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OUT OF THE FOG APPEARS -

A quaint Northern Californian town bordering the Pacific Hills and Mountains form a horseshoe enclosing the north, south and east with the ocean to the west. The town itself is built into a heavily wooded area, with farms and vineyards sweeping the land around it.

WE MOVE over a redwood covered peninsula, settling on the ABANDONED SHADOW VALLEY MINE.

SUPER: SHADOW VALLEY, CALIFORNIA - 6 Days ago

EXT. SHADOW VALLEY PENINSULA - NIGHT

A pair of headlights creep up a twisted dirt road between towering spectral redwoods. They lead a rust beaten SUV with the emblem of the SHADOW VALLEY SHERIFF on the door.

A DEER leaps from the trees and FREEZES in the headlights. The truck SCREECHES to a halt inches from its nose. The deer doesn't budge. The LIGHTS FLICK OFF and the engine quiets.

The deer bounds away.

SHERIFF MILLS, (50's) exits the car and strikes the beam on a powerful emergency light. He looks out of place exiting the vehicle without uniform. He wears a tidy middle income outfit topped by a tacky tweed dinner jacket. He carries a bouquet of lilies down the narrow path.

EXT. SHADOW VALLEY PENINSULA - SECURITY FENCE - NIGHT

Mills makes his way along the rim of a tall security fence crowned with barbed wire. He stops at a white marble MONUMENT overgrown with brush.

Mills trims the foliage away revealing the graven image of a MINER, helmet in hand - Pick ax resting on his shoulder. At his feet is a BRASS PLAQUE MEMORIAL with an inscription. (We'll come back to it). Mills leaves the bundle of lilies.

An imposing gate marks the fence near the monument. Mills undoes several pad locks and exits through.

EXT. SHADOW VALLEY PENINSULA - MOUTH OF THE MINE - NIGHT

The entrance to the ABANDONED SHADOW VALLEY MINE rises out of the ground like the gaping mouth of Jonah's Whale. It's heavily boarded - barring any entrance.

Mills takes a long hard look at the menacing sight, then turns back to leave.

EXT. SHADOW VALLEY PENINSULA - SECURITY FENCE - NIGHT

Mills passes by the Monument on his way back to the truck. We close in on the brass plaque and read the inscription. "THIRTEEN REMEMBERED." Thirteen names are listed one after the other. WE CLOSE ON the last name: JAMESON MILLS.

EXT. TOWN HALL - BANQUET ROOM - NIGHT

Several well dressed Shadow Valleyans file through under a taugh cotton banner which reads: SHERIFF MILLS FOR MAYOR!

A pretty young Woman sits at a collection table near the door. The citizens hand out heavy wads of cash and drop them into a collection box in exchange for a ticket to the dinner.

INT. TOWN HALL - KITCHEN - NIGHT

The Kitchen is a maze of aluminum counter tops and over hanging pots.

JACK TAYLOR (10) is a sharp kid with All American looks and a all American smile. He's one who suffers the nine months of school for three months of adventure.

He and his fellow BOY SCOUTS are the servers for the evening. They wear Scout SCARVES over white collars and black slacks.

Jack focuses - balancing a tray carrying four full glasses of water. The tray is dry. Keeping it that way is a challenge.

GLASS BREAKS! -

HOSTESS JUNE BLANCHE (Older than God) is the head of staff for the evening. She's a spindly stork in heels with bad teeth.

HOSTESS JUNE

Taylor!

She stilts over his way.

HOSTESS JUNE

How many times do I have to tell you!?

JACK

It wasn't me!

WILLIE JACKSON (11) Jack's African-American best friend with a comically bulbous fro intercepts the thrashing.

WILLIE

The cook dropped a dish!... Ma'am.

June leers at the COOK who cleans the shards off the floor.

HOSTESS JUNE

It doesn't make a difference, not one  
little difference and you know it.

June removes one of the glasses from Jack's tray.

HOSTESS JUNE

Stop biting off more than you can chew.  
You're a walking accident waiting to  
happen. Now get those waters out there  
before those people dehydrate.

Jack nods an affirmative and exits toward the banquet hall  
with Willie right next to him carrying a twin tray. They get  
just out of earshot before they speak.

WILLIE

Ignore her Jack, she's just high strung  
because if we screw up, she'll get the  
blame.

JACK

I seriously doubt that, Willie.

INT. TOWN HALL - BANQUET ROOM - NIGHT

MUCUS AURILLIAS (9) is the town sweet heart and it's prodigy.  
He's skipped two grades and has a reading list that would  
rival a librarian. As nimble as his mind is, his chubby body  
is without coordination.

Mucus attempts to serve a glass of water to one of the more  
over weight women in the room. We'll call her NAG. Mucus'  
grip slips. He tips the glass of water on NAG.

MUCUS

I'm sorry, that was my fault, I'm so  
sorry, it just slipped.

Nag soaks up the spill with a quaint smile.

NAG

Don't you worry about it doll. Einstein  
was a terrible waiter.

MUCUS

I'll get you another one.

Nag slips a five dollar bill into his apron.

NAG

Put that in your college fund. We expect big things from you.

MUCUS

Thank you.

Mucus gathers the half empty glass and heads for the kitchen. Jack and Willie just shake their heads at the incompetent little golden child.

Jack places a full glass of water in front of Nag. She tilts her nose up at it.

NAG

Get that out of here! It's dirty.

JACK

Ma'am?

NAG

Don't back talk me. There's something floating in that water.

Jack stares at the glass of water - there's nothing in it at all. June is right over Jack's shoulder.

HOSTESS JUNE

I apologize for him, I tried to tell him in the kitchen to check every glass before he brings it out. I'll get you a fresh one.

June drags Jack away from the table and back into the kitchen. Jack draws disapproving looks and a couple of trite smirks from the other patrons in the room.

Willie turns his eyebrows down at Nag.

NAG

You need to be more selective of the company you keep.

Willie turns his back and walks away.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. TOWN HALL - BANQUET ROOM - LATER

Empty plates and glasses clutter the tables - Applause fills the room. At a podium holding all attention is Mills.

MILLS

... In closing. The Futures bill will assure the safety of our town for many decades to come.

DEPUTY LEE (30's)- Mills' used-to-be hooligan deputy, shuffles through the standing crowd with the DONATION BOX in his clutches.

MILLS

We have compiled a list. On this list are the addresses of every building in this town built prior to nineteen hundred. These buildings are decrepid, dangerous and no longer belong amongst us. A vote for me, is a vote for the future of Shadow Valley. Our future, our children's future... It is time to leave the past behind!

The crowd erupts with jubilation - Lee's radio buzzes with an alert he needs to respond to. He turns and creeps back outside with the donation box.

INT. TOWN HALL - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Jack sits arms crossed on a rickety stool in the corner. He fumes as the other boys count up their tips. Mucus has the lead in money by a few lengths. Willie sides with Jack.

WILLIE

You make more money working for your Grand pops over at the yard then any of those fogies did at your age.

JACK

Yeah? Where am I supposed to work after Mills tears it down?

Willie has no answer. Mucus joins the huddle unwelcome.

MUCUS

Here Jack, I'll split mine with you.

JACK

I don't need your charity, Mucus.

MUCUS

You know when they promote me from the cubs I'm going to put in a request for Troop 6.

JACK

Who says we want you in our troop?

MUCUS

I just thought that...

The door swings open wide and the entire banquet procession follows Hostess June and Sheriff Mills inside.

MILLS

Taylor!

The boys jump, startled.

MILLS

Where is it?

JACK

Where's what?

MILLS

What'd you do with the donation box, son?

WILLIE

I was with him the whole time, he never took anything. I'll swear to it.

JACK

I didn't take anything!

MILLS

Henry put you up to this? He think he's going to save that trash heap of his with a stunt like this?

The trite smirks and evil cackles come from the peanut gallery.

MILLS

Give it up, I'll go easy on you.

Mills gets Jack by the scruff.

JACK

Get your hands off me!

Jack jerks away from Mills and runs out the back.

One of the Gentlemen in the crowd steps forward to give chase. Mills stops him.

MILLS

Let him go. He's got nowhere to run.

Willie looks out after Jack. He's nowhere to be found.

EXT. TAYLOR'S RESALES - MORNING

A hand painted sign proclaims in big bold red letters:  
TAYLOR'S RESALES.

HENRY TAYLOR (73) meanders among a jungle of junk. Old refrigerators and stoves fill piles next to gardening tools. He stretches. A few bones crackle under the stress.

Henry slides the roll up over his garage, revealing a classic 50's hot rod in the stall - 400 horsepower of Dodge Hemi engine driving a ton of light blue inch thick steel with racing fins on the back. The car's a work in progress and isn't in street legal condition just yet.

Henry pops the hood open on the vehicle. The engine is the prettiest thing here. Totally rebuilt of polished chrome. This baby's gotten some TLC.

SNORING interrupts the waking birds from inside the car. Henry knows that snore like he knows his own gas. He slams the hood down hard intent on waking up the noisy sleeper!

Jack pops up in the back seat with a look of confusion on his droopy features.

INT. HENRY'S OFFICE - MORNING

Henry paces past the doorway in another room. Jack digs into a waffle, washing it down with some OJ.

HENRY (PHONE)

He must of snuck in. I got some work for him today. I'll send him home when we're through if that's alright...

A negative assertion comes over the other end of the phone. Jack watches through the portal as his grandfather stops pacing and stares him down with a look of concern.

HENRY (PHONE)

He did what?... I didn't realize.

Henry paces again and disappears from Jack's view. Jack cranes to see what his grandfather is saying. He can barely make out the words.

HENRY (PHONE)

Alright then, we'll be waiting for you.

Henry hangs it up. He turns his troubled brow to the door and enters the kitchen.

INT. HENRY'S KITCHEN - MORNING

Jack is gone. There is a note on the empty plate. It says: I DIDN'T DO IT.

EXT. SHADOW VALLEY PENINSULA - DAY

Jack hikes along a sunny coast line trail furiously kicking rocks off the cliff. He pauses looking at the Shadow Valley Mine on the horizon. He considers the view a moment.

EXT. SHADOW VALLEY PENINSULA - SECURITY FENCE

THE MONUMENT glimmers in the bright day, but suddenly darkens from Jack's shadow. He studies the Monument, the names, and the fresh flowers.

Jack peers through the fence at the boarded up mouth of the mine. He cocks his mouth to his ear. A plan is forming.

INT. WILLIE'S HOUSE - DAY

Willie sits on the couch next to MR. JACKSON, and across from BILL AND ALICE TAYLOR - JACK'S PARENTS.

Alice has dried tears on her cheek. She excepts a PAPER PLATE with a piece of PIE on it from MRS. JACKSON. She hands her a PLASTIC FORK.

MRS. JACKSON

I'm sorry, but this is all we have. We never should have packed the silverware first.

ALICE

How much longer do you have?

MRS. JACKSON

Six days.

ALICE

Well, we'll have to make sure we stay in touch, so the boys can talk.

MR. JACKSON

Absolutely.

BILL

You know Willie, any help you can give us, we'd really appreciate.

WILLIE

I know Mr. Taylor, but I haven't seen him. I don't know where he is.

ALICE

Is there any way you have of contacting him?

WILLIE

Jack didn't take that money.

ALICE

I know. We just want him home.

Willie thinks it over.

MR. JACKSON

He could get himself hurt son. This is important.

WILLIE

I told you everything I know. I don't know where he is, and I've got no way to get a hold of him. That's the truth.

INT. WILLIE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Willie is crouched behind his bed with a WALKIE TALKIE.

WILLIE

This is Black Stallion to Bronco, do you copy...?

(No response)

This is Black Stallion to Bronco, do you copy...?

JACK (RADIO)

Copy that Black Stallion, Bronco on line. Copy?

WILLIE

Copy that. Where are you man? The whole town is looking for you, copy?

JACK (RADIO)

Copy that. Can you get out tonight? Copy.

Willie listens a moment. He hears his parents snoring.

WILLIE

Copy that.

Willie shuts off the radio and hides it between his mattress and box springs.

EXT. THE BIRDS NEST FORT - NIGHT

The boys have a fort built around the base of a redwood. It is not a tree fort, but more of a trunk fort. It's decorated with combat netting and flags. It looks like a surplus store.

INT. THE BIRDS NEST FORT - NIGHT

Jack shoves a CROW-BAR into an open duffle bag. He tosses in a handful of GLOW STICKS and some WIRE CUTTERS.

JACK

It's the only thing I can think of that will set things right.

Willie looks at him like he's gone too long without medication.

WILLIE

We're going to *make* a monster?

JACK

We'll break open the mine, then start leaving evidence around town. People will think that something nasty was set free. They'll start believing my grandfather's story about the mine monster, he'll be vindicated, and in turn so will I.

WILLIE

I don't get it, what exactly do you hope to accomplish?

JACK

It's simple. Everyone blames my grandpa for the men that died in the mine collapse, right...?

WILLIE

Right.

JACK

...And because he blamed the collapse on some non-existent monster everyone felt he was shirking responsibility or something, so since they couldn't make him pay for the crime they made him an outcast, and the rest of his family along with him. Including me.

JACK (CONT'D)

It's like they think B.S. runs in the blood or something.

WILLIE

So you're going to cook up an even bigger lie than your grandfather's to prove your telling the truth?

JACK

Exactly!

A rustle in the bushes freezes the conversation. The boys stealthily exit the fort and creep off toward the sound.

EXT. THE BIRDS NEST FORT - NIGHT

The bushes rustle again as the boys approach. The boys surround the enemy position.

WILLIE

Come out. We got you surrounded.

Mucus tumbles out of the bushes. He's holding a Walkie Talkie. He wears a COMBAT HELMET.

JACK

What are you doing here?

MUCUS

I've been monitoring all radio communications.

WILLIE

Don't you know you could get hurt snooping around like this?

MUCUS

I want to help...

WILLIE

Go home...

Jack cuts him off and pulls him to the side. They whisper to each other.

JACK

You know, he'll believe anything we tell him.

WILLIE

I don't know. He's pretty smart.

JACK

That's what everyone knows. That's why the word monster will sound better coming from his mouth.

Mucus interjects.

MUCUS

I'm a good soldier... Please... I'll do anything you say.

JACK

Alright. Anything we say and when we say it, no arguments.

MUCUS

Copy that!

EXT. SHADOW VALLEY PENINSULA - NIGHT

The boys ride their bikes through the trees and inclining dirt roads up onto the peninsula.

MUCUS

What sort of enemy position are we attacking tonight Jack?

JACK

Fifty years ago, my grandfather was the foreman of the Shadow Valley Mine. There was an accident. Thirteen men died.

MUCUS

The Shadow Valley Mine thirteen. I read about them at the library.

JACK

There was a lawsuit and they had to close the mine down. Everyone blamed my grandpa for the collapse of the mine, and the town economy and the deaths of the thirteen men.

MUCUS

That's silly, the economy can hardly be held to a single industry, by the time the mine had collapsed there were lucrative farms and vineyards supporting the land, not to mention exports of local arts and crafts, and "hello" fishing.

Jack is taken back by Mucus' knowledge.

JACK  
Yeah, exactly.

They race through the darkened wood.

EXT. FOREST - FENCE - MOMENTS LATER

A large fence topped with barbed wire stretches as far as the eye can see in both directions. A large sign warns: KEEP OUT.

Jack pulls a pair of WIRE CUTTERS out of his pants. He snips a small hole at the base of the fence.

MUCUS  
So why are we up here?

Jack finishes clipping the hole. It's TWO FOOT BY TWO FOOT - just big enough to get through.

JACK  
Not everyone's as smart as we are Mucus.

MUCUS  
Tell me about it.

JACK  
We're here to prove once and for all to everyone that my grandfather doesn't deserve the blame.

MUCUS  
Well, you could use a series of extensive charts and graphs to make your point about his impact on the economy. I could do the necessary research, but he did cause the mine to collapse right?

JACK  
Not according to him.

MUCUS  
Who did he say did it?

JACK  
He said a *Monster* did it.

Mucus' eyes go saucer wide. He's confused and terrified all at once.

MUCUS  
That's impossible, there's no such thing as monsters. It's a proven fact.

JACK

They said the world was flat and if you went too far you'd fall off. They said the sound barrier could never be broken. They said we'd never land a man on the moon... What makes you so sure you can believe everything "They" say?

Jack crawls through the hole in the fence. The boys follow.

EXT. FOREST HIGHWAY - NIGHT

Sheriff Mills' SUV rolls up a hill on the peninsula. He scans the trees with a spotlight mounted to the door. He slows to a stop and focuses the light on a broken branch near the side of the road. He spots fresh BICYCLE PRINTS in the dirt

EXT. FOREST - MINE ENTRANCE - NIGHT

Jack, Mucus and Willie push through a barrier of branches to find the boarded up MOUTH OF THE MINE. Beaten signs warn everything from KEEP OUT to DANGER.

JACK

If my grandfather's mine monster does exist... This is where it lives.

Jack crow-bars through the boards and disappears into the darkness. Mucus looks to Willie for comfort.

WILLIE

Stay awake in here. There's no telling what we're going to find.

Willie follows Jack. Mucus is too scared to stay alone. He tries to squeeze through but lodges stuck. He finds himself alone and in the dark paralyzed by the situation.

MUCUS

(comforting himself)  
They're crazy. Their totally certifiable.  
It's crazy talk that's all. Crazy talk.

He wiggles free and pops inside.

INT. SHADOW VALLEY MINE - NIGHT

Jack's flashlight illuminates TWISTED IRON GIRDERS. They're rusted red and reach out like tentacles. They jab into the ground around a pile of spun metal and wood rubble.

The boys climb down to the rubble. The word DANGER is painted on the wood.

JACK

Looks like the right spot.

Jack breaks in the board. A HOWL escapes with a gust of wind from a dark pit below. The void is bottomless. Willie waits for Mucus to catch up.

WILLIE

If there is something down there Jack,  
are you sure we want to find it?

Jack cracks a GLOW STICK and drops it in the hole. The glow stick tumbles through dusty air into the dark. The light dims but remains visible as it falls deeper... and deeper...

MUCUS

You know Jack. It doesn't really matter whose fault the mine collapse was. You're talking about something that happened fifty years ago.

JACK

For fifty years my family has been the town goat. That changes tonight.

There's an UNGODLY HOWL from the cave. Jack smiles and takes that as his cue.

MUCUS

(Unsure)

Boy, there sure is a lot of wind in there.

JACK

That doesn't sound like wind to me.

Another howl, this one sounds animal! Mucus gulps.

MUCUS

Wind...?

The boys share a look of fear.

JACK

Monster. Run!

The boys fleet foot it out of the cave into the night air.

EXT. MINE ENTRANCE - NIGHT

They bolt free of the mine and exit into the forest.

EXT. FOREST - NIGHT

They run tree to tree and hit the BRAKES at the sight of Mills' HEADLIGHTS near the road. Jack pulls Mucus to the ground. Willie drops too.

MUCUS  
(Sobbing)  
What now?

JACK  
Mills. He found the bikes.

MUCUS  
I'm too young for this shit.

WILLIE  
What do we do Jack?

JACK  
You go. I'll draw Mills away.

Mucus salutes Jack.

MUCUS  
It's an honor to serve a man of your  
courage.

JACK  
Shut up and go.

Mucus scurries away.

WILLIE  
He's gonna have to change his shorts when  
he gets home. Happy?

JACK  
I'm just getting warmed up. I need you to  
start planning. We've got to make it look  
like we let something loose. Come up with  
some good stuff.

WILLIE  
Like what?

JACK  
I don't know, watch some monster movies.  
Just stuff that'll scare the hell out of  
everybody. Now go.

WILLIE  
What are you going to do?

JACK

I'm going to turn myself in. If I'm on the loose when our monster starts hitting the town, you know where the fingers are pointing.

WILLIE

Good luck.

Willie takes off through the trees. Jack heads toward the bobbing flashlight of Sheriff Mills.

EXT. FOREST - NIGHT

Mills stalks the fence line. He comes across the hole Jack cut. He shines his flashlight on the sneaker prints around it.

Mills hears a rustle in the bushes behind him. He illuminates a pair of sneakers jutting out from a bush. Mills grabs the sneakers, pulling Jack from the bushes.

Jack is a wide eyed pasty white faker.

JACK

Did you see it?! Did you see it?!

INT. MILLS' SUV - NIGHT

Jack is slammed behind the grate in the rear of the patrol wagon. Mills slides in behind the wheel. He's not buying the story.

JACK

We'd better get out of here before the Monster gets us!

MILLS

You do have the right to remain silent Jack, I suggest you exercise it.

JACK

And you have a right foot, to put on the gas peddle. I suggest you exercise *it*.

MILLS

Henry's going to get you in a lot of trouble. This is his lie boy, not yours.

Mills whips the vehicle away from the trees.

INT. BOTTOMLESS PIT OF THE SHADOW VALLEY MINE - NIGHT

The glow stick tumbles ever deeper into the darkness. With a *Click-E-ty Clack* it bounces down on a dirt surface somewhere deep in the Earth. It rolls to a stop.

A labored subterranean ROAR bubbles from the lungs of an UNNAMED TERROR.

A BLACK SHADOW PAWS down on the glow stick and MUTES THE LIGHT TO BLACK!

CUT TO:

INT. SHADOW VALLEY SHERIFF STATION - NIGHT

Lee is engrossed in a police detective comic book, but stows it when he sees Sheriff Mills enter shoving Jack ahead of him.

MILLS

We'll see how you do after a night in the tank.

Lee hurriedly approaches Mills.

LEE

Sir.

MILLS

Can't you see I'm busy?

LEE

It's important.

MILLS

What?

LEE

And it's private.

Mills pauses. Lee motions toward his office. Mills shoves Jack into a wooden chair in the hall.

MILLS

Stick.

Jack crosses his arms defiantly.

INT. MILL'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Mills and Lee enter.

MILLS

What?

Mills looks at his desk. All of the money he thought was stolen is piled on top. Mills hurriedly closes the door.

LEE

I was going to tell you. They had a break in down at Kogies. I had to rush off and I didn't want to leave it unattended.

Mills picks through the cash.

MILLS

Who else knows about this?

LEE

Nobody. I thought I should tell you first.

MILLS

Good. Let's keep it that way.

LEE

But, the boy.

MILLS

Repeat after me... I will keep my mouth shut or I will lose my job.

LEE

I...

MILLS

Will...

LEE

Keep my mouth shut or I will...

MILLS

Lose...

LEE

My job.

MILLS

Right.

LEE

What are you going to do?

Mills ponders that. He's going to think of something.

INT. HOLDING CELL - NIGHT

Bill and Alice Taylor burst through a doorway to find Jack slumping it behind bars. Mills follows them in.

JACK  
He wouldn't give me my phone call.

MILLS  
I made it for you.

ALICE  
Are you hurt? What's broken?

Mills unlocks the door and lets Jack out.

Alice fawns over him. Jack turns away.

ALICE  
Are you okay? I can't believe you'd put a child behind BARS!

BILL  
Alice.

JACK  
I'm fine.

BILL  
What were you doing up there?

MILLS  
I think Jack has been listening to the wrong people. Maybe being influenced by some false truths.

Alice shakes her head at Bill and ushers Jack away. Bill knows who Mills is talking about.

BILL  
Thank you sheriff Mills. We'll look into it.

He turns and exits.

MILLS  
So will I.

Mills cocks a grin.

EXT. TAYLOR'S RESALES - DAY

Oil drips into a pan underneath the pale blue Hot Rod. Henry tightens down a stopper under the hood. The drip stops.

He sits down behind the wheel and guides the key into the ignition. He says a short prayer to himself and braces for impact. He twists the ignition - the starter sparks and the engine yawns to life waking from a long dormant sleep.

Henry revs the gas peddle - smiling bigger and bigger with each growing roar. A noise hits his ear from somewhere else. He turns the engine off revealing the ring of a bell underneath.

EXT. TAYLOR'S RESALES - MAIN GATE - DAY

A dented old bell bangs against the gate at the end of a pull string.

HENRY

All right, no need to wake the dead!

Henry swings the door open to see Mills and Lee standing outside.

MILLS

May we come in?

HENRY

If you must.

Henry takes a step back and allows their entry. Mills struts in with Lee on his heels and looks down his nose at the surroundings.

MILLS

This is quite a home you've made for yourself Henry.

HENRY

I didn't make this place. You did, and all the rest of the people in town.

Henry gives Lee a much kinder silent greeting and leads them into the yard.

EXT. TAYLOR'S RESALES - DAY

Henry guides Mills and Lee toward the Hemi. Lee is elated to see the car but has to hide his excitement from Mills.

HENRY

I was about to put a coat of polish on  
the old plate.

Henry hands a LICENSE PLATE to Lee wrapped in a white cloth.

HENRY

You want to do the honors?

Lee unwraps the plate. It says GHOST on it.

While they reminisce on the old plate, Mills walks around the garage, disappearing behind a shelf of hub caps. He opens a large RED TOOL BOX.

LEE

I haven't seen this in, well since...

Mills appears next to Lee.

MILLS

Since I impounded it.

HENRY

Fastest car in six counties. Proven dead  
rights fact, huh Lee?

Mills takes the license plate from Lee and passes it back to Henry.

MILLS

We're not here to talk about his old  
screw ups Henry, we're here to talk about  
yours.

(beat)

First a pile of missing money - now a  
break in at the old mine... I see where  
you're going with this Henry, don't think  
I don't.

HENRY

What are you talking about?

Mills smirks. Playing dumb is always the first line of defense.

MILLS

You've got that little soldier of yours  
doing anything he can to keep me from  
tearing down this heap you call home.  
Stealing the money was one thing, but  
breaking into the mine?

HENRY

Jack broke into the mine? Is he okay?

MILLS

He's alive... That's more than I can say for some others.

HENRY

What the hell was he doing up there?! I didn't say anything if that's what you're thinking. You know I wouldn't...

MILLS

(Breaks in)

If you insist on using him to do your dirty work, I'm going to have to suggest to his parents they keep him away from you. Opening up old wounds isn't going to save you, it's only going to make the blood on your hands fresh again.

Mills turns to leave.

HENRY

I know what I saw up there...

That boils Mills' blood. He spins around enraged. Henry puts up a hand, he doesn't want this fight now. Not again.

HENRY

But, that's in the past. I'll talk to Jack. It won't happen again.

MILLS

Good. I'd hate to see lightning strike twice in this town. Thirteen men already lost their lives over this. You've only got one grandson.

Mills turns to exits. Lee is busy admiring "The Ghost." He runs a finger along the fin.

MILLS

Lee.

Lee snaps to and follows. Henry watches the duo go and stares at the license plate. The word GHOST has a double meaning for him. His past is coming back to haunt him. He tosses the plate to the side.

INT. JACK'S HOUSE - JACK'S ROOM - DAY

Jack stares out the window. He's been banished to his room. His eyes light up at something off screen.

INT. JACK'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Alice pots a rhododendron with a pair of dingy canvas gloves. A spot of soil clings to her chin. Bill flutters the keys of a calculator. The kitchen table is blanketed with old charts and graphs.

BILL

The boy's got a big imagination, that's all. He's just getting to that age where pretending isn't enough. He needs to start finding ways to channel that energy in the real world.

ALICE

He needs to have a wooden spoon channeled to his butt.

BILL

He's too old for that. Besides you know your son. If we hit him, it'll just piss him off.

The door bell rings. Alice and Bill rarely get company and they have no idea who it is. Alice looks at Bill then at the ceiling, where Jack's room is.

ALICE

He's still in his room, right?

INT. JACK'S HOUSE - ENTRY WAY - DAY

Alice leads Bill to the front door and they swing it open to greet Henry.

BILL

Hey, dad.

HENRY

Hey boy... Alice.

Alice nods at him - there's some bad blood there, but it's not too hostile an environment.

HENRY

I was hoping I could talk to you about what happened.

ALICE

Of course, come in, I'll make some coffee.

HENRY

Oh no need for trouble over me.

ALICE

(Sarcastic)

No. No trouble at all.

INT. JACK'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

They sit in a circle around the table and discuss the boy over a cup of coffee.

HENRY

I'm fully aware of the problems I've caused for you two. I can only apologize for the situation. The bottom line is despite our differences, I love that boy as much as anybody, and I'm the last person on Earth that wants anything bad to happen to him.

ALICE

Unfortunately, you're also the only person he really listens to.

Henry's proud of that, but can't show it here.

HENRY

I didn't put him up to anything. Lend him to me for the afternoon. I'll make sure he never does anything like this again.

Bill and Alice confer with each other across the table. They're not sure what to do.

INT. THE GHOST - DAY

Jack is strapped into the passenger seat of the GHOST. He wrestles with the RACING SHOULDER STRAPS. They hit him right at the neck - he wants to wear them like the adults, but is still too small.

Jack watches out the window as Henry says a last good bye to Alice and Bill - A couple of brief hugs and he heads for the driver's seat. Jack waves bye to his parents and they wave back.

Henry gets in and revs on the old roadster.

JACK  
When can I drive?

HENRY  
How about we go fishing first?

JACK  
Why, so you can lecture me too? I already know what you're going to say.

HENRY  
Well, there's something I need to make sure you understand.

EXT. SHADOW VALLEY HARBOR - END OF THE DOCK - DUSK

Henry and Jack sit at the end of a worn wooden dock that's been Pearl Harbored by generations of water fowl. Henry casts a hook load of night crawler out into the waves.

HENRY  
They're all full of crap. Mills, this town, most people you'll run into on this green Earth.

Jack tries to attach eggs to the end of his hook.

HENRY  
What are you doing? Worms, worms. Here look.

Henry baits Jack's hook with a squirmer from a coffee can.

HENRY  
It's all about using the right bait. You can catch anything you want if you use the right bait.

Jack casts his line in too.

JACK  
Grand pa, you did see something up at that mine, didn't you?

HENRY  
That was a long time ago Jack. I'm not sure of anything that happened that long ago.

Jack seems dejected.

JACK

I didn't take that money. Everyone always told me honesty was the best policy, but it never seems to do me much good.

HENRY

That's because people don't always believe the truth, no matter what you say. People are going to believe what they want to believe. That's something I learned a long time ago.

They continue to fish as the sky turns pink with the setting sun.

EXT. SHADOW VALLEY PENINSULA - SECURITY FENCE - DUSK

A couple of BURLY RE-BUILDERS with the daily grime of hard work painted in the cracks of their callused hands, follow Mills along the fence line that Jack passed through to get to the mine.

MILLS

Vandals, you do everything you can. I even put a curfew into effect to keep the filthy little manglers off our streets after dark. It doesn't do me any good. The skaters still tag the mailboxes, the punks still spray paint the walls... Then these little turds decide it's a good idea to cut a hole in my fence.

The two workers consult each other with a glance - they've been sizing up Mills to see how much money they can get out of him. They trade hand signals for ever increasing dollar amounts.

BURLY WORKER

These kinds of repairs can be expensive you know.

MILLS

What ballpark are we talking about here?

They continue the hand signals till the stronger of the two exerts his will.

BURLY WORKER

Three, four hundred dollars.

That stops Mills. He sizes them with a piercing stare then continues on.

MILLS

I can always send the bill to the parents. I'm not too worried about it though. I'm sure it won't be that bad. It's a small hole.

The trio comes upon the sight of the break in and are stunned by what they see. The small hole Jack cut has been COMPLETELY TORN AWAY.

BURLY WORKER

You said there was more than one kid?  
Maybe their parents can split the bill.

It looks like somebody flew a plane through the fence. It's been ripped open and the steel rods bend out like the stiff leaves of a wilted ivy. Something massive has been set loose.

EXT. TAYLOR'S RESALES - DUSK

Jack and Henry make their way into the yard. Jack carries a short chain with two small fish at the end.

JACK

This wasn't so bad. I guess my punishment could've been a lot worse.

HENRY

Well, unfortunately you're not done yet.

Henry filters through some old tools in a pile. He pulls out a rake.

HENRY

Your dad's gonna make you rake up all the leaves east of Main. He asked if I'd give you a rake.

That's not what Jack wanted to hear.

HENRY

You take care of this. It's Elmer Johnson's rake.

JACK

Who's Elmer Johnson?

HENRY

Don't they teach you kids history in school. In 72 the state little league world series finals came to town. This rake cleared the fields in time for first pitch.

Jack's not sure if that's true or not.

HENRY  
That's the truth.

Jack's still wary.

HENRY  
Let's go.

INT. THE GHOST - DUSK

Henry cranks the key in the ignition but can't get the engine to start. After a few unsuccessful tries he gives up.

HENRY  
Your parents will kill me if I don't get you home by dark.

JACK  
Just tell'em the car wouldn't start.

Henry knows damn well they won't believe that.

HENRY  
They'll never buy it.

EXT. TAYLOR'S RESALES - DUSK

Henry pulls an old bike out of the garage.

HENRY  
Take this. If they ask why I didn't drive you, tell them I wanted to give you some time to think about your mistakes alone.

Jack smiles. He's starting to catch on.

HENRY  
Head home through the vineyard. It'll save you some time.

JACK  
I'm not supposed to ride through there.

HENRY  
You're not supposed to be home after dark either.

Jack agrees to do what Henry tells him.

HENRY  
One more thing.

JACK  
What's that?

HENRY  
I want you to promise me you'll never go  
up to that mine again. It's not safe.

JACK  
I won't.

HENRY  
Promise me.

JACK  
I promise.

EXT. VINEYARD - SUNSET

The last evidence of sun dips behind the mountains in the distance. The orange evening ages into a black night.

The land is lined by rows upon rows of ready to harvest grape vines. They stretch out away from a quaint Bed and Breakfast attached to the offices of a winery.

Jack rides his bike through one of the long rows at full speed with Elmer Johnson's Rake strapped to his back. The bike is an adults bike and Jack's legs are barely long enough to reach the full dip in the rotation of the spokes. He struggles to control the machine.

The silence is broken by the WHIMPER of a frightened dog.

JACK  
Zamboni?

Jack peddles toward the sound. He finds a beautiful golden retriever with his ears pinned back lying in one of the rows staring at the surrounding trees. He whimpers again.

JACK  
What's up Zambo? What's wrong?

One of the grapevines on the lattice next to him yanks back along the supports. It startles Jack. He's not sure what he just saw. He stares at one of the vines.

Jack reaches out with a finger and touches it.

IT JERKS away and SNAKES in and out of the lattice all the way to the far end of the row where it disappears with a CRUNCH.

MUNCHING and GRUMBLING come out of the trees - The rest of the vines follow suit. More violent and faster!

JACK  
Get out of here boy!

Jack races away from the trees. The vines around him whip by in the opposite direction.

One of the vines tangles in Jack's spokes and yanks the back wheel out from under him.

Jack slams into the ground and is pulled backward by the vine - Zamboni runs away barking.

Jack struggles to free himself from the undertow. He pulls the rake off his back and CHOPS at the vines. He succeeds.

Jack holds his ground as the vines around him strip clean - The entire vineyard is swept away.

EXT. VINEYARD - LATER

Mills walks through the mess with the OWNER at his hip.

OWNER  
I've never seen anything like it. One minute it was there - the next thing I know, all that's left is that boy.

MILLS  
What boy?

They round the corner and see Jack sitting on a stool terrified with a pack of ice on his face. Jack no longer knows what to believe.

INT. MILL'S SUV - NIGHT

Jack sits shotgun this time. Mills sees no need to put the boy behind the cage again. He'll need some new approach to this problem.

They drive to Jack's house. Mills stares out the window giving Jack no expression to go on. They ride in silence till Jack can no longer take it.

JACK  
I didn't do it.

Mills won't acknowledge the comment.

JACK

It happened really fast, it was... It came out of no where. It couldn't have been more than a couple of minutes and they were all gone. It was like someone was feeding them into some turbo charged wood chipper or something.

Mills reacts to that. A turbo charged wood chipper? He only knows one man who would build such a device.

MILLS

If you didn't do it... Who did?

Jack swallows his first word. It would have been "Monster."

JACK

I don't know.

Mills finally turns his gaze from the road to Jack - looking for any sign of falseness behind the boy's fear. He sees trepidation. Mills pulls to a stop in front of Jack's house.

MILLS

I guess finding that out is my job.

Jack meets Mills' eyes. He should have stayed quiet. He knows Henry will be a target - even though he knows he's innocent. Jack exits the truck.

JACK

Are you going to tell my folks?

MILLS

I'm going to tell them something, I'm just not sure what it is yet. I'll give you the chance to talk to them first.

JACK

Thanks.

Jack turns for the house. He stops halfway up the drive.

JACK

You believe me don't you?

MILLS

Good night Jack.

Mills pulls away from the curb. Jack remains in the drive. He watches the red lights on the rear of the SUV disappear around the corner in the distance.

He enters the front door into the amber glow of a fire, the relieved panic of his mother and the stern disappointment of his father. The front door of the house slams closed.

EXT. SHADOW VALLEY TOWN SQUARE - DAY

Jack rides his bike through an active downtown square made up of restaurants, a health conscious market and in the center of the hub is a depot where most go for newspapers, books, and a croissant with their morning coffee.

Jack draws the disapproving scowls and head shakes of those who see him as he crosses the street on his bike and heads toward his grandfather's junk yard.

EXT. TAYLOR'S RESALES - MAIN GATE - DAY

Jack skids to a stop and leans his bike against the fence. He excavates the pad lock key from his pocket and steps up to the gate. The familiar lock that mates his key is gone. In its place is one like the menacing bolts that hold closed the gate leading to the MINE.

The painted sign has a notice tacked over it that reads:  
TEMPORARY CLOSED - BY ORDER OF THE SHADOW VALLEY SHERIFF  
DEPARTMENT.

EXT. THE BIRDS NEST FORT - DECK - DAY

A SLINGSHOT is mounted on the roof of the fort. Willie pulls a red water balloon out of a bucket and loads it into the sling. Mucus stands in front of a pair of binoculars mounted on a tri-pod. An article in the morning paper distracts him from his duty as spotter for Willie.

Willie lets the balloon rip. It zooms out over the trees and disappears on the far side of a GULLY a good hundred and fifty yards away. This is one hell of a sling shot.

MUCUS

Miss. Did you know that water balloons  
are considered lethal weapons in some  
Middle Eastern countries.

WILLIE

No kidding?

MUCUS

Two degrees left.

Willie cranks the weapon to the left.

MUCUS

Yes. Apparently anyone caught with one  
has their hand chopped off.

WILLIE

You sure about that?

MUCUS

Yes, I'm' sure. I read it somewhere.

The door to the fort SLAMS SHUT below. Jack has arrived.

Mucus sets the newspaper down on the chair.

MUCUS

He knows.

WILLIE

Play it cool.

Willie reloads the sling. Jack climbs a ladder from inside  
and emerges on deck.

MUCUS

Two degrees left.

WILLIE

I already did that.

MUCUS

Fire.

The second balloon takes flight.

JACK

What's up?

The boys greet Jack with anti-enthusiasm.

MUCUS

Nothing. What would be up?... Miss -  
three degrees right.

Jack is never ignored by these two - something is up. He  
surveys the area and spots the paper folded over under Mucus'  
deck chair. He snags it. - Willie fires another shot.

Jack reads the article: LOCAL JUNK MAN DETAINED. It relays  
the information that Henry has been brought in for  
questioning in connection with the VINEYARD INCIDENT.

MUCUS

Miss...

Jack takes a look at the duo. Willie loads another balloon. Mucus ignores him in favor of the binoculars. Jack knows they know about Henry, but he's still their leader.

JACK  
One degree left.

Jack descends with paper. Willie adjusts and fires.

EXT. HOUSE ACROSS THE GULLY - BACK YARD - DAY

An OLD BOMBSHELL suns herself with a reflector under her chin in a serene pool side setting. She's hit square in the face with the balloon. It knocks her backwards - heel over head out of her seat.

INT. THE BIRDS NEST FORT - DAY

Willie and Mucus crawl in from up top. Jack stands in front of a poster of PATTON and a base full of charging Walkie Talkies.

Jack has set the article about Henry aside. He scours every other article - shuffling and folding the paper into a Tasmanian Devil Origami as he tosses sections aside.

JACK  
It's got to be here somewhere.

MUCUS  
What are you looking for? I might know where it is.

JACK  
I don't know exactly.

Jack centers on a piece of news about two paragraphs long on the last page. He reads intently.

WILLIE  
Jack, they just took him in for questioning.

MUCUS  
It doesn't mean anything. They can't even hold him for more than a day if they don't have the evidence to arrest him.

Jack hasn't been listening to them.

JACK  
Gotcha!

Jack whips the paper at his friends. Mucus takes it and focuses on the article Jack was reading.

MUCUS

Water Vandals? Ranger Forest Bronson found tower number twelve in the north woods empty yesterday. According to Bronson someone opened the spigot and let it drain out. There was moderate damage done to the superstructure and some repair will be required.

Willie and Jack lock eyes.

WILLIE

Mucus, we're out of soda. Go to the store and get a six pack.

MUCUS

But I was just reading the...

JACK

No questions asked.

MUCUS

Yes, sir... I'll be right back.

Mucus leaves. Willie digs through a pile at the back of the fort and pulls out an old TILLER with three CLAW LIKE PRONGS on it.

WILLIE

I picked this up, thought it might come in handy for tearing up fences and scratching cars, looks like you had bigger things in mind.

JACK

I didn't destroy that vineyard.

WILLIE

You aren't really going to try and tell me that a monster did it.

JACK

No.

WILLIE

Good.

JACK

I'm going to try and *show* you.

Willie's not sure what to make of Jack. He'll go with it for now.

EXT. VINEYARD - DAY

The boys return to the now barren scene of the first attack. What once was a beautiful vineyard is now a tussled graveyard of skeletal wooden framework and dead growth.

They hike through the area of forest where the vines were centrally pulled. Several wine-to-be carcasses litter the ground.

Jack, with a POLAROID INSTANT CAMERA swinging around his neck, sifts through them like a 49er panning for gold.

Willie and Mucus idle over his shoulder.

JACK

Don't just stand there, spread out and look around.

MUCUS

What are we looking for?

JACK

Evidence.

Willie signals Mucus off in one direction, he goes the opposite. Jack takes a shot of the mangled remnants.

WILLIE - separates from the pack. He looks around at the trees but it's obvious he feels this is a waste of valuable time.

MUCUS - stumbles through the underbrush. Something sneaks up on him. The rustle of approaching footsteps is clear - he fails to hear it.

MUCUS

(To himself)

Evidence of what?

JACK - lingers near the edge of the vineyard. He photographs the scene as a whole. He hears the footsteps and turns back toward Mucus.

MUCUS continues to stumble around. Whatever he's looking for he's not finding. He pulls up short and puts his hands on his hips.

MUCUS

This is ridiculous.

He's pounced from behind by a slobbering hairy beast. Mucus screams for help.

Jack races to his aid.

JACK  
Hold on Mucus!

WILLIE - has to pull himself away from something very interesting to go help. He's not sure what he's looking at, but he'll have to come back to it.

Jack runs up to Mucus to see ZAMBONI furiously licking the tubby kid's face.

MUCUS  
He likes me.

JACK  
Key-Riste Mucus, you could've given me a heart attack.

Willie runs in.

WILLIE  
Everybody okay?

JACK  
He's fine, just a little more slimy than usual. What's up?

WILLIE  
I think I found something.

They follow Willie back to the thing he saw. It's revealed as a tree with the bark around the base STRIPPED BARE.

A four foot by three foot patch has simply been raked smooth.

WILLIE  
What do you make of that?

Jack takes a picture. He thinks he's found The Holy Grail.

MUCUS  
Deer.

WILLIE  
What?

MUCUS

Deer marking its territory. All animals with antlers scrape the bark off trees when they're staking out a piece of land.

JACK

Read that in Time?

MUCUS

National Geographic.

EXT. SHADOW VALLEY STREETS - DAY

Jack and his friends peddle through the streets on their way out of town - in the opposite direction of the mine.

WILLIE

How far out is tower 12?

JACK

About three miles.

MUCUS

Three Miles!? That's well over my personal best. I can't ride for three miles. I don't have a motor on this thing.

JACK

Try using the one attached to your mouth.

They head for the North Woods - sight of the Water Tower Incident.

EXT. DESERTED BALLFIELDS - DAY

The boys pull off the side of the main road and cut across the crooked remains of an old asphalt drive. It snakes out into shoulder high grass fields. Jack leads the stalwart band on toward the distant mirage of little league fields.

The tall hunched chain-link backstop and cement dugouts are the only fossils of this lost diamond.

WILLIE

I never knew these were here.

JACK

They had to stop using them. The ground out here is toxic.

The thick weeds twist and jam into the spokes. The boys have to peddle twice as hard to trudge through this junk.

WILLIE

Why?

MUCUS

The dynamite factory. Used to produce  
gunpowder during the war. The chemicals  
seeped into the Earth and ruined the  
soil.

The soil turns up under their rotating wheels and exposes  
black worms and poison earth.

EXT. POISON ORCHARDS - DAY

A vast forest of fruit trees proud with fruit. They are like  
a frozen photograph of spring here on the verge of fall. The  
ground is choked with bits and pieces. It's as if some  
bizarre preservative has kept this area alive.

The boys cycle through, breaking apart bits of old apples and  
oranges.

MUCUS

Thank God, I'm starving.

Mucus reefs in and pulls an apple off of one of the trees.

JACK

Don't! Throw it away Mucus!

MUCUS

What's wrong?

Jack moves over to Mucus.

JACK

Something you don't know? Everything that  
grows out here is poisonous too.

He uses the edge of Mucus' bike light to slice open the  
apple. It crackles and spreads like an ALIEN EGG. It's rotted  
and poison inside. Maggots crawl about.

Mucus laughs at a joke only he gets.

JACK

What's so funny?

MUCUS

You're not the only bad apple in town.

Jack hands the fruit back.

JACK

On second thought, bon appetite.

EXT. DYNAMITE FACTORY - DAY

A gloomy three story brick monolith stands guard over its land.

The boys ride past it.

MUCUS

Looks haunted.

WILLIE

It's not haunted. It's a ghost.

The boys are both surprised by Willie's comment.

WILLIE

It's never going to let Shadow Valley forget it was here. Isn't that what ghosts do?

That's pretty deep for these boys but the mood and the location breed such ideas. They reach the trees that begin the north woods. The boys pause before them.

The north woods are daunting. They're much older than the peninsula growth. These trees were here before anyone or anything.

JACK

Alright. Not far to go now. Stay together. There's no telling what's in here.

Jack leads the way - much slower than they've gone to this point. It's Lions and Tigers and Bears time.

EXT. NORTH WOODS - WATER TOWER - DAY

The thick canopy of leaves strains the sun. God light streams through in shafts illuminating hundreds of miniscule flying insects. Low hanging foliage drags against their bodies as they walk their two wheelers deep into the woods. To ride here would be too dangerous. One small mistake would bring about stitches.

JACK

It should be just around here somewhere. Keep your eyes open.

Mucus walks dead into the ladder on the side of tower number 12.

WHACK!

He hits the ground clutching his head.

MUCUS

I found it.

Mucus gets the other boys' attention. They raise him up and dust off the dirt.

WILLIE

Way to use your head Mucus.

MUCUS

Oh hardy har har, you're the clever one aren't you?

Four dark wooden beams almost as old as the surrounding tree trunks dig into the earth. Several cross bars support the weight of the large bucket on top. The ladder Mucus knocked into is the only way up.

WILLIE

So... what do you think?

JACK

I'm going up to take a look. You guys can stay here and keep a look out.

Jack ascends the tower one rickety rung at a time. It's slow going as Jack does not trust the architecture to support any sudden violent movements.

On the ground Willie and Mucus watch as their leader's feet vanish beyond sight into the upper echelons of the trees.

WILLIE

This is not how I figured to be spending my last month in town.

MUCUS

At this rate you'll be lucky to make the end of the month at all.

Willie and Mucus examine the area on the ground under the spigots.

MUCUS

Dry as a bone - no water damage.

WILLIE

If there was something here. Wouldn't it have left some trace of itself behind?

MUCUS

Probably, I wouldn't even know what to look for though.

Jack continues his vertical crawl skyward. He reaches the top of the tower. There's no damage to the tower that he can see - it's been refilled and appears in perfect condition. The ladder creaks under him.

WILLIE

Jack! Get down here quick you got to check this out!

Jack slugs the tower in frustration and backs down the ladder. He fails to notice the loose ladder bolts at the top rending away from the structure.

WILLIE

Jack it's incredible hurry!

He makes his way quicker with each exalted cry of his friends. If only Jack had taken the time to examine the side of the bucket opposite the ladder he would have seen the JAGGED CLAW MARKS embedded in the wood. These belong to a creature we've yet to encounter.

One of the bolts tears free at the top of the ladder and Jack feels the impact and the loss of security. He grips the ladder and ceases the decent.

WILLIE

Come on down Jack!

JACK

Guys! I don't think this ladder's going to hold!

Jack's thought is confirmed when a second of FOUR BOLTS tears free of its wood support. The ladder tilts sideways and swings Jack.

He doubles his effort and continues the treacherous decent with increased urgency.

JACK

(sotto)

I swear I will never climb another tree as long as I live.

Bolt number three lets loose and Jack hangs by a thread. From the base of the ladder Jack appears to be halfway up. It's a near deadly fall if he goes.

Jack decides valour is the greater part of courage and uses a technique he's seen in the movies. He wraps his shirt sleeves over the sides of the ladder.

He kicks his insteps against the outer beams and SLIDES down like Batman.

BOLT FOUR gives and the ladder breaks away from the tower -

Jack screams and clutches the broken ladder. It slams back against a tree and throws Jack free. He pin-balls down through the branches - they slow his fall and rip his clothes to shreds.

Jack SLAMS to the Earth a mess. He gets his bearings to make sure all of his fingers made it down with him.

Willie and Mucus stand directly in front of him intent on something just behind him.

JACK

Don't rush to help me, guys.. What is it?

Jack turns around to see the BARK STRIPPED OFF THE TREES - just like he'd seen at the vineyard - Here however it is no three by four section - THE ENTIRE TREE IS STRIPPED BARE UP TO THIRTY FEET OVER HEAD.

JACK

I think we should get out of here.

MUCUS

This doesn't prove anything.

JACK

It proves one thing. That everything on this Earth hasn't been written about in books.

Jack takes a picture of the trees.

EXT. DYNAMITE FACTORY - DUSK

The boys peddle clear of the North woods and come to a halt in front of the old factory.

JACK

So when these animals mark their territory like that. It means that's where they plan to live?

MUCUS

Theoretically.

WILLIE

It's getting late guys. If we're going to get home before dark, we better get moving.

Willie and Mucus start rolling - Jack hangs back looking at the old dynamite factory.

JACK

You know everything that's happened has happened at night. What's it called when animals only come out at night?

Willie and Mucus hold up.

MUCUS

Nocturnal. Lots of forest creatures are nocturnal. You know not many people know this but Deer are nocturnal animals.

JACK

I don't think we're dealing with Bambi here. I think if we want to catch this thing we're going to have to do it at night.

WILLIE

Just how do you plan to catch it?

Jack's camera still hangs around his neck.

JACK

A picture is worth a thousand words.

MUCUS

Jack, I can't sneak out tonight. I'm going to get scolded as it is.

WILLIE

That's asking a lot.

JACK

I understand. This isn't your battle. It's mine.

Jack rides past them. Mucus and Willie hang back this time. They consider their friend and each other. They follow him west into the setting sun.

INT. JACK'S HOUSE - BATHROOM - NIGHT

Jack scorches the tip of a needle with the flame from a match. He burns his finger and drops the match into the sink. He sizzles it under the faucet.

His hands are a pin cushion of splinters. He digs at them with the needle and extracts them one by one. It's tedious grueling work.

Alice knocks on the door.

ALICE (O.S.)  
You okay in there?

JACK  
Yeah! I'll be down for dinner in a minute.

ALICE (O.S.)  
Make sure you wash your hands.

Jack continues to pick the splinters out of his hands. He drops them into the sink and washes them down. He pockets the match book.

INT. JACK'S HOUSE - JACK'S ROOM - NIGHT

Jack hides the torn clothes in a bag and stuffs them into the closet. He has remade himself - you'd never know by looking he'd been in an accident.

INT. MUCUS' HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Mucus comes home to an empty house. His dinner is in the fridge with a note from his mom: WORKING TILL 2 - SEE YOU IN THE MORNING - LOVE MOM XOXO.

Mucus closes the fridge door revealing several magnetized pictures of him and his mother together at different ages. There's no father in the shots. Mucus' mother is very young and you might say dresses a tad trashy for the PTA.

Mucus sits at the table by himself eating his bologna sandwich and reading MOBY DICK that's cover is sealed in plastic and labeled for shelf location by the local library.

On a small table behind him are more pictures of Mucus and his mom minus a dad. They've been on their own as long as he can remember.

The dwelling is sparse. They have no TV and are obviously very poor from the age and wear of the little furniture they have. Mucus doesn't finish the sandwich - the smell of bologna is starting to disgust him. He slaps the book down on the table. He's all alone and fed up with his routine.

EXT. WILLIE'S HOUSE - GARDEN - NIGHT

Willie waters his parents' topiary garden. Several large bush animals including a giraffe, a bear, and a rhino stalk the premises. The bulbous animals match their perfectly trimmed froes.

MR. JACKSON walks up behind him and lets him off for the evening. He has a fro on his head to rival Willie's.

MR. JACKSON

Get your chores done during the day and you won't be out here doing them in the cold.

WILLIE

I will from now on.

MR. JACKSON

Alright. Get inside and get yourself ready for bed. Your mom laid your stuff out for you.

Willie obeys. Mr. Jackson shuts off the water and follows his boy inside. After the door closes, one of the topiary characters LEAPS AWAY into the night. It was not a bush animal - but the kind of creature who drinks from water towers and eats vineyards.

EXT. SHADOW VALLEY TOWN SQUARE - NIGHT

Everything and everyone sleeps, except for one.

Jack sneaks through a dark alley on his bike. He pauses to watch and make sure that the coast is clear. Once satisfied he exits the alley and cuts through the square in the direction of the abandoned ballfields.

The alley remains quiet only for moment. A second sneak is on the prowl tonight.

Mucus tip toes his bike through the desolate back drop. He does the same check as Jack. Once satisfied he takes off in the opposite direction - he has a different plan in mind.

EXT. DYNAMITE FACTORY - NIGHT

The sky is the tone of the ocean fifty feet deep and just as heavy with low lying clouds. Jack warily approaches the brick monolith. The windows on the upper level stare down at him and seem to follow his every move.

He peers in through a filth caked window. The inside is dark and indistinguishable through the crusted portal.

Jack pries at the window. It's stubborn but with stern insistence it gives and allows the boy entry. Jack ignites the beam on his flashlight and crawls through.

INT. DYNAMITE FACTORY - NIGHT

Inside the dust filled air chokes Jack's lungs and forces a series of tight violent coughs. Jack scans every inch of the building but finds nothing inside. The place is a museum of old machinery and abandoned technology. A cat walk snakes around over head.

The WINDOW SLAMS SHUT! He spins around startled and has to cough again to fill his lungs with substantial oxygen.

EXT. SHADOW VALLEY LIBRARY - NIGHT

Mucus knows where they keep the spare key. He's spent the good part of his childhood here running through the jungles with Tarzan and Exploring the worlds' oceans with Captain Nemo.

He lifts up the third rock to the right of the front door and finds the Key.

Mucus unlocks the front door, and with a brief recon to make sure he hasn't been spotted, disappears inside.

INT. SHADOW VALLEY LIBRARY - NIGHT

Mucus cues the lights at their dimmest and kicks on the ignition of one of the many computers. He searches the inventory by subject - He begins with the words - THE NATURAL WORLD.

Hundreds of titles pop up - too many for an effective study.

He refines the search with two added words - ANOMALIES OF THE NATURAL WORLD - A more reasonable list of ten books pops up. Mucus prints the list.

Mucus pulls each of the books off the shelves and stacks them together on one table under a small desk light.

Mucus looks through the books one by one. He finds pictures of several rare fossil finds, some oddities from the Asian pacific islands, several bizarre creatures from the arctic and antarctic regions, but nothing that would fit the profile of the beast they possibly encountered.

EXT. SHADOW VALLEY SQUARE - NIGHT

The alley is still and silent as it was before. This time Willie's footsteps disturb the peace. After a swift recon, he heads off after his partner Jack.

Willie failed to see the shadow parked in a facing alley. A shadow lurking in wait for exactly what he just saw. Mills creeps his SUV out of the darkness and stealthily pursues Willie.

INT. DYNAMITE FACTORY - NIGHT

Jack pries at the window. It won't budge. He's temporarily trapped. The thick film of dust blankets out over his hands and arms. It's black against his skin - not like any other dust he's encountered.

He writes in the window dust with his finger the words: MONSTER. He turns away from the window and takes a closer inspection of the building.

There's a big rock in the middle of the floor that he failed to notice before. How a boulder the size of a beach ball got in here is beyond him.

He notices a rank smell in the air and after a quick investigation with his nose judges that the rock is the source of the odor.

The floor is covered in the same dust that was on the windows.

INT. SHADOW VALLEY LIBRARY - NIGHT

Mucus slides book number nine away from himself - his stack of potential help has been dwindled to a diary sized leather bound book with a gold stenciling on the cover that proclaims its title to be: CRYPTO-ZOOLOGY. The author's name is: LARRY HOYTEN.

Mucus cracks open the old book, reading over the introductory page, which says "A study of science and myth."

A crisp CRACKLE followed by potato chip crumbs landing on the page mark that our Sherlock is engrossed in his find.

Mucus dumps the bag of chips on the table and stuffs another handful of crunchy grease in his mouth and turns the page.

Mucus devours the pages almost as fast as the chips. Before he knows it, he's gone through both.

He gently folds the book closed. A look of wonder and fear on his face sprung from the new found knowledge in his brain and the pound of salt in his belly.

Mucus returns the other books to their homes - fills out a check-out card for Crypto-Zoology and files it. He leaves the Library as if he had never been there - replacing the key under the rock as he goes.

INT. DYNAMITE FACTORY - NIGHT

Jack climbs a spiral staircase on to the second story catwalk, which leads him over the massive processing plant.

His flashlight moves over the giant metal holding tanks, assembly line conveyor belts, and other machinery born from one intent. To create something that destroys.

Jack finds himself at the other end of the factory, without a clue or hint to salvage.

He turns to head back when his flashlight dims.

Jack gives it a rattle and the beam goes back to full power. No more than a step later does the light die.

He is shrouded in darkness, save for the little light coming in the narrow windows from the night sky.

Wind howls through tiny cracks in the brick superstructure and whips up under the doorways.

Jack moves a little faster over the catwalk as fear takes hold of him in the darkness.

He trips and clamors on all fours dropping the flashlight. It shatters against some long forgotten glass canisters below.

JACK

Dang it!

Jack gets to his feet and returns to the spiral staircase. He stops before descending. The staircases loose hand railings rattle under the tremor of a sizeable creature pouncing down on the roof overhead.

Jack becomes aware of the presence well before it becomes aware of him.

Another loud thump signals the movement of the creature overhead. It's getting closer.

Jack's instinct to run, and his desire to know, freeze his thought process and he just stands indecisive. Jack gets an idea - he raises the instant camera to bear in the direction of the last noise. He powers the flash - an orange LED signals its readiness.

The crash of a BROKEN WINDOW drives Jack backward as he SNAPS OFF A SHOT.

Jack takes the instant picture, whipping it through the air and blowing on it for the image to become clear. It's too dark for him to see it.

Jack reaches in his pocket and fishes out the book of matches.

He strikes one and holds it aloft like a caveman with a miniscule torch. His eyes search the black photo focusing in against the fading light.

As it develops we see the catwalk coming into view, then the ceiling, then a pair of GLOWING RED EYES.

Jack looks up to see SOMETHING MASSIVE EMERGE FROM THE SHADOW. Somehow the creature is even blacker than his surroundings. It's at this opportune moment the forgotten match flame hits Jack's finger. He drops it with a start.

The lit match tumbles to the dusty floor below. Jack finds out immediately that the black dust he scrawled in was not dust at all.

IT'S STALE GUN POWDER.

The match dies just as it hits the ground. But the ember is enough to give the powder life. A swift ring of flame eats out a circle from the nexus.

Jack runs between the legs of the massive creature just missing its swatting claw by an inch. He dives out the second story window the creature had just shattered when entering.

EXT. DYNAMITE FACTORY - NIGHT

The Dynamite Factory Windows and entrance are blown off their hinges by the massive fireballs gutting the insides of the brick fortress.

Jack is blown into the bushes by the release of the shock wave.

Jack comes to moments after impact, and draws the where with all to look back up and see if he got the Monster.

He didn't.

The Monster bounds away from the smoking shell into the North woods. Everything that was in that structure has been incinerated - including the photograph of the eyes.

Another dark creature pounces on Jack from behind. It's Willie. He beats at Jack's shoes with hand-fulls of dust. Jack was too pre-occupied to notice his rubber soles were still burning.

WILLIE

You okay?

JACK

I saw it! It was there. I took a picture.

WILLIE

What did you see?

Sirens disturb the conversation and Mills' SUV spotlights the boys with whirling red and blues mounted over head.

MILLS

Hold it right there - you're both under arrest!

JACK

He'll burn me for this Willie.

WILLIE

Just hold on Jack.

JACK

I can't Willie.

Jack gets up and runs off into the darkness inches ahead of Mills' grasp. Willie "accidentally" trips Mills up. HE grabs Willie and throws him into the patrol car.

MILLS

You've got to learn to stop covering up  
for his mistakes.

Mills slams the door shut on Willie. He takes his flashlight  
and scours the trees for Jack.

MILLS

I know you're out there Taylor! I know  
who put you up to this too! Open the  
mine! Destroy the vineyard! Drain a water  
tower! Now this!

Jack cowers in the bushes and holds his breath so as not to  
give his position.

MILLS

One big plan to make the innocent people  
of this good town believe that maybe,  
just maybe Henry was telling the truth  
all those years ago.

Jack finds a good route for escape and considers movements  
before the beam of Mills' light passes over his hiding place  
and settles him back down.

MILLS

And then maybe, just maybe, make a great  
big fool out of old Mills. Well they're  
not buying kid!

A FIRE ENGINE roars up toward them from the distance - this  
is going to turn into a full blown scene in a matter of  
seconds.

Jack decides it's worth the chance to get out of dodge and  
goes for his escape. He crawls to safety with Mills' threats  
echoing through the trees behind him.

EXT. TAYLOR'S RESALES - MORNING

A pounding fist shakes the main gate on its hinges. Henry  
scratches the morning out of his eyes and opens it up. Mills  
and Lee serve Henry with a SEARCH WARRANT. They have two  
other deputies with them, AMOS and ANDY.

MILLS

Now don't give us any trouble Henry, just  
step out of our way and let us do our  
job.

HENRY

You issue that yourself?

Henry takes one deliberate step back and allows the officers entry.

INT. TAYLOR'S RESALES - GARAGE - DAY

Lee scours through a pile of junk in the distant background.

MILLS

Amos! You take over the garage. I'll search over here.

Mills exits past the entering Amos. Mills heads to Henry.

MILLS

Where is it old man?

HENRY

This old man's not too old to put a whipper snapper like you over my knee.

Amos calls out from the garage.

AMOS (O.S.)

Sheriff Mills! You better take a look at this!

Amos emerges from the garage holding the rusted red tool box. Everyone gathers around as he lifts open the lid, revealing the STOLEN DONATION MONEY..

Lee recognizes the ploy - even he is surprised and a little turned off by Mills' actions.

MILLS

Dead to rights.

Henry knows he didn't take the money, but he controls any out lash knowing it'll do him no good at this point.

Amos and Andy cuff Henry. Lee walks away ahead of everyone - deep down he doesn't want to be any part of this.

HENRY

You've gone too far this time. It's going to come back to bite you.

MILLS

Henry, come election day, I'm at the top of the food chain all by myself. I'll be the one doing the biting. Get him out of here.

Amos and Andy walk Henry away. Mills hangs back a beat to gloat in his victory. This is vengeance he's sought for most of his life and he's finally getting it.

EXT. WILLIE'S HOUSE - GARAGE - DAY

The garage is a cluster of cardboard boxes and moveables. Bubble wrap and packing peanuts flutter in a light breeze.

Willie lifts a rack of clothes and stuffs them into a large packing box. His Dad hawks over him as the long process of moving, slowly begins to take it's first steps forward.

MR. JACKSON

Make sure those clothes are folded proper, or your Mama'll be steaming.

Willie grunts an "OK" and dumps shoes on top of the clothes, not giving a thought to his Dad's order. He closes up the box top and tapes it shut.

Willie goes to the next packing box with a hand full of canned foods. He flips open the top and nearly loses his cargo.

MUCUS is hiding inside the empty box.

WILLIE

Mucus!

MR. JACKSON

What?

WILLIE

Nothing, just my nose is running...

Willie fakes a snort and a nose wipe.

WILLIE

(whispering)

What's with you?

MUCUS

Covert OPs. You seen Jack?

Willie shakes his head "no" as he continues to fill the box with books, a walkman, tapes, and canned almonds.

MUCUS

I found this at the library. I think it can help us.

Mucus holds up the Book. Willie reads the title and shakes his head.

WILLIE

Jack's in it deep. He blew up the dynamite factory, and his grandpa is in jail.

MUCUS

Then there's no time to waste!

Mucus goes to get up, but is shoved back in by Willie, who covers him with a blanket. Willie's Dad walks up.

MR. JACKSON

Go help your mother with lunch.

WILLIE

But I have to finish packing this one.

MR. JACKSON

Boy, do as you are told. You're on thin enough ice as it is. I'll finish this.

Willie knows better than to question his father a second time and heads inside.

Willie's Dad closes the box top and tapes Mucus inside. He slides the two boxes side by side to the edge of the driveway and goes inside.

EXT. WILLIE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

The last light in the house goes out. Seconds later Willie drops from the tree outside his bedroom window. He runs to the box and pulls at the tape.

WILLIE

Mucus! You still in there?

Willie rips the box top off and looks in.

Mucus has made the box his home. He's curled up on the blanket, walkman on, reading "NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC" and eating almonds.

Mucus makes Willie an afterthought.

MUCUS

Did you know that the earth's population of cows lets out enough methane gas per year to damage our O-zone layer...

WILLIE

Lets out?

MUCUS

You know... Pooting... Imagine that, all our worry about global warming and hair spray, when we ought to be concentrating on cow farts... Almond?

WILLIE

I think you've been in that box too long. Come on.

INT. THE BIRDS NEST FORT - NIGHT

The front door flies open and our two little heros enter.

MUCUS

Jack?!

Mucus and Willie check every hiding place, but it becomes evident Jack is nowhere to be found. This was the first and last place on their list of where he might be.

WILLIE

I told you he wouldn't come here.

They sit at the card table in silence, searching their minds for the answer. A light goes on for Mucus. He reaches under the table and produces a map of the town.

MUCUS

We are going to have to do this the hard way.

Mucus runs his finger over the West side of town.

MUCUS

We'll go in concentric circles and wind down twenty feet per pass.

Mucus draws spirals covering the entire map.

MUCUS

You take the seaside of Shadow Valley, I will take the other. We can meet behind the bike shop in the town center. One of us will have to find him.

WILLIE

That'll take us three days.

MUCUS

We have no other option.

Willie turns to the three Walkie Talkies hanging on the wall. One of them is missing. He pulls one out of the housing. Jack must have been here to grab the third -

WILLIE (RADIO)

Bronco this is Black Stallion do you copy? - over?...Black Stallion to Bronco do you copy? - Over.

Static is all they get, then.

JACK (RADIO)

It took you long enough...

Mucus and Willie are relieved to hear Jack's voice.

JACK (RADIO)

We have to talk quick - Mills may be monitoring.

INT. MILLS' SUV - NIGHT

Mills monitors the call between Jack and Willie - He sips a cup off coffee and chews on a jelly roll with malicious intent. The Jelly drips on his uniform - he pays it no mind.

JACK (RADIO)

It'll take 'em a few minutes to run a trace. - Over.

MUCUS (RADIO)

Where are you?

Mills sets down the coffee and turns up the radio. This is what he's been waiting for.

INT. THE BIRDS NEST FORT - NIGHT

Mucus and Willie huddle around a single radio.

JACK (RADIO)

Identify yourself.

MUCUS (RADIO)

This is uh... Sea Biscuit.

JACK (RADIO)

Doesn't sound like Sea Biscuit. Sounds like "My Little Pony."

WILLIE (RADIO)

Just tell us where you are so we can come help you, hurry.

JACK (RADIO)

Can't do it, Mills is listening. I can feel it.

INT. MILLS' SUV - NIGHT

Mills rolls his eyes pissed off that Jack is wise to him.

WILLIE (RADIO)

Can you give us a hint?

The static crackles as Jack thinks on the other end.

JACK (RADIO)

Willie, you know where I am, like you know the back of your hand. Over and out -

The radio goes dead.

Mills ponders the cypher. He turns both of his hands over and stares at the backs of them. He's got no clue what Jack meant. He does manage to drip a little more Jelly on his uniform.

INT. THE BIRDS NEST FORT - NIGHT

Willie ponders Jack's cryptic message as well - he's got no clue.

WILLIE

What the heck did that mean?

Mucus looks at the back of Willie's hand that's holding the radio. There's a thin scar running the length of his knuckles. Mucus points out the scar to Willie.

MUCUS

Where did you get that?

Willie gets it now. He knows right where Jack is.

EXT. SHADOW VALLEY ELEMENTARY - NIGHT

Willie and Mucus sneak up to the school using the trimmed bushes for cover.

MUCUS

How hard did she hit you?

WILLIE

Broke the ruler in five pieces.

Willie and Mucus stare at the front of the school - there's no noticeable movement at first then Mucus spots the blinds over one of the windows slowly flipping back and forth. It's Jack's signal to them.

MUCUS

There.

Willie and Mucus rush to the window - they find it open - Jack peers through the blinds on the other side.

JACK

Quick!

The boys jump in. Mucus still has the Crypto-Zoology book in tow.

INT. ELEMENTARY SCHOOL ROOM - NIGHT

Jack slams the window shut behind them and locks it down. The room is dark - Jack has been into the cafeteria storage and pulled several stale Hostess Cakes out for his rations.

MUCUS

Why did you come here?

JACK

It's the last place they'll ever look for me.

WILLIE

Ain't that the truth.

JACK

Thanks for trying to help me out at the dynamite factory Willie.

WILLIE

What more can they do to me? A few more days and I'm gone.

Jack scowls at Mucus.

JACK

Where were you? Momma lock you in at night?

MUCUS

I was at the library.

JACK  
 Figures.

MUCUS  
 I was researching the Monster.

That holds the room for a beat.

WILLIE  
 You should listen to him Jack.

EXT. SHADOW VALLEY ELEMENTARY - PARKING LOT - NIGHT

The front door to the school's main office swings open and NAG from the opening scene walks out with a gaggle of keys in hand.

She locks the door behind her. She waddles her way down a short flight of stairs and lumbers out into the lot towards a beat up vintage GREEN OLDS MOBILE CUTLAS SIERRA - It looks like a domestic tank that's seen too many battles - she's proud of it.

She clicks an ALARM SWITCH. The headlights flash and the horn beeps - The lights around the license plate flash on revealing a personalized plate that reads: PRNCPLE.

She stuffs her bag into the trunk and closes the lid. She's about to slide behind the wheel when she spots a faint glow coming from inside the classroom currently occupied by Jack and his friends.

She BEEPS the alarm back on and plods back up to the front door. She's going to catch whoever it is red handed.

INT. ELEMENTARY SCHOOL ROOM - NIGHT

The screech and click of chalk dragging on a blackboard invades Jack and Willie's quiet. The duo have the Crypto-Zoology book sitting on a desk in front of them.

They sit in chairs meant for kindergartners and the desk is pinching their knees.

Mucus writes on the chalk board. He spins to face the class like a pint sized professor.

The glow comes from the teacher's desk lamp which Mucus has turned so that it splashes him and the board with light from under the chin. It's the same effect as a cheesy camp counselor holding a flashlight under his chin to tell a scary story.

Willie and Jack mutter something to each other under their breath.

MUCUS

No talking while I'm talking.

JACK

You weren't talking.

MUCUS

Open your book to chapter three - History of the Myth Species.

Jack begrudgingly complies. The page says exactly as Mucus spoke - HISTORY OF THE MYTH SPECIES.

MUCUS

The Theory is that the Mythos - like all other species - has evolved over time.

Jack flips the page - there is a mimic of the ORIGINS CHART (It shows a monkey on one side, and a gradation of mammals up to a modern man in a suit)

The chart below it however is far more elaborate - it begins with a dinosaur that turns into a dragon - a flying dragon - a pterodactyl - a large bird - a small one - a fairy - an elf - a leprechaun... You get the idea.

MUCUS

The evolution of a species follows whatever the main need for its own survival is.

Mucus points out what he wrote on the board - There are a series of countries - each one lists all of its native mythological monsters beneath it.

MUCUS

In the case of the MYTHOS, it has evolved according to the cultures of the humans who populate its homeland and the territory surrounding it with one main purpose - To stay hidden.

Jack and Willie dig deeper into the book. Jack indicates a passage to Willie that READS: WHEN IT IS DISCOVERED BY THE ADULT WORLD THE MYTH WILL LOOK FOR A NEW HOME AND A NEW BODY TO INHABIT IN ORDER TO REMAIN HIDDEN.

MUCUS

It is vital for the survival of the Mythos or Myth, that no one but children believe in it. If adults did believe in the Myth - they surely would hunt it down like every other species and eliminate it from the planet. It's the knowledge of this that makes The Myth the cleverest creature to ever walk or fly across the Earth. But also one of the most vicious. The Myth will feed on anything - it's most commonly recognized feeding habit?

Mucus points out several fairy tales he's written on the board from different countries - there are dozens - the last one is HANZEL AND GRETEL.

MUCUS

Children.

Jack and Willie look at each other as they glance back at the gradation chart. The last evolution of the Myth is the modern SASQUATCH or BIGFOOT. Following this picture there is a QUESTION MARK.

INT. SHADOW VALLEY ELEMENTARY - PRINCIPLE'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Nag cups a hand to her mouth and whispers into the receiver.

NAG

I'll be waiting for you outside...

Mills offers an encouraging response from the other end of the line.

NAG

Okay, just hurry.

Nag gives Mills the respect of the last word and hangs up the phone.

INT. ELEMENTARY SCHOOL ROOM - NIGHT

There's a lot more chalk on the board - most of it is indecipherable. The boys have huddled around the teacher's desk and are wrapping up their session.

MUCUS

It's had at least fifty years to adapt to being here in Shadow Valley. There's no telling where it was before that or what it might be now. There is one passage that offers us help.

Mucus re-opens the book to the last chapter it's titled: My Encounter With The Myth.

MUCUS

It says here that when the author came into contact with the Myth, the color of the beast had already started to change to resemble the natural camouflage of the forest, and that it was no longer walking strictly up right but had taken to crawling on all fours like a gorilla.

JACK

Who wrote this?

Jack flips the book over to see the author's picture. It's a wild eyed scientist with a patch over his right eye and a full beard.

MUCUS

I looked him up too. This is the only book he ever wrote. They wouldn't publish him after this and the scientific community laughed him out of even the smallest rags.

WILLIE

Have you two considered the possibility that maybe this is all a hoax? It's entirely possible...

JACK

I told you once. I saw it. Mucus, does it have a weakness?

MUCUS

Apparently when it takes on the attributes of its surroundings, it takes on the negative ones too. If we can figure out what it's borrowing its appearance from, we might be able to find its Achilles heel.

The boys here the slam of a door outside. They run to the window and peer through the closed blinds. They see nothing at first then Jack spots the tail end of Mills' SUV.

JACK

Mills.

They turn to each other - if they're going to act they'd better do it now. Lightening flashes outside and a crash of thunder rattles the glass. A storm is coming.

INT. ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - HALLWAY - NIGHT

Mills and Nag scuttle down the hallway and sneak once they get within steps of the door.

The light from inside still glows through the cracks outlining the door. Mills takes the master key from Nag. He winks at her - here we go.

He places the key to the lock but struggles when he can't get it to slide in. He examines the lock - there is a key broken off in it.

Mills pounds on the door.

MILLS

We know you're in there Jack! Let us in!  
(Turns to Nag)  
Could they have gone out the windows?

NAG

The only way to open those is the fire release and they would set off the alarm.

He turns his aggression back at the door. Nag fiddles with the lock trying to extract the undersized key from the lock. It's no use.

MILLS

Taylor! Open up now! You're just making it hard on yourself!

NAG

I'll call a locksmith.

MILLS

If it takes all night we're staying right here. That boy's not getting away from me this time.

INT. ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - HALLWAY - LATER

The LOCKSMITH is here and he fiddles with the lock. He finally successfully extracts the tiny key.

Mills impatiently bats him away and unlocks the door. There's resistance with his initial push, so he musters the fifty year old anger inside and rams his way through.

INT. ELEMENTARY SCHOOL ROOM - NIGHT

Desks that were piled against the door tumble over and clank to the ground as Mills and Nag burst inside.

The dust settles and they see that the window is indeed open. Mills' eyes scan to the alarm - the wire's been elegantly disengaged.

He rushes to the open window and searches the grounds for Jack. There's no sign of him.

MILLS

We've been outside that door for near an hour - he could be long gone.

Mills ushers his head back into the room. Nag and the Locksmith stand in the center of the room staring at the black board.

Jack has left a note for whom it may concern. The inscription is four simple words: WE DIDN'T DO IT!

EXT. FOREST - NIGHT

The boys sneak through the trees, to where they were when they started this adventure. A light rain taps out a march on the leaves around them. They are fully equipped. Flashlights, rope, backpacks full of goodies.

They crunch through the underbrush and reach the FENCE.

The FENCE is now twice as tall as it was before and electrified. It looks like a miniature version of Jurassic park.

MUCUS

I think we'll have to find another way in.

Jack turns and marches into the trees without a word. Willie and Mucus look at each other and follow.

EXT. FENCE LINE - MOMENTS LATER

The boys march along the daunting fence line. They run out of room at the edge of a cliff.

Willie wanders over to the cliff and looks over.

MUCUS

Maybe this isn't the best idea. There's no telling what's down there after all.

JACK

It's loose and it's living in the North Woods, the last place it's going to be is here, and the best place to find any evidence of it is, guess where?

WILLIE  
Jack?

JACK  
Where Mucus?

MUCUS  
Here.

WILLIE  
Would you take a look at this, Jack!

Willie waves Jack over to the cliff. The boys peek over the edge.

Below them the ocean crashes into the rocks to the left and to the right. However there is a large area between where the water flows INTO THE MOUNTAIN.

This is the entrance to a SEA CAVERN.

EXT. SHADOW VALLEY HARBOR - FOOT OF THE DOCK - NIGHT

A thick fog bank hangs over a series of wooden docks that reach into the Pacific. The rain accelerates and the boys have to watch their footing on the harbor dock.

Salt covered windows on beaten homes reflect the shadows of the trio as they creep out onto the docks.

They filter through the increasing storm and find a small motor boat just big enough for three. They drop down into it and pull the rip cord on the motor a couple of times. It doesn't start.

Mucus unscrews the cap on the tank. He strikes his SCOUT LANTERN and shines it inside.

MUCUS  
No juice.

WILLIE  
I'll take care of it.

Willie bounds from the boat and disappears into the fog. His footsteps vanish in the distance.

A LIGHT blasts the fog from the far end of the dock. HEAVY FOOTSTEPS march toward the boat.

The footsteps get closer. An ELDERLY MALE VOICE calls out.

ELDERLY MAN

Who's there?

The footsteps approach. Mucus douses his lantern. He and Jack slide into the water. It's ice cold. Mucus MIMES a scream. Jack slaps his hand over Mucus' mouth.

They slide under the dock and cling to the wooden pylons.

The lights beam illuminates the motor boat. It passes over and the footsteps keep going.

Jack and Mucus crawl into the boat. Mucus chatters his teeth. Jack stares at him. Mucus bites down hard and stops the chatter.

Willie pounces into the boat.

WILLIE

(Whisper)

I got it.

The cap pops off the motor. They drain a FUEL CAN and toss it to the side.

A couple of yanks on the rip cord and the motor sparks to life.

They sputter out away from the docks and around the edge of the cliffs.

EXT. SEA CAVE ENTRANCE TO MINE - NIGHT

A faint orb of light from Jack's SCOUT LANTERN floats from beyond the break toward the side of the cliff.

A gaping hole in the mountainside inhales water. Explosions of white spray slap the rocks on either side.

The motor boat chugs into the ominous cave.

INT. SHADOW VALLEY MINE SEA CAVE - NIGHT

The flooded caverns of what used to be a working mine spread out ahead of the boys. The passages are shrouded in a thick fog. Mucus operates the motor.

MUCUS

Which way?

JACK

Straight ahead. Steady as she goes.

Jack smiles. Mucus guides the boat through the cavern.

DEEPER IN - They drift through the unending darkness.

THUMP! The boat jerks to a halt and the boys fall forward.

JACK

We've run aground!

The boys pull the boat onto a sandy embankment. Jack ties the boat to a rock.

They gather their things and head up the vertical passage.

INT. UPHILL CAVERN - NIGHT

The boys trudge forward. Mucus stops.

WILLIE

They really dug the hell out of this place.

MUCUS

It wouldn't be hard to get lost in here and never find your way out. Especially in the dark.

The boys all consider that for a moment.

WILLIE

You don't think that we caused this... I mean dropping that light into the hole.

JACK

You think we showed it the way out?

They don't have to answer that question - they all feel a little more guilty now than they did before.

MUCUS

What exactly were they mining down here?

JACK

Don't expect to find the riches of Averice down here - you'll be lucky to stumble over a big chunk of coal.

Mucus stubs his toe and yelps.

MUCUS

Damn Coal.

Mucus kicks at the rock he stubbed his toe on. It slides under the dirt. It's not a rock.

Jack bends to the ground at Mucus' feet. He digs the head of a PICK-AXE out of the ground.

He lifts it up and sees the tip of an iron rod sticking out of the wall. He uses the pick-axe to dig it out. He finds a broken old lantern.

JACK

This is it. We're close.

MUCUS

Here's another one.

Mucus bends down and digs what he thinks is an axe out of the ground.

He pulls out a HUMAN SKULL. Mucus screams bloody murder.

He drops the skull. It rolls down an embankment and knocks against another skull.

He backs toward the wall and grabs onto what he thinks is Willie's sleeve. He jerks on it.

MUCUS

Willie! Willie!

He yanks harder - it's the sleeve on a dead Miner's uniform.

The Miner's skeleton topples over on top of him.

Mucus yelps and squirms beneath it.

Jack and Willie look around. All 13 skeletons and their equipment are mixed in with the dirt and rock.

Jack and Willie examine the room with the flashlight. Mucus rolls around panicked.

JACK

It's them!

Willie nods his head.

WILLIE

The Shadow Valley Mine Thirteen.

Mucus gets to his feet, dusting himself off.

They pat Mucus on the back.

WILLIE

You all right buddy?

Mucus is flustered but he affirms.

MUCUS

All in a day's work.

Jack examines the dead miner remains. One is missing an arm. One is missing both legs.

Several of the skeletons clutch PICK AXES in their bony fingers.

JACK

This was no cave in. Look, they're all facing the same way. Bones are missing too. Both his legs, his arm. They've been pulled clean off. These men were attacked. And by the looks of it, they tried to fight back.

WILLIE

Maybe, maybe the rocks fell on top of his legs and when they pulled this guy out they tore them off.

MUCUS

Twelve men couldn't pull a human body apart.

WILLIE

They could if the damage had already been done.

Jack lifts the pick axe out of one of the hands.

JACK

Alright Holmes. What do you make of this then?

Jack tosses it to Willie. It is tinted crimson underneath a layer of dirt.

JACK

Rocks don't bleed.

Mucus examines the rocks in the area. There are oddly enough several different kinds of rocks here. Mucus picks through them.

MUCUS

Soap stone, Lime, fossilized shell...

He picks up a rock he doesn't recognize and sniffs it. The rock has an odious odor.

MUCUS  
Oh that's foul.

JACK  
Let me see.

Jack sniffs the rock.

JACK  
Where do I know that smell from?

MUCUS  
Your butt.

JACK  
No. The boulder in the dynamite factory -  
it's the same kind. Wait a minute.

Jack smacks the rock against the end of a pick-axe till it splits open. It reveals itself as MONSTER FECES - Inside the rock are the fossilized remains of a miners hand.

MUCUS  
It's a fossil.

JACK  
It's a turd.

Jack drops the rock.

JACK  
That must be one of the ways this thing stays hidden - We see it's feces and find body parts in it and we think it's fossilized rock. No wonder it leaves no trace of itself behind.

Jack wipes his hands on Mucus' shirt.

MUCUS  
That's disgusting... But diabolical.

WILLIE  
Guys check this out.

Willie has wandered deeper into the cave. The boys jog to his side. Willie holds up a tree branch.

MUCUS  
What? It's a branch.

WILLIE

Do you see any trees around here?

MUCUS

There's another one.

Mucus steps past Willie toward a second branch and THE GROUND GIVES WAY BENEATH HIM. Mucus plummets into a dark pit deeper into the Earth.

Jack and Willie rush to the side of the hole and illuminate Mucus with the lantern. He lies in a heap of MONSTER CRAP - It all looks like rocks. There are multiple long TREE BRANCHES here as well. It's THE MYTH'S OLD LAIR.

INT. LAIR OF THE MYTH - NIGHT

Mucus coughs out some dust. The hole is not too deep. It's about ten feet down.

MUCUS

Pass me the light guys.

JACK

Hold on a second, we'll bring it to you.

Jack throws the rope off his shoulder and secures it to the cave wall with a climbing spike. He and Willie lower themselves into the pit.

They examine the area - It's fifty years of evolution and feeding. Mucus picks up one of the larger branches and inspects it closely. There's a SEAM running lengthwise down the side.

MUCUS

Willie, give me a hand with this.

Willie comes to his aid - Jack holds the lantern for them.

Mucus peels back the seam. The branch UNROLLS like a FRUIT ROLL UP. They peel it back. It's not a branch at all but a GIANT FLAKE OF SHED SKIN - It's dried out and TREE BARK-LIKE.

JACK

What's that mean?

MUCUS

It means it's gotten bigger.

The sheet of skin is at least ten feet in diameter - It's enough to encapsulate all three boys. They drop the skin. It slowly curls itself back into the form of a branch.

JACK

One thing has me puzzled. If it was down here for fifty years - what did it eat?

A noise echoes through the cavern. There is one tunnel leading away from the pit. It is the source of the noise.

The approaching noise gets louder and SQUEAKIER.

Mucus picks up one of the rocks. He breaks it open to reveal the fossilized jaws of a RAT.

MUCUS

RATS!!!

Hundreds of RATS flood the tunnel.

WILLIE

Let's get out of here!

The boys scamper to the rope and one by one climb out of the pit. Jack is the last to go - Rats nip at his heels and cling to his pants.

One ambitious rodent gets a good grip and crawls all the way up to Jack's chest. He screeches at Jack with wide open jaws. Jack clings to the rope unable to do anything about it. Moments before the Rat sinks his teeth into Jack's face, Willie whacks it away and pulls Jack to safety.

INT. UPHILL CAVERN - NIGHT

The boys huddle together in safety.

JACK

Everybody got all their fingers and toes?

All digits are accounted for.

A HOWLING GUST of WIND blows through the cavern. It's followed by a rising CRASH of a WAVE.

JACK

Everyone be quiet. It's here.

MUCUS

That's no monster. What time is it?

Jack checks his watch.

JACK

Five AM.

MUCUS

Five AM. Morning tide's coming in.

Jack carries the pick axe with him.

WILLIE

If we don't get that boat out of here,  
fifty years from now a bunch of stupid  
kids are going to come looking for us.

They run down the tunnel, which has already started to fill  
with water.

MUCUS

We're trapped!!!

JACK

It's not far, we can swim the rest of the  
way down.

MUCUS

No way!

JACK

It's either that, or spending a night in  
shadow valley mine thirteen hotel.

Jack dives into the water.

Willie shrugs.

WILLIE

I ain't sleeping here!

Willie dives in after Jack.

MUCUS

I need to make some new friends.

Mucus takes a deep breath and plunges in.

INT. SHADOW VALLEY MINE SEA CAVE - TUNNEL - UNDERWATER

Jack, Willie and Mucus swim with all their might in the pitch  
black.

They see a light approaching ahead.

INT. SHADOW VALLEY MINE SEA CAVERN - NIGHT

The boys breach the surface, lungs hungry for air.

The boat floats next to them and they climb in.

Jack rips the cord hard to start the motor.

They lift the oars and use them to force their cause on the ocean.

They push away from the cavern and head back toward the mouth.

JACK

Push! We can't turn back now!

WILLIE

Watch the right side!

They near a pile of rocks on the right.

MUCUS

I got it!

Mucus braces the side with his oar and shoves them away.

WILLIE

Nice job Mucus!

They battle the onrushing tide at every step. Swells lift the boat and drop it back down.

Jack's flashlight is barely enough to blast the white sheet of air in front of them.

They push their way through with motor and man power. Defiant against the violent elements.

They see the mouth of the cave just ahead. It's now a narrow slit. Their heads get closer and closer to the ceiling.

They burst through the cave opening the last second before they are crushed and drowned.

The battle however is not yet won.

EXT. SEA CAVE ENTRANCE TO MINE - NIGHT

It's the perfect storm all over again. White water explosions surround the tiny boat. The boys fight for their lives.

The waves crashing in on them threaten to capsize the tiny vessel.

They fight tooth and nail and finally reach safe water beyond the break.

The storm calms and they head back toward the harbor.

EXT. SHORELINE HARBOR - DAWN

The orange sun comes up into a pale pink sky and reflects off the vast ocean.

Willie ties the boat to the dock.

MUCUS

That's the last time Jack. I'm done.

JACK

You must be kidding. Do you realize what we've done? We've uncovered the Shadow Valley Mine thirteen. You'll get your beige suit now Mucus. We're going to be heros.

The pick axe is nowhere to be found. It's fallen out of the boat.

Mills sticks a fat boot into the boat. He's flanked by the Elderly man from the night before.

MILLS

You're going to be inmates!

The boys look up in disbelief. They've been caught.

INT. MILLS' SUV - MORNING

Mills drives through the misty morning, a satisfied smile on his face. He's got these little turkeys once and for all.

Jack glares at Mills, trying to read the man's thoughts. Willie has had it. He's sick and tired of this whole thing. He actually wants to move away.

Mucus tries to be strong and hold a brave face, but he lets a whimper which burst into a few sobs.

Jack's glare goes to Mucus, and he chokes back the tears.

Mills pulls to the curb in downtown and gets out. He opens the back and points at Willie and Mucus.

MILLS

You two. Hit the road.

Willie and Mucus don't know what to do. Jack is shocked, but sees Mill's plan.

MUCUS

I won't leave Jack.

MILLS

You don't have a choice. Get out!

Mills grabs Mucus by the fat of his neck and pulls the little boy out.

WILLIE

You too Jackson!

Willie is out in a flash. The door slams, trapping Jack inside.

Mills climbs behind the wheel and looks at the two dumbfounded boys.

MILLS

Go home. I'll call your parents later.

The SUV pulls away. Jack looks back at his friends who stand there, lost to the world.

MUCUS

What is he going to do to him?

WILLIE

What isn't he?

INT. SHERIFF STATION - JAIL -

The loud CLANK of a jail cell slams shut.

Jack stares at Mills as he smiles at him, shaking his head. He looks at the young fresh faced Jack, to the old haggard Henry in the cell next to him.

MILLS

I should do a documentary... Before, and after - 50 years of incarceration. Take a good look at this old man Jack. This is your future if you don't wise up.

Jack and Henry don't say a thing. They just look at Mills as he exits.

Jack runs to Henry. They hug each other through the bars.

HENRY

I told you not to go back to the mine.  
You could have killed yourself.

Jack looks at his Grandfather.

JACK

We found them. We found the 13.

Henry lets go of Jack. A look of old terror flushes his face.

JACK

We found evidence of the Monster. It's skin, its feces. It's been evolving to adapt to its environment. That's why nobody can find it.

HENRY

How does it hide its skin?

JACK

It rolls up into these tight wads that look just like tree branches. You'd never tell the difference.

HENRY

Of course. How stupid of me.

Jack looks at his Grandfather's face. He places a hand over ONE EYE and his other around his mouth like a beard. HIS Grandfather was the author of the book.

HENRY

If only I'd have found the evidence sooner.

JACK

That's what you were doing down there? You weren't mining, you were looking for it.

The look in Henry's eyes confirms Jack's deduction.

JACK

What are we going to do Grand pa? How can we stop this thing?

HENRY

Maybe we shouldn't. Maybe we stay safe in here, while this thing ravages the entire country side. Then at least our names will be cleared.

JACK

But it's only a matter of time before this thing kills someone. We can't just stand by and do nothing.

HENRY

I'm old and tired, so long as you are safe Jack.

Jack stands, he can't believe this coming from Henry.

JACK

But Mom and Dad and Willie and Mucus. They're still out there with it. We have to do something.

HENRY

What are we going to do? Catch it? They've been trying for millenniums Jack. What good are we going to do?

JACK

You can catch anything. As long as you use the right bait.

Henry smirks. He's heard those words before.

INT. SHERIFF STATION - FRONT OFFICE - DAY

Lee has his feet up, reading an ACTION COMIC BOOK. The title says "PRECINCT 7 - ATTACK OF THE MAD BOMBER."

Mills enters and Lee snaps to attention.

MILLS

I'm going out. I'll be back later. Keep an eye on those two.

Lee notices that Mills is carrying the bag full of money. He doesn't say anything and looks back at his comic book.

EXT. SHERIFF STATION - DAY

Mills climbs in his SUV and motors away.

INT. SHERIFF STATION - JAIL - THAT MOMENT

Jack drops down from the window. He saw Mills leave. Now's his chance.

JACK

I want my phone call! I want my phone call!

Lee runs in holding the comic book. He looks at Jack, who's whipped up some fake tears. Jack takes note of the comic that Lee is reading about a bomb scare in a police precinct.

JACK  
I want my phone call.

LEE  
Your parents will be called when Sheriff  
Mills see fit.

Henry comes to the bars, locking eyes with Lee.

HENRY  
Seems Mills isn't fit to make any calls.  
He's got a ten year old behind bars for  
crying out loud.

LEE  
Jack's old enough to know the difference  
between right and wrong.

HENRY  
Just like some sixteen year old I knew,  
who took personal offense to the speed  
limit.

Lee can't dispute that.

LEE  
Well, we all change. We all grow up.

HENRY  
My point exactly. The boy needs to admit  
his faults to his parents. Give him his  
phone call.

Lee thinks it over, then wrestles out his keys.

LEE  
One call, short and sweet.

Jack looks at his Grand pa who nods encouragingly.

LEE  
No funny business.

JACK  
Yes sir.

INT. SHERIFF STATION - HALLWAY - DAY

Lee hands Jack a few quarters and stands over him.

Jack punches in the numbers and listens.

JACK  
Hi Mom. I'm fine.

The Office phone begins to ring. Lee looks at Jack, who fakes up some more tears while he explains what happened.

The phone rings and rings. Lee looks at Jack.

LEE  
You stay put.

Jack nods and Lee disappears into the office.

Jack immediately gains composure. He covers the receiver with his shirt.

INT. OFFICE - THAT MOMENT

Lee snaps up the phone.

LEE  
Shadow Valley Sheriff's office, Deputy  
Lee here.

Lee listens to the voice on the other end of the line. His eyes widen and then dart to the open comic book he dropped on the desk.

JACK  
(Voice over)  
There's a bomb.

INT. HALLWAY - THAT MOMENT

Jack takes his shirt off the receiver and picks up the "I'm so sorry mommy" act.

Lee burst from the office, sounding the fire alarm.

LEE  
Bomb! Bomb!

Commotion - chaos. Lee tries to subdue Jack but Jack pulls away. Lee turn his attention to Henry. He cuffs him and leads him out.

INT. SHERIFF STATION - THAT MOMENT

Jack scrambles between blue uniforms in an attempt to get to the door.

LEE  
Grab that kid!

The scrambling officers chase down Jack - he's forced away from freedom and back into the station.

INT. SHERIFF STATION - BELL TOWER - MOMENTS LATER

Jack runs into the tower and grabs hold of the rope. Freedom is fifty feet above him. He begins the arduous climb.

Officers file into the room. They try to climb too. The awkward weight makes the bell RING. Jack scampers to the top just ahead of his pursuers and gets away.

EXT. DOWN TOWN - BANK - THAT MOMENT

Mills exits the bank with a confused look on his face. He hears the bell ringing - he looks to the station in the distance.

MILLS

Taylor.

He darts off for his SUV.

EXT. SHERIFF STATION - DAY

Jack hides in the bushes and watches the commotion with a satisfied grin. He can already hear the Fire Engines coming to life from across town.

VOICE (O.S.)

Jack!

Jack turns to see Willie and Mucus hiding in the bushes. Jack runs over to them.

JACK

I thought you went home.

WILLIE

I don't want an ass whipp'in that bad.

Jack smiles at his friends. They sneak away as Lee brings Henry out in cuffs, and the rest of the staff exit the building.

EXT. TAYLOR'S RESALES - DAY

It's all a wreck now.

Jack, Willie and Mucus dump their bikes and run in through the torn apart gate. The office, garage and neatly stacked junk piles, have been destroyed.

This was definitely the Monsters handy work.

JACK

It came looking for him. It remembered.

WILLIE

What are you talking about?

JACK

I'll explain later. Right now we've got work to do.

Jack scans the junk yard. His eyes rest on the garage.

EXT. SHERIFF STATION - DAY

Fire engines have set up a perimeter around the station.

Mills races up and skids to a halt. Lee runs up to him.

MILLS

What in Sam hill?!

LEE

Bomb threat was called in! But everyone is out.

Mills boils.

MILLS

You've been reading too many damn comic books. Where is he?

LEE

Old Man Taylor's right there.

MILLS

No. The boy?

Lee looks around and thinks a moment. You can read it on his face. He's been tricked.

Mills strides over to Henry and slams him against a fire engine.

MILLS

Where is he?

HENRY

Who are you talking about?

MILLS

Your delicate endangered grand child.

HENRY

I don't know. But, I'll help you find him.

MILLS

Like hell you will.

Mills gets back in his SUV. He sits a moment, looking at Henry and Lee.

HENRY

There's no telling what he's got planned. He's not going to come out for you... He just might do it for me.

Mills idles mulling it over.

INT. MILL'S SUV - DAY

Mills, Lee and Henry drive in silence. Henry looks at the cuffs.

HENRY

These necessary?

Mills tosses the keys in the back. Henry undoes them and rubs the feeling back in to his hands.

MILLS

I'll shoot you if you try to run.

HENRY

I didn't kill your father, and I didn't steal your money. Somebody planted it there. One of these days - maybe you'll let me prove that to you.

Lee gives Mills a look - he knows Henry's telling the truth.

Mills drives on - fuming.

EXT. TAYLOR'S RESALES - DAY

Mills pulls to a stop, his SUV blocking the entrance. He and Lee step out. Henry remains locked up in the backseat.

Mills gets out and studies the ground. Fresh bike tire and sneaker prints speck the dirt.

Mills stands in the middle of the junk yard, just now noticing the recent destruction.

MILLS

(sotto)

This kid works fast.

(to Jack)

This has gone on to long Jack. Come out before you end up killing yourself.

(beat)

JACK! Damn it, I know you are here! This is your last chance! We know a monster didn't do this! There is no such thing as monsters!

An inhuman roar thunders out of the garage. Mills and Lee look at each other.

BAMMMM!!!!

The GHOST erupts from the garage, headed straight for Mills.

INT. THE GHOST - THAT MOMENT

Jack is at the wheel. Willie and Mucus hold on for dear life. They head right at Mills.

MUCUS

Jack!

JACK

I see him.

Mills dives clear of the car.

WILLIE

The exit is blocked!

JACK

Then we make another.

Jack floors it, heading right for the SUV.

EXT. TAYLOR'S RESALES - DAY

The Ghost races to the entrance, only to swerve at the last moment.

It hits a sheet of old roofing and launches into the air.

The Ghost flies over the entrance wall, lands on the other side and races away into a cloud of vapor.

Mills gets to his feet and runs to his SUV.

Lee doesn't budge.

MILLS

Quit your grinning and move you idiot,  
we've got to catch them!

LEE

No way you're catching the Ghost. Fastest  
car in six counties, proven dead rights  
fact.

Mills lets out an angry grunt and jumps behind the wheel.

EXT. OPEN ROAD - DAY

The quiet road is awoken by a streaking flash of powder blue  
steel.

INT. THE GHOST - DAY

Jack drives with the concentration of a formula one racer.  
Mucus stares out the back window, expecting the worst. Willie  
looks at the both of them and smiles. One more adventure. It  
feels good.

MUCUS

Mills is going to have our butts for  
this.

JACK

What's new.

WILLIE

So what's the plan Jack?

JACK

Plan? Who said I had a plan?

Mucus and Willie look at each other, "we're screwed" on their  
faces. Jack cracks a grin, holding in his giggle. Of course  
he has a plan. Jack's middle name is plan.

FADE TO:

EXT. SHADOW VALLEY PENINSULA - HILLTOP OVERLOOK - SUNSET

Mills' SUV pulls to a stop. The valley lays out before them.

The three men get out for a little fresh air.

MILLS

How could they just disappear?

HENRY

They were in a Ghost.

Henry winks at Lee, who holds in his smile.

MILLS

Oh, would you give it a rest?!

Henry can see Mills is genuinely concerned about Jack. Maybe even more so than he's ever really been.

HENRY

I'm on your side Mills. We've got to find him. Before the monster does.

Mills rolls his eyes and grabs the radio, hailing the station.

Henry watches the sun boil into the ocean, as the day dies away to night.

EXT. POISON ORCHARDS - NIGHT

A hand full of rotten fruit is crammed into a Thanksgiving size Turkey.

More rotten fruit is stuffed in Chickens and Cornish game hens.

Massive meat hooks are speared through the birds and attached to a thick steel cord.

EXT. NORTH WOODS - CONTINUOUS

Jack and Willie fasten the steel line to the Ghost's tow hitch, while Mucus lathers the bait in a thick GRAPE JELLY.

The boys cover the line running from the meat to the car with leaves.

The trap is set.

They take cover in the bushes, next to the concealed Ghost.

MUCUS

What if the Monster doesn't come through here? What if it doesn't like turkey or chicken?

JACK

Have some faith Mucus. We know it eats grapes right?

MUCUS

What if he doesn't like jelly? I like grapes, but I don't like Jelly.

WILLIE

No living creature on this planet can resist my Mama's preserves boy, I'll tell you right now.

Jack "shushes" them. They go silent, listening.

MUCUS

Over there.

A pair of headlights bounce from the dirt road passing through the forest.

JACK

Mills.

VOICE (ON MEGAPHONE)

Jack. You out there son?

JACK

Grandpa?

HENRY (ON MEGAPHONE)

Please come home. We are all worried about you boys. We don't want you to get hurt.

MILLS (ON MEGAPHONE)

Jack, this is Sheriff Mills. Let this thing go and we can all sort it out in town. Come on Jack, Henry and I have buried the hatchet, why don't we too.

Jack looks at Willie and Mucus. He can see their desire to bury the hatchet.

JACK

It's a trick.

WILLIE

You're Grandpa's with him Jack. It's legit.

Willie stands.

JACK

Willie.

WILLIE

Stop it.  
(Acknowledges Mucus)  
Tell him... Tell him!

MUCUS

Tell me what?

WILLIE

Jack was planning this all along. We took you with us so that we could convince you that there was a monster. Jack wanted his story to have some credibility and he figured you could pull some weight with the town if you believed.

MUCUS

Is that true?

Jack is stuck.

JACK

It doesn't matter now, I was wrong. The monster is real.

MUCUS

You've been lying to me this whole time?  
I trusted you.

The SUV idles in the distance.

Jack looks at Willie. They just stare at each other, not saying a thing.

Mucus stands next to Willie. He's going to turn himself in.

WILLIE

You almost had me convinced Jack. But enough is enough. We're going in.

The SUV pulls away and disappear into the woods.

MUCUS

No we're not.

Jack and Willie look at Mucus.

The leaves in front of them tug.

Their eyes move over the leaves to the pile of rocks where the bait sits.

A MASSIVE CLAWED hand reaches over the mound and scoops up the bait in one single swipe.

The sounds of the Monster devouring the offering come from the other side of the rock mound.

JACK  
Quick and quiet.

They climb into the Ghost.

Jack looks at the metal cords snaking up from the camo cover.

The GHOST violently tugs backward.

JACK  
We got a big one!

Jack revs on the engine and floors it.

THE GHOST TEARS OUT OF THE BUSHES.

THE **MYTH MONSTER** SMASHES THROUGH A MASSIVE ROCK PILE, AS IT'S PULLED BY THE STEEL LINES, LIKE A FISH ON THE HOOK.

THE MYTH HAS TOWERING BRANCH ANTLERS LIKE A DEER - IT'S HIDE IS BARK LIKE IN APPEARANCE, ITS HAIR LOOKS LIKE SWAMP MOSS - THIS CREATURE BLENDS INTO THE FOREST LIKE A TREE.

THE BAIT WORKED. THEY'VE CAUGHT THEIR PRIZE.

Willie and Mucus look at the Myth being dragged behind them.

WILLIE  
What the hell is that thing?!

MUCUS  
Whatever it needs to be!

It's much bigger than they had imagined.

EXT. THE GHOST - RACING - NIGHT

The boys rocket through the abandon logging roads of the North Woods, dragging the Myth behind them.

The Myth pulls himself free of the hook. It's blood leaks out, looking like heavy TREE SAP -

The Myth crawls claw over claw up the line towards the car. He inches closer to the boys with every pull.

Willie and Mucus watch out the back.

WILLIE  
It's free of the hook Jack!

MUCUS  
Step on it!

WILLIE

What good is that going to do?

The Myth claws toward the car. Jack accelerates but it just drags the Myth faster.

EXT. SHADOW VALLEY PARK - NIGHT

A large crowd of families is gathered on this warm summer night to enjoy an outdoor screening of the 3-D B Movie, "THE MONSTER THAT ATE THE TOWN."

The audience "oohs" and "aahs" at the Giant MAN IN SUIT MONSTER chasing the Hero in his 57 Chevy.

As if mirroring the action on the screen, the GHOST rips through the screen.

The roadster races up the aisle, between the awestruck onlookers, dragging the roaring Myth behind it.

It takes a few moments for the audience to actually process what just happened. "Was that the movie, or real?"

And at once it sinks in.

THE CROWD ERUPTS IN APPLAUSE.

WIDE EYED KID 1

This 3-D rules!

WIDE EYED KID 2

I've seen better.

EXT. SHADOW VALLEY STREET - NIGHT

The Ghost tears through the middle of town.

The Myth grabs on to the back and pulls itself on to the car.

MUCUS

He's on our tail!

INT. THE GHOST - NIGHT

The Ghost roof dents in from a massive footprint. Jack looks at Willie and Mucus.

WILLIE

Oh he's mad.

MUCUS

And we're toast!

The Myth rips the roof off of the car, peeling it away like a soda can top.

WILLIE/MUCUS

Jack!!!

The Myth swipes at Willie and Mucus, who just dodge the lethal strike.

JACK

Hold on!

Jack slams on the breaks.

EXT. SHADOW VALLEY MARKET - NIGHT

The Ghost skids to a halt.

The Myth flies off the car and tumbles through the cargo entrance of the Super Market.

MUCUS

Vicious Monster in aisle 12.

The boys get out of the Ghost and run in after the Myth.

INT. SHADOW VALLEY MARKET - NIGHT

NAG rolls her shopping cart down the neon walkway, filling it with Depends, Lax-relax and Prunes.

She reaches for a box of BRAN CEREAL, when the shelf shatters, making a few boxes fall off.

She mutters to herself, and picks the boxes up.

As she places the box back, she can see through to the other aisle.

What she see's, she can't fathom.

THE MYTH LOOKS at NAG through the hole.

IT BARES IT'S LONG FANGS. THEY DRIP WITH A THICK GREEN SLIME, REMINISCENT OF GREEN ALGAE.

Nag stumbles back, but doesn't get far.

THE SHELF IS KNOCKED OVER, CRUSHING HER.

THE MYTH ROARS then leaps onto the condiment shelf, gobbling up jars of GRAPE JELLY.

Jack, Mucus and Willie watch the creature from behind the candy bar rack. Mucus grabs one, since they are there.

The Myth stops eating at the sound of Mucus' opening the candy bar.

It looks at the candy rack, and stalks over to them.

The Myth pauses, looking up at the video camera and T.V. monitor showing it.

The creature flings the candy rack at the surveillance system and leaps through the entrance.

Jack looks at his two frozen friends.

JACK

Come on!

Mucus checks himself for any missing limbs, then follows Jack and Willie out the back.

EXT. SHADOW VALLEY TOWN SQUARE - NIGHT

Mills' SUV pulls up and parks. Henry, Lee and Mills pile out. They are tired and want to give up.

Mills lights up a cigarette and take a long, much need drag.

Henry studies a large Redwood tree. He picks at a tree branch, to see if it's Monster skin.

Mills' radio beeps and he grabs it.

MILLS

Mills.

DISPATCHER (V.O.)

Sheriff, we just got a report of a wild animal in the Super Market.

Mills looks at Henry.

A ROCK falls from the sky, landing next to Lee.

The three men stare at it a moment.

LEE

What in God's name?

Several more rocks fall from the sky -- monster droppings.

Lee looks up the tree and gasps.

THE MYTH LOOKS DOWN AT THE THREE TINY MEN FROM IT'S REDWOOD PERCH. IT GROWLS.

Mills and Lee look at each other in disbelief. It's actually real.

HENRY  
Told you I didn't do it.

The MYTH stirs, hissing at them.

LEE  
He don't look too happy.

The Myth leaps at the three men cornering them.

It raises it massive claws to swipe away their lives, when...

THE MYTH IS FLOODED BY HIGH BEAMS. -- It freezes like a deer.

**WHAMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMM!!!**

The GHOST SLAMS INTO THE MYTH, AND CARRIES IT AWAY ON THE HOOD, LIKE A DEAD DEER.

INT. THE GHOST - CONTINUOUS

Jack, Willie and Mucus look at the Myth. It's knocked out cold.

WILLIE  
Where to Jack?

JACK  
Where this all started.

EXT. SHADOW VALLEY TOWN SQUARE - NIGHT

Mills and Henry jump in the SUV. Lee goes to get in, but stops at Mills orders.

MILLS  
Call everyone!

Lee nods and dashes back to the station.

MILLS  
That boy of yours is crazy.

HENRY  
He's related to me isn't he.

They race off after Jack.

EXT. SHADOW VALLEY PENINSULA - NIGHT

The Ghost races along the thin stretch of road, leading out of town, and to the fog shrouded coastline.

The Myth remains motionless on the hood of the speed demon.

INT. THE GHOST - NIGHT

Jack holds focus, while Mucus and Willie just stare at the Myth.

MUCUS

Is it dead?

WILLIE

Not likely.

MUCUS

Well what happens when it wakes up?

JACK

Hopefully it won't.

Jack heads straight for a fence blocking the entrance to a dirt road, which snakes out to the cliffs over looking an angry sea.

INT. MILLS' SUV - NIGHT

Mills and Henry race along the country road. They can see the Ghost a few hundred yards ahead.

MILLS

What's he got cooking Henry?

HENRY

Something I should be doing. Sorry.

Mills looks at Henry confused.

In one move, Henry reaches over Mills, opens the driver door, and pushes him out.

Henry slides into the drivers seat and continues on.

EXT. DIRT ROAD - THAT MOMENT

Mills rolls to a stop in the soft grass. He gets up fuming.

MILLS

You crazy son of bitch! What are you trying to do?!!!

Mills knows the moment the words leave his mouth.

INT. THE GHOST

Jack powers to the edge of the cliff. Mucus and Willie look at each other.

JACK  
Get out.

WILLIE  
What?

JACK  
Out. I'm ending this now.

MUCUS  
Jack you can't!

JACK  
Get out. That's an order!

Mucus and Willie won't leave him.

MUCUS  
Troop 6 never leaves a man behind.

WILLIE  
We do this together, or not at all.

The Ghost races to the edge of the cliff.

It's just moments from launching over the side to it's doom.

KU-KLUNCK....

The Ghost jerks forward, the engine dies and sputters, rolling to a stop at the very edge of the cliff.

THEY ALL TAKE A DEEP BREATH.

MUCUS  
That was intense.

JACK  
You guys were really going to stick with me to the end?

Willie and Mucus look at each other.

WILLIE  
Hell no. We were just about to grab your crazy ass and bail out.

The boys have laugh, then look at their Prize.

WILLIE

So what happens to our little pet here?

THE MYTH LOOKS UP AT THEM.

MUCUS

I don't think he liked that.

IT SPRINGS TO IT'S HIND LEGS AND LETS OUT THE MOST BLOOD  
CURLING ROAR IN THE HISTORY OF ROARS.

JACK

Somebody crawled out of the wrong side of  
the cave.

(beat)

Get out!!!

The boys leap from the Ghost.

The Myth lunges forward, grabbing Jack before he can get free.

EXT. MILLS' SUV - THAT MOMENT

Henry barrels through the fog. Drawing closer to the cliff.  
He sees the Myth holding Jack in it's clutches.

HENRY

Jack! No....

Henry floors it.

EXT. CLIFF - NIGHT

Willie and Mucus throw rocks at the Myth, screaming for it to  
let Jack go.

The Myth defends itself with one hand, while keeping a  
defiant Jack in the other.

Jack pulls and tears at the Myth's hand, trying to pry  
himself loose.

It's no good. The Myth has a vice grip.

Jack looks up and sees the SUV barreling for them. He sees  
his Grandfather at the wheel.

JACK

Grandpa...?

THE SUV LIGHTS UP WITH SIRENS, HIGH BEAMS, AND SPOTLIGHTS.

THE MYTH FREEZES!

JACK PULLS AT THE LOOSE LAYER OF SKIN AROUND THE MYTH'S HAND AND SLIPS THROUGH IT'S GRASP.

AND NOT A MOMENT TOO SOON.

THE SUV SLAMS INTO THE GHOST.

HENRY AND THE MYTH ROCKET OFF THE CLIFF.

JACK

No!!!!!!

JACK, WILLIE AND MUCUS RUN TO THE CLIFF, WATCHING THE FLAMING TWO CAR WRECKAGE PLUMMET INTO THE ROCKS AND SURF BELOW.

THERE IS NO BIG EXPLOSION. NO LOUD BANGS. NO LAST ROAR OF PAIN.

The mist and silence envelope the glowing destruction, as the boys let the reality of what just happened sink in.

They just stand there and stare, until Mills runs up behind them.

He doesn't ask what happen. He knows.

Jack looks up at Mills. Tears flow freely down the little boys face.

Mills studies him a moment. The depth behind the eyes. There's something different about the ten year old. He's a man now.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN ON:

EXT. SHADOW VALLEY GRAVEYARD - DAY

The TAYLOR'S stand alone by Henry's grave with tear stained cheeks as a minister gives a poetic eulogy. Jack sobs.

An SUV packed to the brim with cardboard boxes pulls curb side behind them. Jack looks up through the tears to see who it is.

Willie and his parents get out in appropriate funeral attire.

Jack wipes his nose and face. He can't help but smile a bit.

Willie walks up next to Jack with a nod and stands by his side. Willie's parents acknowledge the Taylor's.

Mucus peddles up on his bike and lays it down in the grass. His pant leg hangs on the peddles and he tumbles over. They all let a feeble grin crack their lips.

Mucus waddles up and takes his position next to the boys. He's not as well dressed as the rest, but it's his best.

The minister continues the lonely somber service as another distraction arrives.

Several more cars pull up. FAMILIAR TOWNSPEOPLE - faces we've seen mocking Jack earlier on - arrive at the funeral. They make their way to the grave and stand side by side with the Taylor's. These are people who scoffed at this family once, now come to pay their respects.

Jack turns around and is surprised to see...

An endless caravan of automobiles parading to a stop as more and more people arrive. The minister is a bit thrown off by this display. The Taylor's don't know what to think.

The ENTIRE TOWN shows up. Several familiar faces finger print the crowd. They surround the family in a heart felt show of support.

Last to arrive is MILLS. Mills makes his way through the crowd and stands side by side with JACK and BILL.

Mills puts his hand on Jack's shoulder. He gives him a restrained but proud smile.

Jack smiles back. His tears become tears of joy as he has done exactly what he set out to do.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. SHADOW VALLEY GRAVEYARD - LATER

The townsfolk scatter away. Jack, Willie and Mucus say their good-byes.

JACK

You're going to call as soon as you get there right?

WILLIE

Copy that.

MUCUS  
You ever coming back?

WILLIE  
Don't know, we'll get together again  
sometime. I'm sure.

JACK  
We'll make it happen.

WILLIE  
One way or the other.

They all slap hands.

JACK  
Alright.

WILLIE  
Good luck.

Willie turns and runs back to his parents at the SUV. Jack and Mucus watch Willie drive away. Willie looks back at them and salutes. The boys salute back.

JACK  
Hungry?

MUCUS  
Starved.

JACK  
My mom's got lunch waiting. Let's go.

They turn and walk.

MUCUS  
So, what was Henry like? I never really  
got to meet him.

JACK  
Henry was a very peculiar fellow. This  
one time...

They exit and mutter about Henry as they leave.

EXT. SHADOW VALLEY PENINSULA - NIGHT

The MOUTH OF THE MINE is SEALED with a RIDICULOUSLY ELABORATE METAL TOMB DOOR. Nothing is ever getting out of there again. The fence has been rebuilt again. IT IS JURASSIC PARK NOW.

Just on the safe side of the fence, Jack and Mucus, both

decked out in full BOY SCOUT BEIGE, stargaze flat backed on their sleeping bags. The Shadow Valley Mine Thirteen Monument sits behind them. The air is thick with the language of crickets.

MUCUS

You think the Monster went back into the mine?

JACK

Would you?... There's no telling where it went, or where it'll go next.

MUCUS

At least Mills found a good use for all that money, instead of tearing down the buildings. Now we've just got to find something to do with all that stuff at your grand pa's yard.

Jack cocks his mouth toward his ear. The possibilities are endless.

JACK

We'll come up with something.

Mucus nods and proudly dusts off his troop 6 badge. He looks back to the sky.

MUCUS

You know, the stars we're looking at aren't even stars anymore...

Jack grins, here comes another piece of Mucus trivia.

JACK

Why's that, Mucus?

MUCUS

It takes the light that the stars give off millions of years to reach Earth. So what we're actually looking at are stars that have died millions of years ago.

JACK

You read that in National Geographic?

MUCUS

No, Playboy.

Jack raises an eyebrow to Mucus.

MUCUS

Having a single working mother does come with its advantages.

Jack and Mucus both smile.

JACK

How does a star die?

MUCUS

It's so rad. The gasses build up and it starts to grow. It gets bigger and bigger and bigger until finally one day it gets too big to hold itself together and it just explodes.

JACK

Cool.

MUCUS

Yeah.

JACK

And millions of years later they're still shining.

The boys like that idea.

MUCUS

I hope when I explode, I keep shining for millions of years.

Jack's not sure of Mucus' word use, but he gets the idea.

Jack smiles.

JACK

Yeah. Me too.

We move in on the Shadow Valley Monument, taking note of a couple of slight differences.

The plaque now reads FOURTEEN REMEMBERED.

Going down the list of names, we end on the last two. JAMESON MILLS, as before, and just after it reads, HENRY TAYLOR.

The stars twinkle over head, a galactic memorial of all that's ever been. Once again the constellations shine a bit brighter than the rest to define themselves.

We move in on one constellation we've not seen before. Millions of tiny dimmer stars fill out the bare bones and the form of the MYTH CREATURE takes shape.

The MYTH snaps its attention at the screen and gives us one last SIGNATURE GROWL before LEAPING AT THE SCREEN! As a warning to all - He just might be coming to your town next!

SMASH CUT TO BLACK

THE END...?