

NO SMOKE WITHOUT FIRE DCI WARREN JONES BOOK 2

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and your own entire life. Neddy occupied the entire spacious fourth floor of the house. The third and second floors were each divided into two apartments, the ground floor into four studio units, all of which he rented out. "You don't get the heebie-jeebies," Max said. "You give 'em. Tell me what's wrong." He might have felt properly foolish if he had not suffered so much personal experience of Enoch Cain. This was a false alarm, but considering the nature of the enemy, it wasn't a bad idea to put himself through a drill from time to time. He decided that he must never again kill so impetuously. Never. In fact, he vowed never again to kill at all, except in self-defense. Soon he would be rich-with much to lose if he was caught. Homicide was a marvelous adventure; sadly, however, it was an entertainment that he could no longer afford. In a stolen black Dodge Charger 440 Magnum, Junior Cain shot out of Spruce Hills on as straight a trajectory to Eugene as the winding roads of southern Oregon would allow, staying off Interstate 5, where the policing was more aggressive. Hound was sorry for him. "You know, if it was Gelluk questioning you, he'd have everything you know out of you just with a word or two, and your wits with it. I've seen what old Whiteface leaves behind when he asks questions. Listen, can you work with the wind at all?" She shook her head. "No way back." She pointed to the sketch pad on the floor. "I pushed him there." As a recreational site, Quarry Lake could be judged only a partial success. During the mining operation, trees were cleared well back from the edge of the dig, so that much of the shore would be unshaded on a hot summer day. And along half the strand, signs were posted warning Ungraded Shore: Immediate Deep Water. In places, where lake met land, the bottom lay over a hundred feet below. More than twice, worried nurses-and even a resident internist braved the tumult to check on Junior's condition. They asked if he really felt up to entertaining visitors, these visitors. "Well, you're sweet, aren't you? And you're all bright red on the outside and milk chocolate inside," Celestina said, gently tweaking the girl's light brown nose. Initially, lying drowsily in the sumptuous comfort of Pratesi cotton sheets with black silk piping, Junior assumed that he was in a twilight state between wakefulness and sleep, and that the singing must be a lingering fragment of a dream. Although rising and falling, the voice remained so faint that he didn't at once identify the tune, but when he recognized "Someone to Watch over Me," he sat up in bed and threw back the covers. "Do you know about the earthquake that destroyed seventy percent of Tokyo and all of Yokohama on September 1, 1923?" he asked. With the infant in her arms, the heavyset nurse pressed in beside Celestina, who. If not for Celestina's slutty little sister, Bartholomew would not exist. No threat. Junior's life would be different, better. Although a believer, Agnes was not at the moment able to spread the flowers and ferns of faith over the hard, ugly reality of death. Cowled and skeletal, Death was here, all right, scattering his seeds among all her gathered friends, one day to reap them. In this brighter light, he further examined the gallery brochure and discovered Celestina's photograph. She and her sister were not as alike as twins, but the resemblance was striking. As nimble as a geriatric cat, crying out with pain, Junior nevertheless sprang onto the deep windowsill and shoved against the twin panes of the window. They were already partly open-but they were also stuck. Crouched on the deep sill, pushing against the parted casement panes of the tall French window, using not just muscle but the entire weight of his body, leaning into them, the maniac tried to force his way out of the bedroom. The doors slid open, and they rolled Barty corridor to corridor, past the scrub sinks, to a waiting surgical nurse in green cap, mask, and gown. She alone effected his transfer into the positive pressure of the surgery. He was immensely weary, limp. He felt oppressed, as though a great weight were piled on him. Even keeping his eyes open was tiring. The three of them, gathered around her in the quick, held fast to her, as if Death couldn't take what they refused to release. Just as Celestina snapped shut the latches on the suitcase and turned to the door, a nurse's aide entered, pushing a cart loaded with towels and bed linens. On Thursday, December 28, employing forged driver's licenses and social-security cards as identification, Junior opened small savings accounts and also rented safe-deposit boxes for Pinchbeck and Gammoner at different banks with which he'd never previously done business, using the mailing addresses that he'd established earlier. "We've been planning this a long time," Angel assured her. "I've climbed the tree a hundred times, maybe two hundred, mapping it, describing it to Barty, inch by inch, the trunk and its four divisions, all the major and minor limbs, the thickness of each, the degree of resilience, the angles and intersections, knots and fissures, all the branches down to the twigs. He's got it cold, Aunt Aggie, he's got it knocked. It's all math to him now." Celestina was unable to talk reason to him, and even her mother, Grace, who was living here for the interim and who was always oil on the stormiest of waters, couldn't bring a moment's calm to the velvet squall that was Neddy Gnathic in full blow. He had learned about the baby five days ago, and he had been building force ever since, like a tropical depression aspiring to hurricane status. Crouching beside the boy as he rubbed a brighter shine onto the granite, Agnes said, "Barty, honey, why are you The reverend couldn't easily escape church obligations on such short notice, but Grace wanted to be with her daughters. Phimie, however, pleaded that only Celestina accompany her. Harmless though they were, the sight of them, swaddled and for the most part concealed, first troubled him and then quickly brought him --inexplicably, irrationally, undeniably--to the trembling edge of outright fear. Junior stepped back and squeezed off two shots, aiming for the lock. One round tore a chunk out of the jamb, but the other cracked through the door, shattering more than wood, and the brass knob wobbled and almost fell out. Celestina put Angel down, and the girl raced to the bathroom as Wally stepped into the public hall and pulled the apartment door shut behind him. "But the breed is nervous, dear. With a nervous breed, you just never know, do you? Junior flung back the covers and came to his feet, but his knees proved weak, and he sat at once on the edge of the bed. She got up from the chair, went to the window, and raised the venetian blind rather than look out between its slats. Bartholomew was dead but didn't know it yet. Pistol in hand, cocoon in tatters, ready to spread his butterfly wings, Junior pushed the door to the apartment inward, saw a deserted living room, softly lighted and pleasantly furnished, and was about to step across the threshold when the street door opened and into the hall came Ichabod. As though Amelia Earhart, the long-lost aviatrix, had reached out of her twilight zone and snared the two bits, no tumbling coin glinted in the air above the desk. An unfortunately bumpy ride for the deceased: along the hallway, through the foyer, across the entry threshold, down the porch steps, across a lawn dappled with pine shadows and yellow moonlight, to the graveled driveway. No complaints. In the passenger's seat, Barty was cushioned in his mother's arms. At times, the boy cooed or gurgled, or made a wet chording sound. And so at the age of thirty-one, after more than twenty-eight years of blindness with a few short reprieves, Barty Lampion received the gift of sight from his ten-year-old daughter. 1996 through 2000: Day after day, the work was done in memory of Agnes Lampion, Joey Lampion, Harrison White, Seraphim White, Jacob Isaacson, Simon Magusson, Tom Vanadium, Grace White, and most recently Wally Lipscomb, in memory of all those who had given so much and, though perhaps still alive in other places, were gone from here. NOLLY SAT BEHIND his desk, suit jacket draped over the back of the chair, porkpie hat still squarely on his head, where it remained at virtually all times except when he was sleeping, showering, dining in a restaurant, or making love. In the late-afternoon light,

on this Christmas Eve, Barty was no ghost, no illusion..Caring for her, in every sense of that word, had made him a far happier man than he would otherwise have been-and a far better one..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."..He and the homicide detective had been friends for almost thirty years, since Max had been a uniformed rookie on the SFPD and Vanadium had been a young priest freshly assigned to St. Anselmo's Orphanage here in the city. Before choosing police work, Max had contemplated the priesthood, and perhaps back then he had sensed the cop-to-be in Tom Vanadium.."It's what?" asked the detective, for with the exception of his teeth, he was not a self-improved individual..Junior lifted the pattie with a fork, found no quarter under it, and put the meat on one half of the bun. He constructed the sandwich from these fixings, added ketchup and mustard, and took a great, delicious, satisfying bite..Neighbors might not be home. And by the time he knocked, asked to use the phone, dialed ... Too great a waste of time..He wanted the most expensive box for Joey; but Joey, a modest and prudent man, would have disapproved. Instead, he selected a handsome but not ornate casket just above the median price..Flanked by Dumpsters and trash cans, through steam rising out of grates in the pavement, past parked delivery trucks, here came the dead cop. Running..At many houses, strings of Christmas lights painted patterns of color at the eaves, around the window frames, and along the porch railings-all so blurred by fog that Junior seemed to be moving through a dreamscape with Japanese lanterns.."I could have been killed," Junior Cain repeated, suddenly so horrorstruck by this realization that an iciness welled in his gut, and for a while he wasn't able to feel his extremities..In his mind, Junior saw a quarter turning knuckle over knuckle, and he heard the maniac cop's droning voice: There's a fine George and Ira Gershwin song called "Someone to Watch over Me. " You ever hear it, Enoch? I'm that someone for you, although not, of course, in a romantic sense..Tom Vanadium was too unnerved by the Cain scare to be interested in the newspaper anymore. The strong black coffee, superb before, tasted bitter now..The symptoms that terrified Phimie-the headache, crippling abdominal pain, dizziness, vision problems-had entirely relented. Possibly they had been more psychological than physical in nature..Indeed, he would get through the rest of 1965 without resorting to another homicide. The nonfatal shooting in September would be regrettable, quite messy, painful-but necessary, and calculated to do as little damage as possible..The morning that it happened, Tom Vanadium rose later than usual, shaved, showered, and then used the telephone in Paul's downstairs study to call Max Bellini in San Francisco and to speak, as well, with authorities in both the Oregon State Police and the Spruce Hills Police Department..Although Junior felt honor-bound to give Victoria first shot at him, he certainly didn't owe her monogamy. Eventually, when he had shaken off suspicion as finally as he had shaken off Naomi, he would be in the mood for a dessert buffet, romantically speaking, and one éclair would not satisfy..She stepped on a broken-off chair leg, lost her balance, and fell backward into the side of the bed.."Well, you see, that's the funny thing about all the important choices we make. If we make a really big wrong choice, if we do the really awful wrong thing, we're given another chance to continue on the right path. So the very moment I stupidly stepped off the curb without looking, I created another world where I did look both ways and saw the rhinoceros coming. And so-".so she's married," Junior said, figuring that maybe Celestina wasn't his heart mate, after all..Artificial eyes were on order. He would soon return to Newport Beach for a third fitting before implant. They weren't glass, as commonly believed, but thin plastic shells that fit neatly behind the eyelids in the cavities left after surgery. On the inner surface of the transparent artificial cornea, the artificial iris would be skillfully hand-painted, and movement of the ocular prosthesis could be achieved by attaching the eye-moving muscles to the conjunctiva..Nolly, Kathleen, and Sparky had prepared him for Industrial Woman, but when the flashlight beam flared off her fork-and-fan-blade face, Vanadium twitched in fright. Without fully realizing what he was doing, he crossed himself.."Could you throw an Oreo someplace you weren't blind or maybe someplace Wally wasn't shot?".The strange barrage of lightning, putting an end to the rain rather than initiating it, had been a clue. The rapid clearing of the sky-indicating a stiff wind at high altitudes, while stillness prevailed at ground level-a sudden plunge in the humidity, and an unseasonable warmth confirmed the coming catastrophe..This Dry Sack-assisted effort at recollection, however, brought back to him one thing in addition to all the sweet lubricious images of Seraphim naked. The voice of her father. On the tape recorder. The reverend droning on and on as Junior pinned the devout daughter to the mattress..They had not come to Junior yesterday in their grief, if in fact they had thought to grieve.."You mean it's like with you in the kitchen, but not if you go into the living room? Your cold has a mind of its own?".The words of Robert Louis Stevenson, well read, poured another time and place into the room as smoothly as lemonade pouring from pitcher into glass..Their evenings together were comfortable bliss, though usually they just watched television, or he read to her. She enjoyed being read to: mostly historical novels and occasional mysteries.."Last time I looked, Miss Galloway lived to the south of us. Retired. Never married. No children..".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..At last: the humiliating backless gown, the precious drugs, even a pretty nurse who seemed to like him, and then oblivion..He shook his head. "I think he's evil, not crazy. And stupid in the way that evil often is. Too arrogant and too vain to be aware of his stupidity-and therefore always tangled up in traps of his own making. But nonetheless dangerous for being stupid. In fact, far more dangerous than a wiser man with a sense of consequences..".Sitting at the desk, Celestina phoned her parents again. She shook uncontrollably, but her voice was steady..From childhood, Celestina was encouraged to be confident that life had meaning, and when she'd needed to share that belief with Dr. Lipscomb as he struggled to come to terms with his experience in the operating room, she'd done so without hesitation. Strangely, however, she herself was having difficulty absorbing these two small miracles..He reached the end of the alleyway, stumbled into the stream of pedestrians, nearly knocked over an elderly Chinese man, turned, and discovered ... no Vanadium..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.."Some Baptists are opposed to drink, Doctor, but we're the wicked variety. Though all we have is a warm bottle of Chardonnay..".Junior had seen the silvery coin snapping off the cop's thumb and spinning

upward. Now it was gone, as though it had vanished in midair..Recuperating, he had plenty of time to practice meditation. He became so proficient at focusing on the imaginary bowling pin that he could make himself oblivious of all else. A stridently ringing phone wouldn't penetrate his trance. Even Bob Chicane, Junior's instructor, who knew all the tricks, could not make his voice heard when Junior was at one with the pin..By Thursday, September 23, due to Junior's accident and surgery, the draft board-which had reinstated his I -A status after he'd lost the exemption that had come with his former job as a rehabilitation therapist-agreed to schedule a new physical examination in December..when red aces weft followed by disturbing jacks, Agnes had pretended to take her son's card-told fortune lightly, especially the frightful part of it. In fact, a coldness had twisted through her heart..Agnes found this turn of events amazing, amusing, ironic-and a little sad. She would have dearly loved to teach the boy to read and write, to see his knowledge and competence slowly flower under her care. Although she fully supported Barty's exploration of his gifts, and although she was proud of his astounding achievements, she felt that his swift advancement was robbing her of some of the shared joy of his childhood, even though he remained in so many ways a child..When the nurse was gone, alone with his mother as they waited for the orderly to bring a gurney, Barty said, "Come close.".Since he knew where Celestina would be on January 12, there was no point in taking risks to find her sooner. He had plenty of time to prepare for their encounter, time to savor the sweet anticipation..Currently, the rental market was extremely tight. The first day of his search resulted only in the discovery that he was going to have to pay more than he expected even for modest quarters..She slept for a while, waking to a prayer spoken softly but fervently in Spanish.. "You'll need time to ... adjust to this," he said. "Perhaps you've got to call family.. .".The Hackachaks had arrived post-grief, brought to the hospital by the news that Junior had expressed distaste at the prospect of profiting from his wife's tragic fall. They knew he had turned away Knacker, Hisscus and Nork..This comment left Tom nonplussed. He could only imagine that Jacob had known someone who died in that crash-yet the twin's tone of voice and his expression seemed to suggest that a world without the Bakersfield train wreck would be a less convivial place than one that included it..On other nights, she had overheard this and been touched. On this Christmas Eve, however, it filled her with wonder and wondering, for she recalled their conversation earlier, at Joey's grave..Bob gently encouraged him to return by degrees from the deep meditative state, return, return, return.....Needlepoint provided no sanctuary. Junior's hands trembled just badly enough to make accurate stitchery impossible..A mutual interest in ballroom dancing had resulted in their introduction when each needed a new partner for a fox-trot and swing competition. Nolly had started taking lessons five years before he had met Kathleen..Sometimes, in his mind, Tom wasn't running along the residential streets of Bright Beach, but along the corridor of the dormitory wing over which he had served as prefect. He was cast back in time, to that dreadful night. A sound wakes him. A fragile cry. Thinking it a voice from his dream, he nevertheless gets out of bed, takes up a flashlight, and checks on his charges, his boys. Low-wattage emergency lamps barely relieve the gloom in the corridor. The rooms are dark, doors ajar according to the rules, to guard against the danger of stubborn locks in the event of fire. He listens. Nothing. Then into the first room-and into a Hell on earth. Two small boys per room, easily and silently overcome by a grown man with the strength of madness. In the sweep of the flashlight beam: the dead eyes, the wrenched faces, the blood. Another room, the flashlight jittering, jumping, and the carnage worse. Then in the hall again, movement in the shadows. Josef Krepp captured by the flashlight. Josef Krepp, the quiet custodian, meek by all appearances, employed at St. Anselmo's for the past six months with nary a problem, with only good employee reviews attached to his record. Josef Krepp, here in the corridor of the past, grinning and capering in the flashlight, wearing a dripping necklace of souvenirs..And although Simon would have denied it, would even have joked that a conscience was a liability for an attorney, he possessed a moral compass. When he traveled too far along the wrong trail, that magnetized needle in his soul led him back from the land of the lost..Yet the most enduring relationship he had all year was with the ghostly singer. On February 18, he returned home in the afternoon, from a class in spirit channeling, and heard singing as he opened his front door. That same voice. And the same hateful song. As faint as before, repeatedly rising and falling.. "Wouldn't live in the Caribbean if you paid me," Bill said. "All that humidity. All those bugs..". "As long as the case was open and you were the sole suspect," said the lawyer, "they couldn't negotiate an out-of-court settlement with you. But they were afraid that if eventually they couldn't prove you killed her, then they'd be in an even worse position when a wrongful death suit finally went before a jury..".-and the under girding of the observation platform itself is unstable. The whole thing could have fallen down with us on it! ". "That discord sets up lots of other vibrations, some of which will return to you in ways you might expect-and some in ways you could never see coming. Of the things you couldn't have seen coming, I'm the worst."

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