Eddie fought the impulse to scramble for the edge of the dugout. Against all logic his mind was telling him that he would fall just like Alfonso if he went over that edge. The weightlessness had passed and gravity had reasserted itself, but in the wrong direction. This had to be some kind of sick dream. Maybe the last pitch hadn’t sailed by him after all.

Yeah, that was it. He’d been hit in the skull and this was just a concussion induced nightmare. Eddie shook his head wildly, trying to shake reality back into something sensible.

But the pain in his shoulder was real; it felt like he’d come down with his full weight. He swung his left arm across his body and rolled onto his belly. Something about burying his face in the cement ceiling made this all a little less surreal. Sub-consciously he knew the bench was somewhere above his head, but he was trying not to think about it. The open air over the edge taunted him just a few inches away, and against the protests of his body he nudged himself forward.

The wind nearly blew the cap off Eddie’s head as he inched his nose over the side. The ceiling was on a slight incline toward the back wall, so he was able to still any immediate thoughts of falling. He looked down cautiously, then snapped his head back violently at what he saw. The sky was maddeningly blue, the clouds moving perceptively but leisurely despite the gusting inside the stadium. It looked like any one of dozens of lazy summer afternoons spent lying on his back looking up; except now he was on his belly looking down.

Eddie eased backward, breathing out slowly as he moved. He rested his chin on his hands and looked across the stadium. The stands were mostly empty, though a few people were swinging precariously from railings or clinging to
the backs of their seats. Most fell after a few seconds, falling quietly below
his line of sight. A few were followed by a sickening thump, the sound of their
bodies hitting the upper decks or the pavilion shell.

He watched helplessly as a mother reached out for her two children. The
daughter had managed to weave herself through the bars at the edge of the
field, but the son was too far away. In his right hand he wore a baseball glove
and was trying to grip tightly to a chair, but Eddie could see his hand was
slipping. He wanted to shout, to tell the kid to ditch the glove and get a
better grip, but it was too late.

The glove slipped, and the kid’s right arm hung uselessly at his side. The
effort of trying to hold himself up had probably exhausted him. He dangled
loosely for another few seconds before his left hand gave out. The mother
tried to reach for him but he was already gone. She turned to look across the
field and for a brief instant her eyes met Eddie’s. Then, without a sound, she
let go of the chair and dropped out of view.

Movement to his right drew Eddie’s attention, and he turned to see a young
man trying to shove his way past a middle-aged man and his wife. The older
man was heavy, but strong, and was not about to yield an inch of ground.
Eddie closed his eyes, and when he heard the thump a few seconds later he
didn’t look to see who’d won.

He buried his head in his hands and cried silently, not wanting to see any
more.

“Eddie?” He felt a warm hand against his right calf. He bent his knees and
rolled back onto his side. The speaker put a strong arm around his back and
helped him toward the wall. The rear of the dugout was a mess, a pile of bats
and helmets and other random bits of detritus.

Eddie opened his eyes to see his teammate, Manny, who up till this point
hadn’t said a word to him in weeks. ‘Guess there’s no reason to worry about
my slump rubbing off anymore,’ he thought.
“Are you alright?” Manny asked.

“I’m fine. I just hit my shoulder. You okay?”

Manny nodded, “Banged my shoulder pretty good too.”

The rest of the lineup were scattered against the back wall. Some hung their feet over the side, while others crouched down, pressing as close to the back wall as possible. The whole scene was playing out before them in panoramic view, but nobody wanted to look at it for very long, choosing instead to huddle together in groups of two or three.

Eddie looked over at Franklin, who was puking his guts out in the far corner. He’d been next at bat and would have been standing in the on deck circle if he hadn’t had to re-lace his shoes. Their coach had been standing at the end of the steps, leaning against the pads on the railing and making his wishes known to the base coaches. Eddie hadn’t seen him fall, but he didn’t see him here either. It was ridiculous the difference a couple of steps made.

“This isn’t some x-man thing, right?” Manny said, breaking the silence.

“Excuse me?” Eddie said.

“Like the end of that one movie. That magnetic dude picked up RFK stadium and dropped it next to the White House.”

“What’d he do that for?” Eddie asked, relieved for any kind of distraction.

Manny shook his head. “I’m not sure. I mean it’s impressive like, flying through the middle of DC carrying a big building. But then he just drops it to keep people out who might spoil his plans. If you need a wall, why don’t you just make one out of metal?”

“I don’t know,” Eddie said, “I’ve never seen that movie.”

“You think we’re flying, Eddie?”

“I don’t know.”
‘God I hope so,’ he thought. At least if some telepathic force was picking them up, it could put them down again.

His thoughts were broken by the sound of wrenching metal from somewhere below. He’d been able to tune out the individual screams, but the collective wail beneath his feet was impossible to ignore. He scooted up from his crouch and looked over the edge again.

Below, the solar pavilion had torn itself away from its moorings and was curving outward like a long ribbon. All along its ridged surface people clung desperately, trying to climb as the metal tore away faster and faster. One would lose their grip, and knock down the three below them. They were all fighting a losing battle.

The noise went on for countless minutes, the tear growing longer, twisting in the wind and bucking savagely. The stadium below the dugout shook and for a moment Eddie was afraid their tiny perch would be pulled down as well.

But then, just as quickly as the noise had begun, it stopped.

* * *

Kammie looked up at her feet and wondered where the hell she had put her shoes. The rest of her was covered in boxes, and she felt thin metal cutting dully into her back and shoulders. Her head rested on top of something that felt like thick cork board that cracked as she turned her head.

At first she thought she had lost her balance and knocked over one of the shelves. She groaned at the thought of all the noise she must have made. There was no way she was going to get this mess cleaned up before one of her supervisors found her.

But as her memory returned her brain offered up another suggestion; one neither of them was too happy about. She remembered floating for the briefest of moments, and could recall her feet leaving the floor. What she couldn’t remember was if she’d fallen back down again.
Suddenly Kammie was more thankful for the darkness than she had ever been in all those solitude seeking moments. Her back and shoulders were telling her that what she was laying on felt a lot more like the ceiling frame than the tile floor.

‘Alright,’ she thought, ‘the ceiling’s collapsed. The building’s only a few years old but maybe there were some material flaws.’

She slid one of the tiles aside with her hand and probed for the floor below, but instead felt textured metal. She wasn’t certain, but it felt like the plating above the ceiling. If the ceiling had fallen on her, then the plating would be sitting on top, or still be hanging from the ceiling.

So what was hanging above her?

Her senses were feeding her information in small pieces, knowing that she needed time to comprehend the full reality of the situation. She pushed down, the tiles bending under her weight until they met the plating. She put her arms behind her and slid backward, moving her legs down carefully from where they’d been elevated. The frame had collapsed to the plating around her head and upper back, but the rest was still about a foot and half in the air.

Kammie pulled her knees up under her chin and breathed in slowly. She polled her hearing for information next, trying to recall if there had been any kind of rumbling or shaking that might account for this upside down closet. Northeast Ohio had been getting some minor earthquakes lately, supposedly due to fracking in Pennsylvania, but the worst of that hadn’t registered above a 4 or a 5 on the Richter scale.

The floor, or ceiling, below her was perfectly level. If the building had collapsed or even toppled over she’d be on some kind of an angle. But the room had been flipped 180 degrees.

It was the sound of someone yelling that broke her out of her thoughts. Unless she was dreaming, and that was a real possibility, this room wasn’t
likely to be the only one that had gone topsy-turvy. She grunted as she pulled herself onto her feet, assuring herself that some of the cracks she was hearing were coming from the tiles and not just her knees. She brushed off some of the accumulated dust, and ran a hand along her back where the metal had been pressing in. She felt no obvious cuts, at least where she could reach, though she was bruised in a couple of places.

She took a tentative first step, and nearly fell back onto her hands as the frame caught her below the knee. Most of the tiles had fallen out of the frame, but a few clung on stubbornly. It was almost like walking through a foot of snow. Sometimes the material was packed enough that Kammie could stand and pull herself forward, only for her next step to sink her down again. After a few minutes of this, Kammie reluctantly determined that the best way through was to crawl underneath the frame on her hands and knees.

After another couple of minutes of crawling like this, poking her head up every couple of feet to make sure she was still heading toward the door, Kammie reached the far wall. The handle of the door was a little above eye level. She reached up and pulled down, but the handle wouldn’t move. Panic seeped in for a few fleeting seconds as Kammie thought she might be trapped in this room.

She pushed up on the handle and the door swung open.

Kammie crawled over the doorframe, the ridged metal pushing into her stomach. She hung half-way through for a couple of seconds before falling back below the tiles, like a fish diving below the surface of the water. She stood angrily, breaking through the tiles above her head and plastering her hair with dust and cobwebs. She cupped a hand to her mouth and shouted, “Anybody alive out there?”

“Over here!” a faint woman’s shout came from about fifty feet down the hall. “I’ve got someone hurt!”

Kammie crouched down below the surface of the tiles, crawling for about thirty feet before bumping up against a wall. The voice was coming from the
direction of the visitors lounge, and the ceiling abruptly changed to smooth, thick plaster. Kammie surfaced and crawled up slowly, spreading herself wide to distribute her weight evenly. She moved forward a few feet at a time by alternately kicking with her feet and pulling with her shoulders, like someone crawling across a frozen lake.

The young woman was leaning against a pillar and pressing her sleeve against the forehead of a woman in her fifties. The older woman’s face was obscured so that Kammie didn’t recognize who it was until she was right in front of her.

Margaret Benson had been one of the nursing staff who had first interviewed her, and had been the one who gave Kammie that nick-name. Her full name was Kamyra, and for most of her life she’d been insistent that others pronounce it fully and correctly. But whenever Margaret had called her Kammie it had sounded warm and affectionate. When Kammie had tentatively called her Margie for the first time she’d been treated to a smile so wide it nearly made her giggle.

Margie’s breathing was shallow, and she’d lost consciousness. Kammie felt for a pulse, but it was thin and weak.

She looked up to the young woman who was fighting back tears. She was cradling Margaret in her lap, her one arm pressing down, and the other lightly stroking her cheek. Kammie had remembered seeing the young woman around the floor for the past couple of weeks, mostly in room 3, mostly arguing with the other members of the nursing staff. It never ceased to amaze her how hard and how fervently people fought to control uncontrollable things.

“Can you lift your arm?” Kammie asked, putting a comforting hand on the woman’s shoulder. She nodded, and Kammie tore the sleeve off her scrubs. Margaret was going to need antibiotics either way for the infection, and getting the bleeding contained had to be the priority.

“What’s your name?” Kammie said as she started to work.
“Grace. I was trying to call my sister before...”

Kammie nodded, “I know. I’m not sure what to call it either.”

Grace shook her head, “No, it’s not that. My mother’s sick.”

Kammie tied off the dressing. The bleeding was starting to slow down, and Margie’s breathing seemed a little better, but Kammie was still concerned. She looked up to see that Grace had started to cry.

“I just wanted her to hear Bethany’s voice one last time,” Grace said.

Kammie put an arm around Grace’s shoulder, and the young woman buried her head in her chest.