

The Cosmic
by Pete Barry

415 S. Watson St.
Easton, PA 18045
(201) 344-0221
petebarry27@hotmail.com
WGA#I203963

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.

BUTCHERBIRD

Hey, George, I think this thing is looking to suck us both dry. Let's run. Live to fight another day. Just like always.

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 latch 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 putt'n 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
batter!

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.

EXT. STABLE

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.

Total darkness. Breathing. Bobbi's soft shhh, shhh.

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?

The harsh SWISH of drawn blinds. More light. Dan on a bed, peering out a window. Bobbi behind him, arms folded.

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 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 unearths 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

Jumbled images. Black pebbles moving, smothering an animal. Lightning flashes. Men missing teeth, laughing.

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

Dammit. Run. Run.

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.

HASS

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-

WHEEEEEEEET. 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.

FANTASY CITY - HIGHWAY 89 - NIGHT

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!

REALITY - HIGHWAY 89 - DAY

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 him, 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
 Valent 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 aaaahhr-

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 kidnapers. 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 (CONT'D)
 You can't cover up that kind of
 evil. Now the inmates have taken
 over.

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
 I've lost too much to these men.
 My memory. My powers. My wife.
 Maybe Bobbi. I won't lose more
 innocent lives.

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.

Pause. Martian and Hass look at Dan.

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.

BUTCHERBIRD (O.S.)

Last chance to leave, George. You don't really want to see all the horrors we've cooked up in here, do you? You do? All right, come on in!

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/LEEVIIL

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 unmatched 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.

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?

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. BEEEEEEEEEEEEEP.

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

steps into the hall and grabs her by the face. 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 puts the gun in George's hand.

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/LEEVI

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/LEEVI
 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/LEEVI

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.