

SPECK

You can just barely see it. It's only the size of a pinhole in your field of vision, but you see it. In your left eye, a dot of color floating just outside your periphery. But the color isn't one you've seen before. It's almost yellow, but... no... calling it yellow would be too mundane a thing. Yellow is the color of sunflowers and mustard, the ring around an old bruise or the eyes of a jaundiced man. This color is something new entirely. The more you struggle to focus on it, the smaller it seems, as if hiding from your recognition. When you give up and relax, there it is again! Floating lazily, almost as if it's... bouncing. You squeeze your eyes shut tight against the strange sight and shake your head to clear—whatever it is—out of your mind, but it only grows more vibrant.

You go about your business for the day, going to work and running errands, cooking dinner for yourself, and reading that novel you've been trying to finish for your book club, and it follows you. You do your best to ignore it, pretending it's just a trick of the light, or maybe there's a hole in your cornea, but you know better.

As you lie down to sleep that night, your eyes close gently and the pinhole starts to burn, not growing in intensity or brightness or size, but somehow you know it's getting stronger. You wait, eyes closed, breathing deeply to try and gather some semblance of calming rest, but it eludes you. Your heart beats hard in your chest, resounding

staccato in your ears, the bouncing ball seeming to match in sync without moving. It defies all logic and physiology, but you know what you see. Finally, it is too much. Your eyes shoot open, but nothing changes. It's still pitch black with naught, but this not-yellow speck to break the monotony. You reach for the lamp at your bedside and flick the switch, flooding the room with light, but the speck remains.

You didn't want to believe what that old man had said. He was just a lonely man feeding the ducks at the pond, but something in his eyes made him seem... wrong somehow. You walked faster, trying to evade an interaction with someone so clearly out of the ordinary, but he reached out and grabbed your wrist, freezing you mid-step. His voice was hushed and rasping, as if struggling to escape his throat. "The Old Ones have spoken. You'll do." Then, to your horror, he reached up to your face and forced the eyelid of your left eye open. His strength far exceeded the capability his frame would infer, and though you choked out in protest, he looked deep into your eyes, and you saw something. Something in his pupil, spinning and writhing, a roiling cloud of... limbs? Vines? What it was, you couldn't be sure, but whatever it was, you knew it changed you. And then... You could just barely see it.