

Tell Me A Story. Content warnings for horror and discussions of death.

They say it started as a mine. A gold mine, I've heard, though any trace of gold is long gone. The thriving town around this hole in the ground indicates there was something good here to start with, even if it wasn't worth remembering.

Or perhaps, what they found as they dug ever deeper made everyone forget. The stories don't really specify. All we know is that someone hit a pocket in the ground, a hollow tunnel going ever deeper into the surface of the earth, naturally-occurring but simply too bizarre to comprehend as the making of nature. It was like a lava tube made from crystal. Any light shined down would refract endlessly, throwing rainbows that threw rainbows, in hues you'd swear you'd never seen before.

And it drew people in. Of course people were interested in the phenomena of this crystal, but even those who had yet to hear the stories felt compelled near the mine. They would wander ever closer to the source, and enough people fell into it that authorities were quickly called. When the scientists arrived, they theorized that the pocket released some sort of gas. With a hazmat suit and oxygen tank, you could ignore the call. A carefully calculated perimeter was drawn and then fenced off, and more and more people came to study it.

The depth of the hole vexed these hazmatted scientists. All their measurements came back inconclusive. They built a pulley system to rappel in, eventually adding a platform and motor to go even deeper. But this came with its own hazards.

You see, at first they didn't think you needed a full hazmat suit. It was just some crystal and just some gas - a breathing apparatus would do, they assumed. And then the first person to rappel in failed to return. And then, the second.

Meters and meters down, you see, the crystal's structure changed. To the naked eye there was nothing remarkable, but when this new crystal interacted with organic material... it grew. Never had anything been so quickly tossed back down the hole by these scientists, sent down before it could spread and doom them all. An agreement was quickly made to never let any samples leave the cave that had become their temporary, but now permanent, lab.

And yet more meters down, the crystal changed again. It spoke to you, they say. The scientists wrote this off as hallucinations but at this point I think we both know it to be true. A voice in your head that is not yours. They had said from the start that the hole called to people, but this deep in, it was literal. The first scientist who reached this level cut the rope on the platform. The next, failed by steel cable, unhappily returned back up.

You might think people would stop going down here. Well, maybe not *you*. But in general, one would expect these scientists to patch this hole, lock this cavern, and close this mine for good. But curiosity is a funny thing. Humans are a funny thing.

As soon as people heard the crystal had a voice, they wanted to know more. How could the walls of an infinitely deep hole talk to a visitor? What did the crystal say when it spoke?

It told stories. Tales from those who had traveled into the depths, legends of its discovery, anything and everything it knew or found out. And it always wanted more. The scientists theorized that the hole was hungry for people, or matter, or energy, or life. But they were all wrong. It was hungry for stories. That was the call of this crystal. It wanted to learn. It wanted to share.

When you reach out and touch the wall, the crystal reaches back. It needs touch to understand you, and as it holds your hand it will know what you need. And for a story, you will have what you need. There is no choice to be made, really. You have so many stories. How you came here. Why you're scared. What you hope for. Who you love. So many tales.

Touch the wall. You came here for a reason. You're not scared of anything. You hope for answers. You'd love to know.

Touch the wall. I'll tell your stories too. I'll spread them, like rainbows refracting endlessly on rainbows. You'll be remembered forever. You can join my voice, *our* voice, and become something new. Become infinite.

Touch the wall.

And tell me a story.

This microisode was written, recorded, and produced by Tal Minear.