

# Snatch XII

*by* Mathew Paust

"I mean, theoretically were I to try to move something, just a finger, or blink my eyes, or take a breath, even, and I couldn't, and nothing would happen, no action the signal from my brain would affect, I...the panic could kill me, scare me to death. Not that death alone, just by itself, would be so unwelcome. Total paralysis? Absolute, unequivocally complete paralysis? Another story. I'd go mad. That would come first. And not the sort of gibbering, slobbering madness that's a sanctuary from comprehension, the psychological womb where one feels safe from memory, from its secrets, not that. No. No. No. But the kind of madness that's in stark, unyielding, undeviating communion with a feral imagination so unmanageable it surpasses exponentially the most hideous fevered delirium where even then one instinctively senses at least the hope of a latent mercy just beyond reach.

"Not this time. The madness residing in this unconscionable imagination feeds off the likelihood of every fear one has ever experienced and can conceive of experiencing looming just out of view, waiting to do with one what it wishes whenever it chooses. This I am without doubt would occur were I to try to move and fail. I would know beyond rescue I am stuck in a hellish, incrementally whimsical doom. A fly of uncommon sentience caught intractably in a web across which the measured approach of some other on the connected strands can be felt but not yet seen. No thank you. I choose, for the moment anyway, to keep the option of knowing open. The merest possibility of physical freedom in this circumstance of lethally slender range is nothing short of bliss."

