

# THE MARYLAND STATE NORMAL SCHOOL AT TOWSON ANNOUNCEMENT 1930 1931

Softened by a Shantung shade, the lamplight was golden on his small smooth face, but sapphire and emerald in his eyes. "My scar," he confessed, "is inexperience. For a man my age, Agnes, I'm in some ways unbelievably innocent. I wouldn't trade the years with Perri for anything or anyone, but intense as it was, our love didn't include ... Well, I mean, you may find me inadequate." If the state police did get involved, and even if they found evidence that the accident was staged, they would most likely point the finger of blame at the man for whom Victoria had been preparing dinner. Out of Phimie's humiliation, terror, suffering, and death had come Angel, whom Celestina had first and briefly hated, but whom now she loved more than she loved Wally, more than she loved herself or even life itself. Phimie, through Angel, had brought Celestina both to Wally and to a fuller understanding of their father's meaning when he spoke of this momentous day, an understanding that brought power to her painting and so deeply touched the people who saw and bought her art. Finally, he said, "What I did was grab the shovel, dig a hole really fast, and bury Muffin in it up to her neck-just until she calmed down." "Thank you, Dr. Lipscomb. I'll keep track of what you're losing every month, and someday I'll pay it back to you." In the park, rocketing along on the roller coaster, Barty had an experience, a reaction to more than the canted turns and steep plunges. He grew excited in much the way that Agnes had seen him excited when grasping a new and arcane mathematical theory. At the end of the ride, he wanted to get back on immediately, and so they did. There are no long waits for the blind at amusement parks: always to the head of the line. Agnes rode twice again with him, and then Paul twice, and finally Angel accompanied him three times. This roller-coaster obsession wasn't about thrills or even amusement. His exuberance gave way to a thoughtful silence, especially after a seagull flew within inches of his face, feathers thrumming, startling him, on the next-to-last rollick along the tracks. Thereafter, the park held little interest for him, and all he would say was that he'd thought of a new way to feel things-by which he meant all the ways things are-a fresh angle of approach to that mystery. Dr. Lipscomb brought his hands to his face, covering his nose and mouth as earlier they had been covered with a surgical mask, as though he were in danger of drawing in, with his breath, an idea that would forever change him. The gurney, one wheel rattling. The young orderly behind it, dressed all in white. And the nurse again. After a little silence Otter said, "Thanks." And he looked up at Hound, one brief, questioning, judging glance. Agnes's sharp intake of breath caused Edom to look up from his nephew's name. Pale, she was, her eyes as haunted as old mansions. Junior vigorously scrubbed his corpse-licked cheek with one hand. Then he scrubbed his hand against the musician's raincoat. With that thought, he made himself laugh. Unfortunately, his laughter was high-pitched and shaky, and it scared the hell out of him. Copyright (c) 1997 by Ursula K. Le Guin. The birthmarked man identified himself as Detective Thomas Vanadium. He did not use the familiar, diminutive form of his name, as had the doctor, and his voice was as uninflected as his face was flat and homely. "Oh, my Lord," Chicane groaned as he and Sparky half carried Junior into the bathroom. "When you didn't answer the doorbell, man, I just knew what must have happened," Chicane told Junior. After a long time the door opened and several men came in. He could do nothing against them as they gagged him and bound his arms behind him. "Now you won't weave charms nor speak spells, young'un," said a broad, strong man with a furrowed face, "but you can nod your head well enough, right? They sent you here as a dowser. If you're a good dowser you'll feed well and sleep easy. Cinnabar, that's what you're to nod for. The King's wizard says it's still here somewhere about these old mines. And he wants it. So it's best for us that we find it. Now I'll walk you out. It's like I'm the water finder and you're my wand, see? You lead on. And if you want to go this way or that way you dip your head, so. And when you know there's ore underfoot, you stamp on the place, so. Now that's the bargain, right? And if you play fair I will." "Where's your mother this morning?" he asked, for he'd expected to have to shoot his way through a lot more than one adult to reach both children. The Lipscomb house had proved empty, however, and fortune had given him the boy and girl together, with one guardian. This guy was spooky. Junior was beginning to think that the detective's unorthodox behavior wasn't a carefully crafted strategy, as it had first seemed, but that Vanadium was a little wacky. Among those present before the caravan returned were a few who should have known better than to allow this madness. Tom Vanadium, Edom, Maria. They stared up at the boy, tense and solemn, and Agnes could only suppose that they, too, had arrived after the fact, with the boy already beyond easy recall. The report on the tower forced Junior to consider his mortality; fear, hurt, and self-pity roiled in him. His voice trembled with offense: "You do know, Mr. Magusson, what happened to my Naomi was an. The lawyer's eyes appeared as round as his face. "Aggie, please don't tell me you've started to share Jacob's ... enthusiasms? ". She was so hot that the ice melted quickly. A thin trickle slid down her throat, but not enough to take the Sahara out of her voice when she said, "More." "Would you like a little tea and a piece of crumb cake?" Grace asked as smoothly as if, in *The Big Book of Etiquette for Ministers' Wives*, this were the preferred response to the announcement of a startling career change. The minister had finished. The service was over. No one came to Junior with condolences, because they would see him again shortly, at the Ford dealership buffet. She leaned against the apartment door for a long moment, holding on to the doorknob and to the thumb-turn of the second deadbolt, as though she were convinced that if she let go, she would float off the floor like a cloud-stuffed child. "It's an uncommon reaction," the physician acknowledged, "but not so uncommon as to be rare." He was Father Tom again, having recommitted to his vows three years previous. At his request, the Church had assigned him as the chaplain of Pie Lady Services. Tuesday, January 9, having cashed out a number of investments during the past ten days, Junior made a wire transfer of one and a half million dollars to the Gammoner account in the Grand Cayman bank. This analgesic was among several prescription substances that he had stolen, over time, from the drug locker at the rehab hospital where he once worked. Some he had sold; these he

had retained. Agnes Lampion would enthrall them, for hers was a life of clear significance. That they seemed equally interested in Paul's story, however, surprised him. Perhaps they were merely being kind, and yet with apparent fascination, they drew out of him so many details of his long walks, of the places he had been and the reasons why, of his life with Perri. This night in Weott, with the high solemn silence of the redwood forests out there now and waiting to embrace him in the morning, he slept without dreams. Her case of polio had been so severe that braces and crutches were never an option. Muscle rehabilitation had been ineffective. "Well, we have earthquakes here," Jolene said, "but back east they have all those hurricanes." Nolly raised his martini glass in a toast. "To Kathleen Klerkle Wulfstan, dentist and associate detective." Junior wanted to shoot all of them, but he said, "Take it. Keep it. Get it the hell out of here." No one had actually been here. And he still didn't believe in ghosts, so he didn't think that a spirit had been wandering his home in his absence. One of the paramedics had stooped beside him to press a cool hand against the nape of his neck. Now this man said urgently, "Kenny! St. Mary's social workers did not arrive with dawn, so Celestina was given the privacy of one of their offices, where the wet face of the morning pressed blurrily at the windows, and where she phoned her parents with the terrible news. From here, too, she arranged with a mortician to collect Phimie's body from the cold-storage locker in the hospital morgue, embalm it, and have it flown home to Oregon. The cheerful tides of friends and neighbors, over the years, had washed away nearly all the stains that the dark rage of Agnes's father had impressed on these rooms. She hoped her brothers might eventually see that hatred and anger are only scars upon a beach, while love is the rolling surf that ceaselessly smooths the sand. Curious to know what Neddy had said, Junior quickly approached the same gallery staffer. "Excuse me, but I've been looking for my friend ever so long in this mob, and then I saw him talking to you—the gentleman in the London Fog and the tux—and now I've lost him again. He didn't say if he was leaving, did he? He's my ride home." Wait here in the car. Give them time to settle down. At this hour, they would put the kid to bed first. Then Ichabod and Celestina would go to their room, undress for the night. As before, the name tolled through him like the ominous note of the deepest bass bell in a cathedral carillon, struck on a cold midnight. "Good day, sir," Lipscomb said, closing the door in Neddy's face, possibly compressing his nose and bruising his boutonniere. At last he said, "And there he is, hands in front of his face, quarters bouncing off him, these kids and this old lady scrambling around him to snare some change." Posing as a counselor with Catholic Family Services, he phoned each listed Bartholomew, with a question related to his or her recent adoption. Those who expressed bafflement, and who claimed not to have adopted a child, were generally stricken from his list. The reverend made the first toast, speaking so softly that his tremulous words seemed to bloom in Celestina's mind and heart rather than to fall upon her ears. "To gentle Phimie, who is with God." In the kitchen were a radio, a toaster, a coffeepot, two place settings of cheap flatware, a small mismatched collection of thrift-shop plates and bowls and mugs, and a freezer full of TV dinners and English muffins. Stopped by to help Agnes, and some offered to stay with her at night. She gratefully accepted assistance with the housecleaning, laundry, and shopping, but she declined the all-night company because of her dreams. At home again, in the safety of the family, Barty collapsed in exhaustion from the sustained effort to see with eyes that he didn't possess. Abed for ten days, feverish, afflicted with vertigo and migraine headaches, nauseated, he lost eight pounds before his recovery was complete. He had assumed that the dinner guest was Victoria's lover, but suddenly he realized that this might not be the case. The man might be nothing more than a friend. Her father or a brother. In which case the invitation to romance—posed by the coquettishly arranged wine and rose—would be so wildly inappropriate that the visitor would know at. Paul said, "I wanted you ... I don't know ... I just wanted you to see her. I wanted to say ... to say. . ." To the growing pile of ruin, she added one of Joey's cardigan sweaters, after popping loose one bone button and almost completely detaching a sewn-on patch pocket. A pair of knockabout khaki pants: quickly clip open the seat seam; cut the corner of the wallet pocket, then rip it with both hands; snip loose some stitching and half detach the cuff on the left leg. The three adults exclaimed at the disappearance of the quarter, applauded again, and looked knowingly at Tom's hands, which had closed at the sudden conclusion of all the flourishes. She slammed it shut before he could stop her, whether he had intended to stop her or not, and she engaged the deadbolt lock. With her brothers, she adjourned to the waiting room, where the three of them sat drinking vending-machine coffee, black, from paper cups. The silence in this city of the dead was complete. The night lay breathless, stirring not one whisper from the stationed evergreens that stood sentinel over generations of bones. "If you ranted at him about earthquakes, tornadoes, erupting volcanoes, and all that stuff, how could he mistake you for me?" They were as gracious as any people he had ever met, but they also seemed genuinely interested in his story. He wasn't surprised that. As they rolled along the coast, Agnes began to read to Barty from Podkayne of Mars: " 'All my life I've wanted to go to Earth. Not to live, of course—just to see it. As everybody knows, Terra is a wonderful place to visit but not to live. Not truly suited to human habitation.' " Down the stairs, through the ground floor, quickly, soundlessly, breath held at times, listening for the other's breathing, listening for the softest squeak of rubber-soled shoes, although the hard clack of cloven hoofs and a whiff of sulfur would not have been surprising. At last he went to the kitchen, full circle from the shiny quarter on the breakfast table to the quarter again. No Cain. Junior had expected these singular creatures, and he needed them to be as monstrous as they had always been in the past. Nonetheless, he shrank back against his pillows in dismay when they exploded into the hospital room. Their faces were as fierce as those of painted cannibals coming off a fast. They gestured emphatically, spitting expletives along with tiny bits of lunch dislodged from their teeth by the force of their condemnations. And the mills of capitalism provide them. Supply meets demand. Fantasy becomes a commodity, an industry.... That discord sets up lots of other vibrations, some of which will return to you in ways you might expect .... "If you don't, your feeling gland isn't working. Want me to read you to sleep?" He was filled with bitter remorse for having suspected Naomi of poisoning his cheese sandwich or his apricots. She had in fact

adored him, as he had always believed. She would never have lifted a hand against him, never. Dear Naomi would have died for him. In fact, she had..With one tiny hand, Barty reached up for his mother. She gave him her forefinger, to which the sugar-bag boy clung tenaciously..Paul was nearest to that corner when he halted Grace in her rush toward certain death. Before he quite realized what he was doing, he found that he'd flung open the door and climbed half the single long flight of steps, as surefooted as Doc Savage or the Saint, or the Whistler, or any of the other pulp-fiction heroes whose exploits had for so long been his adventures by proxy..Darkness, the one source of childhood fear that most adults never quite outgrow, held no terror for Barty. Although for a while his bedroom featured a Mickey Mouse night-light, the miniature lamp was there not to soothe the boy, but to quiet his mother's nerves, because she worried about him waking alone, in blackness..WHEN DR. JIM PARKHURST made his evening rounds, Junior didn't continue to feign sleep but asked earnest questions to which he knew most of the answers, having eavesdropped on the conversation between the physician and Detective Vanadium..One of the gifts of power is to know power. Wizard knows wizard, unless the concealment is very skillful. And the boy had no skills at all except in boat-building, of which he was a promising scholar by the age of twelve. About that time the midwife who had helped his mother at his birth came by and said to his parents, "Let Otter come to me in the evenings after work. He should learn the songs and be prepared for his naming day." "It seems it was his own idea, your majesty." She stepped on a broken-off chair leg, lost her balance, and fell backward into the side of the bed..During the following ten days, he withdrew money from several accounts. He converted selected paper assets into cash, as well..Stepping forward lightly, lightly, as he swung the candlestick, Junior saw the dinner guest stiffen, perhaps sensing danger or at least movement, but it was too late. The guy didn't even have time to turn his head or duck.."You'll catch pneumonia," she warned, reaching across the boy to flip the passenger's-side vent toward him..If Vanadium was watching, however, he would interpret the pitch of the coin to mean that his unconventional strategy was working, that Junior's nerves were frayed to the breaking point. With an adversary as indefatigable as this cuckoo cop, you dared never show weakness..A fine carpenter can wield a hammer with an economy of movement and accuracy as elegant as the motions of a symphony conductor with a baton. A cop directing traffic can make a rough ballet out of the work. However, of all the humble tasks that men and women can transform into visual poetry by the application of athletic agility and grace, clambering into a Dumpster holds the least promise of beautification..She knew that the front door was locked, too, because Wally had waited to hear the deadbolts clack shut. Nevertheless, she stepped into the hall, where the light wasn't on, walked quickly past Angel's bedroom, came to the entrance to the lamplit living room-and saw a man backing through the open front door, dragging something, dragging a dark and large and heavy rumpled something, dragging a "I thought so," Angel said, dubious squinching her face. "Mrs. Ornwall made me cheese." Junior wanted to kill her. Kill him. Whatever. But he sensed that Renee knew more than a little about dirty fighting and that the outcome of a violent confrontation would not be easy to predict..This was not the time to ponder the nature of the relationship between the treacherous Miss Bressler and Vanadium. Junior had a bloody trail to cover, and precious time was ticking away.."It's chilly and foggy and late, and there might be villains afoot at this hour," he intoned with mock gravity. "The two of you are Lipscomb women now, or soon will be, and Lipscomb women never go unescorted through the dangerous urban night." Unobtrusively, Junior followed the musician across the large front room, but by an indirect arc, using the babbling bourgeoisie for cover..For an instant, his attention had been distracted by Vanadium's presentation of his empty hands. Nevertheless, there was no way the cop could have snatched the coin out of the air..As usual, Vanadium had spoken in a monotone, putting no special emphasis on those two words. Yet Junior sensed that the detective harbored doubts about the explanation of the girl's death..After supper in a roadside diner, Paul returned to his room and studied a tattered map of the western United States, the latest of several he'd worn out over the years. Depending on the weather and the steepness of the terrain, he might be able to reach Spruce Hills, Oregon, in ten days..She hadn't sung since the early-morning hours of October 18, and no other paranormal event had occurred since then. The waiting between manifestations scraped at Junior's nerves worse than the manifestations themselves..Celestina hardly knew Paul, and although he'd saved her mother's life, his offer raised a look of doubt from her..Requests for permission to make copies of any part of the work should be mailed to the following address..Some listings didn't include first names, only initials. Every time he came across the initial B, he put a red heck mark beside it with a fine point felt-tip pen..Lipscomb shifted his gaze from the street below to the source of the rain. "Phimie was not gone long, perhaps a minute-a minute and ten seconds at most-and when she was with us again, it was clear from her condition that the cardiac arrest was most likely secondary to a massive cerebral incident. She was disoriented, paralysis on the right side ... with the distortion of the facial muscles that you saw. Her speech was slurred at first, but then something strange happened. . .THE RAIN THAT HAD threatened to wash out the morning funeral finally rinsed the afternoon, but by nightfall the Oregon sky was clean and dry. From horizon to horizon spread an infinity of icy stars, and at the center of them hung a bright sickle moon as silver as steel..In the city again, he stopped long enough to donate the raincoat to a homeless man who didn't notice the few odd stains. This pathetic hobo happily accepted the fine coat, donned it-and then cursed his benefactor, spat at him, and threatened him with a claw hammer..When finally he found his voice, it was rough-sawn with a blade of grief. "My wife. Perri. Perris Jean." He yearned for a new heart mate. He was wise enough to know that no amount of yearning could transform the wrong woman into the right one. Love couldn't be demanded, planned, or manufactured. Love always came as a surprise, snuck up on you when you were least expecting it, like Anthony Perkins in a dress..First room on the left. Move. Kick the door open. The sense of a larger space beyond, no bathroom this time, and darker. Fan the pistol, gripping with both hands. Two quick shots: muffled cough, muffled cough..Adoption records would have been kept as secret from Celestina as from everyone else. But perhaps she

knew something about the fate of her sister's bastard son that Junior didn't know, a small detail that would seem insignificant to her but that might put him on the right trail at last. Yet he brooded even at breakfast, in spite of the consolation of clotted cream and berries, raisin scones and cinnamon butter. In better worlds, wiser Tom Vanadiums chose different tactics that resulted in less misery than this, in a far swifter conveyance of Enoch Cain to the halls of justice. But he was none of those Tom Vanadiums. He was only this Tom, flawed "land struggling, and he couldn't take comfort in the fact that elsewhere he had proved to be a better man." "No, I don't see it," Chicane repeated. "There's no benefit to a meditation marathon. Twenty minutes is enough, man. Half an hour at the most. You relied on your internal clock, didn't you?" "I'm Sister Josephina." She slipped Celestina's purse off her shoulder--"You can trust this with me"--Nellie found the strength to rise, but having risen, she was unable to speak. Her mouth shaped words, but her voice deserted her. In his mind's eye, Junior saw the coin in transit of the blunt fingers, moving more swiftly than previously because its passage was lubricated by blood. The strange barrage of lightning, putting an end to the rain rather than initiating it, had been a clue. The rapid clearing of the sky--indicating a stiff wind at high altitudes, while stillness prevailed at ground level--a sudden plunge in the humidity, and an unseasonable warmth confirmed the coming catastrophe. Unable to continue Tehanu's story (because it hadn't happened yet) and foolishly assuming that the story of Ged and Tenar had reached its happily-ever-after, I gave the book a subtitle: "The Last Book of Earthsea." "July 14, 1960, in Guatemala City, Guatemala, a fire in a mental hospital--two hundred twenty-five dead." The sight of the heavily bandaged face apparently pressed all of the compassion buttons in the reverend, because he broke out of his paralytic shock and started forward--before he registered the weapon. As spectacularly busty as the not-yet-dead Jayne Mansfield, Frieda never wore a bra. In 1966, this free-swinging style was little seen. Initially, Junior didn't realize bralessness was a declaration of Frieda's liberation; he thought it meant she was a slut. Yet Agnes feared him, for reasons similar to those that might cause a superstitious primitive to tremble in the presence of a witch doctor. Although he was a healer, his dark knowledge of the mysteries of cancer seemed to give him godlike power; his judgment carried the force of fate, and his was the voice of destiny. The sirens shrieked so loud that he felt a sympathetic vibration in his dental fillings, and with a sharp cry of brakes, a great red truck turned the corner, at once followed by a second. She loosened her hair and brushed it out, and Nolly took her to dinner at their favorite place, which had the decor of a classy saloon and a bay view suitable for God's table. They came here often enough that the maitre d' greeted them by name, as did their waiter. On the third of June, he found another useless Bartholomew, and on Saturday, the twenty-fifth, two deeply disturbing events occurred. He switched on his kitchen radio only to discover that "Paperback Writer," yet another Beatles song, had climbed to the top of the charts, and he received a call from a woman. She asked Edom to stay in the main house, so Barty wouldn't be alone while she visited Maria Gonzalez for an hour or two. He was pleased to oblige, settling down to watch a television documentary about volcanoes, which promised to include stories about the 1902 eruption of Mont Pelee, on Martinique, which killed 28,000 people within minutes, and other disasters of colossal proportions. "You can't take much of anything by mouth for a few hours yet," said the nurse. "Nausea is too great a risk. Retching might start you hemorrhaging again."

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