

BEYOND BELIEF

WGA #1079304

by

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"From ghoolies and ghosties and long-legged beasties, and things that go bump in the night. Good Lord deliver me." A Scottish Prayer

FADE IN

INT. FOSTER HOME - FRONT SLEEPING QUARTERS - DAY

LOOKING DOWN FROM THE CEILING, WE SEE the sleeping quarters of a rundown foster home, with beds crammed so close together it's hard to squeeze between them. OPENING CREDITS HERE.

Initially, there's a FOSTER KID for most every bed--either lying there or packing their meager belongings.

WE DO A TIME LAPSE SEQUENCE as one by one the children pack their bags, vanish, and the beds remain unoccupied. During this, WE HEAR HAPPY SOUNDS in the BG of kids meeting their foster parents for the first time, and the fond exchanges.

Meanwhile, one bed remains occupied throughout. It belongs to bright-eyed, ten-year old, THOMAS MEEK, who lies there facing the ceiling, adeptly folding an origami bird out of a piece of paper.

Eventually, the next to the last child packs his bags and vanishes, and Thomas is left completely and utterly alone.

EXT. FOSTER HOME - FRONT PORCH - DAY

Thomas--the last kid left--drags his few belongings in a beat up suitcase onto the front porch.

Because everything is so rundown and old, it's hard to tell if the scene is period or modern day, local or far away.

The boy waits with anticipation as the kindly old CARETAKER puts a handwritten sign on the door. "Moved To Town. Foster Home Closed." The caretaker is a bit offbeat, or maybe just off. His shoes are on the wrong feet and his coat buttons don't line up. He scratches his head for a confused beat.

CARETAKER

They here yet?

THOMAS

Not yet.

CARETAKER

I think you'll fancy them a great deal.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

As Thomas nervously puts the finishing touch on his origami bird, the caretaker drags out a dusty old box full of books.

CARETAKER (CONT'D)

Thomas Meek, your lucky day. We found these in storage.

THOMAS

What is it?

CARETAKER

Apparently, your father left you a box of literature.

THOMAS

(beside himself)

My father?

He opens the box and rifles through the books like they were buried treasure--wiping and blowing dust off cover after cover.

CARETAKER

Do you remember your father? You were very young.

Thomas takes out a weathered picture of a striking man who can only be his father. He holds the picture to his heart as he sees an approaching car in the distance. He carefully tucks the picture away, then he goes back to nervously folding his origami bird.

CARETAKER (CONT'D)

This could be them now.

They look on as MR. and MRS. THOROUGHGOOD come driving up in a humble sedan. Then a smiling, wholesome-looking man and his equally friendly wife step out of the vehicle.

CARETAKER (CONT'D)

Top of the morning there. You must be the uh...the uh...remind me again.

MRS. THOROUGHGOOD

The Thoroughgoods.

MR. THOROUGHGOOD

That we are, and this must be Master Meek.

(shaking his hand)

Pleased to meet you Master Meek.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Mrs. Thoroughgood gently touches Thomas's face and he almost melts into her hand.

MRS. THOROUGHGOOD

We've been looking forward to this day, Thomas, since the moment the paperwork 'came official. I bet you're gonna quite fancy bein' a part of our family.

MR. THOROUGHGOOD

There was always one important part of the equation missing.

During this, another car turns up the driveway--an old jalopy, that was once a classic luxury model.

CARETAKER

Hmm, wonder who this could be?

Mrs. Thoroughgood puts her arm around Thomas and they stand side by side, watching until the jalopy pulls up and stops. The engine sputters a few times, refusing to die without a fight.

Then the door opens and out steps an odd-looking, curmudgeon of a MAN, and his sour-faced, battle-ax of a WIFE.

CARETAKER (CONT'D)

Did ya know we're closed for business now?

The CONNIPTIONS both speak with unusual high-brow accents--a feeble attempt to cover their low-brow cockney.

MR. CONNIPTION

Good day, kind fellow. Yes, and we're the regal Conniptions, come for Master Thomas Meek.

MRS. CONNIPTION

Are ya not expecting us?

The caretaker swallows a huge knot in this throat. Mr. Conniption musses Thomas's hair.

MR. CONNIPTION

And this must be Sir Thomas Meek.
(looking him over)
He sure looks like a strapping lad, doesn't he, Crumpet?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MRS. CONNIPTION
He looks like a corker, that one
does.

MR. CONNIPTION
(lifting Thomas's arm)
Look at these arms, Muffin.

He pretends to start chomping on Thomas's arm like a corn
cob.

MR. CONNIPTION (CONT'D)
Mmm, scrummy. Just kidding.

MRS. CONNIPTION
A might skinny, but he'll fill in
right nicely, I'm sure. He'll be a
wonderful addition.

MR. CONNIPTION
So, what are we waiting for?

MR. CONNIPTION (CONT'D)
(to Thomas)
Are you ready to see your palatial
estate? You've got the whole upstairs
to yourself. Shall we?

He reaches for Thomas's hand, but Thomas isn't having it.

CARETAKER
(thoroughly flustered)
Oh, dear.

MRS. THOROUGHGOOD
Come along now.
(waving documents)
We've got the papers right here.

MR. THOROUGHGOOD
But we sent in the forms more'n a
month ago and we got a response
straight away.

MR. CONNIPTION
As did we.

CARETAKER
Oh bugger, this is a bit of a sticky
wicket.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MR. CONNIPTION
(waving his own papers)
Were YOUR papers signed by the
Superior High Order himself?

MR. THOROUGHGOOD
And you are?

MR. CONNIPTION
You've not hear of the regal strain
of Conniptions? This is my better
half, Stormy.

MRS. CONNIPTION
It sounds like your documents are a
tad, shall we say...wonky.

MR. CONNIPTION
My little Apple Fritter is ever so
blunt.

MR. THOROUGHGOOD
I assure you they're perfectly legal
and binding...

MRS. THOROUGHGOOD
...And we're not leaving without
him.

MR. CONNIPTION
Nor us.

CARETAKER
(rattled)
N-n-n-ow hold up. Let me just get
to the bottom of this.

He takes Mr. Conniption's paperwork and examines it thoroughly
as both Thomas and the Thoroughgoods hang in the balance.

CARETAKER (CONT'D)
Hmm, it does appear that they have
binding legal documentation from the
highest authority in the land, which
in fact appears to trump and/or take
precedence over all other notes of
legality.

THOMAS
(scared)
What does that mean?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MR. CONNIPTION

It means you'll be coming with the loving, adoring, well-to-do, beachfront-estate-with-the-wrought-iron-gate, make-your-dreams-come-true, candy-for-dinner, Conniptions of the regal Conniption clan.

MRS. THOROUGHGOOD

Candy for dinner is not even good for a child, unless you're planning to rot his teeth out as well.

A scoffing Mr. Conniption opens the car door, inviting Thomas in. Thomas is reluctant, so he grabs Thomas's suitcase with one hand and Thomas with the other.

MR. CONNIPTION

See, we're doing you a favor, Thomas. Who would you rather have, Mr. and Mrs. pikey, wet blanket there, or the world your oyster?

With his free hand, Thomas presses his little origami bird into Mr. Thoroughgood's hand. They linger for a second, hand in hand, then Mr. Conniption drags Thomas to his car.

MR. CONNIPTION (CONT'D)

(pushing him into the back seat)

Good form, lad. You won't be sorry.

Thomas peers though the back window as the crushed Thoroughgoods try to put on brave faces.

MRS. THOROUGHGOOD

We'll be praying for you, Thomas.

They quietly slink back to their car, where Mrs. Thoroughgood wipes her teary eyes.

MR. CONNIPTION

(gloating)

Pip pip there mates.

Thomas watches them drive away. A beat later, the caretaker scoots Thomas's book box to the edge of the porch.

MR. CONNIPTION (CONT'D)

Whoa, whoaaaaa. Not so fast. What's in the box?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CARETAKER

Just a box of Mr. Meek's effects--
books and such.

MR. CONNIPTION

Are they valuable?

CARETAKER

I'd venture they have greater
sentimental value than intrinsic
value.

MR. CONNIPTION

We don't have room then, do we Pumpkin
Bread?

MRS. CONNIPTION

We're full up, Luv.

MR. CONNIPTION

Sorry, they'll have to stay.

THOMAS

(from back seat)

But I have to bring them, they're
from my father.

MR. CONNIPTION

Not possible...son.

THOMAS

Oh, please.

(to caretaker)

Please, is there any way I could
send for them?

CARETAKER

I'll see what I can do.

(whispering to Thomas)

Perhaps I can run them over myself.

Mr. Conniption gets behind the wheel.

THOMAS

(encouraged)

Please do, sir.

CARETAKER

Good day, Thomas. Be well.

The caretaker looks on as they speed away.

EXT. COASTLINE HIGHWAY - DAY

As they wind their way along the coastline, a nervous Thomas looks out with great concern.

THOMAS (V.O.)
Chin up there, Thomas. We had a foster kid once before and he adjusted quite well, all things considered, rest his soul.

MRS. CONNIPTION (V.O.)
We live right smack on the cove.

MR. CONNIPTION (V.O.)
Sure'n you can traipse on down to the dock any time you fancy.

THOMAS (V.O.)
I can?

MR. CONNIPTION (V.O.)
Of course, there's more to life than bangers and bows now isn't there? We want you to grow up with a strong work ethic.

THOMAS (V.O.)
What's that?

MR. CONNIPTION (V.O.)
It's an appreciation for the hard work it takes to get ahead in this world. Do you have it in you, Thomas Meek?

THOMAS (V.O.)
I don't rightly know.

EXT. SECLUDED DRIVEWAY - DAY

They turn up a particularly creepy driveway, and wind up a hill to a rusty metal gate, overgrown with thorns and sticker bushes.

MR. CONNIPTION
Well, search inside yourself, Master Meek.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Beyond the gate is a rundown, dilapidated, Norman Bates-looking house, adorned with dead, twisted, gnarled trees, and devoid of color. As the gate swings open, the whole scene looks gothic and surreal, even in the daylight.

MR. CONNIPTION (CONT'D)

A little painful self-reflection
never hurt anyone.

Thomas's eyes bug out and he swallows down a huge knot in his throat.

MR. CONNIPTION (CONT'D)

The last foster child we had didn't
seem to embrace the concept so
readily, and he didn't fare so well.

Thomas sets foot outside of the car and looks up at the ghastly house which almost appears to look back at him. He shudders at the sight.

MR. CONNIPTION (CONT'D)

Don't forget your belongings, Meek.

Thomas snaps out of his daze and fetches his suitcase.

INT. CONNIPTION'S HOUSE - DAY

As Thomas enters, he realizes the house is as scary on the inside as the outside.

MRS. CONNIPTION

Chivvy along and put your personals
upstairs.

He looks up the eeriest set of stairs to an uninviting upper floor.

THOMAS

Do I have to?

MR. CONNIPTION

Suit yourself. That's where your
room is.

He gazes up the stairs again, trying to muster the courage to go up.

THOMAS

So...whatever happened to your last
foster child?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The Conniptions trade suspicious looks.

MR. CONNIPTION
He uh...lacked fortitude.

THOMAS
(at a loss)
Oh.

He backs away from the stairs and pokes his head into the kitchen.

MRS. CONNIPTION
Something, I'm sure you're brimming with.

MR. CONNIPTION
I guess we'll find out right after dinner. In fact, why don't we skip dinner. I'm sure they fed you at the home.

Thomas glances at a stack of dirty dishes in the sink that are so filthy and crawling, they turn his stomach.

THOMAS
Yeah, they fed us. I'll be full up for a good long time.

MR. CONNIPTION
Good, then once you're settled, in a few minutes, you can get crackin'.

THOMAS
Get crackin' on what?

MR. CONNIPTION
Pick your poison.

EXT. MINE ENTRANCE - DAY

Mr. C and Thomas are staring into an old abandoned mine shaft. Spider webs cover the entrance and there's a "Danger Keep Out" sign posted in front. Weight-bearing beams, once used to keep the mine from caving in, have fallen and are leaning hither and fro. The whole thing screams "death trap."

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MR. CONNIPTION

You're more than welcome to dig precious minerals if it suits you. If you don't mind dog-sized rats, fist-sized spiders, and claustrophobic conditions, it's down right pleasant.

Thomas shudders.

THOMAS

I don't fancy rats at'all.

MR. CONNIPTION

Good, then don't get me started on the bats.

THOMAS

Bats?

MR. CONNIPTION

Oh, and the backbreaking digging and the crumbling mine shaft can be a mite off-putting as well. Care to take a gander?

Thomas tries to part the webs with his hand, during which he sees things slithering, creeping, and scurrying in the dark. He stops cold.

THOMAS

What are my other choices?

EXT. BEACH FRONT - DAY

Thomas stands at Mr. C's side and gazes into the cove. A single dorsal fins circle around the end of a long, wooden dock.

MR. CONNIPTION

If you can swim you can dive for pearls, but never during a full moon, more on that later. Where was I, oh yes, the cove is a veritable treasure trove, but this job has a far greater risk to reward, for obvious reasons.

THOMAS

(gulping)
Sharks?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MR. CONNIPTION

The sharks are tame compared to the barracudas. Our previous foster child was living proof of this. Well, not living proof, rest his soul. In this job you can do swimmingly well, or it can pull you under. It's feast or famine, you being the feast.

EXT. OVERGROWN GARDEN - DAY

The "garden" more resembles a jungle, overrun with nettles and sticker bushes that have taken over. At closer glance one can see it's really an overgrown junkyard--replete with springs, knobs, gears, car parts, and scrap metal for days. Thomas and Mr. C look on.

MR. CONNIPTION

Of course, if you're a neshy boy who likes to play it safe, the vegetable patch needs clearing.

THOMAS

What vegetable patch?

MR. CONNIPTION

The one under all those stickers, stingy nettles, razor chutes, and scrap metal. Mind you the snakes and jaspers have taken over to some extent, but underneath all of that is a flat, furrowed grove just waiting to be hand-fertilized.

A huge bees nest hanging over the "vegetable patch" is pulling in bees by the hundreds.

MR. CONNIPTION (CONT'D)

Compared to the others, this job is the bees knees. Of course, there is a shortcut that could render all of this pointless.

(thinking the better
of it)

Aw...it's far too dangerous.

THOMAS

(desperate)

What?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Just then, Mr. C sees Thomas's box of books that was delivered just outside the front gate.

MR. CONNIPTION
Hmm, what do we have here?

THOMAS
(recognizing the box)
My books!

Mr. C opens the gate and Thomas rushes to the box.

THOMAS (CONT'D)
Strange, he left it upside down.

Thomas turns it upright, opens it, then snatches a pair of reading glasses and a couple of books from inside.

THOMAS (CONT'D)
These were left to me by my father!

MR. CONNIPTION
Are they of any worth?

THOMAS
Only to me...they were just recently discovered.

MR. CONNIPTION
Good, and since we have no use for them, they won't be missed.

THOMAS
But they were...

MR. CONNIPTION
Belt up, boy! They'll fill your head with rubbish and make you a lazy daydreamer. Keep you from doing your chores.

THOMAS
But...please! They're all I have!

Mr. C wrestles the book away from Thomas and rips it in half. Then he goes to work on the rest of the books--ripping them apart, tearing out the pages, and tossing them into the wind.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MR. CONNIPTION

Exactly, and before you know it you'll get all sorts of grand ideas, and grandiose thoughts, and visions of grandeur.

MR. CONNIPTION (CONT'D)

(still ripping and tearing)

You'll see possibilities and dream dreams so heavenly, you won't be of any earthly good. I've seen it happen before.

He works himself into such a frenzy, he trips over a piece of scrap metal and falls down. This angers him even more and he starts tossing, swinging, and beating everything in sight.

MR. CONNIPTION (CONT'D)

There's nothing out there that toil, hard work, and more toil can't accomplish!

He flings the headpiece from a metal bedframe, barely missing a ducking Thomas. Then he punctuates his fit by hoisting up the book box and tossing it into high nettles.

MR. CONNIPTION (CONT'D)

Now get to it!

EXT. OVERGROWN GARDEN - DAY (LATER)

A sweat-drenched, filthy, Thomas is covered with cuts and swollen with bee stings. He swats at the bees as he drags a section of stickers to one side. When he turns WE SEE a couple of snakes hanging from his shirt and britches.

During this, he glances at the creepy house to see if anyone is looking. Seeing no one, he rights his overturned book box, returns the scattered books, and drags the box to a "safe" spot under the bee tree. He then covers the box with foliage, but not before snatching out his glasses and a torn book, and hiding them both in his britches. He swats another bee as he continues his work.

INT. SOCIAL SERVICES OFFICE - DAY

The Thoroughgoods are trying to get to the bottom of things with a kindly SOCIAL WORKER assisting them. She's thumbing through hundreds of files in an old wooden file cabinet.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MR. THOROUGHGOOD

He said his name was Mr. Conniption
from the regal clan of Conniptions...

MRS. THOROUGHGOOD

...And his wife's name was Stormy,
and he claimed to have papers signed
by the superior high authority.

SOCIAL WORKER

Well, we don't show any Conniptions
here, regal or other. And we--Child
Welfare--are the high authority on
such matters.

MRS. THOROUGHGOOD

So, does it sound like we have a
claim?

SOCIAL WORKER

It sounds like their paperwork is
scatty at best, and a downright
counterfeit at worse. Which if that
is the case, they're gonna be bloomin'
hard to find, and it'll be a matter
for the Ploddies and Bills. Can you
make a description of any kind?

MRS. THOROUGHGOOD

Oh, yes. He was ghastly strange,
narrow eyes, on the thin side...

(losing it)

...with a grayish lock of hair...

(breaking down)

He took our son.

Mr. Thoroughgood consoles her as she sobs.

INT. CONNIPTION'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

An aching, bleeding, exhausted Thomas drags himself in through
the front door. It's all he can do to not collapse. A
lounging Mr. and Mrs. Conniption are camped out in front of
an old TV set, practically hypnotized like zombies.

MR. CONNIPTION

Mister Meek. Doesn't it feel right
chuffy to put in an honest day's
work?

He groans.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MRS. CONNIPTION
The lad is totally spent.

MR. CONNIPTION
We're watching a chat show on the
box, Meek.

THOMAS
I heard it's not good for you to sit
so close to the telly.

MRS. CONNIPTION
You heard wrong! Go get cleaned up
for supper.

MR. CONNIPTION
And what's that in your britches,
Meek?

THOMAS
Nothing. Just swollen from a snake
bite or a bee sting.

Thomas staggers into the filthy bathroom.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

A washed up Thomas enters and finds Mr. Conniption still
glued to the set. Thomas sits down behind a TV tray, then
Mrs. Conniption enters with a pan of something slimy, and
plops a glob into Thomas's bowl.

MRS. CONNIPTION
Hungry?

THOMAS
What is it?

MRS. CONNIPTION
Boiled mussels. Eat up. There's
cutlery in the basin if you fancy
utensils.

THOMAS
(stomach turning)
I've uh...never had any...to my
remembering.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MRS. CONNIPTION

Well, you better get used to'em. We have clams for breakfast, cockles for dinner, and mussels for supper. Nice to have a variety.

THOMAS

So, the menu is mainly mollusks?

MR. CONNIPTION

You watch your language, Meek.

MRS. CONNIPTION

Oh, and Saturday is steak night.

THOMAS

(looking at bowl)

What day is today?

MRS. CONNIPTION

Today is Monday.

Thomas reluctantly takes a slippery mussel from his bowl, dangles it, and drops it down his throat. He heaves, fighting to keep it down.

THOMAS

(off stern looks)

Mmm, scrummy.

His stomach churns and gurgles in protest.

MR. CONNIPTION

And don't forget to put out the rubbish every night, or we'll have an infestation.

EXT. CONNIPTION HOUSE - NIGHT

Thomas gathers what little strength he has left and drags the rubbish out to a remote garbage bin. During this, he hears CREEPY SOUNDS and DARTING WHISPERS coming from the direction of the mine shaft.

He nervously dumps the trash as quickly as he can and is about to head back, when he forces himself to take one more glance at the mine.

He wishes he hadn't, for deep inside of the mine he sees what appears to be a pair of glowing, red, eyes peering back at him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

THOMAS

Bug...ger!

He races back to the house as fast as his legs will carry him.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT (LATER)

A candle-toting Thomas stands at the base of the frightful staircase and looks up at the shadowy second floor awaiting him.

MR. CONNIPTION

Time to turn in, Meek. Your room is the second on the right. Don't worry about the groans and rattling chains. It's just the house settling. 'Sides, we've never lost a foster kid yet... well just the one. Night.

THOMAS

Night.

Thomas extends his candle as he walks slowly up the winding stairs.

INT. CONNIPTION HOUSE - UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - NIGHT

He moves even slower down a long, creepy hallway, to the second door on the right, where he takes a courageous breath and pushes the door open.

INT. THOMAS'S ROOM - NIGHT

Thomas holds the candle inside the room first, then enters the dusty room himself. There's a bed, a filthy mattress, a chest of drawers, and not much else. He puts his candle into a holder and whistles to break the silence.

He walks to an open window and looks out at the mine shaft, where bats are circling by moonlight. Just outside the window he finds a length of rope dangling from the roof, that perhaps the last tenant used to try to escape. Thomas pulls on the rope to test it, but the rope pulls loose in his hand. He coils the rope for safekeeping, then he collapses onto the bed.

A beat later, he hears NOISES--bumps, thumps, creaks, scurrying sounds, and darting whispers. He lays there with eyes wide open. His eyes dart back and forth at the various sounds. Scared to death, he sits up and recites a prayer.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

THOMAS

From ghoolies and ghosties and long-
legged beasties, and things that go
bump in the night...good Lord deliver
me.

He's about to lay back down, when he hears a small girlish
whisper, barely loud enough to hear.

VOICE

Maybe they're friendly.

THOMAS

(freezing)
Who said that?

VOICE

(whispering)
Put your glasses on.

THOMAS

I don't wear glasses.

VOICE

The glasses in your pocket. Put
them on.

Thomas doesn't know what else to do, so he takes out his
father's glasses and slowly puts them on.

Looking through the glasses he sees a LITTLE GIRL about twelve
years old, standing before him. He doesn't make the
connection to the glasses yet, and thinks she entered
unbeknownst to him.

THOMAS

Bloomin' crikey!

Thomas nearly jumps out of his shoes. He scrambles over the
bed, so fast that he falls on the floor.

THOMAS (CONT'D)

Don't come any closer.

A beat later, he peeks over the bed to make sure he's not
hallucinating. She's gone. He heaves a sigh of relief, but
then she taps him on the back and he gasps.

LITTLE GIRL

Don't be afraid. I'm here to help
you.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

THOMAS
(beside himself)
H-h-h-help me?

Thomas snatches up the piece of rope he saved, and starts to fashion it into some kind of knot.

THOMAS (CONT'D)
I-I-I don't need help. I wanna be
left alone.

LITTLE GIRL
Aw, Thomas. Everyone needs a little
help. You especially.

THOMAS
Who are you?

LITTLE GIRL
I'm the small voice that talks to
you when you need it most.

THOMAS
What's your name?

LITTLE GIRL
I kinda like the name Birdie.

She glances at the rope which is starting to take the shape of a noose.

BIRDIE
Whatcha makin' there?

THOMAS
Nothing. None of your business.

BIRDIE
But I'm here to help you, Thomas.

THOMAS
You can't. It's hopeless. Completely
hopeless.

He breaks down and starts crying. During this, he looks at the completed hangman's noose in his hands and jerks it a couple of times to test the strength.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BIRDIE

Of course there's hope, Thomas.
It's just how you look at things.
Like that rope there. The same rope
can be used to hang someone by the
neck, or lead a donkey with precious
cargo on his back.

Thomas is drying his tears.

BIRDIE (CONT'D)

Are you gonna give up? Are you gonna
let them win?
(off his confusion)
You gotta pull yourself up by the
bootstraps, Thomas!

THOMAS

(breaking down again)
But I don't have any!
(sobbing)
No one's got it worse than me.

BIRDIE

Oh, but they do. Someone did. I
can show you a lot worse.

THOMAS

I doubt it.

BIRDIE

I can tell you've never been to
"Beyondbelief."

THOMAS

(composing himself)
Where's that?

BIRDIE

Open your book.

THOMAS

What book?

BIRDIE

The book you snuck in in your
britches.

THOMAS

How do you know about that?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BIRDIE

I know everything, Thomas. You just have to trust me.

Thomas acquiesces and takes out the torn book.

BIRDIE (CONT'D)

Hold my hand.

THOMAS

I'm afraid. Will it hurt?

BIRDIE

Hardly ever, but how are you gonna learn anything if you never crack the pages? You'll just stay at "belief" and never go beyond.

He cautiously opens the book, and his glasses miraculously allow him to enter the pages.

EXT. ANIMATED WORLD - DAY (TO ESTABLISH)

Beyondbelief looks like a fairy tale come to life--colorful and three-dimensional, yet it somehow resembles an illustration. THOMAS'S POV as he fixes his eyes on a country-style cottage, like something out of Hansel and Gretel.

THOMAS (V.O.)

Oh, my goodness! This is beyond belief!

BIRDIE (V.O.)

It surely is.

THOMAS (V.O.)

Where are we?

BIRDIE (V.O.)

BEYONDBELIEF!

THOMAS (V.O.)

(taking it in)
I had no idea!

BIRDIE (V.O.)

Well, it's not "Waybeyondbelief," but it does have its moments.

POV as they stop at the entrance of the quaint, old, country cottage. Birdie pushes the front door wide open.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

THOMAS (V.O.)
What are you doing?

BIRDIE (V.O.)
No one's home.

THOMAS (V.O.)
How do you know?

BIRDIE (V.O.)
I've read this one before.

INT. ANIMATED WORLD - COUNTRY COTTAGE - DAY

MORE POV as Birdie leads Thomas into the empty cottage.

THOMAS (V.O.)
It truly is amazing here.

BIRDIE (V.O.)
Well, of course it is, silly. If it were just regular ordinary, it wouldn't be beyondbelief now, would it?

STILL POV as Thomas sees a couple of troll-looking creatures scurrying in the shadows. He recoils.

THOMAS (V.O.)
Blimey, I thought you said there was no one here!

BIRDIE (V.O.)
Oh, those. Those are just Scuttlebumps.
(off confusion)
You know...the things that scuttle around and go bump in the night? Really quite harmless. A little shy, especially in the light of day.

Birdie narrates the story which unfolds right before Thomas's astonished eyes. As part of Thomas's imagination, the style might resemble the same junk art, piecemeal, sensibility of his future room decor and garden inventions--giving a hint of things to come.

BIRDIE (V.O.)
When everyone has gone to bed,

when everyone's asleep.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

When every single light is out,
and no one hears a peep.

When everything is very still,
and no one is about.

When all around there's not a sound,
the Scuttlebumps come out.

Now Racer he was happy
rubbing pencils on their head.

But Inker wasn't happy
with the pens in which he bled.

So Inker said to Racer,

"No more offices and dens!

Let's take a break from pencils,
tables, desktops, drawers, and pens."

And so they did, they set off for
a side they'd never pondered.

The side where grass was greener,
to "the other side" they wandered.

The side with all those gliding,
soaring, parachuting squinters.

Yeah, no one has it better than
the Belly Button Linters.

Dunking lint in belly buttons

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ranks as number one,
unless you count the "Bungy three,"
whose jobs are just as fun.

The Sleeper drops the sleep-stuff
in the corner of your eye.

The Drooler hits your mouth with spit,
he really lets it fly.

The Stinker was the last to bungy
downward in the dark.

The last to pounce, the last to bounce,
the last to leave his mark.

The last to dangle down the line
and leave the kiss of death.

The last to shimmy up the line
and leave you morning breath.

But Inker hadn't seen it all,
although he had seen gobs.

For Racer showed him one thing more--
the queen of all bad jobs.

Yes, this job was the ghastliest.

Yeah, this job was a zinger.

Yes, this job was the thankless
occupation of The Ringer.

The Toilet Basin Ringer

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

was this guy's official name.
And putting rings on toilet bowls
was an official shame.
But someone had to do it, and
although it wasn't fun...
if no one did the dirty work,
how would that work get done?

Then at that very second,
the message took a toll.
For at that very moment,
at that very toilet bowl...
Inker got the thing he lacked
from Ringer's demonstration.
Inker got what he "had not."
He got appreciation.

INT. THOMAS'S ROOM - NIGHT

Thomas returns to the creepy dusty room, but behind his
glasses there's a glimmer of hope in his eyes.

THOMAS

Thanks Birdie...for everything.

BIRDIE

Any time, Thomas. I'm always a
whisper away. And remember, your
father left you with everything you
need, but you gotta believe.
Sometimes even "beyond believe."
Now get some sleep.

Thomas takes off the glasses and Birdie disappears. He takes
the noose from his bed and tosses it into the corner of the
closet. He hides his book and glasses under the mattress.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Then he lays back and falls fast asleep.

INT. CONNIPTION'S HOUSE - DAY

The next morning an inspired Thomas comes bounding down the stairs with a bounce in his step and the gleam still in his eyes. Mr. and Mrs. Conniption are already glued to the TV.

MRS. CONNIPTION
How was your night, Master Meek?

THOMAS
Quite restful, ma'am.

He pokes his head into the kitchen, gurgles down a cupful of gooey clams, then wipes his mouth as he exits to do his chores.

THOMAS (CONT'D)
By the way, I met Birdie last night.

MRS. CONNIPTION
Beg your pardon?

THOMAS
I met your tenant upstairs.

Mr. and Mrs. Conniption trade confused looks.

MRS. CONNIPTION
We 'aven't any tenants.

THOMAS
Well, whoever she is. Cheerio.

MR. CONNIPTION
What's up with him, my Cream Puff?

MRS. CONNIPTION
Maybe he's gone barmey.

MR. CONNIPTION
I think he's off his trolley, that one.

INT. OLD-FASHIONED POLICE STATION - DAY

A uniformed, CONSTABLE-LOOKING OFFICER is taking the Thoroughgood's statement.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

OFFICER

Did he say anything about their whereabouts? Anything at'all?

MRS. THOROUGHGOOD

Nothing, but do you think the caretaker at the foster home might have his posty address?

OFFICER

The caretaker left town with no forwarding for the posty, so we've not much to go on. That and the fact he's rumored to be off his nut, but our office will be steadfast and resolute to the task of trackin' down his whereabouts as best we can...given the circumstances.

MR. THOROUGHGOOD

The Conniption fellow did say they were well off, with an estate by the beach, behind a wrought-iron gate.

OFFICER

Well, that might narrow the search considerably. I wish I could do more, but we're a tad bit short on manpower, as you can see.

EXT. GARDEN - DAY

Thomas is better equipped this time, having wrapped his hands and neck in rags to protect himself from the nettles, stickers, bees, and so on. He puts on a determined face and even whistles a happy tune as he braves the elements and clears the jungle-like shrubbery for all he's worth.

During this, he stops and studies how an ivy chute has woven its way through the metal bed post Mr. C tossed against a tree. Thomas gets an idea. He secures the bedframe to the tree with wire, for it to be used as a trellis.

EXT. GARDEN - DAY

Later on his shift, Thomas takes a break from his garden work to pick through the scrap metal, and retrieve a number of "usable" items.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He then bends, twists, and fashions a sculpture--which doubles as a fountain--with various levels, stair-stepping up, and basins to catch the water.

When he's finished he tests it by dumping a pot of water into the highest catch. The water amazingly flows from one basin to the next, all the way to the bottom, without spilling a drop.

After this, a satisfied Thomas sneak a couple more books from the box into the back of his britches.

INT. CONNIPTION'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DUSK

That evening a tired Thomas drags himself inside and collapses into a creaky rocking chair, as Mr. and Mrs. Conniption remain planted in front of the TV, eating off of trays.

MR. CONNIPTION

Already done, are we?

THOMAS

We are.

MR. CONNIPTION

Pretty chuffed with yourself, are yuh?

THOMAS

I guess.

MR. CONNIPTION

Don't you get cheeky with me, boy, unless you want your ears boxed.

THOMAS

(at a loss)

What?

MR. CONNIPTION

You can't diddle a diddler. I know what you did. Give'em to me right this instant. They're in your britches.

A guilty Thomas is about to come clean and surrender his books, when Mr. Conniption continues.

MR. CONNIPTION (CONT'D)

You wrapped your hands with torn rags. Give'em up right now.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

A relieved Thomas turns over the torn rags from his pockets.

MR. CONNIPTION (CONT'D)

What are these for? So you can have neshy little, dishwater, ballerina hands? You make me ill.

Thomas hangs his head.

MR. CONNIPTION (CONT'D)

You need to build up calluses so your hands are fit for hard labor.

THOMAS

Why?

MR. CONNIPTION

Because you're a daft little, half penny, duffer and you don't have the smarts to do anything else, lad.

MRS. CONNIPTION

You're a dim bulb, son.

MR. CONNIPTION

You're a blunt tool.

MRS. CONNIPTION

A gormless twit. What skills have yuh got?

THOMAS

I can tie a water knot, or a clove hitch, or even a double fisherman.

MR. CONNIPTION

See, yuh ain't got no brains like us, so yuh gotta learn a trade.

THOMAS

Why?

MR. CONNIPTION

Why? So you can make money and become important...

(pointing to TV)

...like these posh people.

MRS. CONNIPTION

Don't you ever watch TV?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

THOMAS

We never had...

MR. CONNIPTION

Poor people are lesser people.

MRS. CONNIPTION

Small people are weak.

MR. CONNIPTION

Have's have, and have nots...haven't.

MRS. CONNIPTION

That's some heady thinkin', Luv.

MR. CONNIPTION

Thanks, my Strudel.

MRS. CONNIPTION

(to Thomas)

Meek people, like yourself, are doormats. Pushy people get what they want.

MR. CONNIPTION

People with suits are important.

(re: his own worn out
excuse for a suit)

Case in point.

MRS. CONNIPTION

So are rich people with lots of houses and cars, and who take long holidays.

THOMAS

But...

MR. CONNIPTION

Put a sock in it, Meek. We're makin' a point here.

MRS. CONNIPTION

Famous people are smart because... they're famous.

MR. CONNIPTION

You, Thomas Meek, are not smart and never will be. You are nothing.

THOMAS

But I thought everyone was valuable.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MR. CONNIPTION

Meek, that's about the biggest crock of codwallop I've ever heard. If everyone was valuable, there would be no one not valuable, so no one would be more valuable than the next. Hence, no one would have any value whatsoever.

MRS. CONNIPTION

Brilliant.

MR. CONNIPTION

Thanks, my little Butter Croissant.

MR. CONNIPTION (CONT'D)

(to Thomas)

Of course, you're too dimwitted to get any of that, so go to bed. You disgust me.

Thomas gets up and starts slinking up the stairs like a wounded animal.

MR. CONNIPTION (CONT'D)

What a bloomin' gorm.

(to Thomas)

The only way you could ever be valuable...never mind.

Thomas hesitates at the top of the stairs.

THOMAS

How?

MR. CONNIPTION

You don't wanna know. It's not for you.

THOMAS

Tell me.

Mr. and Mrs. Conniption trade suspicious looks.

MR. CONNIPTION

...Is if you somehow were able to find the lost treasure of Malta. I told you it was ridiculous.

THOMAS

Where is it?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MR. CONNIPTION

Well, legend has it sunken, buried,
or hidden in, on, or around this
very cove, but the exact whereabouts
nobody knows.

THOMAS

But it's only a legend?

MR. CONNIPTION

Oh, it's no legend. It's as real as
the beauty mark on my Bran Muffin's
face.

Mrs. Connipation turns for all to see this thing of beauty,
with a single, wiry, hair protruding from it.

MR. CONNIPTION (CONT'D)

But it's a bloomin' needle in a
haypatch...of course if someone such
as yourself were to discover the
treasure, and the giant pearl it is
rumored to contain, all your problems
would be over. We could all retire
to the good life.

(to his wife)

Aw, I'm wastin' my time on this one,
Fancy Cake.

MR. CONNIPTION (CONT'D)

(to Thomas)

Go to bed.

EXT. COASTAL HIGHWAY - DUSK

SHOT OF THOROUGHGOOD'S CAR as they search for a house that
might fit the description.

MRS. THOROUGHGOOD (V.O.)

What about that one?

MR. THOROUGHGOOD (V.O.)

Doesn't have an iron gate.

MRS. THOROUGHGOOD (V.O.)

This seems a bit futile, doesn't it?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MR. THOROUGHGOOD (V.O.)

There's only a couple hundred miles of coastline. How many palatial estates with wrought-iron gates could there be?

INT. THOMAS'S ROOM - NIGHT

Thomas pulls the torn books from his britches and is about to put on his glasses, when he decides to check to see if the coast is clear. He reaches for the doorknob, when suddenly, the door flies open revealing a ghastly Mr. C, standing in the doorway holding the heaping trash bin.

Thomas gasps at the sight.

MR. CONNIPTION

If you don't fancy puttin' out the rubbish, maybe you prefer to wallow in it.

He tosses the garbage into the room and exits, slamming the door behind him. Thomas heaves a sigh, relieved he didn't see his books.

INT. THOMAS'S ROOM - NIGHT (LATER)

Thomas has his special glasses on and is talking to Birdie at his bedside.

BIRDIE

That's pure hogwash, Thomas Meek! There is a pearl of great price, but it's not the one he's talking about, and it's not in some grove, cave, or cove. And never ever let anyone tell you you're not valuable, Thomas. Everyone is valuable.

THOMAS

But they said...

BIRDIE

Never mind what they said. They're wrong. It's not who you are that makes you valuable, it's whose you are. And you come from great stock, Thomas.

THOMAS

My father?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BIRDIE

Yes'n if you don't know you're an eagle, instead of soaring you're gonna be scratching around like a turkey.

THOMAS

I don't get it.

BIRDIE

Let me show you.

Birdie pulls one of the books from Thomas's back pocket and opens it. Thomas peers at the open book through his glasses and they both enter the pages.

EXT. BEYONDBELIEF- ANIMATED WORLD - DAY

Birdie narrates "Puny Giants & Jumbo Shrimp." Scenes are animated as described, continuing with the found art, garbage-turned-treasure, motif.

BIRDIE (V.O.)

Once there were two villages
a stone throw from each other,
but never did they intertwine,
if either had their druther.

And it was fairly obvious
to tell which one was which.
For one was on a mountain side,
and one was in a ditch.
The former was comprised of giants,
bigger than two blimps.
The latter boasted gimpy, impy,
wimpy, little shrimps.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Now as was common, Shrimpies built
a church from money lended.
But they came up a little short,
and that's no pun intended.
The Shrimpies weren't so short on cash,
but more so, short on people.
For no one in their ranks could put
the top on their new steeple.

The giants had a problem too--
one of their own volition.
For every year they staged a crèche,
and it was their tradition.
But this year that nativity
appeared to be in danger.
For no one had hands small enough
to place the babe in manger.

So each town sent a messenger
to reach out to the other.
The giants thought to send "Big Ben."
Instead they sent his brother.
This brother was a pushy sort,
and just a tad defiant.
But ne'er would he scare the shrimps.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He was a puny giant.

The Shrimpies had the same chagrin,
for empty was their coffer.

Should they take out a loan for one
who had a lot to offer?

Or should they think outside the box,
and find a cheaper imp?

But who would ever measure up?

They chose a jumbo shrimp.

The puny giant headed west.

The shrimpy headed east.

The shrimpy got a little scared.

The giant none the least.

And one stuck out his massive chest.

One cowered like a wimp.

One was a puny giant,

the other jumbo shrimp.

The giant knew that he could conquer
any in his path.

And so he walked straight on, no one
would dare to face his wrath.

The jumbo shrimp he ducked, and bobbed,
and weaved, because "His Impness,"

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

did not want to call attention
to his jumbo shrimpness.
Then somewhere in the middle there,
these messengers they met.
And guessing who was taller, well...
was anybody's bet.

So they went back to Shrimpville first,
and folks were so impressed,
to see a giant of the stature
which they had been blessed.
And they were even more impressed--
these shrimpy little people--
when he climbed up his counterpart
and then topped off the steeple.

And then they left--this sorted pair--
to village-wide elation.
The puny giant soaked it in
and relished their ovation.
But jumbo shrimp just slinked away,
until the crowds abated.
And he pressed on, but none too fast,
afraid of what awaited.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BIRDIE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
And so on and so forth.

THOMAS (V.O.)
Aw, bugger. Don't tell me...

BIRDIE (V.O.)
Yes, there are a few pages missing,
but you get the point. The only
difference was how they saw
themselves.

INT. THOMAS'S ROOM - NIGHT

Thomas returns to his garbage-filled room.

BIRDIE
Look at what you made in the garden,
Thomas. You have so much talent
inside of you.

THOMAS
But they treat me like rubbish.

BIRDIE
So, what? He meant it for evil.
You make it for good.

Thomas picks up an egg carton, then a milk carton, picking through the trash and studying each, like an artist choosing his palate. He rescues a spool, shoestring, broken glass, bottle caps, even a pair of beetles that he sweeps into a cup.

MONTAGE PT.1--MUSIC UP

EXT. GARDEN - DAY

Thomas takes a break from his garden work to craft some more art out of twisted steel.

SHOTS OF THOMAS--salvaging metal scraps, car parts, and various junk.

Cutting pieces of metal.

Twisting and pounding steel.

Flattening, bending, manipulating.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Forging scrap into something special, but yet to be determined.

EXT. GARDEN - DAY

The patch is almost clear now and beginning to take shape. Gone are the razor chutes, nettles, sticker bushes, and such.

The junk is piled high in one stack, including his junk art creations, but altogether it looks like one big mess, and you'd never know what treasures are hidden within.

EXT. CONNIPTION'S HOUSE - DAY

Thomas slurps down his crustaceous breakfast and heads to the garden for the daily grind, and what a grind it is.

EXT. GARDEN - DAY

Thomas straps some makeshift spikes to the bottom of his shoes...

EXT. GARDEN - DAY

...then Thomas harnesses himself to a homemade plow-blade--like a mule--and furrows the rows of dirt by the sweat of his brow and the strength of his back.

EXT. GARDEN - DAY

The heat of the day is taking a toll on Thomas as he tills works the soil. The bugs are especially voracious this day. Thomas swats, shoos, and waves at flying creatures all day, and when he's not doing that, he's sucking or dabbing his wounds and wiping his brow. His spikes dig into the soil and give him traction.

EXT. GARDEN - DAY

During his break, he's about to smuggle a few books into his britches, but he's distracted by the sight of the old, abandoned, mine shaft. Instead of smuggling the books, he tosses them back and takes the opportunity to slip over and investigate the old mine. MONTAGE MUSIC FADES

EXT. MINE ENTRANCE - WATER WELL - DAY

On his way to the mine, Thomas happens upon an old-fashioned, overgrown, water well, almost hidden by foliage. He peels off some of the shrubbery and discovers the old-style wooden bucket and hand-crank still intact.

EXT. CONNIPTION'S HOUSE - DRIVEWAY - DAY

Meanwhile, the Thoroughgoods are driving up the creepy driveway to the twisted, wrought-iron gate.

EXT. WATER WELL - DAY

Thomas stands at the well and fishes a single penny from his tattered trousers. He kisses the penny, then drops it into the well, while making the most earnest wish he can muster.

His face contorts with concentration as he wishes as hard as he can.

INT. THOROUGHGOOD'S CAR - DAY

It seems to be working. The Thoroughgoods are so close, but they take one look at the rundown house and shake their heads.

MRS. THOROUGHGOOD

It does have a wrought-iron gate.

MR. THOROUGHGOOD

I doubt if anyone has live here for years.

They back out and continue their search, just missing Thomas and his garden mere yards away.

EXT. WATER WELL - DAY

Oblivious to all of this, Thomas waits a couple beats for something to happen. Nothing does happen, so he shrugs and goes back to his grueling garden grind.

EXT. MINE ENTRANCE - NIGHT

That night, by the light of a big full moon, Thomas stands at the entrance of the dilapidated mine and clears the webs aside. He leans in and HEARS SOUNDS coming from deep inside the foreboding old shaft, but he's careful not to enter or even set foot inside.

A beat later, Thomas puts on his special glasses to see a little better, and is relieved to see Birdie standing there beside him.

THOMAS

Oh, hiya. I was just out here...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BIRDIE

I know what you're thinkin' and it's a bad idea. Especially on a full moon.

THOMAS

What? I was just looking. Believe me it would be unthinkable. And what's all the hush hush about the full moon?

BIRDIE

You don't wanna know. You think you have trouble sleeping now...?

Thomas continues to wistfully gaze.

THOMAS

Hypothetically, if you were gonna hide a treasure, where would you put it? Where no one would dare go.

BIRDIE

Stop. You wanna see what could happen if you go down that path?

She glances at her wristwatch and marks the time. Just then, the bats shriek and flee the cave as fast as they can fly.

THOMAS

What's happening?

BIRDIE

Watch.

She pulls him back a couple of steps from the cave entrance. Clouds move in quick-time across the full moon. The wind picks up and the trees blow.

EXT. COVE - NIGHT

In the middle of the cove, the water begins to swell and then to wake, as something big moves just under the surface.

BIRDIE (V.O.)

It comes from open water.

THOMAS (V.O.)

What does?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BIRDIE (V.O.)
You'll see.

EXT. MINE ENTRANCE - NIGHT

Birdie continues to time this unusual event, even as the last bat departs.

THOMAS
What's...?

Birdie holds a finger to her lips to shush Thomas. The cave is still. Eerie silence ensues.

EXT. COVE - NIGHT

As the beast draws nearer it leaves a wake the size of an ocean liner.

EXT. MINE ENTRANCE - NIGHT

The SHRIEK of the bats is replaced by a LOW RUMBLING MOAN that sends a chill down Thomas's spine. His eyes dart nervously, but more silence ensues. Birdie continues to time the event.

BIRDIE
This mine goes clear down to the cove.

EXT. SEA CAVE ENTRANCE - NIGHT

WE SEE the end of the serpent's tail as it slithers into the ocean end of the cave.

BIRDIE (V.O.)
And sometimes he'll slither all the way up.

Gulp. Thomas staggers back a couple of steps, but Birdie takes his hand and holds him steady.

THOMAS
I-I-I'm outta here.

BIRDIE
You're fine right here, but don't get any closer.

She makes a definitive line in the dirt with her foot.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BIRDIE (CONT'D)

It'll devour anything in its path.

THOMAS

No problem. I can see from...

Suddenly, a pair of red eyes appear from deep inside the cave--the serpent, BELLOWING like a beastly dragon from the pit of hell.

Thomas tries to scream, but he's so terrified nothing comes out. Instead he staggers and stammers, as Birdie marks the final time.

BIRDIE

Three minutes on the button. Like clockwork.

The giant serpent rumbles the support beams and threatens to collapse the whole mine, before retreating back into the bowels of the cave as quickly as it came.

Thomas gulps down a huge knot in his throat.

THOMAS

WHAT WAS THAT?

BIRDIE

Oh, that. The leviathan, serpent-y creature? I like to call him "small fry" or "fluffy" because he was really no match for your father.

THOMAS

What do you mean, no match for my father?

BIRDIE

Just what I said. The serpent didn't stand a chance against your old man.

THOMAS

My father was a sailor?

BIRDIE

Higher.

THOMAS

A sea captain?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BIRDIE

Higher.

THOMAS

(impressed)

Higher than a sea captain?

BIRDIE

He was a fisherman.

THOMAS

(deflated)

That's not so high.

BIRDIE

Oh Thomas, in Waybeyondbelief it's
the highest thing you can be.

THOMAS

How do you get there? I suppose you
gotta believe, no beyond believe...
way beyond believe?

BIRDIE

No Thomas, you just gotta believe.

THOMAS

So, what big fish did he catch?

BIRDIE

He caught'em all--big, small,
slippery. He even caught the serpent
once.

THOMAS

Clear off!!! What happened?

BIRDIE

He let'im go 'cause he was too puny
to keep.

THOMAS

Get stuffed!

BIRDIE

I'm serious.

THOMAS

How long have you known my father?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BIRDIE
Since the beginning.

THOMAS
Tell me more about him. Was he a
good man?

BIRDIE
Oh, Thomas...people still talk about
him.

They talk as they head back toward the house, hand in hand.

INT. GARDEN - DAY

Thomas is toiling in the garden when he gets tired and takes an art break. He steps over to the pile of junk and is about to work his magic, when he sees Mr. C peering at him from the other side of the pile.

MR. CONNIPTION
Meek.

Thomas nearly leaps out of his shoes.

THOMAS
Yes, sir.

MR. CONNIPTION
Quite a bloomin', bulbous, pile of
scrap there lad. Think we could
make a quid or two off of it?

THOMAS
I don't rightly know.

MR. CONNIPTION
Well, keep it up.

He exits, and Thomas heaves a sigh of relief. After this, Thomas looses a piece of twisted metal from the scrap pile and we realize it's the sculpture/fountain he fashioned earlier. He carries it to a corner of the garden and sets it in place.

MONTAGE PT.2--MUSIC UP

EXT. GARDEN - DAY

Piece by piece Thomas pulls the mountain of junk apart revealing one masterpiece after the next.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

A weather vane fashioned of springs and metal.

Bird houses and feeders made of gas cans, broken boxes, and broken tools.

Sculptures out of car parts and chrome, hubcaps and lights.

Junk art wind chimes, windmills, a swing, a bench, a teeter-totter.

Step ladder shelves, with potted plants on every rung.

Planters out of car trunks.

EXT. GARDEN - DAY

The garden itself is taking shape, with Thomas planting and seeding in nicely furrowed rows, aligned by his artistic creations. It's quite a sight.

INT. THOMAS'S ROOM - DAY

Thomas's room is taking shape as well, as he uses the emptied trash to make ingenious creations including--

Chandeliers of old cups.

Mosaics of broken glass.

Amazing collages and mobiles.

Egg carton paintings.

Curtains out of rags.

Robots, faces, and other creations out of springs, gears, spools, keys, buttons, nails, screws, and found materials.

INT. THOMAS'S ROOM - DAY

The room has been transformed from a sterile cell to a homey, inviting bedroom.

INT. THOMAS'S ROOM - DAY

Thomas carefully frames the prized picture of his father in a popcycle stick frame of his own creation. He places it on the nightstand beside his bed.

INT. THOMAS'S ROOM - DAY

Thomas watches his two beetle friends run around a shoe box house he's fashioned, that much resembles the home with a white picket fence that he desires for himself.

EXT. GARDEN - DAY

Thomas stands in a beautifully decorated, furrowed patch, where there was once nettles and stickers.

He's putting the finishing touches on a scrap metal sculpture of a dove that is an exact six-foot replica of the origami bird he gave to Mrs. Thoroughgood. MONTAGE MUSIC FADES.

INT. THOROUGHGOOD'S CAR - DAY

Mrs. Thoroughgood is gazing thoughtfully at the origami in her hand as she and her husband wait at a crossroads, wondering if they should continue.

MR. THOROUGHGOOD

Do ya think we should turn back now,
Hun? Runnin' low on food and petrol
and all. You might be right about
that goose chase.

MRS. THOROUGHGOOD

(off origami)
Let's give it another few miles, at
least until we run out of daylight.

Mr. Thoroughgood nods and they continue on.

INT. THOMAS'S ROOM - NIGHT

Clad in his glasses, Thomas is at the window, staring out at the moonlit cove.

The sharks are back and circling again, just like normal.

BIRDIE

Don't even think about it, Thomas.
Don't let it get the better of you.

THOMAS

But things would be so much easier.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BIRDIE

You have a good heart Thomas Meek,
but greed will devour you from head
to toe, just like the serpent.

THOMAS

It won't.

During this, a mouse pokes his head out of a hole in the wall, then ventures well out into the room.

BIRDIE

It will. It'll start out small,
like that mouse poking about, getting
braver and braver, and pretty soon
the unthinkable will become thinkable.

(re: mouse hole)

You should plug that hole by the
way, and nip it in the bud.

THOMAS

I ain't stickin' my mitts down any
dark hole.

BIRDIE

I thought you had the stomach for
it.

THOMAS

I'm almost certain my stomach will
say no to a rat hole.

He shudders at the thought.

BIRDIE

And same with the roaches.

THOMAS

They're beetles.

BIRDIE

Well, yuh can't keep just two. Have
you not ever heard of Stewart Newart?

Birdie plucks a book from Thomas's back pocket and opens the pages. She takes him by the hand.

BIRDIE (CONT'D)

Come with me.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

THOMAS
(reluctant)
Do I have to?

He heaves a sigh, then looks at the pages through his special glasses. They enter.

INT. ANIMATED WORLD - DAY (TO ESTABLISH)

Birdie narrates excerpts of Humongous Fungus.

BIRDIE (V.O.)

When Stewart was a little boy
he saw the warning signs.
His kindergarten teacher said,
"Don't color outside the lines."
And as he grew the list grew too,
sometimes he couldn't win.
Don't pet stray dogs or even cats,
you don't know where they've been.

Don't sit so close to that TV.
Don't lay around all day.
And don't make ugly faces or
your face'll stay that way.
Don't swim right after eating, son,
you'll get a cramp and die.
Don't ever run with scissors, boy,
or you'll put out your eye.

'Till one day Stewart went to school

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

and he could take no more.

So Stewart made a Stewart stew
to even up the score.

A pinch of slime, a dash of mold,
and last but not the least,
an overflowing, seeping, heaping
tablespoon of yeast.

And so he did, but then it started
moving, don't you know.

Then it began to crawl about,
and it began to grow.

So Stewart fetched a mop, but in
the time it took to do it,
the slimy fellow grew enough
to eat a desk and chew it.

As Stewart slammed the door, his teacher
tapped him on the back.

And Stewart nearly almost had
a double heart-attack.

Then Stewart said, "There's something there,
in not a friendly mood.

If I were you, I'd stay out here,
or you might be its food."

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

"Oh, nonsense," said the teacher.

"Are you in your proper mind?

I doubt if anyone has seen a
something of this kind.

And so he turned the doorknob
and he opened up the door.

And there it was, four times as big
as it had been before.

It swallowed up the teacher, gulp--
two hundred pounds in all--
and then it gave a mighty burp
and headed down the hall.

It swallowed up most every coach
and teacher it could find.

The more it ate the more it grew,
the less it left behind.

And then it crept down Stewart's street,
as quiet as a mouse.

And then it ate Stew's parents and
it gobbled up his house.

And Stewart learned to heed advice,
and not to be so hasty.

Especially when those near to him

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

appear to be quite tasty.

A little thing can grow into a
problem quite humongous.

Or it might be a gross, obnoxious,
big, humongous fungus.

INT. THOMAS'S ROOM - NIGHT

Thomas puts his glasses in a safe place and exits for dinner.

MRS. CONNIPTION (O.S.)
Come'n get it!

INT. CONNIPTION'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Thomas is seated at his TV tray, when Mrs. Conniption slaps
a piece of actual meat down on his plate.

MRS. CONNIPTION
It's steak night, Meek. Eat up.

THOMAS
(beside himself)
Oh, blast! I thought this day would
never come!

He tears into it with his knife like a kid possessed, as Mr.
Conniption looks on.

MR. CONNIPTION
Easy boy. It's not about to run
off.

Undaunted, Thomas stabs a piece of steak and gobbles it like
he's never eaten before. A few bites into it, however, he
realizes it tastes a little strange. He slows down.

MR. CONNIPTION (CONT'D)
Something wrong, Meek?

THOMAS
(mouth full)
What kinda steak is this?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MRS. CONNIPTION
Liver steak. What do you think?

THOMAS
(still unable to
swallow)
Liver from what?

MRS. CONNIPTION
From the butcher, yuh berky, little
twit. And it wasn't free, so you're
gonna eat every bite, and quit your
complainin'.

MR. CONNIPTION
Yeah, you stroppy little ingrate.
That's considered a delicacy in many
countries.

Thomas nearly gags as he powers his way through his "steak" with the squinting Conniptions watching his every bite.

INT. THOMAS'S ROOM - NIGHT

There's a KNOCK at the door, where Thomas now has a board wedged against the knob, acting as a lock. Thomas unwedges it and opens the door to find Mr. C, standing there with a trash bin in his hand.

MR. CONNIPTION
Forget something, Meek?

He's about to heave the trash, when he sees that Thomas has transformed the room using the last bin of trash. He comes unglued.

MR. CONNIPTION (CONT'D)
So, this is how you bloody make use
of your time, is it Meek? You think
you can weave straw into gold, do
ya?

THOMAS
I-I-I didn't mean...

MR. CONNIPTION
Think you can make a mug of me, do
ya? That just takes the bloomin'
biscuit!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Mr. C pitches another complete fit--tearing down chandelier, mobiles, curtains, mosaic, and smashing Thomas's creations, until the whole room is trashed.

THOMAS

Please, sir. Please don't. Noooo!

As Mr. C exits, he stamps down on the beetles and their house and crushes them both. CRUNCH! Then he slams the door behind him, leaving Thomas to stew in the aftermath.

INT. GARDEN - DAY

On a mission, a jaded Thomas marches right through the middle of his garden.

Chutes are poking up and bulbs are beginning to bloom, but Thomas steps right on top of them as he goes--knocking over his junk art masterpieces along the way.

EXT. MINE ENTRANCE - DAY

Not stopping, Thomas marches right into the cave entrance and keeps right on going. Then silence ensues. More silence. Eventually, Thomas breaks the silence with a scream.

THOMAS

OH, SQUIDGE!!!

Amidst a thousand ear-piercing SHRIEKS, Thomas comes running out of the cave covered with bats--with a couple of snakes, and crawling things hanging on for good measure.

INT. CONNIPTION'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Later, a filthy, web-covered Thomas enters the house, bitten and bleeding from head to toe.

MR. CONNIPTION

Well, look who just put in a real days work today.

THOMAS

(groaning)
Are widow bites deadly?

MR. CONNIPTION

Nothing of the sort.

THOMAS

Scorpion stings?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MR. CONNIPTION

No more so than a ray or a jellyfish.

THOMAS

Asps?

MR. CONNIPTION

That one you may want to suck out
the poison.

THOMAS

Rabid bats?

MR. CONNIPTION

I doubt they're rabid, but they are
carnivorous, and quite voracious.

MRS. CONNIPTION (O.S.)

Our previous tenant found that out
the hard way.

MR. CONNIPTION

Of course, they much prefer something
a tad more bite-sized. Then again,
if there's enough of them and they're
hungry--like this time of year--
one bite errr...bat for every square
inch of you...well, you do the math.

Mrs. Connption enters with a pan full of gooey shellfish.

MR. CONNIPTION (CONT'D)

Look at our boy, Ginger Snap. And
you thought he was a dimwitted, namby
pamby, who would never amount to
anything.

Thomas is getting a tad lightheaded and has to plop down in
a chair.

MRS. CONNIPTION

Maybe Mr. Meek has more on the ball
than we gave him credit for.

MR. CONNIPTION

(to Thomas)

Treasure hunting is some hard work,
Meek, but it's a noble profession,
and remember...you are what you do.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

In trying to suck the poison out of his arm, he finally grows faint and passes out.

MRS. CONNIPTION
The boy is finally gettin' it.

MR. CONNIPTION
That he is, Rum Raisin. That he is.

INT. THOMAS'S ROOM - NIGHT

Thomas is on hands and knees, searching through the rubble that Mr. C created during his fit.

Thomas goes through piece by piece until he finds what he's looking for--the framed picture of his father. He picks it up, dusts it off, and lovingly places it back onto his nightstand.

INT. THOMAS'S ROOM - NIGHT (LATER)

A groggy Thomas wakes up with a splitting headache. He puts his glasses on and finds a very upset Birdie standing there with her hands on her hips.

BIRDIE
I told you it's not what you do!
It's about believin'!

THOMAS
(aching)
I know.

BIRDIE
They're selling you a bill of goods,
Thomas. You're smarter than that,
aren't you?

THOMAS
You'd think.

Thomas examines a couple of his swelling, throbbing bites.

BIRDIE
You went after the treasure, didn't
you?
(off his guilty sigh)
You're becoming just like them.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

THOMAS

Nah. I'm not gonna let it get better
of me.

Birdie's not hearing it. She puts her fingers in her ears
and drowns out his voice with her own.

BIRDIE

I don't wanna hear it.

THOMAS

Is it so wrong to want a tad more
for myself? Can't you just be a
mite bit helpful?

BIRDIE

I am helping you.

Birdie goes to the secret hiding place under Thomas's mattress
and pulls out a book.

THOMAS

You know, I'm not really feeling so
cheery.

BIRDIE

Blue around the gills?

THOMAS

And hungry, but too nauseous to eat
mussels.

He rolls into bed, fully dressed.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BIRDIE

Hungry, huh? Just like my friends. There once were a couple of travelers who wanted to get to the new world so badly they spent everything they had on some third class tickets on an ocean liner, but in doing so they didn't have any money left over for food. By the first week they had eaten through all their rations and by the second week they were starving. Finally on the verge of starvation, the man went up to the main deck and asked an attendant if they might eat some table scraps lest they starve. To which the attendant replied, "Why sir, the meals were included in the price of your fare. Everything was taken care of. Get it? They'd been starving needlessly.

(off silence)

Thomas?

He starts snoring.

EXT. GARDEN - SCRAP HEAP - DAY

Thomas stands at what remains of the scrap heap, tearing rags again, but this time--instead of wrapping his hands--he shoves the rags into a rusty old engine block and soaks up some of the oil from the pan.

EXT. GARDEN - SCRAP HEAP - DAY

Moments later, he takes the oily rags and wraps them around a stick, fashioning a makeshift, but functional torch.

INT. CONNIPTION'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Thomas is at his TV tray, awaiting dinner, when Mrs. Conniption comes walking in with a liver steak on the end of a fork and plops it down on Thomas's plate.

MRS. CONNIPTION

Steak night, Meek. Eat your fill.

This time Thomas is prepared, with a plastic bag tucked inside the neck of his shirt. It's covered by a bib so instead of biting his pieces of steak, he drops them into the pouch in his shirt.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Mr. Conniption squints at Thomas as he pretends to chew his food.

MR. CONNIPTION
 Growin' on yuh, is it Meek?
 (off grunt)
 You're sure puttin' it away.

THOMAS
 That I am, sir. That I am.

EXT. MINE ENTRANCE - DAY

Thomas uses his special glasses to magnify the sunlight onto his makeshift torch, until it bursts into flames. He musters up his courage, then he descends into the cave, torch in hand.

INT. CAVE - DAY

Once inside, creatures slither and scurry in every direction, and bugs crawl beneath his feet as he descends deeper into the cave. He swats at bugs and shakes off crawling things as he goes.

He passes one rickety, broken, support beam after the next, until eventually he steps in something gooey. He shines his torch on the ground and sees the whole cave floor is covered with it...bat dung.

THOMAS
 Squidger.

Thomas swallows a huge knot in his throat as he shines the torch onto the ceiling, only to discover the cave ceiling is completely covered with sleeping bats...

THOMAS (CONT'D)
 Aw, crikey.

...and what's more, the bats begin to awaken and shriek. They circle Thomas, but Thomas is prepared. He takes out the liver steak from last night's dinner and holds it up for the bats to circle. Then he tosses the steak bag toward the entrance of the cave and the bats give chase, creating a perfect diversion.

With the bats gone, Thomas continues deeper into the cave...

INT. CAVE - DROP-OFF - DAY

...until he HEARS the sound of the OCEAN and CRASHING WAVES. He spots something on the floor and stops to pick it up. He holds it up to the torch and realizes it's a clam.

THOMAS

Hmm, how did this get here?

He holds his torch over a drop-off of some fifteen feet, that leads to the ocean floor below, when suddenly--KA-BOOM-- water comes blasting over the edge like a geyser, drenching Thomas and nearly extinguishing his flame.

THOMAS (CONT'D)

Oh, cripes!

As the flame dies, he makes a mad dash for the exit, but soon the flame gives out and he's in complete darkness--falling and tripping about.

THOMAS (CONT'D)

Help me. I can't see. Help!

His heart is racing as he fumbles around in the darkness, becoming more and more disoriented, until he HEARS the SOUND of the BATS SHRIEKING in the distance. He follows the SOUND of the BATS until he catches a glimpse of daylight, then he presses on toward the light for all he's worth...

EXT. MINE ENTRANCE - DAY

...eventually crashing through the curtain of bats into sweet daylight. The filthy, dung-covered Thomas is still clutching the clam as he drags himself homeward.

INT. CONNIPTION KITCHEN - DAY

A grungy Thomas stands in the equally grungy kitchen and delivers the clam to Mrs. Conniption's open hand, as Mr. Conniption looks on.

MR. CONNIPTION

Pumpkin, I know I told you the lad was a bit of a mug, but this one might just be a corker as well.

MRS. CONNIPTION

If you get eaten alive, boy, who's gonna tend to the vegetable patch?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MR. CONNIPTION

There's a skill to caving that requires months of training, and you're lucky this isn't the parky season, or you'd freeze your bloomin' keaster off.

During this, the clam makes a loud suction sound as Mrs. Connption cuts it open to reveal a nice little pearl inside. Their eyes get big at the sight.

MR. CONNIPTION (CONT'D)

Of course, the lad may be a natural born spelunker. Who are we to squelch his gift?

Mrs. Connption holds the pearl up to the light.

MRS. CONNIPTION

It's a beauty alright.

MR. CONNIPTION

Well, whadda you know about that, Bunt Cake. Master Meek may not be the neshy wimp we had him pegged for after all.

(to Thomas)

What would you fancy for your troubles, lad? You can have anything you want.

MRS. CONNIPTION

Within reason.

MR. CONNIPTION

Of course, Lemon Tart. "Within reason."

Thomas thinks on it for a serious beat.

MR. CONNIPTION (CONT'D)

Choose wisely, Meek. Choose wisely.

Mr. and Mrs. Connption trade nods.

THOMAS

Well, I guess I could use...

MR. CONNIPTION

Yes?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

THOMAS

I could use a miner's helmet with a light, and maybe some climbing pins, and perhaps a bit more rope as well...if it's not too much to ask.

The relieved Conniptions pat Thomas on the back and rub his neck and shoulders.

MR. CONNIPTION

Not at all, boy. And a brilliant choice, I might add. Isn't it, my Blueberry Scone?

She's mesmerized by the pearl.

MRS. CONNIPTION

Perfect color and symmetry.

MR. CONNIPTION

Consider it done, Master Meek. And take the rest of the day off while you're at it.

A proud Thomas can't help but smile.

INT. THOMAS'S ROOM - NIGHT

That night Thomas is on his bed struggling with whether to don his special glasses or not. He wrestles with it, first putting the glasses on the drawer, then picking them up, and back and forth.

Eventually, he puts the glasses on and finds Birdie standing before him with arms crossed, looking none too pleased.

BIRDIE

Why?

THOMAS

Why what?

BIRDIE

Don't play games me. You're gonna get yourself killed, and for what?

THOMAS

I won't get killed. I did this little trick with the liver steak, and a rock, and I threw it...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

THOMAS (CONT'D)

(off her scowl)
...and they chased it...

BIRDIE

You're playing serpent roulette, is what you're doing, and eventually your number will come up.

THOMAS

I'll be quite careful.

BIRDIE

No, you'll be bait. Besides, what does it get you?

THOMAS

I don't rightly know. Respect?

BIRDIE

You don't need that kind of respect. That's like winning second place in a bull fight.

THOMAS

How about a path to a better life?

BIRDIE

But you're takin' a dangerous shortcut, and that path may not lead where you think.

THOMAS

So?

BIRDIE

So, what if you get it all? All this life can give? Is it gonna be enough?

THOMAS

Well, how would I know? According to them, you are what you....

BIRDIE

It's a big fat lie, Thomas.

She grabs a book from the hidden pile.

BIRDIE (CONT'D)

Look at this story with me.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

THOMAS

Do I have to?

BIRDIE

If you have a half a bit of sense,
you do. It's about a boy like you...

THOMAS

I'm feelin' a mite tired tonight. I
think I'll turn in.

Birdie heaves a heavy sigh.

BIRDIE

Just be careful, Thomas. The lie is
that you have to do something, find
something, be something, finish first,
have the most. Pure fiddlesticks.
It's already been done for you, Thomas
Meek. You remember that.

THOMAS

What's been done?

BIRDIE

It's complicated.

THOMAS

Try me.

BIRDIE

Basically anybody who's anybody,
ergo, everybody, wants their body to
go to Waybeyondbelief, but nobody
can get there by anybody's body of
work, 'cause somebody has to pay
their way.

THOMAS

It is complicated.

Thomas takes off his glasses and tucks them away. He lays
back and stares at the ceiling, wide awake--troubled.

He peers at the framed picture of his father for a guilty
beat. He then turns the picture face down and rolls over to
sleep.

INT. CONNIPTION LIVING ROOM - DAY

The next evening at dinner, which happens to be "steak night," Thomas does his bit with the steak again--shoving pieces into his hidden bag again.

EXT. MINE ENTRANCE - DAY

Thomas has an armful of rope and a handful of climbing pins as he turns on the light on his miner's helmet, and steps into the cave.

INT. CAVE - DAY

Deep in the cave, Thomas feels himself starting to slip and slide on the bat dung. The bats take notice and start to circle.

THOMAS
Hungry, are yuh?

Well-prepared, Thomas tosses his bag of meat toward the mouth of the cave, and the bats give chase.

THOMAS (CONT'D)
Go fetch!

INT. CAVE - DROP-OFF - DAY

At the drop-off, Thomas ties off his rope at one end, pounds a piton into a crack in the cave ceiling, and runs his rope through the dangling carabiner.

After a quick jerk to test the rope, Thomas lowers himself some fifteen feet to the ocean floor below.

INT. CAVE - BOTTOM OF DROP-OFF - DAY

At the bottom of the drop-off, in ankle-deep water, Thomas finds another clam. He clutches it tightly as he shines his miner's light into the darkness, in search of others.

During this, his light shines on something in the distance-- a rusty box of some kind, sticking out of the water. It's the treasure chest! Thomas can't believe his eyes. He takes a step in that direction, but then the SOUND of CRASHING WAVES and RUSHING WATER sends Thomas scrambling in full retreat. He puts the clam in his mouth, and he's quickly up the rope and to the top of the drop-off in no time flat.

INT. CAVE - DROP-OFF - DAY

Safely atop the drop-off, Thomas leaves the rope behind and make another dash for daylight, but he's taken too long.

INT. CAVE ENTRANCE - DAY

Back at the mouth of the cave, the ravenous bats have finished their dinner and are returning to the cave by the hundreds.

INT. ANOTHER PART OF THE CAVE - DAY

Meanwhile, Thomas slips and falls in the slippery dung, gets up, and slips again. On slippery footing he fights his way through a river of bats, that threaten to overwhelm him.

Seeing daylight up ahead, he somehow powers through the swarm of bats and makes it out, but in so doing he drops his clam at the mouth of the cave.

EXT. MINE ENTRANCE - DAY

He rolls out of the cave and into daylight, his heart racing. He considers going back for the clam, but thinks the better of it.

THOMAS

Aw, I'll get it later.

He lays back on the ground and heaves a sigh of relief. It's then that he sees the moon making it's first appearance of the day. Seeing this, he gets a horribly amazing idea.

He looks back at the last remnants of the bats. He surveys the sky. Then his lips turn up in a wry smile. He knows what he has to do.

INT. THOMAS'S ROOM - NIGHT

That evening Thomas has his special glasses on and he's pacing around the room like a caged animal, with Birdie one step behind him. He has to keep stepping around her as he paces back and forth.

BIRDIE

Anything you wanna tell me?

THOMAS

Not particularly.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BIRDIE
How was your day?

THOMAS
Same ol' same ol'.

BIRDIE
Nothing new, huh?

THOMAS
Business as usual.

BIRDIE
So, how far in was it?

THOMAS
About thirty meters...

She catches him.

THOMAS (CONT'D)
Aw, bugger.

BIRDIE
I knew it!

THOMAS
C'mon, don't be mad. It's right
there for the taking.

BIRDIE
Over my dead body.

She starts searching through Thomas's secret stash of books.

BIRDIE (CONT'D)
Somewhere there's a book here that
talks about not storing up treasures
here where moth and rust destroy,
and where thieves break in and steal,
but rather store them up where neither
rust or moth can destroy. Do you
know where that is, Thomas?

THOMAS
I have a feeling you're gonna tell
me.

She finds the book she's searching for.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BIRDIE
 (opening it)
 Let's look in the book.

THOMAS
 I don't feel up to it, just now.

BIRDIE
 C'mon, it'll be so clear. You're
 not the first to be tempted, you
 know.

THOMAS
 I don't want to.

She tries to hand him the book.

BIRDIE
 But I'm tryin' to save you, Thomas.

THOMAS
 I don't want your help! I can save
 myself!

He pushes the book away.

THOMAS (CONT'D)
 If you're not gonna help me, I'll go
 it alone!

Then he takes his special glasses and flings them across the
 room, where the lenses come out and break into pieces.

He stands there in stunned silence, gazing at the aftermath
 of what he's done. A beat later, he steps over to the dusty
 closet and takes out his new rope and climbing paraphernalia.

EXT. CAVE ENTRANCE - NIGHT

The next full moon, a miner's hat-clad Thomas is standing at
 the entrance of the cave, where he's loaded up a rusty old
 sled with necessities.

Atop the sled is a massive rock that weighs twice as much as
 Thomas, maybe more. The rock is cow-hitched or harnessed
 with a coil of rope, which is connected to a block and tackle,
 and the other end is already made up into another cow-hitch-
 type, rope-sling.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The sled itself is tied to another coil of rope leading back toward the water well, which we'll later find out is rigged to pull Thomas out.

Thomas shines a kerosene lamp over his contraption--just watching and waiting. He gazes up at the big full moon.

During this, the outline of Birdie circles Thomas, but without his glasses he can't see her. She whispers into his ear, and we see the ripple of her presence, but not her tangible body.

BIRDIE

Thomas.

He cocks his head at first, but then he shakes it off and begins strapping the spikes to the bottom of his shoes.

BIRDIE (CONT'D)

(whispering)

Thomas, I'm right here if you need me.

THOMAS

Alright, I hear you. I know what you're gonna say, but I gotta do this. I can do it. I know I can.

Suddenly, the trees blow in the wind, the clouds begin to move in quick time, and the bats fly out of the cave by the thousands.

As if on cue, Thomas loops the harness around his shoulders. He leans against the weight and churns his legs, until he pulls the sled into the cave like a sled dog.

INT. CAVE - NIGHT

Inside, Thomas pulls the sled as hard as he can for as long as he can. Then when he hits the section with the slippery bat manure he circles the sled and dives onto the back--riding it clear to the drop-off, where he drags his feet to stop his precious load.

EXT. COVE - NIGHT

Meanwhile, the waters begin to wake at the mouth of the cove where something huge is swimming beneath the surface.

INT. CAVE - DROP-OFF - NIGHT

At the drop-off, Thomas jumps off of the sled and wrestles the massive rock to the very edge of the drop, so it literally teeters on the edge.

He then takes the coiled rope with block and tackle and clips it to the anchor already in the cave ceiling. He grabs the rope and lowers himself to the ocean floor below.

EXT. COVE - NIGHT

The wake grows bigger as the serpent draws nearer.

INT. CAVE - BOTTOM OF DROP-OFF - NIGHT

Thomas touches down at the bottom of the drop-off and hits the ground running. He pulls the ready-made harness off of his shoulders as he races to the treasure chest, where he proceeds to wrap up the chest like a hog-tie, tying a hog.

EXT. MOUTH OF SEA CAVE - NIGHT

WE SEE the last of the serpent's tail as it slithers into the mouth of the sea cave.

INT. CAVE - BOTTOM OF DROP-OFF - NIGHT

With time running out, Thomas drags the treasure chest to the bottom of the drop. He can HEAR the BELLOW of the BEAST and its red eyes approaching, as he takes the slack out of the rope and gives it a jerk. The tug causes the massive rock to fall, and in so doing, it hoists Thomas and the treasure to the top of the drop-off. WHOOOOSH!

INT. CAVE - DROP-OFF - NIGHT

As the beast BELLOWs BELOW, Thomas transfers the treasure chest from sling to sled.

Meanwhile, the serpent slithers up the side of the drop-off, and is almost to Thomas's feet, when Thomas grabs the rope on the back of the sled and gives it a tug.

EXT. WATER WELL - NIGHT

This rope is tied off and rigged to topple a heavy engine block into the well, causing the hand-crank to spin with enormous torque, thus pulling the sled like a high-powered winch. ZIP!

INT. CAVE - DROP-OFF - NIGHT

Thomas holds on to both the sled and treasure for all he's worth, as the rope tightens and the sled takes off like a bullet shot from a gun. WHOOSH!

INT. CAVE - NIGHT

Thomas holds tight as he and his cargo fly through the cave at ridiculous speeds.

THOMAS
WHOAAAAAAA!!!

EXT. CAVE ENTRANCE - NIGHT

At the end of the run, Thomas flies out of the cave to where Birdie is waiting, but the chest capsizes just inside the entrance. As he heads back for the treasure, Birdie whispers in his ear.

BIRDIE
Thomas, you don't have go through
with it. Even now...

THOMAS
(growling)
Why don't you help me?

BIRDIE
(broken)
I will.

The red eyes are still coming from deep within the cave, but Thomas is on a mission. He rushes into the cave...

BIRDIE (CONT'D)
(whispering)
It's not too late, Thomas!

INT. CAVE ENTRANCE - NIGHT

...and determinedly scoops up the chest in his arms. The serpent is almost upon him now as Thomas retreats with the treasure chest, the support beams exploding in its wake.

EXT. CAVE ENTRANCE - NIGHT

There's a second of COMPLETE SILENCE, then--BOOM--Thomas races out with the chest, even as the serpent uncoils--baring his teeth, ready to pounce.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Thomas is not going to make it, but at the last second Birdie stands in the gap and stretches her out her arms.

As the serpent towers over her, she goes from spirit to completely real. Then the serpent opens his mouth and devours her in one bite--CHOMP--thus affording Thomas the time to get away.

The serpent lets out an ANGUISHED HOWL as he disappears back into the cave.

THOMAS

We made it! We did it! We outran
the serpent! He couldn't catch...
(off silence)
Birdie?

He looks back at the horrible aftermath--the total destruction of the beams splintered into pieces. He hangs his head at the sight.

INT. CONNIPTION LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

The treasure chest sits in the middle of the living room, with the Conniptions just staring at it with wide-eyed amazement. In fact, they're unable to blink. No one says a word until Thomas finally breaks the silence.

THOMAS

Well, uh...

More silence.

THOMAS (CONT'D)

Should we...

More silence.

THOMAS (CONT'D)

...Open it?

The Conniptions snap out of their daze. They trade nervous looks. Shrugs.

MR. CONNIPTION

Meek, go fetch my pry bar.

Thomas exits and enters two seconds later with a rusty old crowbar. He gives it to Mr. Conniption, who circles the chest a couple of times.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MR. CONNIPTION (CONT'D)
I'm feelin' like a wee little tot at
Christmas time.

Mr. Conniption stops and plunges the bar into the crusty old lock and the lock breaks open. He falls to his knees, as does his wife, and together they open lid, revealing untold treasures.

The chest is brimming with gold and jewelry, but the highlight is a giant pearl sitting right smack in the middle of it all. The Conniptions are speechless. They stutter and stammer, unable to articulate anything. Instead they break into giddy laughter and run their fingers through it.

They string the jewelry all over one another as Thomas looks on.

MRS. CONNIPTION
I want to roll in it!

MR. CONNIPTION
I want to be buried in it!

Mrs. Conniption takes out the giant pearl and hugs and kisses it like it was a child.

MRS. CONNIPTION
Good boy, Master Meek.

MR. CONNIPTION
Yes, grand job, old mate. You
certainly outdid yourself this time.
You'll be takin' tomorrow off. I
can assure you of that.

They all laugh together, but it seems a bit hollow for Thomas.

MR. CONNIPTION (CONT'D)
All of this is because of you, your
Meekship.

MRS. CONNIPTION
Jolly good show, your Meekness.

MR. CONNIPTION
And it won't go unrewarded, will it
Chocolate Eclair?

MRS. CONNIPTION
No, it will not.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Mr. Conniption picks out a small little trinket from the pile of jewelry, showing it to the missus for her approval.

MRS. CONNIPTION (CONT'D)
 (clutching pearl)
 Bigger.

Mr. Conniption picks out a slightly bigger, little bobble, and gets a nod from the missus.

MR. CONNIPTION
 Here you go, Sir Meekalot. Don't spend it all in one place.

He tosses the bobble to Thomas and Thomas catches it.

THOMAS
 Thank you, sir. And what are we apt to do with the rest of it?

Suddenly, their demeanors change, as a look of greed comes over them. Mr. Conniption stands over a cowering Thomas.

MR. CONNIPTION
We are not apt to do anything with it. This is not a democracy, Meek. This is a Conniption-ocracy.

THOMAS
 B-b-but, shouldn't we put some of it in a bank, or start a university fund.

MRS. CONNIPTION
 Have you gone daft, boy?

MR. CONNIPTION
 Who needs a university? We did just fine without higher education, didn't we Funnel Cake?

MRS. CONNIPTION
 We sure did.

MR. CONNIPTION
 And a bank is the last place you wanna put your money.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MR. CONNIPTION (CONT'D)

(grabbing and waving
crowbar)

You don't tell a living soul about
this, Meek. You hear me? If people
know we're filthy rich, they'll rob,
pillage, and plunder us.

MRS. CONNIPTION

I hate being plundered.

MR. CONNIPTION

Don't worry your head, Poppy Seed.

(holding bar)

Won't no one plunder you on my watch.

(to Thomas)

It's best just to spend a little and
hide the rest. Spend it a little at
a time. You almost have to live
like a popper. Even downgrade your
lifestyle a smidgen.

THOMAS

But isn't that defeating...?

MR. CONNIPTION

What would you know about it, Meek?
You're just a neshy nitwit with a
bit of good fortune is all. The
good news is you don't have to search
the mine, cave, or cove anymore.
You can take tomorrow off and start
fresh on the vegetable patch again
the day after. Now clear off.

Thomas hesitates as he heads up the stairs.

MR. CONNIPTION (CONT'D)

What?

THOMAS

Nothing. I just thought you said
we'd all be set for life

Mr. Conniption holds the pearl against his face.

MR. CONNIPTION

And we are. Don't get greedy, Meek.

INT. THOMAS'S ROOM - NIGHT

Thomas steps into his cluttered room and looks around. He sees the broken reading glasses in pieces on the floor.

THOMAS
 (whispering)
 Birdie?
 (louder)
 Birdie? Are you there?

He kneels over the broken glasses.

THOMAS (CONT'D)
 What have I done?

He tries to pick up the pieces, but they're scattered about. He tries to look through one of the bigger pieces, but it's no use.

THOMAS (CONT'D)
 (whispering)
 You were right.

One by one, he goes about the daunting task of collecting the broken lenses, until he has all but the frames. He folds the precious pieces of glass into a napkin and hides them in the corner of a drawer.

INT. CONNIPTION LIVING ROOM - DAY

The next morning, Thomas stares at his gooey bowl of shellfish in disgust.

MR. CONNIPTION
 Not hungry, Meek?

THOMAS
 I'm workin' up to it.

MRS. CONNIPTION
 Don't get cheeky, boy.

MR. CONNIPTION
 We're going into town today, Meek. First to the pawn shop to trade in a bit of treasure, then to the telly shop to buy one of those great, big, telly boxes they advertise.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

THOMAS

Can I come along?

MR. CONNIPTION

Are you kidding? You've got work to do in the vegetable patch.

THOMAS

But I thought maybe...

MR. CONNIPTION

Meek! You've right nearly gotten the snakes, jaspers, nettles, and stickers out of it. It would be a crime to stop now.

The choice of words gives Thomas an idea.

THOMAS

A crime, you say?

MR. CONNIPTION

A bloomin' crime. Wouldn't it Crem Brulet?

MRS. CONNIPTION

A beastly crime.

MR. CONNIPTION

Besides, the only way you're leaving here, Meek, is in a pine box when you go to the hereafter. So, get used to it.

THOMAS

(scheming)

Well, alright then. But a big telly can be a mite awful heavy for two people, one being a woman. How are you plannin' to carry it back and forth and all about?

The Conniptions trade looks.

THOMAS (CONT'D)

I could help, yuh know.

Mr. Conniption gets a nod from the missus.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MR. CONNIPTION

Okay, but you're to stay in the car
the whole time. Understood?

THOMAS

Oh, of course. I wouldn't expect
otherwise.

He slurps down a gulp of his gooey breakfast.

INT. CONNIPTION'S CAR - DAY

Thomas sits in the back seat and looks out the back window
at the creepy old house as they drive away.

EXT. PAWN SHOP - DAY

An exhausted Mr. and Mrs. Thoroughgood sit in their open car
and weigh their options.

MR. THOROUGHGOOD

You don't have to go through with
it.

MRS. THOROUGHGOOD

I want to.

MR. THOROUGHGOOD

They're not about to give us fair
value for it, yuh know.

MRS. THOROUGHGOOD

I know, but we can't stop now. It'll
fetch us enough to eat and fill up
on petrol.

MR. THOROUGHGOOD

What would your grandmum say?

She glances at her origami gift.

MRS. THOROUGHGOOD

She'd say, you used my ring for the
best possible cause. I'm so very
proud of you.

With that, she slides a ring off her finger and they exit to
the pawn shop together.

INT. CONNIPTION'S CAR - DAY (MOMENTS LATER)

The Conniptions pull up to the very same pawn shop with a sign--Mothman & Sons--on the storefront. Mr. Conniption parks, right next to the Thoroughgoods, just as they are backing out. Neither party sees the other.

MR. CONNIPTION

Now you sit here in the car, Meek, whilst we do our business. We'll call for you at the appropriate time.

THOMAS

I'll be right here.

MR. CONNIPTION

Oh, and Meek. You know where runaway boys end up, don't you?

Thomas swallows down a knot in his throat.

THOMAS

Dead?

MR. CONNIPTION

Only if they're lucky. More like sewer duty on the juvenile detention crew. Isn't that right, Apple Bran Muffin?

Mrs. Conniption is already fixated on the TV store across the street.

MRS. CONNIPTION

How much telly do you think that bobble will fetch?

MR. CONNIPTION

Let's go see, Pudding Bread. Shall we?

They exit the car. Then she takes his arm and they enter the pawn shop like a couple high society folk.

INT. PAWN SHOP - DAY

The mangy-looking pawnbroker is named RUSTY MOTHMAN and he eyes the Conniptions like a snake eyes a rat, as does his squinty-eyed, teenage son, SHADY.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RUSTY

Welcome to Mothman & Sons, where we'll give you a fair price, over my dead body.

MR. CONNIPTION

Well, I guess there's a couple of ways to take that.

RUSTY

(extending hand)

Hiya, my name's Rusty Mothman, but friends just call me Rusty.

Mr. Conniption shakes his hand.

RUSTY (CONT'D)

And this here's my son Shady. No reflection on his lack of character.

Meanwhile, a nervous Mrs. Conniption looks at various pawn items--from banjos, to a bevy of rifles and firearms. Her eyes are as big as saucers.

RUSTY (CONT'D)

And what can I help you with?

Mr. Conniption pulls out a gold medallion with a shiny jewel imbedded.

MR. CONNIPTION

What can you give me for this?

Rusty takes it from Mr. Conniption and examines it through a magnifying lens.

RUSTY

Well, let us see. What have we here?

SHADY

Lemme see.

Rusty shows it to his shady son, and they trade nods.

RUSTY

Gold-plated medallion...

MR. CONNIPTION

That's one hundred percent pure gold, Mr. Mothman.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RUSTY

Call me Rusty.
 (eyeballing it)
 Antique brushed to give it the old
 age appearance.

MR. CONNIPTION

It's authentic forged metal, sir.

RUSTY

With an amazingly realistic, imitation
 Ruby centerpiece.

MR. CONNIPTION

(taking it back)
 Genuine article red ruby. I can see
 I may have to take it to a jeweler
 to get fair market value.

RUSTY

No, no, no. I can appreciate when a
 man drives a hard bargain. Where
 did you get such an immaculate piece?

The Conniptions trade guilty looks. Rusty and his son are
 all ears.

MR. CONNIPTION

(squirming)
 It uh...was...an heirloom. Handed
 down from my ancestors. The one
 family heirloom we have to our name.
 (glancing at gun
 collection)
 Or anything valuable for that matter.

MRS. CONNIPTION

(nervous laughter)
 Not like we found a sunken treasure
 or anything.

The Conniptions both laugh at the thought.

RUSTY

I'll give you eight...
 (Shady clears his
 throat)
 ...nine hundred pounds. Take it or
 leave it.

The Conniptions raise impressed eyebrows.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MR. CONNIPTION

We'll take it.

INT. CONNIPTION'S CAR - DAY

Thomas watches from the back seat as the giddy Conniptions take their booty across the street to the TV store. Thomas waves at them innocently as they enter the store.

A few beats later, Thomas is eyeing the pawn shop, getting his courage up, when he turns to find Shady staring him in the face. Shady presses and contorts his face against the window, nearly scaring Thomas half to death.

THOMAS

Bugger all!

Thomas moves to the other side of the car, but Shady's hand slams up against the glass and grabs at Thomas from that window as well. Shady peers at Thomas from outside.

SHADY

Just messin' with yuh, kid.

Shady leaves.

EXT. CONNIPTION'S CAR - DAY

A beat later, Thomas exits the car and enters the pawn shop with a jacket full of...well, most everything he owns.

INT. PAWN SHOP - DAY

Thomas enters the pawn shop and finds Rusty behind the counter gluing some broken piece of merchandise back together. Thomas gazes at all the items for sale. During this, he moves an item on the shelf and Shady is there on the other side, staring back at him. Gasp.

Thomas moves on to an old-fashioned rifle on display. Seeing this, the creepy Shady makes a gun with his fingers, points it at Thomas, and pretends to pull the trigger.

RUSTY

What can I do for you, kid?

THOMAS

I want to buy your glue, sir.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SHADY

That's my glue, and it's not for sale.

THOMAS

Are yuh sure? I've got a good strong rope here to trade in.

He shows Shady his coil of ropes, old and new. Shady throws the old rope back into Thomas's face.

SHADY

Aw, what am I gonna do with a rope?

THOMAS

(laying items on counter)

And I've also got these climbing pins, and this miner's hat, with a light on it.

Shady examines the helmet.

THOMAS (CONT'D)

It's quite handy for caves and whatnot.

SHADY

(waffling)

I dunno. Yuh got anything else?

A disinterested Shady starts to walk away, but then Thomas takes out the bobble he got from the treasure chest.

THOMAS

(holding it up)

What about this?

RUSTY

Let's take a look-see.

Rusty takes out his magnifying lens and takes a closer look. He and Shady trade nods.

SHADY

Alright then, with this and all the rest, I guess I could part with the glue.

THOMAS

It's yours.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Shady gets the glue and hands it over to Thomas, who's still holding his old coil of rope.

SHADY

Pleasure doing business with you,
kid.

RUSTY

Say, were those your folks in here a
minute ago?

THOMAS

The ones with the sunken treasure?
I mean red ruby medallion? Did I
say sunken treasure? How funny.
How many people actually have a chest
full of sunken treasure in their
living room? Yes, actually they're
my foster parents. Thanks for the
glue.

On his way out Thomas looks at the selection of firearms.

THOMAS (CONT'D)

Hmm, maybe we'll be back with more
treasure, errr antique jewelry later.
My foster parents don't even have a
gun to protect themselves. Sittin'
ducks, we are. Say, you don't have
any window latches, do you?

An astonished Shady shakes his head.

THOMAS (CONT'D)

We gotta get the back window fixed
before someone up and robs us blind.
Well, cheers.

Shady stands in stunned amazement as Thomas lets himself
out. Shady is already scheming his next move.

INT. CONNIPTION'S CAR - DAY

Thomas slides into the back seat just as Mr. Conniption pokes
his head out of the TV store.

MR. CONNIPTION

Alright, Meek. We're ready for you
to come fetch the telly.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

THOMAS

Be right there.

INT. OLD-FASHIONED POLICE STATION - DAY

The Thoroughgoods are obviously at their wit's end as they enter.

MR. THOROUGHGOOD

We've been up and down the coast,
from top to bottom, and everywhere
in between.

OFFICER

Well, the stellar news is, we located
the old caretaker from the foster
home.

MRS. THOROUGHGOOD

What's the not so stellar news?

EXT. NURSING HOME FRONT PORCH - DAY

The kindly old caretaker is but a shell of his former self--
unkempt and disheveled--rocking on a chair and staring into
space with a blank expression. The Thoroughgoods are trying
in vain to reach him, but nothing registers.

MR. THOROUGHGOOD

...about yey tall...

MRS. THOROUGHGOOD

...thin...sandy hair...

MR. THOROUGHGOOD

...Thomas Meek...? And there was a
mixup with another family, and you
said, "Oh bugger, this is a bit of a
sticky wicket."

The caretaker gives no response. The Thoroughgoods trade
defeated looks.

MRS. THOROUGHGOOD

Well, thank you for your time.

They turn to leave when the caretaker reaches out and grabs
Mrs. Thoroughgood by the wrist. He opens her nervous fist
revealing the crinkled up origami inside. As he uncrinkles
and straightens it out, a look of clarity and recognition
comes over the old man. He smiles.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CARETAKER

Thomas Meek. Yes, I remember Thomas.

INT. CONNIPTION LIVING ROOM - DAY

The Conniptions are seated right up against their new TV, as Thomas sits in the BG staring at another bowl of gooey shellfish.

MRS. CONNIPTION

Say there Meek, whoever told you it wasn't good for your eyes to sit so close to the telly obviously didn't have a telly as nice as this one here.

MR. CONNIPTION

You got that right, Apple Fritter.

THOMAS

I think it was a physician.

MR. CONNIPTION

Stow it, Meek. And keep your rubbish to yourself. We know how to watch telly the proper way.

THOMAS

May I be excused?

MR. CONNIPTION

You don't wanna watch this big, new telly, suit yourself. Your loss.

Thomas steps into the kitchen and dumps his shellfish into the sink, then he retreats upstairs as the Conniptions stare blankly at the TV.

THOMAS

So, I guess you won't mind if I chivvy out and fetch the other half of the treasure then.

They grunt, too preoccupied to answer.

INT. THOMAS'S ROOM - DAY

Thomas puts the last dab of glue on the last piece of lens, then puts both reconstructed lenses on the dresser to dry.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

After this, he goes about searching for the frames. He crawls around the floor on hands and knees, searching every nook and cranny, but to no avail.

EXT. CONNIPTION'S HOUSE - DRIVEWAY - DAY

A mysterious old hearse pulls up to the iron gate and parks.

INT. THOMAS'S ROOM - DAY

Thomas is still searching for the lost frames. He's gone through the clutter so thoroughly that every piece of trash is stacked and accounted for, but to no avail.

THOMAS

(whispering)

Birdie, I can't hear you...but if you're there, I need your help. I'm sorry I didn't listen. You were right.

(a tear escapes)

About everything.

INT. CONNIPTION LIVING ROOM - DAY

The Conniptions are glued to their new TV, when the pawn broker's son, Shady, and his rifle-toting BROTHERS come bursting in from the kitchen--via the broken back window.

SHADY

Alright, everybody put your hands up!

The Conniptions nearly have double-heart attacks. Mrs. Conniption screams so loud...

INT. THOMAS'S ROOM - DAY

...Thomas hears it upstairs. He's at his wit's end, still searching for the frames, when he spies the infamous hole in the wall. Without a moment's hesitation he dives for the wall and plunges his hand deep into the hole until he finds the frames and pulls them out.

INT. CONNIPTION LIVING ROOM - DAY

Meanwhile, Shady and his brothers are holding the Conniptions at gunpoint. Shady is holding the rope in his hand threateningly. It's tied into a noose again.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SHADY

Where's the treasure?

MR. CONNIPTION

Treasure? We don't know about any treasure.

SHADY

(stretching rope)

Let's string'em up!

Mrs. Conniption wails.

MR. CONNIPTION

Wait.

Mr. Conniption is at a complete loss. Fortunately, they all hear a THUD coming from upstairs. All eyes follow the SOUND.

SHADY

What was that?

MR. CONNIPTION

The boy! He's the one who found the treasure, and he's the only one who knows where it's hidden. You may have to flog it out of him.

MRS. CONNIPTION

He's upstairs in his room.

MR. CONNIPTION

He bloomin' snookered us so he could run off with the treasure.

Shady and one of his brothers start up the stairs, while two other brothers stay behind.

SHADY

(re: Conniptions)

Stay here with them.

BROTHER

What if they're lyin'?

Shady tosses him the noose. The Conniptions gasp at the sight.

MR. CONNIPTION

He's there. You'll see.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Shady and brother continue up the stairs.

INT. THOMAS'S ROOM - DAY

Thomas frantically bobbles and juggles the lenses as he fumbles them back into the frames.

INT. UPSTAIRS CORRIDOR - DAD

Shady and his rifle-toting brother creep down the hallway, just outside Thomas's door.

INT. THOMAS'S ROOM - DAY

Thomas steadies his nervous hands long enough to pop the lenses into the frames. He puts on the special glasses and focuses for all he's worth.

THOMAS

Birdie are you there? I believe
everything you said. I do believe!

INT. UPSTAIRS CORRIDOR - DAY

Shady and his brother kick in the door to Thomas's room.
CRUNCH!

INT. THOMAS'S ROOM - DAY

But when they enter, they find the room completely empty. They search the few places he could be, but he's nowhere to be found.

SHADY

(calling down)
He's not here!

MR. CONNIPTION (O.S.)

That's impossible! Keep searching!

MRS. CONNIPTION (O.S.)

He has to be there!

EXT. WAYBEYONDBELIEF - DAY

Meanwhile, Thomas finds himself in a world or dimension that is not of this world, nor is it the animated world of Beyondbelief. It is beyond scenic--the most colorful, beautiful, mansion courtyard he's ever laid eyes on. Docile deer and other animals stroll past him like he's not even there.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He walks around in awe until he sees the figure of a MAN approaching in the distance.

As the figure draws nearer, Thomas takes the worn old picture of his father from his pocket and holds it up for comparison. The man in the picture looks a great deal like the man who is approaching.

Eventually, the likeness is so great, the words somehow escape from Thomas's lips.

THOMAS
(clutching picture)
Father?

The man picks up the pace until he's running toward Thomas and Thomas is doing likewise.

FATHER
Thomas?

THOMAS
Is it you?

When they come together, the man sweeps Thomas off his feet and twirls him in his strong arms, round and round. Both are in tears now.

FATHER
Oh Thomas, I've missed you so much.

He puts Thomas down. Then he takes Thomas's face in his hands and looks into his eyes.

FATHER (CONT'D)
Yes, I can sure see the resemblance.

THOMAS
Is this Beyondbelief?

FATHER
Oh no, Thomas. This is
Waybeyondbelief.

THOMAS
I don't wanna go back. I wanna stay
here. Please!

FATHER
Soon enough, my boy. In due time.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

THOMAS

I don't wanna be alone again. How could you leave me there alone with them?

A knowing smile comes over his father.

FATHER

I was always right there by your side, Thomas. I wouldn't leave you. Never have, never will.

They embrace.

FATHER (CONT'D)

I'm always a whisper away.

INT. THOMAS'S ROOM - DAY

Moments later, Thomas finds himself back in his room, with his glasses tilted sideways on his head.

He straightens the glasses and lowers them over his eyes, to reveal Birdie standing there before him with a big smile on her face.

BIRDIE

Didn't think you could get rid of me that easily, did you?

He throws his arms around her, and she hugs him back as hard she can.

BIRDIE (CONT'D)

Thomas...THOMAS. They're coming!

He leaps into action, grabbing a pencil and pad from his nightstand, and jotting down a note as fast as he can write.

THOMAS

(aloud)
Went to fetch the rest of the treasure...

BIRDIE

You know you can't go back there now, not even in broad daylight. He'll be guarding it 'round the clock.

THOMAS

...don't try to follow me.

INT. CONNIPTION LIVING ROOM - DAY

Mr. Conniption is held at gunpoint as he leads Shady and brothers up the stairs.

MR. CONNIPTION
He's there. Trust me. I saw him
with me own peepers.

INT. THOMAS'S ROOM - DAY

Mr. Conniption and the Mothman brothers burst into the room again, and again they find it empty, but this time they dicover Thomas's old rope tied to the bed and dangling out the open window.

Mr. Conniption snatches up Thomas's note and reads it aloud.

MR. CONNIPTION
"Went to fetch the rest of the
treasure. Don't try to follow me."
(wadding up the note)
Why, that little...follow me.

EXT. CAVE ENTRANCE - DAY

Mr. and Mrs. Conniption lead the gun-wielding Mothman brothers to the cave entrance, ranting the whole time.

MR. CONNIPTION
That miserable little twit has been
a thorn in our sides since the day
he arrived.

MRS. CONNIPTION
Since day one!

MR. CONNIPTION
But he has proven useful at times.
I'm sure we can all come to an
arrangement that will be mutually
beneficial.

SHADY
Yeah, how about we get the treasure
and you get to live?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MR. CONNIPTION

Yes, and that sounds like a reasonable starting point, but I was thinking more along the lines of a finder's fee or even a fifty-fifty proposition, wherein you provide the muscle and we provide the mine.

Mrs. Conniption can take no more.

MRS. CONNIPTION

(top of her lungs)

Finder's fee nothin'! This is our property, our discovery, and our mine-shaft, and I'll be stuffed whole, before they get the treasure and we get the shaft! We won't be hornswoggled, and we won't take less than what's coming to us! Is that clear?

CUT TO:

INT. THOMAS'S ROOM - DAY

Back in Thomas's room, the door swings out to reveal Thomas standing behind it with Birdie at his side.

BACK TO:

EXT. CAVE ENTRANCE - DAY

MRS. CONNIPTION

(still ranting)

We want what's coming to us! Do you hear me? We DEMAND what's coming to us!!!

When all of the sudden, the serpent lunges from the cave and snaps up the Conniptions in one bite. CHOMP!

Shady and his brothers grab each other and SCREAM in horror, as the serpent disappears inside the cave as quickly as he came.

The Mothman brothers are so traumatized they stagger away as fast as their knocking-knees will carry them.

INT. THOMAS'S ROOM - DAY

Thomas is crouched in the corner plugging his ears, until Birdie unplugs him.

BIRDIE

It's safe now.

(off distant car)

Wait, do you hear that? Someone's here!

They scramble to the open window and look out.

EXT. CONNIPTION'S HOUSE - DRIVEWAY - DAY

The Thoroughgoods pull into the creepy driveway leading to the twisted, wrought-iron gate.

INT. THOROUGHGOOD'S CAR - DAY

MR. THOROUGHGOOD

Is this not the place?

MRS. THOROUGHGOOD

I don't see how it could be. I don't see any sign of life, at'all.

INT. THOMAS'S ROOM - DAY

Meanwhile, Thomas spots them from his second floor window, but they're too far away. He calls to them.

THOMAS

(beside himself)

Oh, no! Wait! I'm up here!

They start to back the car up.

THOMAS (CONT'D)

No, wait! Don't go! Please, don't go!

They're too far away to hear him.

BIRDIE

Go, Thomas. Run!

Thomas takes off running out the door and down the stairs, but too late.

EXT. CONNIPTION DRIVEWAY - DAY

The Thoroughgoods are already to the end of the driveway and about to drive away, when something catches Mr. Thoroughgood's eye.

MR. THOROUGHGOOD (V.O.)
Completely desolate. No sign of
life here...

MRS. THOROUGHGOOD (V.O.)
Wait!

Through the trees she sees the garden in full bloom, and right smack in the middle is Thomas's origami-shaped sculpture-- a large scale version of the very one she's clutching in her hand. Mr. Thoroughgood hits the brakes.

Both Thoroughgoods leap from the car as Thomas races down the driveway to meet them. Thomas leaps into their arms.
FREEZE FRAME.

CREDITS OVER SHOTS OF THOROUGHGOOD FAMILY PHOTOS. MUSIC UP.

FADE OUT