

PERGO'S BEAST

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FADE IN:

INT. APARTMENT - NIGHT

PERGO, mid 20s, shorts and tank top, sits by the open window of her cramped apartment. Her face and neck glow with perspiration in the light of a feeble LAMP.

She adjusts an ELECTRIC FAN, relishes the breeze.

FRAMED PHOTOS stand on a shelf, Pergo alone in each. Pergo in Italy. Pergo at Machu Picchu. Pergo at a fancy restaurant.

FOOTSTEPS then MUFFLED VOICES sound out from the apartment above. The warm, comfortable BANTER of a young couple.

Pergo turns down the fan so she can hear.

As if she's part of the conversation, Pergo's expression reacts animatedly to the MALE VOICE and she tilts her head and mimics the WOMAN'S laughter.

Suddenly, her expression turns forlorn and she stops playing along, checks her watch.

She rises sluggishly from her chair, crosses to her closet and throws open the folding doors.

Looming in the closet is an enormous HEAD. It could be a mascot's head, but it's artful, not cartoonish. Meticulously crafted from foam, fabric and fur, it looks down with big, doleful, shiny, black eyes.

It's vaguely owl-like, with exaggerated features, something you might find in a children's book. Layer upon layer of dark blues, dark greys, black, and hints of crimson.

Pergo plucks it from the shelf and sets it on the bed.

She retrieves the matching costume body from the closet, tosses it down beside the head, wipes her brow, and returns eagerly to the fan.

LATER

Another check of the watch: 3:46.

Pergo looks at the costume, then out into the night.

Suddenly resolved, she pushes up from the chair.

She goes to the bed and eases into the costume body, then sits to push her feet down inside thick soles with shiny black claws. She stands again, pulls up a hidden zipper.

Pergo pours a glass of water at the sink, presses it to her forehead a moment, then drinks it down.

On the fridge, a FLYER advertises "Beast Night, Aug. 9, Niklas Square, ANONYMITY ENFORCED."

She squirms uncomfortably, tugs at the costume.

Swiping a PLASTIC SHOPPING BAG from the counter, she carries it to the freezer, cracks in a tray of ICE CUBES, ties it.

Back at the bed, she eases the massive head over her own then slips the ice bag up inside. A flinch from the cold on the back of her neck. Adjusts the bag.

In a full-length mirror, she cinches the neck tight.

Pergo grabs a key ring from a table and stows it into a hidden pocket, then retrieves the costume's oversized gloves from a drawer.

She peruses herself in the mirror, her eyes just visible through the dark mesh serving as the creature's mouth.

She's a big, ungainly, doleful, shaggy beast.

She opens the door, ducks, steps into the dimly lit hallway.

EXT. CITY STREET - NIGHT

A crooked, deserted street, apartment buildings and shops pressed up to the sidewalk. Streetlights are rare, but the moon and shop signs are bright enough to navigate by.

Pergo lumbers along in her costume, sticking to the shadows.

A DARK FIGURE emerges from around a corner and follows quietly twenty feet behind her. Pergo jolts and turns at the RATTLE of a kicked stone.

The Figure steps under a streetlight just then, and Pergo sees a giant, CAT-LIKE CREATURE. It stops and they eye each other. Pergo nods her oversized head. The Cat nods back. Pergo turns away and they keep walking.

EXT. CITY SQUARE - NIGHT

Pergo and the Cat enter a moonlit square with a quietly BURBLING fountain in the center.

Four HULKING COSTUMED SHAPES are already crossing the square. A dozen more COSTUMED NIGHTWALKERS emerge from side streets. Together, the Creatures form a circle around the fountain.

The costumes are all oversized, with enormous heads, mostly dark colors. Some look almost cuddly, others bare fang and claw.

Pergo takes her place. She breathes heavily, pulls at her collar. She loosens it and retrieves the plastic bag, now empty, the contents leaked into her costume.

The only sound the SHUFFLING OF FEET, the Creatures begin a slow, perfectly coordinated ritual dance. Hands stretch out to the fountain. Up to the moon.

Giant heads swivel right, left, back to centre. The moonlight glints in black eyes as the hypnotic choreography unfolds.

Bodies pivot to the right at the hip, then make a three-point turn to face left.

Pergo's foot drags on the turn. She's losing power, her breathing heavier. Her head starts to dip.

She keeps going, following as the others pace slowly around the fountain, arms tracing intricate, synchronized arcs.

Pergo stumbles, goes down on one knee.

She gets up. Stumbles again, toward the fountain. Ends up on her butt, legs out front.

She struggles for air through the "mouth" mesh of the costume head. She claws at her neck.

A FISH-LIKE CREATURE steps forward to help her.

Frantically, Pergo pulls off the head, gulps the night air. She's dripping with sweat.

The advancing Fish stops, retreats.

GASPS from the others. Motionless, they stare at the no longer anonymous Pergo.

Softly at first, but growing louder, a deep, menacing GROWL emerges from the Creatures and fills the square.

One by one, the Creatures form "x" crosses with their arms, directing them rigidly toward Pergo.

They take a coordinated step toward her. Another step. The circle closes. A swarm of massive heads looms above her. She hides her face in her hands, breathing erratically.

A SKUNK-LIKE CREATURE picks up Pergo's head. Another grasps the other side and pulls, harder and harder, until it tears. A COW-LIKE CREATURE joins, and the head comes apart.

Pergo looks on fearfully as they toss the pieces into the fountain.

They take another step toward her.

Suddenly --

-- a LOUD CLAP --

-- of costumed hands cracks through the night. All heads swivel to a MONKEY-LIKE CREATURE.

It urges them away from Pergo with sharp gestures.

The Creatures grudgingly acquiesce, step back.

The Monkey kneels by Pergo, then plunks down onto its bottom. It strokes her arm.

One and two at a time, the others begin turning away. They walk off, slowly, silently, heading back to side streets.

Pergo and the Monkey are alone.

Pergo GASPS as the Monkey reaches to remove its head. She tries to stop it, but it shrugs her away.

Pergo stares down at the ground.

Two hands set the giant monkey head down.

Hesitantly, Pergo looks up, into the moonlit eyes of SIANA, mid 20s.

Pergo smiles gratefully. Siana returns her smile, then turns to the fountain. Pergo follows her gaze to where her owl costume's head has sunk to the bottom. She shrugs resignedly.

Siana takes a knee, then stands and helps Pergo up. Pergo's legs are wobbly and she clings to Siana's furry monkey arm.

Pergo's eyes widen as Siana picks her head up from the ground and tosses it into the fountain. She looks Siana in the eye and smiles with radiant joy.

Siana shrugs playfully.

With Pergo still clinging to Siana's arm, they walk out of the square and into the night.

FADE OUT.