The Cosmic

by Pete Barry
EXT. ROOFTOP – NIGHT

The CRACK of fierce thunder. Lightning illuminates quick motion: a gloved fist collides with a thug’s face.

The next flash reveals THE COSMIC. His face is shrouded in a bull’s head mask, deep black and green. Below the mask, his teeth are gritted. His nose is broken and gushing blood.

Hulking men surround him, pummel him, punish him. CRUNCH. The CRACK of bone. He slumps, beaten.

BUTCHERBIRD (O.S.)
Bring me the Cosmic!

EXT. ROOFTOP – OVERLOOKING A CITY IN RUINS

Above the rooftop rises the HORROR MACHINE. It resembles a derrick tower, thirty feet high, made of dark red alloy and long, writhing cables. It CREAKS like a sinking submarine.

Before the Machine stands BUTCHERBIRD (30s). His suit is Armani, his eyes covered with a visor of jagged stained glass, his head topped by a plume like a Dr. Seuss nightmare.

BUTCHERBIRD
Bring me the man, the myth, the legend. And soon to be...history.

Two THUGS force The Cosmic to his knees in front of Butcherbird. He surveys his captors.

DR. LEEVIL (60s), five feet tall, face half-eaten by a living, sprouting tumor. He giggles and wields twin buzzsaws.

JANIX, made of living tar.

ASSAULT and BATTERY (40s), in police uniforms. ASSAULT is a stoic, eight-foot tall bruiser. BATTERY sports foot-long metal razors from his wrists and wires from his hair, all sparking in the rain.

Others. SOLOMON WEIR. NOTHINGFACE. JUDGE CLAW.

They CHEER as the Cosmic coughs blood onto the blacktop.

BUTCHERBIRD (CONT’D)
I’m glad you came, George. Can I call you George? Everybody wants to finally meet you. Can someone get rid of that stupid mask?
ASSAULT reaches over with a beefy meathook and rips the bull mask off the Cosmic's head. He is GEORGE LIDDELL, early 40s, accountant, ordinary.

BATTERY
Hey, Butcherbird, is this a joke?
This guy is the Cosmic?

BUTCHERBIRD
He seems more like the Comic, doesn't he?

GEORGE
Where is my family?

BUTCHERBIRD
Jeez! Take some time to appreciate what I've done here! Gathered Janix, Assault and Battery, all these maniacs, together?

George grabs his two captors and cracks their heads together. He advances on Butcherbird as the other villains close in.

Butcherbird pulls a TV remote out of his pants. He pushes a button, and two metal caskets whirl around and pop open.

In one, SHELLEY LIDDELL, 39 and beautiful, George’s wife. In the other, BOBBI LIDDELL, 15, his teenage daughter. Butcherbird draws a nasty-looking ray-gun on George.

BUTCHERBIRD (CONT'D)
Don't! Don't you dare fight me if you want them to live.

George stops, SNARLS, and lowers his head. Butcherbird leans in close.

BUTCHERBIRD (CONT'D)
See, George, I found out about the Nectar of Heaven you drank that made you the Cosmic. I'm gonna squeeze that juice out of you.

GEORGE
The power of the Cosmic is part of me. You can't-

BUTCHERBIRD
I can, George! Dr. Leevil tells me his Machine can suck the Cosmic power right out of you.
Dr. Leevil stares proudly up at the Horror Machine.

    BUTCHERBIRD (CONT'D)
    Maybe suck some other things. It
    sucks. Just like life.

    GEORGE
    My power is a primal power of the
    Earth. You're going to destroy it?

Butcherbird CACKLES.

    BUTCHERBIRD
    I'm not going to destroy it,
    George. I want to put it into me.
    I want to taste that sweet Nectar.
    So you just sit still, and when
    we're done, I'll let your wife and
    daughter haul your sorry carcass
    home. Is it a deal?

George takes a long look at Bobbi and Shelley, both
blindfolded, bound, their screams muffled by gags.

    GEORGE
    I can't let you have the power.
    You'd kill billions of people.

Butcherbird's teeth disappear into tight-lipped resignation.

    BUTCHERBIRD
    You know, George, I don't think you
    fully appreciate this situation.

And he turns and fires the ray gun into Shelley.

The metal coffin explodes in flame, shoots backwards off of
the building, crashing through space to the street below.

    GEORGE
    No!

George leaps for Butcherbird's throat.

Assault tries to block him, and George plows into the giant's
chest, bowling him over.

Dr. Leevil plants one fist-sized buzzsaw in George's back.
George doesn't even flinch. He snags the doctor's second
blade and buries it in Leevil's shoulder. BZZZZHUNK.

Leevil SHRIEKS. Other enemies pile on, but George cannot be
contained, slowly pushing forward towards Butcherbird.
Butcherbird smiles, but anxiously. He points the ray gun at BOBBI.

BUTCHERBIRD
Come on, now, George, don't make me kill my last hostage.

GEORGE
Get back! The Cosmic commands you!

His enemies fall away, as if shrinking from hot coals. Intense green light pours from George's eyes and fists.

George leaps for Butcherbird, grabs him by the throat, and slams him against the side of the Machine.

The gun fires, destroying one of the Machine's consoles.

A klaxon WHOOPS twice. The Horror Machine lights up, cables whirling, and attacks them all.

A bleeding red cable whips around Janix's arm. He SCREAMS as his tar-flesh is sucked into the wire, revealing ruddy human skin beneath.

BUTCHERBIRD
I think your Machine is pissed off, Doc! I want my money back!

Battery is hit by a cable, and the metal prongs begin to retract painfully into his wrists. Another catches Dr. Leevil in the face, and his tumor shrinks.

Assault ducks and weaves past the Horror Machine. He leaps from the building. A cable grabs him in midair, like a snake with a rat.

George sinks his teeth into Butcherbird's hand. Butcherbird SCREAMS and drops the ray gun.

George forces Butcherbird over to Bobbi's casket. He slams his head against a red button. Her restraints slide away.

GEORGE
Bobbi, run! Now!

Bobbi undoes her blindfold and gag. She sees her father lift Butcherbird by the throat. She flees for her life, weeping.

Butcherbird's minions have been decimated by the Horror Machine. Men once gods now lie comatose on the rooftop.

Butcherbird notices two cables hovering in the air above, searching, CHITTERING like hungry birds of prey.
George eyes the empty space where Shelley's coffin stood. Tears pour freely from his eyes.

GEORGE
No, Butcherbird. This time, we'll stay. Let it take us both.

Butcherbird looks ready to cry as well, and then bursts into hysterical laughter.

The two SHRIEKING cables dive and lash onto them.

One cable pulls the LAUGHING Butcherbird twenty feet in the air. No physical change occurs. It drops him to the ground.

Butcherbird's visor shatters. His eyes are wide, staring, blank. He lays still.

George tries to rip the cable out of his back, but can't reach it. Three more cables leave their prey to grab him. He GROANS, resisting. More cables.

He sees the ray gun. He drops to the blacktop, cables embedded in him everywhere, and pulls himself along with his fingers.

He brushes the gun with one finger. The cables drag him back. More cables bite into him.

He grasps the gun, finally.

He fires three shots into the heart of the Horror Machine.

The Machine SCREAMS, steel shreds and fuel tanks EXPLODE. The entire structure crumples, toppling to the roof with a THUNDEROUS CRASH.

Then, silence.

George sits down. He stares into space, confused. A hundred cables stick out from his back and arms, like a steel porcupine.

He looks at his hands. He does not seem to recognize them.

Black.
INT. RESIDENCE MAIN OFFICE - DAY - ELEVEN YEARS LATER

Quiet, clean office. Dull afternoon daylight.

Bobbi, now 26, frowns and taps a pen against a clipboard.

George is clad in street clothes. His hair has gone gray. He watches a spider attack a fly on the windowsill.

DR. AJIR (30s) enters, dressed in a white doctor's coat. He is followed by BRENDA (50s), a plump, smiling nurse.

    DR. AJIR
    Good to see you, Miss Liddell.
    Hello, George. I'm Dr. Ajir.

Dr. Ajir extends his hand. George recoils. Bobbi sighs.

    BOBBI
    I'm sorry. My father has a problem with doctors.

    DR. AJIR
    I understand completely, George. Welcome to the Residence.

    BRENDA
    I'm Brenda, George, I'm the head nurse. If you have any questions, you come find me.

DAN (20s), a well-built and long-haired orderly, shuffles into the office.

    DR. AJIR
    Perfect timing. Daniel, would you show George to his room?

    DAN
    Just call me the bellhop.

    BOBBI
    Time for me to go, Dad.

George hugs Bobbi fiercely, and kisses the top of her head. She puts her arms around him and gives a half-hearted pat.

    GEORGE
    Be careful out there.

    BOBBI
    Just like always.

George follows Dan out. Bobbi stares sourly at the floor.
EXT. RESIDENCE - DAY

Brenda shows George around the Residence: a central hall, several housing units, and a beautiful span of countryside. On a distant basketball court, a friendly game is in session.

BRENDA
Lots of activities. Your own room.
Good food. Look at it like a vacation.

She touches George's shoulder lightly. He hangs his head. Her voice is soothing, patient, almost motherly.

BRENDA (CONT’D)
I know you been in some hospitals over the past few years, George. I hope this will be a different experience for you.

GEORGE
It's just. Embarrassing. My mind runs away from me. I see imaginary bugs. I make an ass of myself with people, with Bobbi. Like a senile old man. Useless.

BRENDA
You're not useless, George. You're gonna get back on your feet, and we're gonna help you.

GEORGE
It does seem nice here. Familiar, somehow.

The GONG of a distant iron bell.

INT. MAIN HALL - DAY

George sits with a group of Residents in the common room. Dr. Ajir calls on an older gentlemen with balled fists.

DR. AJIR
Is there an issue you'd like to discuss today, Herman?

HERMAN
Yes! The water quality here is terrible! When are you going to...

George daydreams. His eyes are drawn to a small hole in the ceiling.
Two men are suddenly seated behind him, shadowy and whispering.

**SQUEAKY VOICE**
Did you see the keycards? They can lock us in at any time.

**GRAVEL VOICE**
Don't tell me this ain't a prison.

George looks over at the front door. A small black box with a card swipe is installed next to the doorknob.

**SQUEAKY VOICE**
The renovations are also unconvincing.

George's eyes are drawn back to the hole in the ceiling. Nice new plaster is peeling away, revealing old slimy water pipes underneath.

A rat, two feet long, scurries in the darkness. It fixes its oildrop eyes on George and HISSES.

**GRAVEL VOICE**
It's like puttin rouge on a corpse.

George turns around. There is no one there.

**DR. AJIR**
George? Are you all right?

Dr. Ajir's smile is a little taut. George bows his head and does not answer.

**INT. CAFETERIA - DAY**

Over sixty people mill about the cavernous, cheerfully decorated cafeteria, chatting, picking up food, taking seats.

George sits down at one end of a long table, alone. A jovial group of Residents takes up the other end.

**MARTIAN (20s)**, skinny and jittery, grabs a seat near the group of friends. They shy away when he speaks to them.

**MARTIAN**
Hey man hey man hey man you get some of them apples?

**SHY RESIDENT**
Uh, yeah. They're good.
MARTIAN
Yeah yeah I got me some I gotta get me some more.

The Resident turns away quickly. George studies Martian's smiling face, and then his eyes light up.

GEORGE
Martian?

He slides down the table and sits next to Martian.

GEORGE (CONT’D)
Martian, what are you doing in here?

MARTIAN
Sorry, who's what? You calling me who?

GEORGE
Martian, it's me, George. George Liddell.

Martian eyes George blankly.

GEORGE (CONT’D)
You know.

George looks around, then tentatively puts his fists to his head and straightens his index fingers, mimicking two horns.

Martian jiggles his head and looks at his lunch, nervous.

GEORGE (CONT’D)
Martian. I'm...
(whispers)
...the Cosmic.

Martian's eyes grow wide.

MARTIAN
You? You're the Cosmic?

GEORGE
Martian, what happened to you? Don't you remember me? We fought together. Side by side.

MARTIAN
I'm sorry, man. I'm no Martian. I'm Mike.

George shakes his head with growing alarm.
GEORGE
What did they do to you?

BUTCHERBIRD (O.S.)
The end is nigh, my friend!

George spins in his seat, almost falling over. Butcherbird, clad not in punkish supervillainy but in jeans and white T-shirt, points straight at Martian.

MARTIAN
Hey hey I'll see you on the field.

BUTCHERBIRD
Is your team prepared for the worst ass-whooping in softball history?

DAN
Hey, no language now, James.

Butcherbird, or James, leaps onto a chair.

BUTCHERBIRD
There will be no more language! English, German, and Chinese are banned from the cafeteria!

General laughter. George stands, face drained of color, eyes wide and panicked. A croaking GASP escapes his lips.

MARTIAN
Hey man, you betta sit down.

GEORGE
Butcherbird.

Dan's hand falls on his shoulder. Dan is smiling, but his eyes are fixed on George, looking for any sign of trouble.

DAN
Hey, George, why don't you come with me, buddy? You look like you could use your pill.

Dan and two other orderlies gently urge George away. Butcherbird breaks into applause. The rest of the cafeteria follows suit.

BUTCHERBIRD
Nothing to see, everyone, George is going to be o-kay!

George tears his eyes away from Butcherbird's leering grin.
INT. INFIRMARY - DAY

Brenda hands George two yellow pills. He pops them into his mouth.

    DAN
    What happened in there, buddy? You see something?

George studies Dan. Then he shrugs.

    BRENDA
    You go lie down for awhile, George.

INT. GEORGE'S ROOM - DAY

Dan ushers George into his room and shuts the door quietly behind him. Cheap wall paneling, a thin blanket on the bed.

George spits the yellow pills into his palm.

Through the window, he sees Martian and Butcherbird walking towards a softball field. He frowns and slips out the door.

EXT. SOFTBALL FIELD - DAY

Butcherbird and Martian flip a coin in the dirt.

    MARTIAN
    Yeah yeah! Losers walk!

Butcherbird gestures obscenely. His team spreads out to their positions; Butcherbird stays on the pitcher’s mound.

George slips up to the bleachers and studies Butcherbird.

    BUTCHERBIRD
    Batter batter batter swing swing!

He fires a shot into home; the batter connects. The enormous SHORT STOP takes a powerful line drive to the stomach. OOF. The ball bounces into his glove.

    BUTCHERBIRD (CONT’D)
    Out!

The big man tosses the ball to Butcherbird, unfazed. He mumbles a comment to the THIRD BASEMAN, a short fellow in glasses. They laugh raucously.

George sucks in a quick, startled breath:
FLASHBACK - INT. FUNHOUSE - NIGHT

The COSMIC slinks through a dark maze. Wild CLOWN LAUGHTER. Technicolor strobelights. Dutch angle shots.

He backs against a wall, and then the wall grabs him.

It is ASSAULT, the short stop. He wears a police uniform, torn sleeves, 1970s era. The Cosmic struggles to escape.

    BATTERY (O.S.)
    You've met Assault, now it's time
    for some Battery!

BATTERY, the third baseman, now also in retro police uniform, advances on the Cosmic. His wrist razors shower sparks against the walls of the funhouse.

BACK TO THE BALLFIELD

Assault and Battery are staring at him. George shudders.

    ASSAULT
    What’s your problem?

    BATTERY
    Yeah, what’s your problem?

CRACK. Martian smacks a fly ball to deep center field. Two of Butcherbird's outfielders scramble after it.

    JANIX
    Come on!

George now notices JANIX, fully human, playing catcher. His face is deep red with fury at the terrible play.

FLASHBACK - EXT. TAR PITS - NIGHT

Black and white, some primary color highlights.

The Cosmic cradles MINDY (19), bawling, covered in blood. He is a silhouette run through with red.

Janix and his pickup are being SLURPED down by the tar pits. Only his face, contorted with rage, and arm are visible.

    JANIX
    I'll kill you! I'll kill everyone
    who touches you! I'll f-

GLURP. The tar swallows Janix whole.
FLASHBACK - INT. APARTMENT - NIGHT

Bone white moon, cartoonishly huge in the window. The furniture is strewn about, demolished.

The Cosmic follows a red smear on the white carpet.

    GEORGE
    Mindy!  Mindy!

In the corner stands a tarry figure, black as outer space. Its voice is a clacking hiss like a hive of beetles.

    JANIX
    What did I tell you?

Tendrils of black ooze reach out to strangle the Cosmic.

BACK TO THE BALLFIELD

Janix throws his cap. Martian sprints, beaming, for third. Assault sticks out a leg and sends him flying to the dirt. Martian leaps back to his feet and pushes Assault, barely moving the big man.

    MARTIAN
    Hey whatchoo do that for?

    ASSAULT
    You tripped.

    MARTIAN
    Oh I tripped I ain't gonna take that from you you big lard.

An outfielder recovers the ball and tosses it to Assault. He catches it, one handed, and taps it to Martian's forehead.

    BUTCHERBIRD
    Out. Sorry!

    MARTIAN
    I ain't out!  I ain't out!  I ain't gonna take this lying down!

The SECOND BASEMAN sneaks up behind Martian on all fours. Assault pushes Martian backwards over the smaller man.

The second baseman laughs. George notices that he looks a lot like DR. LEEVIL without the facial deformity.
FLASHBACK - INT. BASEMENT - NIGHT

Grainy film stock, like a snuff movie.

The Cosmic is strapped to a metal chair. Dr. Leevil slips towards him, holding a syringe and a SCREAMING blowtorch.

DR. LEEVIL
Candy candy candy.

BACK TO THE BALLFIELD

The five men kick at Martian, LAUGHING and SNARLING. Bullies, but not far from murderers.

GEORGE
Stop!

All five turn. George stands on the field, a bat in hand.

BUTCHERBIRD
Hello, George. Is there an issue you would like to discuss?

GEORGE
Leave him alone.

Janix advances on George.

JANIX
Ooh, big tough guy. You talk tough, but can you-

George swats the bat into Janix’s stomach, and then fells him with a kick to the groin.

Assault barrels towards him. George ducks a roundhouse and sends him flying into the bleachers with a loud CLANG.

Butcherbird winds up and drives a ball into George's neck.

WHAP. George CRIES OUT and drops the bat. Janix hits him with a flurry of punches; Assault restrains him.

Dr. Leevil strolls over and spits in his face. Battery cackles. Other Residents call out for blood.

BUTCHERBIRD
Pick him up!

Assault and Janix force George to his feet. Butcherbird grabs the bat and points to the horizon, suddenly dark with looming clouds.
BUTCHERBIRD (CONT’D)
I don't know who you are or where you came from, George, but you're headed for the cheap seats!

As he draws back the bat to swing at George's head, Martian leaps onto Butcherbird's back and bites his ear.

Butcherbird SCREAMS and drops the bat. George kicks Janix in the shin, tears free, and picks up the bat.

He drives back Janix, Assault, and the others. Butcherbird falls on his rear in front of George. George raises the bat.

DAN (O.S.)
George, stop!

Everyone freezes. Dan and three orderlies stare at George, bat above his head, ready to strike Butcherbird.

George scowls and drops the bat. Butcherbird smiles.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - AFTERNOON

Bobbi sits across from George in the dimly lit conference room. She frowns, and speaks without much emotion.

BOBBI
What happened, Dad?

GEORGE
They attacked Martian.

BOBBI
They have Martian in here, too?

GEORGE
Bobbi, they're all in here. Butcherbird. Janix. Assault and Battery. Dr. Leevil. It's just like at the old Gray Lakes Asylum.

BOBBI
Do they recognize you?

GEORGE
They don't remember who I am. It's like they don't even remember who they are.

BOBBI
Dad. Why would they be here?
GEORGE
Well, it can't be coincidence.
Somebody must have arranged it.
Someone who knew my identity.

BOBBI
Dad. You're not-

GEORGE
-the Cosmic anymore, I know, Bobbi.
But somebody must think I'm still worth something.

Bobbi lowers her head and sighs.

BOBBI
If they don't remember who they are, why not leave them that way?
Wouldn't the world be better off?

GEORGE
Because deep down, they're still the same. It'll come out.

MAIN HALL - EVENING

Janix, Assault and Battery play cards in the corner. George sketches the three from across the crowded room, unnoticed.

Martian approaches him. He whistles.

MARTIAN
Hey man you a pretty good artist.
You get in trouble?

GEORGE
Oh. They gave me a warning.

MARTIAN
Yeah yeah they gave me a warning too. Flag on the play you know.
I'm kinda hoping for a first down next time.

GEORGE
Well. Thanks for jumping in, Mike.

MARTIAN
Oh, no, no, man, you can call me Martian. Martian, that's what you called me, right?

George smiles.
GEORGE
OK. Martian.

MARTIAN
You really the Cosmic, ain't you?

GEORGE
Yeah, but let's keep it between us.

MARTIAN
We knew each other, right? I was, like, your sidekick.

GEORGE
Well. We didn't like that word. You and I worked together.

MARTIAN
And those guys. They bad news?

He looks over at the table of laughing card players.

GEORGE
Yeah, Martian. They're bad news.

MARTIAN
OK OK OK. What do we do?

GEORGE
We watch. Very carefully.

HALLWAY - NIGHT

George walks down through the wing with the other Residents as the lights begin to darken. Dan marches by.

DAN
Lights out everybody! You're not up to trouble, are you, George?

GEORGE
Not tonight, Dan.

DAN
Good to hear, get some sleep. Lights out, everyone!

The hallways empty. George opens his own door, then freezes. Butcherbird, clad in a white doctor's coat, sneaks down an adjacent darkened hallway.
George hides behind his door. A loud BUZZ, and the dead bolt pops out automatically, catching on nothing.

He watches Butcherbird withdraw a keycard from his pocket and unlock another Resident's door. Dr. Leevil emerges.

EXT. THE RESIDENCE - NIGHT

Butcherbird, Janix, Leevil, Assault and Battery slip away into the night, shying away from the scattered campus lights.

George follows them along the dorm, watching for security.

TAP TAP. George jumps. Martian opens his first floor window.

    MARTIAN
    George? Whatchoo doing? You gonna get in trouble again.

    GEORGE
    Martian, I have to find out what those guys are up to.

    MARTIAN
    Oh, wow. 
        (Beat.)
    You need a hand?

    GEORGE
    What?

    MARTIAN
    Hang on I'll give you a hand.

    GEORGE
    Wait, Martian!

Too late. Martian stumbles out of his window. George prevents him from landing flat on his back.

    GEORGE (CONT’D)
    Are you sure you're up for this?

    MARTIAN
    Hey, something's going on, somebody's got to stop it, right?

George hesitates, then nods.

    GEORGE
    OK. Come on.
AN OLD STABLE AMONG THE TREES

suffers from years of disuse: paint peeling, boarded windows, shingles missing. From within, MURMURS, and the sound of a SHOVEL.

George and Martian approach and hide in the nearby trees.

MARTIAN
What’s the plan?

GEORGE
I'm going to check at the window.

George fishes a cafeteria spoon out of his pocket.

GEORGE (CONT’D)
Security sweeps the grounds once an hour. Warn me if you see them.

He demonstrates by catching the light from a nearby lamppost with the spoon and reflecting it at the wall of the stable.

MARTIAN
OK OK I got it. Hey, I think it's coming back to me. I can do this.

GEORGE
I know you can.

He hands Martian the spoon and heads for the stable.

INT. STABLE

Assault digs a hole in the dirt floor. The others watch and SHUSH each other.

Dr. Leevil heats up a battery-powered curling iron.

George peers through the window.

BATTERY
I don't see why we don't move it.

JANIX
Would you shut up about moving it?

BATTERY
We're just lucky nobody saw it come down in the first place. What if they find it now?
BUTCHERBIRD
Nobody is going to find it. You would never have found it if I hadn’t showed it to you.

With one last GRUNT, Assault jams in the shovel and unearths a black, shiny igneous rock, about the size of a football. Butcherbird brushes the rock off and holds it up in the moonlight.

BATTERY
How are you sure? Did it tell you-

BUTCHERBIRD
Shh. Do you hear it?

LEEVIL
I hear it. I see things, too.

The men quiet down. George strains to listen. A faint, high pitched KEEN. The sound doesn't reverberate in the space - it could be imaginary. George winces a little; the whine is bearable, but not pleasant.

George notices a hole in the roof where the metal has been burned and sheared inwards. His eyes dart back and forth:

FLASH - INT. THE STABLE - NIGHT - PAST

From the sky, a streak of flame SCREAMS downwards, puncturing the roof of the stable and plowing into the floor inside.

Jumbled images and sounds. Small, SQUEALING black creatures. Jagged, slithering stones. JINGLING. MUNCHING.

BACK

George shakes his head, unnerved by the vision.

JANIX
OK, I hear it. So, what? It told you what to do?

Butcherbird twists the rock in half and pops the rock open. The interior is hollow, lined with shining red crystals.

BUTCHERBIRD
Yup. Curling iron, doctor.

Butcherbird pulls a crystal the size of a cherry pit out of the rock. He pushes the crystal against the curling iron. It SQUEALS quietly.
JANIX
Hurry up. It hurts my head.

BUTCHERBIRD
Oh, this will most definitely hurt worse.

He pulls the object from the iron, steels himself, and pushes the heated crystal against the underside of his tongue.

BATTERY
Ah, Jeez.

BUTCHERBIRD
Unnngh. Unnnngh!

Butcherbird is clearly in intense pain, but continues to push. George stares silently, aghast.

Butcherbird pulls his hands from his mouth, breathes heavily, wipes tears, spits blood. He smiles and points at Battery.

BUTCHERBIRD (CONT'D)
Yaw nexth.

EXT. STABLE

A flash of light arcs across the stable and catches George's attention.

Martian is seeking shelter in the trees while flashing the spoon frantically. A uniformed man in a golf cart is headed their way.

George waves Martian back, but Martian, terrified, bolts for the dormitory. The security guard sees him.

GUARD
Hey!

INT. STABLE

All five look up.

JANIX
Aw, shit.

BUTCHERBIRD
Go. Go. Go.

Assault picks up the shovel and begins to bury the rock again. The others flee.
The security guard chases Martian, entirely missing the gang sneaking out of the stable.

GEORGE
Dammit, Martian.

George makes a beeline for Martian and pulls him out of the headlight beams. They run for the dormitory. George shoves open Martian's window and tries to heave him in.

GEORGE (CONT'D)
They can't prove it was you. Just don't say anything if they ask.

DAN (O.S.)
George?

Dan, three orderlies, and two security guards face George. Martian's butt is still hanging out of the window.

MARTIAN
I didn't do it!

DAN
George, what are you doing? You can't be out here. And you're dragging Mike out with you?

GEORGE
I was following James.

DAN
George, I don't know what's going on between you and James, but-

GEORGE
There's a rock, like a meteorite, buried at the back of the stable. I don't know what he's up to, Dan, but we have to find out.

Dan glances at a fellow orderly, as if deciding what to do with this information. He nods.

A hefty security guard puts a hand on George's shoulder.

DAN
George. Come on inside. We're gonna have to get you a new room.
INT. BASEMENT LEVEL - NIGHT

Dan and the two security guards accompany George down a flight of stairs to a set of large double doors. A sign reads ISOLATION WING - YOU REQUIRE STAFF PERMISSION BEFORE YOU PASS THIS POINT.

Dan drops a keycard into a reader, and pulls open the doors.

ISOLATION WING

HEATHER (20s), sits at a desk and smiles at him, a little too broadly. Brenda bustles up, also smiling.

BRENDA
George! What you doing down here in the basement?

DAN
We’re going to move George in for a couple of days, Brenda.

George isn't hearing them anymore. He peers into one of the isolation room windows.

HERO, young, athletic, is strapped into a steel chair. He wears a darkly colorful superhero costume, shredded in places, and looks dazed, drugged, unaware.

GEORGE
Brenda. What is this place?

A masked doctor wheels a small machine over to Hero. He presses a button, and bleeding red wires spool out of it. They latch onto Hero, and he moans. It is a Horror Machine.

George leaps back and CRIES OUT.

DAN
Hold him!

The guards jump on George, but he sends them both flying. Heather grabs the phone and starts yelling into it. Brenda frowns sadly.

Four, then five, then six men try to restrain George. He fights them off as best he can, but there are too many, and he is not the Cosmic anymore.

DAN (CONT’D)
Get him into restraints. Fast.
ISOLATION ROOM

The ceiling is a tangle of mold-encrusted PVC pipes. The floor is slick wet metal.

They drag George in and strap him into a huge chair. Another mobile Horror Machine lurks in the corner.

An orderly wheels the Machine over. Cables leap out of it.

DAN
Better make it two-fifty.

GEORGE
You can’t make me forget again! I am the Cosmic!

BRENDA
Steady, George, ease up, you're gonna hurt yourself.

A cable bites into his arm. He SHRIEKS.

The light in the room flashes from red tungsten to blue florescent. The Machine is changing. The chair and the room are changing.

George struggles, then slows. The room is white, sterile. He looks over at the Machine. He begins to cry.

The Machine is smaller, ordinary. It is an IV hookup, and the needle is stuck into his arm.

Dan speaks to him gently, soothing, concerned.

DAN
It's OK, buddy. You're OK.

George closes his eyes.

INT. ISOLATION ROOM - DAY

George sits on his new bed, drawing the space rock from the stable. He scribbles it out, frustrated.

Knock knock. Dr. Ajir peers in through the window. He pushes a button, and his voice is filtered through.

DR. AJIR
Hi George. Want to join us for some lunch and a chat?
INT. ISOLATION WING - DAY

George looks into Hero's room as he is led out of the wing. Hero is clad in a clean gray shirt and sweatpants. An IV is hooked into his arm. His eyes are wide and blank.

George blinks tears from his eyes.

INT. MAIN HALL - DAY

George enters, carrying a small bag. Residents sit in a ring of chairs, including Butcherbird and gang. Bobbi sits by herself. Her lips tighten a little when she sees George.

GEORGE

Bobbi?

DR. AJIR

She wanted to sit in on this session, George. She wants to be here for you.

George nods sadly and takes a seat next to Dr. Ajir.

DR. AJIR (CONT’D)

OK, everyone. George has spent a few days by himself, collecting his thoughts. Let's give him a big welcome back.

Dr. Ajir begins the applause, and the Residents join him. Butcherbird claps loudly and broadly, grinning. Battery mocks enthusiasm, and Janix doesn't move.

GEORGE

Doctor. Where's Mike?

DR. AJIR

Mike's going to need another day or two, George. But he told me he couldn't wait to see you again.

BUTCHERBIRD

I couldn't wait to see you again, George.

George glowers at him. Butcherbird smiles back.

DR. AJIR

Now George, I'd like you to share some of the progress you've made with the group.
George swallows and looks to Bobbi. She doesn't move.

GEORGE
What should I say?

DR. AJIR
Why don't you show them your book?

George swallows. He removes from his bag a paperback book, thin, printed on ten-by-fourteen paper.

GEORGE
I write and illustrate comic books. My most well-known creation is The Cosmic.

He places the book gingerly on the table. On the cover, the Cosmic grips a smiling Butcherbird by the throat. The characters do not resemble either George or James.

BATTERY
Holy shit.

DR. AJIR
Philip.

ASSAULT
You wrote The Cosmic?

BATTERY
What the hell are you doing here? They're making a movie now, aren't they? You must be raking it in.

DR. AJIR
Philip, please. Let's let George speak.

BATTERY
I'm just saying.

Assault speaks to George with near reverence.

ASSAULT
My nephew loves the Cosmic.

GEORGE
Thank you.

DR. AJIR
Go on, George. What brought you here?
George continues with considerable difficulty. Bobbi's face tightens, but she maintains her stoicism.

GEORGE
Eleven years ago, my wife Shelley passed away. Breast cancer. I've battled mental illness my entire life, but when Shelley died, I basically had a break from reality. I began to think I was the Cosmic.

He indicates Butcherbird, who is no longer smiling.

GEORGE (CONT'D)
I imagined that people around me were the friends and enemies of the Cosmic. So here I am.

DR. AJIR
It's very brave of you to tell us this, George.

George laughs bitterly.

GEORGE
The Cosmic has one power - his courage. The Cosmic Nectar he drank gave him amazing strength and the ability to drive away enemies with his voice. But those are just manifestations of his courage. So I've written enough about courage to say I haven't got any. My daughter Bobbi...Roberta...she was fifteen when her mother died. She took care of me, the funeral arrangements, then the mortgage, the telephone bills. I abandoned her. Because it was easier to pretend I was a hero, than to face my life. That's called cowardice.

Bobbi looks at her shoes and sniffs.

DR. AJIR
You've taken a first step, George. This is the start of courage.
(to the others)
I think we should let George know-

GEORGE
Wait.

George glares at Butcherbird.
GEORGE (CONT’D)
I've come clean. I'm no superhero. You’re not the first smarmy loudmouth my mind has turned into Butcherbird, or that I’ve followed around. You had lots of friends so I could pick and choose villains from my comic books. But I took my pills, and now I know what's real. So you show me what's under your tongue.

Silence. Assault, Battery, Janix and Leevil all look to Butcherbird, rattled. Bobbi shakes her head, angry.

BOBBI
Dad.

GEORGE
I saw that rock. It was there.

DR. AJIR
George, you know that-

GEORGE
If there's nothing under his tongue, I'll leave him alone forever.

Dr. Ajir sighs, but considers this.

DR. AJIR
Well, James, maybe you could help George out. Show him that he has nothing to fear.

Butcherbird has lost some color in his face. His eyes flicker across George's face.

BUTCHERBIRD
Why...why should I show him, I mean, there's nothing there.

Awkward silence. Dr. Ajir studies Butcherbird suspiciously.

DR. AJIR
Maybe I would like to see that there's nothing under your tongue.

Butcherbird looks around at the group. He chuckles a little.

BUTCHERBIRD
OK, then. Let's see what's under my tongue.
He winks at George and turns to Dr. Ajir.

He flips his tongue up violently, revealing a colorless crystal embedded in the flesh.

    DR. AJIR
    Oh my. Is that a stud?

    BUTCHERBIRD
    Look closer, Doc.

Dr. Ajir looks. His eyes narrow, his lips part slightly.

The lights in the room dim, then swell.

    GEORGE
    Doctor Ajir. Don't look.

    DR. AJIR
    It's OK, George, it's just...

The light reflected by the diamond brightens. Butcherbird's pupils fade, and his eyes turn pale red, like an eclipsed moon.

A quiet WHINE, with no apparent source.

George is riveted to his seat. Assault fidgets, nervous.

    GEORGE
    This isn't real.

    ASSAULT
    James, let's not do this.

    JANIX
    Too late.

    ASSAULT
    No, the rock said it's not ready yet, it's too early.

    BATTERY
    No, he's right. It's too late.

    GEORGE
    It's not real.

Dr. Ajir MOANS, a loud, low sound that quickly grows to a SCREAM.

Assault, Battery, Dr. Leevil, and Janix CRY OUT and grab their mouths, as if experiencing massive dental pain.
THE OVERHEAD LIGHTS

explode in showers of sparks.

IN THE CIRCLE OF CHAIRS

Butcherbird's men open their eyes, all moon-red.

Butcherbird rises from his chair and hovers two inches above the floor.

Chairs topple backwards, spilling their occupants, as a wall of invisible force erupts from the center of the group.

GEORGE

upended, smacks his head hard on the tile. Residents SCREAM. Legs pound the floor all around him. A stampede.

An arm. Bobbi’s arm, pulling him to his feet, dragging him away.

BUTCHERBIRD

plants his hand on Dr. Ajir's chest. Electricity sizzles from his fingers; the doctor collapses to the floor, convulsing.

ASSAULT

rises to his full height. Small cups and notebooks rise into the air around him, orbiting his body.

BATTERY

LAUGHS and glares at the television. It explodes.

DR. LEEVIL

waves a hand at the front door. It swings shut and the electromagnetic lock seals itself with a loud SHWOOMP. Panicked residents pile against the locked door.

JANIX

growls at the ceiling. Tiles are instantly ground to dust. The water pipes above burst and soak the common room.
Bobbi drags George away from the mayhem, out of the common room, down a stairwell to the

ISOLATION WING

Bobbi rattles the locked double doors. She kicks at them. George speaks offhandedly, in shock.

    GEORGE
    You need a keycard, Bobbi.

    BOBBI
    Hey! Anyone in there!

Dan peers out through the window.

    DAN
    What's all the noise?

    BOBBI
    Let us in!

    DAN
    I can't until you-

The body of an orderly tumbles down the stairs. Butcherbird hovers at the top of the landing. Dan yelps in surprise.

    BOBBI
    Let us in! Now!

Dan fumbles with the door. BAAAHP. The doors open. George and Bobbi flee inside and slam the doors shut.

Brenda, Heather, and several orderlies run up to them.

    BRENDA
    What's going on out there?

A shower of sparks erupts from the door. The doors burst open, revealing the hovering Butcherbird.

Heather SCREAMS. Brenda falls backwards in surprise.

Butcherbird looks at a mug full of pencils on the desk. It tips over, and the pencils fly through the air. They jam themselves into the necks and eyes of the orderlies.

Dan swings a thick iron panel down from the ceiling, locking off the isolation wing from Butcherbird's advance.

Dan and Brenda administer to the wounded and dying. Heather WEEPS hysterically.
George jumps, startled, when a hand pounds against the inside of an isolation room window. It is Martian.

MARTIAN
George! George! What's going on?

George opens the door and frees Martian from the isolation room.

BANG. A dent appears in the iron panel.

IN THE COMMON ROOM
Assault throws a Resident down the stairs. Then, suddenly, he grabs his mouth in pain.

His comrades grab their mouths as well. They crash to the ground, along with the objects that hover around their heads.

IN THE ISOLATION WING
Butcherbird winces with pain and sinks to his tiptoes. He floats back into the air, then falls the floor.

BUTCHERBIRD
Ah, Jeez!

He puts a hand to his mouth. His pupils are visible again, his eyes bloodshot. He breathes deeply, SCREECHES, and stretches his hands to the ceiling.

Every light in the hallway explodes.

ALL ACROSS THE RESIDENCE
lights, monitors, and electronics short out and pop.

IN THE ISOLATION WING
Dan pulls out a cell phone. He dials 9-1, and then his phone sparks. He yelps and drops it.

Bobbi pulls George and Martian to the floor in a defensive huddle as every light source in the room EXPLODES.

EXT. RESIDENCE - DAY

Three police cars speed into the front parking lot, followed by a fire truck. The vehicles SCREECH to a halt.

The grounds are deserted, the buildings intact. The complement of five firemen begin to prep, slowly, unsure.

FIRE LIEUTENANT LYNN HASS (30s) jumps out of the truck, whistling. An ever-present, serene smile touches her face. She surveys the Residence. Quiet.

SGT. JOE TAYLOR (20s) leans out of the window of his cruiser.

   JOE
   Hey Hass! Where’s the fire?

   HASS
   Why, Joey, you bring your marshmallows?

Hass moseys up to the front door and twists the knob: locked. She looks at the windows: barred, shades drawn. The corner of her mouth lifts a little more.

She raps her knuckles against the door. It swings open.

   HASS (CONT’D)
   Hi. Can I speak to whoever’s in charge?

   BUTCHERBIRD
   I guess that would be me. Hi, I’m Dr. Ajir.

Butcherbird is dressed in white coat, sweater and slacks. He extends his hand, and Hass shakes it.

   HASS
   Hi, Doc. We got a 9-1-1 call. All we heard was “fire”, a lot of noise, then it was cut off.

   BUTCHERBIRD
   Yes...we had a little...incident. It’s under control.

   HASS
   Everything OK?

   BUTCHERBIRD
   Peachy.

Hass’s smile never wavers, but her eyes might.
HASS
Mind if I take a look inside?

Butcherbird smiles back, then ducks his head inside to take a look, as if to judge the place ready for company.

HASS (CONT’D)
Doc. That was what we call a rhetorical question.

BUTCHERBIRD
Um. Sure. I gotta warn you, it’s a bit of a mess.

HASS
No more than my apartment, I bet.

BUTCHERBIRD
Come on in.

One of the PATROLMEN waves to Joe, holding up his radio.

PATROLMAN
Sarge, we got a four-eighteen out on Beverly, does the FD really need us?

JOE
OK, hang on. Hey Hass, what’s the deal? You need us?

Hass watches Butcherbird disappear inside the Residence. She thinks for a moment, then moves closer to Joe.

HASS
I don’t need the boys, but would you stick around for a couple of minutes? Something’s tickling me, here.

JOE
(to the patrolmen, without hesitating)
Go. I’ll be there when I can.

HASS
Thanks, Joey.

JOE
I’ll take a walk around.

Hass follows Butcherbird inside. Joe heads around to the back of the building; the other cops turn their cars around.
INT. ISOLATION ROOM - DAY

A tiny shaft of light. George’s head against the floor, wide-eyed. Pounding, yelling. Overlapping voices, hushed.

BRENDA
-gonna have to keep them locked in-

HEATHER
-they keep yelling, can we-

BOBBI
-a look at those cops out there?

George sees an angry Resident POUND on his isolation room window. A muffled SHOUT: what’s going on?


DAN
No no no! Don’t leave!

BOBBI
What? They’re leaving?

DAN
Wait, one cop’s staying, and-

CRACK. Janix kicks the glass with a heavy boot. Dan almost falls off the bed. The glass holds.

Dr. Leevil trots around from behind Janix and wags a finger at the survivors through the window. Both men sport white coats; Dr. Leevil has completed his costume with a clipboard.

HEATHER
They can’t break that glass there’s no way. There’s no way is there?

Janix grabs the clipboard and marker. He scribbles on a piece of paper and slams a makeshift sign against the glass:

DO NOT ALERT THE COPS
OR THEY ALL DIE
+ 5 HOSTAGES

Dan nods his head, beaten. Janix and Dr. Leevil move away.

Martian shifts himself over and massages George’s back. No reaction.

MARTIAN
Come on George. You come on back.
INT. COMMON ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Hass whistles sharply when she sees the common room.

HASS
Jesus, Mary and Joseph, Doc! What the heck happened?

Water pools on the hardwood floor. Chairs and objects are strewn everywhere. It is as if a hurricane has run through the building.

BUTCHERBIRD
It’s a real mess. The water main broke, and everybody started running. Some of our Residents don’t respond well to surprises.

HASS
They trashed the place?

BUTCHERBIRD
Mm. It’s going to take a little while to calm many of them down, so we’ve confined everyone to their rooms temporarily.

HASS
What about the fire?

BUTCHERBIRD
Yes, no, no fire. A patient probably got their hands on a cell phone. People in here say the darnedest things.

Hass’ eyes stray behind Butcherbird. He turns to look.

Assault also wears a white coat, though he hasn’t changed his jeans and sneakers. He pushes Dr. Ajir in a wheelchair.

BUTCHERBIRD (CONT’D)
Ah, yes. Jerry. Make sure that James gets to his room, will you?

Dr. Ajir looks at Hass. His face is crumpled on one side, like a stroke victim’s. One eye is wide with terror.

DR. AJIR
Naw Jawmz! Naw Jawmz!

BUTCHERBIRD
It’s OK, James. Everything’s going to be OK.
Butcherbird pats Dr. Ajir on the head. Dr. Ajir keeps screaming as Assault wheels him away.

BUTCHERBIRD (CONT’D)
I’m terribly sorry about that. Is there anything else I can do for you, Miss...?

HASS
Lieutenant. Hass. May I see the other floors, please?

She is still smiling. Butcherbird pauses for only a second.

BUTCHERBIRD
Why not?

INT. ISOLATION ROOM - CONTINUOUS

No speaking, no shouts or protests. Only Heather’s sobs.

George’s breathing becomes more intense as Martian massages harder. He sees men’s shadows through the floor vent, conspiring on a lower level.

SQUEAKY VOICE (O.S.)
I always knew those fellows would amount to something. But telekinesis! How unique!

GRAVEL VOICE (O.S.)
Look at him shake like a dog. Ha ha! Big bull!

George clenches his eyes tightly. Martian whispers to him.

MARTIAN
George now listen man. There’s people in trouble out here, I know they got you on drugs, they got me on drugs, drugs mess you up.

Bobbi pulls Martian to his feet, gently but firmly.

BOBBI
Please leave him alone.

MARTIAN
But he’s the Cosmic, he got to fight.

HEATHER
Stop it, Mike! Just stop it!
BRENDA
Mike, why don’t you sit down-

MARTIAN
Or what? You lock me in my room again? Like those guys?

George watches helplessly as the survivors yell at Martian.

DAN
Mike, cut it out! You have no idea what’s happening here.

MARTIAN
Don’t gimme that! I’m crazy, but I ain’t stupid.

BOBBI
Mike. Listen to me. If we try anything, they’ll kill more people.

MARTIAN
C’mon, man! The terrorist tells you stay put and you’ll be fine, and you believe that shit? He’s just gonna crash you and him and that plane and kill everybody! We gotta stop doing nothing, and start doing something.

Shamed silence. Martian looks at George, who stares up at him with a kind of wonder.

MARTIAN (CONT’D)
And my name’s not Mike, lady. It’s Martian.

George’s face tightens, his brow furrows. Martian helps him to his knees. Bobbi smiles a little, in spite of herself, then crushes it. Brenda chuckles.

BRENDA
Here we are, probably thirty years of psychological experience between us, and we’re still suckers for the oldest tricks. Authority says sit, we sit. You’re right, Mike. We have to stand up.

DAN
Brenda, come on. What can we do? They’ve got ... I don’t know what they’ve got.
A short silence, then Bobbi moves over to George.

BOBBI
All right, Dad. You proved it. You saw something. I’m listening now. What do you know?

Everyone’s eyes are on George now. Dan looks unsure, but even he looks ready to bite. George steadies himself.

GEORGE
There’s an old stable in the grove. They have a meteorite buried there. I think it’s what’s giving them these powers.

HEATHER
You people can’t seriously be listening to this.

MARTIAN
Lady, I was there. They was out there that’s a fact.

BOBBI
They each have a crystal under their tongue — that’s real. They’re moving objects with their minds — that’s real. And they stopped. Why? What happened?

GEORGE
They said it was too early — like they needed more time.

BRENDA
Then we need to get this space rock away from them before they get more time.

Martian leaps up and punches his open hand.

MARTIAN
Now you talking!

HEATHER
This is insane.

DAN
Fine. I accept that we should do something. But one thing we absolutely need to do is signal those cops.
BOBBI
And what will you tell them?

DAN
That we’re hostages!

BOBBI
And if James and his friends start their magic tricks again?

GEORGE
Then we bring more cops. All of the cops.

MARTIAN
You mean get to the radio. The radio.

Bobbi is nodding now, then Brenda, and even Heather looks a little convinced.

DAN
Get on the police band. Say there’s a hostage situation.

BOBBI
No. Just say “officer down”, and let them all come running.

BRENDA
It’s a good idea, George, but it’s pretty dangerous.

DAN
There’s only one police car left, and it’s in the middle of the lot.

MARTIAN
I’ll do it I’ll get there. I’m the fastest guy here I’ll get there lickety split. Just like sliding into third.

DAN
I hate to say it, you’re right. But I’m going with you.

HEATHER
I’ll go with you, too. The radio’s our best chance.

BRENDA
George, you and Bobbi got to come with me.
George looks at her, nervously.

GEORGE
What? Where?

BRENDA
To the stable. Show us where the space rock is. Bobbi, I’m sure George is gonna need you there.

BOBBI
I’m fine. But I’m not sure he’s capable of-

BRENDA
He says it’s buried. He’s seen where, I don’t have time to guess. You did it once, George. You can do it again.

George shakes his head bitterly.

GEORGE
Look, I can’t go back there. I was delusional. I thought I was a superhero on some kind of mission.

She leans over and takes his hand.

BRENDA
We’re not heroes, either, George. I know you’re scared. I’m scared, too. But we got to do this. And you got to be brave for me.

Bobbi looks at George, hard. She takes his hand. George swallows.

INT. ISOLATION WING - MOMENTS LATER

CLACK. The lock on the iron panel pops open. Dan pushes it up a foot and peers under it.

The six refugees slip into the STAIRWELL

Two doors - one topped with a burned-out EXIT sign. Dan drops his keycard into the exit door’s reader. Nothing.

DAN
Dammit. No power.
GEORGE
Dan. Unscrew the card reader and push in the bolt.

DAN
Great. Got a screwdriver?

GEORGE
Use a dime.

BOBBI
Here.

Bobbi digs a coin from her pocket. Dan sets to work.

George steals a look through a window in the second door to the common room.

Assault enters - not the Resident, but the eight-foot supervillian. He drags the bloody body of an RN.

George gasps, shuts his eyes and shakes his head violently.

BOBBI (CONT’D)
Dad? What’s wrong?

GEORGE
Come on come on come on. Get it together. His name is Jerry. His nephew loves the Cosmic.

He looks again. Assault is still there - but in doctor’s coat and jeans, large, but not behemoth. Jerry.

And then Battery - human, white coat and jeans - bursts into the room.

ASSAULT
Did you get it?

BATTERY
I’m going now. What the hell is he doing with that woman? Giving her a tour? Take her to the basement and hit her over the head with a bat!

ASSAULT
We can’t take chances while it’s on the fritz. They all have to leave and not think anything’s wrong.
BATTERY
Or we can make sure none of them
leave. That’s a solution, too.

Battery turns heads right for the door to the stairwell.

GEORGE
Hide! Now!

Everyone scatters. George stands prone against the wall.

Battery enters the stairwell. He does not notice George,
totally exposed, standing right behind him.

He steps to the exit door and pulls. Nothing. He curses.

He touches a finger to the keycard reader. A tiny SPARK of
electricity. Battery grabs his mouth.

BATTERY
Ow! Dammit. Rrrrrr.

He grits his teeth and pushes his hand through the air.
KACHUNK. The door swings open.

Battery sighs with relief, then stops: two tiny drops of
blood pour from his nose and dot his hand.

He wipes the blood away, unnerved. Then he pushes through
the door to the outside.

MARTIAN
Well damn I just about peed my
pants there.

BRENDA
Come on. Let’s go.

They all slip out into daylight.

EXT. RESIDENCE MAIN HALL - CONTINUOUS

Dan pokes his head outside, then leads Martian and Heather
along the side of the building. Brenda, George, and Bobbi
follow Battery away from the main area.

AMONG THE TREES

at the edge of the open campus, Battery hustles along. The
old stable stands about a half mile off.
Behind him, Brenda leads Bobbi and George along, using the trees as best they can for cover. Bobbi holds George’s hand. A twig SNAPS beneath Brenda’s foot.

BATTERY
stops and turns.

BRENDA, BOBBI AND GEORGE
leap behind trees and hide.

GEORGE
finds himself alone, huddled up to a tree, trying to keep from hyperventilating from fear.

SHUFFLE SHUFFLE.

Battery walks into George’s view. Wires sprout from his hair, his wrist razors suck lightning straight from the ground.

Battery’s arms float up, like rabbit ears on a radar slowly extending. Electricity claws the trees, hungry, searching.

George closes his eyes and holds in hitching breaths.

Battery turns back towards the stable. The supervillain is gone.

George exhales deeply, shaking.

ALONGSIDE THE MAIN HALL

Martian, Dan and Heather scramble behind a stacked wood cordon. Martian peeks over it at the police cruiser.

MARTIAN
OK OK OK we gonna do this.

DAN
Wait. Wait.

Across the lot, Janix and Dr. Leevil talk to the firefighters. Janix finishes a joke, and all of them roar with laughter; Leevil doesn’t seem to get it.
DAN (CONT’D)

Go go go!

Martian sprints across the yard and dives neatly under the police car. Janix, Dr. Leevil and the firemen do not notice. Dan sucks in his breath.

INT. STABLE - MOMENTS LATER

Battery flings open the doors. He snatches up a shovel and begins to dig at the far end of the stable.

Brenda, Bobbi and George enter behind him, silently. They slip behind an old tractor.

Brenda scoops up a heavy pick and slips quietly towards Battery. Bobbi shakes her head, but Brenda takes no notice.

BATTERY

tosses the shovel and uses his hands, licking his lips. He unearthers the space rock. He caresses its craggy surface, drooling, salivating.

The diamond under his tongue WHINES.

He cocks his head slightly, then ducks backwards as

BRENDA

swings the pick at his head, missing by inches. She swats at him again, another whiff.

BATTERY

Bad move, Brenda.

BOBBI

leaves her terrified father huddling behind the tractor and leaps to Brenda’s aid.

GEORGE

Bobbi, no!

Bobbi tackles Battery from behind, dropping him to the dirt. Brenda comes around for another swing.
BATTERY

leaps up and touches Brenda’s stomach.

BZZT. A small spark leaps from his fingertips, and blood dribbles from his mouth. Brenda crumples, grabbing her stomach.

The pick leaps up by itself, WHISTLING through the air at Bobbi. She ducks, and it sinks into the wood behind her with a THWACK.

Battery rises up, nose gushing blood, and grabs Bobbi by the throat. He SLAMS her against the wall, just missing the blade of the pick. He snarls as Bobbi struggles for breath, sucking, finding no air.

GEORGE

SLAMS the shovel into the side of Battery’s head.

Battery’s shattered glasses fly ten feet into the dirt. Battery flops to the ground and lies motionless. Bobbi slumps against the wall with angry red welts on her neck, heaving air desperately.

George raises the shovel above his head, trembling. Battery lays unconscious at his feet, blood seeping from the gash in his head, breathing irregularly.

George brings the shovel down weakly on Battery’s shoulder.

The space rock WHINES. George fights back tears and slams the rock with the shovel. CLANG. The WHINE intensifies.

George grabs his temples and sinks to his knees. Brenda moans. Bobbi gasps for breath as if the air pressure has dropped. Then:

FLASH - IN THE DARKNESS


FLASH - IN THE STABLE

George dressed as the Cosmic, holding the rock. The silhouettes of men at the doors. One rubs his hands together compulsively and grunts as if enjoying a satisfying meal.
GRAVEL VOICE (O.S.)
Mmph! Mmph! Rich meat! Strong network! Mmph!

GEORGE
Stop it! Stop it! Stop!

BACK
in the stable. George ROARS and drops the space rock. The SQUEALING stops.

George looks around, shakes his head. Bobbi is looking at him, horrified.

BOBBI
Is that what you saw?

GEORGE
You saw it too? The pictures in your head? I didn’t imagine it.

George moves to Bobbi and holds her tightly.

INT. RESIDENCE MAIN HALL - SECOND FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

Butcherbird’s eyes narrow, as if hearing a distant, unnerving noise. He shivers.

Behind him, Hass surveys the hallway. She walks over to a spot on the tile floor. It looks like a whorl of dark red fluid, something hastily cleaned up with a mop.

HASS
You up to code, Doc?

BUTCHERBIRD
Code? Oh. Um. Yes. Do you need...to see some paperwork?

HASS
I might.

Butcherbird glances past her, through the window. From this vantage point, he can see

MARTIAN
outside, lying prone under the police cruiser. Dr. Leevil, Janix, and the firemen cannot see him.
He slides an arm out from under the car and reaches for the passenger side door handle. It is locked.

BUTCHERBIRD
sucks in a breath, controls his face.

    BUTCHERBIRD
    Pardon me for a moment Lieutenant.

Before Hass can object, Butcherbird heads for the stairwell and disappears through the doors.

In the stairwell, Butcherbird’s eyes briefly glow red.

EXT. RESIDENCE MAIN HALL - CONTINUOUS

Janix and Dr. Leevil’s eyes also flash red and fade. They immediately turn towards the police cruiser.

One of the firemen notices their eyes and turns to another in confidence.

    FIREFIGHTER
    You see that?

Martian slips back under the car. On the other side, he sees the pair stalking towards him.

    MARTIAN
    Oh man oh man.

Martian hunkers down, seconds from being caught. Behind the wood cordon, Dan and Heather watch helplessly.

    DAN

    HEATHER
    He’s not going to make it.

Heather stands up, her face tightening, her breathing steady.

    DAN
    What the hell are you doing?

Heather SPRINTS across the courtyard, away from the cruiser.

    HEATHER
    Hey! Hey!
She waves at Janix and Leevil. They begin to chase her. The firefighters watch on, bemused.

INT. RESIDENCE MAIN HALL – CONTINUOUS

Butcherbird sees the new chase through a window. He starts to run.

BUTCHERBIRD
No, no, no!

EXT. RESIDENCE – CONTINUOUS

Martian reaches out from under the car. He grabs the driver’s side door; it is also locked.

Heather looks over her shoulder at the rapidly gaining Janix.

Assault opens a thick steel access door right into her path.

She slams into the door at top speed and drops to the ground. Assault looks down, almost concerned.

Janix trots up, furious, and begins to deliver vicious kicks to Heather’s ribcage. Butcherbird leaps out of the access doorway.

ASSAULT
What are you doing?

BUTCHERBIRD
Hendricks! Stop!

Janix stops on Butcherbird’s command and backs up, a little dazed, his doctor’s coat sliding off.

HASS
Hey, Doc!

Butcherbird turns to see Hass at the front door. The firemen begin to advance on them.

BUTCHERBIRD
Ah, dammit.

JOE
Freeze!

Sergeant Joe has stepped from around the corner. He levels a gun at Butcherbird’s head.
JOE (CONT’D)
You three. On the ground. Hands on your heads.

Martian leaps up from under the car and is almost shot. Dan stands from behind the cordon, hands above his head.

MARTIAN
Hey hey, officer!

DAN
We’re the staff! The five in the coats are patients!

HASS
I think we’ve gathered that much, thanks.

DAN
You have to call for backup. Right away.

JOE
We’ve got this under control, sir, hang tight.

MARTIAN
You don’t got this under control, my friend, you don’t know these guys-

JOE
Sir, I need you to-

BUTCHERBIRD
grimaces. His eyes glow fiery red, and

JOE
tucks the gun barrel under his chin. A look of surprise crosses his face, and he fires.

BUTCHERBIRD
yowls in pain as blood sputters from his mouth.

HASS
cries out and dives for Joe’s body.
DR. LEEVIL

grabs the hose from the firetruck, pulls the valve, and turns the high-powered spray on the firefighters.

THE COURTYARD

is suddenly full of fighting: Janix and Assault rush the stunned firefighters, throwing punches, holding their faces into the oncoming spray. Martian jumps into the fray.

Butcherbird, still grabbing his bleeding mouth, notices Joe’s gun just as Hass goes for it.

BUTCHERBIRD

Hendricks!

He grits his teeth and another burst of bloody snot flies from his nose. The gun leaps from Hass’s grasp, spins through the air, right into Janix’s outstretched hand.

JANIX

aims the gun at Hass, and then

GEORGE

drives one of the staff golf carts into him.

Bobbi slumps in the golf cart’s passenger seat, and she holds Brenda’s crumpled form in place.

HASS

grabs the key off of Joe’s belt and runs for the police cruiser. Dan hobbles after her, waving his staff badge.

DAN

Don’t leave us!

JANIX

is not badly hurt; he snatches up the gun. One firefighter remains standing. Janix fires a shot into his back.

He sees Hass, reaching for the radio, and unloads the gun into the police car.
IN THE CAR

the windows SHATTER. Sunlight shoots in through brand new holes. Hass ducks down and opens the passenger door, letting Dan and Martian crowd in.

Hass twists the key in the ignition and drives, head down.

IN THE COURTYARD

George outpaces Dr. Leevil and Assault in the golf cart. Battery runs out of the woods, scalp bleeding, and leaps onto the back of the cart.

Bobbi smashes Battery on the head with the space rock.

She holds it with thick gardening gloves, probably taken from the stable. Battery hangs on, grabbing at her with his deadly touch.

Butcherbird fixates on the rock. Anger and anxiety blossom on his face.

BUTCHERBIRD
Hey George! You really want to give us that! What you really don’t want is to fight this fight!

George races after the police car and out of the courtyard with Battery still hanging on.

BUTCHERBIRD (CONT’D)
We have to stop them we have to stop them now!

IN THE POLICE CAR

Hass heads down the dirt trail towards the paved road back to town. A flat tire wobbles, threatening to rip away.

HAHSS
Everyone OK? We got all our fingers and toesies?

MARTIAN
Dan you all right man?

DAN
I’ll live. Where’s George and Brenda?
GEORGE (O.S.)

Hey!

They look out the back window. The cart is struggling to keep up, maxing out at twenty miles an hour.

ON THE DRIVEWAY

Battery grabs for the space rock one more time. Bobbi yanks it out of the way, knocking it against the steering column. It lets out a low ringing TONE.

Battery yelps and grabs his mouth instinctively. He tumbles out onto the road.

George watches Battery roll away, then stares at the space rock.

GEORGE
Did you do that? I’m not dreaming, am I?

IN THE POLICE CAR

Martian claps his hands together.

MARTIAN
Slow down, lady!

HASS
I guess we’re out of the woods.

OUT ON THE DRIVEWAY

She slows to a stop. George pulls the cart up, and everyone heaves Brenda into the police car.

HASS
Everybody buckle their seat belts-

DAN
Holy shit HERE THEY COME!

The FIRE TRUCK roars down the road towards them.

HASS
Hang on!

George and Martian leap in as Hass floors it.
The fire truck SLAMS into the cart and pushes it along, showering sparks everywhere, a fiery masthead. The forty inch wheels ROAR towards them, closing the gap.

IN THE POLICE CAR

Hass grabs the radio with her free hand.

    HASS
    HQ, we have multiple officers down at the Residence, request immediate backup, copy.

No response. Hass looks at the radio, confused.

    HASS (CONT’D)
    Copy, HQ, Joey Taylor’s dead! I’ve got possible hostages-

WHEEEEEEET. The radio screeches, a painful synthetic sound.

    HASS (CONT’D)
    What the f-

IN THE FIRE ENGINE

Butcherbird drives, Janix sits shotgun, Leevil hangs on the back of the truck, visible through the window. Janix and Leevil’s eyes are moon-red; they are groaning low, weirdly, almost mumbling. Blood leaks from their noses.

    JANIX
    This really hurts.

    BUTCHERBIRD
    Keep it going. Keep it going.

IN THE POLICE CAR

Hass is somehow still smiling, though it is grim, murderous, determined. She cranks the volume to MAX.

    HASS
    Copy! Copy HQ!

    GEORGE
    They’re jamming your signal!
    You’re not going to reach backup!

    HASS
    I can try.
DAN
Did you see what happened back there? He just thought about it, and the gun killed that cop.

HASS
I saw it. You know what else I saw? It hurt him to do it.

SMASH. The truck SLAMS into the back of the cruiser.

THUD. A badly thrown fireman’s axe hits the trunk of the cruiser. Butcherbird’s angry voice carries through the smashed-out rear window.

BUTCHERBIRD
Give us the rock!

Bobbi studies the space rock in her hands.

BOBBI
She’s right. We can hurt them.

GEORGE
Bobbi? What are you doing?

Bobbi leans out the back window, looks right at Butcherbird, and SMACKS the rock against the trunk.

SQUEAL. The police car passengers wince, but Janix howls in pain, and Butcherbird has to take one hand off of the wheel to clutch at his tongue. Bobbi smacks the rock again and again, but the effects don’t appear to be cumulative.

Butcherbird shoots a furious look at Bobbi, then pulls the fire truck alongside the back of the cruiser.

HASS
Not good. Not good here.

The truck nudges the side of the cruiser, forcing it to the side of the road. Butcherbird glowers in at them.

Martian leaps halfway out of the broken window and punches Butcherbird in the face.

DAN
Are you insane?
BUTCHERBIRD

grabs Martian by the hair and spins the wheel. Martian is pulled bodily out of the car. He hangs on to the truck cab, feet grasping the door, the ground briefly.

BOBBI

reaches out of the window with the space rock. She bangs it against the door twice, catching Butcherbird’s attention, and George’s.

GEORGE

Bobbi!

BUTCHERBIRD

looks. Bobbi touches the space rock to the spinning hubcap of the fire truck; sparks fly. The rock SCREAMS. Butcherbird screeches and launches the truck back at the cruiser.

IN THE POLICE CAR

George reaches out of the shattered rear window and grabs Martian’s legs, preventing him from being crushed between the vehicles.

The rock slips from Bobbi’s grasp and out of the rear window, bouncing off the trunk of the car.

George and Butcherbird both reach for it. They grab the rock with their bare hands simultaneously.

BOOOOOM. Apocalyptic thunder.

EXT. OTHERWORLDLY ROAD - NIGHT

George is again the Cosmic, and James, Butcherbird. They drive a sporty coupe and a Mack truck under a flame-red sky. They hold between them a large brass ring studded with a thousand diamonds, each etched with a protohuman face.

Butcherbird looks deep into George’s eyes, smiling, his own eyes burning bright red.

BUTCHERBIRD

Cosmic.
George punches Butcherbird in the face, and

REALITY

returns. George pulls the rock back into the car. Butcherbird’s pupils have disappeared in eyes the color of blood. The air in the cruiser WHISTLES, sparking with static electricity.

Hass points ahead: the gated exit, and the main road.

    HASS
    We’re there. We’re there!

    GEORGE
    Hang on!

Butcherbird slams back into the cruiser and pushes both vehicles off the road. They roll up a grassy slope towards the top of the concrete front wall.

EXT. HIGHWAY 89 - CONTINUOUS

The police cruiser and fire truck leap fully over one lane of traffic, landing in the middle of the second lane and plowing forward into the concrete median.

The cruiser’s hood crumples on impact, and spins to a stop.

Dr. Leevil is thrown from the roof of the truck and lands face first in the middle of the opposing lane. The truck rolls over and THUDS to a stop. Water spills from its ruptured tank.

The space rock rolls across the highway and down a gentle slope into an outcropping of tall grass.

HONKING, SCREAMING, traffic stops.

BUTCHERBIRD

emerges from the destroyed front window of the cab. He steps on his ankle and cries out: it is either broken or twisted.

GEORGE

climbs out of the back of the police cruiser, gasping for breath with great difficulty.

They look out across the median at each other.
Again, the Cosmic and Butcherbird. A Sherman tank on fire, a traffic helicopter in pieces in the road. Butcherbird holds something resembling a sci-fi weed whacker. He fires lightning into the air with it, grinning.

**BUTCHERBIRD**

You can’t swing, baby, if you don’t got no arms!

The Cosmic trembles, bleeding from injuries no mortal should stand. He punches the ground, shaking it. Butcherbird digs in his feet, trying to keep his balance.

**JANIX (O.S.)**

James!

Butcherbird shakes his head a little, confused, trying to clear the cobwebs. Sirens wail in the distance.

**JANIX**

We got to go. Now, now, now.

**BUTCHERBIRD**

Shut up shut up. I can’t think. I can’t concentrate.

George eyes Butcherbird carefully, but he is unable to stand.

**JANIX**

Concentrate later. Go now.

**BUTCHERBIRD**

Wait!

Butcherbird runs to the motionless body of Leevil and shakes him. He whispers in his ear.

**BUTCHERBIRD (CONT’D)**

Wake up, Doc. We need you. The Cosmic’s back.

Deep within Leevil’s jaw, a faint glow, and a small WHINE.

**JANIX**

James!

Janix grabs him by the arm and drags him off of Leevil. The two begin to run back up the road to the Residence.
George collapses. He sees Brenda: splayed across the pavement, glazed eyes open. She is dead.

George rolls his head on the pavement and watches the emergency vehicles begin to flood the scene.

CRACK of thunder.

FANTASY CITY - HIGHWAY 89 - NIGHT

In a lightning FLASH, the city beyond is suddenly overrun with giant machines, lurching like Wellesian tripods. Distant screams.

George, the Cosmic, buries his face in his hands, sobbing, and lets the distant sounds of chaos wash over him.

EXT. HIGHWAY 89 - REALITY - EVENING

The sinking sun and emergency lights cast a nightmarish red hue across the accident site.

George stares at the lights, perhaps seeing things that aren’t necessarily there.

Martian sits nearby with Bobbi, applying a compress to her forehead. Her neck is bandaged tightly.

Dan puts his weight on a medical grade cane.

POLICE LIEUTENANT MEYERS (50s), the head cop on the scene, sits next to Hass, who lays on a stretcher.

MEYERS
It’s a miracle the five of you got out alive.

HASS
No miracle, Rich. These were some very brave people.

MEYERS
We got everybody on the planet up there, Lynn.

HASS
Did you tell them the Stephen King stuff?

Meyers casts his eyes downwards.
MEYERS
You were in an intense, crazy
situation, Lynn.

HASS
Richard. Listen to my voice. I’m
not crazy. I’m not hysterical.

Meyers nods. She isn’t. She is solid as a rock.

HASS (CONT’D)
If you don’t tell those boys, it’s
gonna be another bloodbath. I’m
going up there.

MEYERS
If I see you go up there, Lynn,
I’ll have you arrested. You’re
going to stay here and rest.

She shakes her head. Meyers rises, and he walks away,
awkwardly.

MARTIAN
So so what do we do now? We back
to doing nothing?

DAN
There’s nothing we can do.

HASS
Hey, after this, they might throw
me in with George and Mike, here.

MARTIAN
No no, they need us, we got the
inside scoop on these guys.

DAN
Mike, stop. You’re not a
superhero. Just have a seat, and
let somebody else take care of it.

GEORGE
Martian. He’s right. Sit.

Martian jiggles his head a little, then sits angrily. Bobbi
looks at him, a little amused. She slides over to him,
smiling, but earnest.

BOBBI
You were very brave back there.
MARTIAN
Oh no no it was nothing. George he
does that kinda thing every day,
yes sir.

BOBBI
You know you’re not Martian,
though, right? And my dad’s not
the Cosmic.

Martian smiles, but he rocks back and forth before answering.
When he does, he scratches his head absentmindedly.

MARTIAN
Yeah I I know. I’m crazy but I
ain’t stupid.

Bobbi smiles back.

MARTIAN (CONT’D)
But I used to be nothing, you know?
I was drinking. And drugging. You
know, doing drugs. And now I’m
fighting some kinda supervillains.
Even if I ain’t a superhero.
That’s worth something, ain’t it?

HASS
It is worth something. But this
isn’t a comic book. Bravery
doesn’t count. Bullets do.

George, not looking, nods in agreement.

ACROSS THE HIGHWAY

Three EMTs hoist Dr. Leevil onto a stretcher. His face has
been bandaged, his neck trussed. PARKER, a policeman,
approaches.

PARKER
Somebody told me this guy’s still
alive?

EMT 1
I don’t understand it, either, but
he’s got vitals. Spine is
shattered and a lot of his face is
missing, but he’s got a pulse.
PARKER
I’m gonna ride with you to the hospital. If he wakes up, he could be trouble.

EMT 1
Officer, if this guy wakes up, he’s not even going to be able to spell “trouble”.

They lift the stretcher into the ambulance and shut the doors.

AT THE SIDE OF THE HIGHWAY

The space rock nestles deep in a strip of tall grass at the bottom of a small slope.

It begins to glow red in short pulses. A sharp TONE.

ON THE HIGHWAY

Dan, George, Bobbi, Hass and Martian touch their temples in unison. EMTs jam hands over their ears, swat at imaginary insects, look up at the sky.

MARTIAN
You feel that?

GEORGE
It’s the rock. It’s calling out.

INT. AMBULANCE - CONTINUOUS

Parker sucks in a breath and rubs his left eye. The EMT across from him groans and rubs his temples.

PARKER
What the hell is that?

EXT. IN THE TALL GRASS - CONTINUOUS

The rock dips from red to black, then shines a sharp white.

INT. AMBULANCE - CONTINUOUS

The EMT sighs a little, then plops down in a seat.
PARKER
You all right?

EMT 1
A little dizzy. You?

Parker doesn’t reply. He is looking at Leevil’s right hand. From the wrist to the tip of the index finger, a tiny reef of red crystals sprouts through the skin.

Leevil’s head has been wrapped in gauze. The left side of the face beneath the bandages caves inward. The gauze grows red, not with liquid, but with tiny ruby solids.

PARKER
What. Can you. Something’s happening to this guy.

EMT 1
I don’t-

Leevil leaps from the gurney and grabs Parker by the throat.

THE AMBULANCE
stops abruptly and rocks back and forth. Then, silence.

A bandaged and crystal-laced arm, draped in an appropriated doctor’s coat, reaches out of the driver’s window and adjusts the mirror.

The ambulance roars to life, takes a side street, and pulls into a vacant lot separated from the accident scene by a row of fir trees, and the small hill with its thick crop of tall grass.

ON THE HIGHWAY
No one notices the ambulance’s detour. Emergency workers look at each other, a little dazed, trying to figure out the mental disturbance.

Hass climbs out of her stretcher.

HASS
Forget this. Maybe now Richard won’t think we’re so crazy.
DAN
Really? What will you say? See, Captain, it’s an evil tuning fork! Nobody’s going to believe you until they see it with their own eyes.

MARTIAN
Heh heh yeah welcome to my world.

Hass rounds on the four of them.

HASS
There’s good men and women about to be slaughtered up on that hill. And I’m one of five people in the world who knows it’s coming. I know it’s none of your problem. But I gotta do something about it.

She turns and walks across the road towards Lieutenant Meyers.

George fixates on the hill at the side of the road. He hears a tiny, almost imperceptible WHINE.

BOBBI
Dad? Are you all right?

FLASH
He is the Cosmic. The whine becomes the SCREECH of a handheld buzzsaw near his head.

BACK
He shakes his head. Bobbi studies him, alarmed.

GEORGE
The space rock is over there. It must have rolled when the car hit.

He points to the tall grass at the side of the highway.

BOBBI
How do you know that?

DAN
The same way he knows everything. He’s the Cosmic.

George leaps up, angry. Dan backs up.
GEORGE
She’s right. We’re sitting around doing nothing. Brenda’s dead. More people are about to die. Someone has to stop this thing.

BOBBI
Dad!

George stomps across the road and down the hill. Bobbi rolls her eyes and goes after him.

BOBBI (CONT’D)
Come on. Let’s go get him.

MARTIAN
Hey who made you queen of the crazy psychos?

DAN
I’m not a crazy psycho.

Protests aside, Martian and Dan follow her.

George stumbles down the incline and wades into

THE TALL GRASS

He begins to push aside the weeds. Bobbi, Dan, and Martian traipse in after him. Bobbi folds her arms.

BOBBI
Dad. I’m not playing along this time. Your meds are wearing off. This is a dangerous situation. You’re not the Cosmic. And you don’t know where this rock is-

George parts the grass in front of him, revealing the space rock. He stands up with it. Bobbi, Martian, and Dan stop short in surprise.

MARTIAN
Whoa. Wrong about that, lady.

George stares at the space rock. When he looks up, he is on an

ALIEN SAVANNAH

Deep blue sky, three moons. The tall grass covers George to his shoulders and extends to the horizon.
Brenda stands in front of him, smiling her patient smile.

**IN REALITY**

The others watch as George gapes at the imaginary landscape.

**GEORGE**

Brenda?

**DAN**

What’s wrong with him?

**BOBBI**

This happened to us before. We started seeing things. Dad!

The rock glows a dull red color. Bobbi’s face tightens with anxiety.

**BOBBI (CONT’D)**

Dad. Put it down. Right now.

**DAN**

I’ll go for help.

**MARTIAN**

George. Listen man. Why don’t you-

The rock SQUEALS. Bobbi, Martian, and Dan grab their ears and drop into the grass, writhing in pain.

George continues to stare, not seeing their distress.

**ALIEN SAVANNAH**

George stares at Brenda in the alien moonlight. She studies him curiously, like a bug.

**GEORGE**

Where are we, Brenda?

**BRENDA**

This organism modulates its networks continuously. The networks rule the meat.

Behind George, the grass parts. Two beady eyes. A metal blade WHIRRS and spins. It moves back into the grass when George turns around. He looks at Brenda with dawning horror.
GEORGE
You’re not Brenda. You’re the crystals. And all this is...

Something SNORTS heavily to his left. A tuft of blue and
green feathers pokes through the grass, wandering merrily at
a perpendicular. George’s breathing becomes more rapid.

BRENDA
It fights with its own chemical systems.

GEORGE
You’re stealing this from my fantasies. I wrote some of this.
Africa. It’s not real.

Brenda raises her eyebrows.

BRENDA
What does this mean – “real”?

George shakes his head, terrified. Brenda points a finger at
his chest.

BRENDA (CONT’D)
Is this organism “the Cosmic”?

George considers this carefully.

GEORGE
Yes.

BRENDA
Demonstrate.

Brenda stands aside. About two hundred feet behind her rises
a thick dark wood.

GEORGE
All right.

He slowly moves through the grass past Brenda. He reaches
behind his back and pulls the Cosmic mask over his head.

The forms of men in dark costumes rise from the grass behind
men, watching him.

He slips into the woods, and
IN REALITY

George slips between the rows of fir trees. The SQUEALING stops. Bobbi gasps with relief.

    BOBBI
    Dad.

IN THE ALIEN WOOD

George pushes through brambles and sharp branches. The horns of his mask snap twigs and gouge into tree trunks. He fights his way out of the trees and into a clearing.

It is instantly darkest night. The triple moonlight shines down on the stolen ambulance. From inside, light singing.

George shudders. He whispers fiercely:

    GEORGE
    I am the Cosmic. The Cosmic commands you.

No change. The wind howls through the trees behind him.

As if in a dream, George stumbles to the driver’s door and opens it as quietly as possible.

INT. AMBULANCE CAB - CONTINUOUS

He climbs into the driver’s seat and slumps down. Blood on the emergency brake.

The singing is clearer, emanating from the rear of the ambulance. The tune is Twinkle Twinkle Little Star, but the lyrics are inexplicably French:

    DR. LEEVIL (O.S.)
    Ah, vous dirai-je, Maman,
    Ce qui cause mon tourment.

Then a hissing sound, and a muffled yell.

George trembles terribly, dressed in full Cosmic garb but not acting it. He steels himself and pulls back the curtain to

THE REAR OF THE AMBULANCE

Parker and the EMT have been tied to the stretcher racks with Ace bandage wrap. Their mouths and noses have been covered. The EMT hangs limp. Parker roars into his bandages.
DR. LEEVIL

still in his appropriated Residence doctor’s coat, hunches over them. His face is shadowed, but half of it glows red, eaten away by the crystal bloom.

    DR. LEEVIL
    Papa veut que je raisonne,
    Comme une grande personne.

In one hand he holds a lit emergency flare, in the other, a hacksaw.

    DR. LEEVIL (CONT’D)
    Moi, je dis que les bonbons
    Valen mieux que la raison.

He shoves the flare in Parker’s face, igniting his hair.

GEORGE

leaps from the cab and SLAMS the rock down on Leevil’s head, knocking him down. The rock CRACKS down the center.

George reaches for a blanket to smother the flames, but Parker’s struggles abruptly stop. George cries out, horrified and enraged.

DR. LEEVIL

stares at the space rock.

    DR. LEEVIL
    Cosmic. Thank you. You brought my baby back to me.

He leaps for the rock, knocking George to the ground.

GEORGE

reaches for Parker’s leg and grabs his sidearm.

DR. LEEVIL

brings his hacksaw down on George’s forearm.

THE GUN

skitters across the ambulance.
GEORGE

punches Dr. Leevil in the face. The crystals cave a little, and blood leaks from the sides. The fire in Parker’s hair ignites the stretcher. Thick black smoke fills the space.

George heaves Leevil back into the rear doors, popping them open, flooding in daylight. Leevil squeals like an animal and lunges back, grabbing for the space rock.

DR. LEEVIL
Give it give it give it.

George pushes him off, and

THE SPACE ROCK

cracks in half.

Each man comes away with half a meteorite shell, the crystals inside SCREAMING.

GEORGE

holds his half-rock up like a shield, and the inner crystals shimmer green.

DR. LEEVIL

peers into his glowing red half-shell. He sticks his tongue into it. The rock crumbles to dust in his hand. His eyes blaze with red crystals.

LEEVIL
Tasty.

He grabs another flare and lights it.

LEEVIL (CONT’D)
Now for dessert.

BOBBI (O.S.)
Hey!

Leevil turns to face the voice.

BOBBI

stands outside the ambulance doors. She raises Parker’s gun and fires three times into Dr. Leevil.
Dr. Leevil tries to suck in air but it leaks audibly through the holes in his chest. He collapses to the floor and finally lays still.

Bobbi leaps into the ambulance. She drags George, no longer in Cosmic garb, out into the daylight.

EXT. VACANT LOT - REALITY - CONTINUOUS

George spills out of the ambulance and drops to all fours, coughing. He clutches the space rock. Bobbi throws the gun away. Martian and Dan hustle over to them.

DAN
Jesus. What happened in there?

Bobbi looks down at her father. Her usual stoicism is replaced with tearful rage. She swats him on the back.

MARTIAN
Hey hey now Bobbi-

BOBBI
Don’t say my name! You don’t know me! You’re not Martian!

GEORGE
Bobbi-

BOBBI
If I hadn’t picked up that gun-

CRUNCH. A noise from within the ambulance. They all look.

DR. LEEVIL’S BODY

jerks on the floor of the ambulance, leading with the sternum, as if something inside is trying to get out.

A flood of red crystals begins to ooze through the bullet holes in Leevil’s body.

BOBBI

slams the doors shut. She screams at the thing inside.

BOBBI
Stop it! Leave us alone! I killed you! You’re dead! You’re-
The doors fly apart. A long string of ruby crystals, like a serpent, four inches in diameter, twenty feet long, leaps out of the ambulance.

All four back off. The serpent dives straight at Bobbi.

GEORGE

tries to control his terror. He takes a deep breath.

GEORGE
Have to help Bobbi. You’re the Cosmic. Do it. Do it. Now!

George leaps between Bobbi and the serpent, holding the rock out in front of him.

GEORGE (CONT’D)
The Cosmic commands you!

The serpent freezes, shaking from head to tail.

George lunges forward with the rock. The serpent recoils and changes direction. It skitters through the fir trees.

Everyone looks at George in amazement.

MARTIAN
Far out, Cosmic.

DAN
It’s not possible.

BOBBI
You can’t. You can’t call on the powers of the Cosmic. You’re not the Cosmic.

GEORGE
I know. But I think...

He trails off, shakes his head, as if he can’t believe what he’s about to say, either.

BOBBI
You think what?

GEORGE
I think the rock thinks I’m the Cosmic.
THE CRYSTALLINE SERPENT

weaves its way across the highway, under vehicles, past legs. It slithers up the dark road to the Residence, past a full battery of police troopers and SWAT vans.

It passes a news van, in the middle of a live feed.

REPORTER
...from what we understand, Greg, four men holding as many as seventy people hostage...

The serpent winds through the leaves and darkness, unseen.

INT. RESIDENCE MAIN HALL - CONTINUOUS

Janix shoves Heather’s face to the window and screams into a radio.

JANIX
Please, gimme a reason to kill her! You call back in five minutes, or her head rolls out the door.

He smashes the radio to pieces against the floor.

BATTERY
Well, I guess they won’t call back now.

JANIX
Shut up!

BUTCHERBIRD
Hey! Knock it off.

Heather keeps it together remarkably, though tears stream from her eyes. She pleads with Butcherbird.

HEATHER
Please don’t let him kill me.

BUTCHERBIRD
You too, sweetheart.

Heather turns away, quietly sobbing.

ASSAULT
We’re screwed, James.
JANIX
Yeah, James, what’s the big plan now? No rock, no juice, no luck?

BUTCHERBIRD
Everything is under control.

BATTERY
Under control?

ASSAULT
Maybe we should start cutting a deal.

JANIX
No deal! I say we grab hostages and start-

Heather SCREAMS, a hysterical, sanity-destroying scream. The four Residents follow her trembling, pointing finger.

The crystalline serpent has knocked out a vent duct and is spilling into the hallway.

JANIX (CONT’D)
Holy mother of God.

Everyone backs away. Heather scoots backwards with her legs until she is prostrate against the wall.

The serpent slows and lifts its dorsal end three inches from the ground. It sings, the yawning glass tones of the space rock.

BUTCHERBIRD
It’s Leevil.

JANIX
What’s a leevil?

BUTCHERBIRD
It’s Tommy.

BATTERY
What? Are you losing it?

BUTCHERBIRD
Tommy. Look. It’s me.

Butcherbird stretches his hand out to it, as if coaxing a pet dog.

The head of the serpent drops to the floor. It slithers to Butcherbird and creeps up his leg.
Shards of crystal dig into his skin, darkening in color to greens and blues. Crystals spread across his face in a giant visor, and the snake’s head blooms into three dark plumes.

ASSAULT
Holy shit, James. You know who you look like?

JANIX
He looks like somebody?

ASSAULT
You never read The Cosmic?

JANIX
Do I look like a seven year old?

BATTERY
He’s the guy. The villain.

BUTCHERBIRD
I believe the name you are looking for is...Butcherbird?

Assault and Battery nod dumbly. Janix stares.

BUTCHERBIRD (CONT’D)
The Australian aborigines have a myth about a godling bird who stole the sun. Those crazy guys! Ha ha!

JANIX
What is this, James? You’re not-

James grabs Janix by the throat. Electricity sparks up from his hands into Janix’s eyes.

EXT. RESIDENCE MAIN HALL - CONTINUOUS

The lights in the building strobe and flash. The police tighten their fingers on their triggers. The news reporter flinches.

REPORTER
Something’s definitely happening inside the building, Greg.

INT. RESIDENCE MAIN HALL - CONTINUOUS

Crystals creep from Butcherbird’s hands into Janix’s eyes.
Battery runs. Butcherbird raises his hand, and Battery’s feet are swept out from under him by an invisible force.

Butcherbird drops Janix. He grabs Assault by the chest, and Battery by the ankle. Power flows from his hands to their bodies.

Heather screams and runs.

BATTERY

kicks free of Butcherbird’s grasp. He scratches the back of his hand, as if the most terrible itch has overcome him.

He SCREAMS IN PAIN as a foot-long crystal spike sprouts from the back of his left wrist.

      BATTERY
      Ah God! What’s happening? What’s happening?

Another spike rips through his right wrist. Now his eyes grow wide, as if he sees someone, some intruder in his mental space.

      BATTERY (CONT’D)
      Who are you? Whoooo aaaaahhr-

And then his screams change to triumphant, cackling laughter.

Red crystal ropes shoot from his upper back and head, and then fade to a clear, translucent glass.

ASSAULT

stands, not screaming, but ROARING. His muscles stretch taught, and crystals poke through his skin. He grows to a height of eight feet and a weight of almost six hundred pounds.

JANIX

is shredded from the inside out, eaten alive by an angry crystal swarm. Red blood and crystals grow brown, then black as night. A featureless, faceless human shape arises, with two burning ruby embers for eyes.

BUTCHERBIRD

laughs merrily.
BUTCHERBIRD
Let’s do some damage.

EXT. HIGHWAY 89 - CONTINUOUS

Lt. Meyers barks into his radio; Hass tries to command his attention.

MEYERS
That doesn’t help me, Sergeant. Describe a “flash”.

HASS
I’m telling you, Richard, pull back now. Hey, George!

She flags down George, who is stumbling up with the half-meteorite in hand, and Bobbi, Dan and Martian in tow.

GEORGE
You’ve got to get everyone out of there.

EXT. RESIDENCE - CONTINUOUS

A dozen cops take point as Battery emerges from the front door, crystal wires whipping the air.

COP ON BULLHORN
Hands over your head or we will open fire!

BATTERY
No problem! Hands up!

He juts his arms into the air, crystal razors extending upwards.

Lightning strikes the razors and leaps out at the police. Fifty assorted rifles and pistols are knocked aside.

ASSAULT
barrels out of the front door, tearing it from its hinges. He tosses it at the SWAT van. It tears through the side of the van like aluminum foil.
THE COPS

retreat as Battery advances. Two are unlucky enough to stumble. Battery grabs them and power surges from his hands.

He holds up two ash-covered, smoking uniforms.

BATTERY
Hey, buddy!

He tosses the larger uniform to Assault.

BATTERY (CONT’D)
It’ll be nice to be back in uniform!

A BATTERING RAM

heads straight for Assault. He leaps onto the front of it and twists the iron ram upwards.

POV CAMERA

The news team is still shooting as they flee the scene.

REPORTER
Are you getting this Greg? This isn’t like anything I’ve ever-

CAMERAMAN
Holy shit look at that!

The camera spins around and catches a flood of black crystals, like a giant amoeba, cutting off their retreat.

They swarm up into the shape of a man: Janix.

REPORTER
My God, Greg, I don’t, I can’t-

Janix unleashes two black crystal tentacles at the reporters, crushing the camera lens, leaving the microphone to record the screams.

BUTCHERBIRD

strolls out into the yard, enjoying the fray. Battery electrocutes officer after officer, Assault blocks bullets with a sheath of the battering ram’s armor.
Butcherbird plucks a crystal plume from his head. He drops it to the ground.

BUTCHERBIRD
It’s time, little seed. Grow for me.

He grinds the crystals into the dirt with his boot.

He closes his eyes and begins to hum, a combination of human vocal cords and the crystal resonance.

A CRYSTAL SPROUT
shoots five inches up from the ground.

A deep rumbling throughout the parking lot. The cops feel the ground tremble and hunker down, lie prone, or flee.

Five tunneling root runners tear through the earth. Where they travel, more sharp crystal plants sprout, some reaching as tall as eight feet high.

The crystal weeds stretch out and wrap around screaming victims.

EXT. HIGHWAY 89 - CONTINUOUS

Meyers screams into his radio.

MEYERS
No, no, no! I need SWAT in, blues out! What do you mean SWAT’s down? How can the whole SWAT be down?

Meyers leaps into an unmarked sedan and begins driving up the road to the Residence, screaming into his radio. Hass drags George over.

HASS
Richard, you gotta listen to this! Right now!

MEYERS
I don’t have time, Lynn!

HASS
Richard!

But Richard floors it, tearing up the drive to the Residence.
HASS (CONT’D)
Dammit! That thing better be able to help us, George. Or else-

DAN
Look!

The giant crystal weeds sprout along the edges of the road, heading towards the highway.

HASS
Richard!

ON THE DRIVE

Richard’s car is knocked onto its side by a sudden ten-foot sprout, and then the car is dragged under the ground.

ON HIGHWAY 89

The five tendrils spill out onto the highway, getting faster, larger. They crush several emergency workers. The crowd flees, screaming.

Bobbi tries to grab George, but he pulls away and stands his ground.

MARTIAN
Use the rock, George, do it George, do it!

George grimaces and leaps forward, holding the space rock out to the oncoming tendrils.

GEORGE
The Cosmic commands you!

The five tendrils instantly veer ninety degrees off course, repelled by George’s command, creating a crystal wall in front of him. The tendrils tear up the road and travel into the distance. SCREAMS and CRASHES.

New roots emerge from the crystal wall, reaching out and curling blindly like hungry worms. They push towards George, but slowly, grabbing, struggling, every motion an effort.

The crystals in the space rock begin to glow green. George gasps but holds it tightly.

GEORGE (CONT’D)
I am the Cosmic. You will heed me.
The buildings in the distance lose their lights. Power begins to fail across the town. The skyline is only visible in the dim glow of the moonlight.

The sounds of ACCIDENTS, SCREAMING, and DESTRUCTION.

The crystal wall surrounds the crash site, trapping them all. The roots reach further, only three feet from George.

And then, they stop.

The roots immediately in front of George collapse into shards, shattering against the ground, inanimate. The larger roots pull backwards, retreat a little.

HASS
Jesus Mary and Joseph.

MARTIAN
Yeah, you can say that again.

HASS
Nah, I think I’ll stick with once.

EXT. RESIDENCE - CONTINUOUS

Butcherbird frowns and opens his eyes.

BUTCHERBIRD
What happened?

ASSAULT
What do you mean? We won.

He indicates the parking lot: only the four of them have survived.

BUTCHERBIRD
No. It was supposed to grow without end. We had the world in our pockets. But something stopped it.

BATTERY
What?

Butcherbird scowls.

BUTCHERBIRD
Who do you think?
EXT. HIGHWAY 89 - CONTINUOUS

The surrounding crystal wall casts an eerie red sheen over the few survivors of the attack. George stands at the center of the circle, holding up the rock, keeping the crystals at bay. Hass grabs a terrified cop.

HASS
I’m taking command here. Call HQ. Get the National Guard, the DOD. We might need a nuclear weapon.

She gathers behind George with the others.

HASS (CONT’D)
George. Do you know what you’re doing?

GEORGE
I think so. It’s warm, but it doesn’t hurt. I just have to act like the Cosmic.

BOBBI
I don’t like this at all, Dad. You’re having a mental conversation with an alien rock.

MARTIAN
Hey George what does it want? Why’s it want to kill everybody?

GEORGE
I don’t think it “wants” anything. It’s just a crystal. Water doesn’t “want” to run downhill. It does because that’s a property of water.

BOBBI
If it’s just a crystal, how can it “think” you’re the Cosmic?

GEORGE
It doesn’t know how to grow. Maybe that’s how it adapts to its environment, by using animal hosts? It doesn’t know my...delusion...isn’t real. It’s just using it as a blueprint to grow itself.
DAN
Jesus. James and those guys thought they found some kind of magic rock. But it was just using them for food, like a tapeworm.

They regard the silent hilltop in disturbed silence for a moment. Then, a sound, steadily growing louder: BOOM, BOOM, BOOM.

BOBBI
What is that?

MARTIAN
I think we gonna find out yeah here it comes.

He points. Something from the driveway leaps into the air.

ASSAULT
lands inside the crystal ring, CRACKING the concrete with his feet.

HASS
Shoot to kill, boys! Heads up!

The few remaining cops open fire. Bullets lodge firmly into Assault’s skin. He GROWLS.

BATTERY
tears through the crystal circle with his wrist razors, spraying sparks, electrocuting the cops. Janix floods in behind him and engulfs another police officer. The gunfire stops; the cops are all dead.

BUTCHERBIRD (O.S.)
And now for the main course!

BUTCHERBIRD
surfs through the air on a hovering disc. A close look at the disc reveals that it is a garbage can lid. He calls down to George.

BUTCHERBIRD
George! I haven’t seen you since Shelley, man, what was that, fifteen years ago?
GEORGE
You’re not Butcherbird, James.

BUTCHERBIRD
James is out at the moment, George. What you see is what you get.

BOBBI
What do you want?

BUTCHERBIRD
George interrupted our regularly scheduled apocalypse. This will only take a moment. Kill him!

THE VILLAINS
advance on George. Janix slithers around George’s feet and roots him to the spot. Battery throws lightning at a police motorcycle, flipping it through the air into Assault’s grasp.

BOBBI
Dad!

Assault hurls the motorcycle at George’s head.

GEORGE

flinches and throws out his hand defensively.

A slight bump. George remains standing, alive, confused.

BOBBI

puts her hands to her mouth. Beside her, Martian smiles triumphantly.

BUTCHERBIRD

shakes his head in denial, his grin fading.

BUTCHERBIRD

It’s not possible.

GEORGE

holds the motorcycle upright over his head, handling a two-ton vehicle like a caught fly ball.
He laughs nervously and turns the motorcycle in his hand. There is a small space between his hand and the bike, as if the bike is caught in a magnetic field.

He looks down at the space rock. The crystals glow a powerful green, the green of the Cosmic. Wonder and serene confidence spread on George’s face.

ASSAULT

leaps, furious, at George, meaning to tear him apart.

GEORGE

SLAPS him across the chest with the motorcycle. Assault is tossed like a rag doll through the air. He collides with the crystal wall and shatters a wide hole in it.

George throws the motorcycle away and looks down at the black crystals swallowing his feet.

GEORGE

The Cosmic commands you!

He plunges his fist into Janix.

JANIX

emits a shrill SCREECH and withdraws in a circumference around him.

BATTERY

backs up involuntarily, fear shining in his eyes. He shouts and thrusts both razors at George. Lightning leaps out from him.

GEORGE

holds out the space rock, and the lightning crashes against it, like the sea against a strong rock.

Incredibly, George advances on Battery, driving the villain back against the crystal wall.
BUTCHERBIRD

has had enough. He sweeps along on his hovercraft and wrenches a speed limit sign from the ground. He soars towards George, wielding it like a scimitar.

MARTIAN

tries to intercept him, but Butcherbird brushes him aside easily.

    MARTIAN
    George! Look out!

GEORGE

looks up just in time. He ducks Butcherbird’s swing, grabs the sign, and cleaves the garbage can lid in half as it passes.

BUTCHERBIRD

screams as he flies through the air. Assault leaps out and catches him just before he hits the ground.

GEORGE

holds the signpost over his head. The space rock in his hand dissolves into a flood of green crystals. They swarm over his shoulders and form the Cosmic’s cape.

    GEORGE
    I am the Cosmic! You will heed me!

The villains leap at George, marshalling every power against him. George parries Battery’s blasts with the metal post, and knocks Assault down. Janix rises behind him in a tidal wave and is sliced neatly in half.

Butcherbird pulls some fancy pseudo-martial arts, until George lands a fist in his face, throwing him fifty feet.

BUTCHERBIRD

growls. He sights Bobbi amidst the chaos.

    BUTCHERBIRD
    I’ve forgotten all the best plans.
He holds his fist up, and his three henchmen hurry to his side. He whispers something to Janix.

BUTCHERBIRD (CONT’D)

Now!

JANIX

leaps forward at George, divides in half and passes him on both sides. He slithers right towards Bobbi.

GEORGE

Bobbi!

Janix rushes over Bobbi. He slithers back through the wall, carrying her with him.

BUTCHERBIRD

leaps onto Assault’s back, and the giant bounds back towards the Residence, followed by Battery.

GEORGE

ROARS and SMASHES through the crystal wall after the kidnappers. The road to the Residence is a tangle of crystal vines, and he must punch his way through.

SMASH. George groans. The crystals do not break so easily.

GEORGE

What? No! Don’t take it away from me! Please!

Janix outdistances him. He punches and punches, but his hands bleed, and the crystals will no longer shatter.

The Cosmic is gone. Only George remains.

GEORGE (CONT’D)

Bring it back! Bring it back! Bobbi!

George sinks to his knees in despair, gazing up the hill towards the distant and darkened Residence.

INT. RESIDENCE CAFETERIA - CONTINUOUS

The villains burst into the cafeteria. Janix spits Bobbi out onto the floor.
BUTCHERBIRD
Get everybody in here. Now.

ASSAULT, BATTERY, AND JANIX

tear through the Residence, herding the hostages to the

CAFETERIA

Butcherbird shines an emergency flashlight on his own face, creating a makeshift spotlight. Bobbi is tied to a chair next to him.

Janix oozes under everyone’s feet. They shudder and brush themselves hysterically. Dr. Ajir trembles in his wheelchair.

BUTCHERBIRD
Today is a group project day!
We’re building something very
special for some visitors who will
likely be arriving very soon!

Battery showers sparks across the heads of the crowd. They cry out and leap back.

BUTCHERBIRD (CONT’D)
Participation is mandatory.

Assault grabs Dr. Ajir by the throat and lifts. He plucks a shining crystal from his own skin.

BUTCHERBIRD (CONT’D)
To start, we’ll need each of you to
take your medicine.

Assault shoves the crystal into the open mouth of the screaming doctor.

EXT. RESIDENCE DRIVE - CONTINUOUS

Dan and Martian run up the drive. Hass lags behind. She sees Meyers’s car, half-sunk in the ground. His limp arm hangs out.

HASS
Richard. Why couldn’t you listen to me?

She reaches into the car and yanks out Meyers’s pistol. Martian and Dan run to George, who sits weeping.
MARTIAN
What happened, George?

HASS
Looks like he ran out of juice.

George CRIES OUT. Brenda approaches through the crystals. Only George appears to see her.

GEORGE
You. You took the Cosmic from me.

Martian puts his hand on George’s shoulder. George tears it away and grabs Dan by the throat.

DAN
Whoa whoa whoa! What did I do?

HASS
George!

GEORGE
You work for the Residence. They were sucking heroes dry with those machines.

HASS
George, this is your fantasy talking. It’s not real.

BRENDA
“Real” again. Very complex.

George spits at Brenda.

GEORGE
If you didn’t take it from me, what happened to the Cosmic?

BRENDA
Lack of proximity. Signal strength. No primary connections or symbiotic network.

MARTIAN
George George listen to me now you know what’s right what’s wrong.

Hass levels Meyers’s gun at George.
HASS
This alien jawbreaker decided to talk to you, George, so we need you with us. Do you want to get Bobbi back? Then get a grip, now!

George holds Dan for a long moment, then drops him to the ground. He shakes his head. Hass lowers the gun.

MARTIAN
You all right man? You shake some screws loose?

HASS
Is that thing still talking to you?

An odd, almost calculated pause.

GEORGE
It’s being...uncooperative. Apparently I don’t have a good enough connection. The Cosmic effects occurred because of my proximity to James and the others.

HASS
We’re gonna have a heck of a time getting that proximity back.

DAN
Are you kidding me? I’m not going near them. No offense, guys, but we need the cavalry.

HASS
No offense taken, Danny, but we are the cavalry.

GEORGE
Dan, do you smoke?

The same dead tone. Dan studies George.

DAN
Sure. Do you?

GEORGE
Can I borrow your lighter?

Dan looks to Hass. She shrugs. Dan digs out his lighter and hands it over, carefully.

GEORGE (CONT’D)
Anybody else want a smoke?
HASS
Those things’ll kill you.

Dan reaches for a cigarette pack, and Martian reaches to take one.

MARTIAN
They say those things’ll kill you, but I dunno, maybe it’ll be guys on flying garbage can lids.

While they are occupied, George kneels down and snaps a small crystal off of his crystal cape. He strikes the lighter and heats the crystal, which glows green. A low SQUEAL.

DAN
George, don’t!

George pushes the crystal shard into the bottom of his tongue.

A piercing SHRIEK. Martian, Hass, and Dan grab their ears.

George roars in pain. Flecks of green crawl across his eyes.

EXT. GRAY LAKES ASYLUM - MIDNIGHT

George opens his eyes. The crystals on his body are gone. He is dressed as the Cosmic, with the mask pushed back.

MARTIAN
George? You OK, man?

George looks Martian over. His jeans and T-shirt are gone, replaced with a silver jumpsuit and a set of red goggles.

Behind Martian, Dan wears a suit and white coat; Hass’s fire coat is more futuristic, complete with utility belt.

GEORGE
It’s back. The real world. Gray Lakes.

He looks up the hill. The crystal roots still swarm the countryside, but the Residence main hall has become a gothic manor house. Lightning lances the sky behind it.

HASS
What’s Gray Lakes, George?

GEORGE
They built the new asylum right over the old one.

(MORE)
George moves over to a crystal bloom and studies it. The others confer behind him; George takes no notice.

DAN (O.S.)
His delusion’s completely manifested again.

HASS (O.S.)
As long as that delusion approximates the real world, let him have it. We need the Cosmic.

GEORGE
Martian!

Martian is at his side without hesitation.

MARTIAN
Yeah yeah, George, right here.

GEORGE
You’ve fought well. But you can’t go in there. You won’t survive. Take these two and go back.

MARTIAN
What? No no George, we coming with you.

GEORGE

MARTIAN
You ain’t losing me, period. You ain’t shaking me off. I’m standing with you.

HASS
This is what I do for a living, George. I save people. I’m going in there, too.


DAN
Well, what am I, nuts? I’m not going back alone.
GEORGE
I’m sorry I suspected you, Dan. I know you weren’t part of the plot to steal my power. You’ve all shown extraordinary courage. If you must come, then let’s go.

He turns to the crystal roots that block their path.

GEORGE (CONT’D)
Heed me.

The crystals retreat, clearing the drive. George marches towards the looming asylum.

DAN
Are we doing a smart thing, here?

HASS
We’re gonna find out.

Hass, Dan, and Martian follow him. In a lightning flash, the asylum changes: it is the Residence main hall, half devoured by gray crystals.

AT THE ENTRANCE
waits a short, grinning bald man with a long white scarf and a runic mark on his forehead. His voice cracks with age.

HERMAN/NERITAS
Cosmic. We’ve been waiting for you.

DAN
Herman?

George stops for a moment, puzzled.

FLASHBACK
George remembers Herman, a peevish Resident, from the common room group meeting.

HERMAN
The water quality here is terrible!

PRESENT
As Herman smiles, he reveals a diamond embedded in his tongue. George shakes his head.
GEORGE
This man is Neritas, Dan. A sorcerer. Powerless without his books, though, so I suppose Butcherbird made him the doorman.

Herman hisses at George furiously.

HERMAN/NERITAS
I’ll have my power back soon enough, Cosmic. You won’t get your daughter back so easily.

George leaps out and grabs Herman by the throat.

DAN
George, don’t!

HASS
Easy, Cosmic. He’s not what you’re after. We have to save Bobbi. Let’s get moving.

George tosses Herman to the ground. He pushes open the massive mahogany doors and steps into Gray Lakes. Dan and Hass follow, with Martian bringing up the rear.

MARTIAN
I guess I’ll catch you next group therapy, Herman, if you’re not still being a sorcerer.

INT. THE ASYLUM - CONTINUOUS

The common room is covered with obscene fingerpainting. Stark metal walls, leaking pipes, insects, rats. Echoing GROANS, LAUGHTER, and SCREAMS.

DAN
They’re turning everyone in the place into a supervillain.

HASS
It’s like Frankenstein goes to kindergarten. They built their own asylum.

George leads the group carefully through the

HALLWAYS

Long, barren corridors, many blocked with chairs and couches.
GEORGE
They’ve moved things. Walls, furniture. To make a labyrinth.

MARTIAN
Probably to confuse us, you know, psychological warfare. I got lots of psychologies to fight with.

CLICK. A voice speaks from a cobweb-covered speaker on the ceiling.

BUTCHERBIRD (O.S.)
Attention, patrons. The library will be closing in three minutes.

Behind them slithers a silent wave of black tar. It passes out of sight just before they turn to look.

BUTCHERBIRD (O.S.) (CONT’D)
If you do not vacate the premises by then, you may not be able to check out with all of your...items.

FLASH of electric power in the hallway ahead. George runs towards the source. Battery’s unmistakable CACKLE.

MARTIAN
Wait up, George!

ASSAULT

tears through the wall. He grabs Martian under one arm and Hass under the other.

DAN

George!

JANIX

pours out of the hole and engulfs Dan. A river of tar drags the screaming Dan down the hallway.

GEORGE

tries to keep up, but Janix loses him in the maze of hallways. He is alone, racing through the labyrinth.
George rips a door off of its hinges and marches into

THE FRONT OFFICE

The room is empty except for a makeshift puppet show booth. Green and red socks with black marker eyes hit each other.

BUTCHERBIRD (O.S.)
I am the Cosmic! Heed me! No!
You will! I won’t! Arrgh!

George tears the booth away. Butcherbird hides the socks behind his back.

BUTCHERBIRD (CONT’D)
Not a fan of fine art, huh?

His appearance and demeanor have changed from cartoon caricature to believable sociopath. His suit is plainer, his visor replaced by tinted bifocals, his plumes by braided feathers. Jack Nicholson has been replaced by Heath Ledger.

GEORGE
Enough of this nonsense, Butcherbird. Where’s Bobbi?

Butcherbird laughs in disbelief.

BUTCHERBIRD
You really believe this is all happening. Don’t get me wrong, I love being here, being this guy. Hell, you should see what happened to Hendricks. But you really think you’re the Cosmic.

George is taken aback slightly, then shakes it off.

GEORGE
I don’t know what you’re talking about. I know you’ve used an alien crystal to take over Gray Lakes. And you have my daughter.

Butcherbird smiles and mulls this over.
BUTCHERBIRD
OK. Sure. We’ll play it your way. I have an alien crystal! The inmates are running the asylum!

GEORGE
What do you want?

BUTCHERBIRD
I want your power, George. It’s trapping the crystal’s power.

GEORGE
You can’t have the Cosmic power.

BUTCHERBIRD
Then tag. You’re it.

He pulls out a long-barreled pistol and SHOOTS George. George falls to the ground, bruised but not hurt badly. Butcherbird runs out of the room. George leaps to his feet and follows Butcherbird into

THE DARK CORRIDORS

Butcherbird disappears up ahead. His voice echoes over the PA system.

BUTCHERBIRD (O.S.)
Happy Halloween, George. We’ve made a little haunted house for you. Hope you like it.

Two ANCIENT VAMPIRES leap out at George, biting. George slams them into the wall, knocking them unconscious.

George pushes through a velour curtain into a

LABORATORY

Bottles of foul liquids, a Jacob’s ladder. Men strapped to experimenting tables.

Two strong men in ski masks, one with a chainsaw, the other with a sledgehammer, attack. George destroys both weapons and leaves the toughs unconscious.

Dr. Ajir sits in the corner, his back to George.

GEORGE
Doctor...?
Dr. Ajir wheels himself around. Dr. Leevil’s tumor has sprouted on his face. He glides along in a hoverchair with robotic buzzsaw arms.

Dr. Ajir/Leevil points up at the ceiling. It is covered in alien crystals.

DR. AJIR/LEEVL
Don’t listen to the song, Cosmic.
Makes your mind play tricks.

George charges at Leevil, who slips through a black door. George follows into

A HALL OF CELLS
Arms reach through the bars, clutching him.

On one side, sweaty gangsters in wife beaters. No color, a grainy black and white movie.

On the other side, in another world, mutants, black and glistening skin, sharp teeth and many eyes.

SNOWY PETE, a loudly dressed albino hitman, rounds the corner with a double barrelled shotgun.

BLAM! George ducks the first shot. BLAM! He runs up the wall, flips over, and CRASHES through the floor into the

COMMON ROOM
The furniture has been tossed aside, creating a haphazard arena.

A WITCH QUEEN shrieks out a war cry. She rides on the back of a HUMAN SLAVE, tall, athletic build, with a thick cage on his head. An ARMY OF SHAMANS attack.

George plows asunder every one of them with unmatchable strength. He swats the Witch Queen to the ground.

George snaps the neck of the Human Slave. CRACK. The Slave slumps to the floor, dead. The cage falls off his head.

It is Hero. His face is frozen in a look of complete astonishment.
FLASHBACK

Hero, locking in the isolation wing, clad in his casual day wear from the Residence.

PRESENT

George shudders. The crystals embedded in the ceiling SING a quiet, yawning sine wave.

George catches sight of the unconscious Witch Queen: it is Heather. On the floor next to her lies his discarded copy of *The Cosmic*.

Butcherbird speaks over the PA system.

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BUTCHERBIRD
Are you getting confused, George?
Are the crystals singing to you?
There’s too many lies in your head
to keep straight.
```

A lit doorway. George walks into the light like a dreaming man. The hallway becomes a

HOSPITAL WING

George is no longer dressed as the Cosmic. Doctors and nurses walk by him, not noticing. He enters a

HOSPITAL ROOM

Shelley, George’s wife, cradles a newborn infant. Brenda stands over her, smiling.

```
GEORGE
How did I get here? Why are you showing me this?
```

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BRENDA
The organism has conflicting memory paths. Inefficient.
```

```
SHELLEY
Did you take your medicine, George?
```

George nods silently.

```
GEORGE
Is she all right?
```
SHELLEY
She’s fine, George. Babies cry. Babies go through lots of stuff. Here. Come hold your daughter.

She holds the baby out to him; he shrinks back.

GEORGE
I can’t.

SHELLEY
You can. You’re her father. You’re not going to break her.

GEORGE
I’ll drop her. I’ll crush her.

SHELLEY
You’ll do no such thing.

George studies the baby as he would an exotic reptile.

SHELLEY (CONT’D)
I can’t do this alone, George. Please. Hold her.

George carefully takes the baby in his arms, terrified of the tiny thing. He sits in a chair.

BRENDA
This is disorder. This is not the way of things.

George looks up. It is

NIGHT

Brenda is gone, so is the baby in his arms. Shelley lies in the bed, gaunt, unconscious.

A ECG monitor BEEPS.

GEORGE
Shelley? Babe?

The monitor flatlines. BEEEEEEEEEEP.

Nurses and a doctor burst into the room. They push past George.

GEORGE (CONT’D)
Shelley?
The IV in her arm changes. It is the cable of a Horror Machine. The bed becomes a metal coffin.

A doctor grins at George. It is the original Dr. Leevil.

GEORGE (CONT’D)
No.

George stands. The floor is blacktop. It rains in the room. The hospital staff are now enemies: Judge Claw, Nothingface.

BOBBI
Dad!

He turns and finds himself in a

CREMATORIUM

Bobbi, now 15, dressed in black, yells at him.

An open furnace. A man in a suit, head down. People in an adjacent room, looking.

BOBBI
Dad! We’re not allowed back here! Please come back to me!

A metal coffin slides towards the fire.

GEORGE
We have to rescue her! It’s not too late! Do you understand?

BOBBI
Stop it stop it stop it!

GEORGE
It just takes some courage! We’ll save her together, you and I!

BOBBI
Dad, please! You have to take your medicine!

The coffin rolls into the flames.

GEORGE
I am the Cosmic! The Cosmic commands you!

The man in the suit shuts the door to the furnace and strides quickly down a hallway. George leaps after him.
The hallway twists, and the man vanishes. George keeps running.

BOBBI

once again an adult, steps out at the end of the hall. She stares at him, terrified.

GEORGE

Take your medicine. Take your medicine. That’s all you ever wanted. You put me in here! You took the Cosmic from me!

BUTCHERBIRD

tells George. He puts his pistol to her temple. George freezes.

BUTCHERBIRD

Now you’re talking George. She put you in here. She took the Cosmic. She’s the enemy.

BUTCHERBIRD (CONT’D)

Shoot her.

GEORGE

is aghast. He lifts the gun and aims at Butcherbird.

BUTCHERBIRD

Come on, George. You know you’re not gonna shoot me. I’m your whole reason for living. Come here.

BUTCHERBIRD drags Bobbi by the hair. George follows him.

CAFETERIA

A new Horror Machine, twenty feet tall, rises within the cafeteria. Battery touches his razors to its base, and the cables writhe. Assault stands next to him, and Dr. Ajir/Leevil studies his masterpiece from his hoverchair.

AJIR/LEEVL

It’s finished. Let’s eat it.
BUTCHERBIRD
We did what we could on such short notice. Plus, we had company.

He indicates Martian, Hass, and Dan, strapped to the sides of the Machine with duct tape.

Butcherbird tosses Bobbi back to Assault, away from George.

BUTCHERBIRD (CONT’D)
So here we are again, George. Give me your power, or I kill everyone who means anything to you.

George levels the gun at him, shaking.

BUTCHERBIRD (CONT’D)
Put the gun down. Shooting me would bring your whole storybook world crashing down. You may as well give it to me, if you’re just going to throw it away.

George doesn’t lower the gun, but he seems more confused than ever. Butcherbird walks right up to him and pushes the gun to his own forehead.

BUTCHERBIRD (CONT’D)
Shoot me, then. Let’s see you do it. Let’s see you destroy the Cosmic. Go back to being George Liddell. Do it. Shoot me!

GEORGE

looks Butcherbird in the eye for a long moment. He steadies himself, then squeezes the trigger.

BRENDA

grabs his hand, stopping the gun from discharging into Butcherbird’s brain. She is furious.

GEORGE

pulls the gun away from her.

BUTCHERBIRD
Thank you, Brenda. I got you wrong, George. Hard core.
George aims the gun at Brenda.

GEORGE
Get away from me!

BRENDA
Unstable! Fractured modelling process!

GEORGE
Stop it! Get out of my head!

He shoots Brenda. She disintegrates into colorful particles.

REALITY returns. The Horror Machine still stands, but as a crude sculpture of boxes, trays, and extension cords. Crystals infest it and sprout out of its top in black ropes.

The supervillains are mere men crawling with alien crystals. Butcherbird peers at George sadly through crystal lenses.

BUTCHERBIRD
I’m very disappointed that this didn’t work out, George.

Janix bursts through the floor behind George.

BOBBI
Dad!

GEORGE
The Cosmic com-

Black crystals cover George’s mouth and nose, preventing him from speaking or drawing breath.

GEORGE
grabs hold of a table. He tosses it with deadly speed at

ASSAULT

who leaps away, losing hold of Bobbi. The table crashes through the bottom of the Horror Machine, freeing

MARTIAN

who quickly unties Dan and Hass.
MARTIAN
Let’s go let’s do this thing!

He leaps onto Assault’s chest, knocking him over.

BUTCHERBIRD
rounds angrily on his troops.

BUTCHERBIRD
Are you people totally incompetent?

George tears an arm free and aims the gun at Butcherbird.

BUTCHERBIRD (CONT’D)
Oh, shit!

A crystal pseudopod yanks his arm up just in time, and the shot goes wild. George throws the gun to

HASS
and she puts two bullets into Assault as Martian leaps clear. Assault gets to his feet against the force of the bullets.

HASS
Jesus Mary and Joseph stay down!

DAN
finds himself face to face with Battery, crystalline razors crackling with electricity.

BATTERY
Ever piss on the third rail, Danny boy?

Dan sees a janitor’s mop and bucket and seizes it. He tosses the bucket of water at Battery, drenching him.

Battery is soaked and extremely pissed, but unharmed.

DAN
Shit, George! That always works in the comics!

Dan flees the cafeteria into the dark corridors, limping on his bad leg. Battery stalks after him.
DR. AJIR

glides over to Bobbi. In reality, his hoverchair is simply his wheelchair with the wheels bent and covered in sharp crystals. Bobbi grabs a folded chair to defend herself.

DR. AJIR/LEEVIL
Lost little pussycat? There’s more than one way to...well, you know.

The wheels begin to spin, the edges razor-sharp with crystals.

GEORGE

pulls at Janix like taffy. Butcherbird walks up to George and safely punches him in the nose.

BUTCHERBIRD
Keep his eyes uncovered. I want him to watch his daughter turn inside out.

George leaps forward. Butcherbird leaps out of the way; George and Janix plow through the wall into the

KITCHEN

Racks of pots and pans clatter to the ground. Janix oozes into every corner. George gropes blindly for escape.

Butcherbird strolls in through the hole, pleased.

ISOLATION WING

Dan pulls down the iron panel, sealing himself in the isolation wing.

A burst of electricity tears it in half.

BATTERY
You’re running out of hiding places, Danny!

Dan rounds a corner. He stops by an isolation room.

DAN
Please. Please.

He unlocks the door and scrambles in, leaving it open.
Battery sees the open door and peeks merrily into the

ISOLATION ROOM

Dan jams his key into a rear door. Its sign reads OBSERVATION.

BATTERY
Heeeeere’s Bat-tray!

Dan throws himself through the door and shuts it. Click.

BATTERY (CONT’D)
Still haven’t learned, huh Danny?
Doors. Don’t. Stop me!

Battery fires a torrent of current at the door. The white walls and the door blacken, but the door remains in place.

BATTERY (CONT’D)
What...?

DAN
tears through the observation room and out into the hallway.
He gets behind Battery to the room’s front door.

BATTERY

touches the blackened wall, confused. The entire room is covered in white foam padding – he has walked into, in colloquial terms, a rubber room.

The door begins to swing shut.

BATTERY

No!

FROM THE HALLWAY

Dan shuts the door as Battery leaps against it. A quick shoving match, and Dan locks Battery inside the room.

IN THE RUBBER ROOM

Battery falls on his butt and showers the room with sparks.

BATTERY

Dan!
MARTIAN AND HASS

continue to double team Assault. Martian runs quick rings around him. Hass checks her ammo: one more bullet.

HASS
There’s got to be a soft spot.

Assault picks up a table and raises it above Martian’s head.

HASS (CONT’D)
Hey Jerry!

Assault stops and looks at Hass, pained.

HASS (CONT’D)
Yeah, that’s your name, isn’t it?

ASSAULT
They call me Assault. Wanna see why?

HASS
They call you Jerry, as in Tom and Jerry, like the little mouse. Like the little man you are.

Assault roars in anger and charges Hass. Martian rolls over weakly, trying to stand.

MARTIAN
Hey no no whatchoo doing?

HASS
Come on Jerry, show me your stuff!

Assault ROARS. The crystal in his mouth gleams.

Hass smiles and takes aim, solid as rock. She FIRES once into Assault’s open mouth. The crystal shatters.

A small spray of blood. Assault falls over, then stands. He begins to trash the room, moving violently and purposelessly, like a headless chicken. Martian and Hass dive for cover.

BOBBI

holds the chair out against Dr. Ajir/Leevil’s spinning blades. The sharp crystals catch on the chair and knock her down.
DR. AJIR/LEEVIL
Happy endings always make me cry.
Say something poignant. Funny.
Like a real comic book victim.

Ajir/Leevil hovers closer, aiming the blades for her throat.

BOBBI
All right. Doctor, I’ve decided to withdraw my father from your care facility.

She jams the legs of the chair between the spinning blades.

DR. AJIR/LEEVIL
yelps in surprise as his hoverchair tips over backwards. He lands on his back. The whirring mass of crystal blades spins down on top of him.

He SCREAMS.

BOBBI
looks away. CRUNCH, and the doctor stops screaming.

IN THE KITCHEN
George struggles in Janix’s grip. The crystals are turning back into tar.

Butcherbird’s crystals have disappeared, once again fully flesh-and-blood. He turns up a gas burner on a stove and lights a cigarette off of it.

BUTCHERBIRD
Don’t die yet, George. There’s so much pain in this place you have yet to experience.

He pushes the burning cigarette into George’s hand, SIZZLING his flesh. George grabs Butcherbird’s sleeve. A long strip of material tears away.

BUTCHERBIRD (CONT’D)
Dammit, George. That was my good shirt. Ah, who am I kidding? That was my only shirt.

George whips the strip of cloth around, slapping Butcherbird’s ankles.
BUTCHERBIRD (CONT’D)

Whoa, easy, killer. Who knows how much damage a strip of cloth could-

George swings one more time for his target - the stove burner.

The sleeve ignites. The cigarette falls from Butcherbird’s mouth.

BUTCHERBIRD (CONT’D)

Oh-

George whips the flaming sleeve back onto Janix’s tar.

Janix erupts into flame. The tar SQUEALS and sloshes around the room like a living grease fire. George tears his way out of the flaming mass, and collapses, gasping, to the floor.

IN THE CAFETERIA

Bobbi, Hass, and Martian back away from the hole in the wall as the real-world crystalline Janix pours out of it.

The inflammable crystals that make up the real Janix do not burn - however, they change from black to red as the hallucinatory fire spreads, becoming brittle, shattering.

The black crystal mass breaks into pieces and lies still.

BUTCHERBIRD

runs through the hole in the wall. He scoops up a black crystal shard from the floor and grabs

BOBBI

and holds the sharp edge to her throat.

MARTIAN

Bobbi!

HASS

levels her gun at him. Butcherbird studies her face.

BUTCHERBIRD

You’re out of bullets. Bad poker face. Hey Dan!
DAN enters, out of breath. When Butcherbird turns to face him, 

MARTIAN sneaks up beside Butcherbird and grabs his arm. 

Bobbi kicks her captor in the shin and squeezes out of his grip. 

BUTCHERBIRD kicks Bobbi in the stomach, sending her sprawling. He wrestles Martian for the crystal blade. 

BUTCHERBIRD You wouldn’t stab a man with glasses, would you? 

He drives the crystal downwards into Martian. 

BOBBI No! 

Butcherbird stabs him twice more in the belly. 

BUTCHERBIRD Bye, Martian. 

Martian drops to the floor. Butcherbird glowers down at him, and then 

GEORGE grabs him from behind. Butcherbird flies into a furious rage, stabbing, cursing, punching, biting. 

George lifts Butcherbird bodily and slams his spine against his knee. CRUNCH. 

BUTCHERBIRD drops to the ground, gasping, unable to vocalize his pain. He writhes, but his lower body doesn’t move.
GEORGE AND BOBBI

drop to Martian’s side, teary-eyed. Bobbi holds Martian’s head.

MARTIAN
Iss not.

BOBBI
Shh. Don’t talk.

Martian reaches out and grabs George’s hand.

MARTIAN
I’m gonna talk when I like it. You a hero, George. You made me one, too.

A tear falls from George’s eye.

GEORGE
No. You made me a hero.

MARTIAN
Thass crazy talk. I’m crazy but I ain’t.

And he dies.

GEORGE
No. No. No.

BOBBI
Dad. Dad, it’s all right. It’ll be all right.

And then, from behind them, a hoarse whisper:

BUTCHERBIRD
Re-evaluation. Major nodes.

BUTCHERBIRD
rolls his head from side to side. His eyes blaze. The crystal in his tongue gleams. George screams at him.

GEORGE
Why don’t you die?

BOBBI
Dad, no!
HASS
He’s gone, George. That’s the rock talking.

BUTCHERBIRD
Loss of circuits. But. There are alternatives.

He gazes towards

THE HORROR MACHINE

On its side, a spoon sticks out of a cardboard box, like a dial. Written in marker are the words ON and OFF.

The spoon moves by itself and points to ON.

The crystal wires dangling from the Machine leap into the air and reach out and grab

GEORGE

and drive him to the ground.

BOBBI
Dad!

More crystal cables embed themselves in him.

BUTCHERBIRD

is lifted to his feet by cables. They dig into his body.

His crystal outfit blossoms into a green cape and bull-head with feathers and horns: a Cosmic/Butcherbird hybrid.

BUTCHERBIRD
An interesting evolutionary dysfunction. Corrections are necessary for stability.

And then, in the same deathly whisper:

BUTCHERBIRD (CONT’D)
The Cosmic commands you.

HASS, DAN, AND BOBBI

are thrown backwards. George stays where he is, weighted down by a half-ton of cables.
DAN
Now what?

HASS
Now we’re in deep trouble.

BUTCHERBIRD
nods towards George. The cables pick him up so that he can speak face-to-face with Butcherbird.

BUTCHERBIRD
I did it George. I took the Cosmic. It’s beautiful. Networks at capacity. Shutting down inefficiencies. Heed me!

IN THE ISOLATION ROOM
Battery screams in pain as his wrist razors and wires dissolve into chunks of crystal.

THROUGHOUT THE RESIDENCE
Villains CRY OUT in pain. Crystals leak from their bodies. They become Residents again, ordinary men.

IN THE CAFETERIA
Butcherbird smiles, revelling.

GEORGE
What are you doing?

BUTCHERBIRD
I renounce chaos. I will have order. The power of the Cosmic will cleanse this planet. The crystals will spread peace.

GEORGE
Spread peace?

BUTCHERBIRD
Yes. Peace like a plague.
EXT. RESIDENCE - CONTINUOUS

The crystal roots begin to move and squirm. They advance again, growing towards the city, gaining momentum.

INT. CAFETERIA - CONTINUOUS

Butcherbird lolls in satisfaction. The crystal embedded in his tongue shines brightly.

George sticks out his own tongue and touches it. His crystal gleams as well.

GEORGE
We’re doing this together, aren’t we.

BUTCHERBIRD
We are the Cosmic, George. Refraction. We are gods.

George catches sight of Bobbi, crushed against the wall.

BOBBI
Help, anyone! Help us!

George struggles with the cables, but he can barely move.

BUTCHERBIRD
You can’t fight me, organism. I control the Cosmic. I control the crystals. I am the crystals. There’s nothing you can do.

George’s mouth draws into a hard line.

GEORGE
Yes there is. I’m the only reason you even exist.

He reaches into his mouth and grabs the crystal in his tongue.

THE HORROR MACHINE

begins to GROAN, unstable. The crystals change their color from green to white.

BUTCHERBIRD
What are you doing? Stop.
GEORGE
pulls as hard as he can and rips the embedded crystal out of his tongue.

BUTCHERBIRD
SHRIEKS, the cry of the alien rock.

GEORGE
CRIES OUT as well, partially in pain, partially in triumph. He looks down at the tiny, bloody crystal.

BOBBI
is freed from the invisible force.

BOBBI
Dad!
She runs to George’s side and tries to pull the cables out of him.

BUTCHERBIRD
Stop this. I am the Cosmic. You will heed me.
The cables carry Butcherbird across the room to Bobbi, and he strikes her across the face. She punches him back.

HASS AND DAN
run to the base of the Horror Machine and begin tearing pieces off of it.

BUTCHERBIRD
becomes frantic, sensing a sudden total loss of control.

BUTCHERBIRD
I am the Cosmic! You will heed me or die! I will kill you all!
George lunges out, covered in cables, and grabs him by the throat. Bobbi leaps on his back, pulling him to the ground.
THE HORROR MACHINE
groans and topples to the cafeteria floor. Its cables writhe in the air aimlessly.

GEORGE
grips Butcherbird’s neck and squeezes as hard as he can. Hass and Dan run over and hold Butcherbird down.

BUTCHERBIRD
These organisms are faulty! They will all die! We are the C-

George reaches into Butcherbird’s mouth and grabs his tongue.
Butcherbird’s eyes grow huge as he realizes what George is about to do.
George rips the crystal out of Butcherbird’s tongue.

THE CRYSTALS
SCREAM throughout the entire Residence. The light within them fades. The crystals crack and shatter.

OUTSIDE THE RESIDENCE
the crystal roots lose their shape and fall to pieces.

BUTCHERBIRD
falls to the ground, a look of surprise on his face, dead.

GEORGE
holds aloft the bloody crystal as the light dies in it. Crystal ropes hang limply from his back.
He SCREAMS to heaven, and then his screams become weeping.
Bobbi holds him, and then she begins to slump.
George grabs her, and, as she faints, somehow finds the strength to pick her up.
INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - REALITY - NIGHT

Bobbi wakes in a hospital bed with a feverish start. An IV in her arm. George rises from a nearby chair and holds her.

BOBBI
How long was I out?

GEORGE
A couple of hours. They sedated you. It’s all right. It’s over.

Bobbi bursts into tears and hugs her father tightly. He kisses her gently, and eases her back into her bed.

GEORGE (CONT’D)
You need to rest. There are government agents waiting to ask us a million questions.

BOBBI
Don’t leave Dad.

Her speech is slurry, drugged. George closes her eyes.

GEORGE
I won’t leave, Bobbi, I promise. I’m staying right here with you. I’m going to take care of you.

Bobbi rolls over and sighs.

BOBBI
The whole thing. It doesn’t seem real. How could it be real?

She sleeps.

George shudders a little. He reaches into his pocket and withdraws a bottle of pills.

He picks out one pill.

GEORGE
I saved her. I was a hero. This happened. This was real.

He stares at the pill for a long time.

He swallows it.

FADE TO BLACK.