

BEYOND SAME SEX MARRIAGE PERSPECTIVES ON MARITAL POSSIBILITIES

His homely face was long and narrow, as though pulled into that shape by the weight of his responsibilities. In other circumstances, however, his generous mouth might have shaped an appealing smile; and his green eyes had in them the compassion of someone who himself had known great loss..This was tedious work and might not bear fruit. He needed to begin somewhere, however, and the telephone directory was the most logical starting point..He wanted, all right, but -intuition warned him that he ought to continue to be discreet for a while longer..Indeed, she found it difficult to talk with her son in their usual easy way. She heard a stiffness in her voice that she knew would sooner or later be apparent to him..The ghost cop was forty feet behind him, beyond ranks of other pedestrians, every one of whom might as well have been faceless now, smooth and featureless from brow to chin, because suddenly Junior could see no countenance other than that of the walking dead man. The haunting visage bobbed up and down as the grim spirit strode along, vanishing and reappearing and then vanishing again among all the bobbing and swaying heads of the intervening multitudes..Most likely, if Victoria was entertaining, the visitor's car would have been parked in the driveway..Neither customers nor staff could be found in the first of the three large rooms. Only cheaper galleries were crowded with browsers and unctuous sales personnel. In an establishment as upscale as Coquin, the hoi polloi were discouraged from gawking, while the high value and extreme desirability of the art were made evident by the staff's almost pathological aversion to promoting the merchandise..Jacob feared what men could do with clubs, knives, guns, bombs, with their bare hands, but he was most preoccupied by the unintended death that humanity brought upon itself with its devices, machines, and structures meant to improve the quality of life.. "You know Mommy," Barty said, almost desperately sponging up the sight of his little girl's face and wringing the images into his memory to sustain him in the next long darkness..Walking was part of a fitness regimen that he took seriously. He would never be called upon to save the world, like the pulp heroes in the tales he enjoyed; however, he had solemn responsibilities he was determined to meet, and to do so, he must maintain good health..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..LEFT HAND ON the banister, right hand with knife tucked close to his side and ready to thrust, Tom Vanadium climbed cautiously but quickly to the upper floor, glancing back twice to be sure that Cain didn't slip in behind him..Stepping forward, Agnes said, "When Barty holds my hand and walks me through the rain, I get wet even while he stays dry. The same for all the rest of us here ... except Angel."..Holding the mug in his right hand, Tom picked up the coin and rolled it across the knuckles of his left. Paul's quarter, after all. A two-bit temptation to panic. As gifted with physical grace as with good looks, Junior stepped into the bedroom doorway, lithely and with feline stealth. He leaned against the jamb..Ferocious pirates, ruthless secret agents, brain-eating aliens from distant galaxies, super criminals hell-bent on ruling the world, bloodthirsty vampires, face-gnawing werewolves, savage Gestapo thugs, mad scientists, satanic cultists, insane carnival freaks, hate-crazed Ku Klux Klansmen, knife-worshiping thrill killers, and emotionless robot soldiers from other planets had slashed, stabbed, burned, shot, gouged, torn, clubbed, crushed, stomped, hanged, bitten, eviscerated, beheaded, poisoned, drowned, radiated, blown up, mangled, mutilated, and tortured uncounted victims in the pulp magazines that Paul had been reading since childhood. Yet not one scene in those hundreds upon hundreds of issues of colorful tales withered a corner of his soul as did a glimpse of Barty's empty sockets. The sight wasn't in the least gory, nor even gruesome. Paul cringed and looked away only because this evidence of the boy's loss too pointedly made him think about the terrible vulnerability of the innocent in the freight-train path of nature, and threatened to tear off the fragile scab on the anguish that he still felt over Perri's death.. "Take care you don't beat evil into him," said his aunt..During the first months, the journeys were eight or ten miles: along the shoreline north and south of Bright Beach, and inland to the desert beyond the hills. He left home and returned the same day.. "But I've never seen a case like this. Usually, boils appear on the back of the neck. And in moist areas like the armpits and the groin. Not so often on the face. And never in a quantity like this. Really, I've never seen anything like it."..Nothing he had learned about the supernatural had led him closer to a belief in ghosts and in all that ghosts implied. His faith still reposed entirely in Enoch Cain Jr., and he refused to make room on his altar for anyone or anything other than himself..He'd listened to the message and thought it incomprehensible, of no import. Suddenly, tardy intuition told him that it could not have been any more important to him if it had been dead Naomi calling from beyond the grave to leave testimony for the detective..In the morning, after Agnes showered and dressed, when she went downstairs, she discovered Barty already at the kitchen table, eating a bowl of cereal while riveted to the book. Finished with breakfast, he returned to his room, reading as he went..Commit and command. It doesn't matter so much whether the course of action to which you commit is prudent or hopelessly rash, doesn't matter whatsoever whether society at large thinks it's a "good" thing that you're doing or a "bad" thing. As long as you commit without reservation you will inevitably command, because so few people are ever willing to commit to anything, right or wrong, wise or unwise, that those who plunge are guaranteed to succeed more often than not even when their actions are reckless and their cause is idiotic.. "Fifteen fifty-six?" Bill frowned. "Hell, the Chinese probably didn't even have mud back then."..A moment later, in the corridor, as Nolly locked the door to

his suite, Kathleen linked her right arm through Vanadium's left. "Do I call you Detective Vanadium, Brother, or Father?" From the corner armchair, as if he could see so well in the dark that he knew Junior's eyes were open, Detective Thomas Vanadium said, "Did you hear my entire conversation with Dr. Parkhurst?". Sliding one hand lightly along the railing, the boy quickly descended the short flight of steps and walked onto the soggy lawn, into the rain. Joey couldn't raise his head, couldn't turn more directly toward her ... because his spine had been damaged, perhaps severed, and he was paralyzed. The birthmarked man identified himself as Detective Thomas Vanadium. He did not use the familiar, diminutive form of his name, as had the doctor, and his voice was as uninflected as his face was flat and homely. "Water can break?" Maria asked, looking toward the faucet at the kitchen sink. She sighed. "I have so much to be learned." This guy was spooky. Junior was beginning to think that the detective's unorthodox behavior wasn't a carefully crafted strategy, as it had first seemed, but that Vanadium was a little wacky. Usually, he remained still, tense, listening, until enough silence convinced him that the sounds he'd heard had been in the dream, not in the real world. If silence didn't settle him, he went into the living room, only to discover that she was always where he had left her, fork-and-fan-blade face wrenched in a soundless scream. If there had been footsteps, they had fallen silent the moment Junior froze to listen for them. Even over the hard drumming of his heart, he would have heard any noise. The pillowy fog seemed to smother sound in the alleyway more effectively than ever. Spinning off the stool, he had also spun out of control. Second by second, twin storms of anger and fear whirled stronger within him. He was immensely weary, limp. He felt oppressed, as though a great weight were piled on him. Even keeping his eyes open was tiring. He opened the solid doors on the bottom of the breakfront, did not find what he was looking for, checked in the sideboard next, and there it was, a small liquor supply. Scotch, gin, vodka. He selected a full bottle of vodka. Junior considered slipping quietly around the house, peering in windows, to be sure she was alone, before approaching directly. If she saw him, however, his wonderful surprise would be spoiled. "Well," Tom said, "those people who think it's just a trick generally react bigger than you folks, and you know it's real." "Agnes," said the magician, "you better start meeting with that librarian now to record your own life. If you don't get started for another forty years, by then you'll need a whole decade of talking to get it all down." She pushed her chair back from the table and got to her feet, and everyone followed her example. The next thing he knew, he was at the kitchen sink, turning off the water, which he couldn't remember having turned on. He appeared to have washed the bloody candlestick—it was clean—but he had no recollection of this bit of housekeeping. Into darkness, Celestina sat down to dinner with her mother and her father in the dining room of the parsonage. He had already reviewed twenty-four thousand names, finding no Bartholomew, putting red checks beside entries with the initial B instead of a first name. A slip of yellow paper marked his place. "I'll teach her," Wally said, moving past them to the apartment door, fishing a ring of keys out of his coat pocket. The fully evolved man never has to rely on the gods of fortune, Zedd tells us, because he makes his luck with such reliability that he can spit in the faces of the gods with impunity. Buttery sunshine, and emerald-black where the shadows of limbs and leaves overlay it. Fat crows as black as Junior was reminded of a scene in an old movie, something Naomi wanted to watch, a love story set during the Black Plague: a horse drawn cart rolling through the medieval streets of London or Paris, the driver ringing a hand bell and crying, "Bring out your dead, bring out your dead!" If contemporary San Francisco had provided such a convenient service, he wouldn't have had to toss Neddy Gnathic in the Dumpster in the first place. "—and when I get up off the street, my clothes are a mess, and I've got this face." From the corn soup to the baked ham to the plum pudding, he did not speak of his dry walk in wet weather. Strangely, as sometimes happened in this room, his missing toe itched. There was no point in removing his shoe and sock to scratch the stump, because that would provide no relief. Curiously, the itch was in the phantom toe itself, where it could never be scratched. Quickly, he searched for the source, but in less than a minute, before he could trace the voice, it faded away. Unlike that night in December, this time the singing didn't resume. She. Heretofore, Celestina hadn't given a thought to the gender of the baby, because, to her, it had been less a person than a thing. The purpose of life was self-fulfillment, per Zedd, and Junior was so rapidly realizing his extraordinary potential that surely he would have pleased his guru. Someone named Bartholomew had adopted Seraphim's son and named the boy after himself. Junior applied the patience learned through meditation to the task at hand, and instinctively, he soon evolved a motivating mantra that continuously cycled through his mind while he studied the telephone directories: Find the father, kill the son. "September 13, 1928. Lake Okeechobee, Florida. Two thousand people died in a flood." "No, no. But being around him so much, inevitably I absorb some details. He's a compelling speaker when the subject interests him." Yet the coin was as real as dead Naomi broken on the stony ridge at the foot of the fire tower. Nolly shrugged. "He can't know for sure. And anyway, he didn't get the pushed idea until he'd already taken the case." His entire body throbbed from his neck to the tips of his nine toes. His legs were the worst, filled with hot twisting agony. In either case, printing the name in blood was a ritualistic act, and ritualism of this nature was an unmistakable symptom of a seriously unbalanced mind. Evidently, the wife killer would be easier to crack than expected, because his shell was already badly fractured. "Three hundred and ninety-six of the dead were children under the age of ten," Jacob continued. "A passenger train was tumbled off the tracks, killing twenty. Another train with tank cars got smashed around, and oil spilled across the flood waters, ignited, and all these people clinging to floating debris were surrounded by flames, no way to escape. Their choice was being burned alive or drowning." Although rain-pasted to her skin, the fine hairs rose on the nape of her neck. The gooseflesh crawling across her arms had nothing to do with her cold, wet clothes. 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!" Kitchen to dining room, dining room to hallway, keeping his

back to the wall, easing quickly along, then into the foyer. Wait here, listening..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.."I never spoke with God--Nor visited in Heaven--Yet certain am I of the spot--As if the Checks were given."He was as solid as any boy. He was in the day but not in the rain. He was moving toward the back of the car.."You remember things?" the girl asked, her fingertips still pressed lightly to his cheek..Fortunately, he recognized his vulnerability. Until the evening reception for Celestina White, he must spend every hour of the day in calming activities, soothing himself in order to ensure that he would be cool and effective when the time came to act..Too late, Paul thought of the one more thing he had wanted to say. Too late, he said it anyway, "God bless you"..sky grew sullen in the early twilight, and the city once more arrayed itself in the red gesso and gold leaf that had indirectly illuminated Celestina's apartment ceiling the previous night..He was about to lift the body out of the chair when he heard the car in the driveway. He might not have caught the sound of the engine so distinctly and so early if the stereo had not been in the process of changing albums..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..Spruce Hills, but also those in the entire county, maybe seventy or eighty thousand..To his surprise, when Naomi expressed an interest in romance, Junior was a bull again. He would have thought he had left his best stuff at Reverend Harrison White's parsonage..Without using his flashlight, depending only on the moon, he ascended through the cemetery to the service road..The two men introduced themselves. The physician was Dr. Jim Parkhurst. His manner was easy and affable, and his soothing voice, either by nature or by calculation, was as healing as balm..Her case of polio had been so severe that braces and crutches were never an option. Muscle rehabilitation had been ineffective.."If they always go there, smooch--smooch, then you're going to wind up with one really fat finger." *.The customers were in a mood, most of them grumbling about their ailments. Others complained about the dreary weather, the increasing number of kids zooming along sidewalks on these damn new skateboards, the recent tax increases, and the New York Jets paying Joe Namath the kingly sum of \$427,000 a year to play football, which some saw as a sign that the country was money-crazy and going to Hell..Embarrassment flushed her when she realized that the paramedic had cut away the pants of her jogging suit. She was naked from the waist down.."Oh, dear God," she whispered, and although she had always been a strong woman who stood on a rock of faith, who drew hope as well as air with every breath, she was as weak now as the unborn child in her womb, sick with fear..Nevertheless, his sense of violation grew as he paced these now songless rooms, mystified and frustrated. On April 19, the unmanned Surveyor 3, after landing on the lunar surface, began transmitting photos to Earth, and when Junior stepped out of his morning shower, he again heard the eerie singing, which seemed to arise from a place more distant, more alien, than the moon..Now, the hateful music unnerved him. He became convinced that if he went home alone, the phantom chanteuse-whether Victoria Bressler's vengeful ghost or something else-would croon to him once more. He wanted company and distraction, after all..Junior spoke the three words aloud and felt a strange resonance between them and his dim memories of Reverend White's voice on that long-ago night. Yet the link, if any actually existed, remained elusive..A cast-bronze figure, fixed to lacquered walnut in want of raw dogwood, suffered above the bed. This crucifix, contrasting starkly with the white walls, reinforced the impression of monastic economy..Two more uniformed officers had entered the kitchen, fresh from their search of the apartment. They were amused.."Oh, it certainly is! It certainly is enough! But ... I don't regret much, you know. But I do regret not being here to see why you and Angel have been brought together. I know it'll be something lovely, Barty. Something so fine."Celestina nodded, unable to respond to the aide's kindness. Sometimes kindness can shatter as easily as soothe.."Anyway, something clicked in me on the roller coaster, and I grasped a new angle of approach to the problem. I've figured out that I can walk in the idea of sight, sort of sharing the vision of another me, in another reality, without actually going there." He smiled into her astonishment. "So what do you say about that?""I want you to adopt the baby." Before they could react, she hurried on: "I won't be twenty-one for four months yet, and even then they might give me trouble about adopting, even though I'm her aunt, because I'm single. But if you adopt her, I'll raise her. I promise I will. I'll take full responsibility. You don't have to worry that I'll regret it or that I'll ever want to drop her in your laps and escape the responsibility. She'll have to be the center of my life from here on. I understand that. I accept it. I embrace it."..This was not the time to ponder the nature of the relationship between the treacherous Miss Bressler and Vanadium. Junior had a bloody trail to cover, and precious time was ticking away.."So what I am is I'm your talking eyes." Lowering her hand from his face, Angel said, "Do you know where bacon comes from?"..He stood at a window, staring down into the street, his profile to her, and in his silence he searched for the words to describe the "something extraordinary" that he had mentioned earlier..A SEVERE THIRST INDICATED to Agnes that she wasn't dead. There would be no thirst in paradise.."Bullpoop might not be what they say, but it's the worst that we say. And in fact, in this house, bulldoody is preferred."..In the instant that Junior had shoved Naomi into the rotted railing, he had foreseen this visit from Rudy, Sheena, and Kaitlin. He'd known he could pretend to be offended at the state's offer to put a price on his loss, could feign revulsion, could resist convincingly--until gradually, after grueling days or weeks, he reluctantly allowed the indefatigable.."Maybe," said Angel. "Or maybe to The Monkees ... or maybe to where you didn't get run down by the rhinosharush."..Fresh from sedative-assisted sleep, which hadn't ended until they were in the taxi between the hospital and the hotel, Angel had proved as fully resilient as only children could be when they still retained their innocence. She didn't understand how seriously Wally had been hurt, of course, but if the attack by Cain had terrorized her while she'd watched it from beneath her mother's bed, she didn't seem in danger of being permanently traumatized.."I never

saw a Moor--never saw the Sea--Yet know I how the Heather looks--And what a Billow be."" Junior had thought most other policemen must consider Vanadium to be a loose cannon, a rogue, an outcast. Perhaps the opposite was true-and if it was, if Vanadium was highly regarded among his peers, he was immeasurably more dangerous than Junior had realized..Designed by Linda Lockowitz Text set in Adobe Jenson First edition ACBGIKJHFDB."--and we're from different worlds, which I respect. I respect you and your wonderful family ... your centeredness, your certainty. I want to do this only because it's what I owe you."..than the crows. Tumbled on the grass, in fragments: the broken trophy for the prize rose, the symbol of his sinful."I've got one of those faces so ordinary you see it everywhere," said Edom, and decided to tell the story of the Tri-State Tornado of 1925..A pink spot in the center of Victoria's forehead marked the point of impact. Soon it would be an ugly bruise. The skull bone did not appear to have been cratered.

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