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Working at an Art-Film Theater

When I got home, I turned on the computer like I would any other day, only to find a new post on one of the Reddit accounts I follow:

u/Cutie_honey says: Yet another terrible creepypasta overcrowding the internet. They make them worse every time.

This was a comment posted under a recent creepypasta publication—one of those horror stories that you read in parts, as people write them. The story started like any other, with a predictable, stale title, and it went something like this:

WORKING AT AN ART-FILM THEATER - Part 1

My name is Josh, and I work at an art-film theater. You know, one of those special movie theaters that big companies open to

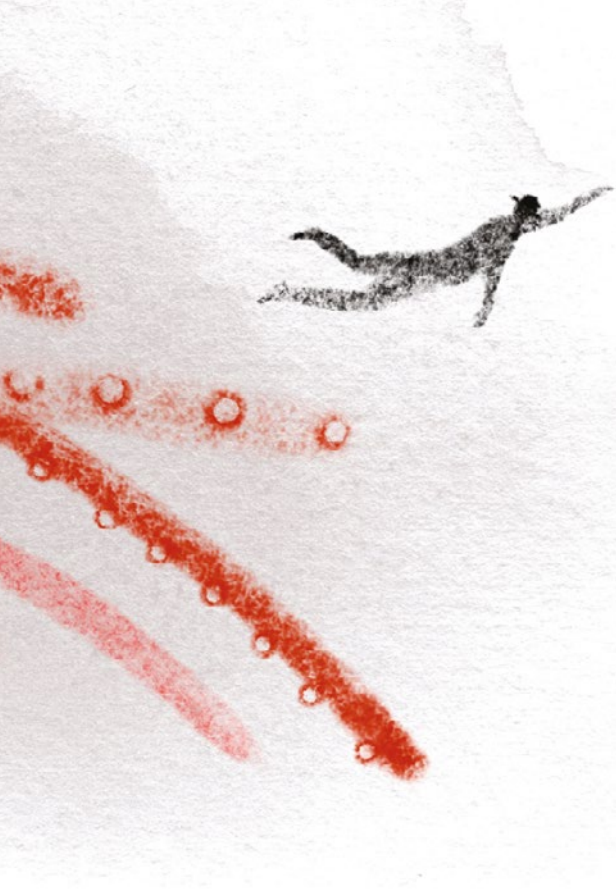
screen nothing but black-and-white films. I'm not sure if "art-film theater" is the right term, but I can't find another good way to explain it. Even the architecture of the place is designed to be cutting-edge. It's strange. My theory is that, before, the theater was actually one of the city's old art-nouveau homes. Even to find the popcorn stand, one has to wander through a labyrinth of stairs and abandoned box offices. And the auditoriums themselves are a nightmare! The seats are so worn that you can feel their plastic frames, and the screens aren't sized for the format of more contemporary films. Each auditorium has surprises of its own, but none stinks as much as auditorium number three.

I discovered this a few weeks ago. I hadn't even been working there for a month when I had to help out with the cleaning. Kyle, the theater manager, handed me an old broom, a metal dustpan, and one of those trash cans with wheels that we'll usually haul to the auditoriums whenever a film ends. "Don't mess up the equipment," Kyle warned me, "It's all we've got. Oh, and be careful in auditorium number three. It's old and barely gets any use. You can just wipe a couple of seats."

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What could there possibly be in that auditorium? I worked quickly so as not to raise suspicion and, when nobody was looking, I poked into auditorium number three. Beyond the dark hallway leading to the seats, I sensed something different in the air. The auditoriums are all cold except this one since there've been issues with the air conditioning. I got my things, and once I was about to start sweeping, I noticed something unsettling. All of the chairs were facing the wrong direction. Instead of the auditorium entrance being at the front, next to the screen, the door was all the way in the back. This auditorium was huge, and the slope seemed extremely steep as I walked down the stairs. When I started sweeping along the first row, I noticed that the numbering was also backwards: it started with row N and went backwards from there.

Unlike the other theaters, where one has to sweep up popcorn and scrub the soda stains, here there was just dust and something slimy on the floor. I focused on sweeping but felt suffocated by the rows and rows of seats. The screen seemed huge against the wall, and it was hard to even see it without craning my neck. That's when the lights started blinking. I went back to the middle aisle, and there, a few rows beneath me, was a bucket of popcorn. I felt a chill run down my spine. Had that bucket always been there? I went over to pick it up, and, as I bent down, I saw something slimy stretching across the floor, like a worm. The lights went out and I felt a cold rope coiling around my leg. Desperate, I tried to pry it off with the dustpan, but its grip got tighter and tighter until I pierced its jellylike flesh with

the edge of the metal dustpan. A thick liquid splattered onto the floor, and the thing let me go.

When I got back to the popcorn stand, everything appeared to be back to normal. Everything but Kyle. He was peering at me all the way from the box office.

☆☆☆☆

Why did it have such bad reviews? It was the best creepy-pasta I'd ever read! Giant worms? Mutant popcorn? I couldn't stop thinking about it. Falling asleep at night started getting harder, and I wasn't paying attention in class. In the afternoon, on the school bus home, I thought up ways to explain the monster hounding the cinema. I got off at the stop near the avenue by my house, tucked between the Korean restaurants and the movie-theater that's on my street. Not a lot of people go to that theater anymore, but I remember having been there with my mom. I didn't have any luck that day. I had to wait another week for the next update:

WORKING AT AN ART-FILM THEATER - Part 2

It's been several weeks since the incident at the movie theater, and I can't stop thinking about what happened. Of course, Kyle gave me a hard time. "I told you to be careful in that theater!" he said. But who cares. To hell with rules! Something supernatural is going on inside that auditorium, and I need to get to the bottom of it. Every day, when I walk past auditorium number three, I can feel something watching me from inside. Today, I finally decided to go back in.

Once again, I found myself sweeping between the rows of seats. I needed to confirm what I'd seen before. I wasn't scared. I waited for the lights to go out. But nothing happened. The thing was hunting me, waiting for me to let my guard down. Or maybe it was all a figment of my imagination. I was feeling more confident, so I took a seat. If nothing showed up for fifteen minutes, I'd go to therapy. Otherwise . . .

I heard a thud behind me—something heavy and metallic. The lights started blinking. Just walking down the steps in that theater was jarring enough—dizzying even—but sitting all the way in the back was where the true horror laid. The floor was at such an incline that you couldn't see if there was anyone in front or behind you. I craned my neck sideways, toward the aisle, and then I saw it. Just a few rows down. He was sitting just like I was, turning back to look at me with a broad

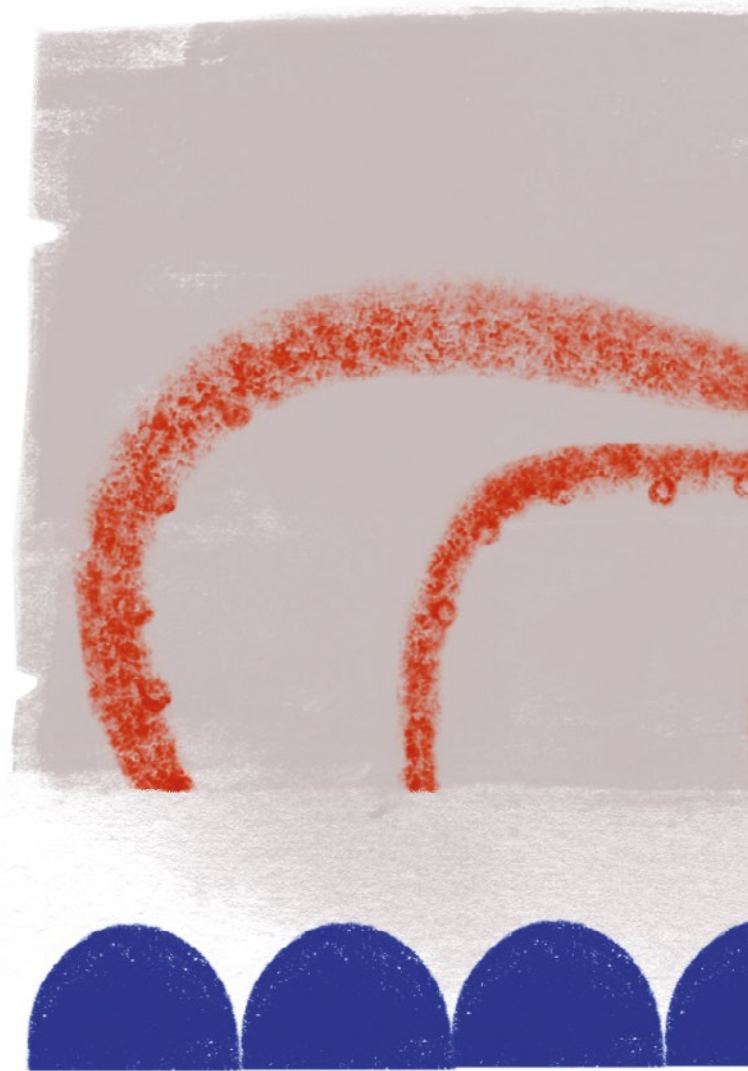
grin. We were exactly the same. He was wearing my hat and my uniform. There was a small, metal nametag pinned to uniform. I recognized it immediately. It said, "Josh."

I tried to make a run for it before the lights went out, but the seats were so close together that I kept tripping on the arm rests. I was getting too distracted. I needed to get out of there! I ran up the stairs and looked back one more time. There I was. I'd stood up, smiling. Slowly, my skull split in two like an egg, and my empty head fell to the ground while hundreds of tentacles sprouted from my uniform collar. Covered in some sort of slime, they'd leap and twist, reveling in their freedom. The monster took a step forward.

I bolted toward the door and realized it was shut. I screamed, kicked, and pushed until I fell face-flat against the carpet. Kyle stood on the other side of the door. He looked worried. He wanted an explanation, but I couldn't give him one. I don't know if I can trust him. For now, it's just me against the thing. And I have a plan. Next week, there's going to be a midnight special at the art-film theater: a screening of the movie *Alien*, or an attempt to draw from the audiences of *Prometheus*, which is premiering in commercial theaters. It's on Friday, so we're going to have a busy day. I'm going to wait until everyone's distracted, and then I'll go in. It'll be my last time in that auditorium. I don't know if I'll ever make it out.

When I finished reading the second update on the story, a strange feeling lingered inside me. I didn't want to keep going. The whole thing about the popcorn was funny, but I was scared to know where the creepypasta would go from there. That week, at school, I tried not to think about it anymore. I just wanted to relax and be able to fall asleep again, in peace. On the school bus, I'd listen to music and look out at the streets. That's when I saw it. As we turned the corner to the stop near my house, I saw a poster for a midnight show at the movie theater. "Reviving the Classics. Special Screening: *Alien*."

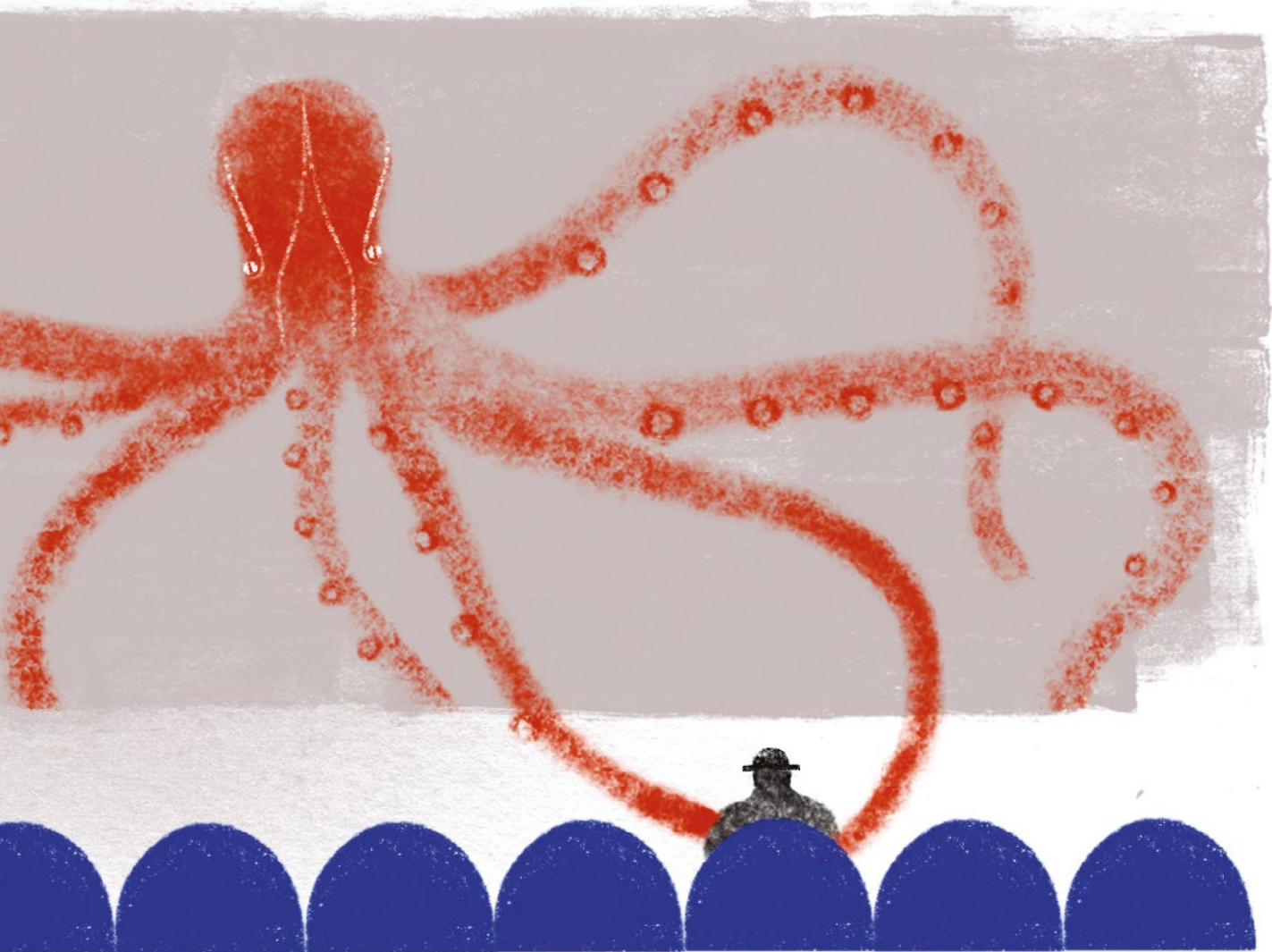
I know that internet stories aren't real . . . but this was a very strange coincidence. I was scared of leaving the house that late at night without telling my mom, but this was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. If there really was a monster in that auditorium, could I live with myself knowing that I didn't try to help that guy out? When I stepped off the school bus, I paused in front of the movie theater. It was small; there was an empty box office and some stairs beside it. Upstairs, there were employees, and everything seemed to be business as usual.



I didn't see anyone called Kyle there. I've never even heard of anyone with that name here in the city, but I did run into an older kid—high-school aged, perhaps—and the nametag clipped his uniform said "Joshua." He was serving up cherry slushies behind the counter.

WORKING AT AN ART-FILM THEATER - Part 3

I know this is Josh's account, but it's Kyle writing today. Ever since I started working here, I've known that something strange has been going on in auditorium number three—probably some maintenance problem, since the theater is actually in a super old house. But I never thought it would get to Josh like this. He'd started looking more and more worn out by the week, and all he'd talk about was auditorium number three. That's why I agreed to go to the midnight screening with him. I am the manager, after all! Now I know it was a mistake—the worst mistake of my life.



Josh showed up armed with a kitchen knife and battery-powered flashlights. I never quite understood why, but he wanted me to watch his back while he was in the theater. And for me to hold the door open. It all happened about one hour after he got there, but the guys at the ticket counter were busy, so only I could hear him scream. His voice sounded distant, like it was coming from deep inside a well. Then I heard a crunching sound, like a bone being broken. "Josh?" I called out, but he didn't answer. "JOSH!" What was going on in there? I let go of the door so that I could find him. I let it slam shut behind me. Inside the theater, the lights had gone out and it was cold as hell. In the distance, a humongous figure came into view, with the shadow of thousands of tentacles shooting up from one of the lowest rows. Thumping and thumping, the tentacles would twist, lifting up what looked like a body and then smashing it against the floor. I can't remember exactly what I saw, no matter how hard I try, but I must have made a noise, because the movement suddenly stopped.

I don't know how long I've been inside here, hiding among the chairs, but I can't escape. The door is jammed, and none of

the other guys knows I'm here. They're probably home by now. Climbing up to the projection booth doesn't look easy. The screen is too high up, and I can't let my guard down and turn my back to that thing. If you're reading this, please let someone know so that someone can come get me. I need to get out of here, now!! I've started to accept that Josh is dead, but I'm not alone. The thing looks just like him with that uniform! Every time I lift my head, there he is, beaming at me from the other end of the auditorium.

The following day, I turned my computer on in the morning. It was a Saturday. The shifts at the movie-theater start early in the day, but the end of the story had already been posted. It had only been a few hours since Josh and I wrote that draft, but we already had our first comment.

u/Cutie_honey says: And it ended like any other cheap story. I told you it wasn't worth it. **NM**