

MISTRY CAVERN

Written by

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FADE IN:

INT. KALEIDOSCOPE - DAY

Psychedelic colored mushroom rings warp and mutate. A dark black hole grows in the center. It consumes the color and light forming a large black circle. In the circle, white Celtic font reads, "Any person who enters a fairy ring will be forced to dance with the creatures until they go mad and perish."

EXT. ALBUQUERQUE JOURNAL PAVILION - NIGHT

SUPER: October 4, 2005

The rock group GREEN DAY performs *Good Riddance* on the stage of the amphitheater. The AUDIENCE sings along.

YOUNG JAVIER (17) meanders through the crowd selling bags of joints. He is a Mexican cutie with a charming smile.

Twenty feet away, KENNEDY (17) sells bags of shrooms. She dances through the crowd like a fairy princess in her flowing dress.

They brush past the audience toward each other. They meet face to face.

Both of them pull out baggies of their merchandise to sell to each other. The attraction is immediate as they smile at each other. Javier lights a joint and inserts it into her mouth. She smokes the joint and feeds him a shroom.

Green Day kicks into *Minority* and both of the dealers dance together.

ARMANDO MENDOZA (V.O.)
How did you meet mom again?

EXT. ROCK-N-ROLL BAR - NIGHT

ARMONDO MENDOZA (16) sells Boy Scout beef jerky at a folding table outside of a busy bar. He is a Mexican American straight-laced, and handsome in his ironed Boy Scout uniform. His father, JAVIER MENDOZA, is thirty-eight years old now. He exchanges money for jerky with a tough biker CUSTOMER.

JAVIER MENDOZA
Thank you.

He gives his son a guitar.

JAVIER MENDOZA
I told you many times over.

ARMONDO
Was she pretty?

JAVIER MENDOZA
Yes, we were dancing to Green Day
and we bumped into each other. She
was a grunge fairy angel. Play a
Green Day song.

Armondo plays a John Denver like acoustic version of Green Day's *Boulevard of Broken Dreams*. Javier smirks as customers buy jerky.

EXT. OREGON ROCK TAVERN - NIGHT

GANJI CONNER (16) parks a rattling 80's rusted pickup truck in front. She drops out of the front seat off some thick foam pads due to being too short to see over the dashboard. She's a miniature Kurt Cobain in her plaid shirt and cut out jeans. She slings a camouflage backpack over her shoulder and enters the bar.

INT. OREGON ROCK TAVERN - NIGHT

A ROCK BAND performs Pearl Jam for the rough AUDIENCE of twenty loggers.

Ganji goes behind the bar to the owner, JEREMY (30's) and drops the backpack. She extracts a big baggie of joints and inserts it into a metal chest.

JEREMY
Ganji, where is the old man?

GANJI
Harvesting. He has to work three
jobs since the corporate farms
hired Alejandro and Sid away.

JEREMY
Times are changing. Hard to compete
with health insurance and 401k's.

He hands her an envelope with cash to which she fans the bills. Ganji nods to the band.

GANJI
Barkly, trying out a new drummer I
see.

JEREMY

Wanna sing a song? It's a slow night.

GANJI

Uh.

Jeremy cuts her off and whistles to get the band's attention.

JEREMY

Special guest tonight.

Barkley, playing guitar, motions her up to the stage.

MOMENTS LATER

Barkley lowers the microphone for Ganji and speaks in it.

BARKLEY

Welcome to the stage Oregon's own Shirley Temple.

There are mild claps from the audience as Barkley begins playing the chords to *On the Good Ship Lollipop*.

However, to the surprise of the audience, the band segue into Hole's *Doll Parts* as Ganji gravely sings like Courtney Love. She grips the microphone with grunge attitude.

GANJI

"I am doll eyes, doll mouth, doll legs..."

She quickly grabs the audience's attention.

EXT. FACTORY - NIGHT

Javier and Armondo finish setting up the jerky table. Over fifty bags of jerky are on the table.

JAVIER MENDOZA

Now, this is the last stop.

Armondo reviews a list in his notebook.

ARMONDO

Once the factory lets out, we can hurry and get to the taxi yard. It's payday Friday.

JAVIER MENDOZA

No. This is it. You are so much like your mother.

(O.S.) The work bell rings.

ARMONDO
Shift is over.

LATIN WORKERS exit the building and are about to pass the jerky stand.

ARMONDO
Boy Scout beef jerky! Your kids,
spouse, or your significant other
will love you for it. No carbs in
this whole bag.

(O.S.) Boots stomp.

ICE AGENTS bull rush the entrance and arrest the Workers.

AGENT
Nobody run!

The Workers run to escape.

WORKER 1
Raid!

WORKER 2
Run!

There is pushing and shoving around the table. Frightened, Armondo backs away from the table as Javier searches for an escape route.

An Agent reaches out to grab Javier, but Javier shoves him away.

ARMONDO
Dad, they aren't after you.

Two other Agents join the fray and tackle Javier across the table of jerky.

The table collapses as Armondo tries to yank off the Agents.

ARMONDO
That's my dad! Leave him alone!
He's legal. Dad tell them.

They wrestle and handcuff Javier. Javier is on his knees and spins to his son.

JAVIER MENDOZA
Armondo, run! Run!

Armondo is confused as his eyes dart from the Agents to his father.

JAVIER MENDOZA
Armondo, go. See Ms. Gomez. Run!
I'll be back for you!

Armondo spins and takes off running down the street. He turns and watches the Agents shove his father into a van.

His eyes water as he backs away.

INT. OREGON ROCK TAVERN - NIGHT

Jeremy answers the phone as the audience claps at the ending of Ganji's song.

BARKLEY
Give it up for Ganji. Our Shirley
Temple with attitude.

A worried look comes over Jeremy's face as Ganji walks to the bar timidly waving.

Jeremy gives her the backpack.

JEREMY
You can't go home.

GANJI
Why? What's wrong?

JEREMY
Your dad called. The farm is being
raided by agents.

GANJI
Now?!

JEREMY
I heard the copter.

Her eyes grow large and she sprints to the door.

JEREMY
Ganji, don't go!

She is already to the door and gone.

EXT. MS. GOMEZ HOUSE - NIGHT

MS. GOMEZ (60's) opens the door to discover Armondo wiping away tears.

ARMONDO
They took my dad.

Ms. Gomez hugs him tight.

EXT. FOREST - NIGHT

Ganji rushes toward a red ember glow above the trees.

(O.S.) A helicopter swirls.

Ganji gets to a forest clearing and discovers her dad's farm torched by AGENTS wearing gas masks and flamethrowers. The helicopter's search beam scans the farm.

She abruptly stops and sees her father in the distance on his knees handcuffed.

She hears a faint voice nearby and ducks behind a fallen tree out of sight.

SHERIFF LINDSEY (50's) a stout, beer-bellied beast, lumbers through the forest on the phone.

SHERIFF LINDSEY
That clears out most of the localized illegal weed. Feds will be auctioning that property in a few months. Your company will have the surrounding valley to grow your crops. Only property left is Mistry Cavern. Owner is a strange old broad. I'll find her tell and get her out of there. You know where I bank.

Sheriff Lindsey walks away toward the blaze as Ganji's head rises up. Sheriff Lindsey yells.

SHERIFF LINDSEY
Keep your eyes out for that delinquent daughter of his.

Ganji runs off.

INT./EXT. GREYHOUND BUS/FREEWAY - NIGHT

The overhead light shines on Armondo holding a curio myrtlewood box on his lap. The top of the box is carved like a cavern with the name, *Mistry Cavern*.

He sits next to an aging HIPPIE (60's) who snores against the window.

We hear the conversation of Armondo and Ms. Gomez over the scene:

MS. GOMEZ (V.O.)
Your father gave me this box if
this should ever happen.

Armondo opens the box revealing a photograph of his mother and father at age 20. Between them is a large goofy sasquatch.

MS. GOMEZ (V.O.)
Your father crossed the border
illegally from Mexico. Before he
could marry your mother, as you
know, she sadly passed away.

He lays the photograph aside and opens a folded discolored pamphlet on the roadside attraction *Mistry Cavern*.

MS. GOMEZ (V.O.)
He could not become a legal
citizen.

ARMONDO (V.O.)
What about me?

MS. GOMEZ (V.O.)
You are legal. You were born here.

ARMONDO (V.O.)
But dad is a Scoutmaster.

MS. GOMEZ (V.O.)
He wanted you to be prepared for
this.

The Hippie stirs and wakes, sniffing the air. He leans over and sniffs the box to the dismay of Armondo.

ARMONDO
Hey?

HIPPIE
You have weed.

ARMONDO

I have no weed.

The Hippie touches his nose.

HIPPIE

I'm a cosmic bloodhound.

The Hippie snatches up the pamphlet and reads it.

HIPPIE

Mistry Cavern. Parents took me
there as a kid. Trippy, hokey
place. Beware Bigfoot! Grrr. Is
that old haunt still open?

Armondo takes the pamphlet back and sniffs the box. He winces
from the stench.

The Hippie laughs and nods.

HIPPIE

God's stink weed.

Armondo takes out a key from the box and studies it.

EXT. OREGON ROCK TAVERN - DAY

Jeremy sweeps up out front with Sheriff Lindsey interrogating
him.

JEREMY

I told you. I saw her last night
and she left once her dad said you
raided his farm.

SHERIFF LINDSEY

The Feds did. I didn't raid his
farm.

JEREMY

You're all under the umbrella of
law enforcement.

SHERIFF LINDSEY

Anyway, why was his underaged
daughter in your tavern?

Jeremy surrenders the debate and sweeps as a Greyhound bus
stops a store away.

JEREMY

She sang with the band. Damn Sheriff Lindsey, you know damn well they were my supplier. The crop is cheap, good shit. If a customer doesn't want alcohol, I'll provide them with a joint. It's all about having a good time here. Hell Sheriff Lindsey, when your son, Bobby comes home from college, he comes here for a toke. Now, I'm screwed. I have to pay commercial prices. You fucked mom and pop businesses to help the corporations.

The bus departs, leaving Armondo on the sidewalk with his rolling suitcase. He spins around disoriented. Both Jeremy and Sheriff Lindsey observe him. Sheriff Lindsey neglects Armondo and walks to his car.

JEREMY

Aren't you gonna help the kid?
Provide assistance?

SHERIFF LINDSEY

The wetback will find his place.

JEREMY

The only thing you did by that raid was to breakup a family.

The Sheriff Lindsey enters the car and speeds off.

JEREMY

Hey, kid. Is someone picking you up?

Armondo rolls his suitcase over to Jeremy.

ARMONDO

Hi. I'm not sure if they know I'm coming.

He pulls out the Mistry Cavern tourist pamphlet and hands it to him.

ARMONDO

I'm trying to get here.

Jeremy reads it with a smirk and flips it over.

JEREMY

You know how old this is? It's closed.

ARMONDO

My mom's family live there.

JEREMY

Harpo and Bernie?

ARMONDO

Fields?

JEREMY

Yeah, Bernie Fields. I have a half hour before I open. I can take you as far as the old campground. The road crew is still working on the road before winter. I'll show you a path that will get you there on foot faster.

Armondo offers a handshake.

ARMONDO

Thank you, sir.

Jeremy smiles and squeezes the boy's shoulder.

JEREMY

You are in Oregon now. It's more casual from where you came.

ARMONDO

New Mexico, sir.

JEREMY

No handshakes or "sirs" required. Call me Jeremy.

EXT. CAMPGROUND - DAY

Jeremy's pickup passes a sign reading "CONSTRUCTION DELAYS AHEAD" and turns into the vacant overgrown campground. Jeremy stops the truck and Armondo jumps out.

JEREMY

Follow the road to the river and then take the path east. You know your east from west?

ARMONDO

I have a compass from Boy Scouts,
sir. I mean Jeremy.

JEREMY

Well, I'm sure you don't have bears
in the desert. If you come across a
black bear, stand your ground and
yell. Don't run away.

ARMONDO

There's bears?

JEREMY

They love wild berries. Be careful
and stay safe.

Jeremy drives away, leaving Armondo to survey for bears.

EXT. RIVER - DAY

Armondo checks his compass which points east. He walks along
the path of a river while pulling his suitcase.

(O.S.) Water splashing.

Armondo halts and fears a bear is ahead.

Bushes along the bank rattle.

Armondo steps lightly forward.

(O.S.) Footsteps coming on the path.

Ganji confronts Armondo while drying her hair with a brown
towel which makes her head look like fur.

Armondo screams which scares Ganji.

GANJI

What the fuck?! Scared me to death.
Were you watching me bathe?

They both compose themselves.

ARMONDO

I thought you were a bear. I was
told to scream.

GANJI

Do I look like a bear, pervert?

ARMONDO

I've never seen a bear in the wild before. I'm really sorry. I'm not a pervert, I'm a Boy Scout.

She looks queerly at him and notices the suitcase.

GANJI

What's that?

ARMONDO

Luggage.

GANJI

Most folks use backpacks when camping.

ARMONDO

I was told this is a shortcut to Mistry Cavern.

GANJI

Mistry Cavern?

ARMONDO

My family lives there.

She cocks her head to him.

GANJI

And you are related how to Bernie and Harpo?

ARMONDO

One is my dead mother's mother.

GANJI

Which one? Bernie or Harpo?

He is perplexed by the question.

GANJI

That would be Bernie. Harpo is her father. Your great grandfather. If you are telling me the truth.

ARMONDO

I never lie. I have a grandmother and a great grandfather?

GANJI

Well, Harpo is out there.

Ganji whistles and twirls her finger.

GANJI

I need to go by there anyway to warn them. Follow me.

ARMONDO

Warn?

GANJI

I'll show you the way.

She hikes the path in his direction.

EXT. TRAIL - DAY

They hike a trail.

GANJI

ICE just took him away?

ARMONDO

He never got his citizenship. My mother died from cancer before they could get married.

GANJI

Sorry. When did she die?

ARMONDO

When I was three. I never really knew her.

GANJI

That sucks. Why aren't you going to your father's family?

ARMONDO

His parents lived in El Salvador and paid coyotes to take him here. New Mexico. They didn't want him to be recruited in gangs.

GANJI

Why didn't they come?

ARMONDO

You ask a lot of questions?

GANJI

Well, you are dumb enough to keep answering them.

ARMONDO

They didn't have the money. Why are you taking a bath in a river?

GANJI

My dad was a weed farmer and it was raided yesterday.

ARMONDO

Weed?

GANJI

Marajuana.

ARMONDO

Ah. Where's your dad now?

She shrugs.

GANJI

Feds arrested him. I'll make that bastard pay for it.

ARMONDO

Your mom?

GANJI

Don't know. She left two years ago and we never heard from her since.

ARMONDO

I'm sorry.

GANJI

It was best. She was a meth head. In Boy Scout terms, addiction to methamphetamine.

ARMONDO

I know meth. *Breaking Bad* was located in Albuquerque. My hometown. What are you going to do now?

GANJI

I can fend for myself. I can hunt and camp. I'll sneak into our trailer tonight and grab my shit.

EXT. PARKING LOT - DAY

They climb a steep grade off the trail and get to a weathered and weed-filled parking lot and road.

EXT. MISTRY CAVERN ENTRANCE - DAY

Across the road is a twenty foot high brick wall. A painted sign on the brick from over thirty years ago reads, "Mistry Cavern." A large two-car-wide iron gate is the only entrance. There is a door built into the gate. Every fifty feet along the wall signs read "No Trespassing."

ARMONDO

Is it really a cavern?

GANJI

My dad said it was a tourist trap years ago. Two kids went missing in the cavern and they were forced to close.

Ganji is unable to open the locked door.

GANJI

It's locked.

She presses a button which sounds a sasquatch HOWL and GROWL.

ARMONDO

What is that?

GANJI

It's Bigfoot.

They wait, but nobody answers.

ARMONDO

What do we do?

GANJI

Follow me.

She walks along the line of the wall with Armondo following.

EXT. MISTRY CAVERN - GARDENS - DAY

Ganji and Armondo hang from an oak tree limb and drop down over the wall.

GANJI

We'll get your suitcase later. It's safe.

ARMONDO

Bears?

GANJI

Only if you have fish or berries in there.

Both stop in awe of the overgrown gardens, fountains and trees. They walk amongst tree trunks which are sculptured into animals, dwarves and fairies.

GANJI

This is some creepy Disney shit.

ARMONDO

I have a picture of my parents standing next to Sasquatch.

Dozens of white tail bunnies scurry around the property.

GANJI

So many fucking rabbits. I need to go hunting here.

ARMONDO

You have a foul mouth.

GANJI

I don't have a beak.

Armondo smirks.

GANJI

Get it? Fowl. F-O-W-L.

ARMONDO

I got your dumb joke.

They follow a sign pointing to "Cavern."

EXT. MISTRY CAVERN - MEADOW - DAY

They walk between redwood trees which reveal a grassy meadow.

They walk through the meadow and discover a circle of fluorescent multi-colored mushrooms about fifteen feet in diameter.

ARMONDO

What is that? Are they real?

GANJI

Must be magic mushrooms.

Armondo studies them.

ARMONDO
What type of magic?

Ganji laughs.

GANJI
You never heard of magic mushrooms?
You are a dorky dude.

Armondo steps into the ring.

GANJI
If you eat them, they make you
high. A psychedelic trip.

The mushrooms begin to sway back and forth.

ARMONDO
They are moving. Are you sure you
have to eat them?

From under Armondo's shoes, white threads crisscross and secure his foot to the ground!

(To get a little wonky and scientific, these threads are mycelia. The definition of mycelia is the vegetative part of a fungus, consisting of a network of fine white filaments. Therefore, these threads or snake-like roots will be known in the script as mycelia.)

GANJI
You have to eat them. What is on
your shoe?

Armondo tries to pry his foot from the ground, but it doesn't budge. The mycelia keep growing out of the ground gripping his other shoe!

Ganji steps into the circle and the same thing happens to her!

GANJI
What the fuck is this? We need to
take off our shoes.

The quick growing mycelia attach to both their ankles and snake up their legs. They try to pry away from their hold, but they grip tighter. Their feet is covered and entwined.

ARMONDO
It's moving up my leg. I feel it in
my pants leg.

He grabs a handful of mycelia and tries to rip them off himself. The threads attack and attach to his hand.

ARMONDO

It has my hand. Don't try to touch them.

Both are in a frenzy trying to pry themselves from the growing mycelia.

GANJI

What are we going to do?

ARMONDO

It's squeezing my hand and going up my arm.

GANJI

Help!

ARMONDO

Help!

The mycelia rapidly grow up their calves and to their knees. Armondo's forearm is entwined with them crawling past his elbow.

GANJI

They're tightening their grip.

Armondo lowers his head to glance at his shoulder and a root reaches for his face.

A blast of a fire extinguisher hits them.

They cough as HARPO (early 70's) shoots a fire extinguisher at their legs. He looks like Harpo Marx with his wig and raincoat. He has a long walking stick with a push horn attached.

GANJI

Harpo!

He honks the horn and motions them to wipe off the mycelia.

Armondo breaks the frozen mycelia from his hand.

ARMONDO

The CO2 froze them. You can break them off now.

Harpo shoots another cloud at their feet as both quickly break apart the frozen threads.

Armondo and Ganji rip and break the mycelia away from their feet.

Harpo honks his horn and jumps in and out of the circle.

GANJI
Get out of the circle!

They can finally break free and jump out of the circle to safety.

Harpo wipes the rest of the mycelia from their legs.

An ominous person appears in a hazmat suit with their head covered. They all glare at the unrecognizable person.

Slowly the person lifts the hood and revealing a pudgy and charming grandmother, BERNIE (50's). She is as threatening as Aunt Bee from *The Andy Griffith Show*.

BERNIE
What is this mischief? You two are trespassing.

GANJI
You didn't answer your door.

BERNIE
Ganji, if someone doesn't answer the door, maybe they are busy and unavailable to entertain.

GANJI
What were those plants? They could have killed us.

BERNIE
Sometimes the Countess's children try to escape. Everybody knows you don't go into a fairy ring. Harpo, can you take care of that ring for me.

Harpo honks his horn and begins making holes with his walking stick around the mushrooms. Bernie spins to walk away.

BERNIE
He must have missed that one on his security check this morning. You and your boyfriend follow me.

GANJI
He's not my boyfriend.

ARMONDO
I'm your grandson.

Bernie halts and swivels to Armondo.

ARMONDO
My father's name is...

BERNIE
Javier Mendoza. Where's your
father?

ARMONDO
He was deported to El Salvador. He
sent me here until he comes back.

She studies his face.

BERNIE
You have your daddy's complexion,
but my daughter's eyes. She was a
wild one.

ARMONDO
I'm not wild.

BERNIE
How old are you?

ARMONDO
Sixteen and soon to be an Eagle
Scout.

Ganji giggles.

BERNIE
Beware. You'll grow into those
eyes. Like the kids say on TV,
bring it into your grandma.

Bernie bear hugs her grandson.

BERNIE
Hey Harp, this is your great
grandson. Come over and give him a
hug.

Harpo honks over with his arms held wide.

INT. MISTRY CAVERN - GUEST CABIN - DAY

Bernie completes making a bunk bed in a rugged and dusty old
tourist cabin. Armondo rolls in his suitcase.

BERNIE

This is the only guest cabin standing. We used the wood from the others for the farm construction. I'll give you a tour once you get settled.

Ganji stands just outside the door, so he whispers.

ARMONDO

Her father was arrested when her farm got raided.

Bernie glances over at Ganji.

ARMONDO

She has nobody. No place to live.

BERNIE

Ganji!

Ganji enters.

BERNIE

Is your father bailing out?

GANJI

I don't know. We were just starting harvest and not much liquidity available.

BERNIE

How much cash do you have?

GANJI

I made a few transactions before the raid. Thousand at most.

Bernie nods.

BERNIE

And I'm sure Sheriff Lindsey Butthole will turn you over to family services.

GANJI

If he finds me. I overheard him saying he is trying to nail you to get your property for the pot conglomerates.

BERNIE

I wonder what his take is from the corporation.

Bernie pats Ganji on the shoulder.

BERNIE

I'll be fine, dear. You can stay in the cabin with Armondo until we iron this out. I don't want any monkey business or shenanigans going on in here. Don't want any great grandkids.

INT. MISTRY CAVERN - MAIN HOUSE - DAY

The Marx Brother's film *Monkey Business* is on TV.

Harpo sits in his comfy chair happily watching the comedy antics of the brothers. He honks his horn and laughs without a sound since he is mute.

Bernie leads Armondo and Ganji on a tour.

BERNIE

Harpo's real name is Jacob, but he likes Harpo. He got his vocal cords cut from a blast in Vietnam. He's the reason why I went into the field of mycology.

ARMONDO

What is mycology?

INT. MISTRY CAVERN - MUSHROOM FARM/GIFT SHOP - DAY

A previous gift shop is refitted to an indoor mushroom farm. Like hanging pods from a horror film, mushroom plastic grow bags hang from roof rafters. Mushrooms stick out from holes on the side of the bags. Bernie leads Armondo and Ganji down the rows as she points at different varieties and shapes.

BERNIE

I grow mushrooms. These are my babies. This row is my psilocybin ones. It's a variety of conocybe, copelandia, galerina, pluteus, but I name them after their first three letters. It makes it easier for Harpo.

ARMONDO

Do you eat them?

BERNIE

Sometimes when I need a bit of whimsy.

GANJI

Magic mushrooms? Like those in the circle?

BERNIE

No. Do not eat those unless you want to die. You eat these to take a trip. Hallucinogenics.

Ganji studies the mushrooms closer.

BERNIE

When my father came back from that ugly, ugly war he was hospitalized and overcoming his wounds. He had acute PTSD.

ARMONDO

Post-traumatic stress disorder. I did a report on it in school. They relive the battle trauma through flashbacks and nightmares.

BERNIE

Maybe you have a bit of me in your genes. I studied psilocybin mushrooms and it led me to my current field of study and experimentation. Whenever he has an episode or recurrence these help him ease into a better state of mind.

Ganji touches the velvet-like texture of a shroom.

GANJI

Can you teach me how to grow it?

Bernie smirks at Ganji.

BERNIE

Take notice of her question, Armondo. You got a wheeler-dealer there. Your mother asked the same thing years ago. Now, I shouldn't do this, but the Countess needs someone other than me to witness her beauty and majesty. Let's go down to the lab.

Bernie walks toward the back as Ganji leans into Armondo.

GANJI
She can make a fortune selling
these mushrooms.

ARMONDO
Who's the Countess?

EXT. FREIGHT ELEVATOR - DAY

Bernie inserts a key into the elevator side panel and presses a down button.

BERNIE
You must never go down to the lab
or the cavern without me. Do you
understand? Even Harpo is not
allowed. It's deathly serious.

The freight door opens and Bernie escorts them in.

BERNIE
Do you understand?

They both nod their heads.

BERNIE
This is the only entrance into the
cavern. The public access has been
sealed years ago.

GANJI
Is that when the children went
missing?

The elevator rattles as it goes down.

BERNIE
They didn't follow the rules. They
left the trail.

Ganji and Armondo side-eye questioning glances to each other. The elevator opens to a large white scientific lab to which they enter.

LABORATORY

The sterile lab contains microscopes, petri dishes, incubators, and freezers. CO2 extinguishers are everywhere.

BERNIE
Do you have a top secret clearance?

Both shake their heads.

BERNIE
Raise your hands.

They raise them.

BERNIE
Do you pledge on your young life
you will not share what I'm about
to show you?

GANJI AND ARMONDO
Yes.

BERNIE
So help you God?

GANJI AND ARMONDO
I do.

BERNIE
Good. The CIA would kill me, and
you, if they knew.

She leads them to a large inserted wall terrarium spanning about fifty feet. There is robotic hand controllers and a camera facing it.

Bernie flips on a switch and a metal door rises up. There is thick glass between them.

BERNIE
This is the Countess. She is as
lethal as she is beautiful.

The Countess is a humungous, wavy florescent fungi with white threads of mycelia moving rapidly below and above the soil.

BERNIE
Bow to her. She has the potential
to save humanity or destroy it.

Armondo and Ganji are mesmerized by the creature.

GANJI
Is she a mushroom?

BERNIE
Common fungi and mold would not do
her justice. Though she does lie in
the Eukaryote Kingdom.

BERNIE (CONT'D)

Her spores or spawn are in the freezer over there. Now for the pièce de résistance.

She leads them to another door off the side.

OBSERVATION ROOM

The door opens to a metal covered wall or observation deck into the cavern. Old wood benches face the metal covering. Bernie flips a switch and the metal guard rises revealing through glass fluorescent mushroom bulbs. The rainbow colors glow amongst the stalagmites and stalactites.

Armondo and Ganji are drawn to the window like a child to a Christmas tree.

GANJI

It's fuckin' amazing.

ARMONDO

Wow!

BERNIE

I'm so happy I can share it with somebody. You don't know how lonely and burdensome this secret holds. It's as if Michelangelo never allowed his frescos to be seen at the Sistine Chapel.

ARMONDO

Can we go in there?

Bernie shakes her head and hands Armondo and Ganji a quarter a piece while pointing to an old tourist monocular telescope.

BERNIE

Those are the Countess's children. Their appetite is voracious and dangerous.

Ganji inserts the quarter and both share viewing the mushrooms.

GANJI

What is voracious?

BERNIE

The strings or mycelia to which nearly consumed you came from here.

BERNIE (CONT'D)

They snaked their roots and found a hole in the stone to reach the upper soil. That's why Harpo needs to kill the fairy circles before it finds prey and spreads.

ARMONDO

It would have ate us?

BERNIE

Like a fallen, decaying tree. Actually faster since I boosted their hunger and speed to which they decompose their prey.

ARMONDO

I thought fungus only decomposes plants and dead animals.

BERNIE

Countess is a carnivore. She kills. And has a learned appetite for humans. Her mycelia finds an opening in the body and spreads its roots inside. It follows the nervous system up the spine and into the brain. Thus the animal loses all functionality. Then like normal fungus, it secretes enzymes which breaks down polymers into monomers and so on. The recycling of life.

Bernie heads to the elevator as Armondo and Ganji study each other.

BERNIE

Your timing in coming here is a blessing. Harpo and I can no longer keep this project going. Both of us are getting old and unable to do the heavy lifting. I've decided to teach you both. Come along.

Ganji leans into Armondo with a whisper.

GANJI

A twisted Willy Wonka.

They join her in the elevator with uncertain eyes.

INT. MISTRY CAVERN - MAIN HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

A plate of spaghetti with sauce and mushrooms is placed in front of Armondo by Harpo with a smile.

Bernie grabs the hands of Ganji and Armondo. To their surprise, Harpo grabs their other hands, closing a circle around the table.

BERNIE

We give thanks for the plants and animals who have given themselves so that we can enjoy this meal together. We also give thanks for our friends and family who have traveled here today. May this meal bring us strength and health.

ARMONDO AND GANJI

Amen.

Harpo honks his horn as they all eat.

BERNIE

Don't be scared of the mushrooms. They are table, white buttons. Tasty, but harmless. I'll get into more tomorrow, my soon-to-be mycologists.

GANJI

I need to pick up my truck and find out about my father. See how much his bail is.

BERNIE

I may be able to help you with that.

GANJI

Wow. That would be cool. Thank you.

Harpo honks and smiles at her.

BERNIE

Harpo too.

INT. MISTRY CAVERN - GUEST CABIN - NIGHT

Armondo is pulling his pajama bottoms from his knees when Bernie barges in the cabin. Embarrassed, he quickly yanks them up over his privates.

BERNIE

I'm your grandmother. Where's Ganji?

ARMONDO

She's not coming out of the bathroom.

BERNIE

She's a tough urchin. I did some snooping and your father is awaiting deportation.

ARMONDO

He's still here? New Mexico?

BERNIE

I still know a couple people. High-ups. I'll see if I can pull a few strings.

Ganji sheepishly comes out of the bathroom in an oversized Victorian granny pajamas.

BERNIE

Don't you look lovely.

Armondo smirks at her.

GANJI

Bite it.

BERNIE

It's best to not leave the cabin at night. Have a good night.

Bernie leaves as Armondo climbs into the top bunk.

GANJI

I might have wanted the top one.

ARMONDO

I was being a gentleman.

GANJI

A Boy Scout.

ARMONDO

What's wrong with that?

She flips off the wall light switch and the moonlight shines in as she jumps in the lower bunk.

GANJI
I beat up Boy Scouts.

ARMONDO
My grandmother said you were a
tough urchin.

GANJI
She did? What's that?

ARMONDO
I think like the Artful Dodger in
Oliver Twist. He was a pickpocket.

GANJI
Whatever. You know I knew Mistry
Cavern was freaky, but not this
weird. She's a mad shroom
scientist.

They both lay back in bed.

ARMONDO
My dad said my grandma worked at
the White Sands Military Base and
that's how he met my mom. She and
he met at a Green Day concert in
Albuquerque.

GANJI
Cool. I like Green Day.

ARMONDO
My mom had a falling out with her
before she got cancer. What do you
think she meant that you were like
my mom?

GANJI
Dunno. I don't understand half of
what she says.

INT. MISTRY CAVERN - GUEST CABIN - NIGHT

Headlights shine past the window which wakes Ganji.

(O.S.) A truck goes out of the gate.

Ganji jumps to the window and peers out.

ARMONDO
What was that?

Ganji spins to him.

GANJI
They must have drove off.

ARMONDO
It's past midnight.

Ganji grabs her shoes.

ARMONDO
Where you going?

GANJI
Let's check out more.

ARMONDO
She told us not to go out at night.

GANJI
C'mon, Boy Scout. Let's scout.
There is a flashlight in the
bathroom.

EXT. MISTRY CAVERN - GROUNDS - NIGHT

By flashlight, Armondo and Ganji walk along the path amongst the trees and sculptures. Rabbits hop across the path and dash in the ferns.

GANJI
This place is trippier at night.

They come across a circle of glowing mushrooms.

ARMONDO
A fairy circle. Stay away from it.

GANJI
Hold on.

Ganji runs off.

(O.S.) Bushes rattle.

Armondo shines the flashlight beam to the bushes and Ganji emerges holding a rabbit.

ARMONDO
Awww. You caught one.

Ganji goes to the fairy circle.

ARMONDO

No way.

She drops the bunny within the circle.

ARMONDO

Why are you...

Before the rabbit could hop out, white mycelia grip and tighten on the rabbit's back feet. The rabbit struggles to escape, but the mycelia wraps around its body. It travels into the rabbit's ears and mouth. The rabbit collapses and is already decaying into the threads of mycelia.

GANJI

Fuck.

ARMONDO

That could have been us.

EXT. MISTRY CAVERN - TOURIST ENTRANCE - NIGHT

A weathered sign reads "Cavern Entrance."

Ganji and Armondo find a long flight of stairs leading down into darkness.

GANJI

Shine the light.

Armondo shines the light down the stairwell. The stairs lead to a closed sturdy iron door. Ganji quickly runs down the stairs and tries the door.

GANJI

It's locked.

EXT. MISTRY CAVERN - MAIN HOUSE - NIGHT

Armondo and Ganji walk past the main house.

(O.S.) Walls are kicked and a glass shatters.

Both of them run to the back door and enter.

INT. MISTRY CAVERN - MAIN HOUSE - LIVINGROOM - NIGHT

Armondo and Ganji search the house for the thumping of the walls.

INT. MISTRY CAVERN - MAIN HOUSE - HALL

Armondo and Ganji meet at a closed door.

(O.S.) Bed rattles from the floor.

Armondo enters.

INT. MISTRY CAVERN - MAIN HOUSE - HARPO'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Harpo thrashes on the bed while kicking and smacking the walls. His wig is off which reveals numerous head scars from the war.

Ganji flips a light switch. Harpo is having a seizure.

ARMONDO

He's having a PTSD seizure.

Armondo hugs Harpo.

ARMONDO

Harpo, it's Armondo. It's alright.
It's going to be OK. Find his
medication.

Ganji leaves.

INT. MISTRY CAVERN - MAIN HOUSE - BATHROOM - NIGHT

Ganji searches and finds jars of dried mushrooms.

ARMONDO (O.S.)

Hurry!

She opens a jar and drops the dried mushrooms into her hand.

INT. MISTRY CAVERN - MAIN HOUSE - HARPO'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Ganji hands Armondo shrooms.

ARMONDO

Harpo, I have your medication.

Harpo's trance-like eyes are frightened, but he opens his mouth. Armondo feeds him a shroom.

ARMONDO

Get some water.

Ganji splits.

Harpo chews on the shrooms and slowly calms down. Armondo still holds him and glances about the room. He discovers the walls are filled family photos. There are some current pictures of him with his father during a recent Boy Scout camping trip.

He focuses on photos of his mother as a teenager and becomes teary-eyed.

CUT TO:

Armondo wakes from a chair with a photograph of his mother on his lap. Harpo sleeps soundly as Bernie enters the bedroom.

BERNIE

What happened? Why are you here?

ARMONDO

He had a bad seizure. We gave him some mushrooms from the bathroom. He calmed down and fell to sleep.

She squeezes his shoulder and takes the photograph from his hand.

BERNIE

I'm happy you're here. Your mother could be a rascal, but she sure was beautiful. I miss my baby too.

ARMONDO

Where did you go?

BERNIE

I had to get some medical supplies. Thank you.

She kisses him on the cheek.

EXT. MISTRY CAVERN - MAIN HOUSE - NIGHT

Armondo walks past Bernie's truck and the ATV which carries a large liquid container.

(O.S.) Oxygen tank hisses.

Armondo makes sure he is not being watched and peeks into the truck window. He finds an oxygenated container like an incubator.

INT. MISTRY CAVERN - GUEST CABIN - DAY

Ganji cuffs up a pair of jeans while Armondo comes out of the bathroom dressed.

GANJI

Thanks for the clothes. I'll get some today.

ARMONDO

You look better in them than I do.

(O.S.) Shotgun blast.

Armondo and Ganji rush outside.

EXT. MISTRY CAVERN - GUEST CABIN - DAY

Armondo and Ganji rush out as a drone comes crashing down in front of them.

Bernie holds a smoking shotgun.

BERNIE

Damn Sheriff Lindsey and his toys. I have breakfast in the kitchen. We have a busy day. You'll be learning what a substrate is and make your own incubation bag.

She spins and leaves them in stunned silence.

INT. MISTRY CAVERN - MUSHROOM FARM/GIFT SHOP - DAY

Armondo, Ganji and Bernie stand before a workbench of a dark brown mixture like dung from an elephant. They wince at the smell.

ARMONDO

What is it?

BERNIE

This is a substrate. It is the nourishment and decay to which mushroom spores can flourish and grow.

Bernie takes a mushroom cap and flips it over.

BERNIE

In the flesh of the fruit is the spores. This is how mushrooms reproduce.

Bernie holds petri dishes of spores.

BERNIE

We will kneed in the spores into our substrate. Go ahead. Get dirty. Get your hands in there and kneed like bread dough.

Reluctantly, Armondo and Ganji sink their hands into the mass.

GANJI

I think what Armondo was really asking was, what is this shit?

Bernie laughs.

BERNIE

Half right. It's coffee grounds and horse manure.

Their eyes widen.

ARMONDO

It's shit.

EXT. MISTRY CAVERN - GROUNDS - DAY

Harpo drives the ATV and chases bunnies into the meadow with honks.

Armondo watches from a distance as Ganji joins him while sniffing her hands.

GANJI

What's going on?

ARMONDO

He's rounding up the rabbits.

GANJI

Or trying. Finally got the smell of crap off my hands. I'm going to pick up my truck.

ARMONDO

I'm going with you.

GANJI

Why?

ARMONDO

You don't want me to?

GANJI

Sure. I thought you might want to hang with your relatives.

Harpo drives over to Armondo and gives him a big hug and honk.

ARMONDO

What?

GANJI

He's thanking you.

Harpo nods and pulls away from Armondo. He surprises Ganji with a hug and honk of her own.

EXT. GANJI'S MOBILE HOME - DAY

Ganji and Armondo stand beside her truck facing the burnt remains and bones of what was a home.

GANJI

They didn't need to do this. Ever since he caught his son buying weed from me, he had out for us.

ARMONDO

Do you blame him? He's watching out for his son. Your father must have known a pot farm is dangerous for his child.

She spins back to the truck.

GANJI

You don't know him. Like your deported dad watched out for you. Sending you to your crazed grandmother who engineers pretty meat-eating monsters.

He follows her into the truck.

EXT. GOODWILL STORE - DAY

Ganji and Armondo toss used clothes and a sleeping bag into the bed of the truck.

ARMONDO

Can we agree that our parents were a bit irresponsible and that led to our current situation?

GANJI

A bit. Only a bit. But we can blame the environment and laws that made them do what they did. My dad provided for me the best way he could. It's illegal one day and the next it's legal. Then so-called free-market moral corporations squeeze us out.

ARMONDO

Why didn't you get a license to grow it?

They both get into the truck.

GANJI

Do you know the cost of a license? Only rich corporations or those well connected to politicians can get them. I still blame the sheriff. He's doing their dirty work. He is going to fuck your grandmother like he did to my dad.

Armondo glances into the bed of the truck as Ganji drives onto the street.

ARMONDO

Why a sleeping bag?

GANJI

I need a backup plan. Keep an eye out for the sheriff's car.

EXT. OREGON ROCK TAVERN - REAR ENTRANCE - DAY

Ganji and Armondo exit her truck.

ARMONDO

Can we both agree my grandma is all we got?

GANJI

At this very moment, I agree.

Ganji grabs the rear doorknob of the tavern.

ARMONDO

And we have each other.

Ganji stops for a brief contemplation of what he said and enters.

INT. OREGON ROCK TAVERN - DAY

Jeremy tends to the bar while Barkley and his band set up instruments. Ganji waives to Barkley and goes directly to Jeremy. Armondo mulls around the stage.

JEREMY

You know Sheriff Lindsey is snooping for you.

GANJI

I parked in the back.

She comes around the bar to him.

JEREMY

You're friends with Bernie's grandson?

GANJI

I ran into him on the trail. I got something that you might be interested in.

She extracts a big baggie of shrooms from inside her waist and shirt.

JEREMY

Mushrooms?

GANJI

The best. Old lady Fields has a whole crop of them.

Jeremy studies them.

JEREMY

Have you taste tested them?

GANJI

I witnessed Harpo have a PTSD
attack and he took maybe one or two
and he was in la la land. A
peaceful easy feeling.

STAGE

Armondo picks up a guitar and strums a quiet tune.

BAR

Jeremy glances up at Armondo.

JEREMY

Is the kid involved?

GANJI

No. Not yet. I'm just selling until
I get enough to help out my dad.

Jeremy studies her and the shrooms.

JEREMY

Same cut? If it's good with repeat
customers, I'll raise your end.

STAGE

Barkley nods over to Armondo.

BARKLEY

You play?

Armondo reluctantly nods.

BARKLEY

Stage is yours.

Barkley sets a microphone near the guitar. Armondo begins to
strum the opening of *Guaranteed* by Eddie Vedder.

BAR

Ganji and Jeremy are struck by Armondo's playing. Jeremy nods
to Ganji to join him.

STAGE

Armondo stops playing when Ganji stands near.

GANJI

Play the intro again.

Armondo plays from the start of the song as Ganji sings the first verse.

GANJI

"On bended knee is no way to be
free. Lifting up an empty cup, I
ask silently. That all my
destinations will accept the one
that's me. So I can breathe."

The attraction grows between them as Armondo duets with her for the second verse.

GANJI AND ARMONDO

"Circles they grow and they swallow
people whole. Half their lives they
say goodnight to wives they'll
never know. Got a mind full of
questions and a teacher in my soul.
And so it goes."

Jeremy and Barkley are astounded by the young duo.

INT./EXT. TRUCK/FOREST ROAD - DAY

Their *Guaranteed* duet plays as Ganji and Armondo drive through the woods with the windows down.

Ganji pulls out a couple of shrooms from her pocket and offers Armondo one. He shakes his head as Ganji eats one.

She winces from the taste but swallows it. Armondo shakes his head but reluctantly holds out his hand.

She drops a shroom into his palm with a smile. He quickly chews and chokes it down.

They smile at each other as they both shrug not feeling anything different.

The song ends.

EXT. MISTRY CAVERN ENTRANCE - DAY

Ganji drives the truck into the gate with Armondo shotgun.

A TREE ACROSS THE ROAD

The camouflaged Sheriff Lindsey peers through binoculars.

INSIDE GATE

She parks the truck and they both exit giggling.

ARMONDO
I don't feel anything. Do you?

GANJI
Nope.

Harpo honks by chasing a bunny on the ATV. They both stare in wonder at him.

ARMONDO
We should help him.

GANJI
That's a wonderful idea.

They giggle and give chase.

EXT. MISTRY CAVERN - MEADOW - DAY

Armondo and Ganji laugh while herding the bunnies like work dogs.

In their eyes the bunnies are a kaleidoscope of colors hopping on a flowing green grassy canvass like a Monet painting.

Harpo honks and motions for them to chase the bunnies over to him. Harpo sits on a gate of a miniature chicken wire corral.

Armondo and Ganji chase the bunnies into the corral where more bunnies wait. They laugh while catching their breath. Harpo secures the gate to keep them from escaping.

Harpo honks his horn and scares the bunnies toward an open hole on the far side of the corral.

The rabbits hop toward the hole as Armondo and Ganji follow giggling uncontrollably.

One by one, the bunnies disappear in the black hole.

(O.S.) Rabbits cry from the hole.

Ganji and Armondo scramble to the hole as they realize the rabbits are being slaughtered for fungus consumption. Their humor gives way to horror.

The rabbits run from them and fall into the hole. Armondo slides to save one by grabbing a rabbit's hind foot, but misses by an inch. The rabbit disappears out of sight.

Ganji joins Armondo on their bellies and peer into the hole. It leads down into the cavern where the florescent carnivorous mushrooms grow. The mycelium quickly ensnares the wounded rabbits and eats them.

Ganji and Armondo roll over and face the sky in worry.

INT. MISTRY CAVERN - GUEST CABIN - NIGHT

Armondo lays in the upper bunk staring at the ceiling. Ganji lays in the lower bunk staring at the upper bunk.

ARMONDO
It finally wore off.

GANJI
Mine too. Colors are back to normal.

ARMONDO
But what we saw and participated in was abnormal.

(O.S.) Gate opens and Bernie's truck leaves.

GANJI
Where does she go?

ARMONDO
I don't know. How can she leave Harpo in the middle of the night?

GANJI
It's another fucking mystery for sure.

EXT. MISTRY CAVERN ENTRANCE - NIGHT

Sheriff Lindsey peers through night binoculars from a tree limb as Bernie's truck exits the gate.

INT. MUSHROOM FARM - DAY

Ganji and Armondo prepare substrate, but wear gloves now.

Harpo enters with his spray container with a honk.

ARMONDO
How many fairy rings did you kill today?

Harpo raises his hand showing five fingers.

GANJI
Where is Bernie?

Harpo taps down his horn and cane.

ARMONDO
She's below.

Harpo nods with a smile.

GANJI
What's in that liquid that kills
the mycelia?

Harpo shakes his head and zips his mouth.

ARMONDO
You can't say? Secret?

Harpo nods.

GANJI
Can you give us a hint?

Harpo glances about for Bernie and uses his hands like wings to fly.

GANJI
It flies?

Harpo nods and then covers his face with his forearm like Dracula with a cape. He brings two fingers to his mouth like fangs.

ARMONDO
Dracula?

Harpo nods and smiles.

GANJI
Vampires kill them?

Harpo gives Ganji a stern look.

GANJI
OK. OK.

Harpo pretends to eat something and then pretends to talk to Armondo. Harpo falls to the floor playing dead.

GANJI
Poison?

Harpo shakes his head.

ARMONDO

Garlic!

Harpo nods and zips his mouth.

EXT. MISTRY CAVERN - MAIN HOUSE - DAY

Ganji, Armondo, Harpo, and Bernie eat sandwiches on the porch.

GANJI

I never worked this hard on my farm.

BERNIE

It builds character.

(O.S.) Bigfoot bellows.

BERNIE

Who can that be? Armondo tell the lookie-loos to shoosh.

MINUTES LATER

Jeremy carries a guitar while walking with Ganji toward the porch. They whisper to each other.

JEREMY

Shit sold out in two days. Can you get me more?

GANJI

You have the money.

JEREMY

See me out when I leave. It's in the truck.

GANJI

Cool. I'll get a batch to you tomorrow.

They get a speaking distance away from the porch.

BERNIE

Well, well, isn't this a pleasant surprise?

Harpo welcomes him with quick honks.

JEREMY

Nice to see Bernie and Harpo are doing well.

BERNIE

What brings you out here?

Jeremy hands the guitar to Armondo.

JEREMY

I wanted to give this to your grandson. He's quite a player.

ARMONDO

Wow. Thank you.

JEREMY

We'd like you two to perform at the tavern next weekend. Thought you could rehearse a few songs together.

Armondo and Ganji meet eyes and nod together.

ARMONDO

Really? Sure.

BERNIE

Let me get you a sandwich.

JEREMY

Thank you, but I can't stay long. We have been opening early to catch the morning logging shift.

EXT. MISTRY CAVERN - MAIN HOUSE - PORCH - DAY

Armondo finishes playing a song on the guitar. Bernie, Harpo, and Ganji clap for him.

BERNIE

Your mother loved music. She would always steal my Eagles and Linda Ronstadt albums.

ARMONDO

Dad told me about how they met at the Green Day concert.

BERNIE

I was inches away from losing my security clearance and my job keeping both of your parents out of jail and deportation. Both your father and mother had to be bailed out for selling illegal drugs at that punk concert.

Armondo's mouth drops.

ARMONDO

He said they met while dancing.

BERNIE

Dancing while using and selling drugs. Your mother stole my mushrooms and sold them to make money.

Ganji glances away from guilt.

BERNIE

Your father sold doobies which he muled across the border.

ARMONDO

My father sold drugs? My mother?

Bernie realizes Armondo never knew and shuts her mouth.

ARMONDO

He kept this a secret from me like his citizenship.

GANJI

There's far worse things.

ARMONDO

At least your dad was honest in breaking the law. What else could he have hidden from me? He said he never had contact with mom's family but there are new photographs of me on Harpo's wall.

BERNIE

Our family dynamic is complex. I couldn't allow your father to be any near this research facility. It would be shut down and all grant funds lost. Which reminds me, Harpo, we need to get ready for our DARPA guests.

Harpo honks and nods with approval.

BERNIE

Armondo, your father sent us those pictures. He wanted to show us how you were growing up into an outstanding young man.

Harpo honks his horn and holds his heart.

ARMONDO

I don't understand.

BERNIE

Just understand your father loves you as Harpo and I. When your father needed money, I was there for him and you. When your father was laid off at the mine, we made sure you got your first guitar for Christmas. But it was too risky for him to raise you near this facility.

ARMONDO

Is this a government research facility?

BERNIE

Military, dear. Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency. DARPA. And that's all I'm allowed to say.

Harpo zips his lips.

ARMONDO

More secrets.

INT. MISTRY CAVERN - GUEST CABIN - NIGHT

Ganji sneaks out of the lower bunk and checks to make sure Armondo is asleep. She silently puts on her shoes and grabs the flashlight.

EXT. MISTRY CAVERN - GROUNDS - NIGHT

A dense mysterious mist creeps along the trees and meadows. Three fairy rings glow in the meadow.

INT. MUSHROOM FARM/GIFT SHOP - NIGHT

Ganji has the flashlight in her mouth and inserts dried shrooms into a large bag.

(O.S.) Door knob squeaks open.

She takes the flashlight from her mouth and flips it off.

ENTRANCE

Sheriff Lindsey sneaks in dressed in camouflage. He shines his flashlight upon the dangling growing bags.

Ganji watches him from behind a far bag.

Sheriff Lindsey studies the mushrooms growing out and takes photographs with his phone.

Ganji mistakenly kicks a pail and Sheriff Lindsey beams his flashlight at the bag.

He measuredly walks over to the hanging bags. He bends down and shines the flashlight beam under the bags where only the pail is seen.

He listens for a brief moment and goes back to taking pictures.

From behind a bag Ganji hangs on with her hands and feet hugging it, with her feet off the floor.

EXT. MUSHROOM FARM - NIGHT

Sheriff Lindsey sneaks out and goes into the meadow where the fairy rings illuminate. Ganji exits and follows him.

He walks around the fairy circles and takes pictures of them. His foot moves less than inch inside the ring. Mycelia creep out toward his foot but he steps back before they can take hold.

Ganji sprints and shoves him into the circle, however his momentum rushes him out of the other side before the mycelia can grab his feet.

He spins around while snatching his pistol from the holster.

SHERIFF LINDSEY
Little bitch.

Ganji runs into the mist while pursued by Sheriff Lindsey.

EXT. MISTRY CAVERN - RABBIT CORRAL - NIGHT

A round colorful glow comes from the feeding hole and beams into the mist.

Ganji climbs over the corral fence with Sheriff Lindsey breathing down her neck. He climbs over right after her.

He catches up to her and tackles her from behind only a couple of feet away from the hole.

SHERIFF LINDSEY

I'm going to make sure you go to
juvy and foster care.

She wildly punches him.

GANJI

Fuck you!

She punches his nose.

SHERIFF LINDSEY

You ain't sellin shit anymore.

He swings his gun and slams her head. She is knocked unconscious for a brief moment.

He rises to his feet as she withers regaining conscious.

SHERIFF LINDSEY

Get up! Hands behind your back.

Sheriff Lindsey is shoved from behind by someone unseen. His momentum forces him to trip over Ganji toward the feeding hole. He tries to regain his balance, but his foot slips off the edge. He tumbles into the hole.

(O.S.) A quick scream and thud.

Armondo helps her to her feet and she gives him a life-saving hug. They measuredly walk to the edge of the feeding hole and peer below.

Mycelia wraps around and inside the sheriff's mouth, ears and eyes. The white threads consume him.

ARMONDO

He is the sheriff?

GANJI

Was.

INT. GUEST CABIN - NIGHT

Ganji lays in the bottom bunk as Armondo the top.

ARMONDO

Do we tell my grandmother?

GANJI

Not sure how she would take it.
Obviously, we can't say you pushed
him in the hole.

ARMONDO

I'm a fucking scout. How can I kill
a sheriff? I'm supposed to respect
authority.

GANJI

There goes that badge.

He quietly sobs.

GANJI

Don't do that. It's not your fault.
You came to my defense.

He sniffles.

GANJI

Do you want me to lay with you up
there?

ARMONDO

No.

There is an awkward silence until he dangles his legs from
the top bunk.

ARMONDO

I'll join you down there.

He jumps down as Ganji opens the bed spreads for him.

ARMONDO

Sure?

GANJI

Hell yeah.

Armondo cuddles next to her.

GANJI

We do nothing.

ARMONDO

Really?

GANJI

Not here. Out there. Nothing happened. He came on private property. I'm sure without a warrant and he fell by accident in the hole.

ARMONDO

They might not even find his body.

GANJI

Even better. But he had a cell phone. It's down with him.

They cuddle even closer.

ARMONDO

They will find him by the phone GPS.

GANJI

We need to go down and get it. We can't repel down the feeding hole.

ARMONDO

The other entrance. I may have the key for it.

GANJI

We need the fire extinguisher and that garlic shit.

ARMONDO

We can wait till morning.

GANJI

Is that what I think it is?

ARMONDO

You aren't helping touching it.

GANJI

It really does grow and the nut sack is sorta weird. Squishy.

They cuddle and kiss each other.

EXT. MISTRY CAVERN - TOURIST ENTRANCE - MORNING

A mist covers the entrance. Armondo holds the key in front of the iron door that leads to the cavern. Ganji has her fingers crossed.

GANJI

This is like Bilbo trying to get into the Misty Mountain.

ARMONDO

I wish this was fiction.

GANJI

And there was only a dragon in there.

ARMONDO

My dad had the key in his old stash box.

Armondo inserts the key and it unlocks.

GANJI

Fuck.

ARMONDO

I know. Right?

He opens the door with a swish of wind from inside.

EXT. MISTRY CAVERN - MEADOW - MORNING

A mist permeates the grounds. Ganji and Armondo meet Harpo who is killing the fairy rings with his secret sauce sprayer.

ARMONDO

Good morning, Harpo.

He honks his horn while pressing his cane point into the ground.

GANJI

We have come to help you out.

ARMONDO

We know my grandma is having you get ready for the guests and I'm sure you have a honey-do list a mile long.

Harpo rolls his eyes and nods.

GANJI

Show us how it's done. Where to get
more secret sauce and we'll help
get rid of the fairy rings.

EXT. MISTRY CAVERN - CAVE ENTRANCE - DAY

Ganji and Armondo are dressed in gloves and boots. Both have fire extinguishers, garden sprayers, and flashlights. They enter the cave and close the door.

INT. MISTRY CAVERN - CAVE ENTRANCE - DAY

Ganji and Armondo follow the flashlight beam along a weathered blacktop trail leading further down. Hundreds of feet down is the glow of the fluorescent mushrooms.

The trail meanders between huge stalagmites and stalactites. Water drops from above and splashes around them.

INT. MISTRY CAVERN - CAVE OBSERVATION ROOM - DAY

Bernie tidies the room and washes the window. She doesn't notice that inside the cavern the outside light rays from the feeding tube spotlights the mycelia decomposing the remains of the Sheriff Lindsey. White threads go inside and outside the eye sockets.

(O.S.) Bigfoot growls.

BERNIE

They're early.

Bernie jogs to the elevator.

EXT. MISTRY CAVERN ENTRANCE - DAY

One darkly tinted SUV and an army carrier enter the grounds.

Harpo closes the gate.

FOUR SOLDIERS (30's) exit the carrier in full military gear and quickly guard the SUV.

The rear door opens on the SUV and a scientist exits. DR. PETRIE is an aging hippie wearing an unbuttoned white lab coat with a Phish t-shirt and jeans. He reads a report. From the other rear opening door a stout female GENERAL BLACKBURN (30's) exits.

Bernie jogs from the gift shop out to them and stops abruptly.

BERNIE

Where is General Stoval and Rick?

Dr. Petrie pays her no mind and the General Blackburn gives her the once-over twice.

GENERAL BLACKBURN

They are no longer with DARPA. They bad mouthed the president.

BERNIE

When?

GENERAL BLACKBURN

Irrelevant.

DR. PETRIE

You are researching mushrooms.

Dr. Petrie thumbs through his report.

DR. PETRIE

Mmmm. I hope this is like wine tasting in Sonoma. Shrooms do enhance a concert.

BERNIE

It's more like the other way around. The Countess would like to taste you.

She chuckles and pivots around.

BERNIE

Though I did make spice cookies for this occasion.

INT. MISTRY CAVERN - DAY

Ganji and Armondo tread closer to the mushroom garden.

ARMONDO

Stop!

The flashlight beam catches small white mycelia crawling near their feet. Armondo shines the beam on the walls and it is layered with moving strands of mycelia.

ARMONDO

Let's try the secret sauce.

Ganji sprays the strands before them and they immediately shrivel and recoil.

GANJI

It works.

Like a human pain receptor and nerves, the mycelia carry a warning to the mushrooms which blink a warning.

GANJI

They know we are a danger.

ARMONDO

Like a child touching a hot stove,
it learns.

Ganji sprays the path as they both move forward.

ARMONDO

Use it sparingly. We'll use the
extinguisher if it gets crazy-bad.

Before Ganji sprays the mycelia, the threads retreat from the path.

GANJI

They are afraid of us.

INT. MISTRY CAVERN - MUSHROOM FARM/GIFT SHOP - DAY

Bernie leads General Blackburn and Dr. Petrie past the dangling vertical grow bags.

GENERAL BLACKBURN

What are your security protocols?

BERNIE

These are psilocybin. The ones you
consume at the concert.

She points to the side.

BERNIE

Those are table variety buttons and
portobello. The Countess and her
children are secured below.

She unlocks a door to the elevator.

EXT. MISTRY CAVERN - GUEST CABIN - DAY

Harpo exits while scratching his head, pondering where the teenagers could have gone. He mounts the ATV and sputters off.

INT. MISTRY CAVERN - DAY

The mycelia is inches thick along the path in front of Armondo and Ganji. Ganji sprays the sauce and the mycelia retreat off the path. They are almost into the heart of the mushroom garden.

(O.S.) Bones crunch below their feet.

ARMONDO
We are getting close.

GANJI
Rabbit bones.

Ganji kicks a rabbit skull away.

ARMONDO
We'll go to the ray of light.

The mycelia retreats revealing two skeletons of children.

GANJI
Holy shit! It's the bones of the missing children.

Armondo moves forward.

ARMONDO
Don't look. Keep spraying and walking.

GANJI
They stayed on the path.

(O.S.) Sheriff Lindsey's cell phone rings yards away.

GANJI
Better yet. Follow the ring.

They advance deeper into the mushroom garden. The mycelia is now a foot deep, like moving snow.

INT. MISTRY CAVERN - LABORATORY - DAY

Bernie leads Dr. Petrie and General Blackburn from the elevator.

BERNIE

No one else has a key. Not even my father.

GENERAL BLACKBURN

What about the mute?

BERNIE

That's my father.

Dr. Petrie thumbs through the report.

DR. PETRIE

This research has been funded for over thirty years.

GENERAL BLACKBURN

Has there ever been a cost analysis?

BERNIE

I have made advancements every year. The worth of this research is well documented. I planned a feeding of the Countess for your viewing pleasure.

GENERAL BLACKBURN

Countess?

BERNIE

She is my engineering marvel. The superhero of shrooms. Please have a cookie while I set up her feeding.

Bernie motions over to a plate of homemade spice cookies in the shape of mushrooms.

DR. PETRIE

They aren't made with you-know-what?

BERNIE

No, no, don't be silly.

EXT. MISTRY CAVERN - GROUNDS - DAY

Harpo drives the ATV by the Soldiers guarding their vehicles. He waves, smiles, and honks at him. They side-eye each other and laugh at him.

INT. MISTRY CAVERN - DAY

Armondo and Ganji follow the cell phone beep. The mycelia is over two feet deep as they plod and spray toward the beep.

GANJI

Thank God they left the sheriff a voicemail.

ARMONDO

There! I see him or what is left of him.

They wince upon witnessing the grotesque eaten remains. Sheriff Lindsey's skull is seen through his eaten skin and the threads of mycelia.

(O.S.) The cell phone beeps from Sheriff Lindsey's camouflaged pants.

Ganji sprays the secret sauce over Sheriff Lindsey's body and the mycelia retreats from the corpse.

Armondo reaches into Sheriff Lindsey's pocket and yanks out the cell phone which still has mycelia attached to it. The mycelia quickly crawl on his hand.

ARMONDO

Spray my hand!

Ganji sprays his hand and the mycelia wilts away.

GANJI

Let's get out of here.

They spin around and discover the path they made is now overgrown with mycelia.

ARMONDO

They covered the path.

GANJI

We're as stupid as Hansel and Gretel.

Armondo shakes the spray canister.

ARMONDO

I said use it sparingly.

GANJI

There was no weatherman to tell us
to expect two feet of moving snow.

They stand for brief seconds thinking as the mycelia snakes
closer to them.

ARMONDO

We'll use it up and then the
extinguisher. Once we hit ground,
we run.

GANJI

We can run faster than they can
grab us.

While they are talking, the mycelia group together unnoticed
and raise up, attaching to the spray canister.

The mycelia yank the canister from Ganji's hand.

GANJI

What the fuck?!

The canister falls to the path and is quickly submerged in
mycelium.

ARMONDO

Watch out!

Armondo sprays the extinguisher in a carbon dioxide cloud. It
dissipates and the lump of mycelia which is the canister
disappears in the depths of the garden of mushrooms.

INT. MISTRY CAVERN - LABORATORY - DAY

The armored metal door rises up on the terrarium. The
Countess's wavy flesh appears to be breathing. The mycelia
moves like thousands of snakes.

General Blackburn and Dr. Petrie step up to study the
Countess.

Bernie takes control of the remote control hands and moves
mechanical claws in the terrarium.

BERNIE

It's feeding time, your highness.

DR. PETRIE

How can something so ugly be so beautiful?

GENERAL BLACKBURN

Over thirty years for this, thing?

BERNIE

Someone who leads soldiers in lethal warfare will find this interesting.

The claws open a rear door revealing a breathing premature baby.

GENERAL BLACKBURN

What the hell?!

DR. PETRIE

A baby?!

GENERAL BLACKBURN

Stop this.

Bernie picks up the baby. The mycelia rises up to touch the metal claws.

BERNIE

The fetus is brain dead. I get the samples from the Roseburg, VA. If you would have reviewed the report, this has been authorized many, many years now.

Bernie lays the baby on a feeding stand. In a split second the mycelia engulfs the baby. It wraps it in a cocoon of threads.

DR. PETRIE

A carnivorous fungus. Instead of decaying dead animals and plants, it kills them first.

BERNIE

The spores from the Countess could destroy an army. She is always hungry, actually starving. Her speed and acceleration of the mycelia is mind numbing. She hunts through heat absorption and vibration of her prey.

GENERAL BLACKBURN

Can she-IT be controlled?

DR. PETRIE
Is this the only one?

BERNIE
Funny you ask. I have raised her
children, but without the ability
to reproduce spores. One and done.
Let's head to the observation room.

DR. PETRIE
Why is she bioluminescent?

The baby is only but bones now.

GENERAL BLACKBURN
Huh? Bio what?

BERNIE
I engineered them to be seen in the
dark for safety. I can make it
stealth by taking it out of the
chain if necessary.

They follow Bernie to the observation room.

EXT. MISTRY CAVERN - TOURIST ENTRANCE - DAY

Harpo shines a flashlight at the iron door and discovers it
unlocked. He mounts the ATV and drives off.

INT. MISTRY CAVERN - DAY

Armondo desperately sprays the attacking mycelia from around
Ganji's feet with the extinguisher.

GANJI
Help! Help!

ARMONDO
We need to do something. This can't
last.

They both toss their heads up toward the feeding hole.

GANJI AND ARMONDO
Help!

ARMONDO
I'm never going to get laid.

GANJI
That's what is on your mind now?

ARMONDO

Help!

GANJI

Me neither. Help!

The mycelia snake closer and deathly closer.

ARMONDO

The sheriff's phone. We can call
for help.

He touches the cell phone face.

ARMONDO

We need him to open it.

They search for Sheriff Lindsey's body but find only his
skeleton.

GANJI

He's only a skeleton. No finger
prints. He's all gone.

They look at each other in panic and scream.

ARMONDO AND GANJI

HELP!

INT. MISTRY CAVERN - CAVE OBSERVATION - DAY

Bernie leads General Blackburn and Dr. Petrie in. The metal
guard covers the glass observation window.

BERNIE

Imagine turning on the Christmas
lights after decorating the tree.
This is a hundred times better than
the Rockefeller Center. Do you have
quarters?

They check their pockets.

BERNIE

Here you go.

She gives each a quarter and points to the tourist telescope.

BERNIE

You'll require it for closer
viewing.

Bernie flips a switch and the metal guard raises up. The room fills with color.

GENERAL BLACKBURN
Holy shit! An army of mushrooms.

DR. PETRIE
Magnificent.

General Blackburn and Dr. Petrie are consumed by the brilliance. However, there is a cloud of carbon dioxide in the middle.

Bernie is puzzled by the cloud as it dissipates revealing Armondo and Ganji.

GENERAL BLACKBURN
Are those children?

General Blackburn inserts her quarter into the telescope and peers into it. Bernie's face changes to fright.

BERNIE
It's my grandson.

GENERAL BLACKBURN
It's two teens and a skeleton too.
How do we get in there?

She studies the glass barrier.

BERNIE
It's unbreakable. I need to get Harpo and save them.

Bernie and General Blackburn dash to the freight elevator.

DR. PETRIE
I'll stay here.

Dr. Petrie inserts his quarter and observes the horrified teens like lab rats.

INT. MISTRY CAVERN - DAY

Armondo sprays the mycelia off Ganji's leg with the extinguisher.

GANJI
They are going up yours.

The mycelia snake up Armondo's leg. Ganji yanks the extinguisher from Armondo and sprays his leg in a CO2 cloud.

The extinguisher sputters out.

GANJI

Aw fuck! It's out! Help!

ARMONDO

We just have to run.

He tries to pick up his foot, but it is captive to the mycelia.

ARMONDO

You need to run.

GANJI

I won't go without you. I can't make it that far.

The mycelia snake around and secure her feet and move up both their legs.

GANJI

Kiss me!

He gives her a hug and kisses her mouth as the mycelia snake further up their legs.

Drops of liquid fall down around them from the feeding hole. The liquid burns into the mycelia and the mushrooms shrivel. Drops hit their heads.

They release from the kiss and look up. A cascade of secret sauce showers them.

The mycelia die and retreat forming a large circumference around them.

They wipe the sauce from their eyes and peer up.

Harpo peers down from above and claps his hands.

EXT. MISTRY CAVERN - FEEDING HOLE - DAY

Harpo is dancing and honking next to his ATV. The container of secret sauce from the ATV is next to the hole. General Blackburn and the Soldiers race up with weapons drawn.

MINUTES LATER

Armondo is hoisted up by the army carrier's wench. Ganji is already up with a blanket around her shoulders. Bernie, General Blackburn and the Soldiers are there.

BERNIE

Why did you go in there? That is the second time you could have been killed.

GENERAL BLACKBURN

Second?

Armondo is helped up by a Soldier and Bernie quickly gives him a hug.

BERNIE

Thank goodness you're safe.

GENERAL BLACKBURN

It seems there is a lack of safety protocols at this facility.

BERNIE

How did you get in there?

He extracts a key from his pocket.

ARMONDO

My father gave it to me.

Bernie snaps it up.

GENERAL BLACKBURN

That doesn't answer why they went down there.

ARMONDO

The sheriff.

GENERAL BLACKBURN

There is a dead sheriff down there? Is that the skeleton? Eaten by those things?

Ganji butts in.

GANJI

The sheriff was after me last night and he attacked me near the hole and I pushed him in. In self defense.

ARMONDO

And we went down there to see if he was alive.

GENERAL BLACKBURN

I heard better excuses from my pit
bull and he only barks bullshit. No
offense to the mute over there.

Harpo shrugs her off with his hands.

(O.S.) The cell phone beeps in Armondo's pocket.

General Blackburn cocks her head and holds out her hand.
Reluctantly, Armondo takes it out of his pocket and gives it
to her.

GENERAL BLACKBURN

You didn't call for help?

GANJI

Didn't know the pass code.

GENERAL BLACKBURN

The sheriff's phone?

He lowers his eyes in guilt and nods.

GENERAL BLACKBURN

He had no fingers left to open it.

EXT. MISTRY CAVERN - FEEDING HOLE - NIGHT

A rainbow of colors fill the night like the aurora borealis.
Soldiers hammer the final nails in a large wooden cover. They
lift it and cover the lit hole.

INT. MISTRY CAVERN - MAIN HOUSE - LIVINGROOM - NIGHT

Harpo watches the Marx brothers on TV and laughs silently.
Bernie crochets a blanket next to him. SOLDIER 1 stands guard
at the door.

BERNIE

Dad, they are going to kill my baby
and her grandchildren.

Harpo wraps his arm around her and kisses her cheek.

INT. MISTRY CAVERN - GUEST CABIN - NIGHT

Armondo strums the guitar on the top bunk with his feet
dangling. Ganji peeks out the front window curtain.

GANJI
Still there. What do you think they
will do with us?

ARMONDO
I don't know.

GANJI
Don't you wanna be like them?

ARMONDO
No. I may have at one time, but
they are only pawns in the
government's game.

GANJI
Bob Dylan?

ARMONDO
I'm understanding the song better
now.

She sits down in the lower bunk and tickles his foot.

ARMONDO
Stop.

GANJI
Do you remember what you said when
we were going to die?

ARMONDO
Which time?

Ganji smirks.

GANJI
The last one.

ARMONDO
Help?

GANJI
You know?

ARMONDO
I'm just fuckin' with you.

GANJI
That one.

ARMONDO
Really?

She caresses his foot and leg. He smirks to himself and drops to the floor. He jumps in bed with an embrace.

(O.S.) Bigfoot roars an entrance.

EXT. MISTRY CAVERN ENTRANCE - NIGHT

A white Mercedes coup rolls in and parks.

General Blackburn and Soldier 2 smoke and watch it enter.

GENERAL BLACKBURN

Bout time.

MR. WHIPPLE (early 60's) exits the car dressed dapper in an all-white suit. He covers his bald head with a white fedora and carries a white iPad.

SOLDIER 1

Who is he?

GENERAL BLACKBURN

Guess his name?

SOLDIER 1

Mister Clean.

GENERAL BLACKBURN

Close. Mr. Whipple. He wipes America's ass when it shits on itself.

She drops her cigarette and stomps it out as she walks over to him.

GENERAL BLACKBURN

Hello, again.

Mr. Whipple scans the grounds.

MR. WHIPPLE

It's been years since I've been here last. It has been rather clean since the last unfortunate incident.

GENERAL BLACKBURN

Do I need to go over the details again?

Mr Whipple types on his pad.

MR. WHIPPLE

Once is plenty. Where's the parties?

GENERAL BLACKBURN

Kids in a guest cabin and Bernie and the mute father are in the main house.

MR. WHIPPLE

He likes to be called Harpo.

GENERAL BLACKBURN

Yes.

MR. WHIPPLE

What about Dr. Petrie?

GENERAL BLACKBURN

Dr. Petrie?

MR. WHIPPLE

Yes. Keep an eye on him. He can be messy.

She shrugs him off.

INT. MISTRY CAVERN - LABORATORY - NIGHT

The robotic claws in the terrarium smash into the wall and then into the window.

DR. PETRIE

What the fuck?! Always bad at those toy grabber machines.

His hands try to move it again and the claw inside rips the Countess's flesh. It's wavy flesh sways and the mycelia quickly attacks the claw.

His eyes pop open.

(O.S.) Freight elevator moves.

He yanks his hands away from the controllers.

The claws slam into the window. Unseen to him, a chip of glass falls into the terrarium.

He quickly steps away from the controls.

The elevator opens and General Blackburn and Mr. Whipple exit.

MR. WHIPPLE
Hello, Craig.

DR. PETRIE
Hello.

MR. WHIPPLE
Haven't seen you since the water
fiasco in Flint.

Mr. Whipple goes to the terrarium and analyzes the Countess.

MR. WHIPPLE
Her mission was to only feed and
maintain this creature after the
death of the two children.

DR. PETRIE
She is still doing experiments.
There's thousands of those in the
caverns. Also.

Dr. Petrie goes to a huge standing freezer and opens the
door. Hundreds of petri dishes are stacked and organized.

GENERAL BLACKBURN
What are those?

DR. PETRIE
Spores. From that baby-eating
monster.

GENERAL BLACKBURN
Each one is a spore?

DR. PETRIE
No. There is probably over a
thousand spores per dish.

Their eyes expand.

GENERAL BLACKBURN
They can kill a full town.

DR. PETRIE
Cities, states, even countries,
continents.

MR. WHIPPLE
Alright. We'll bury it.

DR. PETRIE
It can live. The mycelia will
travel through dirt.

MR. WHIPPLE

We will starve it and seal the whole cavern in cement. Store and keep what is required to restart the program if requested. That creature in there must be euthanized.

Mr. Whipple and General Blackburn walk to the elevator.

GENERAL BLACKBURN

What about the teens?

MR. WHIPPLE

I got it handled. They'll get their father's back and be out of the way.

GENERAL BLACKBURN

What about them talking?

They enter the elevator.

MR. WHIPPLE

No one will believe them. Please don't ask me any more questions that you know you aren't privileged to know. You do your job as I do mine, general. That goes for scientists too.

Dr. Petrie goes back to work in the lab.

INT. MISTRY CAVERN - MAIN HOUSE - LIVINGROOM - DAY

Bernie knits while Harpo laughs silently to the TV.

(O.S.) Gunshots from the meadow.

Soldier 1 leaves guarding the door and runs out with his gun drawn.

Bernie and Harpo rise from the couch.

BERNIE

Follow them.

Bernie lifts a couch cushion and brandishes her shotgun. Harpo stands worried as Bernie kisses his cheek.

BERNIE

They can't harm my child.

She skirts out the door.

EXT. MISTRY CAVERN - GUEST CABIN - NIGHT

Soldier 3 runs toward the gunshots as Armondo and Ganji follow.

EXT. MUSHROOM FARM - NIGHT

General Blackburn leads Mr. Whipple out of the door. They run toward the gunshots in the meadow.

EXT. MISTRY CAVERN - GROUNDS - NIGHT

Soldier 4 lays dead shrouded in white mycelia. He is lit by a fairy circle of glowing mushrooms. A growing mist surrounds them.

Soldiers 1 and 2 are about to step in the ring to rescue as Armondo, Ganji, General Blackburn, and Harpo gather.

ARMONDO

Don't go in the circle!

GANJI

You'll be killed too.

GENERAL BLACKBURN

They're outside the cavern?

GANJI

A few stragglers make it to the top.

GENERAL BLACKBURN

Stragglers? One just killed one of my men.

GANJI

Harpo kills them with secret sauce before they can grow.

GENERAL BLACKBURN

We aren't at McDonalds ordering a Big Mac. Bernie, I want that sauce now.

They glance around for Bernie, but she's not there.

Mr. Whipple sighs.

MR. WHIPPLE

After Harpo shows you the sauce,
please keep the kids and him locked
in the house. Never have them leave
your sight, general.

Mr. Whipple spins and takes out a pistol with a silencer from
a shoulder holster.

INT. MISTRY CAVERN - LABORATORY - NIGHT

Bernie exits the elevator with her shotgun aimed at Dr.
Petrie who has his back to her. He tries again to control the
robotic arms.

DR. PETRIE

I can't get control of these
fuckers.

The arms rip into the fleshy skin of the Countess and slam
into the glass again. More glass chips fall inside unseen by
Dr. Petrie.

BERNIE

What are you doing?! Don't harm my
child.

Dr. Petrie turns around and takes heed when he sees the
shotgun aimed at him.

DR. PETRIE

Now, now, now. I'm not doing
anything. I'm only following
orders.

Bernie moves closer to see the ripped flesh on the Countess.

BERNIE

You hurt her. You are torturing her
before you kill her.

The computer beeps and reads, "Download Complete."

BERNIE

You're shutting me down.

DR. PETRIE

No, no. It will be on hiatus until
everything is cleaned up. Please
lower the shotgun. We're both
scientists here. Not soldiers. Not
special forces.

Bernie lowers the shotgun down toward her knees. Dr. Petrie takes out a pen.

DR. PETRIE

We can work together to save this.
It's amazing research.

Dr. Petrie flips a small switch on the pen and it extends out a knife blade.

He lunges toward Bernie, but Bernie raises the shotgun at the same time.

Buckshot blasts into Dr. Petrie. Blood and buckshot splatter on the glass enclosure. More glass shards break and fall inside.

Bernie steps over Dr. Petrie's dead body and cocks her head like a loving mother caring for her child. She takes the control of the robotic hands and pets her wounded child.

BERNIE

I'm here. I'm sorry they hurt you.

(O.S.) Freight elevator moves.

MOMENTS LATER

The freight elevator opens and Mr. Whipple strolls out. He is greeted with the barrel of Bernie's shotgun.

MR. WHIPPLE

Bernie, Bernie, Bernie. We had this discussion years ago. If there were any more incidents, we would have to shut it down.

He looks past her to discover blood splatter and Dr. Petrie's dead body.

MR. WHIPPLE

What did you do, Bernie?

BERNIE

He tortured her.

MR. WHIPPLE

Do you comprehend the magnitude of the trouble you caused? I can get you help. All this can be rectified.

She moves in front of the terrarium while still aiming the shotgun at him.

MR. WHIPPLE

A soldier lies dead wrapped in a cocoon from that creature.

He claps sarcastically.

MR. WHIPPLE

Bravo. Your research was a success. However, you can't control it.

BERNIE

The Countess can be controlled.

MR. WHIPPLE

With so-called secret sauce? I remember when we first met after the first incident. I asked you why you named your creation Countess.

He inches toward her.

BERNIE

Don't come closer.

MR. WHIPPLE

It was after Countess Elizabeth Bathory. The most notorious female serial killer to have ever lived. Some folk tales called her a vampire. You knew how dangerous she could be.

BERNIE

She can be controlled.

MR. WHIPPLE

Did you know the real Countess was never convicted of a crime? She was imprisoned in her castle where she died a slow death. That is my intention for your Countess. She will be buried in her own Mistry Cavern and slowly die. Never convicted. Her crimes unpunished. Bernie, you will not be punished.

The Countess's fleshy fungus sways and the mycelia snakes over the window.

BERNIE

What about my father? Grandchild?

MR. WHIPPLE

They will be taken care of as of
you.

He turns his back to her.

MR. WHIPPLE

Bernie, let's go. It's time to
retire. Retire this project.

She cocks the shotgun. Unseen to her a small thread-like
strand of mycelia pokes through a pinhole in the glass.

Mr Whipple freezes with his back to her.

The strand of mycelia moves closer to Bernie's neck. It
tickles her neck and she slaps at it. She grabs the piece of
thread and yanks it to her view. Her eyes grow large in
horror as she is shot in the head by a silencer. The bullet
travels in and out of her head and strikes the glass window.

It makes a half inch hole in the terrarium exactly where the
pinhole was.

Bernie falls to the floor dead.

Mr. Whipple checks her pulse and doesn't notice more strands
of mycelia snaking through the hole.

He walks toward the freight elevator and cleans his gun with
a white handkerchief.

INT. MISTRY CAVERN - MAIN HOUSE KITCHEN - NIGHT

Harpo sets paper placemats and two plates of dinner in front
Armondo and Ganji at the table.

Soldier 2 stands guard at the door as Harpo sits at the table
with his dinner.

ARMONDO

She should have been back by now.

Harpo points to his place mat.

GANJI

What?

Armondo moves his plate revealing an old placemat map of
Mistry Cavern which identifies tourist trails and landmarks.

Ganji looks at hers and finds a circle drawn on a landmark
and trail.

GANJI
Sasquatch Lair trail?

ARMONDO
It's a tunnel.

Harpo nods his head.

ARMONDO
It leads to the cavern. There's
another entrance to the lab?

Harpo nods again and raises his hands like claws and pretends to be a beast.

MINUTES LATER

Ganji and Armondo are armed with fire extinguishers by the door. Harpo stomps over dressed in a Sasquatch costume holding a toy souvenir Mistry Cavern megaphone.

Harpo nods with a press of a button on the megaphone.

The megaphone produces a loud Sasquatch growl and howl.

Soldier 2 busts through the door as Ganji and Armondo fill the room in a mist of carbon dioxide.

Sasquatch pushes the Soldier 2 down and runs out the door. Soldier 2 rises in hot pursuit of Bigfoot.

The teens sneak out the door.

Bigfoot keeps growling and howling while being chased by the Soldiers.

SOLDIER 2
Get Bigfoot.

Bigfoot spins around the corner and scares Mr. Whipple who lets out a high pitch scream. Bigfoot mows him over and mounts the ATV and drives off into the mist.

EXT. MISTRY CAVERN - GROUNDS - NIGHT

Armondo reads the map by flashlight. While Ganji searches around the dwarfs and trees.

GANJI
I thought you were a Boy Scout.

ARMONDO

I quit when I met you. It says it
is here.

Ganji leans against a large tree trunk and a door swings
back. She catches herself before she falls in.

They shine flashlights into the trunk revealing steps heading
downward.

(O.S.) ATV motor and Sasquatch growls and howls.

GANJI

Hurry!

INT. SASQUATCH TUNNEL - NIGHT

Ganji and Armondo walk quickly while shining the flashlight
beam in the six foot high tunnel.

ARMONDO

Bigfoot wouldn't even fit in here.

GANJI

It's for kids.

The flashlight beam catches a large phony vulture over their
head.

They get to a fork with a bloodthirsty elf pointing in each
tunnels direction.

ARMONDO

Which way? Right or left? It's not
on the place mat.

Ganji steps into the left side tunnel.

EXT. MISTRY CAVERN - MAIN HOUSE - NIGHT

Mr. Whipple exits with a heavy sigh.

(O.S.) ATV motor and Sasquatch growls and howls in the
distance.

He extracts his silencer and walks toward the guest cabin.

INT. SASQUATCH TUNNEL - NIGHT

Ganji and Armondo get to a dead end. On the wall is painted
"Watch for low hanging objects."

ARMONDO

Bad choice.

A huge spider the size of a pony drops over their heads and Ganji shoots the extinguisher at it.

Armondo shines the flashlight on the large spider as it bounces from a bungee cord. Ganji punches it away.

EXT. MISTRY CAVERN - GROUNDS - NIGHT

The three remaining Soldiers and General Blackburn aim their weapons at a running ATV which is now seen in a growing mist. They discover it is without a driver.

(O.S.) Sasquatch growls and howls in the forest.

They chase in the direction of the misty forest.

EXT. MISTRY CAVERN - GUEST CABIN - NIGHT

Mr. Whipple exits and walks across the misty grounds toward the gift shop.

INT. SASQUATCH TUNNEL - NIGHT

Ganji and Armondo shine flashlights into the Sasquatch lair which contains a huge bed of straw and a pair of Bigfoot-size boots.

ARMONDO

Bigfoot's big bed.

GANJI

There!

Her flashlight shines on a door as they rush toward it.

INT. MISTRY CAVERN - CAVE OBSERVATION - NIGHT

Ganji and Armondo enter from a hidden stone door.

They rush toward the lit white lab across from them.

INT. MISTRY CAVERN - LABORATORY - NIGHT

Ganji and Armondo rush in and brake in horror.

The mycelia wraps around Bernie and Dr. Petrie like a slithering mummy of snakes. Mushrooms grow from the bodies. The mycelia strands are tethered to the Countess through the window.

ARMONDO

Grandma!

Ganji holds him back.

GANJI

Don't get close.

ARMONDO

We can save her.

GANJI

She's dead.

Armondo moves closer and notices the shotgun partially wrapped in mycelia.

ARMONDO

She was killed. They killed her.

(O.S.) Freight elevator starts.

GANJI

We got to go.

She yanks on his shirt to leave.

ARMONDO

Not yet.

He pulls away and glances at the computer screen which reads "Download Complete."

GANJI

Should we kill her?

ARMONDO

Her?

GANJI

The Countess.

Armondo looks at the breathing fungus.

ARMONDO

Fuck no!

He extracts the USB stick from the computer.

ARMONDO
This was her life.

Ganji goes to the freezer and grabs a petri dish.

The mycelia moves from the bodies and quickly advance toward them.

ARMONDO
Watch out!

Ganji quickly jumps over the oncoming mycelia.

Armondo steps back quickly from the advancing snakes.

ARMONDO
They're faster! Hurry!

Ganji and Armondo rush away through the lab snapping up the extinguishers.

The elevator door opens and Mr. Whipple exits. He catches a glimpse of them and aims and shoots. He barely misses them as the bullets strike the wall.

MR. WHIPPLE
Little shits!

His eyes widen as he discovers mycelia growing from the bodies and snaking around the room.

MR. WHIPPLE
Holy crap!

The mycelia stop moving.

The elevator door begins to close, but he stops it. The mycelia strands explode toward the elevator.

Mr Whipple leaps back into the elevator and pokes the "door close" button. The door closes before the strands can enter.

(O.S.) Mycelia scratches and slithers on the elevator door.

Small strands sneak between the door cracks.

Mr. Whipple smacks the top floor button and the elevator rises.

INT. MISTRY CAVERN - CAVE OBSERVATION ROOM - DAY

The mycelia grows and dangerously rushes on Armondo and Ganji's heels.

GANJI

He tried to kill us.

Ganji yanks open the door to leave. Armondo spins on the mycelia and sprays them with the CO2. A cold freeze stops the mycelia's advance for a brief moment.

As the cloud dissipates, the mycelia collects more strands and advances.

ARMONDO

It doesn't stop the Countess.

He is pulled through the door by Ganji and the door is shoved closed.

They shine the flashlight on the door. Like the Blob, mycelia strands find their way around the cracks in the door.

GANJI

How does it know to follow us?

ARMONDO

It's hunting.

They sprint into the tunnel.

INT. ELEVATOR SHAFT - NIGHT

The elevator rises as the mycelium slithers up the sides at the same rate of speed.

INT. ELEVATOR - NIGHT

Mr. Whipple relaxes as the elevator reaches the top floor.

The door opens and Mr Whipple is about to step out until the mycelia snake out from the shaft and hunts him.

Mr. Whipple jumps over the accumulation, but is yanked down by his shoe by the gripping mycelia. He falls to the ground with the mycelia wrapping around his shoe. He rips his foot out of the shoe and crawls to his feet. The mycelia chases him.

EXT. MISTRY CAVERN - GROUNDS - NIGHT

The three remaining Soldiers and General Blackburn hunt through the mist-covered woods with their weapons drawn.

(O.S.) Bigfoot growls and howls nearby.

The Soldiers shoot into the mist.

SECONDS LATER

A wooden dwarf is riddled with bullets.

General Blackburn lifts up the broken tourist megaphone nearby.

INT. SASQUATCH TUNNEL - NIGHT

Flashlight beams bounce as Ganji and Armondo escape at a break neck pace. The mycelia slivers after them, deathly close.

INT. MISTRY CAVERN - MUSHROOM FARM/GIFT SHOP - NIGHT

Mr. Whipple is being chased by the mycelia. He runs past the hanging garden. The mycelia stops and gathers around the other mushroom bags.

EXT. MISTRY CAVERN - GROUNDS - NIGHT

General Blackburn eyes Bigfoot lumbering across the mist. She gives chase and tackles him. The Soldiers follow and help to restrain the beast.

SOLDIER 1

We caught Bigfoot.

The Soldiers lift up Bigfoot and walk him back under gunpoint.

EXT. SASQUATCH TUNNEL - NIGHT

Ganji and Armondo burst out from the tree trunk door and slam it closed. Armondo sprays the extinguisher around the door cracks.

GANJI

We need the special sauce.

ARMONDO

We need to find Harpo and get out of here. She's going to kill everything in her path.

They race away through the forest jumping over scattering bunnies.

GANJI

Hope it stops and eats rabbit
before us.

EXT. MISTRY CAVERN - MEADOW - NIGHT

Mr. Whipple finds General Blackburn and the Soldiers leading
Bigfoot across the meadow.

MR. WHIPPLE

You need to call in more troops.

GENERAL BLACKBURN

We caught the mute. Where's the
teens?

MR. WHIPPLE

It's not them. The Countess is
loose. We need more help.

GENERAL BLACKBURN

Where's Dr. Petrie?

MR. WHIPPLE

Dead. That's what happens to fuck-
ups. He assisted in that creature's
escape.

GENERAL BLACKBURN

Let's kill it with that special
sauce of theirs.

MR. WHIPPLE

She's growing and spreading out.
The best thing you can do is keep
it contained until we can bury it
forever.

Soldier 1 points across the meadow.

SOLDIER 1

What is that?

From the mist, glowing mushrooms sprout haphazardly about
fifty feet surrounding them.

EXT. SASQUATCH TUNNEL - NIGHT

The mycelia snake around the door opening and crawls its way
through the forest. Strands engulf a bunny and glowing
mushrooms sprout.

Armondo and Ganji escape by running through the trees. The mycelia is right behind them engulfing rabbits as it goes. They run to a clearing where glowing mushrooms pop up in every direction.

GANJI
Where do we go?

ARMONDO
Climb the tree!

They run past the snakes of mycelia and climb the tree. Ganji slips her foot back down on the ground and the mycelia attack. Armondo yanks her up with her foot, barely escaping the hunting strands.

ARMONDO
If we climb high enough she can't
feel our heat or any vibration.

They climb up the limbs to where they can see the far meadow through the mist.

GANJI
There's the soldiers.

ARMONDO
They have Bigfoot.

They can see the Soldiers, General Blackburn, Mr. Whipple, and Bigfoot surrounded and lit by glowing mushrooms.

ARMONDO
We need to help my great
grandfather.

Ganji glances on the other side of the tree. The ATV with the special sauce drum is under a limb of the tree. Mushrooms and snaking mycelia surround it.

GANJI
The ATV.

Armondo looks back.

ARMONDO
It's surrounded.

GANJI
If we climb on the limb we can
swing into it. Never hit the
ground.

Ganji climbs onto the limb that overhangs the ATV.

EXT. MISTRY CAVERN - MEADOW - NIGHT

The three Soldiers, General Blackburn, Mr. Whipple, and Bigfoot stand in a circle as the mushrooms and mycelia hunt closer.

A rabbit races into their circle and is attacked by the mycelia. Soldier 2 lifts his foot away from the rabbit.

MR. WHIPPLE

Don't move.

The mycelia clings onto Soldier 2's foot and snake up his leg.

SOLDIER 2

Help me!

General Blackburn shoves Soldier 2 out of the circle away from them. He is immediately covered in mycelia.

Glowing mushrooms grow from his body as he is digested and decomposed in an instant.

GENERAL BLACKBURN

Can we outrun them?

MR. WHIPPLE

The vibration sets them off.

GENERAL BLACKBURN

I want both you to run to the truck as fast as you can.

The last two Soldiers glance at each other.

SOLDIER 1

It's about a football field away.

GENERAL BLACKBURN

You heard me. Man up, soldiers.

SOLDIER 4

Yes, sir.

Both Soldiers sprint towards the transport truck.

Soldier 1 races ahead of Soldier 4. He jumps over mushrooms as the mycelia reaches to capture his foot.

Soldier 4 trips and lands on his stomach. He freezes as the mycelia crawls upon his face. He closes his mouth and does not breathe.

The mycelia crawl into his nostrils and tickles him. He sneezes with his mouth open and the mycelia rush into his open mouth.

Soldier 1 makes it to the truck and jumps into the driver's seat. He starts the truck and shifts it into drive.

MEADOW

General Blackburn, Mr. Whipple, and Bigfoot watch the truck begin to move.

GENERAL BLACKBURN

He made it.

The truck slowly gathers speed. Mycelia attach to the wheels and the axle. The truck heads toward the group.

EXT. MISTRY CAVERN - TREE - NIGHT

Ganji and Armondo reach the end of the limb just fifteen feet over the ATV.

ARMONDO

I go first.

GANJI

No, we both go together. Once both of us land, we need to start driving. She will be on us quick.

ARMONDO

You need to drive. I don't have a license.

She shakes her head and they both dangle from the limb over the ATV.

GANJI

One, two, three.

They both drop onto the ATV. Armondo almost falls over the side, but is yanked back over by Ganji.

She starts the ATV and accelerates.

ARMONDO

I'll get the sprayer.

He climbs over the back to get the sprayer.

EXT. MISTRY CAVERN - MEADOW - NIGHT

The army truck comes toward General Blackburn, Mr. Whipple, and Bigfoot.

It roars up as General Blackburn and Mr. Whipple climb on the floor board. The mycelia clings to the stopped tires.

GENERAL BLACKBURN
Outstanding, soldier. Get this
fucker going.

Bigfoot steps one foot on the floor board.

Mr. Whipple kicks Bigfoot in the chest and he falls back flat on his hairy back.

The mycelia quickly covers and secures Bigfoot to the ground.

The army truck gains momentum and heads toward the gate.

The ATV speeds through the mycelia with Ganji driving and Armondo constantly spraying secret sauce around the it.

GANJI
We're too late.

ARMONDO
What is that?

Bigfoot's brown fur is seen disappearing under the mycelia.

ARMONDO
Get closer.

The ATV comes to halt near the lump of mycelia. Armondo sprays the mycelia from Bigfoot.

GANJI
Hurry! She's climbing on.

Armondo wipes the dead mycelia from Bigfoot. He lifts up the mask and Harpo grins as happy as ever.

ARMONDO
He's alive. Hop on, Harp!

Bigfoot sits on the back of the ATV as Armondo sprays around it.

Ganji guns the motor as it lurches after the army truck.

The army truck advances fast upon the closed door. Mr Whipple climbs in the passenger truck door from the side board. General Blackburn hangs on tight along the side board.

GENERAL BLACKBURN

Pick up the speed. Bust through it!

The ATV speeds behind the truck.

ARMONDO

They are going to ram the door.
Stay close behind.

Bigfoot reaches over and presses a garage door opener attached to the ATV dashboard.

The truck is now at ramming speed.

SOLDIER 1

Brace for impact!

They all grip tight, however the gate door opens before them.

The racing truck exits without impact.

MR WHIPPLE

It opened.

SOLDIER 1

Fuck! I can't control it.

The truck flies past the gate and bounces across the road. Brakes squeal, but it careens and crashes into the trees.

General Blackburn flies upon impact of a tree and smashes her head on a boulder.

It's momentum carries it down the wooded slope.

A limb breaks the front window and impales Soldier 1.

The wrecked truck flips and tumbles down to a rest in the ravine.

The ATV stops at the side of the road where the truck went over.

Gangi presses the gate door opener and the gate closes.

The mist hanging over the interior walls of Mistry Cavern is a kaleidoscope of color like the Northern Lights.

Ganji drives them away down the road as Armondo grasps hold of her hand.

TIME DISSOLVE
TO:

INT. OREGON ROCK TAVERN - NIGHT

Armondo holds Ganji's hand as they sit on stools upon the stage. They release hands as Armondo strums a guitar. Armondo speaks into a microphone to the CROWD.

ARMONDO

This song is for our dads which are
surprisingly in the audience
tonight.

Javier Mendoza and Ganji's father, WAYNE (late 30's) sit at the same table drinking beers. Wayne is a lumberjack with his beard and plaid. Harpo sits between them with his horn.

ARMONDO

This was my grandmother's favorite
song and the reason we are all here
tonight.

In a duet they sing, Jefferson Airplane's *White Rabbit*.

EXT. MISTRY CAVERN ENTRANCE - DAY

Jefferson Airplane's *White Rabbit* continues as Mr. Whipple sits in a motorized wheelchair with his broken leg and hand in casts.

SOLDIERS spray the outside grounds with the special sauce.

A cement truck drives into the entrance.

INT. MISTRY CAVERN - FEEDING HOLE - DAY

Jefferson Airplane's *White Rabbit* continues as cement pours from a cement truck trough into the hole.

INT. MISTRY CAVERN - LABORATORY - DAY

Jefferson Airplane's *White Rabbit* continues as the Countess and the terrarium is buried in wet concrete. It's fleshy and breathing fungus is suffocated and buried.

INT. OREGON ROCK TAVERN - NIGHT

Ganji and Armondo's duet ends with loud claps from the audience. Their fathers smile proudly.

INT. MUSHROOM BARN - DAY

SUPER: TWO MONTHS LATER

Javier and Wayne's hands mix a substrate of manure and coffee grinds. Ganji is schooling them on the farming process. Hanging bags grow mushrooms in an old wooden barn.

JAVIER MENDOZA

What is it?

GANJI

This is a substrate. It is the nourishment and decay to which mushroom spores can flourish and grow.

Ganji takes a mushroom cap and flips it over.

GANJI

In the flesh of the fruit is the spores. This is how mushrooms reproduce.

Ganji holds petri dishes of spores.

GANJI

We will kneed in the spores into our substrate. Go ahead. You need to get dirty. Get your hands in there and kneed like bread dough.

WAYNE

I think Javier was really asking is, what is this shit?

Ganji laughs as Armondo enters behind them in a white lab coat.

ARMONDO

Half right. It's coffee grounds and horse manure.

Their eyes widen.

JAVIER MENDOZA

It's shit.

They laugh as Armondo pulls out an open envelope from his pocket and waves it at them.

ARMONDO

We got our license today.

Ganji gives him a big hug.

JAVIER MENDOZA

We are now legal to grow and sell shrooms.

ARMONDO

It's good to know people in high places.

As they celebrate, a petri dish on the table reads, "Countess 01/20/2021."

EXT. MUSHROOM FARM - DAY

Through the mist, a sign reads, "Mistry Farm" attached to an old wooden red barn.

FADE OUT:

THE END.