

THRESHOLD

MONDAY

The room was ordinary. A modest apartment bedroom with pale, faded walls and a creaky wooden floor. It was in this dull, unremarkable space that Mark Miller lived, worked, and slept -utterly alone. His life, much like the room, was routine and predictable, dictated by mundane tasks that gave him a sense of structure, if not fulfillment.

That evening, Mark followed his usual routine. He sat at his desk, staring blankly at his computer screen, scrolling through an endless stream of work emails. As usual, most of them were mind-numbing, filled with corporate bullshit and requests he didn't care about. After skimming the last of them, he sighed, closing his laptop.

Next came the nightly ritual. Mark stood up and stretched, his joints cracking in the silence. He slouched into the kitchen to wash a single mug, his mug, scrubbing it under the warm water. His eyes glazed over as the sponge moved in circles, his thoughts wandering aimlessly. The rhythmic task was almost soothing, a small moment of peace in an otherwise unremarkable day.

He set the mug down to dry, grabbed a fresh glass of water, and returned to his desk. Every night, the same actions: finish work, clean up, drink water, and prepare for bed. The routine kept him anchored, kept the days from blurring together. Tonight, however, something felt...off.

He sat in his chair and stared at the blank computer screen. The silence in the room felt heavier tonight, almost oppressive. He frowned, trying to shake the odd sensation creeping over him, but it lingered, growing stronger by the second.

With a sigh, Mark stood up and made his way to the window, pulling the curtains aside. Outside, the street was as still as it always was at this hour. No cars, no people, just the occasional flicker of a streetlight. Everything looked normal.

Everything should *feel* normal.

He shook his head and turned away from the window, heading toward his bed. As he pulled back the covers, he paused. His heart skipped a beat, though he wasn't sure why. Out of the corner of his eye, something caught his attention. A flicker, barely noticeable, but there.

The walls seemed to ripple, as if the air around him had stretched, then snapped back into place.

Mark blinked, rubbed his eyes, and looked again. The room was as normal as ever. With a sigh, he dismissed it as fatigue. It had to be a trick of the light, or maybe he'd stared at the computer for too long.

But as he lay down, pulling the blanket over his shoulders, he couldn't shake the sense of wrongness. It was as if something had shifted in the space around him, like the world was... thinner somehow. The flicker replayed in his mind over and over, each time making his skin prickle with unease.

Just as he closed his eyes, he heard it.

A faint sound. A whisper. Muffled and distant, as though it came from somewhere far beyond the walls of his room. The voice was too quiet to make out, its tone indecipherable, but it was there.

Mark's eyes snapped open, his heart racing. The room was silent again, the air still. But the whisper lingered in his mind, strange and haunting, as if calling to him from a place just beyond his understanding.

He lay there in the dark, staring up at the ceiling, the weight of the mundane routine he'd once clung to now feeling hollow, fragile. Something had changed. He could feel it.

The night stretched on, but sleep didn't come easily.

TUESDAY

The next day, Mark found himself obsessing over what he had seen, or thought he had seen. He replayed the moment in his mind again and again, each time feeling the ripple in the walls more vividly. It was no longer just a trick of the eye, but something more real, something wrong. The whisper from the night before haunted him, faint but undeniable, its meaning elusive but persistent.

That evening, as he sat in the same chair, staring at the same screen, the ripple came again. But this time, it lasted longer. The walls like the surface of water, disturbed by an unseen force. Behind the walls, or perhaps through them, Mark saw something.

It was a place he couldn't comprehend. A landscape that defied logic, with impossible angles and colors that had no name. A blackened sky where stars seemed to writhe, alive and sentient.

And then there was the voice. Louder now, closer. It was speaking, but the words were twisted, alien, as though filtered through water. Mark leaned forward, his breath shallow, straining to make sense of it.

The vision snapped away, leaving the room as still and mundane as ever. Mark's heart raced, and he couldn't shake the feeling that he was on the verge of understanding something vast and terrifying. He didn't feel fear, not yet—just an overwhelming need to know more.

Sleep came in intervals that night, with the voice whispering in the back of his mind, calling to him from a place far beyond.

WEDNESDAY

By the third day, Mark's life outside the room had ceased to matter. He hadn't gone to work, hadn't answered his phone. Nothing existed for him now except the room and the glimpses of the other world beyond it. The boundary between the two seemed thinner, as though the barrier separating them had begun to fray.

When the walls rippled that night, they didn't stop. The entire room warped and bent, shapes emerging from the plaster. The vision on the other side was clearer now. His gaze was drawn to something in the distance.

A tree.

It stood far off in the alien landscape, yet its presence dominated his view. The tree was massive, its trunk twisted and gnarled, covered in a slick, oily sheen that reflected faint, unnatural colours. Its branches reached upward at impossible angles, like fingers of a creature stretching out from the earth. He could see something hanging from the branches, but couldn't make out what.

As Mark stared, a wave of nausea hit him. The tree radiated something. A force that made his skin crawl and his head throb. A sudden sharp pain shot behind his eyes, growing unbearable the longer he looked at it. Every time he tried to turn away, his gaze was pulled back, as if the tree demanded to be seen.

He doubled over, clutching his temples, the pressure in his skull intensifying. The tree's grotesque form seared itself into his mind, and the longer he stared, the more he felt its pull, as if it wanted him to approach, to come closer.

The voice returned, louder and more insistent, its alien syllables wrapping around his brain. Mark could hear it vibrating through the air like an otherworldly hum.

The vision faded, but the pain lingered. Mark sank to the floor, shaking, knowing that whatever the tree was, it was waiting for him. And it was connected to the voice.

THURSDAY

On the fourth day, Mark could feel reality slipping away. He had stopped eating, stopped leaving the room, stopped caring about anything beyond the visions that now dominated his mind. The mundane life he once clung to had crumbled, leaving only the room and the horrors creeping in from the edges of his sanity. The otherworldly glimpses were no longer brief, they were lasting longer, pulling him deeper into a place he could not understand.

That evening, the room didn't just ripple, it tore open.

A deafening crack echoed through the air, and the walls split as if a massive force had struck them from the inside. The threshold between his reality and the other was gone. The room twisted and contorted into impossible angles as Mark stood frozen in the center, watching helplessly as the alien landscape bled through.

And there, looming before him in full grotesque clarity, stood the tree.

It was closer now, impossibly large, its twisted trunk towering above him. But this time, Mark saw it clearly, *too* clearly. The base of the tree was not just bark and roots, but the shape of a female body, carved from the same slick, dark material as the rest of the tree. Her limbs were fused into the trunk, her face obscured by the writhing roots that wound up her torso. The figure's arms were bound to her sides, but from her head, the branches sprouted outward like nightmarish extensions of her being, stretching toward the heavens in jagged, unnatural patterns.

Mark's stomach churned, a cold sweat breaking out across his skin. The figure wasn't just a part of the tree—it *was* the tree. A grotesque fusion of human and nature, twisted by forces beyond comprehension.

From her branches hung corpses. Dozens of them. Lifeless bodies dangled by their necks, swaying gently in the breeze of this alien world. Each one had been stripped of its humanity, their heads replaced with enormous, blooming flowers unlike anything from the earth. These flowers pulsed with a sickly glow, their petals curling and uncurling as if breathing.

The corpses, suspended by the branches, twitched faintly, as though still alive in some agonizing state of half-existence. Their bodies hung limp, yet the flowers seemed to move independently, turning toward Mark as if watching him, their petals spreading to reveal eyes within the centre of each bloom. Dark, bottomless eyes that seemed to see into the depths of his soul.

Mark staggered backward, his breath coming in gasps. The pain in his head intensified, sharper than ever before, as if his skull was being split open by the sheer wrongness of what he was seeing. The female form, fused to the tree, seemed to pulse with life, her branches shuddering with each new breath she took. And the corpses, their flower-heads twisting to follow him, swayed gently in the still air.

The voice returned, no longer distant but roaring in his ears. The words were no longer muffled, they were clear, though their meaning still escaped him. It was as though the

voice was speaking directly to his mind, bypassing language entirely, filling his thoughts with ancient, incomprehensible truths.

Come closer.

Mark collapsed to his knees, his head splitting with the force of the command. The roots of the tree, writhing like tentacles, crept through the floorboards of his room, inching toward him. They twisted around his legs, tightening as they climbed higher, pulling him toward the base of the tree—the woman fused to the trunk. The air was thick with the scent of rot and those strange flowers. It filled his lungs, burning his throat, making him gag.

His vision blurred as the room continued to distort, twisting and warping into impossible shapes. The branches of the tree shuddered, and the corpses hanging from them seemed to twitch more violently, their flower-heads growing brighter, their eyes locked on Mark.

The roots wound around his torso now, squeezing the breath from his lungs. He tried to scream, but no sound came. His entire body was being pulled toward the tree, toward the woman, whose empty, root-covered face seemed to turn ever so slightly in his direction. The branches above her trembled, as if alive with some malevolent force, their grotesque corpses swaying like puppets.

The voice spoke again, louder, more commanding.

“Feed the roots of all existence.”

Mark’s body was dragged across the floor, toward the roots and the pulsating trunk of the tree. His mind was unraveling, the pain so intense he thought he might black out. But just before everything went dark, his vision filled with the image of the tree, the corpses hanging from her branches, and the knowledge that there was no escape.

The tree had claimed him, as it had claimed all those before him.

And with a final, deafening crack, the world went black.

FRIDAY

Mark awoke on the fifth day. The room was still.

He blinked, slowly sitting up, his head pounding. The room was normal. His heart raced as he looked around, expecting the twisted landscape to return, expecting the walls to ripple and tear open again. But everything was as it had always been.

The walls were solid. The furniture was undisturbed. There was no sign of the tree, no sign of the woman, no corpses hanging from branches. Everything was just as it should be.

He stood, heart hammering in his chest, waiting for the ripples, waiting for the air to thicken and the tree to return. He was ready for it this time. Ready for the nightmare to claim him once more.

But nothing happened.

Hours passed, and the room remained still. Unbearably ordinary. The silence pressed down on him, heavier than it had ever been before. There were no whispers, no flickers of the otherworldly landscape. Just an oppressive, suffocating quiet.

Mark paced the room, his nerves fraying. He pressed his hands against the walls, waiting for them to bend and ripple, waiting for the voice, for the tree, for the corpses, for *anything*. He slammed his fists against the walls, screaming for them to come back, to take him.

But nothing came.

The pain returned. Not from visions or horrors, but from the absence of them. The tree was gone, but it had left something behind: an emptiness. A hollow, gnawing void in Mark's mind, more torturous than the visions had ever been.

He sank to the floor, staring blankly at the walls. There was no escape. No meaning in the world beyond this room. He had been ready to face the otherworldly horrors, but now he realized the truth: there was nothing. No answers, no revelations.

Just this.

The room, silent and still, with Mark trapped inside, waiting for something that would never come. His mind frayed, unraveling as the emptiness consumed him.

The room would never change again.

He sits quietly on the floor, eyes fixated on the wall. Chanting in a language that felt ancient and wrong.

And soon, when his mind finally shatters, the tree would return for him, just as it always had planned.

