

ELEVEN

A change in the lighting.

The fingers of the left hand, still affixed to the chair, have become slightly more cramped. Otherwise, same as before.

It was an odd, toylike
 Place, this upper balcony, a curious
 And whimsical
 Wrought-iron afterthought
 In the design of that marmoreal station.
 Perched above
 A mural depicting
 The History of Transportation, it seemed, in comparison
 To the heroic
 Travelers Throughout the Ages
 Who plodded
 And paddled and steamed and bounced
 In an eternal
 Counter-clockwise
 Procession the shadows beneath it—
 As if it were built
 To the proportions of a child. This balcony was also—
 As best I could tell—
 Unconnected
 To the rest of the station—
 There were no stairways, no ladders, no elevators—
 No way at all
 That I could see for a person
 To get up there—
 But I had no other option—this was the last
 Place to look—the last place
 Where Three
 Might somehow be found.

Besides, the Mr. Three I remembered
 Had seemed a resourceful
 Athletic sort—
 Exactly the type to regard
 The upper balcony as a challenge, and scale
 Its heights—in all likelihood
 He was up there somewhere right now, leaning over

The wrought-iron
Railing, admiring the view—his climbing ropes
Coiled up
Neatly beside his backpack
While he smoked
A celebratory cigarette, the smoke drifting downward
In thin
Intertwining
Trails.

And so, with steady
Fierce concentration, pillar by rusty
Pillar, and dark
Arched window
By distant dark arched window, I moved my eyes
Slowly around
That apparently unreachable place.
Above the ox-cart and the kayaked Eskimo
My eyes proceeded, above
The big-armed
Grim-faced galley slaves, above the peasants
Of various nations
Trudging to market with their donkeys
And their yaks
And their llamas—inch by inch
I moved
Around the balcony far above me—almost forgetting
That I myself
Was still down on the main floor—
Almost losing
Myself in the mural's
Dream of motion, in its journey
Through all those journeys, going nowhere.

But unlike all
Those painted figures, unlike even
Those lucky
Beneficiaries of Progress, the sophisticated
Dining-car
Passengers of the nineteen-twenties,
Who with confident
Manicured fingers

Poured cups of tea from fragile
But untrembling
Teapots
As majestic scenery sped by, my slow-moving
Frantic eyes
Were not frozen
In transit, were engaged instead in a kind of travel
Where the destination
Can, in fact, be reached, must
Be reached, and despite
My studied
Lack of rapidity
Was upon me all too soon. In what seemed
Like less time
Than it takes to forget
The name of the face that you've just
Been introduced to—
The journey was over—their circuit completed,
My eyes had returned
To the place where they had started—to the wrought-iron
Pillar
Above the ox-cart's wheel.