

SEVENTEEN

A change in the 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.

Wouldn't it be embarrassing
 If it turned out all along to have been
 Something I should
 Have recognized? Like... oh, what about...
 Why not a musical
 Instrument! I mean, for all I knew
 This thing
 Might be one of the standard
 Components of the orchestra—a voice of the symphony—
 Whose name I probably learned in fifth grade—
 But a week
 Or two later
 Forgot. It certainly had that kind of sheen
 To it—it was the image of something well-constructed
 Yet delicate, a shape refined
 Over the course of painstaking centuries
 For the simple
 Fulfillment
 Of complex purposes. If it wasn't
 A musical instrument, it could easily be an expensive
 Toy, an amusement for the undestructive
 Children of the rich—or an antique
 Tool, handcrafted
 For the maintenance of some fantastic and elaborate
 Scientific machine—something Tycho Brahe's
 Dwarf might use
 To adjust
 A room-sized sextant. Whatever
 It was, it was something
 To be handled gently, and then, when you were done with it,
 You'd put it
 Lovingly away, nestling it
 Into the felt-lined
 Recesses
 Of its leather-bound carrying case—

The case I did not have—
Had never seen.