

## TWO

*A change in lighting.*

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

Somewhere far above us, way up there  
 In the dark,  
 On the other side of a vast  
 Vaulting  
 Vacancy—there was some kind of ceiling—  
 A ghostly  
 Dome, arches  
 And filigrees and water-stains barely discernible  
 Through the gloom. To the unhurried  
 Upward gaze  
 Of eyes  
 With nothing better—and not  
 Much else—to do, the emptiness itself  
 Soon became  
 Visible—the more I looked up, the more the dark  
 Vacant void  
 Took on a shape of its own, until it looked  
 More present—more obviously  
 There—  
 Than the distant architecture which—  
 In theory, anyway—  
 Created  
 Or at least defined it.

Yes, I could see it! There it was!—a looming  
 Massive thing, poised there—  
 Just so.  
 It looked  
 Soft and heavy, this emptiness above—a softness  
 And heaviness in a balance  
 So precarious that it seemed as if a cough  
 Or a sneeze  
 Could at any moment dislodge it and send  
 Its smothering weight  
 Down in a rush upon us.

Now this shape, this thing, this...  
Negation...  
Was no less  
Disturbing, and certainly  
No less unstable,  
For being, to my mind,  
Impossible and self-contradictory, a violation  
Of good common sense. I knew—  
Or thought  
I knew—or remembered  
That I once knew—that emptiness  
Is an absence  
Not a presence, and that absences, by definition, possess  
Zero  
Mass—therefore, one cannot be smothered  
By an avalanche  
Of nothing.

Yet it was there, this thing, or this  
Non-thing—  
*There it was!*  
Right on top of me—I couldn't look up  
Without seeing  
Its immensity, and if I tried to ignore it by looking down  
At the floor, I would feel  
Its weight  
And its nearness  
Pressing against the protruding, vulnerable  
Vertebrae  
At the base of my neck, the way a prisoner, condemned  
To be beheaded,  
Must sometimes feel, in the soft  
Fleshy spaces  
Between those same vertebrae, a faint  
Proleptic  
Tingle.