

Excerpt from

THE SOUND AT NO. 565 W 29TH ST.

NOTE: This story follows a man who explores an unmarked building in downtown Manhattan. In this final scene, he has followed a strange figure deep into the heart of the cavernous building and now finds himself on a walkway high above the ground floor.

It was this sound -- as it had always been -- that moved my feet to follow the gaunt-faced man. Although the rusty walkway creaked and groaned, I did not feel it was unsafe. The main floor would be directly through the aperture in the wall, a simple square hole in the seemingly-infinite wall of painted cinderblock. I had the sense that I was passing through the veil, that the wall divided not two rooms, but two worlds or two realities. Adding to this sense was the thick blackness within the main chamber; whatever was meagerly lighting the antechamber did not bleed into the larger main space. At the threshold itself, I paused for the last time with the realization that I would have to continue into the chamber blind, with only the even footsteps of my guide ahead of me and metal hand rail I clutched with both hands.

I was then in the main chamber, and the two sounds -- humming and water -- enveloped me. While huge, they were not loud, or at least not offensively so, as is a jackhammer when passed on the street. They were, however, complete; they filled every emptiness doubly, then triply, and even beyond as the sound reverberated off the walls of the cavernous space. The echoes confirmed I was in an enclosed space, but, like the antechamber, I also felt as if this room was larger than the building could possibly contain, perhaps even larger than I could imagine in any space man had previously encountered.

It was at this point that, for reasons I do not understand, I experienced a brief memory from my childhood. I had a very clear image of sitting under a tree in my grandmother's yard playing with a set of wooden soldiers on a small pull-cart. The soldiers were cylindrical, small dowels with the edges rounded smooth and painted red and black to indicate the form of a British palace guard. I then remembered putting the soldiers, one by one, into a similarly sized hole in the bottom of a blue plastic toy chair. They slid in easily, but, once inside, they couldn't be coaxed back out by any amount of shaking.

It's possible that this was merely a form of daydream encouraged by the room's odd sort of sensory deprivation. I

cannot say why my mind chose to fill that space with that particular memory, but I include it here because I wish to record my every experience of the event as accurately and fully as possible, should any detail be useful to those asking the questions which, as I stated in my warning, should not be asked.

Shortly after my mind returned from this brief departure, I realized that the gaunt-faced man had stopped walking, and I could barely make out his form from a small, red LED light on the walkway railing. As I neared, I could see that this light indicated the location of a switch box hanging from the railing by a thick corrugated metal cable. The switch box itself had two large buttons, one red and one green. The man was once again facing me, and his constant stream of babble had, for the moment, ceased. I approached, but stopped slightly further than the normal polite distance for conversation. There was silence, in which I once again felt the urge to contribute some statement or question, but once again my mind and mouth could produce nothing. The pause continued for an arbitrary length of time -- it did not seem to be dramatic or even purposeful, but rather that time and its nuances were either not experienced or not acknowledged by the man -- and then the man spoke a single word as he pressed the green button: "See."

Wide industrial flood lamps sputtered and blinked on from directly overhead and then spread from the central line outwards towards the two ends of the room. In light, the proportions of the room seemed closer to the realm of sanity, although still very large, as the main chamber did now seem to approximate the size of a city block. The source of the rushing water was now visible: steel pipes, perhaps four feet in diameter and located every fifty feet or so around the perimeter of the chamber, spewed enormous quantities of greenish water onto the thing on the floor. The appearance of the water aligned with the smell, further corroborating my guess that it had been pumped in from the river. One would assume this quantity of water would flood the building, but in some way or another, the thing was absorbing or consuming the water entirely, and none remained to form any depth on the floor itself.

The hum was clearly emanating from the thing itself, which I will here attempt to describe. But first, although I know it to likely be the prime cause of your inquiry into this account, I must tell you that description is impossible. If you think of a moment in a dream when you meet a person whom you know, but at the same time it is also someone else, and furthermore it would be wrong to call him or her or it by the name of either of those

people from your real, waking life for the reason that it would be incorrect, it would be wrong to assign the dream-person the exact identity of any waking-person, if this occasion is relatable to you, then you will understand my difficulty. I can tell you certain impressions of the thing, but they will all be wrong, because, for one, certain impressions will coexist which are, of course, impossible and paradoxical, and secondly to try and imagine the thing limited to those impressions would be inaccurate. This entire concept I am trying to communicate is obviously nonsensical, and I, a rational being, fully acknowledge all of its irrationality, but nevertheless I must communicate it in order to fulfill my goal of relating the experience.

The first paradox is that the thing was not a thing, but a mass, a quantity of something, like sand or water or, perhaps best, darkness. This gave the sense that there could be more or less of it, and it would still be what it is. Yet, at the same time, it was still a unified object or presence or being. It was both a quantity or amount of substance but also one distinct creature or object or being.

What was next apparent is its movement, which had several qualities. There was a wriggling or writhing motion, as if the

surface of the substance were burbling. This movement directly corresponded to the contours of the hum as it rose, fell, and otherwise fluctuated. However, while the edges of the stuff gently ebbed, the mass did not seem to travel in any consistent direction. At the same time, there was another vector of motion, as my perception of the thing would fade in and out in certain locations. This is not to say that it turned invisible, but rather, it did not exist at all for some moments in some places, and it is my belief that it either struggled to exist in the dimensions available to my perception, or, more likely, it, in its relaxed state, did not feel it necessary to exist on my plane with any great consistency.

The color of the thing I would choose to omit, for it gave the greatest impression of not having a color at all, but rather being a kind of translucent, not in the sense that I could see the concrete floor below it, but rather that, by gazing into the mass, I could see a great chasm or void that would be hidden from me otherwise. However, I mention color because there was also an inky purple hue that would tinge the image, like ink swirling in swaths and rivulets. It was akin to the way a mirror appears silvery even while reflecting another image in all its detail. It also gave the impression of having glistening,

gelatinous skin, as the floodlights would reveal the glimmer of undulating curves.

The last two observations of note are separate qualities, but for me they had some relation which requires their descriptions to be conjoined, and furthermore, this last description will lead us to the end of the events inside No. 565 W 29th St. The two qualities of which I speak were, first, the thing's only discernible organ (the best word I could draw upon for a discrete, purposeful feature), and, second, the enormous sense of both emptiness and dread that filled me as I looked upon this thing on the floor.

I shall begin with the central organ, which I would call either the eye or the mouth if it did not clearly serve as both things and more. As both organs, it could open and close. When the lights turned on, I could see that the water was pouring into this organ, but at the same time, it was sensitive to the light, and it twitched and shuddered with adjustment as a human eye might when a switch is unexpectedly flicked in the dark. I furthermore knew that this organ was meant to perceive and consume, at first merely by some horrible intuition, but ultimately because it would come to open fully and look upon me.

The wave of fear that accompanied my first glimpse of this terrible and massive thing would have made any other experience of horror in my life seem tiny and insignificant, but this in turn was dwarfed by the experience of being seen, being *known* by the thing's eye-mouth. Its physical proportions alone were terrifying; it was much larger than anything that should be alive, and I was disturbed by how wrong it was to see something so large. But then there was the knowledge that, because of its nature (if the word "nature" could still be used), my mind was utterly incapable of comprehension of more than some small fraction of what the thing truly was. These things made me feel so terribly small, a tiny and stupid creature in the presence of awesome and complex forces, and my only recourse from this terror was to hide and shake and try to guide my perception to some little speck that could draw my attention, like a magnet, away from the thing which would destroy my mind by merely existing in my awareness.

But then, when the eye turned upon me, this experience of terror expanded by an infinite factor, and, in doing so, became a different emotion which might no longer be called fear. It was at this point that my earlier intuitions were confirmed, and I was aware that the thing was seeing me, perceiving me. Yet, I

also knew that by seeing and knowing, it consumed. I have a peculiar instinct to call this experience love, for love is perhaps the only human emotion to which it had a relation, insofar as love is an experience of absolute release, letting oneself drift off into another's being. Yet it was not love, for there was no euphoria or obsession or need to grasp someone or something tightly, but instead a vast expanse, a void that, in that single moment, I could experience as truly infinite, that concept that normally is so far beyond human comprehension. The true enormity I experienced in its gaze effectively made the noise in my head -- the noise of the city, of life, of concern, of worry, of love and desire -- reverberate out into a space so large that it dissipated into nothingness, and in that moment the peace I sought became mine. The great void filled me with neither fear nor joy; I did not cower in the sight of its vastness, nor did I feel contentment to have my anxieties vanished. I simply felt nothing, and, in that singular moment when the thing saw me and knew me and consumed me, as I rocketed towards that cosmic asymptotic limit, my feeling nothing became being nothing, and I was gone.

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