

The cold night's embrace left little to my skin's imagination. Every pore knew that it was icy and unkind outside. The low growl followed by the screaming howl jolted my nerves; I lunge forward and duck in attempt to protect myself.

Stumbling around, the widespread blurry eyes bared down, relentless. The angled and sharp brow followed by the desolate glow of the iris, held slave to its master. It was distinct, harsh, and wholly emotionless.

Spikes of pain shoot down my legs, urging me to run. Nature takes its course, and I follow my limbs in the direction they head. Great glass pillars fly in opposite directions, and I half dart, half tumble onto the other side. Like at the hand of some unseen chained ghost, the glass pillars ricochet and rocket back toward each other.

An explosion of noise bursts outward as the transparent walls slam violently against each other, like the tectonic plates of earth.

My palms cut on the dirty floor shards, and slide backward into an iridescent tripod that crumbles upon impact. The clattering of the foreign material hitting the artificial floor leaves an echo in my head like a sharp snap of a whip.

The grimy floor does little to help me erect myself. Using my tensed stomach muscles, I wheel myself forward and forced myself to stand. The legs are wobbly, barely registering usage; my abs and back are throbbing, unsure of how to process their recent beating.

Gathering myself, I thought it best to ascertain my surroundings. The beaming lights shines above, dulling my peripherals. I don't remember it being this bright from outside. Squinting through the light, rectangular shapes form with mountainous tops. Peculiar objects jut from the cliffs; different shades of color morph out of the mess.

In the opposite direction, the vast space seems to go on for miles. Linear blots on the landscape, spaced equally apart and with specific purpose, offering no mercy. The cold and calculated intentions of it all punctured through the emptiness.

Straight ahead lay more of the linear succubi; pleading, begging, oozing, calling. They want something from me, maybe to fill their black holes. I could feel the pull of their desire, becoming my desire.

I carefully approach the mountains, for lack of any better options. At least the mountains don't seem to want anything from me. Quite the opposite; the landscape is desolate, unwanted, and abhorrent. Advancing brought clarity to a tilted, forgotten sign post.

"Freaks and Weirdos," it read. I think that's what it read. The letters contort to blur and move as I focus on them, shifting from one form to another, but that is the best interpretation I can get. Behind the sign is a putrid stench, strong enough to sting my eyes. Shuffling sideways around the first mountain, several more crop up behind it.

Different shapes and colors take place atop the mountain, but they all smell. The same emulsified taint as the first mountain. I don't know if my nostrils are just penetrated by the original blast, or if all reeked of the pungent aroma. Plugging my nose results in scratches from the shrapnel of the floor. Stupid, should have remembered my hands were coated in it.

A small dot of red wells up on the underside of my nose, held close by my still-present soiled hand. Carefully, sliding past the repugnant mounds, a corridor opens up. A chilly breeze marks this area, illuminated as if the segregated boxes were shrines. Creeping closer, I peer into one of the craters.

Shiny, separated objects glisten under the lights. The formations make no sense up close, but I assume that as an overall pictorial, it might be beautiful. I rest my hand on the precipice. An instant mistake; the slime coating burns right through my sliced and unprotected skin.

Ripping away my opposable digits, I examine the damage. I don't understand, but somehow there is no mark. The skin is still there and in tact, yet it still feels as though the layers are melting away. I clench into a fist, and decide to move on.

The remaining holes are filled to the brim with the same element. The shiny shapes in different sizes, all gleaming under their spotlights. I dare not touch again; my few fingers still sting with their invisible lashing.

An unnatural and heinous cry from a distance pierces and reverberates. I cover my ears as best as I can, aware this time that the shards are still in place. Now the phantom cut enhances my inability to fully cloak my hearing senses, making the shrieking all that more unrelenting.

What the hell is that? Some perverse foul being's dying vow? It continues on for longer than it should. Not that it sounds as if it should exist in the first place, but the horrifying vibration fails to die.

A steel door silently sits between two of the shrines. I don't know why, but I feel like I can find relief from the indecent wails behind the door. The pain spikes in my lower half return, beckoning me to turn toward the steel.

I throw my weight against it, unsure of what to expect. The metal gives way much more easily than I anticipate, and I hurl toward the ground on the other side. There must be more chained ghosts, because the tricky steel moves quickly toward its original position, erasing my previous assault.

I immediately regret my actions. The room behind is damp, dark, and gray. A bizarre darkness; there are more blazing lights here, but it's like the walls are eating it all up. Similar to the inside of a soot stained fireplace; the more the flames lick at it, the darker it becomes.

The chill is more prevalent in here. More unforgiving than outside. It's been a long time since this place has seen any kind of warmth, and it's bitter about it. Mammoth looming crates are stacked everywhere. Peering upward, the edge of the tallest crate is far above, and I wonder how any living creature could actually reach it. Or put it up there.

Much to my dismay, my question receives an answer by the slow drumming pulse of an incomprehensible creation. Three massive eyes, stumpy legs, and one coiled arm that could reach for miles with a hooked claw at the end. No, not a claw; something bigger. Bigger than its whole body. I don't understand how physics works with this thing, but there is no time to analyze.

An erect being emerges behind the great purring beast, gesticulating wildly and raising its vibrations to high pitched levels. It's coming straight for me. It doesn't seem friendly, and it seems to be agitating the purring beast.

The wailing is horrible, but it doesn't seem as imminent a threat, so I decide to try my chances in the shrine chamber again. The pain spikes return, letting me know that it's time to move. They know where they are going, and before I realize it, I'm through the trick steel and standing next to a shrine. The ghosts have closed the steel door faster than the time before, sealing it off seconds after I burst through it.

The spikes are still pulsing through my legs, so I just keep going. I pass the shrine boxes, and in between two of the linear succubi. It narrows sharply, like a long hallway where the end just turns into blackness, but I keep running.

Glancing to the side, something catches and I slow. My curiosity has welled up beyond belief, and the pain spikes dissipate. The linear succubi... they aren't as murky and unforgiving as they appear from afar. The surface of either side looks fluffy, like billowing cotton candy. I reach out to touch it, and little strings of delicacy extend like static electricity.

One string, two strings, seven, ten, more, tickle my dirty and blood stained fingertips. I am only reminded of the state of my appendage from looking down at the strings. I want to keep feeling the strands... they're so soft and warm, so inviting. So exquisite. Just one more touch.

A gurgling sound catches my attention as the strings swirl and whisk around my fingertips. Twisting my neck toward the end of the path, a bulbous and deformed mound slowly barrels its way down. It glances from side to side, its lifeless eyes seeking something in the succubi.

It doesn't seem to notice me, but as it approaches, I can't help but notice how grotesque it is. The surface looks scaly and unclean; one large bulb melts into the next, creating a mushed but gorged condition. Large boils protrude from every visible part. The lids are drooping, half covering the black pits were eyes should have been.

None of that is as putrid as the gaping hole in place of where a mouth once was. Thick green strings of mucus, visible fumes, with a clucking lump of organ undulating around. It has sorrel, jagged, bark-looking pieces that randomly shoot out of the cracked and decaying gum line, and what looks like black worms wriggling around every place that wasn't covered in mucus.

My stomach lurches, and it takes all my effort not to retch. I'm too late; what feels like gelatinous beans regurgitate, perpetuating my revulsion even further.

The spikes return with a vengeance as the thing ambles toward the center of the succubi. I dart down the rest of the hall, past the globular biped, and into the blackness.

I run for an indeterminate amount of time; I don't know if I've gone for miles, or if only seconds have passed. Every sense is attacking me. I can only hear the pulsating blood in my ears, and my vision is narrowing and dimming. The sticky sweat and my overheating torso slightly distract from the falter of my legs, which feel like they're being stabbed with hot pokers.

I begin to experience dizziness, accentuated by rapid temperature changes. I can't breathe... no air is coming through, no matter how hard I gasp. The blackness accelerates toward me, like a twenty foot wave of water barreling down.

My knees hit the unyielding and rigid floor tiles, which has the added bonus of breaking my patellas. My hand reaches out, searching for some kind of salvation. The delicate strings have betrayed, turning into lurid tentacles with needle point strands. They wrap around, gnawing on my outstretched extremity.

The pain would be blinding if the darkness hadn't already suffocated my vision. One final gasp right at the onset, and I imbibe the pure black. The succubi have won. It's so welcoming, and I release myself to the ravenous greed.

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Blinking away the wetness, my heavy movable folds argue. My occiput throbs, so I try to alleviate my discomfort by sitting up. I'm immediately overwhelmed by the lightheadedness, and it takes many more seconds to orient myself.

The same undeviating pathway. Craning my neck, I discover I've gone no where at all. The glob is behind me, spewing mucus at the delicate strings. Almost like it's having a conversation in sludge.

The blackness is gone, giving way to an opening nearby. The singeing overhead bulbs remain as before, beckoning and recoiling all at once.

I place my destroyed, bloody palms on the cold and soiled tile. With immense effort, I bend and twist my way to a vertical position, locking my bruised and damaged knees to keep them from buckling. I dare not touch the succubi again, reminiscing on the thousands of pinpoint puncture wounds engulfing my forearm.

Shuffling toward the opening, more of the succubi emerge. At the end of the pathway, a dingy, disgruntled, diminutive horror is standing. It's cloaked in azure, has beating marks in various stages of healing and a raw dermis, complete with a down-turned beak. This thing has never known happiness.

It stares at me, with such loathing and sadness that I don't know whether I should fear or pity it. The azure mutant says nothing, nor approaches. It just stands, glaring. I quicken my pace as best I can, hobbling toward a centered open space.

An obnoxious neon sign hovers over the expanse. My oculars are still damp, but the connected beacon reads "SLAVES" and just below it are rectangular boxes that several heaving beasts are surrounding.

The beasts, on all fours, circle the squares in rhythm. The haloed articles are fist sized, glowing sickly synthetic colors, and emitting high pitched tones. The monstrosities lack hair, leaving only their vulnerable tattered and crusted skin. They are absurdly hunchbacked, with substantial calluses atop their gouty knuckles and ankles, suggesting that this vile ritual is endlessly incessant.

The beasts pay no attention to anything but the matter, so I continue forward.

I believe it's a forward movement, anyway. No matter which way I turned, the linear succubi encase everything. Right, left, up, down, backward, forward, diagonal... every place owned by them. The darkness is in every crevice, but it doesn't reach out for me anymore. Maybe it took enough.

Locking my defunct joints together, I trudge down another obscured passage. My interest in enduring is waning.

Off in the unreasonable darkness, an effulgent splash of burgundy, dripping down the shadow. Like the obnoxious neon sign, this one wafts above. Where the burning brightness and the darkness meet, a clearly defined line is drawn. The suspended burgundy sign is just beyond this unhallowed divide.

It's too far off and too high to read, but my mind conjures the scripting anyway.
"REDEMPTION"

I fix my point towards the suspended burgundy, and teeter in its direction. Unseen abnormalities sob from other arteries. I wonder if they're just lost, like me. I trip over myself a little, stumbling on my frightening thought; could that possibly be an echo... me?

The unconsecrated divide. I've managed to make it. Just a few more steps, and I'll be to the crimson. Fear and doubt swarm in, paralyzing. Did I miss something? What have I forgotten? Is something being left behind?

I don't want to come back here. I consign to forget any purpose for being in this soul sucking dungeon. With one swift effort, I lob myself into the awaiting rust aperture.

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The polar blow to my face sends an uncontrollable shiver to the rest of my body. My open wounds and oozing injuries scream at me, and I'm at a loss for how to quiet them. Stretched, pliable sacks dangle from my non-punctured arm, and as I glance down I see that small boulders are resting comfortably inside.

Souvenirs from the succubi, no doubt. Unnecessary mementos that burden, yet I still carry them with me.

The outside is just as I left it. Cold, unkind, but now liberating. Twisting my torso slightly, I see the glass jaws opening wide for a new victim. As if I were watching a replay of my torment, the poor soul dives into what they erroneously believe is safety.

The crushing flicker and buzz of the cerulean and citron mock the victim. Taunt him. The condescending colors remain smug, vainglorious.

We, as a society, have let this depraved realm creep into our existence. We have let it thrive, knowing that it is a soul harbinger. We feed it, leaving its immoral essence to grow into something even more atrocious.

As I make my way to disappear into the night, I hear the crunchy laughter of the cerulean and citron. It knows I'll be back.