

Antarctica February 2, 2015

It came through while the mining operation was nearly dead asleep. It approached from an unknown direction at an unknown hour. Not a single person reported the sighting, yet everyone would tell you it came in over the night.

That night, there were perfectly clear skies. The northern lights painted the canvas of the ice floor as the ocean filled with pristine green and blue. Not a single living creature dared impose it. The constant of drills entering earth, fuel silos whirring in loops, and the infrequent sounds of dynamite, all subsided for that night. No disturbances.

The morning remained quiet until the first operator spotted the goliath. The others awoke, confused, hardly believing the words they were hearing. Hastily, they made their way into the metal elevator the size of a small flat and poorly lit with one large light bar in the center ceiling. Some were still in undershirts from their rest. Once each was in, the elevator pulleyed them up slowly to the fourth floor of the operation, where the metal deck oversaw Antarctica for miles.

Each of them flooded the deck. A shadow cast over them. The slight excitement faded into dread as they looked up.

A monolith, hovering six stories off the ground, seven above sea level, resembling a cube standing on one of its corners. From just the deck, it was impossible to see but just two sides of the being, the other sides were either obscured in pitch black shadows, or too far away to see with the naked eye. The sun behind it, barely peeped through. It was clear that the structure was another color, but any tone could not be made out under its shadow.

Two operators ran into the communications room. The radars displayed black through their circular screens, the coil-wired phones hummed a constant tone, and each computer lining the walls displayed no connection. Everyone panicked. The dingy communications were of no use and without them, no help could arrive. Mining would have to be paused, without communication, the likelihood of an accident would be too great to continue safely.

By the second hour, some had made plans to leave, but all of them fell through quickly. The nearest boats were at least five miles away from the station, they all lacked fuel, and the only fuel tanks were stationed at the bottom of the facility; they were not meant to be moved from their positions and the operators were explicitly given no handheld gas cans.

The fourth hour, every operator was huddled in the communications room. They had brought up sandwiches and drinks from the lower floors and assembled a picnic of sorts. The shadow of the monolith blotched out all the windows. It was like midnight, but step onto the deck and

you could see the sun's rays in the distance. One of the operators chose to not dine with the rest, instead staring at the monolith from the deck. He was aptly dubbed "Peeping Tom."

The thirteenth hour came around. Though the sun had faded from the distance, the operators noticed no difference in lighting. The monolith had not moved in that time, at least not enough to be noticeable. Some wagered it was non-hostile, but seeing how it obscured communications, that was a non-garrentee. They all feared to go to sleep, some overcoming their fears sooner than others.

Eventually, everyone was able to doze off to sleep. Though the threat of the monolith remained on everyone's mind. Peeping Tom was the last to sleep, he spent the most time compared to anyone looking at the monolith.

That was a month ago, and Tom is dead.

Everyone in the operation had small pieces of their skin seemingly fall apart. First, blood would drip from the patch, eventually growing into a constant flow, like an endless sap from a tree. The patch would become dehydrated, then the skin would no longer cling to the muscle.

But for Tom, he was entirely consumed. It wasn't just his skin: His fingernails fell off one by one, his arms stopped in place, permanently twisted as if in a backward hug, his eyes began to bleed, draining like smushed grapes, and his mouth gave way to a flood of pure red.

It all happened over the course of the month, when it reached his arms, they thought of just cutting him short but he insisted that he could not die just then. His will to live was inhuman.

The monolith, in that time, moved much closer to the facility. Now, it only stood a few meters away from the roof. Everyone made their best attempts to avoid it but now, it demanded attention. Though everyone was stationed at the bottom floor of the facility, they could hear it; from the top floor, a sizzling sound, like water hitting a grill.

No one was willing to investigate. Each of them adorned a battle scar, a place of missing flesh. It was unrealistic to risk more people, but the sound was unignorable.

The sizzling continued for another hour. It was like boiling rain hitting the roof. Someone volunteered to go, the man with the least scars. He rode the elevator up to the top floor but by then the sizzling noise had stopped. Was he right on time, or too late?

The entire floor smelled of human waste, the stench growing worse as the operator made his way to the deck.

Above him, the monolith, but in front of him, horrific amazement: a grotesquely statured creature resembling Tom almost entirely.