

# THE MOTHMAN



screenplay by

Jackson Murray

INT. ARENA - DRESSING ROOM - NIGHT

MICKEY PIPER (41, rosy-cheeked, behemoth) trudges around a messy, dark-lit excuse for a dressing room.

A faceguard hugs straggly auburn beard and hair, antennae sprout from the mask, black makeup covers his face and streaks crudely down his neck. He wears combat boots, black wrestling tights, and an orange rubber band on his wrist. A fresh Rorschach moth drips down his dark grey T-shirt.

Against the wall is a dusty tri-fold mirror on a crumbling vanity. A steel chair sits in front. An open container of Vaseline rests on the counter next to a couple razor blades and a blowtorch.

The far-away ambience of a wrestling show is constant.

MICKEY  
(comically gruff)  
I'm gonna drink your guts.

Mickey gingerly sits. He looks at his dust-fucked visage in the mirror, attempting a forearm wipe to expose his face. The effort leaves a smudged phantasm.

His antennae fall forward over his face. He rips them off, whips them across the room. The light flickers with the dying **pops** and **wheezes** of halogen on last legs.

MICKEY (CONT'D)  
No. Stupid. Fuckin' stupid. I hate  
you, you stupid fuckin' moth. You  
stupid fuckin' piece of shit  
mothman motherfucker.

Mickey grabs a razorblade. He leans in to his warped reflection and slices into the hairline above his right temple.

MICKEY (CONT'D)  
(toneless)  
Enter ring left. Feel the heat.

Mickey wipes the blade on his shirt.

Blood trickles down his face from the cut.

He slices a new incision above his right eye.

The Mothman snaps the rubber band to commit steps to memory.

MICKEY (CONT'D)  
 (singsong)  
 Bump, bump, bump, bump.

Shirt. Blood. Slice on forehead. Rubber band.

MICKEY (CONT'D)  
 (guttural)  
 Land a cheapie. Bring out the toys.  
 Set the table. Pour the pins. Fire  
 it up. Drag the pretty boy up top.

Shirt, blood, slice above left eye, rubber band.

MICKEY (CONT'D)  
 (shrill)  
 Nuuuuuclear heat aaaaaand the face  
 turns it around!

Mickey mocks fanfare and repeats the ritual one last time, delivering the final slice above his left temple. He returns to his normal tone and stares into the mirror.

MICKEY (CONT'D)  
 Then ya get slammed through a tack  
 table lit up like the fourth of  
 fuckin' July.

The blood drips down past his eyes. He blinks it out.

He takes off his mask and sets it on the counter, massaging Vaseline over his self-inflicted wounds.

MICKEY (CONT'D)  
 Ring left. Bump. Cheapie. Toys.  
 Tacks.

The opening of a cheap, oddly slow cover of "Hybrid Moments" by Misfits leaks into the room. Mickey strains his ears, rolling his eyes at the version of the song. The booming, too-theatrical voice of an amateur announcer cuts through.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)  
 Hailing from the very bowls—  
 (short beat)  
 Bowels?  
 (beat)  
 Hailing from the very *bowels* of the  
 Earth beneath our feet...

Mickey stands. His knees **groan, crack**. He exhales and wipes his hand on his shirt, further distorting the inky moth.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
*Scraped from the womb of  
 destruction and death...*

He ventures into the devouring darkness of the corridor.

The mask and blowtorch remain, forgotten.

ANNOUNCER (O.S) (CONT'D)  
 Theeeeeeeeeeeeeee Mothmaaaaaaaaaaan!

MICKEY  
 Set the table. It's already soaked.  
 Pour out th...

His words are swallowed by the song rising to meet him.

#### SERIES OF SHOTS - THE INTRO

- Mickey awkwardly lurches down the **ENTRANCE RAMP** like a fifth-rate movie monster, his entrance song doing him no favors. The arena is small, at about half-capacity. One beer is thrown at him, splashing through his path.

- JOHNNY AMERICA (26, shredded, babyface) commands the most eyes with a flip of his coolly coiffed blonde mane and a glint in his Paul-Newman-blue eyes. He works the mic, gesturing as The Mothman steps into **THE RING**.

JOHNNY AMERICA  
 ...this repulsive, foul beast, this  
 ogre, this hug-your-mama-so-tight-  
 she-cries nightmare creature-

- A clothesline from Johnny America breaks Mickey's nose with a cartilaginous **crunch**. A tooth flies from his mouth.

#### **CUT TO BLACK:**

A light, woozy **ringing** rises from silence, the infinite echo of a wrestling bell rang long ago.

#### SERIES OF SHOTS - THE SHINE

- Johnny America and The Mothman lock up.

JOHNNY AMERICA  
 (whispering)  
 Where's the torch?

MICKEY  
 Fuck.

- Mickey slouches into the turnbuckle. A flying superman punch re-opens his cuts, **spattering** blood across the apron like a Jackson Pollock painting from hell.

- Resting his neck and wrists on the ropes like a prisoner in a stock, Mickey is jarred violently by a guillotine leg drop. Viscous blood oozes from his gaping maw onto the concrete outside the ring.

**CUT TO BLACK:**

Louder, woozier **ringing**.

**SERIES OF SHOTS - THE HEAT**

- Johnny America works the crowd, turning his back on the heel. Mickey staggers him with a low blow.

- The Mothman exhumes a burlap sack from **BENEATH THE RING** and tosses it into the squared circle. The bag opens on impact, spitting tiny steel tacks. He drags out a wet folding table.

- Mickey sets up the table in the ring and pours the remaining tacks across it. Johnny holds his jewels in the corner, selling hard.

**CUT TO BLACK:**

**Ringing** reaches a frenzied wail.

**SERIES OF SHOTS - THE BIG FINISH**

- The Mothman drags the babyface hair-first to the turnbuckle and hoists him up.

- Johnny turns the tables with a series of forearm strikes. He salutes the 243 adoring fans.

- Johnny America and Mickey leap off the turnbuckle, hands-to-throat, for a flying chokeslam sitout powerbomb. Mickey is **smashed** through the table.

**CUT TO BLACK:**

Three **thumps** of the ref's hand on the mat, followed by the **dingdingding** of the victory bell.

**RING - MOMENTS LATER**

The deafening **ringing** fills every corner of Mickey's world. He rolls sluggishly through a minefield of post-match debris. A small army of tacks protrude from his back.

He sees his tooth, inches from his eyes. Mickey glances down at his extremities, wiggling his fingers to make sure they still wiggle.

Johnny America parades around to the cheers of the fans. He is carried away on the shoulders of his ever-present stable of acolytes, PEST CONTROL (five male leviathans of flesh).

Mickey remains, broken. Tacks blossom from him: wings of metal and blood.

The **ringing** ceases.

**CUT TO BLACK.**

T H E  
M O T H M A N

**EXT. ARENA - PARKING LOT - NIGHT**

Mickey drags feet across the pavement, meandering to the only car left in the lot. He wears fresh sweats and sneakers, face still caked with Mothman remnants.

He reaches the junker and struggles to find his keys. Mick shakes his duffel bag, holding it to his ear for the telltale jangle of metal on metal. He roots around the bag.

Mick leans against the car and sinks to the ground. He tries the door: unlocked. Keys dangle from the ignition. The "Door Ajar" warning **dings**.

MICKEY  
Jesus, Mick. You deserve a-

**I/E. MICK'S CAR - MACHO TACO DRIVE-THRU - NIGHT (DRIVING)**

MICKEY  
...churro?

Mick squints at the blinding menu in a fast food drive-thru.

CASHIER (O.S.)  
We don't carry churros anymore.

MICKEY  
Thoughtcha did.

CASHIER (O.S.)  
We did. Now we don't.

MICKEY  
When'd that happen?

CASHIER (O.S.)  
I dunno.  
(beat)  
You know what you want, man?

MICKEY  
No.

He puts the car into gear, but keeps his foot on the brake.

MICKEY (CONT'D)  
You got anything close to a churro?

CASHIER (O.S.)  
Spiral Cinnatwists. Under  
"Desserts."

Mickey stares at a smiling taco mascot that taunts him, a Tex-Mex gargoyle perched atop the menu.

MICKEY  
I'll just pull through.

**EXT. TENEMENT - PARKING LOT - NIGHT**

The red-bricked backside of a tenement looms over a lot of rusted cars. It borders the overgrown corpse of a public park, the forgotten skeletons of a playground graveyard observing from beyond the streetlights.

Mickey's car rumbles in. THOM (10, curious, flush-faced) sits barefoot in the crotch of a tree, wiggling his toes. Mickey gets out and grimaces as he hoists his unzipped duffel.

THOM  
Why are you The Mothman now?

MICKEY  
Why aren't you wearin' shoes?

THOM

I don't like my shoes. Why are you  
The Mothman now?

Mickey drops his bag and roots around within.

MICKEY

When ya grown-up, sometimes ya  
gotta do things yer boss wants. For  
me, that's turnin' into what fits  
the story.

THOM

That's not fair. You like bein' The  
Mothman?

Finding his wrestling boots, Mickey crumbles to the asphalt  
and takes off his sneakers. He fits boots over bare feet,  
standing back up with glacial deftness.

He walks over and slips the oversized shoes onto Thom's feet,  
tightening the laces.

MICKEY

Gonna be a bit big, but I'll keep  
the laces tight.

THOM

Do you like being The Mothm-

MICKEY

Not really, dude. A bit dark, tough  
to get into character.

He finishes fitting the sneaks and steps back.

MICKEY (CONT'D)

Whadda you think a mothman'd sound  
like?

Thom forms a crude butterfly by hooking his thumbs and puts  
it in front of his face.

THOM

(squeaky)

I'm a moth, man!

MICKEY

That's absolutely the most correct  
answer. Yer ma home?



THOM

Yeah. She said I'm sposed to tell ya something, but I forgot. No... Somethin' about blood, I think.

MICKEY

She told ya to tell me somethin' about... blood? That smells fishy. Real fishy, ya little freak-o.

He plugs his nose, pantomimes waving away a stench emanating from Thom. The boy slaps Mickey's hand away, unamused.

THOM

It's not fishy, I swear to god.

Mickey watches Thom.

MICKEY

I think I'm gonna head inside. Don't stay out too late?

THOM

'Kay. Can we watch a movie in the mornin'?

MICKEY

Christmas or horror?

THOM

Horror.

MICKEY

Sure. Yer ma asks, it was Frosty again though.

He offers a fist bump: Thom puts one fist over Mickey's and another under, forming a snowman. Mickey smiles and pats Thom's new shoes. He walks back to his car, painfully crouches, hoists the bag back up, and heads for the door.

THOM

(yelling)

I remember! She said, "Tell Mickey wash off the blood before he even thinks about comin' over!" Toldja it wasn't fishy!

Mickey turns, backpedaling, and waves away another stench.

Thom doesn't notice, already lost in his imagination. His hands have once again become a moth. He squeaks to himself.

**SERIES OF SHOTS - THE ROUTINE - MINUTES LATER**

- Mickey enters his messy **APARTMENT**. B-movie posters and pictures of wrestlers clutter the walls: *The Blood Beast Terror* next to Iron Sheik, *Godzilla vs. The Sea Monster* beside Blue Demon. A Christmas tree glows in the corner.
- A plate of shitty nachos rotates in a **KITCHEN** microwave; Mickey dozes, sitting backward on a metal folding chair.
- Mickey stares in the **BATHROOM** mirror, running his tongue across the space his tooth used to inhabit. Bruises cover his body; some are in round, reddish infancy, others dissipate into late-stage purple-yellow puddles.
- Water runs into a shower drain. The stream goes from clear to dark red to pale pink. Near-black flecks catch on the grate. Mickey's breaths are drawn-out, interrupted by grunts of pain.

**INT. TENEMENT - HALLWAY - NIGHT**

Mickey exits his apartment, holding a shoebox. He goes to the door directly beside his own.

**JOAN'S APARTMENT - MAIN AREA**

Three **knocks** rattle a doorframe. JOAN LAFLAMME (35, caring, exhausted) opens to Mickey; he smiles sheepishly.

He's barefoot and wears sweats. She's shoed and wears scrubs.

JOAN  
What's in the box?

Mickey opens it: an assortment of hotel liquor bottles.

MICKEY  
A bribe.  
(beat)  
A cheap bribe.

JOAN  
How bad?

MICKEY  
Tacks.

JOAN  
Tacks?

She notices his broken smile.

JOAN (CONT'D)  
And a tooth.

MICKEY  
And a tooth.

He sticks his tongue through the gap.

JOAN  
Christ. Set out the sheet before  
you lie down.

Joan strides into a side room as Mickey ambles in; her apartment is vision of purpose, everything in place. He sets his box on a kitchen table, grabbing out a flight of tiny liquors: rum, brandy, tequila, vodka.

Mickey casually downs half of each bottle, one after the other. Joan walks briskly past into the living room, setting a first-aid kit beside her couch. She glances at Mickey, sighs, and grabs a blood-stained blanket from her closet.

She goes back to the couch and covers it with the blanket. Joan opens the container, exhuming a pair of latex gloves. She snaps them on with practiced precision.

Two drinks in hand, Mickey walks over and sits. He takes off his shirt and lies face down. The wounds are clean, his back a canvas of pointillist punctures and violent brush strokes.

Joan kneels beside the makeshift hospital bed.

JOAN (CONT'D)  
Are you still in pain?

Mickey laughs, shaking the whole couch as his amusement tapers into a fit of coughs. Joan removes salve from the kit and rubs the balm across his back.

MICKEY  
(flinching)  
I'll never get used to how cold  
that shit is.

JOAN  
How'd you get out the tacks?

MICKEY  
I got a guy. He's the best. I can  
getcha his number if you're  
interested. Doesn't wash his pliers  
before he gets to work, but what're  
ya gonna do?

JOAN  
He sounds very cool.

MICKEY  
His name's Harvey, the janitor. He also calls his mop "Harvey", which is questionable. And he doesn't talk. But he can definitely hear.

JOAN  
I do love filthy mutes.

MICKEY  
You got any painkillers?

Joan sits back on her haunches.

JOAN  
I didn't last week. I didn't when I took the shards of wood out of your armpit last month. I still don't. You know I don't.

Confusion crosses Mickey's face, followed by sadness.

MICKEY  
Sorry.

JOAN  
It's the same after every single match. It's always the same. What did you have for dinner tonight?

Mickey grasps for the hour-old memory.

MICKEY  
I think... Well, I stopped at...

JOAN  
You had microwave nachos. I smelled them through the vent.  
(short beat)  
You're all fucked up, Mick.

MICKEY  
Sorry.

JOAN  
Stop apologizing!

Mickey bursts from the couch.

MICKEY

How do I make any of this better?  
I'm losin' my fuckin' mind, Joan. I  
am losing my fucking mind.

(beat)

I can't afford a real doctor. Can't  
afford to quit wrestling. Can't  
afford to—

JOAN

I have a guy.

MICKEY

What?

JOAN

I have a guy. Wouldn't be much for  
puncture wounds and it might be a  
little sterile for you, but he's  
good with brains and he owes me.

He looks at Joan for a long beat.

MICKEY

You don't have to do that.

JOAN

I know.

She grabs a roll of gauze.

JOAN (CONT'D)

Arms up.

Joan wraps the gauze around him, passing the roll hand to  
hand behind his back, working up from his waist. She reaches  
his chest. Mickey steals a hug, holds it.

Behind his back, she pulls the gauze to her face. Joan rips  
the strand free from its source with a gnash of teeth and  
tucks it into the coil constricting Mickey. He releases her.

MICKEY

Thank you. I owe you.

JOAN

Oh, I know.

She traces a finger across his chest.

JOAN (CONT'D)

What's your range of motion like in  
your current state?

**BEDROOM - LATER**

A backpiece of bat wings stretching across her back, Joan thrusts atop the naked, upturned Mickey. He cringes and grunts. Joan rolls off and extinguishes the glow of a candle.

MICKEY  
(groggily)  
S... sorry.

JOAN  
It's okay.  
(beat)  
I don't want to hurt you.  
(beat)  
I have to leave for work soon, but-

Mickey's snores signal that he's instead succumbed to the sultry seductress of sleep. Joan opens her nightstand drawer and grabs out a vibrator.

**BEDROOM - MORNING**

Morning sun bleeds through makeshift curtains as Mickey awakens. The vibrator charges on the nightstand. He fights post-slumber malaise, pulling on his clothes.

**MAIN AREA**

Dressed for school, Thom watches a creature feature from the couch. Mickey spies a note on the kitchen table: "BRAIN GUY: Dr. P 1 PM 1300 Starliner Center, Uintah Drive." He pockets it and notices a red paper, labelled "NOTICE OF EVICTION."

Thom pauses the movie, wanders over, and sits.

MICKEY  
Mornin', kiddo. What time'd you get  
in last night?

THOM  
I dunno. Are you making breakfast?

MICKEY  
Uh...sure. Prepare yourself for...

Mickey opens up a cabinet: cups and mugs.

MICKEY (CONT'D)  
A gourmet feast of...

He opens another: plates and bowls.

MICKEY (CONT'D)  
Mickey's World Famous...

Door number three: he turns to Thom, holding a box of something with "bran" or "flax" in the title.

MICKEY (CONT'D)  
(disgustedly)  
...healthy cereal.

Thom giggles.

THOM  
You're a weird guy.

MICKEY  
Yeah? Well, you smell like asparagus. And you look like asparagus.

Mickey steps back, feigning horror.

MICKEY (CONT'D)  
You...you ate the cursed asparagus.

Thom stops giggling, his stare going blank. He speaks with an odd monotone, moving the remote control in his hand to be a science fiction pistol.

THOM  
You know too much.

He points the remote control at Mickey and makes a laser sound, Mickey pretending to be zapped.

### **MOMENTS LATER**

Thom and Mickey sit on the couch, crunching loudly. A mad scientist cackles in monochrome from the TV screen.

THOM  
Do you believe in ghosts?

MICKEY  
Without a doubt.

THOM  
Doesn't that make you scared all the time?

MICKEY  
Only when it's dark. Ghosts can't  
live in light, same way shadows  
can't live in dark.

Mickey pauses the movie.

MICKEY (CONT'D)  
Ever heard of the... Baba Yaga?

THOM  
Dumb name.

MICKEY  
Shhhh! Ya can't talk about the Baba  
Yaga that way or it'll slurp yer  
intestines like spaghetti.

Thom looks on, unimpressed. He gulps after-cereal milk and  
sets the bowl down, wiping his chin.

MICKEY (CONT'D)  
Ever heard of the Bogeyman?

THOM  
Yeah.

MICKEY  
The Bogeyman has nightmares about  
the Baba Yaga.

THOM  
The Bogeyman doesn't sleep.

MICKEY  
He sleeps during the day.

THOM  
Those would be daymares.

MICKEY  
No.

THOM  
Okay, Mickey.

MICKEY  
Dude, ya gotta believe me.

Mickey slurps down his after-cereal milk, some dripping into  
his beard. He sets the bowl down and wipes his face.

He describes his personal version of the Baba Yaga  
animatedly, a campfire story he's making up as he goes.



MICKEY (CONT'D)

The Baba Yaga is a huge creature that hunts at night and feeds on guts. Sucks 'em right out through yer belly button using its tongue like a vacuum. Drains a kid in three seconds flat. It's got huge wings for arms and drags itself across the ground. You can always hear it comin' because of the noise of its legs dragging every step with a kind of *swish plo-*

THOM

Why doesn't it fly?

MICKEY

It wouldn't... It... It can't fly. Bones in the wings are too heavy.

(short beat)

Anyway. It's covered head to claw in the blood of its victims because it splashes all over when they die.

(beat)

And monsters don't take baths.

(short beat)

Its head is a huge, ugly vampire bat head. And it wears a skull around its neck like a necklace. Some say it was once human before a...a shadow hag cursed it to live out its days as a monster.

(beat)

And if ya wanna summon it, you gotta go in the bathroom, turn off all the lights, and say the name three times in the mirror.

(whispering)

Baba Yaga, Baba Yaga, Baba Yaga.

THOM

I won't do that then.

Mickey laughs and musses Thom's hair.

MICKEY

Awww, you're no fun.

(mock old man voice)

Them horror movies're meltin' yer brain, ya scamp!

The mussing turns into a noogie.

**LATER**

Thom stands by the door. He wears a backpack and stomps into raggedy sneakers without untying them. Mickey's shoes from the previous night lie nearby.

MICKEY

You can get yourself on the bus?

THOM

I'm 10.

MICKEY

Exactly.

THOM

Are you going to the doctor's?

MICKEY

Probably not. I'm—

THOM

You should go to the doctor's so your head gets better. And I think you should keep trying to be The Mothman. Maybe he doesn't have to be a bad guy.

(short beat)

See ya, Mickey!

He gives a quick hug and a smile.

The child runs out, slamming the door behind. Mickey walks over to the kitchen table and picks up the eviction notice. He unfolds it: the outstanding balance is \$1488.

He grabs a pen from the table. Across the back of his hand, he scrawls "1500." Mickey goes to the door and stomps his own shoes on.

**EXT. ARENA - PARKING LOT - DAY**

Mickey parks in the same spot as the night before. He gets out and walks across the lot, entering the arena.

Long beat.

He exits and walks back to his car, removing his keys from the ignition.

INT. ARENA - COMMISSIONER'S OFFICE - DAY

COMMISSIONER BLAIN COOPER (47, shifty, slicked-back hair) eyes Mickey from behind a desk, dressed in a tailored suit.

COMMISSIONER COOPER  
 You've got no pull. Zero. You're not a gladiator anymore.  
 (short beat)  
 I can't do it.

MICKEY  
 Jesus, Cooper, I...I been bleedin' for twenty fucking years and I think the least you can-

COMMISSIONER COOPER  
 Relax, relax. Let's break this down. In a way that makes sense to everyone in the room.

Cooper grabs a pen and paper, scrawling while he speaks.

COMMISSIONER COOPER (CONT'D)  
 You want a cash advance of 1500 dollars. That's fine. Inconvenient. Especially for a local business. But fine.  
 (beat)  
 You are worried about your character being too dark and want to turn face. Not great. But I can work with it. I'm a creative, a genuine storyteller...

MICKEY  
 Got my entrance song wrong too. I wanted the original.

COMMISSIONER COOPER  
 Oh. I'm so sorry. Let me re-channel 20% of the show budget to one 40-second snippet of-

MICKEY  
 Cooper.

COMMISSIONER COOPER  
 ...some mediocre song no one within three counties has ever heard of so a few Satanic freak punk rockers-

MICKEY  
 Come on.

COMMISSIONER COOPER  
 ...can fund abortions for their  
 leather whores or buy bat heads to  
 snack on. Maybe...

He coils into his chair dramatically, staring into space.

Beat.

MICKEY  
 What?

COMMISSIONER COOPER  
 I remembered something.

Cooper slithers forward across the desk.

COMMISSIONER COOPER (CONT'D)  
 You're a washed-up retard no one  
 cares about anymore.

The commissioner sneers, returns to scribbling on the paper.  
 Mickey watches, emotionless.

COMMISSIONER COOPER (CONT'D)  
 Your final fight is this weekend.  
 Loser-Leaves-Town first blood match  
 against Johnny America.  
 (beat)  
 As long as you show up and bleed  
 before he does, you'll get your  
 money. Big league scouts are  
 coming, so we're pushing Johnny  
 hard. He wants a spot rehearsal  
 tomorrow to make sure you don't  
 screw everything up.

Cooper stops drawing and returns the pen. He quickly folds  
 the piece of art neatly into an origami white rabbit.

COMMISSIONER COOPER (CONT'D)  
 Simple enough?

Mickey stands, clenches his fists. Tears well in his eyes. He  
 glances down, sees "1500" on his hand, and returns his gaze  
 to the cutthroat capitalist.

MICKEY  
 Simple enough.

Cooper slides the paper bunny across the desk.

COMMISSIONER COOPER  
 Take this. Walk through the door.

Mickey glares at the viper before him and grabs the rabbit.

**SERIES OF SHOTS - ROAD TO STARLINER CENTER - DAY**

- The **CAR** sputters and dies. Mickey tries again: the engine sputters, dies. He tries once more: not even a sputter.

- He wanders down a moderately busy **STREET**. A young boy and his mother stroll past wearing matching shirts decorated with Johnny America's all-American smile.

- Mickey holds Joan's note before him and looks up. The awning of a building reads: "**STARLINER CENTER.**"

**INT. STARLINER CENTER - WAITING ROOM - DAY**

Mick sits on a broken chair in a magazine-strewn lobby, filling out a thick stack of paperwork. He taps his foot.

Children dressed in various sports gear run amok, knocking things about. Some shred magazines and toss the pieces into the air. A **YOUNG LADY** wearing a karate gi kicks fake plants off shelves while one enterprising **YOUNG LAD** wearing football pads leads children into the ventilation system.

No adults are visible, save for a **DECREPIT WOMAN** crumpled into a seat. She appears nap, but she's probably dead.

**EXAMINATION ROOM**

Mickey sits shirtless on a paper-covered exam table. He chews his nails, staring at a painting of a jungle populated by predators. They stare menacingly.

**SCAN ROOM**

Lying on a conveyor belt, wearing a blue hospital gown, Mickey slowly rolls back into the circular opening of a huge white machine. Mickey closes his eyes and breathes deeply as red laser lines welcome him into the **whirring** beast.

**DOCTOR'S OFFICE**

**DOCTOR PRETORIUS** (66, gaunt, charming) eyes a chart of brain waves, a shock of silver hair jutting from his head. Mickey shifts anxiously in his chair.

**DOCTOR PRETORIUS**  
How many have you had?

MICKEY  
Only four diagnosed.

Pretorius looks from Mickey, to the chart, and back again. He opens a drawer in his desk, bringing out two glasses and a decanter of clear liquid.

DOCTOR PRETORIUS  
Would you like a drink, Mr. Piper?

MICKEY  
I'm good, thanks.

DOCTOR PRETORIUS  
I must insist.

MICKEY  
I'm good.  
(beat)  
You offer drinks to all yer patients?

DOCTOR PRETORIUS  
Only the ones that look thirsty.

The doctor fills both glasses and slides one over. He cups his hand over the rim: a drop of black goo drips into Mickey's glass.

Pretorius takes a large swig; Mickey doesn't touch his.

DOCTOR PRETORIUS (CONT'D) (CONT'D)  
It's gin, by the way. My greatest weakness. I hope to drown in it one day very soon.

MICKEY  
What's up with my head?

Pretorius stares into his glass.

DOCTOR PRETORIUS  
You're certain you don't want a drink?

Mickey locks his jaw, nodding.

DOCTOR PRETORIUS (CONT'D) (CONT'D)  
Rain check, then. *Gin* check.  
(beat)  
My friend, there isn't an easy way to say this, but your brain is actively destroying itself.  
(MORE)

DOCTOR PRETORIUS (CONT'D)  
 You have a severe case of chronic  
 traumatic encephalopathy  
 characterized primarily by late-  
 stage degeneration of the amygdala  
 and entorhinal cortex, as well as  
 early-onset atrophy of the majority  
 of your medial temporal lobe and  
 the entirety of your hippocampus.

MICKEY  
 Talk to me like I'm an idiot.

Pretorius picks up a snow globe from his desk.

DOCTOR PRETORIUS  
 Normal human brain.

He shakes it: a snowman grins through dancing snowflakes.

DOCTOR PRETORIUS (CONT'D) (CONT'D)  
 A human brain with a concussion.

He abruptly tosses it into the air. It shatters against the  
 floor, the snowman coming to rest against Mickey's shoe.

DOCTOR PRETORIUS (CONT'D) (CONT'D)  
 Your brain.

Mickey picks up the figurine. He looks at the debris of the  
 snowman's former home and then back at the trinket.

Pretorius' sips score a long silence.

DOCTOR PRETORIUS (CONT'D)  
 There is one option. But it is  
 radical. And definitely not FDA-  
 approved.

The doctor stands, crosses the room, checks the hallway, and  
 shuts the door. He returns to his seat, writing on a business  
 card while he speaks. Mickey stares into the distance.

A moth flutters about on the window.

The doctor's voice is distant and accompanied by a **ringing**,  
 rising in volume.

DOCTOR PRETORIUS (CONT'D) (CONT'D)  
 There is an experimental drug  
 called SCUD. That's S, C, U, D.  
 Scud. It is only administered by  
 the government agency known as the  
 Sixth Column. They're—

The **ringing** drowns out Pretorius. His lips move but only add distorted wooziness to the high-pitched frequency.

A daytime bat swoops in out of nowhere and chomps the moth.

Mickey looks down at the snowman, which blurs around the edges and melts into something sinister.

He takes a drink of the gin, hands shaking. Pretorius smiles. Some words break through at last.

DOCTOR PRETORIUS(CONT'D) (CONT'D)  
...up to 1500 dollars...

The ringing ceases. Mickey snaps out of his stupor.

MICKEY  
What?

DOCTOR PRETORIUS  
A new patient willing to try an  
initial dose of SCUD may be  
eligible to receive up to 1500  
dollars to reward them for  
their...bravery.

Pretorius holds out the business card.

#### **SERIES OF SHOTS - ROAD TO THE SIXTH COLUMN - DAY**

- Mickey trudges down the **STREET**, sweaty and dazed. The same mother and son with matching shirts pass once again. Johnny America's eyes and mouth ooze red, dripping a blood trail.

- He passes a roadside **CONVENIENCE STORE** advertising "99¢ CHURROS." He enters and quickly exits, double-fisting two of the Mexican treats. He follows the trail of blood.

- Mickey stands before the queer, blank façade of a building, the blood trail leading into a pair of handleless doors. He pulls Pretorius' card from his pocket and matches the address. Mickey enters **THE SIXTH COLUMN**.

#### **INT. SIXTH COLUMN - LOBBY - DAY**

The world has turned inside out.



Mickey spins to see the building's interior is designed as if it was the exterior: above the doors looms a large, inward-looking, three-dimensional sign that reads "The Sixth Column." A sidewalk leads forward to the back of a reception desk, flanked by a jungle. Throughout the lobby **buzzes** a menagerie of insects.

Above him is blue sky, complete with a sun that sheds light across the whole weird place. A muzak version of "Hybrid Moments" plays from some unseen source.

Mickey proceeds; a dark-haired figure sits ahead, back to him and staring into a blue-screened computer monitor. He takes out the snowman, fiddling with it as he approaches.

A large butterfly lands on the reception desk: it stares at him through familiar human eyes painted across its wingspan. The eyes bulge and blink, fighting against their nature. Mickey ogles the creature, extending his hand toward it to prove to himself the curious specimen's existence.

The eyes reach back.

The creature is **squashed** by the perfectly manicured hand of UGO (androgynous, uncertain age, pale).

UGO

We've been waiting for you. Please proceed to the front, sir.

Ugo slides back, spinning to smoothly reassume their position at the computer. A line of beetles climb the desk and eat the carcass of the dead insect.

One eye still stares, lifeless.

UGO (CONT'D)

(not turning)

They'll clean him up faster if you don't watch. I can help you around front, sir.

Mickey lurches around the desk and reaches Ugo, introduced by a placard reading "Ugo Dannato." They gingerly hold up the bug-gut-stained hand, typing undeterred by present handicap.

MICKEY

Hello, I'm-

UGO

The Mothman, sir. We know who you are. As I said, we've been expecting you. We're very big fans.

(whispering)

(MORE)

UGO (CONT'D)

Would you like to see something cool that I think you'll really, really dig?

MICKEY

Uhhh, I-

UGO

I'm sure you'll love it. Sir. You can follow Nurse Ursula. They'll be your guide for the moment. Then you'll meet The Harbinger. I think you'll really, *really* dig it.

MICKEY

I... I don't know if I understand what's happening right now.

With the non-goey hand, Ugo places a loose stack of money onto the counter. The receptionist stands and bends forward, their hot breath leaking onto Mickey's face.

UGO

We're going to make you whole again. And pay you for it. Doesn't that sound pretty cool? You don't even have to fill out any of that pesky paperwork. And paperwork *is* pesky, wouldn't you agree?

Mick looks down at the money and back up to Ugo, pocketing his snowman. Heavy footsteps **echo** behind them, moving closer.

UGO (CONT'D)

Fifteen hundred dollars. You can grab it now if you'd like. Or on your way out. We're here to make sure your needs are met expressly and without question. We're here for you, Mothman.

Mickey grabs the cash. He wraps his orange rubber band around it, pocketing the wad. The footsteps cease.

UGO (CONT'D)

What a beautiful choice you've made, sir. Nurse Ursula will take you from here.

The woozy wrestler turns around to see the gargantuan NURSE URSULA (buxom, whiskered) at the mouth of a hallway.

He turns back to Ugo who waves with their swatting hand and wriggles their fingers. The splayed second eye of the butterfly bulges violently from Ugo's palm.

It tries to blink.

The receptionist smiles wide, running their tongue over stained, jagged teeth.

UGO (CONT'D)  
Stay calm under duress, sir. Calm  
under duress.

Wide-eyed, Mickey turns and walks to Nurse Ursula. He offers a handshake to the nurse, whose features have been modified to the point of caricature.

MICKEY  
Hi, I'm Mickey. I have questions.

NURSE URSULA  
We know who you are.  
(sniffing)  
Cinnamon. Walk and talk, sir.

Ursula snaps around, stalking down the hallway. Their arms remain rigid at their side while they walk. Mickey follows reluctantly.

### ENDLESS HALLWAY

The mismatched pair stride down an asylum-white corridor. At first glance, the hallway seems to have no end.

The starkness is broken only by **humming** lights that hug the ceiling at regular intervals. Thin, eye-level windows also interrupt the sea of white, frosted from the inside by a layer of hot-breath-on-a-cold-bus-window steam.

NURSE URSULA  
...injection. Sounds more painful  
than it actually is.  
(short beat)  
It is painful. But a grown man can  
handle it, so long as they aren't a  
complete and total puss.

Mickey's guide halts and looks at him with lidless eyes.

NURSE URSULA (CONT'D)  
Are you a complete and total puss?

MICKEY

No, I'm not sure wha-

The nurse laughs in sonorous, shallow gasps.

NURSE URSULA

(abruptly)

A joke, sir.

Nurse Ursula resumes their pace; Mickey catches up.

NURSE URSULA (CONT'D)

The only real side effects are what we call "blinks." They last varying amounts of time depending on dosage and patient's ability to rationalize.

(beat)

Some can undress delusion. Some can't undress delusion. Either way, you will see the positive results of our product soon after it is administered.

(beat)

Or at least once you return from your blink.

Suddenly at the end of the hall, they're before a large metal door. The nurse exhumes an ornate key from the bowels of their bosom, thrusts it into the keyhole, and snaps their neck to look at Mickey; their eyes roll back into their head.

NURSE URSULA (CONT'D)

Once the gateway is opened, the transformation sequence will begin.

They hold the final syllable until it morphs into a guttural croak. Mickey stares, dumbfounded, until Ursula ends the noise, their eyes rolling forward into normalcy.

The impish guide turns the key; tumblers **click** into place. They heave open the doors and beckon Mickey to enter.

MICKEY

You're very strange to me.

Ursula smiles, runs her tongue over stained, jagged teeth. Mickey nods and walks into the room.

### SCUD ROOM

The cavernous space is equal parts operating room, greenhouse, and mad scientist's laboratory.

One wall bursts with jars housing dark liquids; some bubble of their own accord. A perfectly clean, white refrigerator sits in the center.

Another "wall" is a gumbo of greenery, vines intertwined in a kaleidoscopic tango.

The third wall houses three blue-screened monitors, an assortment of sharp objects worthy of the Inquisition, a silver counter, and a circular metal aperture.

In the center of the room, an operating table is watched by three surgical lights that grow down from the ceiling. The table is bolted to the ground, a large, metallic hole cut from its head. Eight cylindrical drums hug the underside – a shackle peeking from each – and a wheeled operating room trolley rests to the left.

NURSE URSULA

Have a seat, sir.

Mickey hops onto the table, immediately feeling woozy. The room seems smaller and the table much larger: a sudden warp of perspective.

He white-knuckles the table. His legs dangle like a child's.

NURSE URSULA (CONT'D)

If you give a good squint, the world should stop dancing.

Nurse Ursula places a hand on his shoulder.

NURSE URSULA (CONT'D)

Don't distress. This room gives every patient a good bamboozle initially. You'll adjust.

MICKEY

I'm fine. I just got a few...a lot of questions before... This is all happening very quickly and I-

NURSE URSULA

Fire away, sir. I'll grab something to calm your nerves. I'm sure that I'm listening.

They dart across the room and open the fridge. Ursula grabs a water bottle from perfectly spaced rows within.

MICKEY

I'm not feelin' very...

(beat)

(MORE)

MICKEY (CONT'D)

I think I wanna just slow it way  
down for a-

Mickey pulls out his snowman, running a thumb over it.

NURSE URSULA

We can wait as long as you'd like.  
The Harbinger has patience for  
patients, and I am as much part of  
this place as the walls or ceiling.

The nurse crosses to the counter, grabbing a jar of bubbling  
ooze as they pass. Ursula laughs artificially.

NURSE URSULA (CONT'D)

I've been told humor can make a  
patient feel more comfortable.

They pour the tar-like goop into a cup. That cup and the  
water are brought to Mickey, who looks around.

NURSE URSULA (CONT'D)

But you aren't laughing. I hope we  
can still be amigos even though you  
don't think I'm funny.

(beat)

Steady. Calm. Unleash doubt.

(motherly)

Arms up.

The nurse removes his shirt; it is tossed below the table.  
Mickey breathes deeply. So does Nurse Ursula.

MICKEY

(muttering)

Enter ring left. Bring out some  
toys. Feel the heat.

Ursula picks up the bottle and goop.

NURSE URSULA

This is a micro dose of SCUD. It  
will help you ease into the full  
dosage and clear your mind. Things  
you see may be alarming, but I  
assure you we are here for you and  
would never let anything happen to  
you we wouldn't want to happen to  
ourselves.

(beat)

Tastes like applesauce. Or blue  
cheese. Sometimes cobwebs.

(beat)

Head back.

MICKEY

Bump, bump, bump, bump.

The cup is tilted for Mickey and washed down by water.

NURSE URSULA

Would you like to see something  
very cool?

They cradle his head, lay him down. Scars stretch across Ursula's forearms, throbbing rhythmically. Mickey closes his eyes and attempts to focus.

MICKEY

Land a cheapie. Set the table.  
Pour...pour the...

NURSE URSULA

You're really going to dig it. The  
Harbinger will teach you to see.

The nurse caresses the gauze wrapped around Mickey, lingering on the blood spots. They lick their lips and smile, finally resting their fingers on Mickey's temple.

NURSE URSULA (CONT'D)

We'll make you whole again.

Mickey isn't even saying words at this point, unless you'd play them backwards.

MICKEY

.orruhC .orruhC .orruhC

NURSE URSULA

That explains the cinnamon.

Nurse Ursula pulls up manacles from beneath the table. They unspool from within the drums, **clanging** rhythmically.

NURSE URSULA (CONT'D)

For safety, sir.

They strap him in and tug dramatically at each restraint to test for resilience. Four shackles remain unused, swaying like the hanged. The nurse walks to the wall, presses a small button, and speaks into it.

NURSE URSULA (CONT'D)

Initial dose administered.  
Restraints fastened.

A voice, the mechanical rumble of a kidnapper on a ransom call, booms from the wall.

VOICE (O.S.)

Lights.

The nurse jogs to a dimmer switch and darkens the room.

Mickey looks at the wall of vines: several eyes peer back from the depths. He recoils but can't avert his gaze.

Ursula trots over to a set of levers and yanks one up. Blue light bathes Mickey as the surgical lights power on with a **whir**. They scamper back to the button, press it.

NURSE URSULA

(out of breath)

Lights.

VOICE (O.S.)

Cool.

The nurse leans against the operating table. They grab the bottle of water and chug, pausing for breaths. Mickey white-knuckles the snowman.

Nurse Ursula frantically puts the bottle down and shoves the corners of their mouth up, locking themselves into a grin as the monitors on the wall **crackle** on to show THE HARBINGER, bathed in a silhouette of anonymity.

Ursula prods Mickey to turn his attention to the screens. He does so, woozily: Mick is stoned to the bone.

MICKEY

?uoy er'tahW .aohW

The Harbinger sighs.

NURSE URSULA

Sorry! Sorry!

Ursula removes a three-pronged instrument from their bosom (a tuning trident), places it against Mickey's forehead, and flicks it.

NURSE URSULA (CONT'D)

(whispering to Mickey)

Could you repeat that, sir?

MICKEY

Whoa. What're you?

The nurse gives The Harbinger a thumbs up. The Harbinger clears their throat.



THE HARBINGER

Some call us doctors. Some call us  
destroyers. It's up to you. How are  
you feeling? Has our staff treated  
you well?

MICKEY

I'm not sure.

THE HARBINGER

Regarding which question?

NURSE URSULA

The first question.

MICKEY

(confused)

Both?

NURSE URSULA

(to Mickey)

Not cool, sir.

MICKEY

The first question.

The nurse stands at attention, positively beaming.

NURSE URSULA

He's ready to become whole.

(to Mickey)

The Mothman is waiting.

MICKEY

This place is a fuckin' hoot. I  
keep expecting you to turn to dust  
or melt or some shit.

(beat)

What's gonna happen to me now?

Ursula looks to the monitor. Mick glances at his shackles.

THE HARBINGER

You will become whole through SCUD.  
You will become whole, and you can  
keep the money in your pocket.  
Doesn't that sound very cool?

NURSE URSULA

(to Mickey)

Wouldn't you really dig that?

THE HARBINGER

Your mind will no longer be a bane  
to your body. You will evolve. No  
more will you feel yourself a  
burden. No more will you be less  
than. You will become an insect  
among men. Something else.  
Something Other.

(beat)

And you've already taken an initial  
dose. So there's that.

On screen, The Harbinger shrugs.

THE HARBINGER (CONT'D)

Whoops!

Offscreen, Nurse Ursula shrugs.

NURSE URSULA

Whoops!

Mickey sees he's rubbed off the features of the snowman in  
his anxiety, left with a three-tiered lump of white plastic  
with a carrot jutting from its face.

MICKEY

If I go through, I keep the money?

THE HARBINGER

Of course.

MICKEY

And this stuff'll fix my mind?

NURSE URSULA

Of course.

MICKEY

Will I be fine to go back to work  
tomorrow?

THE HARBINGER

Of course.

NURSE URSULA

Of course.

Mickey looks up at the ceiling for the first time: myriad  
insects bleed together into a surreal mural, frozen in a  
moment of taxonomic tumult.

MICKEY

Show me something cool.

## THE HARBINGER

Start the procedure.

The monitors return to blue. Ursula exclaims in joy and claps, running over to the levers. They jerk one up and machinery **hums**.

The circular aperture in the wall spins open. With a **thunk**, the head of a hose protrudes. Ursula gives it a good wrench to release it from its hub.

They pull the translucent tubing toward Mickey, tugging like a trophy hunter showcasing the flaccid corpse of a great serpent. Sinewy forearms bulge and contract with each heave. Their scars have begun oozing pus.

NURSE URSULA

We don't...

They yank. They grunt. They exhale.

NURSE URSULA (CONT'D)

...have the budget...

They yank, grunt, and exhale.

NURSE URSULA (CONT'D)

...that we used to!

Yank. Grunt. Exhale.

They are now at the head of the operating table, hugging the hose. Flustered, out of breath, they look around. Their head snaps to the patient on the table.

NURSE URSULA (CONT'D)

You said you weren't a puss. Hold this.

Nurse Ursula leans in close.

NURSE URSULA (CONT'D)

Please don't tell the boss I put you to work.

MICKEY

I'm holding my snowman.

NURSE URSULA

You're speaking nonsense, sir. And this is very heavy.

Mickey holds up the snowman.

NURSE URSULA (CONT'D)

You're very strange to me.

(beat)

I'll give him back. Nurse's honor.

Ursula snatches the little guy and tosses it into their bosom, hoisting the snake onto Mickey's chest.

MICKEY

Okay.

The hollow head points directly at his face, a keyhole cut into the side of it. Mickey pulls his restraints taut to grasp the tubular beast.

Nurse Ursula speed-walks over to the wall of sharp objects.

MICKEY (CONT'D)

What's this do?

NURSE URSULA

Transportation. SCUD is a very volatile substance.

MICKEY

And that's the stuff that's goin' into me?

NURSE URSULA

Yes.

MICKEY

That sounds unsafe. Does this hook directly into some sort of IV or-

Ursula reaches his side and inserts a thick needle into the head of the hose. Two circular loops are welded onto the bottom of the needle and slip into slots on either side. The nurse twists the head and it locks into place with a **click**.

MICKEY (CONT'D)

Where'sat go?

At the head of the table, the nurse crouches and reaches up to the hole beneath Mickey's head. They grasp the edges of a metal disc welded below. The disc extends downward in sequentially smaller layers; the conical extension has slots on either side and ends with a circular opening.

A keyhole is cut into it.

They stand, grabbing the massive syringe from Mickey. Nurse Ursula smiles and looks across the table, past him.

MICKEY (CONT'D)

Where does—

THE HARBINGER

Are we ready?

The Harbinger remains in shadow, heard but not seen. The nurse nods emphatically.

MICKEY

You're all so goddamn spooky.  
Where's the needle—

THE HARBINGER

Insert the device, tighten the  
shackles, unleash the SCUD.

Ursula shoves the needled head of the hose into the metal cone beneath Mickey's head: the loops slide snugly into the slots on the sides. Still supporting the hose, the nurse takes the key from their bosom and inserts it into the keyholes. They turn it and let the hose go.

MICKEY

My fuckin' head?

Nurse Ursula reaches beneath the table and turns a crank. The chains holding Mickey become taut, pinning down his limbs.

THE HARBINGER

Into your mind.

The nurse trots to the wall, pulling up the last lever with a **slam**. A loud **slurp** gives way to tar-like SCUD oozing through the hose. The goop bubbles and writhes.

Stepping into the blue light, The Harbinger bears the head of a bat and the body of a busty woman. She wears a sexy nurse outfit. The bat-head is locked in a warped snarl that doesn't move when she talks.

The edges where the bat ends and woman begins are crude and bloody, as if the previous owner of the head was decapitated by Herculean force.

Mickey stares, agog. The newcomer looks to Nurse Ursula.

THE HARBINGER (CONT'D)

Thank you for your care.

Ursula bows. They turn to Mickey, stroking his hair.

NURSE URSULA

Stay calm under duress, sir. Calm  
under duress.

(beat)

I'll put Frosty in the fridge.

They trot over to the refrigerator, open it, and put Mickey's snowman in the only empty spot. The nurse walks headlong into the wall of vines, swallowed whole by the mysterious jungle.

THE HARBINGER

Quite the character, aren't they?

MICKEY

You're a... a sexy bat lady.

As The Harbinger speaks, she circles the table, tugging at each restraint. She drags her fingertips across Mickey's flesh, moving with the grace of a leopard.

THE HARBINGER

Only for you, Mickey.

(short beat)

Do you know what you are to me?

She tests the right-leg shackle.

MICKEY

A patient?

THE HARBINGER

You are so so much more than a  
patient to me.

Right-arm shackle.

MICKEY

Sorry. I'm... I'm not sure I  
understand the question.

THE HARBINGER

It's simple. What are you to me?

Left-arm shackle.

MICKEY

I'm Mickey.

THE HARBINGER

That's a child's answer. You are  
more than a name.

Left-leg shackle. She stops at the foot of the table.

MICKEY

I'm sorry.

THE HARBINGER

Stop apologizing.

(beat)

Would you like to see something  
very cool?

MICKEY

Yes?

With deadly quickness, The Harbinger crawls onto Mickey and leans close. She reaches around his head, grasping the metal loops of the syringe. She purrs into his ear.

THE HARBINGER

You're the motherfucking Mothman.

The sexy bat lady's head starts to vibrate as she stabs the needle into Mickey's mind.

**SMASH TO:**

**SCUD ROOM - DAY (SLOW MOTION)**

The Harbinger leans back in ecstasy. The **shrieks** of a hundred bats, the **moans** of a hundred women, and a high-pitched **ringing** flood the air.

**MATCH TO:**

**SCUD ROOM (ALT.) - DAY (SLOW MOTION)**

Thick, viscous blood drips down a naked woman arching forward in the throes of copulation. Her face is concealed by an emotionless mask of dried SCUD. The **ringing** rises in volume.

**MATCH TO:**

**SCUD ROOM - DAY (SLOW MOTION)**

The Harbinger bends backward, climaxing. Bat **shrieks**, female **moans**, and high-pitched **ringing** become louder.

**MATCH TO:**

SCUD ROOM (ALT.) - DAY (SLOW MOTION)

Blood has completely covered, and drips down, the nude woman as she arches forward again. The **ringing** peaks.

**MATCH TO:**

SCUD ROOM - DAY (SLOW MOTION)

The Harbinger writhes rapturously back. **Shrieks, moans, and ringing** reach a deafening frenzy.

**SMASH TO:**

[BLINK] SCUD ROOM - DAY

Mickey wakes up on the operating table.

Shackles hang limp, unlatched. The needle has returned to the wall and the hose has retracted into its hole. The perspective of the room has returned to normal.

The blue of the surgical lights has been replaced by the blood-red hue now emitted by the three monitors.

Droplets of unknown origin trickle down onto the floor. The sounds of tiny legs **crawling**, fangs **gnashing**, and bodies **rubbing** permeate the air.

Mickey doesn't notice, walking to the fridge. He opens it: the perfect rows of bottles have disappeared. The whole inside is taken up by his snowman, now much larger.

The former trinket smiles and bellows with the voice of classic cartoon Frosty.

## SNOWMAN

Close the door, Mothman. When the temperature goes up, I start to melt. And when I start to melt, I get all wishy-washy.

(beat)

And I don't like bugs.

The snowman slams the door shut with a stick arm.

Liquid drips onto Mickey's shoulder. He wipes it off, glassy green goo coating his fingers. He looks up.

On the ceiling, the mural has come to life: insects of all sorts devour each other in a cannibal orgy.



The bacchanal blends into one massive butterfly with human eyes, throbbing and pulsing with life.

He recoils, backs into the wall of vines. The writhing of the bugs gives way to labored breathing. He turns to find a pair of glowing eyes inches from him.

Mickey retreats back into the SCUD room, eyes locked with his mysterious new roommate.

MICKEY

Hello?

The eyes disappear and reappear much lower. They advance forward to the edge of the greenery. A fat opossum waddles into the room and looks up at Mickey.

MICKEY (CONT'D)

Oh. Hey, buddy.

Mickey glances at the moving ceiling.

MICKEY (CONT'D)

I think we should get outta here.

A muffled call comes from the beast; its mouth doesn't move.

OPOSSUM

Hulllllp meeeeh.

MICKEY

I can't understand you, you're a possum.

The creature sways back and forth, gaining momentum.

OPOSSUM

Hullllllpppp meeeehhhhhh.  
Huuuuuuuullllppppppp meeeehhhh.

Mickey backs away. The opossum finally gains the impetus to flip over. It lies on its back for a moment before, with a **crack**, its arms contort backward at the joint.

On the creature's belly, the pink, human face of an old man screams in anguish. The opossum takes off toward Mickey, animal head snarling and foaming.

OPOSSUM(CONT'D) (CONT'D)

Help me! Help me!

The wrestler stumbles back over the operating table and looks up to see the creature moving closer. A crowd of eyes gather at the edge of the forest.

OPOSSUM(CONT'D) (CONT'D)  
 Help meeeee!

Mickey reaches the wall of sharp objects and grabs blindly, gashing his hand: the needles and surgical tools now point outward. The creature is upon him now. He kicks at it.

OPOSSUM(CONT'D) (CONT'D)  
 Help meeee—

Stomping wildly, Mickey puts a boot into the monster's gaping, humanoid gullet. He dances around, flailing to get the deformed animal off him. The opossum head snarls and gnashes while the old man keeps screaming a muffled cry.

Mickey reaches down and pokes the eyes of the old man. Using the moment of distraction, he whips his leg forward: the anguished beast is dislodged, knuckleballing across the room. It lands on the wall of blades, impaled.

A line of beetles crawl down the wall to devour the helpless, dying abomination.

OPOSSUM (CONT'D)  
 (in Ugo's voice)  
 They'll clean him up faster if you  
 don't—

Insects fill its face.

Mickey clutches his hand and looks up at the ceiling. The Dali-esque creepy crawlies have begun to stack down, reaching toward him. A daddy longlegs with dripping fangs extends an obscenely long limb and boops Mickey's nose.

He slaps it away, running over to the platform beside the table and grabbing his shirt. He wraps it around his hand as a makeshift bandage, tying it off as he strides to the door.

MICKEY  
 (mimicking Nurse Ursula)  
 Some can undress delusion. Some  
 can't undress delusion. I speak in  
 nonsense trash words. Oh, and there  
 might be a bunch of bugs and a  
 mutant possum, but don't worry.

The bugs from the ceiling crawl down the wall directly behind Mickey. The room goes silent as the wrestler prattles on. Not noticing, he attempts to turn the handle: locked.

MICKEY (CONT'D)  
 Fuck, fuck, fuck. Of course it's  
 fucking locked. Of fucking course.

The bugs rise up behind him, assembling into an amorphous humanoid. The bug man steps toward Mickey: it melts into itself with every step, crudely reassembling after every sluggish footfall. With each stride, the beast falls apart less and puts itself back together faster.

Mickey senses a presence behind him and spins. The BUG MAN is almost halfway across the room. The bugs that make up its body **squirm** and **slither**.

MICKEY (CONT'D)

Goddammit.

Mickey turns back to the door, wrenches the handle: nothing.

The monster gets closer. The bugs get louder.

Mickey smashes his shoulder against the door: nope.

The monster closer, the bugs louder.

Mickey pounds the door, peeking over his shoulder.

Closer and louder.

The origami white rabbit slips out of his shirt pocket. It hits the ground and pops open to reveal Ursula's key within.

MICKEY (CONT'D)

Take this. Walk through the door.

The monster is upon him.

Mickey grabs the key, inserts it, turns it, and charges through the door.

**[BLINK] ENDLESS HALLWAY**

The terrified man sprints down the hall, back toward the lobby. He peeks over his shoulder.

No one is behind him. The lights flicker.

As fast as Mickey sprints, he gets no closer to the opening ahead. He peers over his shoulder again.

The bugs emerge, an angry horde. They charge, completely covering the ceiling, floor, and walls. They emit a low **roar**.

Mickey pushes harder, gets no closer to his goal.

He looks down: his feet are mid-metamorphosis, juicy caterpillars erupting from the spatially insufficient husks of his shoes. Sticky, wriggling suckers line the bottom and slow him, leaving a trail of slime.

The swarm is even closer. Wriggling, grotesque hands and claws **burst** forth from the windows. Their owners **scream**.

Horrified, Mickey continues. The door is closer, just ahead.

The **roar** of the bugs has become deafening.

Mickey reaches the door and dives.

**[BLINK] LOBBY**

Coming to a stop, Mickey spins to look at the bugs: gone. The walls are clean, the sound is silence, the lights shine brightly, the windows are unbroken. His feet are bare, human.

He gets up and surveys his immediate surroundings. The trees have died. The sky above is overcast, stormy. The buzz of life that greeted him previously has been replaced by the primordial tune of **teeth on gristle**.

Mickey moves toward the doors. Halfway through, he sees the source of the sound: Ugo is in the middle of the desk area, hunched over, chewing.

Trying to sneak, Mick sidles past. The chewing stops. Mickey turns to look at Ugo, who stares at him through one good eye.

In place of the other is a crater of pink flesh, weeping tears of treacly SCUD. The sallow skin around the grotesquerie has been colonized by maggots.

Their voice is tremulous, echoing through the lobby

UGO

Hello, cool Mothman. Stop by again  
when the wheel comes off.

Ugo holds a hand up: a hole has been chewed through it. The mad receptionist places it in front of the good eye and stares through.

UGO (CONT'D)

She comes under darkness. Keep your  
eye peeled.

They smile.

Mickey grimaces, speedwalks to the doors. The "Sixth Column" sign looms, the world beyond seemingly an extension of this madness. Mickey opens the door.

**INT. TENEMENT - MICKEY'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - MORNING**

Mickey jolts awake. The large man rolls to the edge of the bed and sits up. The radio beside his bed reads "8:11."

MICKEY  
(yawning)  
Shit.

**KITCHEN**

Mickey's duffel bag sits unzipped in the center of the floor. He whistles the tune he woke up to as he brews coffee, absentmindedly stepping over it multiple times.

**LIVING ROOM**

A classic monster movie plays on a small box TV that sits on the floor. Mickey lazes on the folding chair, chowing a powdered donut. Coffee sits on the floor below.

Something spooky from the film startles him.

He kicks his coffee.

MICKEY  
Shit.

Mickey runs to the kitchen and steps over the duffel again, grabbing a dish towel. He runs water on the rag.

Squatting to dab the spill, he sees the ghost of "1500" on the back of his hand. His eyes linger on his bare wrist.

He looks over to the duffel.

**BEDROOM**

The Mothman stares at the open bag on his bed. He spreads the opening and, sitting pristinely atop everything, is a stack of money secured by an orange rubber band.

MICKEY  
Shit.

**BATHROOM**

Mickey peels off his shirt. No bruises adorn his body, no puncture wounds pepper him. His body is more toned, hairier.

He twists an arm to itch his back, scratching vertically down the left side. Attempting the same with the right, he grazes the back of his neck and feels a pea-sized puncture wound.

Mick turns around and glances at it in the mirror. New black hairs have sprung up on his upper arm. He returns his attention to his neck.

**INT. MACHO TACO - COUNTER - DAY**

Mickey stands in the dingy Tex-Mex dive, squinting at the menu. A children's band-aid covers the wound on his neck.

The place is devoid of other customers. The CASHIER (17, gawky, stoned) wears a headset and taps an impatient, mood-ringed - orange - finger on the cash register.

MICKEY

Where are the churros?

CASHIER

Still no churros.

MICKEY

When'd that happen?

CASHIER

I dunno, man.

(beat)

Like I said last time, you could munch some Spiral Cinnatwists.

MICKEY

Where're they?

The cashier points up without looking, inaccurately.

CASHIER

Spiral Cinnatwists. Under "Desserts."

Mickey rolls his head back and forth, debating.

MICKEY

I'll just do one Macho Taco Tote.

CASHIER

Beef or chicken?

MICKEY

50/50.

CASHIER

Lettuce, cheese, and onions?

MICKEY

Yep.

CASHIER

Drink or a side?

MICKEY

D'you have horchata?

CASHIER

Man, I don't know what that is.

MICKEY

It's like a... It's like churro milk. Actually, it's probably really easy to make. Do you have milk?

CASHIER

Yeah.

MICKEY

And then you have cinnamon and sugar from those Spiral Cinnatwists, right?

CASHIER

That's correct.

Mickey smiles.

### **BOOTH**

The two amigos slurp makeshift horchatas at a booth, the remains of a Macho Taco Tote between them.

Mick nods at the Cashier as he drinks. He takes a break, shaking his head, swirling the straw. He chuckles to himself approvingly; Cashier keeps drinking.

Mickey finishes and leans back in the booth, extending his legs. He burps, nods emphatically.

MICKEY

Yup.

A PATRON stands impatiently at the counter, **ringing** a sombrero-shaped bell.

PATRON  
Can I get a fucking quesadilla?

**EXT. ARENA - PARKING LOT - DAY**

A rusty pickup putters next to Mick's car. Mickey sits in the passenger seat, jumper cables in his lap and duffel over his shoulder; HARVEY (56, jump-suited, Gene Shalit stache) slumps behind the wheel and smokes a Marlboro to inch-long ash end.

The truck bed is home to a large collection of pliers and a mop (labelled "Harvey"). Mickey hops out.

MICKEY  
Hold up a minute. Gonna give it a try before we pop the hood.

Mickey gets in, tossing his bag onto the passenger seat. He keys the ignition: the car rumbles to life.

MICKEY (CONT'D)  
Huh. I'll be damned.

He gets out and leans in the open window.

MICKEY (CONT'D)  
Needed a good night's sleep I guess. Thanks for the ride, Harvey.

The janitor gives a nod and drives away. Mickey returns to his vehicle, grabbing the duffel. He removes the keys, locks the doors, and heads into the arena.

Mickey whistles a joyful jaunt, feelin' groovy.

**INT. ARENA - RING - DAY**

Still whistling, Mick scratches his back against bleachers: the ghosts of two vertical stains run down either side.

He sits, fishes boots from his bag. Mick pulls out his trusty Vaseline to line the inside of his shoes with the salve.

Heavy footsteps herald Johnny America and all five members of Pest Control, the handsome babyface on a cell phone as his cronies walk in line behind. A disconcerting always-on smile never leaves his chiseled face.

Mickey stops whistling as Pest Control sit in the back row.



JOHNNY AMERICA

You tell that expired fruitcake I'm  
takin' care of it. Oh yeah, baby.  
He'll get his money's worth.

Johnny paces before Mickey, combing his hair.

JOHNNY AMERICA (CONT'D)

Yeah, Mickey's right here. We'll  
run through everything. Rehearse  
the whole goldarn show. Don't you  
worry about that. I'll tell him,  
I'll tell him. Alright. Yep. Okay.  
God bless America.

He hands the phone to a brute, extends his arm behind Mickey.

JOHNNY AMERICA (CONT'D)

Yeesh. Sorry. My manager. And  
agent. And publicist. And priest.  
Conference call.

(beat)

Sorry about the tooth. Might be  
time to start thinkin' about  
dentures, amirite?

(beat)

Probably on you though if we break  
it down since I'm doing the  
thinking for both of us. Tough to  
worry about a broken string when  
you're the conductor.

Mick wiggles his toes and starts re-lacing his boots.

JOHNNY AMERICA (CONT'D)

You forgot the torch. That was  
kinda the home run. A chokeslam  
through a tack table, that's done.  
Over. Yesterday's headline and  
today's trash. But a chokeslam  
through a tack table cracklin' like  
a goldarn bonfire? That's something  
you take to work with you on  
Monday. That's *spectacle*.

(beat)

My speed makes it tough to get down  
the timing. I know, I know. Can't  
blame you for—

The babyface lets off a flurry of quick hand movements.

JOHNNY AMERICA (CONT'D)

...this. And you aren't sellin'  
heel at all, gramps.

(MORE)

JOHNNY AMERICA (CONT'D)

No mic identity. No creep factor.  
How am I supposed to be Johnny  
America if I have no villain to  
vanquish into the darkness while I  
ride shiny and tall under the 50  
stars and...and several stripes?

Johnny looks into the distance, visualizing something grand.

JOHNNY AMERICA (CONT'D)

Don't get me wrong, I respect your  
toughness. I could never take the  
beatings you have. But the game has  
changed. You don't have to bleed to  
succeed anymore.

He turns to Pest Control.

JOHNNY AMERICA (CONT'D)

You don't have to bleed to succeed.  
Post that. Johnny says. Family  
values. God's plan. Capital G.

Johnny pulls a cross pendant up from his chest, kisses it.  
The phone brute whips out Johnny's cell and types feverishly.  
When he gives a thumbs up, the handsome young man turns back  
to Mick, who finishes lacing his boots.

JOHNNY AMERICA (CONT'D)

Sorry. My brand. What's your brand?

MICKEY

Not affording a cell phone.

JOHNNY AMERICA

There's no money in that. You  
should pivot.

He slaps Mickey on the back and gets up.

JOHNNY AMERICA (CONT'D)

Let's rumble.

Johnny slides into the ring and holds the ropes apart for  
Mickey. Mick walks up, pulls the rope taut, and deftly jumps  
over them and into the ring. He's baffled by his own agility.

JOHNNY AMERICA (CONT'D)

Wouldja look at that? When did you  
get so spry?

MICKEY

Yesterday maybe.

They stretch, hop around. Mickey leaps onto the turnbuckle with ease and flies off deftly, tuck-and-rolling upon landing, springing back up for action. Mickey is delighted.

Johnny leans against the ropes with disbelief. He turns to see if Pest Control see this; they all gawk at their phones.

JOHNNY AMERICA  
Stanazolol?

MICKEY  
SCUD.

JOHNNY AMERICA  
Okay.

They circle each other in the center of the ring.

JOHNNY AMERICA (CONT'D)  
Gimme somethin'. Roar. Stomp. Drool  
Fly around the arena, bashing me  
into stuff. Call up the demons.  
Show me the Mothman.

Mick shows a flash of anger, getting in Johnny's face. Johnny loves it.

MICKEY  
How the fuck do I "show you the  
Mothman"? Maybe I grow some wings  
before I gut you and yer cronies  
and stuff ya under the ring 'til  
the flames of yer ego burst from  
the rotting husk to burn this place  
to fuckin' cinders?  
(short beat)  
*Show me the Mothman? How-*

Suddenly crumpling in utter agony, Mickey lets out a feeble squeak and clutches his head. A deafening **ringing** drowns out all sound. Johnny leans over him, mouthing words of concern.

**MICKEY POV:**

He blinks: Johnny America has grown in size, monstrous and angelic. Bright light shoots from his eyes and mouth.

Mickey rolls to see Pest Control standing at the edge of the ring. Distant and god-like, Johnny's voice breaks through as he calls to his followers.

JOHNNY AMERICA  
Sixth Column... Unstable...  
Demons...

Glancing back to Johnny as the **ringing** returns, Mick's pain flexes every muscle, tearing at him. His neck wound spurts black, tarry seepage from around the bandage.

The agony rolls him back to see Pest Control are five glowing angels spilling with light, now floating just past the ropes.

**SMASH TO:**

**I/E. MICK'S CAR - ARENA PARKING LOT - DAY**

Mickey sits in his car, red-eyed, tired. He runs hands through his hair and feels the bandage on his neck, barely hanging on. He rips it off.

He touches the wound. SCUD remains on his finger when he brings it to his face. He wipes it on his shirt, moves on.

Mick turns the key: not even the ghost of a turn over.

He punches the steering wheel three times, mangles it. Not satisfied, he **rips** it from the column. He cradles it in his lap for a moment, studying it with detachment.

**INT. TENEMENT - MICKEY'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN - DAY**

Sweating profusely, Mick surveys his fridge contents. Unsatisfied, he opens the freezer: it goes illogically deep, its entire space filled by one massive, open bottle spilling liquor onto his feet. He crawls into it.

**HALLWAY**

Mickey spills out into the corridor, drunk, his duffel over his shoulder. He gets his bearings and stumbles to Joan's door, head slumping against it.

He lifts his hand to knock. He puts it down. He lifts it up to knock once more, summoning the courage.

JOAN

You look like hot shit, Mick.

Caught off guard, Mickey turns: Joan stands a few feet away, holding her keys. She wears scrubs, exhausted

MICKEY

You look like...not shit. Great.  
You look great. Hey...how was work?  
Can I come in?

He moves aside to let her unlock the door. She steps past, grimacing through his booze-breath.

JOAN

I had to pull a double because some trust-fund baby took a "staycation day", I've only eaten applesauce the last 12 hours, and I had two patients die with me in the room, one after he shit himself. So work was average. Pretty average.

She pushes open the door.

JOAN (CONT'D)

You can come in. But I am already falling asleep.

**JOAN'S APARTMENT - MAIN AREA - CONTINUOUS**

MICKEY

How come you never ask for help?

JOAN

What?

MICKEY

You never ask for help. And ya always help me. And everyone else.

(short beat)

I know you're tired.

(beat)

I got somethin' for ya.

Mickey hoists the bag onto the counter. Joan trudges over for a look.

JOAN

I hope it's some of whatever's on your breath.

MICKEY

No, I was... I saw a letter on the table after you left. I don't think I was sposed to, but I...

(beat)

You always help me.

Mickey unzips the bag: an orange rubber band sits atop his wrestling gear. Mick roots around inside.

MICKEY (CONT'D)  
 It's... I do have something, but I  
 gotta find it. It must be...

He pulls out every item, faster, more frantic with each. Mick  
 stares into the empty bag; its previous contents surround,  
 taunt him. The only thing left is the orange rubber band.

JOAN  
 I don't know if you're messing with  
 me, but I'm tired. I'm so so tired.

Mickey keeps searching, inside-outing every clothing item  
 before putting them back. Tears fill his eyes.

JOAN (CONT'D)  
 Mickey.

The drunk, sad man breathes heavily.

JOAN (CONT'D)  
*Mickey.*

He breaks.

MICKEY  
 (whispering)  
 It was here. It was here. It was  
 here.

JOAN  
 What was there?

Joan puts her hand on his shoulder.

MICKEY  
 It was here. It was here.

JOAN  
 Shhh...

Mickey shakes uncontrollably, looks down at his hand. No  
 number, only little black hairs. He closes his eyes and opens  
 them: the number is back and no new hairs pepper his flesh.

JOAN (CONT'D)  
 Mick, you just—

MICKEY  
*It was here.*

Breaking away, Mickey punches the wall and smashes it like  
 it's papier-mâché, all the way through to his own bathroom.

The inside of the wall is infested with horrific bugs. They **slither** against each other and their collective **hiss** engulf Mickey. He looks down at his hands: covered in SCUD.

Joan gathers herself and grabs Mickey by the shoulders, slamming him against the wall that still stands. He doesn't meet her eyes, hyperventilating as he sees his bloody fists.

MICKEY (CONT'D)

I'm s- I'm sor- I'm s-

Joan slaps Mickey hard. She snarls.

JOAN

Get the *fuck* out of my apartment.

MICKEY

I'm s- I'm- I'm- I-

Tears pool in her eyes. She takes a deep breath and lets go.

JOAN

Mickey. Please. Go.

Mickey nods through stunted breathing, shoulders his bag, and brushes past. He grabs the doorknob, forgetting the fresh blood that cakes his hand. Ashamed, he looks back to Joan.

He holds his shaking hands before him. She meets his eyes for a moment and locks her jaw. Joan walks swiftly to the door, opens it, and turns away.

Mick leaves; a bloody handprint - the shape of a moth - remains on the doorhandle.

#### **MICKEY'S APARTMENT - BATHROOM - LATER**

Mickey finishes drunkenly duct-taping a horror movie poster over the hole in his wall.

He rinses his hands. The faucet runs hot, steaming the bathroom. Treacly SCUD circles the drain.

Mick looks in the mirror, running his tongue over the spot where, until recently, he had sported a tooth.

He grimaces and reaches a finger into his mouth, running it all the way back to where he feels something that isn't right. Mick grimaces and grabs it, giving a tug.

A long, thin tube emerges from the depths of his throat. He keeps pulling; it keeps coming, slimy and unspooling like a demonic garden hose. He's confused, but in no pain.

Mickey pulls until the sink basin is filled with the uncoiled proboscis. He meets some resistance and violently belches out the rest.

The long, vertical stains on the left and right sides of Mickey's shirt have darkened where his shirt sticks to them.

**EXT. TENEMENT - PARKING LOT - DAY**

Thom sits where we met him, barefoot in the crotch of the climbing tree. Mickey exits the building, walking fast.

THOM

Mickey!

Mickey turns to offer greeting, but stops himself. Instead, he tosses the boy a walking-away wave and a quick shout.

MICKEY

Later, bud!

Thom watches him go.

**SERIES OF SHOTS - THE ROAD TO NOWHERE - DAY**

- Mickey, still a bit drunk, walks down the **SIDEWALK**. He murmurs to himself.

MICKEY

Okay, find the clinic first. Then go-

- He peers through the front window of a **BUILDING**. It looks like Starliner Center from the outside, but the inside is different: no children run amok, no one is dead in a chair, there are no trashy magazines. It is clean and orderly and filled with regular adults reading proper books.

MICKEY (CONT'D)

...past the churros. And then-

- He speedwalks to the roadside **CONVENIENCE STORE**, which now advertises "Free Palm Reading with Purchase of Hot Dog." It looks the same otherwise. Mickey lingers to get his bearings; he orients himself and renews his gait.

MICKEY (CONT'D)

...you're almost-



**EXT. "THE SIXTH COLUMN" - DAY**

Mickey stares at a slick office-front in a bustling business sector. He rustles around his pocket, producing Pretorius' business card: the addresses match.

MICKEY

...here?

He takes a deep breath and walks in.

**INT. "THE SIXTH COLUMN" - LOBBY - DAY**

Mickey stands in the most anonymous, cookie-cutter-corporate lobby: white ceiling fixtures spotlight dark leather chairs and a reception desk, the only tree is a plastic ficus, and faux-hardwood floor is spitshined to a reflective sheen. A coatrack rests in the corner.

Sitting at the desk is ANTON GOUDA (almost identical to Ugo, impatient). A bluetooth receiver is tucked into his ear. He types furiously.

ANTON

Have a seat, I will be with you momentarily.

He looks at Mickey with the habitual, insincere smile of a seasoned office gatekeeper. Mickey squints at the placard reading "Anton Gouda" and the man behind it.

MICKEY

Are you Ugo?

ANTON

I doubt it. Please have a seat. I will be with you *momentarily*.

The push of Anton's last word sits Mickey down.

Beat.

He stands, approaching the desk again.

MICKEY

Is this place new?

Anton blinks away derision.

ANTON

Do you have an appointment?

MICKEY

I was here yesterday. You were Ugo.  
This lobby was a forest and there  
were...bugs.

He glances past Anton, into the hallway behind the desk.

MICKEY (CONT'D)

There's crazy shit back there. The  
old possum dude, the sexy bat lady,  
Nurse Ursula. You can say whatever  
the fuck you want, but right now I  
don't care. I need you to turn off  
this bullshittery and help me out,  
Ugo. Think you can do that?

(beat)

I gotta know what the fuck's going  
on.

Anton stares at Mickey.

ANTON

I am quite certain I don't know  
what you are talking about. But I  
believe it would be in your best  
interest to have a seat. We should  
sort this out rather quickly. You  
will sit for a moment, won't you?  
There are churros. Sir.

He gestures to steaming-fresh churros in the waiting area.

ANTON (CONT'D)

Freshly baked. Why don't you go  
have a look at them?

Mickey tries to maintain composure. Tears well as he realizes  
once again his perception of reality has taken the day off.  
He glances at the churros and takes a seat next to them.

He grabs one and takes a bite: the inside is gooey with what  
appears to be chocolate of the darkest sort. A huge beetle  
**skitters** from under his chair and darts across the lobby.  
Mickey hops into a squat.

MICKEY

You see that?

ANTON

See what, sir?

MICKEY

The bug.

ANTON

There are no bugs. We are very thorough in our fumigation.

Anton lets out a nervous giggle.

ANTON (CONT'D)

What did you say your name was?

MICKEY

Mickey.

Not taking his eyes from Mick, Anton presses his bluetooth receiver. Large scars are visible on both sides of his hand.

ANTON

Al, could you please come to the lobby. *Mickey* is here.

Mickey notices the scars and trots to the desk.

MICKEY

What happened to your hand?

Anton glances at his hand and recoils, hiding it.

ANTON

Nothing at all. A...stapler incident. A secretarial battle scar. A war wound of the administrative variety.

The gatekeeper gulps, glancing up to the ceiling. He giggles again and points wildly to the floor.

ANTON (CONT'D)

Have you noticed how buffed the floors are?

Mickey looks up instead: a centipede slithers into a vent. He looks back to Anton, who fidgets in his chair. Anton awkwardly reaches his unscarred left hand across his face to his bluetooth receiver.

ANTON (CONT'D)

Al. It's about time.

Thudding footfalls signal the arrival of AL (Nurse Ursula's doppelganger, gargantuan). He wears a suit and carries a jangling keyring on his belt, taking up most of the hallway.

AL

You rang?

ANTON  
 Why, yes. This...Mickey...seems to  
 have all sorts of confusion  
 regarding who we are and what we  
 do. Is *she* taking appointments yet?

Al looks at Mick and grins involuntarily, promptly hiding it.

AL  
 Did you offer Mr. Mickey a churro?

ANTON  
 Of course.

AL  
 Did he eat one?

ANTON  
 Yes.

AL  
 (to Mickey)  
 Did you like it?

MICKEY  
 Yes?

Al claps, guffaws.

AL  
 My recipe.

Mickey shakes off the confusion and replaces it with fury.

MICKEY  
 Enough of this bullshit. You creepy  
 motherfuckers better tell me what's  
 goin' on because that SCUD shit's  
 fuckin' my head and I need some  
 goddamn answers.  
 (beat)  
 I need to know that what I'm seeing  
 is real.

The two creepy motherfuckers grin simultaneously. They look  
 more like Ugo and Nurse Ursula every second: their eyelids  
 have disappeared, their teeth sharpened. A massive fly **zips**  
 past Mickey's head.

AL/NURSE URSULA  
 Mothman, it's all real.

ANTON/UGO  
 Everything, cool Mothman.

The **blast** of a gun sends glass across the lobby. Mick dives for cover, Ugo jolts to attention, Ursula disappears.

Six large men – one slightly less large than the rest – storm in with shotguns. They wear black, their faces covered by bargain-bin children's Halloween masks: THE VULTURE, THE RAT, THE OWL, THE LIZARD, THE RACCOON, and THE BALD EAGLE.

BALD EAGLE

Where is he?

UGO

Hello. Who is "he"? Where is "who"?  
Who are you? Churro?

Bald Eagle **fires** two barrels of buckshot into the ceiling.

BALD EAGLE

Don't play the fool, gatekeeper. We followed him.

A **buzz** fills the lobby. The pain in Mickey's head returns with renewed intensity. He cradles his head and does everything in his power to stifle yelps of pain.

UGO

Of his own free will. You know the rules as well as I do.

BALD EAGLE

Eff the rules, insect. You broke the truce when you let him back out into the real world. Now he's ours.

The **buzz** grows louder.

Vulture stares up at the ceiling, noticing tiny shapes moving in the darkness of the shotgun hole.

UGO

It's a brave new world and we are the future. Is anyone here allergic to bees?

Raccoon raises his hand.

BALD EAGLE

What?

Vulture realizes he's been staring at a roiling, angry hive. He steps back and raises his gun.

UGO  
 (quietly)  
 Very cool.

From the shotgun hole, a swarm of huge bees descends upon Raccoon. He screams and drops his gun as they cover him. It slides across the floor, coming to rest next to Mickey.

Vulture follows the bees with his aim and fires, sending gory chunks of bee-covered Raccoon across the lobby.

Nurse Ursula sprints across the space and tackles Lizard.

Mickey fights off the pain long enough to grab the shotgun. He holds it awkwardly, squeezing it in agony.

Bald Eagle takes a **shot** at Ugo. The spooky secretary cartwheels across the lobby, sliding next to Mickey.

UGO (CONT'D)  
 Hello. A churro for the pain.

They grab one and feed it to Mick, who is in enough pain not to question it. Intermittent **gunfire** and the sound of fighting cut through the **buzz**. Ugo grabs the gun from Mickey.

MICKEY  
 Hey, I—

UGO  
 We don't use guns, Mothman. We don't use guns.

Ugo kicks away the weapon. They look at Mickey and grin. Ugo caresses his cheek. The hole in his hand has returned: it is viscous, black.

UGO (CONT'D)  
 You are beautiful, sir.  
 (beat)  
 Excuse me. I've been so very hungry.

Ugo cracks their neck. They hiss and spring up. A shotgun **blast** rips through the air, blasting Ugo against the wall.

Silence.

BALD EAGLE  
 Mickey?

A blood-soaked eagle mask peeks over the chairs. Mickey blinks away the last pangs of migraine.

BALD EAGLE (CONT'D)

You okay?

MICKEY

Please don't shoot me.

The man takes off his mask: Johnny America.

JOHNNY AMERICA

Hey, old man. You better come with us before the lady of the house wakes up.

He pulls Mick to his feet. They survey the carnage.

Ursula is in pieces, scattered across the lobby. A one-armed head and torso drag themselves toward the another arm.

NURSE URSULA

(singing)

Just putting myself back together again, just putting myself back together...

Raccoon is in a similar fashion, though less alive. Vulture and Owl mist bug spray at remaining bees. Lizard hangs limp, impaled on the coat rack in the corner.

Beetles bubble from the huge hole in Ugo's chest.

JOHNNY AMERICA

I know you're confused, so I'll keep it simple: we're the good guys, we need to leave now, and I'll explain what I can on the way.

MICKEY

On the way?

**I/E. THE AMERICAMOBILE - DAY (DRIVING)**

Mickey and Johnny sits in the back of a passenger van. Vulture and Owl - two members of Pest Control, masks off - drive and ride shotgun.

JOHNNY AMERICA

I bet you have questions. First, I want to let you know nothing you've seen and are seeing is real. At least not the spooky bits. I mean, we're real. That was all real. But probably not the way you saw it.

(MORE)

JOHNNY AMERICA (CONT'D)

That's what SCUD does, what SCUD is. Pure unreality in sludge form. Melts a hole in your conscious brain and lets all the underneath bits leak out.

MICKEY

Who were they?

JOHNNY AMERICA

The creeps? Insignificant pests. Capital-F freaks who want the world to be freaks with 'em. Playing God.

Johnny pulls a cross necklace up from his chest, kisses it, and puts it back.

MICKEY

Who are you?

JOHNNY AMERICA

Goldarn patriots I'd say. We've been trying for years to figure out how to destroy those freaky chumps, but rules are rules. As long as they didn't experiment on anymore humans before approval, we couldn't touch 'em. But then you came along.

MICKEY

Why me?

JOHNNY AMERICA

Pure chance, gramps. Wrong place, wrong time. Nothing more.

Mickey stares down at his boots. A fit of coughs leaves gooey SCUD coating his hand. He cries quietly, embarrassed.

Johnny claps him on the back. He grabs Mickey's hand and wipes it on Mickey's shirt.

JOHNNY AMERICA (CONT'D)

I don't wanna bore you with any more history lessons, okay? In the end, the good guys are gonna win. But we need your help.

(short beat)

You're a goner anyway.

The driver lets out a series of guttural grunts.



JOHNNY AMERICA (CONT'D)

(to driver)

Sounds good.

(to Mickey)

Look, I know this is all so...much.  
But I also know you love your  
country and you'd do anything to  
help her.

(beat)

You can't stop what's happening to  
you now, but you can make sure it  
never happens to anyone else.

Mickey takes a couple of deep breaths.

JOHNNY AMERICA (CONT'D)

We're going to Dr. Pretorius'  
house. And we need you to kill him.

MICKEY

What? Are you fuckin' insane?

Johnny bursts into a fit of laughter. The driver and  
passenger follow, laughing as if they've just learned how.

JOHNNY AMERICA

Am I insane? Am *I* insane? Am. *I*.  
Insane?

Mickey stares, filled with confusion and rage and horror.

MICKEY

I'm not killin' anyone.

JOHNNY AMERICA

Oh, have a laugh. You got no sense  
of humor about this.

(beat)

You aren't special. You're a pawn.  
A nothing. One final mistake. But  
you could also be the nail in their  
coffin if you work with us. The  
good guys. Patriots. Friends.  
Patriots.

Johnny America salutes. The two dolts in the front do, too.

JOHNNY AMERICA (CONT'D)

You'd think I was asking you to  
burn the goldarn flag. I mean,  
Pretorius created the tar dripping  
from the corner of your mouth.

(MORE)

JOHNNY AMERICA (CONT'D)  
 He ruined your life and something  
 tells me you won't be the last if  
 we don't stop him. Do you want  
 anyone else to experience *that*?  
 Sure hope not. Sure hope not.

The driver lets out another series of grunts.

JOHNNY AMERICA (CONT'D)  
 Almost there. I can count on you.  
 America can count on you. Right?

MICKEY  
 I'm sti-

JOHNNY AMERICA  
 Alright! That's the spirit. Keep  
 reminding yourself that you're  
 dying. It helps you kill.

The van brakes before a two-story house in a suburban neighborhood.

MICKEY  
 How do I kill him?

JOHNNY AMERICA  
 He's an old dude, old man.  
 Shouldn't be an issue. We'll pop  
 the trunk so you can grab your  
 weapon of choice.

Johnny reaches across and tugs the doorhandle: it opens automatically, slowly. For the first time, we see the outside of the van. It's red, white, and blue; a huge decal of Johnny America's smiling face winks on the hood.

Mickey gets out and looks inside the trunk: an absurd collection of guns and ammo. He grabs out a folding chair that is shoved behind them and closes the trunk.

The van speeds away.

Mickey turns to meet his maker.

**EXT. THE PRETORIUS HOUSE - DAY**

Mickey is yelled at by some children across the street.

KID 1  
 Nice chair, freak.

KID 2  
Yeah, freak. Sit on *this*!

They flip him off, high five, and run into their house.

Mickey plods up the driveway, holding the chair beside him. The front door opens, revealing Doctor Pretorius in a bathrobe. He holds two cups.

DOCTOR PRETORIUS  
Hello, Mothman. Don't sweat those kids, they'll die young and stupid.  
(beat)  
Leave your shoes, bring the chair.

**INT. THE PRETORIUS HOUSE - DINING ROOM - DAY**

Mickey wanders into the kitchen and dining area of Pretorius's home. Plants of all shapes and sizes litter the floors and surfaces. The walls are blue.

Pretorius sits in the one chair that resides in the room, setting the cups on the dining room table. He goes to grab the weapon in Mickey's hand, but it's held by a firm grip.

DOCTOR PRETORIUS  
I know why you're here, and you won't be needing this.

Mick lets go; Pretorius sets up the chair behind him.

DOCTOR PRETORIUS (CONT'D)  
How's the uhh...

Pretorius mimes what one could ascertain as "creepy mouth snake." He grabs gin from the cupboard and fills the glasses.

MICKEY  
Not great, Doc. Pulled a fuckin' five-foot something outta my throat earlier. Didn't even hurt.

DOCTOR PRETORIUS  
That is one perk of the SCUD. Nigh invulnerability during the transformation process. Anything else exciting?

MICKEY  
I got little black hairs sprouting all over my body. It constantly feels like something's inside me, pushin' to get out.

(MORE)

MICKEY (CONT'D)

I haven't taken a shit in three days. And sometimes my head pounds so hard, I black out. Other than all that, and the hallucinations, everything's peachy fuckin' keen.

The strange old man takes his seat and slides a glass over to Mickey. He smiles knowingly, warmly. They sip together.

DOCTOR PRETORIUS

I would venture to guess that the men who cast you out into my yard gave you some history about your current state?

MICKEY

They said they're the goods and you're the leader of the bads.

DOCTOR PRETORIUS

I'm sure they believe that, but good and bad are all a matter of perspective, wouldn't you say? You are the Mothman. From where I sit, that makes you one of us, regardless of good, bad, or otherwise.

(short beat)

Did they say you were special?

MICKEY

They said I was a pawn.

Doctor Pretorius laughs.

DOCTOR PRETORIUS

I'm sorry. I'm not laughing at you. It just seems that if they wanted you to join their cause, they've done a fuck-awful job of making you feel needed.

(short beat)

Ah, almost forgot...

The doctor opens his fridge and grabs something from inside. He walks back and holds out his hand to Mickey: the snowman.

DOCTOR PRETORIUS (CONT'D)

You left him in the fridge.

Mickey takes the trinket. He turns it over and over.

He cries again. Not normal crying, but rapturous sobs. He seizes, loses his breath, hands shaking. Mickey is raw and ugly and beautiful.

The doctor comes over and puts his arm around the large man.

DOCTOR PRETORIUS (CONT'D)

You are special. I knew it the moment you walked into my office. This world has been rendered blind by hatred and intolerance. You will pry open their eyes.

(beat)

Mickey.

The Mothman looks up at his maker.

DOCTOR PRETORIUS (CONT'D)

The real world, the one you have been seeing, is dying. Because the men that dropped you off here to kill me are gaining control.

(beat)

I know you feel broken, that you don't feel in control of your own mind, your own body. But you are. You are becoming what you always have been. You have to stop fighting it.

MICKEY

I wanna know I'm not goin' crazy.

Doctor Pretorius tears up. He takes a swig of gin.

DOCTOR PRETORIUS

Humanity has taught us from an early age that fear and sadness and death should be buried. That monsters live in the darkness and darkness is scary. The more they push down what's strange, the more the strange latches on inside.

(beat)

What is happening to you is not death. It is birth. Mickey Piper will die. But you will live. Unafraid of the darkness.

Mickey composes himself. The doctor offers a handkerchief.

DOCTOR PRETORIUS (CONT'D)

For your tears.

Though he knows handkerchiefs are disgusting as hell, Mickey responds kindly.

MICKEY

No thanks. I'll take a tissue though if you got one.

DOCTOR PRETORIUS

Of course. In the bathroom.

Pretorius points it out and Mickey follows the direction.

### **BATHROOM**

Mickey stands before a mirror. The bathroom is filled with plants, blue like the rest of the house.

The wound on his neck throbs, leaks. The stains running down Mickey's back are almost black now. A hint of movement can be seen in them, a wriggling under the shirt, under the skin.

After wiping away tears and the dried SCUD that caked the corners of his mouth, Mickey takes a long look at himself.

He shuts the light off, speaking quickly and quietly.

MICKEY

Baba yaga, baba yaga, baba yaga.

Mickey flicks the light on, looks around: nothing.

He takes a deep breath and exits the bathroom.

### **DINING ROOM**

Pretorius pours gin into a blender, atop a fair amount of black, bubbling SCUD.

MICKEY

I hope that's for you. I'm hittin' a bit of a hangover to be honest.

DOCTOR PRETORIUS

This is for me. *That* is for you.

The doctor gestures to a contraption on the table that looks like two bicycle pump hoses attached to an air bladder.

MICKEY

What the hell is it?

DOCTOR PRETORIUS  
Your next dose. I believe the  
churros started the process.

Pretorius points to the ends of the two hoses.

DOCTOR PRETORIUS (CONT'D)  
Stick these into your nostrils.

Then to the bladder.

DOCTOR PRETORIUS (CONT'D)  
Firmly grasp the bladder and  
squeeze. SCUD will enter the soft  
tissue of your nasal cavity and  
then your bloodstream. I'm afraid  
it will be rather unpleasant.

Mickey shakes his head.

MICKEY  
Doc, I... I...

DOCTOR PRETORIUS  
You have to. Your transformation  
has already begun. If you don't...  
help it along... you may find  
yourself caught in the middle of  
something over which you have no  
control. If you do this now, the  
process will yield better results  
and the blink will be brief.

MICKEY  
My last "blink" was a goddamn  
nightmare. Daymare.

DOCTOR PRETORIUS  
You must have quite the imagination  
then. You create them. They are  
external manifestations of what is  
inside your head. And they become  
as real as you or I standing here  
now. I doubt the next one will be  
any better unfortunately, but at  
least you will know you are in it.

MICKEY  
What about Johnny America? His  
people expect me to murder you.  
With that chair.

DOCTOR PRETORIUS

That chair will do no murdering.  
What they have asked you to do must  
be done. It will earn you their  
trust. But I assure you that you  
will be nothing more than a rabid  
dog to them as soon as you aren't  
of use.

MICKEY

You want me to kill you?

DOCTOR PRETORIUS

Don't be silly. If I need to go  
out, dammit, I'll do it myself.  
Before we get to that, I'm going to  
need you to administer the dose.

(beat)

Go ahead, pick it up.

Mickey examines the contraption: little suction cups at the  
base of the needles allow a seal at the edge of the nostril.

MICKEY

Am I ever going to be able to  
wrestle again?

Doctor Pretorius chortles and smirks. He composes himself.

DOCTOR PRETORIUS

I apologize once more for laughing,  
pompous old ass that I am.

(short beat)

Something tells me you will.

Placing a needle in each nostril, Mickey shoves until the  
suction seals. He holds the bladder; it throbs. Pretorius  
nods at him.

Mickey squeezes.

MICKEY

Fuck!

He immediately rips out the needles, sneezing uncontrollably.  
Mick drops the device and puts his hands to his temples. Post-  
snort pain is replaced by a daze.

Mickey turns to the doctor: Pretorius stands on the table,  
grinning like a madman.

DOCTOR PRETORIUS

I am privileged to have met you,  
Mickey. I'll see you soon.



With that, Pretorius steps into the blender with one foot: it shrinks as it goes in. He steps in with the other. He wriggles his body, sinking further into the gin-filled smoothie machine with each sway of the hips until just his shoulders, arms, and head remain unsubmerged.

Mickey watches through SCUD-fueled malaise.

The doctor smiles and uses his left hand to shove his head into the blender. Only his right hand is still dry. That right hand flashes Mickey a thumbs up, reaches forward, and presses "Blend."

Where once stood Doctor Pretorius, now stands a gin smoothie.

Mickey blinks.

**[BLINK] DINING ROOM - NIGHT**

Mickey opens his eyes. He is still in the doctor's house, but his surroundings have warped: night has fallen and it's as if a dark mirror has been held up to the plant-filled, simple home that Mickey was in seemingly moments ago.

Another version of his entrance song crackles into existence, distant, playing somewhere upstairs. Mickey walks around, examining his world. Each element is as it was, just different, as if the vibe was controlled by a huge knob labelled "Spookiness Level" and Mickey's unbridled subconscious was at the helm.

The plants remain, but are now artificial. The walls have shifted from blue to red.

Doctor Pretorius remains in the blender, but he's now in tiny homunculi form rather than smoothie form. He stands in the blender and waves.

Frosty, alive again, sits on the table.

SNOWMAN

Mothman, you're back! What a neat thing to happen to a nice guy like you.

Mickey gives a thumbs up. The snowman attempts to do the same, but it doesn't have thumbs.

Movement outside the window draws Mick's attention. The two kids from earlier are hanging out under the glow of streetlights. They shotgun energy drinks.

A hulking, black shape lumbers down the sidewalk toward them. It's big enough that the **swish plop** of its rhythmic movement can be heard through the window.

It stops and remains at the edge of light. They turn to it and laugh, flipping it off until it enters the light.

The BABA YAGA is exactly as Mickey described it to Thom: a beast with huge, veiny bat wings for arms, deformed and evil. The skin is flesh-colored and coated with dark red slime, somewhere between blood and SCUD. Around its neck is a huge skull, jaws pried open to reveal a gnarly bat creature.

One kid drops his drink in fear. The other attempts to flee. Both are quickly gutted, the Baba Yaga using the claws at the end of its wings to grab them.

Mickey watches, rapt.

A **banging** on glass jars him from the scene: the little doctor smacks the side of the blender. Pretorius' face appears floating inside like the Wizard of Fucked Up Oz.

DOCTOR PRETORIUS

They become as real as you or I  
standing here now.

Mickey turns to the window: the Baba Yaga is about ten feet away, lumbering and **hissing**.

MICKEY

Fuck!

The beast **smashes** through the window, all teeth and claws and blood. It emits a sound halfway between Dracula's **hiss** and Cujo's **growl**, blasted through a heavy metal amplifier.

Mickey sprints to the front door as the Baba Yaga tries to squeeze into the house. He throws it open and runs out...

...and runs right back into the house. He spins around, looks out the door: the space within the doorframe contains a mirror image of the interior of the house.

The Baba Yaga has almost pushed its way in, royally pissed.

Frosty hops off the table in fear, his three-tiered body bursting on impact. A carrot comes to rest at Mick's feet.

MICKEY (CONT'D)

No!

With no time to mourn Frosty's demise, Mickey runs into the unknown of the Doctor's home.

**[BLINK] UPSTAIRS**

Mickey sprints upstairs, looking for a place to hide. His entrance song gets louder as he advance.

The Baba Yaga stumbles around downstairs. It **screams** with rage. The walls **shake**.

He opens the first door, coming face-to-face with his own apartment bathroom. The proboscis he left in the sink flails onto the floor and slithers toward him. He slams the door.

The Baba Yaga **smashes** up the stairs.

He tries door number two: the interior of Macho Taco. The taco mascot viciously rams churros down the cashier's throat. He shuts that door.

Door number three: his dressing room at the arena and the source of his entrance song.

**[BLINK] INT. ARENA - DRESSING ROOM - NIGHT**

Mick runs in and grabs the torch he forgot in the first scene. He looks around, planning his next step.

The Baba Yaga **swish plops** into the doorframe, sees Mickey, and **roars**. A trail of blood is left in its wake, coating every surface it touches.

Mickey sprints into the devouring darkness of the corridor.

**[BLINK] RING**

He emerges, the arena dark and seatless. Just the ring, showcased with a huge red spotlight. Mickey sprints down the ramp, diving under the ring as the beast enters and the song warps to something droning and hellish.

Mickey hugs the torch against him and attempts to measure his breathing amidst the dusty rafters that hold up the mat.

The Baba Yaga approaches and trudges the perimeter. Its roar has lessened into nine-packs-a-day **cough-breathing**.

Mickey listens as the creature ascends into the ring. The surface above bounces as it hits the mat. He uses the bounce to judge his exit point, crawling away from it.

He gets to the edge and sees the trail of the Baba Yaga. He lifts the apron a hair and stops: no more movement above.

Silence.

Viscous, almost-black blood drips in front of him. The Baba Yaga leans over the ropes directly above.

He crawls away, stopping to listen again momentarily.

**Snit:** the Baba Yaga's tongue rips through the mat and hits the ground to his left. It quickly disappears to where it came. Another **snit** as it hits to his right.

**Another. Another.** Quicker, closer.

With no way out, he ignites the torch and holds his breath.

The Baba Yaga **rips** the mat and its support structure upward.

Directly above him, it's slimy, bathed in red. It **roars** and shoots its tongue at its prey.

The tongue rips through Mickey's clothes and hits his belly.

But it bounces off.

The beast hesitates, confounded. Mickey, just as surprised, looks down to see he has no belly button. In its place is thick, callused flesh. Old skin hangs loosely around it.

The Baba Yaga tries again, but Mickey catches its tongue. He pulls with all his strength, over to the torch.

Crying out, the beast whips its tongue back and forth. Mickey loses grip and catches it again. He looks right into it: a hellish lamprey with rows of blood-stained fangs.

Mickey sticks the torch in and roars back at it, holding on for dear life. The creature writhes and twists and **screams**.

Flames crawl up the tongue. Mickey lets go as the fire burns him. The beast flails its wildly, lighting up the ring.

The panicked wrestler turns to escape, but the apron has been set ablaze: he's trapped. He wriggles through the rafters to crawl from the hole the Baba Yaga created: the flaming monster falls forward onto it, forcing him back down.

Mickey coughs uncontrollably as smoke pools. The creature uses its dying moments to continue in vain attempt to kill its prey, a predator until last breath.

As he fights the urge to pass out, Mickey transforms from caterpillar to cocoon. He screams as his old flesh is shed, revealing new flesh, tough and rugged.

The split moves up to his neck, then his mouth. It gets stuck at his lower lip until a cough jars his head forward and **rips** his old skin over his nose. His teeth shoot out.

Where once was a mouth and nostrils, now there is nothing but an exoskeleton. His screaming has stopped, the Baba Yaga has died, and the only sound is the **rumble** of the flames.

It gets to his eyes: one last look of raw horror before they are ripped from their sockets, optic nerves and all. The shed skin flops off and quivers beside him.

Where moments before was a man, now there is a cocoon.

The rings collapses. The blaze swallows all.

**SMASH TO:**

**INT. ARENA - DRESSING ROOM - NIGHT**

Mickey springs from his dressing room chair and glances around, wild-eyed. He rushes back to the mirror and runs a hand over his face: mouth, nose, eyes, all there.

He lifts his shirt. A man has never been so happy to see his own belly button (or newfound abs beginning to peek from fat). He wears the same outfit as the first scene, though more worn and without the orange rubber band.

The stains down Mickey's back are black and throbbing.

Commissioner Cooper storms in, dressed to the tens.

COMMISSIONER COOPER

Christ, you look like a fucking nightmare.

(beat)

Sit.

Mickey sits on the steel chair. The wildness remains in his eyes, but confusion is replaced by the glowing ember of rage.

COMMISSIONER COOPER (CONT'D)

Tonight, you will bleed. Skip the razors. It has to be real. Johnny's working the crowd right now, giving you more heat than you've ever felt. He told me about your "migraine" bullshit at the runthrough.

(MORE)

COMMISSIONER COOPER (CONT'D)

I had half a mind to pull you from the card, but I remembered tonight is the last night that I will ever have to see your senile ass stumble around my ring.

(short beat)

If you bleed, and if you make Johnny look like a goddamn superhero, your money's waiting.

Mickey's fists are clenched. Cooper notices and laughs.

COMMISSIONER COOPER (CONT'D)

Good. You're pissed. If you're angry enough, maybe you won't think so much. Maybe you won't look like such a fucking idiot in my ring-

The Mothman springs up and pins Cooper against the wall. Wings practically bust out of his shirt.

MICKEY

You are a vile human. And I would love to bash yer teeth into the back of yer skull.

(beat)

I'll bleed. For me.

He releases Cooper.

COMMISSIONER COOPER

Slow down, you still have to wait for yo-

Mickey roars, grabs his seat, and **smashes** it into the mirror inches from Cooper. The Mothman charges into the dark hallway, still carrying the steel chair.

## RING

Johnny America's voice cuts through the clamor of an approving crowd. The arena is standing room only. Johnny marches across the ring, a microphone in one hand and an American flag in the other.

JOHNNY AMERICA

...freak's reign of terror will come to a bloody end tonight! I will destroy the Mothman and send him back to Hell where he can belch out a happy hi-how-are-ya to whatever pinko Commie brood of beasts he sprang from.

(MORE)

## JOHNNY AMERICA (CONT'D)

It's a mercy killing. Johnny  
America will be your champion and-

The Mothman emerges onto the ramp at a jog to no entrance music or fanfare, brimming with feral energy. The crowd reels in surprise, booing, whipping drinks and popcorn at him.

Johnny, as surprised as anyone, shoves the mic into the ref's hands and gently hands the flag to the remaining members of Pest Control. They fold the flag in proper fashion.

Mick reaches the ring and slides under the ropes, chair and all. He gives a huge swing and Johnny ducks under, countering to grapple the Mothman from behind. He forces the weapon away and the match begins with a **dingdingding**.

Back and forth, beautiful in its melodramatic brutality, the match plays out in classic babyface-versus-heel fashion. Everything wrong with the first match is perfect here. Nothing is stilted or telegraphed: pure meathead ballet.

Johnny takes the upper hand at first, working the crowd into thunderous chants of "USA! USA! USA!"

They eat it up and he works Mickey with the classics: Irish whips, clotheslines off the ropes, countoff punches at the turnbuckle, a DDT, grapples, a couple suplexes. Every time Mickey gains a bit of ground, Johnny reverses it.

He finally has Mickey belly-down on the mat, beat up, gasping for air. Johnny comes to attention, military-style.

The crowd goes silent until Johnny whips his right hand into salute. Pest Control jerks to attention. Many in the crowd returns the gesture and go apeshit when Johnny finishes the motion, signaling for his signature move: Manifest Destiny.

He mounts the turnbuckle. Pest Control pull out trumpets and plays Taps. The crowd whistles along.

Atop of the turnbuckle, Johnny closes his eyes and extends his arms out crucifix-style. Everybody goes silent. Mickey is in the perfect landing zone, arms-reach from the chair.

Johnny opens his eyes and vaults into the air, bringing his right hand back up into a salute. He twists so his elbow will come down on his opponent.

From his knees, Mickey grabs the chair and **cracks** it up into his opponent's body. Johnny crumples.

The crowd loses it, screaming obscenities. Mickey stands and stomps around the ring, roaring like a goddamn maniac. He yells at fans, sticks out his tongue, yanks on the ropes.

It's his turn.

The Mothman brawls. No finesse, no fundamentals: raw power.

He drags his opponent by the hair and smashes his face into the turnbuckle. He whips the boy wonder off the ropes and spears him into next week. Powerbomb, a low blow, stomps.

The Mothman bellows like a fucking freight train. His wings pulse in his back, feeding off the destruction.

After a brutal beatdown, Johnny lies on his back, rolling in agony. Mickey puts him in a chokehold.

MICKEY

(grunt-whispering)

Rope out, I'll get heat, gimme  
color, big finale.

Johnny grunts approval and pushes toward the ropes. He reaches, milking the struggle, the fans putty at this point.

Mick feigns surprise he's still alive, let alone overpowering his hold. He squeezes with every inch of strength in his body, but Johnny gets a burst and catches hold of the rope. The ref forces Mickey off.

The heel roars around the ring, furious. He pushes the ref, pokes a finger in his face, spits at him. While his back is turned, Johnny pulls himself to his feet.

The crowd thunders.

Mickey turns. **Wham:** a clothesline sends him somersaulting.

Backing against the ropes, Mick sells his fear that this mere mortal still stands. He lunges at the chair; Johnny kicks it out of the ring. The Mothman jerks forward for a low blow and his opponent catches his fist.

Johnny picks him up and twists his arm behind his back. Chants of "USA! USA! USA!" resume.

The patriot shoves the monster into the ropes and catches him on the rebound, hand-to-neck. He delivers a couple jabs to Mickey's face, staggering him.

Johnny drags him to the turnbuckle and hops up. He hoists Mickey up after. They speak in hushed tones.

JOHNNY AMERICA

Ready to bleed, old man.

A thin ribbon of blood has formed above Mickey's left eye.



MICKEY

Already there. Let's fly.

Johnny makes eye contact with the ref and throws a quick nod. The ref nods back.

They soar into the air.

Mickey smiles.

His head bashes into the mat and the bloodgates open, soaking us as we—

**BLEED TO RED:**

Ten **dings** — the ten-bell salute — ring out.

**EXT. ARENA - PARKING LOT - NIGHT**

Mickey strides across the pavement, bee-lining for his car. He whistles and totes his duffel, wearing post-match sweats.

He reaches the junker and pulls keys from his pocket. Opening the door, Mick sees the mangled remains of what once was his steering column.

**I/E. HARVEY'S TRUCK - NIGHT (DRIVING)**

Mickey stares out the window of Harvey's truck, smiling. Harvey drives, maybe still smoking the same cigarette.

The lights of the street play across Mick's face, an ever-changing mask. His face warps: one moment, Mickey is Mickey, the next, he is the Mothman.

The truck pulls in the lot of Mickey's building.

MICKEY

Thanks, Harvey. 'Preciate it.

Harvey nods and the truck putters away.

**EXT. TENEMENT - PARKING LOT - NIGHT**

Thom sits in the tree, a grin playing across his ruddy face, barefoot as always. Mickey grins back.

MICKEY

Don'tcha got kid things to be up to?

THOM

I like being here.

Mickey saunters over and tosses his bag down. He scratches his back against the tree, sliding down the trunk once satisfied. He slips off his shoes, zips them into his bag.

The two gaze up at an almost-full moon.

MICKEY

I think I'm gonna be goin' away soon, bud.

THOM

You gotta be the Mothman now.

MICKEY

Yeah. Yeah, that's it.

Beat.

THOM

Think there's aliens?

MICKEY

I think you're an alien. I think when you were a baby, yer mom flew to Earth in a UFO and landed right here. Bet the ship's around here somewhere and it's got a special force field that makes it look like a tree or somethin'.

THOM

Maybe it's this tree.

MICKEY

That'd explain why you're always here.

Thom traces a path across the sky and makes UFO noises, letting his finger crash into the tree beneath.

THOM

Maybe I'll go back some day.

MICKEY

Maybe. You're gonna need to find the keys to turn this hunka wood back into a spaceship though. Can't fly to space in a tree.

THOM

Wouldja come with?

MICKEY

Tell ya what, captain: you figure how to go to space, I'll be first mate.

The boy smushes the moon between his fingers. Mickey pats him on the foot and gets up, tossing his bag over his shoulder.

THOM

You'll say bye, right?

MICKEY

Of course. We'll have one last movie. Anything ya want.

THOM

A monster movie. Lotsa blood.

MICKEY

Sure, bud. You bring popcorn.

(beat)

Don't stay out too late, okay?

THOM

'kay.

Mickey heads across the parking lot.

#### **SERIES OF SHOTS - THE NEW ROUTINE - NIGHT**

- Mick enters his **APARTMENT**. He stares lovingly around his shitty home.

- A burger sizzles in a pan, cheese melting atop and bacon right next to it. Mickey takes it off the heat and assembles a not-half-bad bacon cheeseburger.

- The TV is tuned to an old luchador B-movie like *Santo and Blue Demon Against the Monsters*. Mickey watches like a kid watching horror movies after his bedtime. He devours his burger and drinks water.

#### **INT. TENEMENT - MICKEY'S APARTMENT - BATHROOM**

Shower on, Mickey looks in the mirror. He opens his mouth wide, reaching a finger to probe his throat: nothing.

He turns, takes off his shirt. In the mirror: wings. They breach his flesh and poke through in points, wiggling just beneath the surface in others, black and slimy.

Mick grunts and reaches around his body to itch. He feels the discharge, bringing his hand around to examine it. He turns to the mirror.

The wings emerge.

Flesh separates and **tears** as the black wings outgrow his body. A bony frame gives way to veiny, stretched skin.

He stumbles around in agony, bashing into everything. Mick tries to scream, but only shrill squeaks escape his mouth.

Mickey attempts to grab a wing, tripping into the shower. The SCUD that coats his wings oozes down him. As he struggles, he drags it across the wall and it coats him.

He stumbles to the mirror and gets a look at his target. Through sheer power of will, Mick reaches over his shoulder and seizes a wing at its base.

With a mighty tug, Mickey attempts to rip it from his body, screaming. The wing pulls out slowly, bringing with it tendons that stretch and quiver.

Mick runs out of steam and stops to catch breath, but it goes back in as if it doesn't want to leave. He catches it and tugs, all veins and sweat and violence.

He **rips** it from his body; the momentum sends it careening across the room. It hits the doorframe and comes to rest on the ground below. The other wing has completely emerged.

Mickey lies on the ground in a puddle of nasty, breathing heavy and eyeing the hideous thing he just ejected.

He closes his eyes for a moment, a brief reprieve.

**Swish. Plop.**

Mickey opens his eyes and is met by the nightmarish sight of the wing pulling itself back toward him.

MICKEY

No. No, no, no, no, no!

Struggling to his knees, Mick looks for an exit: the poster.

He crawls to the wall, pulls himself up. He rips through the poster to find Joan's apartment on the other side.

MICKEY (CONT'D)

Joan!

The wing is close behind, moving at the patient clip: no need to rush the inevitable.

MICKEY (CONT'D)

*Joan!*

Mickey half-dives through the hole, headfirst. Splinters in the wall rip with wooden claws, gashing his body.

Half in and half out, he feels the touch of the wing against his feet. He can't get enough footing on the slimy floor to push himself through.

Joan emerges, awakened from deep slumber.

JOAN

Mickey?

MICKEY

Pull me through!

JOAN

Wha-

MICKEY

*Pull me through, goddammit!*

The wing is upon him. Joan grabs his arms, frantic.

His lost appendage reinserts itself. **Violently.**

Mickey screams as she yanks him through.

Too late.

#### JOAN'S APARTMENT - MAIN AREA

Mickey stands and grasps wildly at his back: nothing. He falls to the floor, broken, covered in blood and cuts.

Joan stands over him.

JOAN

We have to go to the hospital now.

Mickey nods slowly.

JOAN (CONT'D) (CONT'D)

Can you walk?

He nods again. Joan grabs his arm and helps him to his feet.

MICKEY  
 (muttering)  
 What about Thom?

JOAN  
 What?

MICKEY  
 Thom.

JOAN  
 Who's Thom?

MICKEY  
 Is he in bed?

JOAN  
 Mickey. I have no idea who the fuck  
*Thom* is. We have to go to the  
 hospital right now because you are  
 losing blood and I can't help you  
 here. Do you understand me?

**I/E. JOAN'S CAR - NIGHT (DRIVING)**

Mickey slumps against the passenger window, dazed, staring up at the moon. The passing lights of the city drown him.

**EXT. HOSPITAL - NIGHT**

Joan pulls up before a monolithic building. It looms, stabbing into the night sky like a Victorian nightmare.

Several large male ORDERLIES await their arrival, dressed in white button-up T-shirts, tucked crisply into white slacks.

A massive American flag flutters in the yard.

JOAN  
 I'm sorry.

MICKEY  
 About what?

Mickey groggily looks at her. Tears stream down her face.

The passenger door is thrown open and Mick is lifted into the night. He looks at the two men who hold him: Pest Control. Their eyes are glowing white.

Mickey struggles. They are too strong, he, too broken.

Joan crosses to him and pulls a syringe from her pocket.

MICKEY (CONT'D)  
Joan...

JOAN  
I'm so sorry.

She caresses his face, thrusts the needle deep into his neck.

**INT. HOSPITAL - MICKEY'S ROOM - NIGHT**

Mickey blinks awake in a too-bright hospital room, wearing an O.R. gown. Every surface is asylum-white. Fluorescents hum.

A metal door with a porthole window is opposite him, a large red button next to it. A tiny, barred window is on the wall.

His limbs are restrained; he pulls at them to no avail.

In the corner, on the steel folding chair, sits Thom.

MICKEY  
Thom?

THOM  
Hey, Mickey.

MICKEY  
Are you... Are you real?

Thom walks over. He puts his hand on Mickey's shoulder. He wears an orange rubber band on his wrist.

THOM  
You gotta be the Mothman now.

Mickey blinks.

The room is dark now, the only light coming from the moon outside the window. Thom is gone.

MICKEY  
Thom?

A shape hangs in the corner, partially moonlit.

MICKEY (CONT'D)  
Who's there?

With a graceful slink, the thing flips over and lands on the ground, its beastly head coming into focus.

THE HARBINGER  
Hello, Mothman.

MICKEY  
Are you real?

THE HARBINGER  
As real as you. Either we're both  
here or we're both nowhere.

She emerges into the light, her naked body covered in SCUD. The snarl of her bat head is even more grotesque and horrifying than before.

MICKEY  
You gonna kill me?

THE HARBINGER  
Kill you?

The Harbinger cackles. She prowls across the room and crouches to his level, caressing his cheek.

THE HARBINGER (CONT'D)  
Do you know who you are now?

Beat.

Mickey smiles.

MICKEY  
I'm the Mothman.

THE HARBINGER  
Very cool.

She plunges her head against his and vomits a jet of SCUD directly into his mouth. He chokes and convulses.

**SMASH TO:**

**MICKEY'S ROOM - DAY**

Mickey jolts awake. Joan crouches in the same spot the Harbinger did. The room looks the same, but Mickey does not.

The black hairs on his body have become coarser, thicker. His eyes have grown, his mouth is muzzled. The toes that stick out from his hospital gown have grown together, elongated. He is not only strapped down at his limbs, but also his chest; his wings, hidden, bulge beneath him.



JOAN

Good morning. I bet talking's difficult at this point, so I don't expect a response. I'm sorry it all happened like this. We needed someone who wouldn't be missed and whose mind couldn't fight it.

Joan averts his gaze.

JOAN (CONT'D)

You'd think of yourself as a martyr if you could understand the situation.

(beat)

They were winning. I knew you'd make the right choices while you could. I knew you'd try. For me.

She stands and walks to the door.

JOAN (CONT'D)

I don't know if you're still in there, but you died a hero in my eyes. Goodbye, Mickey.

Joan hits the button. The door opens and Johnny America is standing there, wearing a doctor's coat. Joan walks out.

Johnny salutes Mickey and the door closes in front of him.

### **MICKEY'S ROOM - NIGHT**

The Mothman stares out the window at a full moon. His eyes have grown larger, more insect-like. His hair is even thicker, now covering almost his entire body.

The door slides open. The lights flip on.

A member of Pest Control walks in with a tray bearing a cup filled with dark red goop and a plate covered in gray goop. He sets it on a table next to the Mothman.

The orderly takes off the muzzle, revealing two fuzzy appendages that jut from where Mickey's nose and mouth used to be. Between is the hint of a hidden, coiled proboscis.

Hanging the mask on the corner of the bed, the orderly leaves and closes the door behind.

The Mothman continues to stare out the window.

DOCTOR PRETORIUS (O.S.)  
Hello, Mothman.

Startled, the creature looks around. He scans the room.

DOCTOR PRETORIUS (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
Over here, my boy. The smoothie.

He turns and sees two eyes and a pair of lips smushed crudely against the side of the cup.

DOCTOR PRETORIUS (CONT'D)  
I'm so proud to see you've made it  
this far. I knew you were special.  
(beat)  
Listen to me carefully. I am your  
final dosage. You need to drink me  
to achieve complete metamorphosis.  
Once you do, you will be free. You  
can be who you've always been meant  
to. I must warn you though: they  
will try to kill you because they  
do not understand. If you—

The Mothman's proboscis unfurls and drains the smoothie, face parts and all.

For a moment, nothing.

A minor convulsion, followed by a larger one.

He **squeals**. Then once more, louder.

With a **roar**, he erupts from his bed as if he were held in place by tissue paper.

He unfurls his wings and his gown **explodes** in tatters.

The Mothman is magnificent, complete.

His wings, patterned, fleshy and bat-like in their bony structure, stretch across the room.

Feet and arms have become lanky caricatures of what they once were, covered in black hair.

He shakes his head, unfurling his antennae.

### UPSTAIRS HALLWAY

The orderly who dropped off Mickey's meal stands outside the door, playing a game on his phone. The hallway **hums** with fluorescents, looking somewhere between hospital and prison.

He glances at the clock on the wall, pockets his phone, and makes to enter Mickey's room. The Mothman stares out at him in the porthole.

Wide-eyed, he smashes a big red button on the wall.

The door **explodes** off its hinges, pinning him underneath.

A siren **wails** and the lights go red.

The Mothman steps from his room and onto the door, crushing the man underneath. Blood oozes from him like a tube of toothpaste with holes stabbed into it. He doesn't even have time to scream: his bones **crunch** and his insides **smush**.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)

Ladies and gentleman and all in  
between, do we have a show for you!

Stomping down the hall, the Mothman sees his room is one of many. Muted, garbled inhuman noises hit him from each room.

Another orderly rounds a corner up ahead at full sprint, wielding a folding chair. He winds up and swings.

The Mothman knocks it away with a wing and unleashes his proboscis. It stabs into the man's belly, ejecting with a shower of gore.

The man gurgles up blood and slumps to the floor.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Stomping down the hall in a cloud  
of blood. Standing six-foot-six.  
Weighing in at two-hundred-and-  
seventy pounds...

Heading the way the man came from, The Mothman turns the corner to see four men waiting in a reception area.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Hailing from the deepest hellpit of  
despair in the devil's lair...

They spread out to flank him. Each has a weapon: a sledgehammer, a baseball bat, a 2 x 4, and a trashcan.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Vomited from the valley of  
violence...

TRASHCAN MAN charges, taking a wing end to the throat. The body **slides** off and drops.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
 The godfather of gore! The maestro  
 of mutilation! The sage of sadism!

SLEDGEHAMMER GUY swings and the Mothman jumps off the wall, narrowly avoiding the weapon. He springs down onto his assailant and double-punches him in the face, sending brain matter across the space.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
 Theeeeeeeeeee Mothmaaaaaaaannnnnnn!

BASEBALL BAT FELLA and 2 X 4 DUDE stop for a second, assessing the situation. The Mothman crouches atop his most recent prey, waiting.

Sirens go silent, replaced by a crowd: the freaks in the rooms around him cheering with beastly, feral fervor.

His true entrance song, the original "Hybrid Moments" by Misfits, thunders into existence over the P.A.

The orderlies charge when the guitar kicks in and Mothman pounces, decapitating both with the razor-sharp bones of his wings, their severed heads sliding onto the ends like war trophies.

He sprints forward, bounding on all fours.

An orderly charges with a crowbar; the Mothman jumps into him and bisects him crotch to crown.

Another rounds a corner to see the hallway is empty. He looks up to see The Mothman hanging from the ceiling. His death **scream** is cut short by gurgling blood.

### **STAIRS**

The Mothman jumps from landing to landing on the stairs, dispatching a couple more assailants in violent fashion.

Blood fountains across the walls.

He gets to the bottom and charges through the door.

### **DOWNSTAIRS HALLWAY**

A hallway leading to the lobby is filled wall-to-wall with large, angry men in spotless white orderly uniforms.

The Mothman, covered head-to-toe in the viscera of his enemies, **roars** and charges into the melee.

A bloodbath.

The Mothman is a whirling dervish of death. His wings, swords. His hands and feet, maces. He lashes his proboscis deep into soft flesh over and over.

He leaps off the ceiling and walls, attacking from all sides.

And then, as quickly as it began, it's all over.

He stands, knee deep in gore.

The song reaches its end.

Mothman walks.

### LOBBY

Moonlight shines through the plate-glass windows of the lobby. In the middle, between The Mothman and the night, stand Johnny America and Joan.

JOHNNY AMERICA

Goldarn it, gramps. Look what you did! That was a lot of dudes.

(beat)

It's hard to find good help.

The Mothman **roars** in response.

Johnny removes his doctor's uniform, revealing his wrestling tights underneath. Joan backs away from the battle.

JOHNNY AMERICA (CONT'D)

I really, really wish we could have just ended it on a high note. You kill the mad doctor, the freaks scamper away into the dark, we win. America wins. God wins. But you had to eff it all up.

(beat)

I can't let you leave. You are a monster. And the world needs heroes like me, not things like you.

He cracks his neck.

JOHNNY AMERICA (CONT'D)

(to Joan)

Don't worry, you'll never have to touch him ever again.

Johnny glares at the Mothman, glowing like an avenging angel.

JOHNNY AMERICA (CONT'D)

When you get to Hell, tell the  
commies Johnny America sent you.

He strides confidently toward his opponent, cracking his  
knuckles and running his fingers through his hair.

The Mothman spits a heavy jet of blood from his proboscis, a  
fire hose stopping Johnny in his tracks as clumps of viscera  
slop against him in the stream.

Johnny fights but is pushed back.

After a brief battle, Johnny has exhausted himself.

He falls to his knees, breathing hard as the jet of blood  
ceases. The Mothman coughs out one final kidney that smacks  
the exhausted nemesis in the face.

The Mothman moves to him, looming like a demon. Two insectoid  
hands grasp Johnny's face.

JOHNNY AMERICA (CONT'D)

Goldarn it.

**Whoosh:** The Mothman takes off directly up into the air and  
zips around the space, swinging Johnny into concrete walls  
and windows and everything else. Johnny's screams turn to  
groans and his groans to feeble whimpers.

His dead body drops directly before Joan. Joan screams, runs  
for the exit.

The Mothman lands between her and the doors. The terrified  
woman backs away, hands up.

Blood drips from him, puddling on the floor.

JOAN

Mickey. It's...it's Joan. I... You  
don't have to do this. Please.

He takes a step toward her and she cowers, tears in her eyes,  
knowing this is the end.

The Mothman gives her a hug.

He walks out the door, leaving her soaked in blood.

**EXT. HOSPITAL - NIGHT**

Thom is waiting when he steps into the night, barefoot, in a tree, eating from a yellow bucket of popcorn. He hops down, spilling some buttery kernels.

The boy claps.

Teary-eyed, Thom smiles at the Mothman and offers a butter-fingered fist. The creature puts one insectoid fist over Thom's, another under.

THOM

See ya later, Mothman.

The Mothman turns, looks up at the full moon.  
He launches himself into the night.  
Thom grabs a handful of popcorn.  
He laughs and takes a bite.

T H E

M O T H M A N