

## **BRAHMS WITH ILLUSTRATIONS AND PORTRAITS**

She pushed her chair back from the table and got to her feet, and everyone followed her example. "Sulk away," the man said. "If you don't like this work, there's always the roaster." "Peach, raisin, walnut pies," Agnes said, "with regular bottom crust and a chocolate-crackle top crust." He knew she wouldn't just step back to calculate her batting average, so he rolled at once, out of her way, immensely relieved that he could move, because judging by the pain coruscating across his back, he wouldn't have been surprised if she had broken his spine and paralyzed him. The chair crashed down again, exactly where Junior had been sprawled an instant before. "No. Charming," she disagreed. "There's a meaning to it. Everything has a meaning, dear." Find the father, kill the son. In just nine days, Junior bedded four beautiful women: one on Christmas Eve, the next on Christmas Night, the third on New Year's Eve, and the fourth on New Year's Day. For the first time in his life-and on all four occasions-his joy in the act was less than complete..She worried that her anxiety would prove contagious, that when her fear infected her boy, he would be less able to fight whatever hateful thing had taken seed in his right eye..Bill wasn't impressed. "They build houses out of mud in China. No wonder everything falls down." Many nights, his sleep wasn't half as restful as he would have wished, for he often dreamed of walking in a wasteland. Sometimes, desert salt flats stretched in all directions, with here and there a monument of weather-gnarled rock, all baking under a merciless sun. Sometimes, the salt was snow, and the monuments of rock were ridges of ice, revealed in the hard glare of a cold sun. Regardless of the landscape, he walked slowly, though he had the desire and the energy to proceed faster. His frustration built until it was so intolerable that he woke, kicking in the tangled sheets, restless and edgy..The Bright Beach Library was open until nine on Friday evening. Arriving an hour before closing, they returned the Heinlein novels that Barty had already read and checked out the three that he wanted. In a spirit of optimism, they borrowed a fourth, Podkayne of Mars..He briefly closed his hand around the three coins, then with a snap of his wrist, flung them at Nolly, who flinched. But either the coins were never flung or they vanished in midair-and his hand was empty..Although he was seventy-six, Tom still worked for Pie Lady Services. They had no set retirement age for staff, and Father Tom expected to die at his work. "And if it's a pie-caravan day, just leave my old carcass where I drop until you make all the deliveries. I won't be responsible for anyone missing a promised pie." Having booked the suite for three nights, Tom expected that he would spend far fewer late hours in his bed than sitting watch in the shared living room..Sunday morning, when Agnes returned from church, Edom and Jacob joined her for lunch. During the afternoon, Jacob helped her bake seven pies for Monday delivery..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." Three and a half days had passed since he'd pushed his wife off the tower, and in that time he'd had no real fun. He was gregarious by nature, never one to turn down a party invitation. He liked to laugh, to love, to live, but he couldn't enjoy life when he must remember at all times to appear bereft and to keep sorrow in his voice..Shortly before ten o'clock, Junior returned to the cemetery and left his Suburban where the Negro mourners had parked earlier in the day. His was the only vehicle on the service road..It was the best he could do in protest against the misuse of good work and a good ship. He was pleased with himself. When the ship was launched (and all seemed well with her, for her fault would not show up until she was out on the open sea) he could not keep from his teachers what he had done, the little circle of old men and midwives, the young hunchback who could speak with the dead, the blind girl who knew the names of things. He told them his trick, and the blind girl laughed, but the old people said, "Look out. Take care. Keep hidden." If he didn't find the Rolex and get back to his car before the reception ended, he'd forfeit his best chance of following Celestina to Bartholomew..But, ah, the heft of the candlestick, the smooth arc it made, and the crack of contact had been as hugely satisfying as any home-run swing that had ever won a baseball World Series.. "That won't do it." Odder yet, the pianist had studied him with a keen interest that was inexplicable, since they were essentially strangers. When caught staring, he'd appeared rattled, turning away quickly, eager to avoid further contact.. "I got to admit," Nolly said, "I'm surprised these little pranks have rattled him so deeply." Angel. A less exotic synonym for her own name. Seraphim's angel. The angel of an angel..The bullet had been fired by a renegade cop who was every bit as lousy a marksman as he was a corrupt scumball. He'd been aiming for Nolly's crotch..Olive complexion, no less smooth than the skin of a calamata. Eyes as lustrous as pools shimmering with a reflection of eternity and stars.. "December 1, 1958, in Chicago, Illinois, a parochial-school fire killed ninety-five." Earlier, he had placed an open fifth of vodka on the table, in front of Victoria. The nurse, no longer in the chair, sprawled on the floor as if she had emptied another bottle before this one..Having ridden from the church to the cemetery with Hanna, his housekeeper, Paul chose to walk home. The distance between Perri's new bed and her old was only three miles, and the afternoon mild..Summary: Explores further the magical world of Earthsea through five tales of events which occur before or after the time of the original novels, as well as an essay on the people, languages, history and magic of the place..Startled, he snatched his hand back. The object fell, ringing faintly against the pavement..Although he was a stranger, arriving unannounced, and something of an eccentric by anyone's definition, Paul was received by Grace and Harrison White with warmth and fellowship. At their doorstep, raising his voice to compete

with the wailing weather, he hurriedly blurted out his mission, as if they might reel back from his wild windblown presence if he didn't talk quickly enough: "I've walked here from Bright Beach, California, to tell you about an exceptional woman whose life will echo through the lives of countless others long after she's gone. Her husband died the night their son was born, but not before naming the boy Bartholomew, because he'd been so impressed by "This Momentous Day. And now the boy is blind, and I hope you'll be able and willing to give some comfort to his mother." The Whites failed to reel backward, didn't even flinch from his unfortunately explosive statement of purpose. Instead, they invited him into their home, later invited him to dinner, and later still asked him to stay the night in their guest room..He held forth the single red rose. "For you. Not that it compares. No flower could." Here, four days past Christmas, after two days of torment, Agnes knew the worst, that her treasured son must go eyeless or die, must choose between blindness or cancer of the brain.."A wonderful wedding," Celestina promised her, taking a pair of pajamas from a dresser drawer..With the great tree ninety degrees to his left, he was able to locate the back-porch steps at forty-five degrees. He pointed with the cane, which otherwise he had not used. "The porch?".the floor, on a silk-covered pillow filled with goose down. With a sigh " he assumed the lotus position: spine straight, legs crossed, hands at rest with the palms up..Uncommon dexterity is essential for anyone who hopes to become a highly skilled card mechanic, but it is not the sole requirement. A capacity to endure grim tedium while engaging in thousands of hours of patient practice is equally important. The finest card mechanics also exhibit complex memory function of a breadth and depth that the average person would find extraordinary..He didn't rely, either, on a sixth sense to detect obstacles or open spaces, which some blind people claimed to have. Sometimes instinct told him that in his path was an object that ordinarily would not have been there; but as often as not, it went undetected, and unless he was using his cane, he tripped over it. The sixth sense was greatly overrated..Her awful sense of weightlessness became something much better: buoyancy, an exhilarating lightness of spirit. Fear remained with her-fear for Barty, fear of the future and of the strange complexity of Creation that she'd just glimpsed-but wonder and wild hope now tempered it.."This will stay with you," Mary said. "It's shared sight from all the other yous in all the other places, but you won't have to make any effort to hold on to it. No headaches. No problems ever. Merry Christmas, Daddy."..At the beginning of his third month, instead of at the end of his fifth, he was combining vowels and consonants: "ba-ba-ba, ga-ga-ga, la-la-la, ca-ca-ca."..The tone sounded, as promised, and a man's voice spoke from the box: "It's Max. You're psychic. I found the hospital here. Poor kid had a cerebral hemorrhage, arising from a hyperensive crisis caused by ... eclampsia, I think it is. Baby survived. Call me, huh?".The nurse noted that the maximum weight capacity of the elevator allowed all of them to take the same cab, if they didn't mind being squeezed a little.."Crafty men" is what they called wizards in those days..When he reached the Suburban and closed his right hand around the handle on the driver's door, he felt something peculiar against his palm. A small, cold object balanced there..Edom did as asked. Then he cut the deck into two approximately equal stacks when requested to do so..Into the autumn of 1967, Junior reviewed hundreds of thousands of phone listings, and occasionally he located a rare Bartholomew. In San Rafael or Marinwood. In Greenbrae or San Anselmo. Located and investigated and cleared them of any connection with Seraphim White's bastard baby..Of course, you've never seen anything like it, you worthless adolescent twit. You're not old enough to have seen squat, and even if you were older than your own grandfather, you wouldn't have seen anything like this, Dr Kildare, because this here is a true case of voodoo Baptist boils, and they don't come along often!.What the commodifiers of fantasy count on and exploit is the insuperable imagination of the reader, child or adult, which gives even these dead things life-of a sort, for a while..Tears burst from Junior, stinging torrents, a salt sea of grief that blurred his vision and bathed his face in brine. "Get out of here, you disgusting, sick son of a bitch," he demanded, his voice simultaneously shaking with sorrow and twisted by righteous anger. "Get out of here now, get out!".Maybe the bright side was that the musician hadn't either wet his pants or taken a dump while in his death throes. Sometimes, during a comparatively slow death like strangulation, the victim lost control of all bodily functions. He'd read it in a novel, something from the Book-of-the-Month Club and therefore both life-enriching and reliable. Probably not Eudora Welty. Maybe Norman Mailer. Anyway, the men's room didn't smell as fresh as a flower shop, but it didn't reek, either..If their relationship had not been limited to a single evening of passion, if they had not been of two worlds, if she had not been underage and therefore jailbait, they might have had an open romance, and then her death would have touched him more deeply.."Who is this?" he demanded, although for a demand, the words came out too thin, too squeaky..If the directory proved to be of no help, Junior would proceed next to the registry office at the county courthouse, to review the records of births going back to the turn of the century if necessary. Bartholomew, of course, might not have been born in the county, might have moved here as a child or an adult. If he owned property, he'd show up on the register of deeds. Whether a landowner or not, if he did his civic duty every two years, he would appear on the voter rolls..Eventually he put the quarter on the nightstand, switched off the lamp, and slipped into bed..The aging, fugitive Nazi had been replaced at the front desk by a woman with messily chopped blond hair, a brutish face, and arms that would dissuade Charles Atlas from challenging her. She changed a five-dollar bill into coins for the vending machines and snarled at him only once in strangely accented English..Phimie must be honored now with laughter instead of with tears, because her life had left Celestina with so many memories of joy and with joy personified in Angel. To fend off tears, she said, "Listen, Clark Kent, we women need our little secrets, our private thoughts. If you can really read my heart this easily, I guess I'm going to have to start wearing lead brassieres."..Nearly two weeks ago, in the Spruce Hills hospital, Junior had been drawn by some strange magnetism to the viewing window at the neonatal-care unit. There, transfixed by the newborns, he sank into a slough of fear that threatened to undo him completely. By some sixth sense, he had realized that the mysterious Bartholomew had something to do with babies..The missing paintings. The missing collection of Zedd's books.

You didn't take these things with you for a weekend in Reno. You took them if you thought you might never be coming back.. "It's a miracle both of you didn't go through that railing," the attorney agreed..Sitting in Simon Magusson's mahogany-paneled office, reading the contents of this file, Junior was aghast. "I could have been killed.".On the counter beside the bathroom sink stood an open box of BandAids in a variety of sizes, a bottle of rubbing alcohol, and a bottle of iodine..For a while, Celestina had worried that the girl was slower to walk than other children, slower to talk, and slower to develop her vocabulary, even though Celestina read aloud to her from storybooks every day. Then, during the past six months, Angel had caught up in a rush though she traveled a road somewhat different from what the childrearing books described. Her first word was mama, which was fairly standard, but her second was blue, which for a while came out "boo." At three, an average child would be doing exceptionally well to identify four colors; Angel could name eleven, including black and white, because she was able routinely to differentiate pink from red, and purple from blue..This didn't seem strange to him. Among the many things that no longer mattered were the concepts of distance and time..At the end, with the salt Tom and the pepper Tom standing side by side in their different but parallel worlds, Maria said, "Seems like science fiction.".Instruction in Braille wasn't recommended for three-year-olds, but an exception was made in this case. Agnes arranged to have Barty receive a series of lessons, although she suspected that he'd absorb the system and learn to use it in one or two sessions..Bartholomew might be a teenager living with his parents or a dependent adult residing with family; if so, he wouldn't be revealed in this search, because the phone would not be listed in his name. Or maybe the guy loathed his first name and never used it except in legal matters, going by his middle name, instead..Junior realized that thick drool oozed out of the right corner of his mouth. Shakily, he raised one hand to wipe his face..Shuddering with dread, he placed one hand against the door and slowly pushed it open.. "But what made you choose that life? You must have committed to the seminary awfully young.".Still looming over her, he snatched the pad out of her hands and examined the sketch. "Where would you have seen this?".After Victoria had departed, Junior lay smiling at the ceiling, floating on Valium and desire. And vanity.. "This is going to be an enormous settlement," the attorney promised. "And there's more good news. County and state authorities have agreed to close the case on Naomi's death. It's now officially an accident.".The disease hadn't corrupted her heart, and it had left her face untouched, as well. Lovely, she was, as she had always been..NORTHBOUND ON THE coastal highway, headed for Newport Beach, Agnes saw bad omens, mile after mile.. "Well, actually, I owe Phimie. It's what she said between her two deaths on the delivery table that's changed my life.".Judging by the sounds Vanadium made, Junior figured that the cop had settled once more into the armchair..The sudden change of subject, from the airliner crash to Phimie, confused Celestina..Junior remembered the very words the detective had used: They say she died in a traffic accident.. "This card to mean also is family love, and is love from many friends, not just to be kissy-kissy love," Maria elucidated..A quick review of these book spines revealed that the treasured Zedd collection wasn't here..She was also a cat lover, working with the Kitten Konservatory to save abandoned felines from death in the city pound. She was the charity's investment manager. Within ten months, Tammy grew twenty thousand in Konservatory funds into a quarter million by speculating in the stock of a South African firm that hit it big selling germ-warfare technology to North Korea, Pakistan, India, and the Republic of Tanzania, whose chief export was sisal..Aside from purchasing the T S. Eliot book, which he hadn't found time to read, Junior was only peripherally aware of current events, because they were, after all, current, while he tried always to focus on the future. The news of the day was but a faint background music to him, like a song on a radio in another apartment.. "But in 'This Momentous Day,' Bartholomew is just the disciple, the historical figure, and he's also a metaphor for the unforeseen consequences of even our most ordinary actions.".When he pushed Naomi, profit was the motive. He killed Victoria and Vanadium in self-defense. Those three deaths were necessary..That was the first-and until now the last-long walk he made with a purpose in mind. He went to see a hero..Celestina breezed through the open door with Angel. "No vanilla wafers. You'll be up all night with a sugar rush.".Holding up his misshapen hands, knobby knuckles toward Agnes, Obadiah said, "How do you think they became like this?".Unable to run, he raised his arms defensively, crossing them in front of his face, though the impact of the coins wasn't painful. Volleys flicked off his fingers, palms, and wrists..Ministering to Perri, Joshua had pulled back her blankets. The fabric of the pale yellow pajama pants couldn't disguise how terribly withered her legs were: two sticks.. "Don't worry, love. I'll make sure the snap's are constructed so you can get it off me easily enough..". "Yes, Barty," Tom said. "I feel a depth to life, layers beyond layers. Sometimes it's ... scary. Mostly it inspires me. I can't see these other worlds, can't move between them. But with this quarter, I can prove that what I feel isn't my imagination." He extracted a quarter from a jacket pocket, holding it between thumb and forefinger for all but Barty to see. "Angel?".Knacker or Hisscus, or Nork, was talking about an offering, as though Naomi were a goddess to whom they wished to present a penance of gold and jewels..After adjusting the hairpin that held her lace mantilla, Maria passed from the narthex into the nave She dipped two fingers in the holy water that glimmered in the marble font, and crossed herself.. "Oh!" She blotted her eyes on the heels of her hands. "Wait! Give me a second chance. I can do it better, I'm sure I can.".ANGEL WAS DRESSED in as much red as the devil himself: bright red shoes, red socks, red leggings, red skirt, red sweater, and a knee length red coat with a red hood..Startled, Nolly checked his shirt pocket and withdrew a quarter. "It's not the same one..".To Agnes, Jacob said, "Likely to be a sunnier fortune if the cards are bright and fresh, don't you think?".As luck would have it," the nun said, "Dr. Lipscomb was in the when it happened. He'd just delivered another baby under..Junior didn't believe in gods, devils, Heaven, Hell, life after death. He put his faith in one thing: himself..As the nurse slapped a bar of lye soap in Celestina's right hand, she turned on the water in the sink..Needles of rain knitted the air and quickly embroidered silvery patterns on the blacktop..Google didn't realize that he was an object of disgust. He wiggled his eyebrows in what he evidently assumed to be

an expression of male camaraderie, and he nudged Junior with one elbow. Victoria lay faceup on the floor. The nurse was no longer as lovely as she had been, and perhaps because of early rigor mortis, her grace, which had initially been evident even in death, had now deserted her. He phoned her before leaving, to be sure she was home. She didn't work weekend shifts at the hospital; but maybe she would have gone out on this night off. When she answered, he recognized her seductive voice-and devilishly muttered, "Wrong number." As he was wheeled headfirst into the operating room, Barty raised off the gurney pillow. He fixed his gaze on his mother until the door swung shut between them. I also wanted information on various things that had happened back then, before Ged and Tenar were born. A good deal about Earthsea, about wizards, about Roke Island, about dragons, had begun to puzzle me. In order to understand current events, I needed to do some historical research, to spend some time in the Archives of the Archipelago. Celestina almost begged off, almost told him that she had no interest in whatever curiosity of medicine or physiology he might have witnessed. The only miracle that would have mattered, Phimie's survival, had not been granted. Celestina dropped to one knee in front of Angel, to tie the drawstrings of the hood under the girl's chin. "The princess is correct," he acknowledged, revealing that this hand was still empty. Then he reached to the girl and plucked the quarter from her ear. Junior tossed garments on the floor and across the bed to create the impression that the detective had packed with haste. After being imprudent enough to blast Victoria Bressler five times with his service revolver-perhaps in a jealous rage, or perhaps because he had gone nuts-Vanadium would have been frantic to flee justice. He wanted to say: The vain, power-mad politicians who milk cheers from ignorant crowds, the sports stars and preening actors who hear themselves called heroes and never object, they should all wither with shame at the mention of your name. Your vision, your struggle, the years of grueling work, your enduring faith when others doubted, the risk you took with career and reputation--it's one of the great stories of science, and I'd be honored if I could shake your hand. Vanadium arrived and stood beside Junior. His black suit was cheap, but it fit better than Rudy's. "I didn't know her well. She didn't hang out or party much--especially after the baby." Then the boy put new and puzzling shadings on his meaning when he said, "Daddy died here, but he didn't die every place I am." As she clambered through the open door into Celestina's lap, the girl said, "Uncle Wally gave me an Oreo." Under a sullen afternoon sky, in the winter-drab hills, the yellow-and-white station wagon was a bright arrow, drawn and fired not from a hunter's quiver but from that of a Samaritan. To buy as much time as possible while Enoch Cain's assault was still fresh in Celestina's mind, Tom proposed that they remain hidden away for another two weeks, unless the killer was apprehended sooner. "Then if you go to Wally's house from here, you'll want to install the best alarm system you can get, and you should lead a restricted life for quite a while, even hire security if you can afford it. The smartest thing would be to move out of San Francisco as soon as Wally's recovered. He retired young, right? And a painter can paint anywhere. Sell the properties here, start over somewhere else, and make the move in such a way that you can't be easily traced. I can help you work that out." "And how about this," he continued. "Every point in the universe is directly connected to every other point, regardless of distance, so any point on Mars is, in some mysterious way, as close to me as is any of you. Which means it's possible for information-and objects, even people-to move instantly between here and London without wires or microwave transmission. In fact, between here and a distant star, instantly. We just haven't figured out how to make it happen. Indeed, on a deep structural level, every point in the universe is the same point. This interconnectedness is so complete that a great flock of birds taking flight in Tokyo, disturbing the air with their wings, contributes to weather changes in Chicago." When Victoria failed to answer the door, this man would not simply go away. He had been invited. He was expected. Lights were on in the house. The lack of a response to his knock would be taken as a sign that something was amiss. During the five years following Agnes's death, their family of many names thrived. Barty and Angel had brought them all together in this place fifteen years previously, but the destiny about which Toni had spoken on the back porch, that night in the rain, seemed to be in no hurry to manifest itself. Barty could find no painless way to sustain secondhand sight, so he lived without the light. Angel had no reason to shove anyone else into the world of the big bugs, where she'd pushed Cain. The only miracles in their lives were the miracles of love and friendship, but the family remained convinced of eventual wonders, even as they got on with the day at hand. Barty rounded the tree and returned to the porch. He climbed the steps and stood before Tom. As to the distressing matter of Seraphim's daughter, Junior at first decided to return to San Francisco to torture the truth out of Nolly Wulfstan. Then he realized that he'd been referred to Wulfstan by the same man who had told him that Thomas Vanadium was missing and was believed to be Victoria Bressler's killer. Sometimes Barty could be fierce in his independence-his mother told him so-and now he rebuffed Angel too sharply. "I don't want to be waited on. I'm not helpless, you know. I can get sodas myself" By the time he reached the doorway, he felt sorry for his tone, and he looked back toward where the window seat must be. "Angel?" At last, as the sun slowly set, he arrived at the highest of the high redoubts, beyond which the branches were too young and too weak to support him farther. Against a sky red enough to delight the most sullen sailors, he rose and stood in a final crook of limbs, pressing his left hand against a balancing branch, right hand planted cockily on his hip, lord of his domain, having kicked off the trammels of darkness and fashioned from them a ladder. Urgency gripped the paramedics. The rescuers' equipment and the pieces of the car door were dragged out of the way to make a path for a gurney, its wheels clattering across pavement littered with debris. Alone with Paul, as he stood abashed, she removed her blouse and bra and, with arms crossed over her breasts, revealed to him her savaged back. Whereas her father had used open-hand slaps and hard fists to teach his twin sons the lessons of God, he preferred canes and lashes as the instruments of education for his daughter, because he believed that his direct touch might have invited sin. Scars disfigured Agnes from shoulders to buttocks, pale scars and others dark, crosshatched and whorled. 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." That same day, he dared to visit two galleries. Neither of them had a pewter candlestick on display. The lid of the cooler wasn't on as tight as it ought to have been. From around one edge slipped a thin and sinuous stream of smoke. Something on fire. First, he searched immediately around the dead man, figuring that the watch might still be snared on the coat belt or on one of the sleeve straps. No luck. Harrison and Grace had welcomed him in spite of the fact that a friend and parishioner had died on Thursday, leaving them both bereft and with church obligations. Naomi's beautiful countenance rose in his mind, and she looked beautiful for a moment, but then he thought he saw a certain slyness in her angelic smile, a disturbing glint of calculation in her once loving eyes. He knew that the only movement in those staring, sightless eyes was the restless reflection of the flashlight beam as he probed the trash with it. He knew he was being irrational, but nevertheless he was reluctant to turn his back on the corpse. Repeatedly in the midst of searching, he snapped his head up, whipping his attention to Neddy, certain that from the corner of his eye, he had seen the dead gaze following him. "Angel," Phemie said thickly, searching her sister's eyes for a sign of understanding. In the dark dumpster, tormented by ceaseless torrents of what-ifs, convinced that the spirit of Vanadium was going to slam the lid and lock him in with a revived corpse, Junior had for a while been reduced to the condition of a helpless child. Paralyzed by fear, withdrawn to the corner of the dumpster farthest from the putrefying pianist, squatting in trash, he had shaken with such violence that his castanet teeth had chattered in a frenzied flamenco rhythm to which his bones seemed to knock, knock, like boot heels on a dance floor. He had heard himself whimpering but couldn't stop, had felt tears of shame burning down his cheeks but couldn't halt the flow, had felt his bladder ready to burst from the needle prick of terror but had with heroic effort managed to refrain from wetting his pants. First, Victoria Bressler was listed as one of his victims, although as far as he knew, the authorities still had every reason to attribute her murder to Vanadium. 'She didn't reach into your thoughts and pluck out the name Rowena. Or Beezil or Feezil.'

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