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It was November. Although it was not yet late, the sky was dark when I turned into Laundry Passage. I closed the door and put the shop key in its usual place behind Bailey's Advanced Principles of Geometry. Poor Bailey. No one has wanted his fat gray book for thirty years. Sometimes I wonder what he makes of his role as guardian of the bookshop keys. I don't suppose it's the destiny he had in mind for the masterwork that he spent two decades writing.

A letter. For me. That was something of an event. The crisp-cornered envelope, puffed up with its thickly folded contents, was addressed in a hand that must have given the postman a certain amount of trouble. Although the style of the writing was old-fashioned, with its

heavily embellished capitals and curly flourishes, my first impression was that it had been written by a child. The letters seemed untrained. Their uneven strokes either faded into nothing or were heavily etched into the paper. There was no sense of flow in the letters that spelled out my name. Each had been undertaken separately -- M A R G A R E T L E A -- as a new and daunting enterprise. But I knew no children. That is when I thought, It is the hand of an invalid.

It gave me a queer feeling. Yesterday or the day before, while I had been going about my business, quietly and in private, some

*Nunc congrue venenatis malesuada.
In nec tempor massa. Sed rutrum magna vel nunc
lacinia, facilisis tincidunt mi vulputate.*

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