

II

DAD? DADDY?"

At the sound of Paul's voice, his quick light steps on the garage stairs, David looked up from the exposed sheet of paper he had just slipped into the developer.

"Hang on!" he called out. "Just a second, Paul." But even as he spoke the door burst open, spilling light into the room.

"Damn it!" David watched the paper darken rapidly, the image lost in the sudden burst of light. "Damn it, Paul, haven't I told you a million zillion *trillion* times not to come in when the red light is on?"

"Sorry. I'm sorry, Dad."

David took a deep breath, chastened. Paul was only six, and standing in the doorway he looked very small. "It's okay, Paul. Come on in. I'm sorry I yelled at you."

He squatted down and held out his arms, and Paul plunged into them, resting his head briefly on David's shoulder, the bristle of his new haircut both soft and stiff against David's neck. Paul was slight and wiry, strong, a boy who moved through the world like quicksilver, quiet and watchful and eager to please. David kissed his forehead, regretting that moment of anger, marveling at his son's