

HELLBOUND: NO EXIT

written by

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INT. BOARDING HOUSE - LOBBY - NIGHT

The lobby is dimly lit. A chandelier flickers from above. The air is stale, coated in cigarette smoke and mildew.

A young man drags in a red suitcase — ETHAN MILLER (30). Pale, restless eyes. He hesitates before the wooden counter where a guestbook waits.

He casually pulls out his phone and texts his brother, DAVID: *"Hey, let's meet up later. Grab something to eat?"*

Behind it, a figure emerges, the LANDLADY (60s), gray hair, wide smile that doesn't reach her eyes.

LANDLADY

Welcome, Mr. Miller. You'll find our rooms... private. A bit quiet. Just what you asked for.

ETHAN

Yeah. Quiet's good.

She slides over a brass key. A number etched on it: Room 6.

LANDLADY

Mind the neighbors. They are quite chaotic.

A beat. Ethan forces a smile, takes the key.

ETHAN

Thanks... I guess.

INT. BOARDING HOUSE - HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Long, claustrophobic corridor. The bulbs hum, some dead.

Ethan walks, suitcase rolling, echoing unnaturally loud. He pauses, feeling eyes on him.

A door at the far end creaks open. A gaunt figure, GABRIEL (30s), peers out. Unsettlingly calm.

GABRIEL

New tenant: Male. Appears to be in his late 20s and tired. Greetings. My name is Gabriel.

ETHAN

Yeah. Name's Ethan. Just passing through.

Gabriel steps out, barefoot, tilts his head.

GABRIEL

Nobody passes through. We stay. And  
you're one of us now.

Ethan forces a chuckle, walks past. Gabriel watches, his eyes  
lingering far too long.

INT. ROOM 6

Room 6 is sparse and composed of: a bed, a wardrobe, a desk  
with a chair, a lamp, one small window nailed shut.

Ethan sets down his suitcase. Sits on the bed. The bed creaks  
under him. Then he hears it, scratching noise. From inside  
the walls. Soft, steady, like something's moving around.

Ethan presses his ear to the wall. Scratch... scratch...  
scratch. He knocks. The scratching stops. A whisper bleeds  
through:

VOICE (O.S.)

(soft, childlike)

Don't piss me off.

Ethan stumbles away. Breath quickening.

The bulb above his bed flickers violently, then steadies.

INT. BOARDING HOUSE - DINING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

A long table is set, dimly lit by candles. Five RESIDENTS  
sit, eating silently. Faces gaunt, eyes hollow. Ethan joins  
at the empty seat. Awkward silence. Knives scraping plates.

Finally, a woman, MARTHA (40s), speaks, voice dry.

MARTHA

The previous Room 6 owners were a  
total menace. Always shouting and  
arguing... never a moment's peace. I  
hope you don't mind them.

Forks pause. All eyes on Ethan.

ETHAN

What's that supposed to mean?

GABRIEL

You'll see.

Gabriel grins. Landlady enters, sets a pot of stew down. The stew somehow is in flames? The glowing orange fire reflects in Ethan's eyes.

ETHAN

How...?

LANDLADY

(unfazed)

Eat up. You'll need strength.

INT. ROOM 6 - LATER THAT NIGHT

Ethan jolts awake. Someone's in the room. A shadow stands at the foot of his bed. A figure of a WOMAN?

WOMAN

My kid... my kid...

Ethan fumbles for the lamp, but when light comes, nothing's there. He sits in silence, chest heaving. From the hallway outside faint shouting. Multiple voices overlapping. He grips the sheets tighter.

INT. ROOM 6 - MORNING

Sunlight filters through cracks in the nailed window. Dust floats like ash.

Ethan stares at the door. Fresh scratches gouge the wood overnight. Long, jagged marks like fingernails dragged with force.

He traces one with his fingertip. His skin shivers.

There's a knock at the door. Ethan jumps. The door creaks open before he can answer. Gabriel leans inside, holding two mugs of coffee.

GABRIEL

You didn't eat last night. Thought you might want this.

Ethan eyes the mug. Steam rises.

ETHAN

Thanks.

He takes it, sips. Too metallic. He forces it down.

ETHAN (CONT'D)

No thanks...

GABRIEL

Room 6 likes to keep its guests awake. Did you hear them?

ETHAN

Them?

Gabriel grins, teeth slightly too sharp.

GABRIEL

Don't worry. You'll hear more tonight.

INT. BOARDING HOUSE - HALLWAY - AFTERNOON

Ethan walks down the hall. The doors on both sides are ajar. Eyes peek through cracks. Whispering.

Unaware, he's scrolling on his phone, checking the message he sent his brother.

ETHAN

Why hasn't he replied yet...? What's wrong with him leaving me on read.

He then stops. The hallway goes quiet. Every door shuts at once. The hallway echoes like a gunshot. Ethan stiffens, heart racing.

INT. DINING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The residents eat again. Afternoon silence breaks faster.

MARTHA

(to Ethan)

Do you dream at night?

ETHAN

What?

MARTHA

The house gives us dreams. Sometimes bad ones. Especially during mid-night.

The others nod, slowly, solemnly.

ETHAN

What about mid-night?

Martha leans closer and whispers:

MARTHA

That's when you feel the burn.

A heavy pause. The Landlady appears at the head of the table, carrying a covered tray. She lifts the lid. Inside raw meat soup, scarred with a burnt toy embedded.

LANDLADY

Eat. Or you'll be eaten by flames.

(chuckles)

Just joking.

The residents dig in. Gabriel chews with casual delight. Ethan stares, revolted. His stomach twists.

INT. ROOM 6 - NIGHT

Ethan locks the door. He paces the room his breath sharp.

Suddenly, the light turns off. And a low hum rises in the walls. Like voices singing, layered, out of sync.

Ethan grips the lamp and turns it on. On the bed sits the woman, with burnt skin. Eyes black voids.

WOMAN

(softly)

You shouldn't stay here.

Ethan drops the lamp and glass shatters. The woman is gone. More knocking erupts from the side of the door. Violent, rapid.

ETHAN

Stop... STOP!

The wardrobe creaks open an inch. Darkness beyond. A gray skeletal hand reaches out.

Ethan bolts to the door, flings it open -

INT. HALLWAY

Gabriel stands there, smiling as if waiting.

GABRIEL

Leaving already?

Ethan slams the door shut, back against it, trembling.

INT. ROOM 6

Sweat drips down his forehead. His hands tremble. Then a sudden fast desperate knocking at his door.

He opens it and Martha stumbles in, shaking. Her body is covered in severe burns, almost entirely scorched.

ETHAN  
Jesus, what—?

MARTHA  
(shoving him)  
Lock it. Hurry!

He slams the door. They both pant.

ETHAN  
What happened?

Martha grabs his shirt, eyes wild.

MARTHA  
They tried to burn me. Alive. They  
tried to feed me to it.

ETHAN  
Who?

MARTHA  
Room 6.

The loud scratching in the walls starts again.

Martha sobs, rocking. Ethan edges toward the walls. It falls silence. When he turns back Martha's gone. Just a smear of blood across the floor, trailing under the bed.

INT. BOARDING HOUSE - BATHROOM - MORNING

Ethan splashes cold water on his face. Breath ragged.

ETHAN  
It's just nightmares. It's not  
real.

He looks up. In the mirror a kid, no older than ten. He stands behind him, smiling.

Ethan spins around. There's no one. When he looks back at the mirror the kid's reflection is still there, standing right behind him, grinning wider. The kid mouths: Burn. The mirror cracks down the middle.

INT. HALLWAY

Ethan runs. Doors slam open one after the other as he passes. Whispering noise overlapping each other.

One door bursts wide. Inside, the child from before, sitting cross-legged.

CHILD

It won't let you leave.

Ethan staggers back. The door slams shut.

INT. DINING ROOM - LATER

The residents sit at the table again. This time, the Landlady places a chair at the head.

LANDLADY

Our new guest has proven to be strong. Strong enough to stay.

The residents clap slowly, eerily in sync. Ethan backs away.

ETHAN

I'm not staying here.

Gabriel rises, spreading his arms.

GABRIEL

But you already belong. The room has chose you.

Ethan bolts. Gabriel lunges after him, laughing.

INT. ROOM 6

Ethan barricades the door with the desk. He grips a broken shard of the mirror like a weapon.

Whispers flood the room. The walls pulse as though breathing.

VOICES (O.S.)

(whispering, overlapping)

Burn... Burn... Burn...

The bulb swings overhead, shadows stretching unnaturally long. From under the bed a woman's hand shoots out, clutching his ankle.

Ethan screams, thrashing, stabbing down with the glass shard. A shrill cry erupts from under the bed. The hand retreats.

Ethan backs against the wall, shaking.

INT. ROOM 6 - DUSK

Ethan wakes to a knock. Slow and Steady. He grips his shard of mirror, ready if a fight breaks out.

The door creaks open. A familiar voice speaks out. DAVID (28), Ethan's younger brother.

DAVID  
Ethan? What's up, man?

Ethan freezes, disbelief flooding him.

ETHAN  
David...? No. You're— You can't be here.

David steps in, smiling weakly.

DAVID  
I came to find you. I didn't want you to be alone anymore.

Ethan drops the shard, trembling.

ETHAN  
(whispering)  
You left me. You walked away from me.

David grips his shoulders, firm.

DAVID  
What are you saying. I came back.

Ethan pulls him into a desperate hug. His face cracks, tears streaming.

INT. DINING ROOM - AFTER THAT

Gabriel and Landlady stare as Ethan and David sit together. Their gazes heavy, disapproving.

Gabriel sneers.

GABRIEL  
The house doesn't like reunions. It only keeps what it needs.

ETHAN  
He's my brother.

LANDLADY  
(softly, smiling)  
Familyhood are fragile here.

Ethan stiffens.

David grips his hand under the table.

DAVID  
Don't listen. We can just leave.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

The brothers creep through the corridor, suitcase in Ethan's hand. The lights flicker dimly. Whispers rise. Doors slam open, revealing residents inside, blocking their way.

Gabriel steps forward, arms out.

GABRIEL  
The house is generous. It gave you  
back your brother. But nothing is  
free.

He lunges. A violent struggle issues. David smashes a vase across Gabriel's back. Gabriel laughs, blood dripping from his mouth.

GABRIEL (CONT'D)  
Ouch. But you can't kill me. The  
house won't let me die!

They both run.

INT. ROOM 6

They barricade inside. Both panting.

Ethan clutches David.

ETHAN  
We leave. At dawn. No matter what.

David nods, determined.

The bulb overhead pops. Darkness swallows the room. Dozens of black hands claw out from the walls, reaching, grasping, dragging.

Ethan screams, holding onto David as the walls writhe alive.

DAVID  
Hold on! Don't let go!

Ethan grips tighter. But the hands wrap David, yanking him toward the wall.

ETHAN  
NO!

He claws, fights, ripping his own nails bloody as he tries to pull David back.

David's face contorts in pain and then, suddenly he appears calm.

DAVID  
(softly)  
Maybe this is the only way, Ethan.

The wall swallows him whole. Ethan collapses, sobbing uncontrollable, alone again.

INT. ROOM 6

Ethan sits against the wall, eyes red, staring at the spot where David vanished. His nails are cracked, bloody from clawing.

A slow *knock-knock-knock* begins from inside the walls. Whispers seep through: overlapping voices, chanting his name.

VOICES (O.S.)  
Eeeethan... burn... Eeeethan... burn...

He clamps his ears. The bulb overhead flickers to life and David stands in the corner.

ETHAN  
David.

Only his skin is burnt. His eyes are black voids. His mouth sewn shut, yet he grins.

Ethan scrambles back.

ETHAN (CONT'D)  
No. No no no.

David jerks forward, movements unnatural, puppet-like. The stitches on his mouth tear as he hisses.

DAVID  
 (stitched mouth ripping)  
 Why... did you let me go?

Ethan hurls a chair at him. The figure shatters like glass, collapsing into shards across the floor.

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Ethan bursts out, running. The hallway is endless, stretching impossibly long.

Doors slam open and residents step out, forming a line. Their are burnt. Faces are distorted, eyes gouged, jaws hanging slack.

Gabriel stands at the far end, arms wide.

GABRIEL  
 You're one of us! Stay with us.

Ethan screams, rushes at him. They collide, a brutal fight.

Ethan slams Gabriel into the wall, stabbing him with his broken shard of mirror. Gabriel laughs, blood gushing, eyes shining.

GABRIEL (CONT'D)  
 (staggering closer)  
 You'll never leave.

Ethan stabs again, and again, until Gabriel collapses in a heap, twitching, laughing even in death.

INT. DINING ROOM

Ethan stumbles in. The table is set and on fire. The Landlady sits at the head, unfazed.

LANDLADY  
 Sit. It's dinner time.

ETHAN  
 No, it's not. I'm not staying.

The Landlady's clothes catches fire but she leans closer, her smile cracking unnaturally wide until her jaw splits at the hinge.

LANDLADY  
 Burn...

The walls begin to catch fire. Blood runs down the walls. Ethan bolts, slipping in the blood, clawing toward the door.

INT. FRONT DOOR

Ethan reaches the front door. His hands grip the knob. It burns his skin with a sizzling sound. He screams, forcing it open.

Behind him, the Landlady shrieks an inhuman, piercing sound. The residents surge forward, including Martha and Gabriel, shrieking, their hands clawing.

Ethan tears the door open and stumbles out.

EXT. STREET

Ethan is out in the empty street. The boarding house looms behind him. Its windows glow orange due to the fire burning inside.

Ethan collapses to his knees.

EXT. EMPTY STREET - LATER

Ethan walks, trembling as he passes a mirror shop. Glass panes stacked in the windows.

He glances and every reflection is him, but rotted, mutilated, different deaths.

One reflection moves on its own, pressing against the glass.

REFLECTION

You're already dead.

The glass shatters. Shards rain across the sidewalk, slicing his arms. He stumbles back, bleeding.

EXT. MOTEL - MOMENTS LATER

A decent-looking motel with neon sign buzzing. He stumbles inside, throws money on the counter.

His name tag slips into view, *Sam*. The clerk, SAM (40s) slides him a key without a word.

ETHAN  
 (pleading)  
 Please. No games. No tricks. Just a  
 normal bedroom.

The clerk stares. His smile spreads wider. Familiar? It's giving Landlady's smile.

Ethan's hand shakes as he takes the key.

INT. MOTEL ROOM

Ethan sets the suitcase down and collapses on the bed. For a moment silence. Then the scratching begins again. Same as Room 6.

Ethan laughs bitterly out loud.

ETHAN  
 Of course. Of course it followed  
 me.

The scratching grows louder, frantic. The walls tremble. Blood seeps through the wallpaper, forming words: Burn

Ethan grips the broken mirror shard.

ETHAN (CONT'D)  
 No. I'm leaving. For good.

Suddenly the child sits in front of him.

ETHAN (CONT'D)  
 Enough! What do you guys want from  
 me? Money? Company?

The child tilts his head.

CHILD  
 Are you stupid? We want you to burn  
 with us... and be one with the house.

Ethan lunges, stabbing again and again. Blood splashes the walls. But when Ethan stops, gasping. He sees the truth:

He's stabbed the motel clerk, Sam. The man slumps, lifeless.

Ethan drops the shard, horrified.

The child laughs.

CHILD (CONT'D)  
 Thank you....

Its mouth stretches impossibly wide, splitting open. Inside a swarm of hands clawing out, reaching for Ethan.

Ethan screams, scrambling back.

The motel walls pulse like living flesh, the carpet bubbling like veins.

He claws at the doorknob. He struggles to open. The knob dissolves into his palm, fusing with his skin. He rips free, chunks of flesh tearing off.

INT. MOTEL ROOM

The walls split open like ribs cracking. Behind them it's meat, pulsating alive.

Ethan claws his way out as the room collapses.

INT. STAIRWELL - CONTINUOUS

He barrels down stair after stair, but every landing is the same. Same pink wallpaper. Same EXIT sign. Endless loop.

Screams screams above and below. Gray hands crawl along the ceiling like spiders.

Ethan swings his suitcase, and smashes one's hand.

INT. LOBBY

He bursts into the lobby. Only one thing inside: a dinner table, set for two. An empty chair and other: David's, already half-eaten body.

David sits at the table, blood dripping down his chin.

                  DAVID  
                  (snarling)  
                  Sit.

Ethan hurls a hammer he randomly found. It bursts open. He screams and bolts for a door.

EXT. WOODS - NIGHT

Suddenly, he's in a forest. Dead trees, endless fog. He runs. Branches claw at him, tearing his skin. Behind him, the house walks on spider-legs, chasing, its windows glowing red.

He trips, slams into the dirt. Looks up.

The child stands above him, holding a key.

CHILD

One door left. Do you really want  
it?

Ethan snatches the key, crawls to a crooked wooden door standing alone in the clearing. He shoves the key in and turns it...

INT. ROOM 6 - NIGHT

He's back to Room 6. Same green walls. Same nailed window.

Ethan laughs, a broken sound.

ETHAN

I never left...

INT. ROOM 6 - NEXT MORNING

Ethan sits on the bed, motionless. Defeated. But this time, no scratching. No voices.

He looks at the nailed window. Gets up and begins to pull. One nail. Then another. The wood creaks. He rips until the boards fall out. Light pierces through, the sunlight almost blinding. Outside, cars honk and birds chirp, city noise pouring in.

Ethan's face twists in disbelief.

EXT. STREET - CONTINUOUS

Ethan stumbles out the front door of the house. Now it looks abandoned, decrepit, windows shattered, just an old building no one notices. People walk past without a glance.

He staggers into the street, clutching himself.

A sudden voice cuts through the quiet.

DAVID (O.S.)

Ethan!

Ethan spins. His brother David jogs up, phone in hand.

DAVID (CONT'D)

Ethan!

ETHAN  
(stammering)  
David...? You- you're not real. You  
died-

David frowns, confused.

DAVID  
What are you talking about? Who  
died?

Ethan shakes his head violently.

ETHAN  
I saw you. In there. They took you-  
the house-

David glances at the building, then back at Ethan.

DAVID  
That? Bro, nobody's lived there in  
decades. Why the hell were you  
inside?

Ethan's lips tremble.

ETHAN  
How long... how long was I gone?

David blinks. Then laughs, shaking his head.

DAVID  
Gone? What have you been smoking?  
You texted me like one hour ago to  
meet.

Ethan stares at him, searching his face for a crack, a tell,  
a lie. But David's just... normal. Finally, Ethan exhales,  
forces a nod.

ETHAN  
Okay... okay. My bad. Just... just a  
bad dream.

David smirks.

DAVID  
Bad dream? What? You took a nap in  
a decapitated abandoned building?  
Gross.

Ethan shrugs it off, brushing dust from his shirt.

ETHAN

Come on. Let's get out of here.  
What do you wanna eat?

DAVID

David grins.

DAVID (CONT'D)

Hamburger. And a Sprite.

They both laugh, walking away together. The camera lingers on the building behind them.

INT. FAST FOOD RESTAURANT - DAY

Bright sunlight pours through the wide windows. Cars roll by outside. Ethan and David sit across from each other at a booth, trays between them loaded with burgers, fries, and sodas.

David takes a huge bite, chewing as he talks.

DAVID

So seriously... what the hell were you doing inside that busted old building? Ghost-hunting?

Ethan rolls his eyes, biting into his fries.

ETHAN

Quit it.

DAVID

(grins)

Nah, really. If you're going back in there, tag me along next time. I'll bring my camera, we'll make a YouTube channel.

Ethan shakes his head, amused despite himself.

ETHAN

You're an idiot.

David leans back, sipping his Sprite.

ETHAN (CONT'D)

But since we're on the topic... why don't we check what that place actually was? You know, before it all went down.

David pulls out his phone. A few taps.

DAVID  
Okay... here we go.

Ethan watches him scroll, sipping his drink nervously.

DAVID (CONT'D)  
(slowly, reading)  
"Boarding house... fire accident...  
thirty-four confirmed dead."

Ethan stiffens.

ETHAN  
What?

DAVID  
Yeah. Happened decades ago. They  
say a ten-year-old kid started it.

Ethan puts his drink down, appetite gone.

DAVID (CONT'D)  
(reading)  
"The kid lived in the building most  
of his life. His mom... wasn't really  
in the picture. Always left him  
with the landlady."

David glances up at Ethan.

DAVID (CONT'D)  
Sound familiar?

Ethan shifts uncomfortably, clearing his throat.

DAVID (CONT'D)  
Anyway... one day, the kid begged  
the landlady to see his mom. She  
didn't want to, but finally agreed.  
They met at a motel. Only, uh... she  
wasn't alone. The clerk, Sam, was  
with her. In bed. You can guess the  
rest.

Ethan winces.

ETHAN  
That's— Jesus.

DAVID  
Yeah. After that, arguments were  
constant. Neighbors had to step in  
more than once.

He scrolls.

DAVID (CONT'D)

Then, one night, just before  
midnight, on the kid's birthday,  
the mom shows up drunk. Bought him  
toys. Cheap, ugly things. He  
snapped.

Ethan's grip on his soda cup tightens.

DAVID (CONT'D)

She then passed out. The kid... took  
a bottle of liquor and some  
clothes... lit the room on fire.  
Whole building went up.

ETHAN

How did the boy die?

David scrolls further, his face tightening.

DAVID

He tried to leave, but the door was  
locked. The keys had slipped under  
her while she was snoring. He  
couldn't get out.

David looks up at Ethan.

DAVID (CONT'D)

So when the fire started, he was  
trapped. Pounding and scratching on  
the door until... yeah.

Silence stretches between them. Ethan's face hardens, pale.

ETHAN

How do we even know all that?

David turns the screen toward him.

DAVID

Because there were survivors. Two,  
apparently. One guy had gone out  
for a smoke. Ran into the mom  
outside. Learned it was the kid's  
birthday. Came back and saw flames  
tearing the building apart.

He swipes again.

DAVID (CONT'D)

And... a woman named Martha. She made it out, but died three days later in the hospital. Eighty-seven percent burns.

Ethan leans back, shaken.

DAVID (CONT'D)

Crazy part? At the time, the landlady was apparently sick of all the noise and chaos. She wanted fresh tenants.

Ethan's eyes glaze for a moment, a flashback of himself weeks earlier, staring at a website listing for "Affordable Boarding House Rooms." The photo looked strangely inviting.

BACK TO PRESENT.

Ethan forces a weak chuckle.

ETHAN

Didn't know all that.

David shrugs, chewing his last fry.

DAVID

Yeah. Guess some people get lucky. All because of a smoke break.

Ethan glares at him.

ETHAN

Not funny, David.

David raises his hands, mock-innocent.

DAVID

Oops. My bad.

Ethan sighs, turns toward the window. He stares outside taking a deep, long, heavy breath like trying to convince himself he's awake.