

Where There's Smoke (There's Monsters)

By

Gregory L. Heitmann

1924 Thomas AVE
Santa Fe, NM 87505
(505) 424-4195
g_mann_jr@yahoo.com

© 2012 Gregory L. Heitmann. All Rights Reserved.

FADE IN:

EXT. SANTA FE RESIDENTIAL BACKYARD - NIGHT

The fire pit flames are the only light that illuminate two young men slumped in chairs on the patio.

JAKE

Did you talk to Mom?

JAKE VOSKILL (28) is clean-cut, White male. He does not look like a low level pot dealer. Jake's Scandinavian cheek bones blend with his Germanic heritage leaving a "Young Republican" image. He hands a joint to his brother, ROY VOSKILL (23) after taking a hit and holding it.

ROY

Yeah, Mom and Dad insist on visiting this summer.

Roy inhales and grimaces with a smile as he hits the cigarette. Roy is the younger version of Jake, but with a Beatles type mop top and Fu Man Chu facial hair. Jake nods in acknowledgement.

JAKE

(exhaling smoke as he talks)

No use in trying to talk them out of it. It's been three years since they came to see us.

Roy finally exhales. He stares at the joint. Jake picks up a large mailing envelope from the table and he removes a one page letter and reads to himself.

ROY

Wow, this seems to be some good stuff. This the new batch? Whatcha readin' there?

JAKE

Nothin'. Just my latest rejection from the St. Thomas University Literature and Creative Writing program. Check this out.

Jake clears his throat and speaks with a high, English accent as he reads the letter aloud.

JAKE

Dear Mr. Voskill, although your writing samples have been the highest quality submitted by the incoming pool of applicants, we regret to inform you that you do not meet the current financial aid qualification. We cannot consider your application further.

Jake shrugs, looks at Roy, and continues to read the letter.

JAKE

We have returned your samples and encourage you to continue to pursue your writing. Sincerely, Harley Schmidt, Vice President of Admissions, St. Thomas University.

ROY

Short and sweet rejection. Sorry, man.

Roy takes a hit from the joint.

ROY

As I was saying, this is the new stuff? It's sweet.

Jake drops the letter and the envelope into the fire pit and watches it burn.

JAKE

(eyeing Roy)

Yup. By the way, I don't want to seem judgmental, but what's with the scarf?

Roy smiles and smoothes his scarf.

ROY

I'm trying out a new look for my musician persona, a la Bob Dylan. You like?

JAKE

No.

Roy frowns and hands the blunt back to Jake. He takes a long drag from the cigarette. Roy tosses another log in the fire pit.

JAKE

Hold off on stoking the fire. I'm beat. I'm going to hit the hay early.

ROY

What? We've been out here for only a half hour.

JAKE

It's this new stuff. It's potent.

Roy pokes at the fire with a stick.

ROY

Well, that's good. We need something new. Business is way off, even for being the usual summer doldrums.

Roy pokes again at the flames. He is unaware his scarf is on fire. He sets the stick aside and scoots his chair up to the table. He begins rolling a joint. Jake slips down in his chair with his eyes half closed.

JAKE

Scarf's on fire.

ROY

Ha-ha. Pass it back.

JAKE

No really.

Roy screams as he notices the nylon scarf on fire and flames racing toward his face. He unwinds the scarf from his neck and stomps the fire out. The commotion startles the neighbor's Chihuahua in its backyard. It begins a fit of barking. Its owner opens the door and calls the dog inside.

JAKE

So much for the scarf look.

Jake blindly hands the joint back to Roy, who puts it in his lips. Roy reaches over and slaps Jake's knee.

ROY

Hey, get your goods rolled for tomorrow. They're not going to roll themselves.

Jake reluctantly scoots up.

JAKE

Damn kids today. Can't even roll their own smokes. We got to start charging more.

ROY

We already do.

JAKE

Can you take care of the garden tonight? I'm beat.

ROY

No problem.

The men sit quietly passing the joint back and forth as they roll a few more cigarettes. The marijuana works its magic and the men relax and work slows.

Out of the darkness a dirty, bearded man materializes and stands warming himself near the fire. After a moment Jake turns and notices the man and hollers, equally frightening Roy.

JAKE

Holy shit, Billy! You can't sneak up on people like that.

BILLY (60) is a homeless man that wanders the neighborhood frequently imposing on people for a dollar or two. His eloquent English accent belies his appearance.

BILLY

I beg your pardon, gentleman.

ROY

Jesus, Billy. You scared the shit out of me.

BILLY

Truly, you must forgive me and I hate to impose, but could I sleep in your shed tonight.

JAKE

Come on Billy, we've already talked about this. The neighbors had a fit and called the cops the last two times they saw you come out of the shed.

ROY

Yeah, as you can see from our operation, we can't really have a police presence around.

Roy waves his hands over the joints spread out on the patio table.

BILLY

I understand. If I could just warm by the fire a few moments, I will then bid you adieu.

The fire dies and turns to glowing red embers. Billy tips his hat and exits the yard. Jake moves inside for the night and Roy bags up the newly rolled joints and puts the supplies away.

ROY

Damn it!

Roy slaps a mosquito on his elbow.

ROY

How can there be mosquitoes here?

INT. JAKE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Roy tosses the goods on the counter. He moves into a large room filled with boxes and assorted junk strewn everywhere. This would be the master bedroom suite. Roy bumps a bicycle leaning against a stack of boxes and it falls, knocking other boxes over.

ROY

Damn it!

Roy waves away the tidal wave of clutter.

ROY

I'll get it later.

He moves through the room and enters a door.

INT. WALK IN CLOSET - NIGHT

An interior room with no windows.

ROY

Hello, my pretties.

Roy smiles at the glow of the eight by eight foot room aglow with lights. He shuts the door.

One third of the converted closet is hung with drying plants. Two thirds of the room is shelves stacked with marijuana plants.

ROY

Well guys, just me and you tonight.

Roy pours water on each plant as he also harvests and hangs a few materials for the drying area.

ROY

Ahhh, you look thirsty. Look my pretties. Look what I got for ya. Fresh from the rain barrel.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Jake appears in the kitchen wearing his work uniform, a grey jumpsuit with his name above his right chest pocket. Roy sits at the table reading the paper eating cereal.

JAKE

Morning.

ROY

Look what the cat dragged out.

Jake grabs the orange juice and pours a glass looking puzzled.

JAKE

Don't you mean what the cat dragged in?

ROY

No. Dragged out to the kitchen. You were here with me last night; you were already in.

Jake shakes his head grabs his lunch pail, takes a swig of orange juice. He stows several Ziploc bags containing joints, a sandwich, and a banana. He finally sets a stack of papers over everything in the lunch pail.

JAKE

See you later.

Roy stands and puts on his uniform shirt. It is a bowling shirt with fancy embroidery on the back in the shape of a bouquet of roses. The roses are bracketed by the words, "LISA'S FLOWER BOUTIQUE." On the front over his left pocket his name is spelled out in cursive.

ROY

Have a good one. Make us some money.

JAKE

You too.

EXT. ST. THOMAS UNIVERSITY CAMPUS - DAY

Jake uses a Weedeater to mow the edges of a sidewalk. He is wearing hearing protection and goggles. He concentrates on his work and doesn't see his boss approaching.

SOLOMON WHITE, SOL, (55) Jake's boss taps him on the shoulder and makes a slashing motion across his throat as Jake looks up with a start. Jake kills the motor and removes his ear muffs.

SOL

Lunch! Come with me.

Jake and Sol walk to the nearby maintenance shed and gather their lunch pails before sitting at a rickety table.

SOL

I like the new pages.

Sol is a large Black man with bulging eyes, brilliantly white teeth in contrast to his dark skin. His tightly cropped nappy hair is jet black without a speck of grey.

JAKE

Awesome! I'll trade you.

They open their lunch pails and each grabs papers on top and they exchange the stacks.

SOL

You're going to have enough short stories to publish a compilation soon.

JAKE

(unwrapping his sandwich)

I wish. I can't afford it. I dream of taking the masters of literature course here, but I can't afford the tuition and they won't even read anything I've offered.

SOL

Hang in there. You got some good stuff. I particularly liked the puppy dog story.

JAKE

That one's a true story.

SOL

It made me cry.

JAKE

Me too.

INT. ROY'S DELIVERY VAN - DAY

Roy looks at a clipboard.

ROY

Oh, no. Not Mrs. Johnson. It's way too early in the morning for her.

EXT. HOUSE IN AFFLUENT NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY

Roy rings the doorbell holding a bouquet of mixed red and orange flowers. The door opens and MRS. JOHNSON (70) smiles at Roy, she could pass for a fifty-five year old Marilyn Monroe.

MRS. JOHNSON

Hello, Roy.

ROY

Good morning, Mrs. Johnson. I have some beautiful flowers for you this morning.

Mrs. Johnson yanks Roy over the threshold.

INT. JOHNSON HOUSE - DAY

Mrs. Johnson kisses Roy as he struggles to hold up the flowers.

ROY

Mrs. Johnson...

MRS. JOHNSON

Shush. Did you bring the stuff?

ROY

Yes, I have your usual.

Mrs. Johnson knowingly reaches into Roy's cargo shorts pocket and pulls out a baggie containing a joint. She pulls away and opens a drawer and extracts a lighter and fires up the joint.

MRS. JOHNSON

Come. Let's go to the pool. I don't want the smoke inside.

She grabs Roy's hand and tows him into the backyard pool. She puffs on the blunt and offers it to Roy. Roy waves it away.

ROY

I have more deliveries.

EXT. POOLSIDE - DAY

Mrs. Johnson removes her tan sweater revealing her bare breasts. Her khakis follow suit and she attacks Roy's cargo shorts. Roy does not resist.

ROY

Oh, boy...

EXT. JAKE'S BACKYARD - NIGHT

Jake and Roy have assumed the usual position surrounding the fire pit and they smoke weed and roll joints. A RUSTLING comes from behind the shed in the dark.

JAKE

Billy, is that you? We told you, you can't hang out here.

There is more RUSTLING OF SHOES ON LOOSE GRAVEL and the THUMP OF SOMEONE FALLING. The neighbor's dog begins BARKING from its backyard. The neighbor opens the door and calls the dog inside the house.

CARLTON (O.S.)

Son of a bitch!

Roy stands and grabs hold of his fire poker.

ROY

Who is there?

A curly haired white gangster-type with a paisley shirt, low hanging jeans and heavy, braided gold chain emerges from the darkness.

CARLTON

It's me, Carlton. Put the stick down, Roy.

ROY

Carlton? What do you want?

JAKE

You sneaking around to rob us?

CARLTON

What? No! I was just checking up on the competition. I heard you got some new shit on the street. People are talking.

ROY

We don't have much of a supply, so don't bother asking for some.

CARLTON

No, no. I was just wanting to hear it myself. I didn't think it would hurt to come by in person.

Carlton limps to the fire to warm in the cool night air.

CARLTON

That was before I tripped on the antler and skulls or whatever you got back there. That did hurt.

JAKE

Why you coming through the arroyo.
Roy was getting ready to brain you
with the poker.

CARLTON

Just keeping a low profile. Gotta
stay invisible in our business,
but hey, those skulls...they are
cool. Could I have one? I'll pay
you.

JAKE

I don't think so. Those are
treasured memories from me and my
brother's deer hunts. I plan on
cleaning them up and displaying
them.

CARLTON

I think you could make some money
selling them. Especially in this
high falutin' town. These people
eat this Southwest décor shit up.

ROY

I've told him that before.

CARLTON

Well, dudes, I gotta get goin'.
Take it easy. If you change your
mind on the skull, give me a
holler.

Carlton disappears over the back wall of the property and
into the arroyo.

ROY

Carlton, what a shady fuck. Those
skulls will disappear. Better
lock them up. That guy was here
to take whatever he could get his
hands on.

Jake and Roy get back to rolling reefer.

JAKE

How did it go today?

ROY

Not good. I had a delivery to Mrs. Johnson.

Jake's shoulders shake as he laughs silently.

ROY

It's not funny. You think being a gigolo, drug dealer would be glamorous. But, it kind of sucks.

JAKE

Oh, come on.

ROY

I'm tired of it, man.

JAKE

You couldn't wait to get in the business with me. You want out?

ROY

Are we being serious?

JAKE

Yes.

ROY

Well, yeah I want out. We have no money. I have no girl.

JAKE

You got a bunch of girlfriends.

ROY

Old ladies! Come on, man. Let's see if Carlton will buy us out.

JAKE

Yeah, we can see. We'll check with him. I've been thinking about retiring for awhile.

Jake looks to the shed.

JAKE

This is good timing with Mom and Dad coming to visit, we can be out of the biz before they come.

Jake looks to the back of the shed again.

JAKE

I'm going to get those skulls cleaned up and sell them. I hate to part with them, but we can get some cash and at least pay our bills for a couple months.

ROY

That's some good thinkin'. Sell all dad's deer skulls he shot over the years.

JAKE

You remember what he said?

ROY

Yeah, 'You artsy guys can sell them skulls down there.'

JAKE

Now, we'll finally do it.

Jake goes to the shed in the dark and returns with a ladder.

ROY

What are you doing?

JAKE

I'm going to put all the skulls on the roof for now. Otherwise they'll be gone to Carlton's lair.

ROY

Good thinkin'. They can't come inside. They still smell a little. So the roof is good.

JAKE

I'll get a bucket and start soaking them one at a time in a bleach solution. That should kill any smell.

Roy slaps at the back of his neck and looks at his hand.

ROY

Jesus, a mosquito just bit me. It's the frickin' high desert. Where'd a mosquito come from?

JAKE

Who knows? Help me get the skulls up on the roof.

ROY

I hate mosquitoes!

Roy stands and moves to retrieve some skulls.

ROY

Hey, they don't look to bad. Just dried leathery, furry skin to take off and they'll look cool.

The men haul a dozen deer skulls with various size antlers from behind the shed to the flat pueblo-style roof.

EXT. JAKE'S BACKYARD - DAY

Jake is dressed in his groundskeeper coveralls as he digs out the ladder from the shed, climbs up to the roof and brings down a large antlered mule deer skull.

Roy appears from the side of the house with a jug of bleach and two gallon bucket. He fills the bucket from the spigot, adds a generous amount of bleach, and sets the bucket in the shed.

ROY

There. That's about a 50-50 solution. I gotta get to work.

Jake finishes peeling some loose hide from dried skull.
He sniffs the skull and makes a face.

JAKE

Whew. Hopefully a couple days
soaking in the bucket will kill
the smell.

Jake waves to Roy.

JAKE

Have a good one.

ROY

Remember to keep the antlers out
of the water the best you can. We
want to keep them the original
color.

Jake submerges the skull portion in the water careful to
keep the antlers out of the solution. As Jake shuts the
shed door a wayward mosquito enters. Nobody notices the
insect. The men, lunch pails in hand, head to their
vehicles for work as the sun rises.

EXT. PATIO - NIGHT

The nightly routine is on as Jake and Roy smoke and roll
joints for the next day's deliveries.

JAKE

(hoisting a beer)

A toast to the art business and
selling our skulls.

Roy pulls deeply from the blunt and holds up his beer.

ROY

Cheers, brother.

The men sit quietly around the fire pit working, smoking,
and drinking.

JAKE

I'm going to check the shed and
see if Carlton dropped by and
stole our work in progress.

Jake stands and moves to the shed.

INT. SHED - NIGHT

In the pitch black of the shed the HIGH PITCH BUZZ of mosquito wings is heard and then there is silence.

The door opens and in the faintest light Jake can be seen looking to the floor where the bucket sits with the skull inside. On a magnified view of the surface of the bucket, a mosquito floats. It deposits an egg.

EXT. BACKYARD - NIGHT

Jake closes the door and moves back to the table to continue smoking and rolling. He accepts the joint from Roy.

JAKE

Good news, the skull is still there.

Roy nods.

JAKE

We'll let it sit a couple more days, then we'll get a new one in the bucket.

ROY

You're on your own tomorrow night. I gotta gig at Ray's Pizza.

JAKE

No problem, I'll get Angela to help me.

ROY

Yeah, don't hold your breath.

Jake and Roy share a laugh as they finish the joint and their beers.

JAKE

I'll still ask her to come by.

ROY

Good luck.

JAKE

I gotta go write some pages. I promised Sol I'd finish the revisions to my latest short story.

Jake kills his beer and heads inside leaving Roy to tend the fire and put things away.

EXT. ST. THOMAS CAMPUS MAINTENANCE SHED - DAY

Jake and Sol are having lunch. Sol finishes reading the last of several pages. He straightens them and hands them back to Jake. Sol is expressionless

JAKE

So?

Sol can't hold back his smile any longer.

SOL

It's perfect. You nailed it. I love the new ending. I liked the twist with ivory figurine better than the coin. It really made me think.

Jake sighs with relief.

JAKE

Thanks, I wasn't sure if I pulled it off.

SOL

The ivory carving and the coin had the same image. The symbolism was excellent.

JAKE

I'm glad you caught that. I was worried I buried it too deeply.

SOL

Nope, it was right on the mark.

Jake stands.

JAKE

I gotta go. I'm trying to catch
Angela.

SOL

Hold up a second.

Sol grabs Jake's sleeve. Jake sits back down.

SOL

I don't know how to say this, so
I'll just be direct. Do you deal
pot?

Jake tips a little but he catches himself as his face
loses all color.

SOL

Easy. I'm not...

Jake hyperventilates, trying to gather himself. Sol
enjoys putting this little scare into his co-worker.

SOL

Don't worry, you're not in
trouble. Did you think you were
so sneaky that I didn't notice?

Sol laughs as Jake tries to recover.

SOL

It's...Well, it's been four months
since Rita passed. I...I can't
sleep. It's been two years since
Rodney was killed in Afghanistan.
I just want to get away.

Jake finally understands.

JAKE

Don't say another word.

Jake reaches into his lunch pail and pulls a baggie with
two joints inside and tucks it in Sol's hand.

JAKE

It's the good stuff. You'll get a great escape, plus a goodnight's sleep.

Sol digs in his pocket and pulls out a stack of bills.

SOL

What do I owe you?

JAKE

Your money's no good with me. Smoke a quarter of one of those joints and that should be enough to help. Let me know if you need more.

SOL

Thanks, Jake.

JAKE

Don't mention it.

Jake stands and squeezes Sol's shoulder.

JAKE

You need anything, you call me. Even if you just want to talk.

Sol nods without looking up.

JAKE

I gotta run and see Angela. Spot me a couple minutes after lunch.

Jake yawns and Sol makes eye contact and smiles.

JAKE

I'm sorry I'm yawning. I was up late last night finishing those pages. Hey, stash that stuff in your lunch box.

Sol holds up the bag guiltily and reaches for his lunch pail.

INT. ANGELA PALMEIRO'S OFFICE - DAY

ANGELA PALMEIRO (31) Hispanic, beautiful, and local girl, she is the St. Thomas University Art Museum curator. Jake sits on the corner of her desk.

JAKE

So, come on over tonight.

Angela smiles coyly

ANGELA

You won't even tell me what for.

JAKE

What do you think surprise means?

The conversation is interrupted by the Dean of Arts and Sciences, DR. SIDNEY DRAKE (53) stuffy and redundantly English.

DR. DRAKE

I beg your pardon, Ms. Palmeiro.
I need a word.

ANGELA

Yes, Dr. Drake.

JAKE

Dr. Dre? You're a rapper? Let me hear something.

Angela, appalled, has gone stone faced.

ANGELA

It's Drake. Drake, as in male duck.

JAKE

Oh. Well, Doctor, I have a pain in my side.

Jake points to his side and leans awkwardly.

JAKE

What do you think my problem is?

DR. DRAKE

Oh, Dear. It seems I have caught you at a bad time, Ms. Palmeiro. If you will excuse me.

ANGELA

Dr. Drake, please wait!

The departing Dean halts.

ANGELA

Dean Drake, this is Jake, my good friend. Jake, this is the new Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences here at St. Thomas.

Jake is paralyzed upon this revelation.

JAKE

My bad. You're probably a doctor of English Literature. Oops, my apologies. This beautiful woman gets me flustered.

Dr. Drake forces a smile.

ANGELA

Dr. Drake, my friend Jake is an artist and a writer. He was just showing me his latest short story. It is something else.

DR. DRAKE

Yes, by the looks of his uniform, I would guess he would be riding a lawnmower, not writing.

JAKE

Oooh, burn. Look at the time. Sol needs me back at the shop.

Jake slides off the corner of the desk staring down the uppity Dean returning his own cold stare.

EXT. JAKE'S PATIO - NIGHT

Jake sits at the table by himself smoking a joint by the fire pit and rolling the reefer for the next day's delivery. His eyelids are droopy and his blinks get longer.

Jake rests his arm on the table and eases his head down for a moment. The warmth of sleep falls over him. The fire pit pops and an ember flies out into the pine needles covering the ground beneath the large backyard tree. The needles ignite.

ANGELA (O.S.)

Hello?

Angela approaches around the side of the house.

ANGELA (O.S.)

The front door is locked. You
back here?

Angela rounds the corner and spies the initial flames leaping about under the magnificent pine, threatening to engulf the ancient backyard tree. The neighbor's dog begins yipping.

ANGELA

Jake! Fire!

Angela throws down her purse and quickly turns on the faucet with the hose. She sprays down the flames controlling the situation as Jake rouses from the commotion.

JAKE

(groggily)

What's going on?

ANGELA

What's going on is you almost
burned your house down! You could
have been killed!

Jake is still foggy. A few flaming piles of pine needles attempt to resist the spray from the hose.

JAKE

What are you yelling about?

ANGELA

You started a fire! You are so lucky I got here when I did.

Jake stands and moves to help stomp out any hot spots.

JAKE

Thanks.

ANGELA

Thanks? That's all you have to say?

Angela shakes her head in disgust as she throws down the hose.

ANGELA

What are we doing here? I have tacitly approved of your illegal business for too long. You're high every night. You are going to kill yourself. I can't do this anymore.

JAKE

Baby, that's why I wanted you here tonight...

ANGELA

Just stop! I don't want to hear your stories. You're high right now, aren't you?

JAKE

But, I wanted to show...

ANGELA

Answer my question! You're high aren't you?

JAKE

I smoked a little. I'm tired. I was up late writing last night.

ANGELA

(sarcastically)

Oh, right! You embarrassed me today in my office in front of the new Dean. I was trying to help you, and you couldn't be civil for one minute.

JAKE

How was I to know they hired a new Dean? You sure never told me!

Angela turns and gathers her purse. She scoops up her bag and doesn't look back.

ANGELA

I'm leaving and don't call me.

The neighbor's dog barks incessantly. After a few more moments the neighbor opens the door and calls the dog inside.

Jake turns away and trudges to his table to put things away for the night.

INT. SHED - NIGHT

The shed door is not latched and a sliver of moonlight illuminates the bucket and skull. Inside the bucket a mutant mosquito feasts on the bleach soaked flesh of the deer skull.

The sparrow-sized mosquito sits hunched on the skull and tears at the leathery meal. It turns and its piercing red eyes burn through the darkness.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Jake and Roy stand in the kitchen drinking orange juice for breakfast.

JAKE

Anyhoo, she said, "Don't call me!" She was pretty emphatic.

ROY
(waving his hand)
Bah, let her cool off a couple
days. She'll get over it.
Especially when she learns we are
getting out of the biz.

Jake and Roy clink their OJ filled glasses together.

JAKE
To new beginnings.

ROY
Cheers.

They drink and Roy stares at Jake.

ROY
Man your eyes are red. Maybe you
were a little too high last night.

Roy tosses Jake some Visine.

JAKE
(shrugging)
I got a hold of Carlton and he's
going to make an offer on our
stash. If it's even halfway
close to our estimate, we're
taking it.

ROY
Sure thing. To a new chapter.

They toast again and drink more juice.

ROY
Get it? I said "new chapter,"
'cause you're a writer.

Jake nods.

JAKE
Yes, hilarious.

They kill off their juice.

INT. SHED - DAY

The shed door is not latched and the monster, ducks behind the rafters of the small shed away from the bucket and its lifeblood water and the skin and fur along with other materials clinging to the soaking skull.

The mutant hides from the bright sunlight, its sensitive red eyes peering from the darkness at the knife of light slicing the blackness of the shed.

EXT. JAKE'S BACKYARD - DAY

The neighbor's Chihuahua, "Muffin," has escaped his yard and wandered near the shed. Beckoned by some deep instinct driving its curiosity the dog moves toward doom.

The hair on the dog's back bristles as it inches toward the cracked open shed door. The dog senses an unusual presence in the midst of the shed and it uses its nose to sniff inside the cracked door and push the door open to enter the shed.

INT. SHED - DAY

The mutant mosquito eyes the fresh meat entering its domain and prepares to pounce.

The dog sniffs cautiously at the antlers protruding from the bleach bucket. High strung at a resting mode, the Chihuahua is taut as its nose works up and down the antler. A gust of wind from outside shuts the door leaving only the dimmest of a visual threshold.

That is all it takes to entice the monster to leap down upon the dog with only its red eyes visible as it drop on the dog, its needle-nose piercing between the dog's shoulder blades.

The dog emits only the slightest muffled WOOF. There is silence after the jingle of the collar falls from the dog out the cracked-open door. The wind picks up again and the door shuts, latching this time.

INT. FORTUNA HOUSEHOLD - DAY

Just a few blocks from Jake's and Roy's house, with her hand on the front door ready to exit, JESSI FORTUNA (10) wears her uniform and hoists her backpack of sales supplies.

JESSI

Mom! I'm going to sell some cookies!

MRS. FORTUNA (O.S)

Be careful, dear.

EXT. BACKYARD PATIO - DAY

Saturday evening has arrived and Jake and Roy sit at their usual places around the fire pit and work. The sun is just going down and they hear a latch of the gate CLANK. As their heads snap up to see who is here, Roy hollers.

ROY

Run! It's the cops.

Jake sets down one of his freshly cleaned up skulls he has been examining on the table.

JAKE

Calm down, for crying out loud!
Why are you so jumpy!

Jake puts his finger to his lips to shush Roy.

JAKE

Who is there? Carlton?

From around the corner a smiling, little girl in uniform appears.

JESSI

(speaking quickly)

Hello, my name is Jessi. I am with the Wild Flower Girls and we are selling cookies. It is a fundraiser for our many activities including, but not limited to: camping, horseback riding, and volunteering.

Jessi is a fast talking, quick witted little girl. Her rapid fire speech belies her age.

ROY

(sneering)

Oh, it's a little girl reading us a script from a sales pitch. She's like a telemarketer, except she is live in person.

Roy does not try to conceal his lit joint anymore and takes a deep drag.

JAKE

I'm sorry little girl. We can't afford to buy any cookies.

JESSI

That'd be a shame if I went home empty handed and had to tell my parents the guys with the funny smelling cigarettes wouldn't buy any cookies.

ROY

Wha? Y-y-you. No!

JAKE

Fine, put us down for a box of mints.

JESSI

Four boxes of mints. Excellent choice.

JAKE

I said...

JESSI

I heard you fine, four boxes,
mister. And my parents don't need
to know anything. Just fill out
the order on my clipboard.

The girl shoves the clipboard toward Jake.

JAKE

Fine.

Jake takes the clipboard from the girl as he scowls.

JESSI

You guys are terrible at
negotiating. I would have
accepted one box. Heck, my
parents actually wouldn't even
care about the pot.

Roy's jaw drops.

JESSI

If you have any extra pot, I'd bet
my parents would buy some from
you.

JAKE

Wait. What?

JESSI

Yeah, my parents smoke all the
time. Just like you guys. They
sit on the patio around the fire
pit and get mellow. It's
ridiculous. They are in their
forties!

Jessi shakes her head.

JESSI

This is how I'm finding my
customers. I just look for smoke
from the backyard and ambush
people.

ROY

What the heck? Who are you, some sort of extortionist?

JESSI

Lighten up. You got off easy. I soaked the couple four houses down for forty boxes. They had some mucho dinero; they have a Lexus and a Mercedes in their garage.

Jessi rubs her fingers together.

JESSI

You guys looked poor and I felt sorry for you. You are welcome.

Jake smiles as Roy shakes his head in disgust and hands the joint to his brother.

ROY

Oh, yeah? Well, I'm not going to offer you a smoke then.

JESSI

I'm ten, I don't smoke, especially not pot.

In the neighbor's yard a man opens his backdoor and calls for his dog.

NEIGHBOR (O.S.)

Muffin! Come on boy!

JESSI

Who's Muffin?

ROY

That's their stupid dog.

Roy turns to Jake.

ROY

Did you notice the dog's not barking? Weird.

Jake picks up the deer skull and begins examining it again.

JESSI

That's a nice skull you got there.
What are you going to do with it?

JAKE

We need some money, so we're
cleaning them up in hopes of
selling them as fine art to some
of the rich folks around here.

JESSI

Hmm. Can I see it?

Jake hands the skull to the girl.

JESSI

This is pretty cool. I could help
you out for a small fee.

ROY

How could you help?

JESSI

I know some people. Actually, my
parents know people. Rich people.

Jessi bounces her eyebrows.

ROY

Really? That sounds good.

JESSI

What I'd like to do is do some
beadwork to spruce up the look a
bit. Splashes of color.

Jessi turns the skull over in her hands.

JESSI

Native American style decoration
beadwork.

Jake and Roy nod in agreement.

JESSI

Here's the deal, I'll take 5% finder's fees on any skull I find a buyer for, flat rate. I'll do the beadwork decorations; say...\$35 bucks each. Any sale over \$500, I'll take another 5%.

Jessi extends her hand. Roy and Jake look at each other and nod.

Roy moves the joint to his lips and extends his hand.

ROY

Deal.

Roy shakes her hand followed by Jake.

JESSI

All right then. It's getting dark. I'll have your cookies in the next couple days. Make sure you have the money. I don't want any trouble.

JAKE

Yes, no trouble from you either. Swear it.

JESSI

I swear on my Wild Flower Girl honor.

Jessi backs away. She points to her eyes and then to the men.

JESSI

(smiles knowingly)

I got my eyes on you two, in a good way. We're going to make some cash together.

As Jessi leaves the phone RINGS inside and Roy bolts as the ringtone plays HAIL TO THE CHIEF.

ROY
That's Mom calling. I'll get it.

INT. JAKE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Roy answers the phone.

ROY
Hello, Mom.

Roy listens.

ROY
I knew it was you, because of
caller ID and we have a special
ringtone for you. We've talked
about this.

Roy listens and fumbles the phone as his jaw drops.

ROY
What do you mean you'll be here
next week? The airline tickets
are non-refundable?

Roy listens.

ROY
No. It's no trouble, that'll be
great to see you and Dad. Listen,
Jake and I are in the middle of..

Roy hesitates trying to think of something to get off the
phone.

ROY
...rearranging the furniture. We'll
call you later and make plans and
get all your flight information.

Roy listens.

ROY
Ok. Bye. Love you too.

Roy clicks the button ending the call. He stares at the
phone in his hand a moment.

ROY
(screaming)
Jake! We have a problem!

INT. ST. THOMAS UNIVERSITY ART MUSEUM - NIGHT

Dean Drake is hosting a contingent from Universidade de Brasilia with the assistance of Angela. It is a black-tie event.

DR. DRAKE
A toast to our new friends and
partners from our sister
University in Brazil.

The crowd raises glasses.

CROWD
Hear! Hear!

PRESIDENT FLORES (55) of the U of Brasilia, steps forward for his toast. He is a debonair man with perfect English.

PRESIDENT
To new friends.

Everyone hoists glasses and drinks champagne.

PRESIDENT
I also have a special gift to
present.

An assistant rushes a canvas covered box to the President's side. The President dramatically reveals an exotic plant beneath the canvas as a magician would reveal a disappearing bird in a cage.

PRESIDENT
This is a rare a species that
comes from similar mountainous
climes in Brazil as you have here.
I was most difficult to get
through customs.

A laugh ripples the crowd.

PRESIDENT

Let this be a symbol of our
friendship; planted and
prosperous.

Dr. Drake accepts the gift and holds it over his head for
all to see.

DR. DRAKE

Thank you, President Flores.

The party resumes and Angela mingles with the crowd. She
notices Dr. Drake and President Flores pointing in her
direction in deep conversation. After a few minutes Dr.
Drake corners the elegant Angela at the punch bowl.

DR. DRAKE

Miss Palmeiro, where is your
friend?

ANGELA

Oh, Jake couldn't make it tonight.

DR. DRAKE

How unfortunate. Maybe you would
like to entertain President
Flores.

ANGELA

What do you mean?

DR. DRAKE

It seems President Flores has
taken a shine to you. He, as well
as St. Thomas University, would be
grateful if you would entertain
our distinguished guest.

Dr. Drake gives a wink to Angela.

ANGELA

I don't know what kind of woman
you think I am. You have no right
to speak to me that way. Excuse
me.

Angela storms away to a surprised Dr. Drake. Drake looks to President Flores across the room and shrugs. Flores returns the shrug.

EXT. JAKE'S BACKYARD - DAY

The neighbor calls out for his dog as he searches for his missing pooch.

NEIGHBOR

Muffin! Here boy!

The neighbor wanders near Jake's shed. He spies Muffin's collar near the door.

NEIGHBOR

What is this?

He bends down and picks up the collar.

NEIGHBOR

Hmmm.

He looks toward the sliding glass patio door of Jake's house. He scowls and angrily reaches for the shed door and flings it open and steps inside the shed.

NEIGHBOR

Muffin! You in here?

INT. SHED - DAY

The bright sun washes through the shed for a moment, but space is quickly darkened when the door bounces back on its hinges from being flung open. The door is nearly shut as the neighbor tries to reopen it, but it is too late.

The monster, the size of a chicken now, now having fed on fresh dog, falls from its perch in the shed's rafters. Its proboscis finds the man's spinal cord between the base of the brain and the spine. The man is instantly paralyzed.

The door moves open slightly, but a breeze catches it, latching it with a CLICK.

It is virtually pitch black inside the shed as the only light is from the red glow of the mutant's eyes. The monster releases its grip from the paralyzed man and moves to the man's face to feast on its newly realized delicacy, optic fluid.

The unmoving and dying man is aware that something is in front of him. The monster having crawled over the man's head, moves into position. He senses the monster and finally sees the piercing red eyes with his own eyes. He tries to scream, but he has no breath or movement, he is paralyzed by the blow to his spine.

The mutant mosquito jabs its blood-seeking snout into the man's eye.

EXT. JAKE'S BACKYARD - NIGHT

The seasonal monsoonal rains have started and the weather is wet. Billy, the neighborhood homeless man, sneaks into the backyard.

BILLY

I do say, a fortunate bit of luck.
The boys are out.

Billy peers toward the darkened patio doors and smiles a self-satisfied, broken-toothed smile. Lightning flashes and the drizzle gives way to rain. Billy reaches for the shed door.

INT. SHED - NIGHT

The monster has stripped the man's carcass. Nothing is left but bones. It has grown again. The meals continue to feed its maturing bulk. It is now as massive as a full grown swan, strong and powerful.

Mildly sluggish from its latest meal, the turning of the door handle alerts the beast above the pitter-patter of the rain on the shed roof. It would eat again.

Billy hurriedly enters the shed latching the door behind. He drops all his worldly possession contained in a backpack. He strikes his lighter to get his bearings in the small shed.

Avoiding the bucket of bleach and the antlered skull inside, Billy steps onto a femur of the dead neighbor. He stumbles but catches himself.

Billy does not have a last thought, except for maybe a question of what the two piercing red dots from above are.

The mutant mosquito drives its syringe-like nose between Billy's eyes deep into his brain. The monster breathes in the soft, fatty, brain tissue in gulps.

The lighter falls from Billy's hand to the floor and burns a moment, flickering light on the beast before a foreleg from the monster steps on the flame to extinguish the annoying light.

INT. RAY'S PIZZA SHOP - NIGHT

Roy and Jake enjoy a pizza.

JAKE

Nice of Ray to give us a pizza.

ROY

What do you mean nice? I have to earn this. I'm singing for our supper tonight.

Jake pours beer from a pitcher.

JAKE

Well, all right then. Don't keep us waiting.

Roy slides away from the table as the rain pelts the windows. A flash of lightning strobes the room.

JAKE

Don't get electrocuted by your amp.

ROY

I'll risk it. I'm doing a set of electric tonight. I'm debuting my new half ballad, half rock anthem.

Roy sets up on the small stage, merely a one-foot raised platform, in the corner. He plugs in his electric guitar and strums a few chords to check tuning.

ROY

Tonight, I will open with my
latest.

Roy strums a gentle tune and sings softly.

ROY

(singing)

Where there's smoke,
There's trouble,
Where's there's trouble,
You'll find me.

Where there's smoke,
You'll find trouble,
Where there's smoke,
That's where I'll be.

Roy breaks into a driving rhythm playing the guitar and the fair crowd stops chewing for a moment and listens to the catchy tune.

INT. SHED - NIGHT

Monster devours Billy.

INT. RAY'S PIZZA - NIGHT

Roy sings his song.

INTERCUT - BETWEEN SONG AND MONSTER EATING

As the song picks up pace, the monster seems to eat faster in only the dimmest of lights provided by the lightning flashes.

Roy picks up the song's pace with the strobing effect of the lightning.

INT. JAKE'S KITCHEN - DAY

Jake and Roy eat breakfast.

ROY

Any word from Carlton on our buy out?

JAKE

Nada.

ROY

Shit. You can't count on that guy.

The men stand, leaning against the counter, as they each enjoy a bowl of sugar flakes cereal.

ROY

You going to go see Angela today at lunch?

JAKE

Nah, I'm going to give her a couple more days to cool down.

ROY

Don't forget we got to work tonight. We have to fill some orders.

JAKE

Yeah, I gotta get a new skull in the bucket. They're turning out pretty good so far, don't you think?

Roy, with his mouthful, gives him a thumbs up as the men finish their cereal in silence.

INT. SHED - DAY

The monster has reached a new level in its growth. As big as a kitchen stove it rests burrowed in a dark back corner away from the scattered bones of its victims and the bucket of its birth containing the bleach solution and deer skull. The mutant is too big to perch in the shed's rafters.

It inches from the corner and begins to gather the bones. The bones are one by one stuffed into Billy's backpack by the monster, its nesting instincts in full force.

EXT. JAKE'S BACKYARD - DAY

Carlton has waited until the guys have left for their work before showing up. He wants what he wants. He thought the deer skull he saw previously was cool. Now he's here to claim it.

Carlton moves behind the shed looking for what he tripped over that night, but finding nothing. He ponders but a moment and moves to the shed door.

Without hesitation he tries the door and it opens. He spies his desire immediately in the bucket. His attention on the skull, he never sees the monster.

INT. SHED - DAY

The monster nimbly extends a foreleg and pulls Carlton into the shed with a lightning fast motion. Carlton, still holding the door, drags it shut with a slam as he is drawn inside the shed.

Carlton gasps his last breath as the needle-nose pierces his chest, penetrating his heart.

EXT. JAKE'S BACKYARD - NIGHT

Jake is on his own again for the evening work. Roy has another gig at Riverside Pizza. The sun prepares to set and the shadows get long. Jake lights up the fire pit to settle in and roll some joints.

As he pulls his chair near the table and begins to roll his first doobie of the night, he notices a strap protruding from the shed door. This reminds him to check the skull soaking inside.

Jake finishes wrapping the joint and tucks it behind his ear as he unwraps his supper, a York Peppermint Patty he's been saving. He takes a bite as he walks to the shed and opens the door.

He holds the mint in his mouth as he kneels and reaches both hands around the antler of the skull. Jake looks up to see two red eyes peering from the dark corner of the shed. He stands and the mint falls from his mouth. He catches the mint in his hand without looking.

His eyes are focused on the red staring eyes now leaping toward him. Just as quickly as the monster leaps at Jake it stops frightened, retreating to the corner from whence it came.

Jake, slow to react at first, now retreats like there is no tomorrow. His foot catches the strap of Billy's backpack and he falls and drags the bag with him as he stumbles out of the shed, pack in tow. He slams the shed door from his knees and scrambles quickly away from the shed staring in disbelief.

INT. JAKE'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

It is dark and Jake holds the phone to his ear as he looks to the patio and the dying flames of the fire pit.

JAKE

(whispering)

Hey, I'm glad you answered.

ANGELA (O.S.)

Why are you whispering?

Jake continues to talk in whispered tones.

JAKE

I don't know. I need you here right now.

ANGELA (O.S.)

Are you high?

JAKE

No! I haven't smoked anything or drank anything. I swear. It's an emergency.

ANGELA (O.S.)

Fine. I need to talk to you about some work stuff. I need to vent. I'll be right over.

JAKE

Good. But don't come around back. Stay away from the shed.

ANGELA (O.S.)

Whatever. What is going on? Tell me.

JAKE

I don't want to talk over the phone. Just get over here and I'll show you. I need you here. I need you to help prove to me that I'm not going insane!

ANGELA (O.S.)

You're scaring me. I'll be right there.

After a few minutes Angela enters the house. Jake grabs her arm and escorts her through the house to the patio.

ANGELA

Ow! Tell me what is going on. You're hurting my arm.

EXT. PATIO - NIGHT

At Angela's feet rests a backpack, Billy's pack.

JAKE

Open the pack and tell me what you see.

Angela stares at Jake in suspicion. She unclasped the pack and a human skull rolls out and bounces off her foot. She screams, but no sound comes out. She throws herself into Jake's arms.

ANGELA

What is this? Who is this? What is going on?

JAKE

I have no idea. Come with me.

They move quietly to the shed door.

JAKE

Stand back away from the door a bit. I'm going to open this door while staying behind it. As soon as you see anything, shout out what you see, and I will close the door.

Jake opens the door about four inches and Angela cranes her neck to see inside.

ANGELA

I see two red spots.

Jake slams the door quickly.

ANGELA

What in the world is going on?

JAKE

Let's sit down by the fire and smoke. I'll explain after we relax a bit.

ANGELA

(disgusted)

I want to know right now!

JAKE

Sit. Believe me, you're going to want to hear this story with the edge off.

ANGELA

I don't want to be sitting around with a bunch of human bones!

JAKE

That's a big part of the story, and why we need the ganja.

They sit and blaze up a joint. Angela reluctantly smokes.

ANGELA

Ok. Tell me.

JAKE

That backpack?

ANGELA

Yeah?

JAKE

That's Billy's. The homeless guy. I assume his skull is in there, along with two other skulls and bones. There's also a small dog's bones.

ANGELA

Oh, my God!

Jake pulls a braided, heavy gold chain from his pocket.

JAKE

This chain look familiar?

Angela nods.

JAKE

Carlton's chain. His bones must be in the bag.

Angela almost falls from her chair. She snatches the cigarette from Jake and inhales deeply.

JAKE

There's a monster in the shed. I saw it earlier. Those red dots you saw, those are its eyes.

Jake takes the doobie back and inhales.

JAKE

It's like a giant mosquito!

ANGELA

How did you see it?

Jake thinks back a moment.

JAKE

I noticed the strap sticking out
from the shed door.

Jake stands.

JAKE

I got up and started to eat my
York mint for supper while I
moved to check the strap. I
remembered I wanted to check the
skull in the shed.

ANGELA

What skull?

JAKE

This is a different skull, a deer
skull with antlers. We're
cleaning them up to sell as fine
art. Anyhoo, the sun was just
going down.

Jake moves a couple steps, he mimes opening the shed
door, and kneels down.

JAKE

I knelt down with the mint in my
mouth to grab the antlers of the
skull. I happened to see the red
eyes, I stood the mint fell from
my mouth and I could just see the
body of the monster.

Jake sticks out his hand to catch the imaginary mint from
his mouth.

JAKE

I was frozen watching the giant mosquito-like monster coming at me. But I reached out and caught the mint. The monster just froze and retreated to its corner.

Jake returns to his chair near the fire.

JAKE

Maybe the smell of the mint bothers it. But, I backed out the shed, snagged the pack on my foot, and slammed the door.

Jake takes a drag and hands the joint back to Angela.

JAKE

I looked in the bag and saw all the bones. Then called you. Now, here we are freaking out.

ANGELA

Let's call the police.

JAKE

Are you crazy! There are three dead bodies in that bag. We're high. Not to mention the small pot farm we have in our closet.

ANGELA

Well? What then?

Jake gets up. He picks up a long two by four scrap from the wood pile.

JAKE

I'm going to brace that door closed. Maybe when Roy gets here, he can help us think of what to do.

Jake returns to the table.

JAKE

In the mean time, help me roll
some joints for our deliveries
tomorrow.

INT. JAKE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Jake and Angela are asleep on the couch sitting up for Roy's return. Roy enters and spies the couple sitting on the couch.

ROY

What are you guy's doing? Hey,
Angela's here. Didn't I tell you,
Jake? She just needed to cool
off.

Jake stirs and pushes Angela off his shoulder as he stands and stretches.

JAKE

What time is it and why are you
home so late?

ROY

Who are you, my mom?

Jake shrugs as Angela stretches and grabs his arm as she pulls herself to her feet.

JAKE

Sorry, but we got a bit of a
situation.

Roy looks at Angela.

ROY

Oh my God, you're pregnant. Look
at you, you're huge!

Roy reaches for Angela's belly. Angela blocks his hand and puts her hand on her stomach.

ANGELA

I'm not pregnant!

ROY

Oops my bad. Easy mistake to make.

Roy catches Jake's eye and puffs out his cheeks and points at Angela.

ANGELA

Shut up, Roy!

JAKE

Sit down. We got to tell you something.

ROY

I think you should sit down; I have something to tell you. It's why I'm home so late.

JAKE

What happened?

ROY

Lisa fired me, but let me start at the beginning. I wrecked the delivery van when I was arguing with Lisa on the phone about not delivering flowers to Mrs. "Cougar" Johnson.

ANGELA

Are you ok?

ROY

I was wearing my seatbelt. The only scars are psychological. I had my guitars and amp in the van with me. I was going to the gig right after my last delivery. Both guitars, broken necks. They can't be fixed.

ANGELA

Sit down.

Roy sits.

ROY

I had to walk home. Lisa wouldn't even give me a ride she was so angry.

JAKE

I'm sorry, man. I hate to pile on, but we have a monster in the shed.

Roy is nonplussed as he nods in understanding.

ROY

That makes sense. I thought I saw something in the bleach solution one night, but I was kinda high, so I ignored it.

JAKE

Are you high now? How can you be so matter-of-fact?

ROY

I haven't smoked, but, hey, let's head outside and fire one up? I'll catch up with you two. Did I mention I was nearly killed earlier and I also lost my job?

Roy stands.

ROY

If there was ever a reason to smoke, this is it.

JAKE

Oh, shit. What are we going to do? Did I mention the bag of bones we have by the fire?

ROY

(smiling)

Now I know you guys are high!

ANGELA

Roy, we're serious.

The crew heads out to the patio as Roy fires up a joint.

JAKE

Roy, you see that backpack?

ROY

Its Billy's pack isn't it? He's dead. He'd never leave that backpack alone.

JAKE

Yeah.

ROY

Poor bastard.

JAKE

(nods to the bag)

Uh, I don't know how to say this, but, the three dead bodies, there all in that bag.

Roy's eyes widen as he holds a drag from the joint. He coughs the smoke as he speaks.

ROY

(coughing)

What are you talking about?

ANGELA

There are three different skeletons in that bag. Picked clean. There's not a speck of flesh on them.

ROY

I don't understand. How did the bones get in the bag?

Angela and Jake shrug and shake their heads.

ROY

We have a monster in the shed that devours human flesh leaving only bones and is an impeccable housekeeper? That's perfect. Can I see the monster?

JAKE

I don't recommend it. Ask Angela.

ANGELA

No. Jake, tell him what happened.

They sit down and Jake repeats the story as he told Angela earlier. Jake finishes the story, including having had Angela look inside the shed, confirming the glowing eyes.

ROY

Wow.

Roy looks to the shed. He offers the doobie to Jake. Jake reluctantly takes a hit and passes it to Angela, who follows suit, handing it back to Roy.

ROY

Good. You got the shed door barricaded.

JAKE

How can you be so calm? Angela and I were going crazy. We smoked all night trying to figure out what to do.

ROY

Well, you did one thing right. You didn't call the cops. We can't go to the cops with our greenhouse and three bodies in a backpack. Maybe we can sleep on it and figure it out tomorrow.

JAKE

My sentiments exactly.

Everyone slumps a little lower in their chair as they sit in silence trying to think of a plan.

EXT. JAKE'S HOUSE - DAY

Wild Flower Girl, Jessi, was bright and early in her delivery of the four boxes of mint cookies.

She has opened one box and started eating a few as she waits after knocking. Nobody answers the door. After a few minutes she moves to the backyard.

INT. JAKE'S HOUSE - DAY

After the long night, it took awhile for Roy to roust himself out of bed to answer the door.

ROY

I'm coming! Hold your horse!

Roy stops and thinks a moment.

ROY

Horses! I mean hold your horses!

Roy answers the front door. Nobody is there.

EXT. JAKE'S BACKYARD - DAY

Jessi is munching on her mint cookies when she walks over to the shed and barricaded door.

JESSI

Hmmm. I wonder if they got some cleaned up deer skulls in here.

She kicks away the two by four bracing the door and opens it.

She can see the skull's antlers protruding from the bleach solution bucket and she steps forward to get a closer look.

INT. SHED - DAY

As Jessi grabs an antler with one hand she has a sensation of not being alone. She looks and can see the red eyes staring from the darkened corner.

The mint cookies falls from her hand and scatter on the floor as the monster rushes from its corner, stopping short, shying away from the cookies.

Jessi reaches into her Wild Flower Girl-issued fanny pack and effortlessly produces a butterfly knife that she whips open without a thought, prepared to fight.

JESSI

You want a piece of me! Bring it
creep!

The monster keeps its distance from the crumbled mint cookies as it holds its ground. It swings a foreleg at the girl. Jessi slices a six-inch chunk from that fore leg and as the monster hisses an unearthly cry, it retreats to the corner.

INT. JAKE'S HOUSE - DAY

Roy is awake wearing a robe. He rubs his aching head as he moves to look out the patio doors to recall the evening's events. He spies the open shed door.

ROY

Holy shit!

Roy fumbles with the door, slides it open with a crash and runs toward the shed.

INT. SHED - DAY

Jessi stares at the monster's red eyes and points a finger at it.

JESSI

Stay!

Jessi picks up the chunk of foreleg, all the while keeping her gaze locked with the monster's eyes. The leg looks and feels like a flattened piece of black PVC pipe with a serrated edge. It is hollow and light.

Roy appears at the door of the shed. He sees the glowing eyes of the beast in the corner. He grabs Jessi's arm and yanks her clean out of the shed.

EXT. BACKYARD - DAY

Roy and Jessi tumble to the small patch of grass in the backyard. Roy scrambles to the shed door and slams it, bracing the two by four against the door.

ROY
(gasping)
Jessi! What are you doing here?

JESSI
Did you know you have a monster in
your shed?

Jessi stands, gathers her butterfly knife and chunk of
the monsters leg.

ROY
Why the Hell do you have a knife?

Roy has managed to gather himself a bit, he's on his
hands and knees puffing like an old steam engine.

Jessi flips open and closes the butterfly knife with
amazing dexterity.

JESSI
Cool, huh?

ROY
No! You're a little girl!

JESSI
Well, this little girl just cut a
chunk o' leg off that monster.

ROY
(pointing)
Get in the house, now! Get!

Roy and Jessi retreat inside the house.

INT. JAKE'S HOUSE - DAY

ROY
Tell me what happened.

JESSI
I knocked. Nobody answered.
Remember, I said I was going to
deliver the cookies in a couple
days?

ROY

Yes.

JESSI

Nobody answered. I was going to leave the cookies in the shed. I remembered the skulls at the same time, so I looked in the shed, bing, bang boom...monster leg.

Jessi holds up a piece of the monster's foreleg with a big smile.

ROY

Give me that!

Roy snatches the leg from her hand and examines it.

ROY

It's kind of cool...

He focuses back on Jessi.

ROY

What am I saying? You could have been killed!

Roy and Jessi turn to the front door where there is a KNOCK.

ROY

Damn it! Now what?

Roy moves to the front door and looks through the peephole.

ROY

Oh my God! It's the cops! Did you call the cops?

Roy points an accusing finger at Jessi.

JESSI

No!

ROY

Get in the other room.

Jessi moves to a back bedroom as Roy opens the front door and addresses the POLICE OFFICER on the front step.

ROY

Hello, officer. What can I do for you?

OFFICER

Are you Roy Voskill?

ROY

Yes.

OFFICER

You need to come with me to the station. There are some questions about the wreck last night.

ROY

I thought I took care of everything last night

OFFICER

There were some illegal drugs found at the scene.

ROY

I see. Well, they sure were not mine. Can I put some clothes on?

OFFICER

Please do. We'll take you downtown and bring you back when we are done.

ROY

I'll be out in a minute.

Roy closes the door and hustles to the backroom.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

Roy throws on a shirt and pants as Jessi watches.

ROY

You need to stay here. Wait for my brother to get home and explain to him what happened if I'm not back. There's cereal if you get hungry.

JESSI

Are you in trouble with the cops?

ROY

I wrecked the flower delivery van and there might have been some weed involved.

JESSI

Oh, I'm sorry. Are you going to be all right?

ROY

I'm fine. Don't touch anything. Watch TV and stay inside.

Roy points a cautionary finger at Jessi.

ROY

Stay put. Wait for my brother. He should be here by five. Got it?

JESSI

I got it.

Roy exits.

EXT. ST. THOMAS UNIVERSITY CAMPUS - DAY

Outside the campus museum, Sol and Jake work trimming the manicured lawns. Jake has already discussed his situation at home with Sol. Sol decided to work with Jake all morning to be able to bounce ideas and solutions off each other to address the problem when the work day was done.

Now at the campus museum, Angela joined the pair in the shade as they took a mid-morning break on a bench. The men in their work jumpsuits and Angela in her business suit made for an odd trio on the bench.

SOL

Just let me come over tonight and assess the situation. We can go from there, after I see it. I was in 'Nam. I know situations.

ANGELA

Sounds fine to me. I have no ideas.

JAKE

That's the best we can do for now.

SOL

(smiling)

Just think of the great story you get to write about after this episode. Truth will be stranger than fiction!

JAKE

Somehow, I don't share your enthusiasm.

Sol stands and pats Jake on the shoulder.

SOL

Buck up, Jake. It's always darkest before the dawn.

Angela hugs both men and heads back inside the museum. The men put their protective ear muff and goggles back in place and return to their Weedeaters.

Sol moves near the museum annex containing the offices of the Dean, Dr. Drake. As he mows near a window sill, he slips on the wet grass. The Weedeater rises and mows down a window box garden of the Dean.

INT. ANGELA'S OFFICE - DAY

Dr. Drake and Angela discuss an upcoming artist showing. A CRASH can be heard.

DR. DRAKE

Did you hear that?

ANGELA

Yes.

Angela follows Dr. Drake from her office to his office.

INT. DR. DRAKE'S OFFICE - DAY

Dr. Drake moves to the window and looks outside at Sol on the ground and Jake helping him to his feet.

DR. DRAKE

What are those idiots doing now?

Angela moves to the window to get a look. She staggers when she sees that it is Jake and Sol.

DR. DRAKE

Help me open this window!

Angela stares outside as she shakes her head.

DR. DRAKE

Ms. Palmeiro, help me open this window!

EXT. OUTSIDE DR. DRAKE'S OFFICE - DAY

Jake hustles over to Sol, sprawled on the ground.

JAKE

Are you ok?

SOL

I'm fine. Just slipped on the wet grass. Help me up.

Jake gives Sol a hand and pulls him to his feet.

The commotion has brought the Dean to the window. He flings the window open and attends to the damaged plants. He screams.

DR. DRAKE

You two! You stay where you are.

Sol and Jake look at each other in bewilderment.

After a moment the Dean appears around the corner of the building marching very quickly in the direction of the two men. Sol brushes himself, separating the leaves and grass from his jumpsuit.

The Dean begins his tirade a few yards away.

DR. DRAKE

You clumsy oaf! Do you realize
what you have done!

Dr. Drake steps in front of Sol and yells into his face.

DR. DRAKE

Those were priceless flowers from
Brazil! The President of
Universidade de Brasilia gifted
those to St. Thomas.

The Dean's arms flail wildly.

JAKE

Take it easy, mister.

The Dean turns to Jake.

DR. DRAKE

It is not, mister. It is Doctor.
Doctor Drake!

Angela trailing the Dean after hearing the commotion has arrived at the gathering.

ANGELA

It's going to be fine, Dean.

DR. DRAKE

It is not fine. President Flores
is set to return in two weeks and
specifically wanted to see how the
plants had established. He will
be mortally insulted by this turn
of events.

The Dean turns to Sol.

DR. DRAKE

You are sacked. Gather your things and report to human resources.

Jake winces. He scratches his head as he steps forward.

JAKE

You seem to be confused, Doctor. I mowed over the plants.

SOL

But, it was an accident.

DR. DRAKE

Fine. You then, are fired. Incompetence is incompetence.

The Dean looks to Sol.

DR. DRAKE

You are this man's superior?

Sol nods.

DR. DRAKE

You make sure he is off the premises by lunch.

ANGELA

But, sir...

DR. DRAKE

Uh-uh-uh. No more discussion.

The Dean turns and walks away.

SOL

What did you do that for?

Jake shrugs.

JAKE

You are only a couple years from retirement. I couldn't let them fire you. I'm young. I'll find another job. Heck, maybe I can put my English Degree to use.

The trio stands in stunned silence.

JAKE

Come on. You better do what he
says. Before it gets worse.

Angela puts her arm around Jake. A tear streams down her face as she turns with Jake and they begin walking toward the groundskeeping shed.

Sol stands frozen, watching the couple walk away. He looks to the shattered window box garden. He moves to the box and uses both hands to scoop out what's left of a section of plants and their root mass.

He turns and makes his way to the John Deere lawn truck and places the mangled plants in the back of the vehicle. He gathers the Weedeaters left by the building and points the vehicle toward the groundskeeping shed.

INT. JAKE'S HOUSE - DAY

Angela has accompanied Jake home from the campus. They enter the house through the garage door, Angela in the lead. Jake follows, he wears his work jumpsuit off his shoulders with the sleeves tied around his waist.

ANGELA

I'm just saying, don't worry.
It's like Roy told you about me,
sometimes we just need a cooling
down period. Dr. Drake will
probably cool down.

Angela carries a box of miscellaneous items from Jake's work locker.

JAKE

I think it was pretty definitive.

Angela moves forward into the house talking over her shoulder.

ANGELA

You didn't react and say anything
that might have burned bridges...

JESSI

Hello.

Angela screams and drops the box.

ANGELA

Who the Hell are you!

Jessi whips out a card from her fanny pack.

JESSI

My name is Jessi Fortuna. As you can see from the card, I am a Wild Flower Girl.

Angela looks at the card as Jake rushes to her side.

JAKE

Jessi? What are you doing inside my house?

JESSI

I hope you don't mind. I used your computer to print up some business cards. I know Roy told me not to touch anything, but I was bored.

JAKE

(flailing)

What are you doing here?

JESSI

Relax! I take it Roy did not get a hold of you.

Jessi shrugs and points to the couch.

JESSI

You probably want to sit down.

Jake and Angela sidle to the couch keeping a suspicious eye on the little girl. Jessi snatches from the counter the monster leg piece she had cut from it earlier.

JESSI

Do you know what this is?

Jessi hands the chunk to Jake as he sits next to Angela on the couch.

JAKE

No. Should I?

JESSI

That is part of the foreleg of the monster that lives in your shed.

Jake springs to his feet.

JAKE

What are you talking about?

JESSI

Relax. Sit.

Jessi reaches into her fanny pack with cat like quickness, produces her butterfly knife, and opens it. She closes the knife and puts it back in her pack.

JESSI

I cut that hunk of leg off with my knife.

JAKE

Where the Hell is Roy? And why does a little girl have a butterfly knife?

JESSI

Oh, yeah. The cops came and got him. There were some questions about some illegal drugs in the wrecked delivery van.

Jessi shrugs.

JESSI

(sarcastically)

I just can't imagine where drugs came from.

ANGELA

(hyperventilating)

What happened? How did you cut the monster's leg off? Did you kill it? Did you kill it? Please tell me you killed it.

JESSI

Uh, no. Unfortunately it's not dead. But, I'm fine thanks for asking.

ANGELA

Sorry. Are you ok? Is Roy ok?

JESSI

We're both fine. Who are you?

ANGELA

I'm Angela, Jake's friend.

JESSI

Girlfriend?

ANGELA

Yes, girlfriend.

Jessi looks to Jake and gives him a thumbs up.

JESSI

Nice work. She's hot

ANGELA

(impatiently)

Just tell us what happened.

JESSI

I came by to drop off the four boxes of mint cookies these deadbeats ordered. You owe me twelve bucks by the way, three bucks a box.

JAKE

Whatever. I don't have any money. I just got fired.

JESSI

Oh, I guess that explains why you are home now. Roy said you wouldn't be back until five.

JAKE

Just tell the story!

JESSI

I knocked. Nobody answered. I went around back to see if you were there, while thinking I could leave the cookies in the shed.

Jessi mimes opening the shed door.

JESSI

I remembered the skulls you were cleaning, the ones we have a handshake agreement on.

Jessi mimes shaking hands as she extends her arm toward Jake.

JESSI

I wanted to see how it was going with the skull cleaning. Figured they were in the shed.

Jessi shrugs.

JESSI

This is a little embarrassing, but I had opened one of your boxes of mint cookies and was snacking. I figured you wouldn't mind.

JAKE

Sure, why would we mind? You had already used extortion on us to make us buy them in the first place.

JESSI

My point exactly. So, I open the door, see the skull and antlers in the bucket. At the same time I reach for the antlers, I get this weird feeling and I see some red eyes in the corner of the shed.

Jessi reaches into her pack. She produces her butterfly knife, opens it and slashes the air.

JESSI (V.O.)

The monster came at me, but stopped short. I had dropped the cookies I was eating and I think that distracted it.

Images flash by showing Jessi performing exaggerated ninja like moves and slashing, swings of her blade in the air.

JESSI

It swung a foreleg at me and I cut that chunk from it. It screamed and retreated to the corner.

Jessi points to the leg Angela holds in her hand.

JESSI

The monster is like a giant fucking mosquito!

Jake and Angela look wide-eyed at Jessi.

JESSI

Oh, sorry. I'll watch my language.

ANGELA

That doesn't sound like a word a Wild Flower Girl would use.

Jessi shrugs embarrassed.

JESSI

Just then, Roy came to the shed, grabbed me, yanked me out of the shed, slammed the door, and braced it shut.

ANGELA

Thank God you are alright!

JESSI

We got back inside the house and there was a knock at the door. It was the cops. Roy thought I had called the police.

Jessi returns her knife to her fanny pack.

JESSI

The police took him downtown to question him about the wreck and the drugs.

Jake leans over and holds his head in his hands.

JAKE

Oh, my God. We're doomed

EXT. JAKE'S DRIVEWAY - DAY

Sol has left work and has parked his truck. He gets out with a deep breath and moves to the back of the truck. He pulls out a plastic bag and moves to the front door and knocks.

INT. JAKE'S HOUSE - DAY

Jake, Angela, and Jessi sit quietly for a moment digesting Jessi's story. A KNOCK on the door startles them back to reality.

JAKE

You think it's the cops?

ANGELA

Oh, my God!

JESSI

Take it easy. Just go see who's
at the door.

Jake is up and cautiously moving to the door. He looks through the peephole and lets out a deep breath. He turns to Angela and Jessi with a big smile.

JAKE

It's Sol! He's here to help us.

INT. JAKE'S HOUSE - DAY

Sol enters the house and Jake hugs him. Sol holding the plastic bag hugs Jake awkwardly back.

SOL

Uh, Jake, you all right.

JAKE

Sol, thanks for coming.

Jake lets go of Sol as Angela and Jessi stare uncomfortably at the pair of men. Jake sighs and smiles reassured with a nod from Sol.

SOL

Ok, where's your brother? I brought what's left of the Dean's plant. I know Roy's a whiz with plants and was hoping he could revive it.

Jake's smile goes immediately to a frown.

JAKE

Roy's with the cops.

SOL

Now what?

JAKE

He wrecked the delivery van last night, pot, police, blah, blah, blah. Give me the bag.

SOL

I was thinking that fixing that plant might get you your job back. But I realize it's the least of your worries right now.

Jake steps forward and takes the bag. He steps toward the back room and stops.

JAKE

Sol already knows about the monster and had some ideas. I'm going to work on this plant a couple minutes. When I come out, I want to hear ideas.

Jake stops.

JAKE

Jessi, Sol. Sol, Jessi. There's your introductions. Now work on a plan.

Jessi steps forward and shakes Sol's hand and whips out a card from her fanny pack and gives it to him.

JESSI

Hi, I'm Jessi Fortuna, Wild Flower Girl.

SOL

Nice to meet you. I'm Solomon White, call me Sol.

Jessi looks at Sol with a curious look.

JESSI

I don't mean to be insensitive, but I can't help but thinking how ironic it is for you as a Black man to have the name "White."

Sol looks down at Jessi with a blank stare on his face for an uncomfortable amount of time. He finally smiles and laughs heartily. He musses her hair.

SOL

I like you. You're a very candid
little, White girl.

INT. CLOSET - DAY

Jake enters the greenhouse within the closet. The harsh light of the growth lamps illuminates the space. He crowds the marijuana plants together to make room for the plastic bag on the counter.

He finds an empty pot and opens the bag. Carefully he replants the wounded plant. He looks to the ceiling a moment.

JAKE

Please, God. I know we don't talk
much, but please help us.

Jake awkwardly tries to cross himself. He turns to exit the closet.

INT. JAKE'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

Jake returns to the living room. Sol, Jessi, and Angela are quietly discussing a list of supplies needed from the store.

JAKE

Let me hear what you got.

Everyone starts talking at once and the din of noise makes Jake wave his arms. But everyone still talks at once.

Jessi reaches out and drags her nails across a chalkboard with a nerve-fraying SQUEAK. Everyone is quiet. They stare at Jessi.

JESSI

Listen and listen good!

Jake looks around the room and points to the chalkboard.

JAKE

Where did that chalkboard come
from?

JESSI
Never mind the chalkboard!

Jessi grabs a piece of chalk and begins to list supplies on the board.

JAKE
We have chalk in this house?

Jake leans over to Angela and whispers.

JAKE
Seriously, did you know we had chalk and a chalkboard in this house?

Angela shakes her head no as she watches Jessi.

JESSI
We got three dead bodies in the back...

JAKE
Wait! You guys told her about the bodies?

Sol and Angela murmur as they avoid eye contact with Jake.

JESSI
Man up, Jake. I know we can't go to the cops with all your dope and three dead guys in the backyard. We have a plan. Now get on board with us!

Jake heaves a sigh and looks to the heaven and mouths a prayer.

Jessi glares at Jake.

JAKE

Fine. Here's my idea. That mutant-mosquito out there was born out of a bleach solution, a basic, caustic solution. So, what do we need to neutralize it?

Jake waits for a moment, but nobody speaks.

JAKE

We need an acid solution. I figure we get a Supersoaker squirt gun, fill it with lemon juice mixed with vinegar and let it have it.

SOL

Bravo. I like it.

Sol claps and encourages everyone else to clap. There's a smattering of applause. Jake waves and acknowledges the courtesy applause.

JESSI

Good. We got a plan.

Jessi continues listing the items on the chalkboard as she describes each piece of equipment.

INT. STAN'S SUPERMART - DAY

Sol pushes a cart through the aisles as Jessi loads the supplies.

SOL

This is fun! I haven't had an adventure in a long time. Did I tell you I was in 'Nam?

The cart is getting full of items: rope, plastic sheeting, assorted tools including an ax and a hatchet. Jessi stops the cart in front of the insect repellent end cap.

She grabs two cans and tosses them into the cart. She hesitates, pulls the cart close to the stand and sweeps her arm across the shelf knocking in thirty large cans of repellent. The can is blue and orange with the letters "AWAY!"

JESSI

No. I didn't hear you say you were in 'Nam. What was it like?

SOL

Pretty much like you hear. A giant cluster fu...

Sol catches himself as Jessi smiles.

SOL

It was pretty much like the movies portrayed it. Nobody knew what they were doing or why.

JESSI

Come on. We need sporting goods. Catcher's equipment.

INT. JAKE'S HOUSE - DAY

Jake and Angela are left waiting for Jessi and Sol to shop for supplies.

ANGELA

Come on. Let's go lay down.

JAKE

I can't sleep. I'm too wound up.

ANGELA

Who said anything about sleep?

Angela takes Jake's hand and tows him toward his bedroom.

JAKE

Oh.

The bedroom door shuts.

INT. JAKE'S BEDROOM - DAY

Angela and Jake lay in bed on their backs, staring at the ceiling, and wearing only a sheet over their bodies.

JAKE

What do you think is going to happen?

ANGELA

Why can't you just enjoy this for the moment?

Angela turns on her side and snuggles close to Jake, resting her head on his bare chest.

JAKE

Oh, God.

Jake sighs as he covers a pained look on his face. Angela's head rises and falls with the deep breath and she laughs.

JAKE

Yeah, easy for you to laugh. You have a job. Oh, did I mention that my parents are coming next week? And by the way, there's a monster that is killing people in my shed.

Angela sits up and looks at Jake.

ANGELA

Really? Your parents are coming? I can't wait to meet them!

She lays her head back down on Jake's chest.

JAKE

Yup, they can come visit me and Roy in jail. I wonder if they'll have enough cash to bail us out?

ANGELA

Oh, stop. It's going to be fine. How could a ten-year old Wild Flower Girl's plan go wrong?

They both burst out laughing.

ANGELA
It's going to be fine.

A door SLAMS.

ANGELA
Uh, they're back. Get up.

INT. JAKE'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

Jake and Angela emerge from Jake's bedroom wearing robes.

Sol and Jessi haul the bags of supplies and drop them on the couch and the floor.

ANGELA
We were just taking a nap.

Jessi winks at Angela.

JESSI
Right. A nap.
Angela blushes.

SOL
We discussed it. And we think right at sunset would be the best to attack. We'll have enough light to see, but enough dusk to give us cover from the neighbors.

JAKE
We got an hour and a half then. Should we get something to eat?

JESSI
We got some Ray's Pizza in the truck. I'll go get it.

Jessi heads out the door.

SOL
No word from Roy?

JAKE

Nada.

SOL

What the Hell, man? Cops in this town, ridiculous Nazis.

JAKE

We shouldn't complain. We got three bodies in the backyard, a ten-year old girl leading a covert assault, and we haven't had a sniff from the cops. Knock on wood.

Jake raps on a wooden bookshelf.

Jessi returns with the pizzas and everyone enjoys a slice and a soda.

INT. JAKE'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

The sun sinks lower and the sky turns pink. Sol is suited up in a baseball catcher's protective gear: shin guards, chest protector, and mask. On his elbows, arms, and shoulders he sports hockey pads.

SOL

I don't know about all this gear.
I can barely move.

Sol wriggles and grabs his crotch.

SOL

Not to mention this cup. Man, I forgot how uncomfortable these things are. I guess things are hanging a little lower in my old age.

JAKE

You'll be fine.

Jake hands Sol the full size ax and the hatchet.

JAKE

Which one?

SOL

I'm going to go with the hatchet.
The ax is too unwieldy, especially
in close quarters.

Sol takes a couple practice chops.

SOL

One thing for sure, no head, no
monster. You gotta get that head
separated from the body.

JAKE

Let's hope the acid works and it's
easy to get close for the
decapitation.

Jake smiles.

SOL

Let's not dilly-dally. Let's go
for it. We're losing light.

Everyone moves to the patio.

EXT. PATIO - DAY

The last evening light fades and Angela and Jessi have a
can of insect repellent in each hand as the douse every
square inch of Sol. The fog of the spray cans hang in
the still air.

Sol gives a nod and marches to the shed Supersoaker in
one hand, hatchet in the other. He pauses at the door
where Jake waits ready to pull the bracing away.

SOL

Just like 'Nam.

Sol nods to Jake and Jake pulls the brace away and opens
the door.

INT. SHED - NIGHT

Sol immediately picks up the glowing red eyes and pulls
the trigger on the Supersoaker. An ungodly hissing
whistle is produced by the monster as it cowers in pain.

Sol moves in with the hatchet at the ready, but the monster counters with a blow from its needle-nose.

The blow catches Sol in the left knee. The nose pierces the knee through shin guard and Sol retreats to the door and out of the shed bleeding profusely.

Jake pulls Sol clear, slams the door, and braces it shut.

INT. JAKE'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

Sol is quickly stripped of his equipment and towels are pressed on his wound.

ANGELA

He's bleeding all over!

SOL

It's just a scratch!

Sol winces and reaches for his leg.

SOL

I hurt him. Ow, ow, ow, ow. My leg, it hurts.

JAKE

We got to get him to the hospital.

SOL

I'm sorry guys. It didn't work. It hurt him, but it didn't work.

Sol writhes in pain.

JAKE

Angela, drive him to the emergency room, now! Take Sol's truck.

EXT. JAKE'S DRIVEWAY - NIGHT

Everyone helps load up Sol into the truck and Angela speeds away down the block. Jessi and Jake watch the taillights turn and disappear as a car turns and headlights move toward them.

It is a police car. It stops in front of Jake's house.

A policeman exits and moves around to the back of the car. He opens the backdoor and Roy hops out of the car.

ROY
Thanks for the lift. Have a good
night officer.

The policeman moves back around to the driver's side.

POLICEMAN
Take care.

Roy smiles with open arms at Jake and Jessi as the police car pulls away.

ROY
I'm home!

JAKE
Get in the house!

INT. JAKE'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Jake, Roy, and Jessi are gathered around the chalkboard.

JAKE
We lost Sol, but we got Roy.

ROY
What exactly happened?

JAKE
Angela had to take Sol to the
emergency room. The monster got a
good lick on him.

ROY
Well, today's our lucky day,
because I came up with the
solution. Jessi, go light the
fire pit. We'll meet you out
there.

Jessi heads out onto the patio.

ROY

Come on let's get some weed.

JAKE

Roy! What the fuck? We don't have time to smoke!

ROY

This is the plan, man. I had plenty of time to sit there while they sweated me before questioning. I came up with the perfect plan!

Jake waits a moment.

JAKE

Well!

Roy places both hands on Jake's shoulders and smiles.

ROY

We are going to get that monster high! We'll smoke him out. At least into submission.

Jake smiles. Roy draws his finger across his throat.

ROY

A mellow monster with no head.

JAKE

Brilliant. He'll be so stoned, we can cut his head right off.

ROY

High five!

Jake high fives Roy.

JAKE

Let's do this.

INT. CLOSET - NIGHT

Jake and Roy gather as much dried or drying weed as they can carry. They haul it to the patio.

EXT. PATIO - NIGHT

Jessi waits on the patio. Her head is cocked in curiosity.

JESSI

What's going on?

JAKE

Good fire Jess.

ROY

That's a great fire. We need that fire. We have a fire almost every night our neighbors expect it. It's our cover.

JESSI

What are we doing?

JAKE

Go get all the plastic sheeting you bought and all the duct tape. We're going to get that monster high.

Jessi smiles broadly.

JESSI

Now we are thinking outside the box!

Jessi bolts inside.

ROY

I'll get the grill. We'll put plastic all around the front of the shed, crack open the door, and let Maryjane do her magic.

The crew works steadily and after a half hour everything is in place.

Work stops when they hear a car door SLAM. They wait. Angela emerges from the house onto the patio and bursts into tears as Jake meets her. He envelops her in his arms.

JAKE

What happened?

ANGELA

(sobbing)

He's dead!

JAKE

What? How?

ANGELA

He was fine. We were laughing and joking. But he went into cardiac arrest. They couldn't bring him back.

Jessi's lip quivers and tears flow, but she doesn't make a noise.

Roy leans down and grabs his knees.

Jake guides Angela over to the table and chairs on the patio. They sit together. Jake holds his head in his hands.

Jake stands and points at Roy.

JAKE

Light it up.

Jake cracks open the shed door. The grill is lit and a cloud of smoke forms inside the plastic. A fan is turned on inside a ductwork made of plastic sheeting, forcing the smoke inside the shed.

JAKE

In an hour, I'll go in and get him.

The hour drags by as an eternity. The crew sits around the patio table in silence watching the smoke swirl and whirl in side the plastic. The smoke clouds are illuminated by the fire pit.

JAKE

It's time.

Jake stands he grabs the hatchet and spins it in his hand.

ROY

Wait a minute. There was one other thing I realized today. It's mint. That's what repels the monster.

JAKE

Yeah, that's great Roy, you do smell minty fresh...

Jake looks around at his crew.

JAKE

If I don't come out of there. Burn the fucking shed down.

Jake steps toward the shed.

Roy stands and halts Jake.

ROY

Let me do it. I'm fresh. Clearheaded. I sat around the police station all day. I can do this.

Jake pulls away but Roy grabs the hatchet and holds him back.

ROY

Come on, Jake. You got Angela to think about. You took me in and let me live here.

Roy smiles a confident smile.

ROY

Let me do this for you. Besides, it was my plan and I already covered myself with peppermint extract.

Jake pauses, it is enough time for Roy to push him and yank the hatchet away. He runs to the shed lifts the plastic and squeezes in the shed door.

Jake stumbles back, caught off guard.

JAKE

Roy! No!

There is nothing, no sound except the WHIRRING of the fan.

INT. SHED - NIGHT

Inside the shed it's no contest. The red eyes of the monster are half-closed. The monster is mellow and does not sense, see nor feel anything in the thick smoke. The burning red eyes give away its location in a heartbeat.

Roy raises the sharpened hatchet and with one fell swoop, the head comes off. Roy picks up his trophy and moves to the door.

EXT. JAKE'S BACKYARD - NIGHT

Jake moves forward and the shed door flies open knocking the grill over.

The red eyes penetrate the smoke and the darkness, but they dim as they get closer. Roy holds the head of the beast and the red eyes fade to black. It is dead.

JAKE

You got him!

Jake rushes forward followed by Angela and Jessi. Everyone jumps up and down celebrating with whoops and hollers.

Nobody notices the tipped grill and the plastic sheeting catching fire. In just a moment the shed is engulfed. Jake notices first and his jumps get lower and lower, followed by everyone else as they have to move away from the flames.

JAKE

Call 911!

Jessi is already dragging the backpack of bones to the fire and tossing it into the flames.

EXT. BACKYARD - NIGHT

The fire department and police are swarming the neighborhood. The shed is nothing but a pile of wet ashes. It had taken twenty minutes for emergency responders to arrive. It was mop up time.

A group of policemen and firemen surround Jessi.

JESSI

(sobbing)

The bad man kidnapped me. He tied me up and locked me in the shed with him.

The policemen take notes as fast as they can write.

JESSI

That man killed two other men. Their bodies were right beside me. He was smoking a funny cigarette and laughing, saying I was next.

Jessi wails loudly.

JAKE

There, there Jessi.

Jessi waves Jake forward and throws her arms around him. She whispers in his ear as she fakes convulsive shoulder shakes.

JESSI

(whispering)

I'll handle all of the explanation. We'll all be heroes.

JAKE

(whispering)

So far, so good. Don't over do it.

Jessi releases her grasp on Jake

POLICEMAN

Can you continue?

Jessi sobs and whimper, but nods her head yes.

JESSI

(sobbing)

The bad man didn't know I had a butterfly knife in my pack. I stabbed him and escaped.

Jessi wipes her eyes and whimpers.

JESSI

His cigarette he was smoking must have started the whole shed on fire.

JAKE

We keep some gasoline for our lawnmower and also some charcoal lighter fluid. His cigarette could have ignited those things in the shed.

The officers write furiously. An EMT brings a blanket and wraps Jessi tightly.

EMT

Let's get you to the ambulance.

The crowd of policemen and firemen begin to disperse as they move Jessi into the house.

INT. JAKE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

The group follows as Jessi trudges ensconced in her blanket.

A policeman walking behind the group looks into the kitchen. The head of the mutant-mosquito sits squarely on the kitchen table.

POLICEMAN

What is that?

Roy is there to respond without missing a beat.

ROY

That on the table? That is a fertility mask.

POLICEMAN

Really? Is it from Africa?

ROY

Far East. Thailand.

POLICEMAN

Wow. That is cool. Think I could get one?

ROY

Nah, this was one of a kind.

EXT. JAKE'S DRIVEWAY - NIGHT

As Jessi is escorted to the Ambulance, a man and a woman approach the scene. Jessi stops and looks at them.

JESSI

Mom? Dad?

The two people, LESTER FORTUNA (48) a thin hippie with a long ponytail and mustache, and ANITA FORTUNA (46) petite hippie with a flowery dress, come rushing forward.

LESTER

What are you doing here, Baby?

ANITA

You are supposed to be camping with your Wild Flower Girl Corps.

Jessi whips up a few more tears.

JESSI

It was horrible. A bad man got me. I was lucky. These two guys, Jake and Roy, they bought cookies from me before. They helped rescue me from a burning shed.

POLICEMAN

We just ran the records. A Dan Quintana lives next door. He was a registered sex offender.

JAKE

Seriously? I had no idea there were sex offenders in my neighborhood.

Jessi's mom and dad envelop her in their arms.

ANITA

We're here now, Baby. You're ok.

JESSI

How did you get here so fast?

LESTER

We were looking for a Roy Voskill. We heard him play the other day at Ray's Pizza and we were wondering if he has agent.

ANITA

We grabbed a card from Ray's and we were just going to walk over to see him when we saw all this commotion.

Jake pulls Roy over to the conversation, and puts his arm around his brother.

JAKE

Hey, here is my brother, Roy, right now. You want to talk to him about music?

Roy looks around in bewilderment.

ROY

What's up?

JAKE

Jessi's parents. They're in the music biz, and they want to talk to you.

Jessi's dad stands and shakes Roy's hand.

LESTER

We'll talk later. We have to get
Jessi home.

ROY

Sure thing. That'd be awesome!

Lights of the emergency vehicles flash and strobe as more responders come to the site. A new vehicle appears and TV lights shine on a reporter standing before a camera giving an account of the situation.

EXT. NATIONAL CEMETARY - DAY

Roy, Angela, Jake, and Jessi are all dressed in black as the military detail provides a twenty-one gun salute and they play taps for Sol.

The flag is folded and given to Jake as no other family for Sol is there.

The funeral ends and the group slowly makes its way to the car in silence. A man in a trench coat appears from behind a tree.

TRENCH COAT MAN

Jake Voskill?

JAKE

Yes.

The man hands Jake an official looking letter.

TRENCH COAT MAN

Consider yourself served.

JAKE

What the Hell is this?

The man is already ten yards away and not stopping. Angela takes the folded flag from Jake as he fumbles with the letter.

Jake tears open the letter and glances through the pages.

JAKE

It's Sol's estate. I'm executor.
He never told me this.

ANGELA

He didn't have any family left.
His wife just died and his son was
killed in Iraq.

JAKE

It was Afghanistan. He was killed
in Afghanistan.

Jake looks back and stares at Sol's fresh grave.
A smaller sealed letter falls to the ground and Jake
retrieves and opens it and reads to himself.

SOL (V.O.)

Dear Jake, You are reading this
because my funeral is over. You
were like a son to me. Especially
when Rita and I lost Rodney in
that God-awful war. You know, I
lost everything when Rita passed,
but your short stories kept me
going. I truly treasured the days
you'd have pages to share. You
have a special talent to write.
That is why I have left an
endowment with St. Thomas.

The first tear streams from Jake's eye.

SOL (V.O.)

Everything is paid for, you
should have plenty of cash with
the generous stipend allowed by
the endowment. The instructions
are for you to write full time for
as long as you like. You'll be
meeting with lawyers and all that
hassle, to get things started, but
I just wanted this note to tell
you how important you were to me
in our few short years on the
"crew." Life is short, enjoy it.
Love, Sol.

Jake's shoulders shake as he weeps. Angela puts her arm on his back. Roy and Jessi follow suit to provide comfort.

EXT. JAKE'S PATIO - NIGHT

The fire pit is burning as Angela, Roy, and Jake sit around the table with full margaritas in front of them. Jake works rolling a joint as Roy tunes his guitar.

JAKE

We have to smoke in honor of our fallen brother.

ROY

Hear. Hear. To surviving.

Roy hoists his margarita and drinks.

ROY

Plus, we are going to be on a smoke out when Mom and Dad are here next week.

Jake finishes rolling the cigarette and fires it up.

Roy begins strumming his guitar.

ROY

(singing)

Where there's smoke,
There's trouble,
Where's there's trouble,
You'll find me.

Where there's smoke,
You'll find trouble,
Where there's smoke,
That's where I'll be.

From the darkness a tiny mosquito emerges. It makes a wide berth around the fire pit as it flies through the backyard. It moves closer, away from the fire, closer to the observer's perspective. Close enough that, even on the tiniest of a mosquito, you can see the glowing red eyes.

FADE TO BLACK WITH RED EYES REMAINING BEFORE BLINKING.

ALL BLACK.

THE END.