

Immanence.

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Part 1:

Desperation.

There was a hole in the floor. My wife and I didn't really know what to think of it when we woke up. I mean it was right there, in the middle of the foyer. My wife and I stood above it on the stairs, watching the wide abyss on the floor in the morning. I stood slumped in my pajamas, my empty coffee mug in hand. My wife stood tall in her robe, recording the thing with her phone. It was like a construction team dropped a wrecking ball through the house and left it like that. The floorboards were ruptured in a circle around the hole and the black void of nothingness below had earthy inner outlinings, like a crater to the center of the planet. Even in her camera the hole wasn't appearing. What the fuck?

For the first few days, nothing happened. It literally appeared out of nowhere. How could this have even happened? Before we called anyone, we checked to see if it was actually real, searching for any damaged areas around the house to see if something, I don't know, crashed through the roof? Nothing. My wife couldn't figure it out either. She was a brilliant architect, an interior engineering architect at that. She genuinely believed it had either come from under us, or it was from nowhere at all. Even as a writer I've never believed in the supernatural. Nor did I believe in aliens. I guess some would say I'm a skeptic. That's what my wife calls me anyways. I couldn't figure out some, off the dome, crazy creative theory for it. It was just so surreal. Like what in the living hell was that?

We went and checked the basement underneath us before heading out to work on the first day. Nothing. No hole in the ceiling at all. My wife went upstairs and yelled down to me in the basement asking if the hole was visible, and well, it wasn't. It seems like the strange abyss actually came out of nowhere, but did it lead to nowhere? I walked back up, grabbed a fork and dropped it into the hole. I heard it bouncing against the rocky inner walls but I never heard it hit the ground. As the sounds of the fork subsided a feeling stirred inside of me, *remorse*.

My wife and I didn't know what to do or who to call, but what we did know is that we needed to get back to work. That's what my Wife would repeat to me. 'Let's just figure it out later,' she'd said. We just moved in recently and now there's a hole in the ground? It's definitely strange but maybe we were collectively hallucinating? My wife was stressed out of her mind, exhausted from dealing with her 'bosses.' She'd always come home, heavy eyed, slouching, less radiant than before she got the new job, "incompetent bastards," she'd call them. I guess architecture isn't all that simple huh. I couldn't speak on that though. I'm an independent writer with a best seller and two other works on the rise. If I hadn't gotten lucky and she hadn't gotten her new job, we wouldn't have this house, and subsequently, the hole in the floor. We thought we could call a few people to maybe sort it out. Her mother? Ha, she'd support us if anything happened, especially my Wife. While she may not believe us, she'd come in a flash hearing something was wrong with her sweet precious daughter. My mom? Wouldn't be worth the time of day. Our families wouldn't be of much help I mean. Maybe the hole would go away soon. So, with no solutions and no plans, we left. She went to work and I went upstairs to my office and then out later to buy groceries. I thought maybe if we both left it would go away? But no. The hole wanted a place to stay, and so it made its home with us.

We didn't want to draw too much attention and have the paparazzi flood our neighborhood. Plus, we could risk getting the house repossessed or even demolished by the State so they could take a better look at the hole and hope it led to some oil. I mean it's not like

they'd help us move out, they just want whatever's down there. But we didn't really know what's down there.

On the first day, or, well, the middle of the night more like it, my wife claimed she almost fell in at first. She'd told me she was in a daze and went down for a midnight snack and just felt quite off when walking downstairs. Then she noticed something in the floor ahead of her, almost taking a step too far forward. She said, even at night time, in the pitch black darkness of the house, the hole in the floor was still visible. She said it had a glow, emitting the color black, as if the hole itself was so dark, that its absence of color was illuminated in total darkness.

It's weird though, that story. She never really told me why she didn't wake me up to check it out. She just came back to bed as if nothing happened. I remember when I asked why she didn't wake me up. She stuttered and told me she thought she was dreaming so she didn't take me to see it. Hmf. I'd be scared too I guess. Would I be? What the hell was this thing?

Part 2:

Elevation.

It had been a week now. It was like our little ritual to go and check on the hole in the floor every night in our pajamas. During the day, my writing consumed my time. I'd go to my office and write, or, at least I tried. I was feeling so much blockage in my head. It was like a barrier in my mind, one that I've never seen before. There was a wall right in front of me, preventing me from accessing anything beyond it. The wall was distant, just like The Hole, it was right there, tangible, yet my hand could never reach its surface. Sometimes it felt like I could just wave my hand through it and it would be gone, but I never did. It was too dense. It made my chest sink into itself when I approached. The wall was so tall too, like I couldn't see where or if it ever stopped going up. Same with its width. Looking to my left and right, all I could see at the end of my mental road was the wall, stretching farther than I could see, or run. But for my wife? Well,

I'd never really seen her this way before. She was excited about her architecture firm, showering me with details every single evening when she got back from work. Everyday, she became happier. She hadn't really interacted with The Hole anymore. Just a few weeks in and she'd rather sleep before our nightly ritual would start. All she'd do now is walk into the house, strut past it, settle down, and talk to me about her job. Who was I to question the happiness of my partner? I mean, I am happy. Right?

I was at least glad to see her imaginatively active. She had been burnt out for the past few weeks. Her sleep was off, her mood was groggy, her jokes were lacking originality, I mean, she was clearly exhausted. But then what? It's like she was now a whole different person. Our talks were engaging, her sleeping was still off even though she was more tired, like she'd wake up in the middle of the night still, but our sex was amazing. I'd never felt her like that before, not in a while. It's like she was elevated; she had so many brilliant ideas to share about her architecture plans, and was enthusiastic about getting her single minded executive partners on her side for her huge project coming up. I didn't question it, not in the slightest, it's personal, and it's not in my right to question it, as far as I know.

For me though, that mental block was becoming straining. Sometimes I'd leave the office to just go and stare down The Hole. Walking out into nature started to feel less real, less productive. More, strenuous, felt like someone had put a bag over my head to strangle me. Staring at The Hole never jogged my memory per say, it just, uh, took my mind away. I thought I heard voices one time, desperately crawling out from inside. But when I asked my Wife she said to me,

"What voices?"

Could she not hear the whispers?

Part 3:

Admiration.

It's like it talked to me now. Whenever I reached the mental barrier I'd go to The Hole, but sometimes it felt like I was being summoned. It'd say to me,

"Fix," "Burn," or "Alter." I always felt like I knew what it meant, but it wasn't ever clear. Fix what? My life? My life was great. My wife was happy, she was her own person, and I, well, I was uh, hm. Anyway, burn? Alter? It made me feel sick, my stomach would swirl, twist, *rip*. I didn't like to think about my life. My wife was on her own journey though. She was still so vibrant, radiant. I enjoyed her company, her energy. It used to replenish mine. Our talks were still fresh. Sometimes we still went on walks outside and they were harmonic but, the air was becoming toxic. Her ideas were flowing like a steady stream, and our sex was, well, new. It was different this time. Like I could feel two separate feelings of release at once, like I was there in the moment, and yet, I was watching all of it happen from above.

What could I do? It had been a small few months now. I'd thought about it again. Calling my family. It wouldn't solve much. My two brothers wouldn't help. One of them is too busy trying to subtly take over my life, and the other one is too busy with his own work. Wish we'd kept in contact more. It would be interesting to see if he had a hole in his foyer too. Mom wouldn't care. Nor would dad, even if he was here to see it. He wouldn't want to, he was always too busy. Though I think he'd love to see it. He worked construction when he was alive. Died on the job. You know, sometimes, *I hear him from The Hole*. After we all split up and went our separate ways, me and my family, Mom told us that she didn't want to see us brothers ever again. She was always dramatic. One dead Dad and one falling out and that's all it took for her to break apart for good. But she was also the only one ever around. Dad kept us together, kept us whole, kept the entire family running. He was the cog to our machine, even when he wasn't fully

present. But once he left the mechanism, we all stopped functioning. We rusted. We were weaker together. So we had to split apart and find another machine to work with.

“Oh don’t be dramatic boy,” she’d say to me. Maybe Mom was right. ‘Cog in our machine?’ Unnecessary dramatization huh? *Dirty Hypocrite*.

“Watch us,” The Hole said to me. I was watching all right. Watching more than I was working. Sometimes when my wife would come home for the day and I’d be at The Hole with my coffee mug from the morning. Me and The Hole would share the coffee sometimes. It felt like it needed it. My wife never questioned it all. It’s like she just ignored The Hole for good. Why would she do that? She didn’t care? I don’t ignore it. I’m still here. She should be too. *Worthless Wench*.

Part 4:

Falter.

What was that point? My mental barrier wall had turned into a dome. I asked my wife about domes. She said it wasn’t her specialty but she knows how to generally build one. She taught me how. It had been 6 months now. My editor was flippant. She’d spam my phone, always asking where my revisions were, but I stopped answering. The Hole used to tell me to stop, used to say, “perpetuate,” but I never really knew what it meant. I felt it, like a new side of me, my body split in two.

My wife and I’s conversations were about architecture now. She loved to talk about that. She taught me while I sat listening, silently. Our walks were now non-existent. She still went on walks. I stayed where I was needed, with The Hole. I started to construct The Dome. Her ideas were steadily flowing. She claimed she had gotten a promotion. Did she not hear what The Hole told her to do?

“Flood,” it said to her, not me. I didn’t feel that warmth when it said this. I could see it reaching its dark abyssal vines to her but she didn’t budge. The vines shriveled and died when they reached her feet. They were scared, guilty, *shameful*. She’d be out of the house longer this time, in meetings more, leaving me alone more. *Thank God*. Our sex was fully unreal. I could see myself having it, floating above my head, out of my own body. It looked, *painful*.

“Machine,” is what The Hole would say to me whenever I talked to it about our sex. I was the machine? I was out of the machine? What? How can I fix this? WHAT DO I DO?!?

So I built The Dome.

It had been a year now. My Wife was still going at it, staying strong. I was terminated from my work. My writing was only useful when feeding The Hole, but it didn’t like hearing the stories; *it already knew them*. The Dome was built. The Hole said, “Ask her.” So I did. I asked her what really happened that night she first encountered The Hole. She finally told me. She’d said she felt uneasy at first, but an eventual calm, like a hug from her mother before bed as a child. It happened when she stared, but the more she stared, something unnatural would violently rock the acid in her stomach. She was confused, intrigued. She said it spoke to her then. Her grandfather’s voice. He left this world a decade ago. She said he cried for help from inside, but she knew better. She said she then felt silent. Her bones no longer rattled the cage on her soul. As long as she continued to focus on her work, herself, her life, The Hole would ease its grasp and linger, silently. She told me to do the same but how could I? Ignore The Hole? My precious, dull, void? It was mine. She let it go, gave it up, gave it to me. I would thank her for it, but I always had this weird feeling that it wasn’t her doing.

The Dome protected The Hole, or that’s what I told myself. But it said not to, it said it couldn’t breath. I’m sorry. It’s screaming, muffled. I said I was sorry. It’s piercing my brain, it’s my own voice,

“STOP HURTING ME I SAID WAS SORRY PLEASE!!!”

I destroyed The Dome.

The Hole was resentful. It didn't speak to me anymore. It stopped its grasp, its black vines receded. I felt it no longer. Like a rush, a wave of thoughts slammed into my brain like a tsunami:

"DAMNIT!! WHAT HAPPENED TO ME?! MY JOB!? MY MIND!? MY LIFE!? THE WARMTH?! IT'S ALL GONE!! WHAT THE FUCK IS GOING ON?!?"

They echoed; the thoughts. Louder. Louder. No, LOUDER.

I didn't know what to do. I cried. I could barely feel my body anymore. I touched my hands together and felt them numb. I could see them touch as if I were watching it all through a screen. My wife came to me and stared. I screamed desperately into The Hole and it yelled back in my voice but I couldn't hear it. It was like I was *Deaf*. But still I felt its screams, feeling my voice wade and slither under my skin. I knew its words, exact words. I felt it yell back but in a different tone. It was, *empty*. I couldn't sit up straight anymore, I couldn't breathe anymore, my body ached, I couldn't stand. So I fell. I was pulled into The Hole.

As I fell, I waited, waited to hit the bottom, but I never did. I fell and I still fall now. As I'm falling I wonder to myself, how worth-it was it all? Life? Did I mean those harsh, inescapable thoughts? Did I leave her behind? Did I leave my family behind? Did I leave myself behind? Even now as I fall, I can still see the inside of the house. When I'd first fallen, I saw my Wife look down at me, lifeless, but that wasn't her. *That was her husk*. Come to think of it, I believe I can see her now. She's different, she's talking to someone, on the stairs. Hm. I lessen my weight when falling, gaining back some of my strength. Black abyssal vines rip from the inner walls of The Hole and catch me as I fall. They hold me tight, by my limbs; they feel so warm. I've stopped falling, because I willed it. Hm. I can see her more clearly now. It's faint but I, I think can see it. It is her, right now it's her. Oh my God. She is on the stairs. She's looking directly down at me in her robe. It's morning up there and, she's uh, she's recording with her phone? Wait. She's not alone. Who's that standing next to her, watching? Is that...

Me?