

## SIXTEEN

*A change in lighting.*

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

But I could not get away—there in my private  
     Darkness, branded  
     Onto the back of my eyelids, defying  
 My renunciation of the visual, was this glowing  
     Orange-red negative,  
     The burning  
     Afterimage  
     Of my new hand. I opened my eyes  
     Tried to look  
 At something else, at the newsstand, at some piece  
     Of marble,  
     At anything at all, but I felt  
     My gaze drawn back  
     Toward that thing, pulled into its orbit,  
     My attention locking  
 Once again into fixed observation, into the hopeless  
     Bewilderment  
     Of sitting there staring  
 Blankly at an enigma. And so with all the limited  
     Force of my will  
     I shut  
     My eyes again, steeling my timid  
     Soul to confront  
 That searing image—which, sure enough,  
     Appeared, right on schedule,  
     Floating  
     There in my darkness, wherever  
     I looked.

    Of course I would have preferred  
     Not to see it at all,  
     But the odd thing was, it wasn't so bad  
     To look at  
 This way—if I kept my eyes closed and pretended  
 That the thing I saw, this entoptic outline, this neurological

Sketch,  
Was not part of my body, not my new hand—  
Just some ordinary  
Thingamabob,  
A curio, a geegaw, a *that*—  
Which I had by chance encountered  
As I had often  
Encountered unusual or novel objects in the course  
Of daily life, objects which I had failed  
To recognize  
But which did not present  
Any particular challenge to my faculty of perception—  
Unknown things  
And devices  
Which never swarmed  
Or danced as I looked at them, never  
Arranged themselves  
First into one shape, then into another, and then, tauntingly,  
Into a third—  
  
If I tricked myself  
Into forgetting that this thing had applied  
To be  
Incorporated  
Into my not-too-steady  
Sense of self, then, at long last, it would begin  
To sit still, accepting, even basking  
In my attention, my morbid  
Fascination, which it now welcomed, a celebrity  
Whatchamacallit  
Granting its eager public  
A viewing.