

0 10 RULE IMPROVING EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES FOR OUR MILITARY AND VETE

His conscience as a craftsman would not let him fault the carpentry of the ship in any way; but his conscience as a wizard told him he could put a hex on her, a curse woven right into her beams and hull. Surely that was using the secret art to a good end? For harm, yes, but only to harm the harmful. He did not talk to his teachers about it. If he was doing wrong, it was none of their fault and they would know nothing about it. He thought about it for a long time, working out how to do it, making the spell very carefully. It was the reversal of a finding charm: a losing charm, he called it to himself. The ship would float, and handle well, and steer, but she would never steer quite true. Following a splendid lunch, having just left the fourth gallery on his list and strolling toward the fifth, Junior didn't at once see the source of the quarters. Indeed, when the first three rapid-fire coins hit the side of his face, he didn't even know what they were. Startled, he flinched and looked down as he heard them ring off the sidewalk. "That won't do it." A floor-to-ceiling bookshelf was crammed with pulp magazines that had been published throughout the 1920s, '30s, and '40s, before paperback books supplanted them. The All-Story, Mammoth Adventure, Nickel Western, The Black Mask, Detective Fiction Weekly, Spicy Mystery, Weird Tales, Amazing Stories, Astounding Stories, The Shadow, Doc Savage, G-8 and His Battle Aces, Mysterious Wu Fang Although she would have felt ridiculous phrasing this question in these words to any other three-year-old, no better way existed to ask it of her special son: "Kiddo ... do you realize you're speaking of your dad in the present tense?" "Nervous," he said, and howled when one of the paramedics proved to be a sadist masquerading as an angel of mercy. In his right hand again, the real gun, loaded with ten hollow-point rounds, felt charged with supernatural power: to Bartholomew as a crucifix to Dracula, as holy water to a demon, as kryptonite to Superman. Angel, however, focused on a point in the air above the table. Faint furrows marked her brow for a moment, but then the frown gave way to a smile. 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. As if he'd been presented with many previous photos under these circumstances, Jonas Salk accepted the picture. "Your daughter?" He either detected their well-concealed surprise or assumed they would be curious as to why, in spite of extensive surgery, he still wore this Boris Karloff face. 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. Junior was accustomed to having women seduce him. His good looks were a blessing of nature. His commitment to improving his mind made him interesting. Most important, from the books of Caesar Zedd, he had learned how to be irresistibly charming. Under Celestina's guidance, the menfolk-Wally, Edom, Jacob, Paul, Tom-had packed cartons of canned and dry goods, plus numerous boxes of new spring clothing for the children on their route. All those items had been loaded into the vehicles the previous evening. He had not yet disposed of her personal effects. In the dark, he went to the dresser, opened a drawer, and found a cotton sweater that she had worn recently. 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. Celestina often thought of his wife and twin boys-Rowena, Danny, and Harry--dead in that airliner crash six years ago, and sometimes she was pierced by a sense of loss so poignant that they might have been members of her own family. She grieved as much over their loss of Wally as over his loss of them, and as blasphemous as the thought might be, she wondered why God had been so cruel as to sunder such a family. Rowena, Danny, and Harry had crossed all waters of suffering and lived now eternally in the kingdom. One day they would all be rejoined with the special husband and father they had lost; but even the reward of Heaven seemed inadequate compensation for being denied so many years here on earth with a man as good and kind and big of heart as Walter Lipscomb. In a red coat with a red hood, Bartholomew appeared first in the arms of the tall lanky man, the Ichabod Crane look-alike, who also had a large tote bag hanging from his shoulder. Thrusting the red rose at her again, insistently pressing it against her hand to distract her, Junior swung the Merlot, and just as Sinatra sang the word sugar with a bounce, the bottle smacked Victoria in the center of her forehead. To the right first. Kick the door open, simultaneously firing two rounds, because maybe this was her bedroom, where she kept a gun. Mirrors shattered: a tintinnabulation of falling glass on porcelain, glass on ceramic tile, a lot more noise than the shots themselves. At nearly forty years of age, Edom still dreamed of that grim summer afternoon, although not as often as in the past. When it troubled his sleep these days, it was a nightmare that gradually metamorphosed into a dream of tenderness and hope. Until the last few years, he'd always awakened when the roses were being jammed into his mouth or when the thorns flicked through his eyelashes, or when Agnes began to strike their father with the Bible, thus seeming to assure worse punishment. This additional act, this transition from horror to hope before he woke, had been added when Agnes was pregnant with Barty. Edom didn't know why this should be so, and he didn't try to analyze it. He was simply grateful for the change, because he woke now in a state of peace, never with worse than a shudder, no longer with a hoarse cry of anguish. Angel followed him at two steps, and when she stood beside his chair, watching him open the soft drink, Barty said, "Why were you following me?" "It's a miracle both of you didn't go through that railing," the attorney agreed. Through nine months of quiet panic, however, Phimie grew less rational week by week, resorting to reckless measures that endangered. Slow deep breaths. Per Zedd, slow deep breaths. Any state of anxiety, regardless of how powerful,

could be ameliorated or even dissipated."-called himself King Obadiah, Pharaoh of the Fantastic. He traveled all over the country playing nightclubs-"As the afternoon waned toward a portentous dusk and toward the gallery reception for Celestina White, Junior prepared his knives and guns..-nor cruel, nor hateful, nor envious, nor mean," Phimie recited, "for all these are sicknesses of this fallen world-".Because, since childhood, Jacob had been drawn to stories and images of doom, to catastrophe on both the personal and the planetary scale-from theater fires to all-out nuclear war-he had a flamboyant imagination second to none and a colorful if peculiar intellectual life. For him, therefore, the most difficult part of learning card manipulation had been coping with the tedium of practice, but for years he had applied himself diligently, motivated by his love and admiration for his sister, Agnes..In a rocking chair, holding her tiny son in her arms, Agnes cried quietly. Often, Barty slept through her weeping. Awakened, he smiled or squinched his face into a puzzled frown..That Olympian purge had, however, made him appear to be both emotionally and physically devastated by the loss of his wife. He couldn't have calculated any stratagem more likely to convince most..More often than not, in a social situation, regardless of its nature, there came a time when Edom had to bolt, and here now was the time, not because he floundered at a loss for words, not because he became panicked that he would say the wrong thing or would knock over his coffee cup, or would in some way prove himself foolish or as clumsy as a clown in full pratfall, but in this instance because he didn't want to bring his tears into Agnes's day. Recently she'd had too many tears in her life, and though these were not tears of anguish, though they were tears of love, he didn't want to burden her with them..As one of the two paramedics hurried to the ambulance van and scrambled into the driver's seat, Agnes suffered another contraction so severe that for a tremulous moment, at the peak of the agony, she almost lost consciousness..One worrisome problem: Neddy might be found in the container before it had been hauled away, instead of at the landfill that preferably would serve as his next-to-last resting place. If his body was discovered here, it must be at a distance from any trash bin used by the gallery. The less likely the cops were to connect Neddy to Greenbaum's art-sausage factory, the less likely they also were to connect the murder to Junior..FOR JUNIOR CAIN, the Year of the Horse (1966) and the Year of the Sheep (1967) offered many opportunities for personal growth and self-improvement. Even if by Christmas Eve, '67, Junior would not be able to take a dry walk in the rain, this nevertheless was a period of great achievement and much pleasure for him..She always had a generous heart. After disease whittled Perri's flesh, leaving her so frail, her great heart, undiminished by her suffering, seemed bigger than the body that contained it..And God has four hundred billion billion fingers, and He plays a really hot version of "Hawaiian Holiday..Perri had been crippled seventeen years before Jonas Salk's vaccine had spared future generations from the curse of polio..Fourth and last, he was surprised that Kickmule was a legitimate surname. This information wasn't of immediate importance to him, but if ever his Gammoner and Pinchbeck identities were compromised and he required false ID in a new name, he would call himself Eric Kickmule. Or possibly Wolfgang Kickmule. That sounded really tough. No one would mess with a man named Kickmule..More good American music. The Supremes were Negroes, sure, but Junior was not a bigot. Indeed, he had once made passionate love to a Negro girl..His first year in San Francisco was an eventful one for the nation and the world. Winston Churchill, arguably the greatest man of the century thus far, died. The United States launched the first air strikes against North Vietnam, and Lyndon Johnson raised troop levels to 150,000 in that conflict. A Soviet cosmonaut was the first to take a space walk outside an orbiting craft. Race riots raged in Watts for five fiery days. The Voting Rights Act of 1965 was signed into law. Sandy Koufax, a Los Angeles Dodger, pitched a perfect game, in which no hitter reached first base. T. S. Eliot died, and Junior purchased one of the poet's works through the Book-of-the-Month Club. Other famous people passed away: Stan Laurel, Nat King Cole, Le Corbusier, Albert Schweitzer, Somerset Maugham.... Indira Gandhi became the first woman prime minister of India, and the Beatles' inexplicable and annoying success rolled on and on..Saturday morning, Paul made himself useful by assisting Grace with food preparation and by setting out the plates, flatware, and glasses on the dining-room sideboard..On the short return trip to the ophthahnologist, Agnes crazily considered driving past Chan's office building, cruising onward--ever onward-into the sparkling December night, not just back to Bright Beach, where the bad news would simply come by phone, but to places so far away that the diagnosis could never catch up to them, where the disease would remain unnamed and therefore would have no power over Barty..quiet pool, sweet with the fragrance of jasmine. Under the huge spreading oak. Grass oiled to a glossy green by the..Backing off, trying to feel his way to the foyer and front door, afraid that if he stumbled over a chair, she'd descend upon him like a screaming hawk upon a mouse, Junior denied her accusation. "You're crazy. How could I know? Look at you! How could I possibly know?".Kitchen staff. All men. Some looked up in surprise; others were oblivious of him. He stalked the cramped work aisles, eyes watering from the fragrant steam and the heat, seeking Vanadium, an answer..On this morning in March, minutes after the pie caravan had departed, Edom got his Ford Country Squire out of the garage and drove to the nursery, which opened early. Spring was drawing near, and much work needed to be done to make the most of the rosarium that Joey Lampion had encouraged him to restore. He happily contemplated hours of browsing through plant stock, tools, and gardening supplies..Of the things you couldn't have seen coming, I'm the worst ... I'm the worst ... I'm the worst.....Barty stood in the rain, surrounded by the rain, pummeled by the rain, with the rain. Saturated grass squished under his sneakers. The droplets, in their millions, didn't bend-slip-twist magically around his form, didn't hiss into steam a millimeter from his skin. Yet he remained as dry as baby Moses floating on the river in a mother-made ark of bulrushes..The wedding reception-big, noisy, and joyous-spread across the three properties without fences. His mother's name was so often mentioned, her presence so strongly felt in all the lives that she had touched, that sometimes it seemed that she was actually there with them..A moment ago, he'd slammed into Angel's room, and that was loud, but this boomed louder, thunderous enough to wake people throughout the building..Yet for all his love of reading

and of music, events suggested that for mathematics he had a still greater aptitude. "Well, anyway," she said, as though Muffins uncharacteristic viciousness had been adequately explained, "this mending ought to cover ten more lessons." He decided to use the tool just three times on each deadbolt before trying the door. The less noise the better. Maybe luck would be with him. Words eluded him again, and he surveyed the coffee shop, as if someone might step forward to speak for him. He realized people were staring, and embarrassment drew a tighter knot in his tongue. 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. An elderly Negro gentleman answered the door. His hair was such a pure white that in contrast to his plum-dark skin, it appeared to glow like a nimbus around his head. With his equally radiant goatee, his kindly features, and his compelling black eyes, he seemed to have stepped out of a movie about a jazz musician who, having died, was on earth once more as someone's angelic guardian. "If I ever have trots, you'll know." And then in the Cheese voice: "CAN WE LISTEN TO THE BOOK TALK IN YOUR ROOM?". If the policeman's gray eyes had earlier been as hard as nailheads, they were now points, and behind them was willpower strong enough to drive spikes through stone. 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. Junior glanced over his shoulder even as Celestina turned and fled. He caught only a glimpse of her disappearing into the inner hallway. On hearing of Bartholomew's-and/or Celestina's-death, Neddy would be on the phone to the police, pointing them toward Junior, in twelve seconds. Maybe fourteen. In January 1965, Magusson had sent Cain to Nolly as a client, not sure why the creep needed a private detective. That had turned out to be the business about Seraphim White's baby. Simon's warning to be careful of Enoch Cain had helped to shape Nolly's decision to withhold the information about the child's placement. Succinctly, Edom told Jacob about visiting Obadiah, the magician with the mangled hands. Then: "When we left, I followed Agnes, and Obadiah held me back to say, 'Your secret's safe with me.'" As spectacularly busy 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. He met her eyes, but at once shifted his gaze to the porch floor again. "I've come to say ... how sorry I am, how miserably sorry." To Agnes, Jacob said, "Likely to be a sunnier fortune if the cards are bright and fresh, don't you think?". The disease hadn't corrupted her heart, and it had left her face untouched, as well. Lovely, she was, as she had always been. One, two, three, four-Edom took away all the remaining pies. He pointed at Barty and then at the empty table. "Did they rush you straight in here or did you arrange all the insurance matters at reception, Mr. Pinchbeck?". Angel, busy with a cookie through most of this, licked crumbs from her lips and asked Paul, "Do you have a puppy?". This saving spirit retreated, and in his place came a young paramedic in a black-and-yellow rain slicker over hospital whites. "Just want to be sure there's no spinal injury before we move you. Can you squeeze my hands?". Tom Vanadium liked this man at once. Cop instinct told him that Damascus was honest and reliable. Priestly insight suggested even more impressive qualities. That last part was true. He just wasn't loose in this world anymore. And in the world to which he'd gone, he would not find easy victims. The chest respirator, which Joshua had evidently applied, lay discarded on the bedclothes beside her. She seldom required this apparatus to assist her breathing, and then only at night. "My God," Junior said, pretending that his befuddlement had faded and that his mind had just now clarified, "you think Naomi was murdered, don't you?". Curiously, reciting these facts usually calmed him, as though speaking of disaster would ward it off. Since Friday, however, he had found no comfort in his usual routines. The house was hers, free and clear of mortgages. There were two savings accounts to which Joey had diligently made deposits weekly through nine years of marriage. During the following ten days, he withdrew money from several accounts. He converted selected paper assets into cash, as well. Grace White was petite, and Paul wasn't. Otherwise he might not have been able to halt her determined rush toward her husband, might not have been able to scoop her off her feet and, carrying her in his arms, spirit her to safety. Surprisingly, dolls. Quite a few dolls. Apparently the bastard boy was effeminate, a quality he sure as hell hadn't inherited from his father. Alarmed, concerned that his patient's emotional reaction would lead to racking sobs, which in turn might stimulate abdominal spasms and renewed vomiting, Parkhurst called for a nurse and prescribed the immediate administration of diazepam. On the other hand, killing a stranger like Bartholomew Prosser relieved stress better than sex did. Senseless murder was as relaxing to him as meditation without seed, and probably less dangerous. By this time, Vinton had finished, commercials had run, and the number-two song had started: "Come See About Me," by the Supremes. He swallowed one capsule and washed it down with water. He returned the pharmacy bottle to the nightstand. 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. In addition to delivering a honey-raisin pear pie, Agnes had come to offer Obadiah Sepharad a year's work-not performing magic, but talking about it. Now, after removing the four decks of cards from the pressboard packs in which they had come, Jacob lined them up side by side on the scarred maple top of the table. "One of the things I was searching for in your house was a life insurance policy on your wife. I didn't find one. Didn't find any canceled checks for the premium, either." Not incidentally, the project served as a vehicle by which some older citizens, in financial crisis, could receive money in a way that spared their dignity, gave them hope,

and repaired their damaged self esteem. Agnes asked Obadiah to enrich the project by accepting a one year grant to record the story of his life with the help of the head librarian..She tried to tell him that he was going to make it, that he would be with her for a long time, that the universe was not so cruel as to take him at thirty with all their lives ahead of them, but the truth was here to see, and she could not lie to him..Yet, uncaught, the quarter would have dropped to the floor. Junior would have heard it ring off the tiles. Which he hadn't..Maria Elena Gonzalez-no longer a seamstress in a dry-cleaners, but proprietor of Elena's Fashions, a small dress shop one block off the town square-joined Agnes, Barty, Edom, and Jacob on Christmas.Bill wasn't impressed. "They build houses out of mud in China. No wonder everything falls down.".That night, in Barty's room, after Agnes had listened to his prayers and then had tucked him in for the night, she sat on the edge of his bed. "Honey, I was wondering.... Now that you've had more time to think, could you explain to me what happened?". "Will I love you tomorrow, you mean, and the day after tomorrow, and on forever? Of course, forever, Wally, always.".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..Junior remembered the very words the detective had used: They say she died in a traffic accident..On the nightstand waited a glass of water on a coaster and a pharmacy bottle containing several capsules of a potent painkiller..Of course, when turning a quarter across his knuckles, the cop had made no noise. And he had glided across the hospital room, in the dark, with feline stealth..Admittedly, she had allowed herself to be disturbed by the fall of the cards, too. According them any credibility at all opened the door to full belief..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..Vanadium couldn't know the whereabouts of the quarter. Besides, even when he'd swung the lunch tray over Junior's lap, the detective hadn't been close enough to pick the pocket of the robe..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.. "I'm Sister Josephina." She slipped Celestina's purse off her shoulder--"You can trust this with me"-..Junior had no idea who the driver of the Buick might be, but he hated the tall lanky son of a bitch because he figured the guy was humping Celestina, who would never have humped anyone but Junior if she had met him first, because like her sister, like all women, she would find him irresistible. He felt that he had a prior claim on her because of his relationship to the family; he was the father of her sister's bastard boy, after all, which made him their blood by shared--progeny..On January 2, 1968, four days before his birthday, Bartholomew Lampion gave up his eyes that he might live, and accepted a life of blindness with no hope of bathing in light again until, in his good time, he left this world for a better one..Meanwhile, she could offer him only a few pieces of ice, which he was forbidden to chew. "Let them melt in your mouth.". "No. But I'm sure as can be, the kid is better off undiscovered by the likes of him.". "God bless us, every one," Agnes repeated with all her extended family, and after a sip of the wine, she made an excuse to check on something in the kitchen, where she pressed hot tears into a cool, slightly damp dishtowel to prevent the telltale swelling of her eyes..He couldn't work up sufficient saliva to get the rasp out of his voice: "Then you could learn to do it.".The Worry Bear carries worries in his pockets. Under his Panama hat and in two gold locket. Carries worries on his back and under his arms. Nevertheless, dear old Worry Bear has his charms..Junior hadn't paid attention to everyone who visited the pianist though surely he'd have noticed a certain stump in a cheap suit..As he entered, the visitor's back was to Junior, and he moved toward the table, where dead Victoria sat with her head on her folded arms. She looked for all the world as though she were just resting..It didn't seem to him to amount to much. It was such an easy matter to him to make a silvery light shine in a dark room, or find a lost pin by thinking about it, or true up a warped joint by running his hands over the wood and talking to it, that he couldn't see why they made a fuss over such things. But his father raged at him for his "shortcuts," even struck him once on the mouth when he was talking to the work, and insisted that he do his carpentry with tools, in silence..Agnes hoped that the boy would spend a night or two in her room, until he was reoriented to the house. But Barty wanted to sleep in his own bed..Pain again, but not a mere contraction. Such an excruciation, unendurable. The hobnailed wheels ground through her once more, as though she were being broken on a medieval torture device..When the old man died and Agnes inherited the property, the three of them played cards in the backyard for the first time on the day of his funeral, played openly rather than in secret, almost giddy with freedom. Eventually, when Agnes fell in love and married, Joey Lampion joined their card games, and thereafter, Jacob and Edom enjoyed a greater sense of family than they had ever known before.. "If there's a presentation, I assume then I'm the presentee," he said, taming his chair sideways to the table and taking her into his lap. "Just remember, I never wear neckties.".Dropped cartridges gleamed on the carpet. Stoop to snatch them up? No. That was asking for a skull-cracking blow..Then came the Year of the Tiger, 1974. Gasoline shortages, panic buying, mile-long lines at service stations. Patty Hearst kidnapped. Nixon gone in disgrace. Hank Aaron toppled Babe Ruth's longstanding home-run record, and the inflation rate topped fifteen percent, and the legendary Muhammad Ali defeated George Foreman to regain his world-heavyweight title.. "I never spoke with God--Nor visited in Heaven--Yet certain am I of the spot--As if the Checks were given.". "Nicholas Deed." On her tongue, the name was as bitter as a dissolving aspirin..When Agnes groaned, one of the shadows spread its wings, moved closer, to the right side of the bed, and resolved into a nurse. Agnes's vision had cleared. The nurse was a pretty young woman with black hair and indigo eyes..Junior's agony might have made him howl like a cankered dog or might even have dropped him to his knees if he hadn't used the pain to fuel

his anger. His knobby countenance was so sensitive that the light breeze flailed his skin as cruelly as if it had been a barbed lash. Empowered by rage even more beautiful than his countenance was monstrous, he crossed the parking lot, looking through car windows in the hope of seeing keys dangling from an ignition. Kathleen and Nolly shifted their attention to Tom's clenched left hand, although the quarter could not possibly have traveled from one fist to the other. With the successful consumption of the burger and with the addition of the third Sklent to his collection, Junior felt more upbeat than he'd been in quite a while. Contributing to his better mood was the fact that he hadn't heard the phantom singer in longer than three months, since the library in July. "You know," Tom said when the second round of drinks arrived, "hard as it is to believe, some places never heard of martinis." By eleven months, his vocabulary had expanded to nineteen words, by Agnes's count: an age when even a precocious child usually spoke three or four at most. Scamp had fabulous legs, and her bralessness left no doubts about the lusciousness and authenticity of her chest, but after an hour of conversation about something or other, before suggesting that they leave together, Junior maneuvered her into a reasonably private corner and discreetly put a hand up her skirt, just to confirm that his gender suspicions were correct. Tom opened his empty hands and then filled one of them with his water glass. The rattling ice belied his calm face. Gradually, Agnes realized that this was not a prayer for the soul of a deceased infant but for the survival of one still alive. Dishes dried and put away, Jacob retired to the living room and settled contentedly into an armchair, where he would probably become so enthralled with his new book of dam disasters that he would forget to make luncheon sandwiches until Barty and Angel rescued him from the flooded streets of some dismally unfortunate town. Avoiding the graveled driveway, on which he was more likely to scuff his freshly polished loafers, he approached the house across the lawn, beneath the moon-sifting branches of a great pine that made itself useless for Christmas by spreading as majestically as an oak. Shortly after six o'clock, Saturday morning, she stirred from a fretful dream and saw Barty sitting up in bed, reading.

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