

## 30 VESTIDOS ROJOS

He'd once spoken that very sentiment to her. Golden haze, sun in the heart. His words had melted her, tears had sprung into her eyes, and sex been better than ever. For a while, she couldn't get enough air. Felt suffocated. She drew great, raw, shuddering breaths, and thought that she would never be able to quiet herself but quiet came. Through her efforts, the Bright Beach Public Library sponsored an ambitious oral-history project financed by two private foundations and by an annual strawberry festival. Local retirees were enlisted to record the stories of their lives, so that their experiences, insights, and knowledge wouldn't be lost to generations yet unborn. The 9-mm pistol and the ammunition were on the foyer table. With trembling hands, Junior tore open the boxes and loaded the gun. There were effective actions and ineffective actions, socially acceptable and unacceptable behavior, wise and stupid decisions that could be made. But if you wanted to achieve maximum self-realization, you had to understand that any choice you made in life was entirely value neutral. Morality was a primitive concept, useful in earlier stages of societal evolution, perhaps, but without relevance in the modern age. In a magazine article about the hero, passing mention was made of a restaurant where occasionally the great man ate breakfast. Her case of polio had been so severe that braces and crutches were never an option. Muscle rehabilitation had been ineffective. Anyway—and curiously—Industrial Woman increasingly looked to him like Scamp. As various abraded and inflamed mucous membranes constantly reminded him, he'd had more than enough of Scamp for a while. At last the day arrived: Friday, January 12. Without excellence, of course, there would be no civilization, no progress, no joy; and Agnes was surprised that this sharp burr of her father's philosophy had stuck deep in her subconscious, prickling and worrying her unnecessarily. She'd thought that she was entirely clean of his influence. The possibility that he'd left a clear fingerprint on the watch crystal had to be judged remote. And the band had been too textured to take a print useful to the police. She poured cold milk and drank it quickly. As she was rinsing the empty glass, she felt as if she might throw up, but she didn't. "Everyone knows about Vanadium. He's a crusader, self-appointed champion of truth, justice, and the American way. A holy fool, if you will. With the case closed, he has no authority to harass you." For a while, Junior half convinced himself that the quarter in his cheeseburger, in December '65, was a meaningless coincidence, unrelated to Vanadium. His short tour of the kitchen, in search of the perpetrator, had given him reason to believe the diner's sanitary standards were inadequate. Recalling the greasy men on that culinary death squad, he knew that he'd been fortunate not to discover a dead rodent spread-eagle on the melted cheese, or an old sock. This didn't seem strange to him. Among the many things that no longer mattered were the concepts of distance and time. Maria, puzzled but cooperative, left the room as instructed, and Barty removed the correct book from the stack on the table, without anyone's guidance. He sat in the armchair at his mother's side and began to read. Her elegance was appealing. A pink Chanel suit with knee-length skirt, a strand of pearls. Her figure was spectacular, but she didn't flaunt it. She was even wearing a bra. In this age of bold erotic fashion, her more demure style was enormously seductive. Barty grinned mischievously. "One of the places we visited today. Some big kids. They saw this scary movie, said they had to wash their shorts after." As Barty climbed to the porch without benefit of the railing and held out his right hand, Paul Damascus said, "Tom, we're wondering if Barty can extend to you the protection he gives to Angel in the rain. Maybe he can ... since the three of you share this ... this awareness, this insight, or whatever you want to call it. But he won't know until he tries." "You should've seen this, Kathleen. He's dodging people on the sidewalk, shoving them out of his way when he can't dodge them. Three long blocks, Jimmy and I watched the creep, till he turned the corner, three long blocks all uphill, and it's a hill that would kill an Olympic athlete, but he doesn't slow down once." Sometimes, while shaving or combing his hair, as he was looking in the bathroom or foyer mirror, Junior thought that he glimpsed a presence, dark and vaporous, less substantial than smoke, standing or moving behind him. At other times, this entity seemed to be within the mirror. He couldn't focus on it, study it, because the moment he became aware of the presence, it was gone. And in time, the surgeon did appear, bearing the good news that neither of the malignancies had spread to the orbit and optic nerve, but he had no greater miracle to report. He would come. She knew. She had always known, but had half forgotten. There was something special about Angel, and because of that specialness, she lived under a threat as surely as the newborns of Bethlehem under King Herod's death decree. Long ago, Celestina glimpsed a complex and mysterious pattern in this, and to the eye of the artist, the symmetry of the design required that the father would sooner or later come. The night was holding its breath again, the previous breeze now pent up in the breast of darkness. Now, since he didn't intend to date this woman again, he grabbed the only chance he might ever have to learn the intimate, eccentric details of her life. He began in her kitchen, with the contents of the refrigerator and cupboards, concluding his tour in her bedroom. With some sharp instrument, probably a knife, Cain had stabbed and gouged the red letters, working on the wall with such fury that two of the Bartholomews were barely readable anymore. The Sheetrock was marked by hundreds of scores and punctures. He wanted Celestina to sit in her seat and use her lap belt, but she insisted on cuddling next to him, as if she were a high-school girl and he were her teenage beau. "For one thing, jurors might conclude that the authorities never really suspected you and tried to frame you for murder to conceal their culpability in the poor maintenance of the tower. By far, most of the cops think you're innocent anyway." Three doors in the dark hallway: one to the right, ajar, and two to the left, both closed. Over potato soup and an asparagus salad, the dinner conversation got off to a promising start: a discussion of favorite potato dishes, observations on the weather, talk of Mexico at Christmas. Agnes considered describing the sunset to the blinded boy, but her hesitancy settled into reluctance, and by the time the stars came out, she had said not a word about the day's splendid final act. For one thing, she worried that her description would fall far short of the reality, and

that with her inadequate words, she might dull Barty's precious memories of sunsets he had seen. Primarily, however, she failed to remark on the spectacle because she was afraid that to do so would be to remind him of all that he had lost. To be useful, anger must be channeled, as Zedd explains with unusually poetic prose in *The Beauty of Rage: Channel Your Anger and Be a Winner*. Junior's current predicament would only get worse if he had to telephone Roto-Rooter to extract a musician from the plumbing. Your deeds ... will return to you, magnified beyond imagining ... the spirit of Bartholomew ... will find you ... and mete out the terrible judgment that you deserve. Cypresses lined the entry drive to the cemetery. Tall and solemn, the trees kept guard, as though posted to prevent restless spirits from roaming out into the land of the living. They were driven to St. Mary's by Detective Bellini in a police sedan. Tom Vanadium—a friend of her father's whom she had met a few times in Spruce Hills, but whom she didn't know well—literally rode shotgun, tensed to react, wary of the occupants of other vehicles on. Whereas the lone heart at the center of the rectangular white field inspired amazement and delight in her brothers and in Maria, Agnes reacted to it with dread. She strove to mask her true feelings with a smile as thin as the edge of a playing card. Junior closed his eyes at once and let his jaw sag, breathing through his mouth, feigning sleep. "Making too many wrong choices," Grace White said, "produces too many branches—a gnarled, twisted, ugly growth." He didn't want to risk marrying weapon and silencer here in the hall, where he might be seen. Besides, complications could arise from being splattered with Neddy's blood. Aftermath was disgusting, but it was also highly incriminating. For the same reason, he was loath to use a knife. Slow deep breaths. Per Zedd, slow deep breaths. Any state of anxiety, regardless of how powerful, could be ameliorated or even dissipated. Her hands shook as she counted out the fare and the tip from her wallet. "I'm scared sick. Maybe you should just take me right back home." The wife killer was evil; and his evil would be expressed one way or another, regardless of the forces that affected his actions. If he'd not killed Naomi on the fire tower, he would have killed her elsewhere, when another opportunity for enrichment presented itself. If Victoria hadn't become a victim, some other woman would have died instead. If Cain hadn't become obsessed with the strange conviction that someone named Bartholomew might be the death of him, he would have filled his hollow heart with an equally strange obsession that might have led him, anyway, to Celestina, but that would surely have brought violence down on someone else if not on her. The sedative was mild, but Phimie was asleep in mere minutes. She was exhausted by her long ordeal and by her recent lack of sleep. Celestina, standing next to Agnes, put an arm around her waist, as perhaps she had once been in the habit of doing with her sister. By now he recognized that the man approaching from the other graveside service was neither a Negro nor a stranger. Detective Thomas Vanadium was annoying enough to be an honorary Hackachak. Her father respected and admired Tom, so she was thankful for his presence. And anyone who could survive whatever catastrophe had left him with this cubistic face was a man she wanted on her team in a crisis. Honor and family. This was life, and everyone lived his life in the shadow of one solemn obligation or another. Celestina circled him, half carrying but also half dragging the chair, either because her nerves were still ringing and her arms were weak—or because she was faking weakness in the hope of luring him to a reckless response. Junior circled her while she rounded oil him frantically trying to deal with the pistol without taking his eyes off his adversary. When Paul practiced the quarter trick, he usually did so on the sofa or in an armchair, and always in a room with carpeting, because when dropped on a hard surface, the coin rolled and required too much chasing. He was a man with a plan, focused, committed, ready to act and then think, as soon as he was able to act. A spasm of pain weakened his hand. Cartridges slipped through his fingers, fell to the floor. "Why do you think he's spending his money for all this tricky stuff?" Kathleen wondered, not for the first time. At first all had gone well. Agnes, Maria, and Edom were rightly amazed. A thrill of wonder and big smiles all around the table. They were enthralled by the astoundingly favorable fall of cards, a breathtaking mathematical improbability. Tom himself had decided to build a new life here, as well, assisting Agnes with her ever-expanding work. He was not yet sure whether this would include the rededication to his vows and a return to the Roman collar, or whether he would spend the rest of his days in civvies. He was delaying that decision until the Cain case was resolved. "Too bad. You might have used that to bargain with." He bought cracker sandwiches, some filled with cheese and some with peanut butter, redskin peanuts, chocolate bars, and Coca-Cola. Although this was an unhealthy meal, cheese and peanut butter and chocolate shared a virtue: they were all binding. The poster announced an upcoming show, titled "This Momentous Day," by the young artist calling herself Celestina White. Dates for the exhibition were Friday, January 12, through Saturday, January 27. Eventually, when he had gone through the entire directory, if he'd had no success, he would phone each red-checked listing and ask for Bartholomew. A few hundred calls, no doubt. Some would involve long-distance charges, but he could afford the toll. Blink, the living room. Turning off Sinatra halfway through "It Gets Lonely Early." Eleven days had passed since Wally stopped three bullets. He still had a little residual weakness in his arms, grew tired more easily than before he'd wound up on the wrong end of a pistol, complained of stiffness in his muscles, and used a cane to keep his full weight off his wounded leg. The rest of the medical care he required, as well as physical rehabilitation, could be had in Bright Beach as well as in San Francisco. By March, he should be back to normal, assuming that the definition of normal included massive scars and an internal hollow space where once his spleen had been. The past three years had given Wally much to celebrate, as well. After selling his medical practice and taking an eight-month hiatus from the sixty-hour work weeks he had endured for so long, he'd been giving twenty-four hours of free service to a pediatric clinic each week, providing care to the disadvantaged. He'd worked hard all his life, and saved diligently, and now he was able to focus solely on those activities that gave him the greatest gratification. Agnes prepared a dinner to indulge him: hot dogs with cheese, potato chips. Root beer instead of milk. "If you ranted at him about earthquakes, tornadoes, erupting volcanoes, and all that stuff, how could he mistake you for me?" Barty read aloud as Agnes drove, because she'd enjoyed the novel only from page

104. He wanted to share with her the exploits of Jim and Frank and their Martian companion, Willis. In August, he developed an interest in meditation. He began with concentrative meditation—the form called meditation "with seed"—in which you must close your eyes, mentally focus on a visualized object, and clear your mind of all else. Tammy—the stock analyst, broker, and cat-food-eating feline fetishist—whom he had dated from Christmas of '65 through February of '66, had given him the timepiece in return for all the trading commissions and perfect sex that he had given her. CLOUDS SWARMED THE late-afternoon sun, and the Oregon sky grew sapphire where still revealed. Cops gathered like bright-eyed crows in the lengthening shadow of the fire tower. Holding a shaker in each hand, Tom walked them forward, causing them to diverge slightly at first, but then moving them along exactly parallel to each other. Flush with the promise of their engagement, still excited by the success at the gallery, with Angel exuberant in spite of the hour and Oreo energized, he was amazed that they had made the transfer of the little red whirlwind from house to Buick to house with nothing else forgotten other than one purse. Celie called it ballet, but Wally thought that it was merely momentary order in chaos, the challenging-joyous-frustrating-delightful-exhilarating chaos of a life full of hope and love and children, which he wouldn't have traded for calm or kingdoms. Neddy favored a quick greeting, two curt pumps, but Junior held fast after the handshake was over. He didn't grind the musician's knuckles, nothing so crude, just held on pleasantly but firmly. His intention was to confuse and further rattle the man, taking advantage of his obvious dislike of having his personal space encroached upon, in the hope that Neddy would reveal why he'd been watching Junior so intently from across the room. The gas oven might blow up in his face, at last bringing him peace, but if it didn't, he would at least have cookies for Agnes. Junior reached the window seat and stared down at her. "I don't believe that's true." Lifted from his despair by this exhilarating wrath, Junior turned away from the mirror, looking for the bright side once more. Perhaps it was the bathroom window. Since childhood, he had been waiting for this moment—if indeed it was The Moment—and he had nearly lost hope that the much-desired encounter would ever come to pass. He had expected to find others with his perceptions among physicists or mathematicians, among monks or mystics, but never in the form of a three-year-old girl dressed all in midnight-blue except for a red belt and two red hair bows. Sometimes he thought he walked for Perri, using the steps she had stored up and never taken, giving expression to her unfulfilled yearning to travel. At other times, he thought he walked for the solitude that allowed him to remember their life in fine detail—or to forget. To find peace—or seek adventure. To gain understanding through contemplation—or to scrub all thought from his mind. To see the world or to be rid of it. Perhaps he hoped that coyotes would stalk him through a bleak twilight or a mountain lion set upon him on a hungry dawn, or a drunk driver run him down. Almost thirty years from the seminary—even farther from it if measured by degrees of lost innocence, by miles of rough experience Tom Vanadium set out to kill a man. Given the chance to disarm Cain, given the opportunity to merely wound him, he would nevertheless go for the head shot or the heart shot, play jury and executioner, play God, and leave to God the judgment of his stained soul. "Because He didn't want you to be a dog." She finished tying a bow in the drawstrings. "There. You look just like an M&M." Nothing in his reading offered a satisfactory explanation for what had been happening to him. None of the women filled the hole in his heart, and all of the Bartholomews were harmless. Only the needlepoint offered any satisfaction, but though Junior was proud of his craftsmanship, he knew that a grown man couldn't find fulfillment in stitchery alone. This morning, Damascus had left the house early, before Vanadium came downstairs, which was perfect for Junior's purposes. While the maniac cop was finishing his shave and shower, Junior crept upstairs to check his room. He discovered the revolver in the second of the three places that he expected it to be, did his work, and returned the weapon to the nightstand drawer in precisely the position that he had found it. Narrowly avoiding an encounter with Vanadium in the hall, he retreated to the ground floor. After some fussing over the most effective placement, he left the quarter and the luggage—just as Vanadium, the human stump, clumped down the stairs. Junior experienced an unexpected delay when the detective spent half an hour making phone calls from the study, but then Vanadium went into the kitchen, allowing him to slip out of the house and complete his work. Having been so wounded by one death, Celestina could not imagine how Lipscomb could have survived the loss of his entire family. Pity knotted her heart and cinched her throat so that she spoke in little more than a whisper: "Was that the American Airlines. . ." By the time Junior passed the three offices and found the men's room, Neddy had occupied it. The door was locked, which must mean this was a single-occupant john. 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. After the amusement park, no hospital for the Pie Lady. With Wally near, she had a doctor all her own, capable of giving her the anticancer drugs and transfusions that she required. While radiation therapy is prescribed for acute lymphoblastic leukemia, it is much less useful to treat myeloblastic cases, and in this instance, it wasn't deemed helpful, which made treatment at home even easier. With only a faint twinge of sentimental longing, he drove away from the house that had been his and Naomi's love nest for fourteen blissful months. "No," Otter said, and hesitated. He felt he owed this man an explanation. "See, it's not so much won't as can't. I thought of making plugs in the planking of that galley, near the keel—you know what I mean by plugs? They'd work out as the timbers work when she gets in a heavy sea." Hound nodded. "But I couldn't do it. I'm a shipbuilder. I can't build a ship to sink. With the men aboard her. My hands wouldn't do it. So I did what I could. I made her go her own way. Not his way." At a gun shop, Junior purchased two hundred rounds of ammunition. Later, that many cartridges seemed excessive to him. Later still, he purchased another two hundred. With everyone in the diner now aware of Junior, with every head turned toward him and with every wary eye tracking him, he dropped the bun cap and the mustard dispenser on the floor. Barging through the swinging gate at the end of the lunch counter, he entered the narrow work area behind it. The blocking dresser, which doubled as a vanity, was surmounted by a mirror. One bullet

drilled through the plywood backing, made a spider-web puzzle of the silvered glass, lodged in the wall above the bed-thwack-and kicked out a spray of plaster chips..In January '65, while Vanadium had been in the first month of what proved to be an eight-month coma, Enoch Cain had sought Nolly's assistance in a search for Seraphim's newborn child. When Vanadium had learned about this from Magusson long after the event, he assumed that Cain had heard Max Bellini's message on his answering machine, made the connection with Seraphim's death in an "accident" in San Francisco, and set out to find the child because it was his. Fatherhood was the only imaginable reason for his interest in the baby..Trembling and sweating, he turned his back to the view window. As he retreated from the creche, he expected the oppressive pall of fear to lift, but it grew heavier..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..At the stream Serrenen, where it runs within the north wall of the city, the midwife gave Otter his true name, by which he is remembered in islands far from Havnor..Great anger was apparent in the way that the uneven, red block letters had been drawn on the wall in hard slashes. But the lettering looked like the work of a calm and rational mind compared to what had been done after the three Bartholomews were printed..Livor mortis had already set in, blood draining to the lowest points of her body, leaving the fronts of her bare legs, one side of each bare arm, and her face ghastly pale..Agnes was only thirty-nine years old, full of plans and vigor, so Angel's words seemed premature. Yet in too few years, she would have reason to wonder if perhaps these gifted children foresaw, unconsciously, that she would need the comfort of having witnessed this climb..Eventually, dinner over, cleanup finished, when Maria and the uncles had gone, Agnes and Barty faced the stairs together. She followed, holding his cane, which he said he preferred not to use in the house, prepared to catch him if he stumbled..The candlestick was dry. Holding this pewter bludgeon with a paper towel, Junior replaced it on the table as he had found it. He picked up the candle from the floor and married it to the stick..Grimacing, she said, "I told the police about your disgusting little come--on with the ice spoon."..Extending his hand, watching the pianist closely, Junior said, "My name's Richard Gammoner."..Returning from his tests, he'd gotten into bed without stripping off the thin, hospital-issue robe. He was still wearing it over his pajamas..After the service, among those who came to Agnes at graveside, trying to express the inexpressible, was Paul Damascus, the owner of Damascus Pharmacy on Ocean Avenue. Of Mideastern extraction, he had dark olive skin and, incredibly, rust--red hair. With his rust-red eyebrows, lashes, and mustache, his handsome face looked like that of a bronze statue with a curious patina..EARTHSEA..Then he looked up at the massive limbs overhead, and the mood changed: A sense of impending insight at once gave way to the fear that an unsuspected fissure in a huge limb might crack through at this precise moment, crushing him under a ton of wood, or that the Big One, striking now, would topple the entire oak..Although she had slept well and though her hemorrhaging had been successfully arrested, Agnes was too weak to manage breakfast alone. A simple spoon was as heavy and as unwieldy as a shovel..Sparky wasn't a bad guy, not easily bought, and if he'd been asked to sell out any tenant other than Cain, he probably wouldn't have done so at any price. He greatly disliked Cain, however, and considered him to be "as strange and creepy as a syphilitic monkey."..Even Barty seemed to be attentive, but Angel happily applied crayons to a coloring book and hummed softly to herself..She devoted half her work time to the neighbors-in-need route that Agnes had established and steadily expanded, the other half to her painting. She was in no rush to mount a new show; anyway, she didn't dare renew contact with the Greenbaum Gallery or with anyone at all from her past life, until the police found Enoch Cain..The operator attempted to calm him, but he remained hysterical. Between gasps and sharp squeals of pretended pain, he shakily rattled off his name, address, and phone number..The dining room again, but this time he remembered how he had gotten here: by way of the living room.."There's a fine George and Ira Gershwin song called 'Someone to Watch Over Me.'..Although Neddy had flushed to a rich primrose-pink, Junior still held his hand, crowding him, lowering his face even closer to the musician's. "If you vouched for a teacher, I'd feel confident that I was in good hands, but I'd still much rather learn from you, Neddy. I really wish you would reconsider-"..Abruptly, Junior Cain turned away from the tower, from the body of his lost love, dropped to his knees, and vomited. Vomited more explosively than he had ever done in the depths of the worst sickness of his life. Bitter, thick, grossly out of proportion to the simple lunch that he had eaten, up came a dreadfully reeking vomitus. He was untroubled by nausea, but his abdominal muscles contracted painfully, so tightly that he thought he would be cinched in two, and up came more, and still more, spasm after spasm, until he spewed a thin gruel green with bile, which surely had to be the last of it, but was not, for here was more bile, so acidic that his gums burned from contact with it--Oh God, please no--still more. His entire body heaving. Choking as he aspirated a piece of something vile. He squeezed his watering eyes shut against the sight of the flood, but he could not block out the stench..Atop the dead woman, Vanadium's leather ID holder ignited. The identification card would bum, but the badge was not likely to melt. The police would also identify the revolver..She strove to appear calm, and she must have succeeded, because neither woman seemed to realize that she was scared almost to the point of paralysis. She moved woodenly, joints stiff, muscles tense..Suddenly and seriously crept out, Junior wanted to get away from this nut case. Yet he was frozen by morbid fascination..She thought of herself as a creative person, a capable and efficient and committed person, but she did not think of herself as a strong person. Yet she would need great strength for what lay ahead..Agnes drew him into her arms and lifted him off the desk and embraced him tightly, with his head on her shoulder and his face nestled against her neck, as she'd held him when he was a baby..And God has four hundred billion billion fingers, and He plays a really hot version of "Hawaiian Holiday.."..Well," Kathleen said, "even if the money wasn't so nice, I'd be sorry to see this case end."..Junior glanced over his shoulder even as Celestina turned and fled. He caught only a glimpse of her disappearing into the inner hallway..Carrying the candlestick, he raced to the kitchen at the end of the short hall. The door stood open, but he had to enter the room to see Victoria slumped in one of the two chairs at the small

dinette..Barty never cried. In the hospital neonatal unit, he'd been a marvel to the nurses, because when the other newborns were squalling in chorus, Barty had been unfailingly serene..demons: hypodermoclysis ... intravenous oxytocin ... maintain perfect asepsis, and I mean perfect, at all times ... a few oral preparations of ergot as soon as it's safe to give her anything by mouth. When Seraphim's bastard baby was dead, evidence of paternity would die with it-and any claim for child support. Even Vanadium's stubborn, selfish, greedy, grubbing, vicious, psychotic, evil spirit would have to recognize that all hope of bringing Junior down was lost, and it would at last either dissipate in frustration or be reincarnated.. "The girl's baby," said Nolly, "was placed with Catholic Family Services for adoption." Repressing a smirk, feigning a respectful solemnity, he dared to glance at Vanadium, but the detective stared into Naomi's grave as though he hadn't heard the mockery-or, having heard it, didn't recognize it for what it was.. "It's just that you never know what anyone's hand has been up to recently," Jacob explained. "That respectable banker down the street might have thirty dismembered women buried in his backyard. The nice church-going lady next door might be sleeping in the same bed with the rotting corpse of a lover who tried to jilt her, and for a hobby she makes jewelry from the finger bones of preschool children she's tortured and murdered." Wonderful. Oh, perfect. So Neddy, a friend of Celestina's, knew that Junior, reputed to be a vicious sadist, had attended this reception under a false name. If Junior really was a sleazy pervert of such rococo tastes that he would be shunned even by the scum of the world, even by the deranged mutant offspring of a self-breeding hermaphrodite, then surely he was capable of murder, too..the grass, silent because he is barely conscious, too badly beaten to protest or to plead for mercy, but also. Certain that he was overreacting, Tom nevertheless left the kitchen as a cop, not a priest, would leave it: staying low, knife thrust in front of him, clearing the doorframe fast.. Junior knew that he must remain vigilant. Vigilant and focused until January 12 had come and gone. Eight days to go.

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