

A Life Behind Him

A Psychological Horror

The room smelled of cold dust and stagnant time. Nothing moved, not even the air seemed willing to stay. He sat at the desk, his back hunched as if something held him there. In his hands trembled a slip of paper. "I know." Nothing more. No name, no explanation, no escape.

His gaze fell on the ring before him. He had nervously slipped it off his finger minutes ago, hastily, almost unconsciously, as if that could lighten the weight in his chest. Matte gold, dulled like everything that had once meant something. Inside, barely visible, a carved date. Not their wedding day, but the day of his betrayal. Beside it, a nearly empty glass of whiskey caught the dim light, its amber liquid a bitter reminder of restless nights and hollow attempts at courage.

Something was wrong. The room had grown heavier. He felt it at the nape of his neck, the sure knowledge that he was no longer alone. Slowly he raised his head. The walls seemed to close in. And then he saw the outline in the shadow behind him, female, familiar, yet wrong. Too still. Too complete.

"Anna?" The word fell lifeless into the room. The shadow did not respond. Of course not. Anna had been dead for three days. Car accident, they had said. Quick, painless. He had functioned, spoken, mourned, all as expected. None of it had been real.

The shadow moved closer. Not walking, simply closer. His hands began to tremble. "This isn't real." His voice sounded strange. The paper slipped from his hands. For a moment, he thought he saw more words on it, but he dared not look.

Behind him, the darkness thickened, cold and calm, without anger, without haste. No scream, no blow, only a silent judgment. Something inside him began to tear, first fine, then deeper. Against every instinct, he turned further. The shadow took shape. Hair, shoulders, a face he knew and no longer wanted to recognize.

Then he understood. It was not a ghost. It was memory. His own. And it had decided to stay.

The ring began to spin, slowly, silently. The man closed his eyes. When he opened them again, the ring had stopped spinning. The room was no longer the same. And neither was he.

Explore the accompanying photograph for this piece, along with many more striking, evocative, and artistically distinctive images from this and other series, in the web album at www.BioMechMaidens.com.

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