

TWELVE

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.

All around me everything was quiet—
 Save for the low
 Meditative hum of the invisible
 Air-handling
 Equipment—that constant, purring, mechanical
 Conversation
 Among boilers and fans and ducts and thermostats—
 Which would never—
 No matter how long I eavesdropped—
 Have anything
 To do with me. I released the upper balcony
 From the grip
 Of concentration in which I had held it
 So tightly, and I let
 My attention
 Drop
 Back down to the main floor.

I was glad to see
 Mr. One, still ambitious, still hard at work
 At getting
 His good night's
 Sleep—
 And devout Miss Two—she was still
 Held rapt
 By the vision
 Of the giant clock
 At the end of the hall. This moment—
 This stillness—
 Which I had feared would be so fleeting, now seemed
 As if it might persist
 For some time—as if, instead of pacing,
 Nervous
 Inertia had become
 Characteristic of our state in that station. I noticed
 All these things

Calmly, without thinking—in fact, right then
I was unable
To think, a man with no thoughts—
For as I listened
To the private
Colloquy of the machines,
And observed, once again, my companions
In their places
And felt the growing
Strength and aspirations toward permanence of that lingering
Moment of stillness—
My thoughts—if I can call them mine—had by then
Escaped, had run off in a pack
To live primitive
Ungoverned lives—far away from me, in a fire-burnt
Wilderness, my thoughts were screaming
And howling, brandishing
Their genitals like weapons and chanting bitter
Ineffectual curses
As they circled warily around a smoldering
Misshapen
Wreck—the inconceivable fact
Of Mr. Three's
Non-presence
That had smashed into my life like a meteor.