Vanessa:

*It’s her eyes. That’s it, right? I mean she’s just* staring. *What a creep.* Damien walked slowly up to the desk. “Um, I’d like a room, please. Just whatever’s cheap.”

“Of course, let me have a look.” The hotel receptionist smiled down into her computer. She had on a cliche orange bellhop outfit with hat, gloves and everything which, to Damien, didn’t quite compare with the broken chandelier, tattered wallpaper, and general disrepair that the lobby was in.

Her fingers stopped typing and she looked up at him. “Room 32 is all yours. Enjoy your stay.” She held out a small silver key for him.

“Thanks,” he nodded. Her gold nameplate smiled back. *Vanessa*.

Room 32 wasn't quite what Damien expected. Or perhaps, maybe it *was*. The small chamber palpably paralleled the curiously dilapidated front lobby; its mundane architecture prescribing a daunting lack of character or creativity with respect to both the meek masonry and objective disregard. Rather, the only sensational manifestation was that of a crude square bed positioned laterally equidistant and medially askew. To Damien, the small prison matched his imagination’s epitome of ocular transgression and olfactory displeasement and all-together attenuated his hope at a good night’s rest.

So with a heavy hand on recursive wariness and cautionary skepticism, Damien resolved to premonotorially place his compact portmanteau on the floor beside the bed and lapse into whatever superficial sleep his mind could produce for him in such a foreign place.

He woke up. Blackness everywhere. He tried to shift around, but his body refused to move. *What the hell?* The only light offered was a small slit shining from behind the room’s door. He lurched but only his head was able to move. His body was pinned down interminably by some imaginary tether. Eying the room around him he could make out the shadow of his portmanteau, the door, and a very curiously irregular shape harbored in the far west corner. Damien tried to remember if there had been anything there the night before when it started creeping towards him. As it came, he could make out that it was in some wicked relation to that of a human body, but somehow it was *off*.

Finally, it intersected the light rays from the door slit and Damien was able to fully see the devilishly corporal analogue. He saw the arms, the legs, the head, the *gold nameplate*, and yet there was something malignly misconstrued in the general construction of the receptionist. The eyes just *weren’t there*; the joints were *torturously twisted*; the torso and hands were *elongated* in a way that refused to conform to the mathematics of nature. Every muscle in Damien quivered as a cancerous fear oscillated throughout his immovable body. He pushed and fought but only his head swung in mad circles as the receptionist encroached on her prey. With her all too irregularly massive hands she gripped Damien’s leg and savagely ripped it off his adjoining hip.

The pain was overwhelming. Too unimaginable to do anything about it. He started to fade out, but not before glimpsing the raucous gnashing of his leg in Vanessa’s multi-layered mouth.

The light creeped in from under the door. The night sat flat and heavy above the limp body of Damien. Gradually, the nocturnality of his mind thawed and gave way to the horrorsome prejudices of his recent memory. He tried to move; only his head bobbed. He scanned his body and found that both of his legs were healthily attached and aligned as to where they should be. He felt no pain. *It must’ve been a dream*. And yet, he still could not move, weighed down by the fixed net across his body.

*There can be an explanation.* And yet, there couldn’t, because a pool of blood sat oozing into the carpet at the foot of his bed exactly where his leg had been torn. Dispassionately, he looked around the room for any sign of a recurring beast. Nothing. His head lulled into his pillow, his body relaxed, and his mind bent back into the shape it was before he had come into contact with such a malevolent creature.

For a moment, he was calm enough to fall back to sleep. However, his mind hit a wall and *would not allow him* to drift off. Fear began to creep back in and suddenly a sharp pain broke out from his back. He could feel her nails sawing into his spine. Harsh, uncut bones digging in search of any bloody fossil it could withdraw from inside his gut. The hole grew larger and the pain grew greater. Body cemented to the bed, yet head violently thrashing and foaming in response to the terrible sight of a hand protruding through the stomach.

With bloody guts embalmed in the fist, it made its way towards his head like some hellish hydrofoil ripping his corporal wake. Once above his head, it released the contents on its catch into his mouth and wrapped its stretched fingers fully around his neck. Finally, he began to fade as the beast doubly choked him to sleep.

His eyes fluttered open. *Will this Promethean torture never end?* He shook his head instinctively, but his body followed as well. He could move.

“Good morning, sir. To remind you, the checkout was at 9:00, so please hurry up.” The receptionist, Vanessa, stood in his doorway, but this time she was normal. Nevertheless, Damien took a jump back.

“Sir, would you like something for your mouth? It appears to be bleeding.” She squinted towards his face as he licked his bloody lips. *Remains from the night*.

“Uh, no, I’ll, uh…I’m good. I’ll be out quickly.” She left the room. Damien began to pack. He sucked the salty blood from his lips once more. *Am I still dreaming? Then why can I move?* Hurriedly, he stuffed his portmanteau and rushed to the lobby.

Vanessa was behind the desk, yet everything seemed as it was the night before. He laid the keys on the counter. “Thank you, sir, have a nice day.” He didn’t say anything. He made his way to the door, taking one last glance back at the lobby.

The vision he saw was one that would assuredly make any good man mad so long as he chose to remain alive. Although his body could move, there was no mental fleeing from the most perfectly prescribed of incandescent evils; mental malnourishment would linger in his brain, reminding him there was no escape. For, as he looked back upon the reality he had so jocularly consumed, he saw the frantic typing away of the receptionist with her *elongated hands.*