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Failing to notice, and he put his hands out, flexed his fingers. There were lemons in the trees, and, at that point, there was not much else about himself that he had to imagine. Just don't think. It will come. Just don't think. Still, that was flat thinking, and that was abusive behavior, and yet, this is what he ended up telling himself. There will be a war, a mistrial declared. Someone will have heard me. I was not myself. I wanted to scream, to be a better man. And it continued that way for hours. There were hours, then, hours in the dark. In the dark of the hotel. And in driving for hours to get to the hotel there had been smoke, and fire, and there had been something else. A tragedy that befell the world. A real and singular tragedy that would come out of the blue and befall the world. So much of it was made up. And this was in the summer, and there was no one else in the room. There was red in the room, however. And there was a pipe left on a table. And there was the sound of his heart beating. I knew I lived somewhere. He'd left his hat on the table. But what he couldn't have known was the one thing he might have found disturbing. He had to slow down.

There is trouble in the room. He is looking around the room, trying to find his way back in. And, in a minute or two, there will be a sound, his signal, and then there will be somewhere to go. But these events have to take place in a room.

At the end of the street, and I thought it was like music. I thought it would be more like noise. I thought of many things, and those things that I thought of continued to bother me. I was at the end of my rope, the end of my tether, and that was the way they dressed things up in those days. It was a beautiful summer's night. The air was cool. The hotel was a very beautiful place to be. All of the other guests thought so too.

And then he tells himself a story.

But I kept seeing the things that I was seeing, and the things that I was seeing were not mine. I had a bit from a book, and I had a bit from a story that I'd been told when I was very young.

There was someone waiting for him in the lobby. He'd gone downstairs and was having a drink at the bar. He'd waited near the hotel lobby, waited in the bar just off the hotel lobby. He had the key to his room in his hand. He walked in the cool night air, and there was a breeze, and this was right at the beginning of events. It excited him to no end, realizing he'd come to the right place. And the hotel was, indeed, just the right place. For the first time in his life, he'd understood. He'd seen enough signs to know. Still, this was new, this was drinking at the hotel bar, and waiting.

These are the rules of the game. There is no spitting on the floor allowed, and when the General begins the discussion, the gentlemen will remain in their seats and act with the utmost consideration to one another and to whomever has the floor at any

given time. There is a discussion beginning, another discussion beginning, and then, later, someone will draw the curtains back and the music will start. Then there is the sound of the car, and the sound of the wind through the car windows. It is cool there for a summer's night, even on an early summer's night. It is a night unlike any other night. He is walking down the grand staircase. He is in a hotel. He tells himself that the setting is fine, even if stories have been set in hotels before. He is walking down the stairs on his way to dinner. The food, so far, has been excellent. The food has been much better than expected, and this, inevitably, leads him to think of the drive to the hotel. He'd thought out his stay at the hotel in the car. His itinerary. He thinks of many things while he is in cars. This is because he has recently had to drive a lot. He has been driven a lot. And then he is at dinner and seated among the other guests. And this is valid criticism. Yet, this is also the type of criticism that stings. Still, at that point, he is able to tell the other guests a thing or two about the way he thinks a top-notch hotel should be run. After all, he has his opinions, and his opinions are as good as anyone else's, he feels. And then he pauses briefly, and smiles, and clinks his glass with the person sitting on his right. The other guests are very charming. He thinks of the time when he was ill. At one point he'd had a serious illness, but that was long ago and he is feeling much better now, thank God. And then there is laughing. And a rustling in the bushes. This, however, comes as a shock, as a complete surprise. Is there someone laughing at him? He has, after all, just taken the Lord's name in vain. And then there is fear, and then someone, one of the other guests, perhaps, does something that upsets him. And he is afraid, afraid that they, the other guests, will not want him for himself anymore.

A man in a tuxedo. A man in a long fur coat. A man with a gun in a hunting jacket. A man in a smoking jacket.

The hotel was set in the mountains, set high in the mountains. The hotel was well known as a place to go for cures for one's ills. The hotel was set atop a great mountain range, and he turned his head. It was the laughing that upset him most. A mocking sort of laughter, and, yet, it had been amusing, had been amusing right up to that point to be at a hotel. It had been amusing and it had been urbane. A civilized thought. A concept. An idea. The point he'd wanted to make. And, if he thought about it, the point he'd been trying to make, to express clearly, to the other guests in the dining room. And, pity, because, in general, the hotel was a place he could have remained happily, for a time, if only he'd refrained from thanking God. There, and he'd said it again. I feel better, thank God. Yes, thank you. I am doing, feeling, much better now. I am much better now.



The hotel was very large and very old and very discrete, in its way. Expensive. A place to go for people who wanted to get away from it all. A place to come, famously, for people to cure their ills. He sat in a chair in the lobby and read a newspaper and smoked a cigarette. Cigarette smoking was still very fashionable in those days. When the hotel was built. There were pictures on the walls. And his room made sounds. Yet, it was not the type of hotel one would bring, say, a family to on vacation. A very large hotel. But the stairs were there, and so was the lobby, and his room was there, and so was the lounge, and then the grounds outside, and the dining room, and the halls, and the bar. So far, all of the necessary elements for a hotel. Yes, the location would do. It would serve his purpose, even if it was obvious, and even if it had been done many times before.