

Gertie and the Mold

By

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**EXT. BATTLEFIELD - TRENCH - DAY (PRETEND WORLD)**

Wind whistles through an empty WWI trench.

Thunder crashes and rain pours. The trench turns into a roaring creek.

SPLASH SPLASH SPLASH!

GERTIE (around 9) hard charges and skids to a stop as she hunches down against an earthen wall. She clutches a bolt-action Springfield 1903 and holds her Brodie helmet to her head.

BAM! A bomb goes off above her and debris showers her.

She gets up at once, unshaken, and determined to keep moving toward a heavy-duty military truck.

SPLASH!

GERMAN SOLDIER #1, his monster-human face shadowed by a spiked helmet, drops into the trench in front of her.

Gertie goes to affix her bayonet. She's interrupted-

SPLASH!

Gertie gasps and turns to see GERMAN SOLDIER #2, who displays a wide grin of rotten pointy teeth.

Gertie's jaw firms and she takes the initiative to attack!

They fight, Gertie dual-wielding her rifle and bayonet, and the German Soldiers using their bayonet-fixed rifles as spears.

She stabs German Soldier #1 in the thigh. He roars in pain. She takes off to run but German Soldier #1 snatches her ankle.

Gertie falls and loses her weapons.

German Soldier #2 stands over her and chortles.

Gertie turns, knowing what's coming.

German Soldier #2 raises his spear to skewer Gertie.

SMACK!

A baseball-sized rock hits German Soldier #2 square in the face. He stumbles back in surprise and feels his face.

DANNY (around 9), cool cucumber and in uniform like Gertie, winks at Gertie as he shoulders off his rifle.

GERTIE

Danny!

DANNY

What're you waiting for? Let's go!

German Soldier #1 uses the trench wall to get to his feet and groans out:

GERMAN SOLDIER #1

(in German)

Get them!

German Soldier #2 clears the cobwebs to see Danny and Gertie turning a corner and disappearing.

German Soldier #2 hurdles down the trenches and rounds the corner into--

The business end of Gertie and Danny's Springfields.

#### **OVER BLACK**

BAM! BAM! Two gunshots.

#### **BACK TO SCENE**

Gertie runs to the truck, climbs onto the step, and pauses to survey the battlefield.

The enemy army overruns the trenches.

GERTIE

It ain't over till it's over.

She slides her Springfield onto the dash, hops in, and looks for the keys as Danny hops into the passenger seat.

DAD (O.S.)

Gertie! Get out of that truck!

Gertie gasps and looks in the side view mirror as DAD (late 30s), covered in sweat from a run, approaches the cab in a modern-day, sunny world.

**EXT. MILITARY HOUSE - MOVING TRUCK - DAY (END PRETEND WORLD)**

Dad walks by the side of a modern moving truck and takes a drink from his water bottle.

**INT. MOVING TRUCK - DAY**

Gertie slumps in modern oversized military clothing and stares at the water gun rifle on the dash. The guillotine is nigh for the only one in the cab.

Dad hangs over the open window and catches his breath.

DAD

What did I say about the truck?

GERTIE

It's not ours. We couldn't afford the insurance. Don't break it.

DAD

Did you win? Are you hurt?

GERTIE

We'll get 'em in the end and I ain't got time to bleed.

Dad opens the driver-side door.

DAD

I believe it. Outta the truck, c'mon.

Gertie glances at the empty side beside her.

GERTIE

(to herself)

Good work, Danny.

She drags her rifle off the dash and slides out.

**EXT. MILITARY HOUSE - DAY**

Dad puts his arm around his little girl as they navigate around moving boxes and furniture to the front door of a quaint 'on base' house for military families.

A busy MOVER, burly fella, jettisons out the front door with an empty dolly.

DAD

Split up!

Dad and Gertie dramatically split to make way.

The Mover passes between, amused.

GERTIE

That was close!

DAD

Dude, I know! But we made it.

Dad pauses.

DAD

Did I mention I've got a surprise for you?

GERTIE

Dad, no more experimental recipes... please. I threw up last time.

Dad laughs.

DAD

Not this time my little guinea pig.

**EXT. MILITARY BASE - DAY**

Choppers fly over a sprawling cookie-cutter family housing neighborhood probably built around WWII.

**EXT. MILITARY HOUSE - DAY**

Dad and Gertie sit on the front porch with fishing poles. Crickets CHIRP in the early morning.

They look as if they've been waiting for a while.

Dad checks his phone.

DAD

I'm sorry, she must've gotten held up.

GERTIE

Next time just don't tell me anything.

Gertie mopes off toward a station wagon. Dad follows.

DAD

Maybe she'll meet us for lunch.

Dad opens the back hatch as Gertie waits, listless.

A big blue bus RAMBLES towards them.

Dad looks relieved to see the bus and takes Gertie's fishing pole. Gertie, entranced with anticipation, doesn't notice.

Brakes SQUEAL.

MOM (mid-30s), military jacket slung over her shoulder, steps off the truck. She's built like a Mack truck and just as intimidating.

DAD  
(to Gertie)  
Go get her.

Gertie launches before Dad can finish the sentence.

Gertie and Mom embrace.

**EXT. POND - DAY**

A fishing bobber bobs about on the surface of a pond.

Gertie skirts the pond and investigates the dark, murky shallows. Her fishing pole sits in a rod holder.

Dad and a tired Mom sit side by side in camping chairs, but only Dad fishes.

MOM  
Gertie, not too close!

Gertie acknowledges with only a thumbs up.

Dad reels his line and Mom watches Gertie. He decides to chance some conversation.

DAD  
I found where the movers packed the  
garbage can.

MOM  
Mhm.

DAD  
We're five out of five for PCS moves  
where the movers packed the garbage  
can with the garbage still in it.

MOM  
Would you rather we do the packing?

DAD  
Not a chance.

He prepares to start another conversation, something more important, but declines as Mom rubs her eyes.

A WATER MONSTER's unfriendly eyes emerge above dark water.

Gertie, a Native American warrior, grips a spear and prepares to do battle at the water's edge.

Danny stands behind her, same garb, with a bow at the ready.

**EXT. MILITARY HOUSE - FRONT PORCH - DAY**

Gertie waits on the front steps with a school backpack and lunch bag.

Danny sits down beside her and checks his lunch bag. Disappointment crosses his face.

DANNY  
Mom made lunch.

**INT. MILITARY HOUSE - GARAGE - DAY**

Dad sits amongst towers of moving boxes and unpacks a box as Mom stands against the interior door. They're in the midst of an argument.

MOM  
Then where is it?

DAD  
Look around- we still have a million boxes to go through. I'm sure it's just packed away in a mislabeled box or whatever.

MOM  
I know what box I put it in.

Dad picks up a box from the middle of the garage and sets it atop another to unbox. A large metal grate is uncovered.

DAD  
If you're insinuating that I did something with it- why would I?

MOM  
No, that's not what I'm saying.

Mom backpedals, hiding something.

**INT. MILITARY HOUSE - GARAGE TUNNEL - CONTINUOUS**

A roughly hewn tunnel big enough for a young child with a small, crude ladder attached to the wall. Cobwebs.

Voices echo down toward a metal hatch.

The wheel handle turns.

DAD (O.S.)

Then what are you saying?

MOM (O.S.)

Forget it. Gertie needs to get to school.

Cobwebs dance through the tunnel as a draft blows upwards.

DAD (O.S.)

Gertie is spending more and more time with-

MOM (O.S.)

Don't.

DAD (O.S.)

It's getting worse.

MOM (O.S.)

I heard you. I thought you were going to talk to her?

**INT. MILITARY HOUSE - GARAGE - CONTINUOUS**

Cobweb fingers reach from the grate as the draft escapes.

Dad and Mom look at one another, tired of fighting.

DAD

Trying to talk to her about it just makes it worse. We need someone to help, we all need-

MOM

I'll handle it. I'm on leave for the next month anyway.

DAD

You didn't tell me you were on leave.

Mom turns to leave.

MOM  
I forgot.

Dad pauses as he's about to hit a nerve, and Mom knows it.

MOM  
What?

DAD  
How much longer can we do this?

The interior door slams.

Dad stands alone, contemplating what has gone wrong.

**INT. MILITARY HOUSE - HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS**

Mom stands outside the interior garage door and wipes a tear. She shrugs off the near cry and marches down the hallway.

**INT. MILITARY HOUSE - GARAGE - CONTINUOUS**

Dad rummages around a box and tries to shrug off being upset, but can't, and shoves the box. He stacks and opens boxes, angrily--

**INT. MILITARY HOUSE - GARAGE TUNNEL - CONTINUOUS**

THUD THUD THUD echoes off the walls of the tunnel down to--

The metal hatch lifts and long claws, covered in black and green mold, burst out! Then slow, grabbing the hatch, with the SCRATCHES of the claws against the metal.

This is the MOLD MONSTER.

**EXT. MILITARY HOUSE - FRONT PORCH - DAY**

Gertie lays on the landing, hands behind her head, eyes closed.

A door OPENS and Mom hovers over her.

MOM  
You didn't fold your clothes last night. Has Dad been going easy on you?

Gertie tries not to look guilty and give Dad up.

MOM

You ready?

GERTIE

Yeah.

MOM

School might be different than what you're used to. That's the reality of it.

GERTIE

Why?

MOM

Dad told you the on-base school was full, and this is a public school, right?

GERTIE

Yeah.

MOM

All you have to do is face it head-on, face what's in front of you and everything will be all right.

Gertie gulps, having not considered a difference.

**INT. CAR (PARKED) - DAY**

Gertie looks at a drab, gulag-style prison in the middle of winter through the car window.

SCHOOL KIDS appear in rags and hoods trudge through the snow to the main entrance.

Mom checks through Gertie's lunch box and pulls out a packaged brownie.

MOM

I thought we agreed on healthier lunches.

Gertie tries not to give away the culprit.

GERTIE

I didn't put that there.

MOM

Then who did?

GERTIE  
I don't know.

MOM  
Gertrude.

Gertie shrugs, looking out the window at the prison school.

Mom follows Gertie's gaze.

Through the window, normal School Kids flood into the main entrance of a normal school on a sunny day.

She drops the packaged brownie into the lunch bag.

MOM  
Here. Get going, you'll be late.

Gertie takes the lunch bag, solemn.

MOM  
I love you. And remember what I said.

Gertie nods and takes a deep breath.

**INT. MILITARY HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY**

TICK. TOCK. TICK TOCK. A German cuckoo clock sits a cluttered coffee table.

Dad sleeps on a couch in a half put-together living room, his hand on his chest over a closed box-cutter.

**MONSTER'S POV - LIVING ROOM**

Peers from behind a moving box, eye level, at Dad.

Runs, GRUMBLING, and slides beneath the coffee table.

Climbs up the couch to the armrest and looks down on Dad.

Focuses on the rising and falling knife.

**BACK TO SCENE**

Dad wakes up, surprised to have nodded off. A small amount of greenish-black goo covers his mouth and drips down his chin.

He scratches his chest, sans box-cutter, and finds the goo on his mouth.

DAD  
What the...?

He looks up at the ceiling for the goo's source but doesn't see anything, then discreetly checks his nose and sniffs.

He announces to the house as he changes into running gear:

DAD  
I think I'm coming down with a cold.  
The green snot kind. Gonna head out  
for a run. Kick the ole immune system  
into gear.

**EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD STREET - DAY**

Dad jogs down the street with ease and passes similar houses to his own. He enjoys the jog and scenery.

He jogs in place as he waits on a car to pass.

The car slows down and the DRIVER waves him on.

Dad gives a thankful nod and jogs into the road. A coughing fit takes hold of Dad as he passes the car.

The Driver rolls down their window and sticks their head out.

DRIVER  
You OK?

Dad waves in response, walks to the curb, and gives a good cough.

The car passes.

Dad, back to normal, shakes it off and jogs off.

**INT. SCHOOL - CLASSROOM - DAY**

Gertie sits in the front of the class, non-existent, as School Kids huddle and CHATTER in their close-knit cliques.

Danny stands in the back of the class and plays with plastic, green army soldiers on a window sill. He smiles at Gertie and waves.

Gertie smiles back and lifts her hand to wave.

A SCHOOL KID catches Gertie's smile and finds it weird.

Gertie looks away and drops her hand, dejected.

**INT. SCHOOL - CAFETERIA - DAY**

Gertie's lunch bag dangles from her hand.

She looks for a place to sit but every table has a group of kids seated together and no one pays her mind.

A SCHOOLGIRL smiles at her but one of the other School Kids taps her on the shoulder to show her something.

Schoolgirl turns away.

Gertie frowns.

Danny throws a ball in the hallway. KABOP. KABOP.

Gertie makes for the hallway, away from everyone else.

**INT. MILITARY HOUSE - CLOSET - DAY**

Mom hangs up her clothes in a lit closet. She pauses at a button-up shirt.

She listens for anyone near, hears nothing, and unbuttons the shirt to reveal a toddler's t-shirt: MOMMA'S BOY 4 LIFE.

She shudders with sadness, holds it close, and faces the doorway.

**MONSTER'S POV**

From behind the clothes, looks at Mom's bare calves and feet as they turn away.

Focuses on the Achille's tendon.

**BACK TO SCENE**

Mom wipes her eyes.

ACHOO! Dad sneezes O.S.

Mom hurries to button the shirt.

**MONSTER'S POV**

The box-cutter appears, blade out, and gripped in sloth-like long-clawed, mold-covered humanoid hands.

**BACK TO SCENE**

Mom abruptly turns, puts up the shirt, and leaves.

In the shadows beneath the clothes, Mold Monster's clawed hands hang at the floor with the box-cutter near small, grungy humanoid feet.

**INT. CAR (PARKED) - SCHOOL - DAY**

Mom leans on the steering wheel, checking off a list in a green military memorandum notepad, standard issue.

Gertie approaches the passenger window.

MOM  
Gertrude. Check.

Mom closes the notepad as Gertie enters.

MOM  
So?

Gertie shrugs and rolls her head towards Mom, flat.

Motherly concern switches to a confident smile on Mom's face.

MOM  
It'll get better.

Gertie's head rolls to the window.

**EXT. MILITARY HOUSE - DAY**

Gertie and Mom exit the car.

Mom gathers groceries from the trunk as Gertie plods to the front door, carrying her book bag and lunch bag in her hands.

Something from the side yard, farthest from the driveway, catches Gertie's attention and she pauses.

Mom suddenly passes by with an armful of groceries.

MOM  
Hey. Get those last two for me?

Gertie mumbles, transfixed.

GERTIE  
Yes, ma'am.

Mom disappears into the house.

Gertie heads straight to the side yard.

**EXT. MILITARY HOUSE - SIDE YARD - DAY**

Chain-linked fences separate Gertie's backyard, overgrown, and the neighbor's backyard, tidy.

Gertie stands halfway hidden at the corner of her house eyeing the area as if expecting something terrible, but there's nothing.

She calms and goes to leave--

A HAPPY LABRADOR trots into view in the neighbor's backyard.

Gertie drops her bags and slams her back against the front of the house, near hyperventilation.

MOM (O.S.)

Gertie!

Gertie's attention snaps to Mom on the porch.

MOM

The bags?

Gertie nods and runs toward the car, book bag bouncing.

MOM

Thank you.

Mom glances toward the neighbor's house and registers something was off.

**INT. MILITARY HOUSE - BREAKFAST NOOK - NIGHT**

A halfway assembled kitchen and breakfast nook. A pan of hot dogs and a pot of macaroni and cheese sit on the stove.

Gertie and family sit on the floor and eat off paper plates.

Dad blows his nose into a paper towel.

DAD

New place. New allergies. I swear.

MOM

Did you take anything?

DAD  
Haven't found that box yet.

MOM  
Must've been mislabeled. Or whatever.

They retreat from the argument with Gertie in the room.

MOM  
(to Gertie)  
How was your first day?

Gertie shrugs, but Mom and Dad wait for an answer. She musters one.

GERTIE  
New school. New people. I swear.

DAD  
That good, huh?

GERTIE  
Everyone knows each other since they pooped in diapers.

DAD  
I would've thought there would be other military kids there with the school on-base full up.

MOM  
I agree.

GERTIE  
I don't know.

DAD  
I know it's tough to be alone at school.

Gertie pushes a hot dog around with her fork.

GERTIE  
I'm never alone.

Dad and Mom glance at each other.

Gertie doesn't look up as she stabs macaroni with a fork.

MOM  
Tomorrow we really need to work on

that jungle in the backyard.

Dad sighs and snuffles.

Mom gives him a look, "faker."

MOM

Gertie, maybe we can start showing you how to work the lawnmower?

DAD

That sounds awesome, right?

Mom and Dad look at an unenthused Gertie.

GERTIE

I'm full. May I be excused?

DAD

Sure, honey.

The parents watch Gertie slide away.

DAD

What was that about?

MOM

I think...

Mom points a thumb toward the neighbor's house and mimics dog ears with her hands.

**INT. MILITARY HOUSE - GERTIE'S ROOM - NIGHT**

Open moving boxes with action figures and military-style toys lay about.

Gertie, in sleepwear, tapes up a poster of a female MMA fighter alongside another poster of an old Cynthia Rothrock movie.

She steps back and admires her work.

Mom steps into the doorway, something on her mind.

MOM

Hey, kiddo.

Gertie immediately looks at a pile of clothes on her bed.

MOM  
Get 'em tomorrow.

Mom sits on the bed. Gertie takes a seat beside her and tries to remember the last thing she did bad.

GERTIE  
What's up?

MOM  
Do you still see Danny?

Gertie shrugs.

Mom picks up a family photo from a box near the bed: Mom, Dad, YOUNG GERTIE (toddler), a medium-sized FAMILY DOG and Danny. Danny gives a thumbs up to the camera.

MOM  
Sometimes the only way I can see him  
anymore is when I look at these  
pictures.

Mom realizes she opened up to her too young daughter.

MOM  
I'm worried about you. The new school.  
Non-military kids might be hard to  
relate to, at first, but you're all  
kids. I bet they like dressing up for  
Halloween or opening presents at  
Christmas, just like any other kids.

Gertie shrugs.

GERTIE  
Did Dad tell you to tell me all those  
things?

MOM  
No. OK, maybe he coached me a little.

They chuckle at each other, but Gertie fades off quick.

GERTIE  
Can you try to get me into school on  
base?

Mom looks unsure but relents. Gertie reads her face.

GERTIE

Thank you, thank you, thank you!

MOM

Hold on. I'll try is what I said.

Gertie deflates.

MOM

You have to promise me you're going to try, too.

Gertie nods, a lie.

MOM

All right, soldier.

On 'soldier' Gertie sits up, shoulders back, chin up.

MOM

You know when I call you soldier, it doesn't mean you have to be one when you grow up. Just because I am, and your grandfather was, it doesn't mean you have to be. I'll be proud of whatever you decide to become... as long as it's what you really want.

Gertie seems confused for a moment.

GERTIE

I know.

They hug.

MOM

Good. Get some rest. But, seriously, those clothes. Before school. OK?

Gertie fells like a tree.

GERTIE

Someday I'll have a house and I'll call the shots.

MOM

Someday you will. But to get there, or anywhere, remember...

Mom heads to the door.

Gertie mouths Mom's usual line as she says it:

MOM

Motivation is what gets you going.  
Habit is what keeps you going.

**INT. MILITARY HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT**

Mom and Dad unpack boxes. They haven't been talking.

Mom sips on whiskey.

Dad sneezes and coughs.

DAD

Just can't shake this. Maybe it's a  
cold? I'm so tired.

He turns to find Mom leaning on the counter, in thought.

DAD

What?

MOM

She'll grow up thinking she can deal  
with things by escaping into her  
pretend world. She's only giving the  
problem time to multiply or for more  
to pile on. She needs to learn how to  
accept reality.

Dad looks confused.

DAD

Thanks for including me late in the  
conversation. We're talking about  
Gertie?

MOM

Yeah. Who else?

DAD

Just making sure.

Mom looks at Dad as if he was up to something.

DAD

I'm going to finish up this box and  
head to bed.

Dad turns to continue unpacking.

MOM

Reality will chew you up and spit you  
out if you let it.

Mom takes a drink.

Dad glances over his shoulder at her. He hates that phrase.

He starts coughing.

**INT. MILITARY HOUSE - GERTIE'S ROOM - DAY**

Gertie wakes up and realizes something is wrong.

**INT. MILITARY HOUSE - HALLWAY - DAY**

Gertie walks down the hall and prepares to knock on her  
parents' door.

A GROAN from the living room.

GERTIE

Mom? Dad?

Gertie investigates.

**INT. MILITARY HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY**

Dad sits at a hastily assembled desk and computer and  
wretches in a mop bucket. He wears a wireless headset.

DAD

Ugh, God.

He presses a button to unmute his mic.

DAD

No, sir, I'm still here. I understand  
your concern and we're going to fix  
this.

Gertie appears in the hallway entrance.

**INT. MILITARY HOUSE - HALLWAY - DAY**

Gertie heads back to her parents' bedroom.

GERTIE

Mooooom. Dad's really sick and I'm way  
late for school.

Gertie knocks on the door and enters.

Mom lays in bed, covered in sweat. She looks awful. Goo crusts on her mouth's corner.

GERTIE

Mom?

Mom wakes up, startled.

MOM

Hey baby. I didn't hear you come in.  
How was school?

Mom pretends like nothing is wrong, but she's groggy.

GERTIE

I haven't gone yet.

MOM

What?

Mom looks at a clock on the floor. It reads: 9:03 AM.

MOM

Oh no!

Mom swings her legs out of bed and immediately regrets moving so fast.

MOM

Oh...no.

GERTIE

Maybe you should lay down.

Mom shakes her head, no, but it turns into a nod.

MOM

Good idea.

Mom lays down and Gertie tucks her in.

Dad drags himself in with his headset still on and a bucket.

DAD

Sick day. It's not a cold. Not  
allergies. It's gotta be the flu.

MOM

You, too?

GERTIE

Don't worry, I'll take care of both of you.

Dad drops into bed, his face planted in the pillow.

DAD

(muffled)

Aren't you supposed to be in school?

MOM

We'll call Grandpa. He's only an hour away.

GERTIE

No! I mean, Doctor Gertrude, at your service. You'll be right as rain come morn. Trust me.

Mom doesn't have the strength to argue.

MOM

Just for today...

Dad snores.

**INT. MILITARY HOUSE - GERTIE'S ROOM - DAY**

Gertie stands in the middle of her room in contemplation. She spots the large pile of unfolded clothes.

Her hands grab two wads of clothes and throw them in the air! She giggles with excitement as the clothing confetti falls around her.

**INT. DARK TUNNEL - DAY (PRETEND WORLD)**

An underground bunker tunnel lit by dim ceiling lamps.

RUNNING FOOTSTEPS fade up.

Gertie and Danny, in dark spy clothing, dashes around a corner. Gertie carries a metal suitcase.

Gertie and Danny skid to a stop at different doors and tries them, frantically. They're locked!

ANGRY VOICES echo from down the tunnel. Shadows play against the corner walls.

Gertie and Danny share a look.

Gertie spots a door she missed.

GERTIE

This one!

She tries it - success!

**INT. DARK ROOM - DAY (PRETEND WORLD)**

Gertie presses the door closed and joins Danny, backs against the tunnel-side wall.

She opens the suitcase and takes a peek at vials of green liquid. She shows the contents to Danny.

Danny smiles and gives a thumbs up.

GERTIE

Don't worry Mom. Don't worry Dad. We found the antidote.

ANGRY VOICES and BOOTS near and begin to pass.

DANNY

Check the coast.

**INT. DARK TUNNEL - DAY (PRETEND WORLD)**

Gertie peeks out of the Dark Room. The tunnel to the right is empty.

GERTIE

Whew.

Something at the opposite end of the tunnel catches her attention. She can't make it out and it shouldn't be there.

A short, egg-shaped humanoid form shrouded in near darkness. It emits a low GROWL.

She shrinks away and closes the door.

**INT. DARK ROOM - DAY (PRETEND WORLD)**

She looks at Danny with confusion and concern.

GERTIE

Danny. Something is weird.

DANNY

Shh! Here they come!

BOOTS fade up.

Her stomach RUMBLES. The BOOTS and ANGRY VOICES stop.

They both look down at her stomach.

GERTIE/DANNY

Oh, no...

**INT. MILITARY HOUSE - HALLWAY - DAY (END PRETEND WORLD)**

Gertie skips down the hall and stops at her parents' room. The door is cracked. Odd.

SNORING.

She pulls the door closed and skips onward.

**INT. MILITARY HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY**

Gertie, dressed like a queen with a crown, opens a packaged brownie snack. Multiple wrappers lay around her in a circle along with a jeweled scepter.

She holds the unwrapped brownie at eye level. She's full, a food coma, but they're so good.

The SQUEAL of tires.

Gertie looks out a window and sees a school bus with lettering: FORT BRAGG ELEMENTARY SCHOOL.

DODDS SCHOOL KIDS exit a bus.

GERTIE

Let them eat brownies.

She takes a huge bite out of the brownie.

**INT. MILITARY HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY**

Gertie makes tomato soup from a can and fills two bowls.

She finds she can't physically bring both bowls, takes one instead.

**INT. MILITARY HOUSE - PARENTS' BEDROOM - DAY**

Gertie pushes open the already cracked door and shuffles in, quiet, eyes locked on the soup.

She pauses, and looks back at the again open door, confused, but shrugs it off and circles around toward Dad's beside.

SUCKING noises.

Gertie, at the footboard, looks up and gasps!

Mold Monster straddles Dad and sucks on his mouth, goo everywhere. It's a short, humanoid thing with an egg-shaped body, short legs, and floor-dragging arms.

Gertie drops the bowl and backs away. She fails to scream.

The Mold Monster's head whirls around. Its large, far-spaced eyes search out the noise source as a long stringy tongue circles a cherub mouth where two pointy, long top front teeth hang over a bottom lip. Mold crusts around its eyes, mouth, and claws.

It sneers at Gertie and turns around fully to brandish its claws. It wears a stretched toddler's t-shirt: MOMMA'S BOY 4 LIFE.

Mom begins to stir.

The Mold Monster notices and jumps down. SPLASH, right into the soup.

Gertie circles around to Dad's bedside as the Mold Monster waddle-runs out of the room.

GERTIE

WAKE UP!

Mom and Dad pop up at the waist, unsure where they are or what's going on. Dad wipes his mouth.

GERTIE

Monster! There was a monster. I swear.  
Dad, it was on you. It was kissing  
you!

Mom and Dad, mouths agape, look at one another and drop back into bed.

MOM

Gertie, please. No games.

Mom fishes for something in her mouth.

GERTIE

I swear!

DAD

Gertie, sweetheart, listen to your Mom.

GERTIE

Look! It jumped off the bed, right into the soup, and then it ran off.

Gertie points at the soup but no one pays attention.

DAD

Did you spill soup on the floor?

Mom studies the shard of a tooth from her mouth.

GERTIE

And I think it had one of Danny's shirts!

Mom's eyes widen.

MOM

Gertrude! That's enough!

Gertie stomps out of the room and slams the door.

Dad puts the pillow over his face and groans into it.

Mom sighs, knowing she was harsh.

MOM

(to Gertie)

Gertie, I'm sorry!

Mom shakes her head.

DAD

What, honey?

Mom pulls the pillow off Dad's face and shows him her tooth.

MOM

My tooth broke. Mm... I think there's another piece.

Mom fishes in her mouth.

DAD  
Grinding your teeth in your sleep  
again?

MOM  
I guess.

DAD  
This is the only time I'm ever going  
to say this-

Mom pulls another piece out and joins it with the other.

MOM  
I'll text dad.

DAD  
Great. Right after he saves our lives,  
I'm sure he can fix your tooth, too.

MOM  
Don't start.

Dad dry heaves.

DAD  
The bucket!

Dad turns, snatches up the bucket from the floor, and pukes.

Mom side-eyes him, grossed out, as she texts. Suddenly, she  
feels it, too! She covers her mouth.

MOM  
Bucket!

**INT. MILITARY HOUSE - GERTIE'S ROOM - DAY**

Gertie lies on her bed and buries her head in a pillow.

She gets up, angry that she's crying, and swipes away her  
tears.

GERTIE  
Danny?

Danny is nowhere to be found.

Gertie closes her door and puts a box against it.

She sits on her bed with a Tupperware bin and gathers the

courage to open it.

She does, and it holds a pair of Danny's red sneakers and stacks of photos- the topmost of Danny and Young Gertie blowing out birthday candles together.

DANNY (O.S.)

You OK?

Gertie looks up. Danny sits on top of the box by the door.

GERTIE

Yeah. Fine.

DANNY

Feel like playing?

GERTIE

I dunno.

DANNY

Have you ever heard of... the Mummy!?

Gertie closes the bin. A smile creeps over her face, irresistibly.

**INT. EGYPTIAN BURIAL CHAMBER - DAY (PRETEND WORLD)**

Gertie, in archaeologist gear, studies hieroglyphs on a wall lit by firelight.

Danny studies a large sarcophagus surrounded by stone pillars.

GERTIE

I know it was real. No one believes me.

DANNY

I believe you.

Gertie looks at him, "as if that'll help."

DANNY

I guess you're calling the shots now.

GERTIE

Yup. Mom and Dad are sick. I'm steppin' up.

DANNY

That's cool. We're the same age now  
you know...

Gertie pauses and frowns.

Danny detours the conversation.

DANNY

You think Mom is a drill sergeant with  
you, whew, you have no idea.

GERTIE

Hey! It says here... what lies beneath  
is an... eater of souls.

Gertie slow turns to Danny, who stares at her with wide eyes.

GERTIE

What does that mean?

DANNY

Can't be good. Maybe we should leave  
it alone.

GERTIE

Nonsense. We are scientists. We don't  
believe in the superstitions of  
ancient civilizations. We explain  
things with fact, not fiction.

DANNY

Yeah, until something we thought was  
crazy is super science fact-u-al.

A MOAN from within the sarcophagi.

DANNY

Did you hear that?

Gertie, back to studying the walls, isn't sure she's reading  
something right.

GERTIE

This line here says those who disturb  
the demon of the night shall unleash  
its curse upon themselves.

DANNY

I think we ought to-

Danny backs into the sarcophagi and the lid shifts. He freezes and flicks his eyes to Gertie.

Gertie turns to see what the noise was.

They both look at the corner of the disturbed lid.

MOANS erupt and something pounds on the lid from within.

Gertie pushes on a wall.

GERTIE

The hidden door is stuck. It won't move! Danny, what do we do?

Danny, frantic, purses his lips and slows his breathing. An idea strikes him. He falls over dramatically.

GERTIE

Danny!

He opens one eye.

GERTIE

What are you...

He whispers, barely moving his lips.

DANNY

Playing possum. It'll think we're dead, too.

Gertie doesn't believe him. The sarcophagi lid shifts and falls off the other side. MOAAAAANNNN!

Gertie dramatically falls dead beside Danny.

A MUMMY (ancient) climbs out and looks around for someone to throttle. It spots Gertie and Danny and hovers over them.

It becomes confused, uninterested, and finally moves on through the hidden wall door with ease.

Danny turns his head to Gertie, unopened eyes.

DANNY

We have to stop it from wreaking havoc on the world. It's our responsibility. We unleashed it.

Gertie isn't sure why his eyes are still closed.

GERTIE  
Why're you talking with your eyes  
closed?

DANNY  
I was deep into the role.

Danny's eyes roll, "duh."

They help each other up.

Gertie remembers something.

GERTIE  
We need the torch.

Danny peers out the hidden wall door.

DANNY  
Hurry up.

Gertie face plants and everything goes black.

**INT. MILITARY HOUSE - GARAGE - DAY (END PRETEND WORLD)**

Gertie lays on her elbow, surrounded by stacked boxes  
representing the sarcophagi and pillars.

Gertie gets up and brushes herself off. She checks her  
throbbing elbow and finds a scratch.

GERTIE  
Ow.

She finds what tripped her: the metal grate. She hadn't seen  
it before.

GERTIE  
Woah.

She kneels and investigates.

**TUNNEL POV**

Gertie's face appears over the grate through the cobweb-less  
tunnel.

**BACK TO SCENE**

Gertie notices some red goop on the grate. She pushes it with  
her finger.

She looks around as if someone might be watching, and tastes it.

GERTIE

Tomato soup?

She looks up - a trail of little tomato splotches leads into the garage and stops at the grate.

Gertie backs away, deep breath upon realizing--

GERTIE

It is real.

BRNNGG! Light floods from beneath a slow-opening garage door.

Gertie jumps and hides behind a 'pillar.'

GRANDPA (70s), retired Colonel, stands outside the garage door and is revealed from toe to head.

GRANDPA

Gertie. Is that you? Front and center.

Gertie jogs to the commanded spot and stands at attention.

Grandpa looks her up and down like a soldier.

GRANDPA

Sit rep.

GERTIE

Colonel, sir, the situation is that Mom and Dad are sick, screwed up real good. I'm taking care of them, so they will be unscrewed come dawn, sir.

Grandpa walks past her into the garage.

GRANDPA

If that were the case I wouldn't be here to rectify this soup sandwich, now would I?

Gertie looks ashamed. She wheels around.

GERTIE

Something else, sir. There's something in the house.

Grandpa looks over his shoulder at her but finds his

attention drawn to something on the floor.

GRANDPA

Probably mold in the A/C. I bet that's why everyone is sick. You're young - better immune system.

GERTIE

No. A monster. A real monster.

Gertie snaps her mouth shut, not meaning to blurt.

Grandpa turns and points at the floor.

GRANDPA

Is this food on the floor? Mold, and now rats and roaches? This is out of control. Quit moving like pond water and let's get this cleaned up.

GERTIE

Yes, sir.

GRANDPA

And keep that imagination in check. It's useless. A distraction in the real world that can devour you in two seconds flat is dangerous. Got it?

GERTIE

Yes, sir.

Grandpa leaves.

Gertie bursts into action and pushes a box over the crate. No, that's not enough. With effort, she stacks on another.

She holds down the garage door button.

BRRNGG! The garage door closes and the darkness overcomes.

KERCHUNK. KERCHUNK. The interior garage door locks at the handle and the deadbolt.

The topmost box on the grate reads: MOM'S MILITARY STUFF - DON'T TOUCH, GERTRUDE!

**INT. MILITARY HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY**

Grandpa fills two bowls with a fresh batch of tomato soup.

GRANDPA

I'm going to check the attic. You can take the soup to your parents.

GERTIE

What's in the attic?

Grandpa turns with a bowl in each hand.

GRANDPA

Can you take both of these?

GERTIE

No, sir.

Grandpa sets the bowls on the table in front of her.

GRANDPA

Improvise, soldier.

Grandpa walks off, leaving Gertie to stare at the bowls.

**INT. MILITARY HOUSE - KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER**

Gertie pulls out a baking pan and puts the bowls on top.

She tests the idea and nods in self-satisfaction.

**INT. MILITARY HOUSE - HALLWAY - DAY**

Gertie shuffles down the hall with the pan.

Grandpa carries a flashlight in one hand and pulls down the attic stairs.

He takes a step up but pauses to watch Gertie.

Gertie sets the tray down opens the door, picks it up again, and goes inside the parents' bedroom.

Grandpa nods in approval.

He turns to take another step but his hip threatens to give. He drops the flashlight, lays against the ladder, and holds tight.

GRANDPA

Ruck up, old man.

He slaps his hip and grimaces.

Gertie stands in the bedroom doorway holding the pan.

GERTIE  
Colonel, what're you doing?

GRANDPA  
Nothing.

Grandpa improvises, reluctantly.

GRANDPA  
Get up on these stairs, take a sniff  
around, and tell me what you find.

GERTIE  
Won't I get sick?

Grandpa looks like he won't take no for an answer.

GRANDPA  
I didn't say stick your nose in it,  
did I?

Gertie grimaces and looks up at the attic.

**INT. MILITARY HOUSE - ATTIC - DAY**

A dark, dusty attic. Empty but for an ancient, scary air-handling unit.

Gertie's head pops up through the hatch.

GERTIE  
Smells fine.

GRANDPA (O.S.)  
You gotta get up in there, Gertrude.

Gertie pulls herself into the attic and looks around.

GRANDPA (O.S.)  
And be careful where you step. You  
could fall through the ceiling.

Gertie sees what Grandpa means - where the plywood stops.

GERTIE  
So... if Mom and Dad are sick, and I'm  
not, does that still mean we have  
mold, or...?

GRANDPA (O.S.)  
Have you found anything yet?

Gertie walks around and sniffs at the air.

GERTIE  
Dusty.

GRANDPA (O.S.)  
Is anything wet and moldy?

Gertie shines the light around.

GERTIE  
I don't think so.

Gertie's light stops on a dust-covered notebook hidden behind the air-handling unit.

She opens it to the first page: THE MOLD MONSTER, accompanied by a children's drawing of the Mold Monster.

She flips the page and reads a passage.

GERTIE  
Mold Monsters feed on a special kind of mold. The longer they stay the more dangerous they become. Follow my guide and you shall find victory and save your family. Please sign and return when done.

Gertie's face screws up as she looks at all of the signatures around the page: ETHAN TALL, MAEVE WILLIAMS, EMMY DOUGLAS, etc.

She flips to a page showing a sunrise over three graves. Writing on the page reads: BY SUNRISE...OR ELSE!

GERTIE  
By sunrise...

Her eyes go wide.

GRANDPA (O.S.)  
Gertie?

GERTIE  
Coming!

Gertie fits the notebook into her rear waistband and covers

it with her shirt.

As Gertie descends the ladder, carefully watching each step, the flashlight beam waggles upward - green and black mold partially covering the attic ceiling.

Gertie doesn't notice.

**INT. MILITARY HOUSE - HALLWAY - DAY**

Grandpa looks up at the hatch, impatient.

Gertie's head pops in view.

GRANDPA

Well?

GERTIE

Nothing.

GRANDPA

You checked every corner?

GERTIE

Yes, sir.

He doesn't look convinced.

GRANDPA

Come on down.

Grandpa reaches up to help Gertie down.

Between Grandpa's lower legs and the lower rungs of the ladder the garage door down the dark end of the hall opens.

Mold Monster hangs on the door handle and pulls its claw from the lock.

It lets go and drops, eyeshine reflecting green and yellow as it spies Grandpa helping Gertie down from the ladder.

It licks its lips, seeing Grandpa.

**INT. MILITARY HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT**

A tipped-over cardboard box with a cornucopia of books spilled out. The red notebook is off to the side.

Gertie sits on the floor and flips through the books, anxious to find an answer.

Danny practices fencing with an imaginary sword.

DANNY  
Find anything yet?

GERTIE  
Nope.

DANNY  
There's got to be something, right?

She finds a book, MONSTERS GROWING WITHIN: A SELF-HELP GUIDE.

GERTIE  
Cool. I think this is it.

Gertie flips through the book and looks increasingly disappointed. She comes across a pamphlet: GRIEF COUNSELING.

GERTIE  
Nothing about monsters. Not it.

She shoves the pamphlet back into the book and tosses them to the side to continue with her search.

Danny continues to fence, but glances at the book and Gertie as if knowing something she doesn't.

Gertie's stomach RUMBLES.

**INT. MILITARY HOUSE - PARENTS' BEDROOM - DAY**

Grandpa slips into the bedroom.

Mom snoozes hard.

Dad blows his nose. A mound of tissues sits on the box next to him. He doesn't see Grandpa until-

Grandpa stands at the footboard, assessing Dad.

DAD  
I didn't see you there.

GRANDPA  
How long?

DAD  
Maybe a day. Maybe two.

GRANDPA  
Could be mold.

Dad, "here we go."

DAD  
More like the flu.

Grandpa grips the footboard and leans forward.

Dad looks unnerved, but tries to hide it.

GRANDPA  
Someday I'm going to stop sucking air,  
and she won't have me to back her up  
anymore. Keep her safe, keep my  
granddaughter safe.

Dad hesitates to say something loudly. But, then--

DAD  
Guess who's gonna be changing your  
diapers when she's away.

Grandpa's eyes narrow.

GRANDPA  
I'll be sure you don't have the  
privilege to change my diapers.

Mom mumbles in her sleep. Grandpa and Dad pause.

GRANDPA  
You. Called. Me.

They glare at one another.

**INT. MILITARY HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT**

Gertie sits on the floor and opens a Meal, Ready to Eat (MRE).

**INT. MILITARY HOUSE - PARENTS' BEDROOM - NIGHT**

Mold Monster's feet, wearing Danny's red shoes, scoots around the door frame.

It covertly watches the standoff between Dad and Grandpa, salivates, and stains Danny's old shirt.

DAD

And now I regret agreeing to it. We'll be better tomorrow and you can leave. But this, this right here, isn't helping.

GRANDPA

I can't for the life of me understand why she trusts you with anything. Not anymore.

Dad looks gutted, but anger quickly consumes.

Mold Monster's cherub lips peel back and expose its only two long teeth in full as goo drips off their points.

**INT. MILITARY HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT**

Gertie arranges the individual food stuffs and thinks she hears something.

She grabs the packaged brownie and heads toward the hallway.

**INT. MILITARY HOUSE - PARENTS' BEDROOM - NIGHT**

Dad looks at Grandpa who's crossed a line.

DAD

Get out of this bedroom. Now.

Grandpa pushes off the bed and leaves at his own pace.

**INT. MILITARY HOUSE - HALLWAY - NIGHT**

Gertie rounds the corner into an empty hallway, unwrapping the brownie.

Grandpa walks out of parents' bedroom and barely remembers not to slam the door.

He power walks into the bathroom and closes the door.

Gertie pauses, unsure of what's happening.

**INT. MILITARY HOUSE - PARENTS' BEDROOM - NIGHT**

The Mold Monster peeks out from behind the moving box where previously hidden.

Dad SOBS, quietly.

DAD

I'm sorry. I'm so sorry.

Mom, turned away from Dad and barely awake, hears Dad but doesn't react.

Air BLOWS through an air vent. A tiny drip of thick goo hangs on before dripping onto the floor.

**EXT. CABIN - COVERED PORCH - NIGHT (PRETEND WORLD)**

An 1800's cabin on a desolate plain in a mid-west state. Storms clouds gather and thunder rumbles.

Grandpa, era-appropriate clothes, sips whiskey from whiskey glass and watches the storm's approach.

Gertie, clothes of the era - but slacks, stands behind him and watches the storm, too, none too happy with the storm or the circle of opened, old books surrounding her.

GRANDPA

You still back there?

GERTIE

Yes, sir.

Grandpa pats beside him.

Gertie obliges. She looks at him - old, but solid as a rock, and yet an inconceivable softness on his face.

GRANDPA

Your momma ever tell you where your name came from?

GERTIE

My Grandma.

GRANDPA

That's right. It's a strong name, made so by the strength of the woman. Your Grandma.

GERTIE

I don't remember her.

GRANDPA

You wouldn't, I guess. Too young. Your brother would, if he were here, if-

Grandpa stops himself short and takes a drink.

GRANDPA

Your Grandmother's strength was infectious. It made others want to be strong. I have no doubt that woman would've outranked me if things were switched, her a Tank Commander and me an Okinawan watching my whole life get trampled under tank treads.

GERTIE

Mom says I'm a lot like her.

GRANDPA

Do you know what made her strong?

Gertie shakes her head, but Grandpa doesn't wait for a response.

GRANDPA

She was confident she would always figure out a way. A solution for anything. Just born that way. Hardheaded or determined, call it what you will. I remember looking down from my tank- and there she was. Arms crossed, pissed as a wet hen.

Grandpa's mind goes elsewhere for a beat.

GRANDPA

Danny was a lot like her.

Grandpa downs the rest of his drink and goes inside, leaving Gertie alone and demolished.

The rain comes. She watches it for a moment and turns, feeling something rub against her back.

She plucks the notebook out of her waistband and takes a seat in a rocking chair.

GERTIE

There's got to be a way.

She flips through the pages.

**INT. MILITARY HOUSE - HALLWAY - NIGHT (END PRETEND WORLD)**

The parents' bedroom door opens. Claws grip the door to open

it.

**INT. MILITARY HOUSE - PARENTS' BEDROOM - NIGHT**

Mom and Dad lay in bed, freezing yet covered in sweat. They're gaunt, somehow losing a lot of weight within the day.

**INT. MILITARY HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT**

Grandpa drops into a recliner and pushes back, trying to hold steady a new whiskey pour.

RUNNING THUDS from shoes worn by something with short legs.

Grandpa stays focused on his mission: draining the new pour and finding a military documentary on TV.

**EXT. CABIN - COVERED PORCH - NIGHT (PRETEND WORLD)**

Rain steadily pours as Gertie rocks in a CREAKY rocking chair.

She reads the notebook as another rocking chair CREAKS with hers. She looks up.

Danny smiles at her from another rocking chair. She doesn't reciprocate.

DANNY

What's wrong?

GERTIE

I trapped it, but I don't think it's gonna hold.

DANNY

I've got a few ideas.

Gertie doesn't respond, flipping through the notebook to a drawing of the Mold Monster in the middle of a large room and scared.

GERTIE

It doesn't like being out in the open.

She flips a page: Mold Monster shields its eyes from the sun.

GERTIE

Or bright light.

Gertie flips the page and becomes curious at the rendering of

Mold Monster covering its ears to some kind of yelling from multiple, face-less people.

DANNY

Your birthday is next month. What're you gonna ask for?

GERTIE

I don't know.

DANNY

I wanted a bike. A new bike. One with all those gears, brakes on the handles- not those stupid brakes on the pedals. So stupid.

GERTIE

Uh-huh.

DANNY

You're going to be older than me.

Gertie doesn't look up, but he has her attention.

GERTIE

Uh-huh.

DANNY

Gertie, are you listening to me?

GERTIE

I have to stay on mission, Danny. You're distracting me.

DANNY

Sorry. How can I help? I have a few ideas on how to stop the Mold Monster, remember?

GERTIE

I don't know, Danny, I don't know!

Gertie slaps the notebook closed, pops out of the chair, and enters the cabin.

Danny looks discouraged and confused.

His rocking chair comes to a stop.

No one is on the porch.

**INT. MILITARY HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT (END PRETEND WORLD)**

Gertie passes by Grandpa sleeping in the recliner on her way to the hallway, notebook under her arm.

**INT. MILITARY HOUSE - HALLWAY - NIGHT**

Gertie stands in front of the garage door and stares in surprise at the door being unlocked. She opens the door.

The grate is uncovered and dislodged!

GERTIE

It's all up to me.

**INT. MILITARY HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT**

The Mold Monster opens the sink cabinet and finds a roll of duct tape.

A military documentary PLAYS in the background.

It tapes the boxcutter on its back, a la Die Hard, and gets an idea.

It turns toward the Living Room where the light from the TV flickers and the back of Grandpa's head is visible over the recliner headrest.

**INT. MILITARY HOUSE - PARENTS' BATHROOM - NIGHT**

An en-suite bathroom. A package of opened toilet paper sits on an unopened box. Lights off.

Mom sits on the toilet, barely unable to stay awake.

She stands on a scale and looks concerned. It can't be right.

**INT. MILITARY HOUSE - PARENTS' BEDROOM - NIGHT**

Mom navigates like a drunk back to the bed and drops in, never mind the covers, facing away from Dad.

MOM

We need to... call the... doctor... in the morning. OK, babe?

Dad doesn't breathe, perhaps not in a while.

MOM

Babe...?

She turns her head to him.

Dad suddenly takes in a deep breath.

**INT. MILITARY HOUSE - GERTIE'S ROOM - NIGHT**

Gertie stares up at a PREDATOR (1987) movie poster.

She tosses on an oversized military uniform.

As she puts on camouflage face paint she studies her large DVD collection of action movies.

**INT. MILITARY HOUSE - HALLWAY - NIGHT**

Gertie sneaks out of her room and into the garage.

**INT. MILITARY HOUSE - GARAGE - NIGHT**

Gertie looks around for the Mold Monster.

Satisfied, she looks across the garage- her battlefield.

GERTIE

There's a storm coming. And I am the  
storm!

**INT. MILITARY HOUSE - HALLWAY - NIGHT**

The Mold Monster swaggers down the middle of the dark hallway, triumphant.

Its claws grasp at the parents' door but it doesn't break stride, "I'll get back to you."

**INT. MILITARY HOUSE - GARAGE - NIGHT**

Light escapes around the edges of the interior garage door as the Mold Monster enters. It strides in and flings the door closed behind it.

CRUNCH, CRUNCH.

It looks down at a cargo net spread across the floor, curiously.

SCHLOOP!

The cargo net shoots up in mid-air and hangs as the Mold Monster screams.

The line reaches from the cargo net to an eye-bolt screwed into the wall above the interior garage door to--

Gertie emerges from within a wall of moving boxes, holding the line to the net.

The Mold Monster eyes her from within the net.

GERTIE

Got you. All. By. Myself.

The Mold Monster's claw draws down the net, cutting it into shreds.

Mold Monster falls from the net and hits the ground running at Gertie.

Gertie gasps.

Mold Monster snarls as it speeds up.

POP!

Mold Monster drops on its butt, hard, and rubs its forehead.

A golf ball settles to a stop.

Mold Monster launches itself forward and avoids the onslaught of golf balls that ricochet off the ground in all directions.

Mold Monster prepares to jump as Gertie turns on a shop light sitting on another box. It shields its eyes and screams, until--

It slips and slides on a slicked floor toward the moving box wall! It passes a few used cans of WD40.

Gertie takes cover.

The Mold Monster prepares to hit a box, but suddenly the box lifts and it slides right into a dog kennel.

BAM!

The door shuts.

Mold Monster shakes it off and looks up to Gertie standing over it, triumphant.

GERTIE

All. By. Myself.

Gertie gets a good look at the monster for the first time and finds her confidence overshadowed by fear even though it's caged.

GERTIE

You're one ugly mother beeeeeeeeeeeep.

Gertie gives the caged monster a wide berth as she heads toward the exit.

GERTIE

Mom, Dad, Grandpa! I got it!

**INT. MILITARY HOUSE - HALLWAY - NIGHT**

Gertie runs down the hallway, knocks on the parents' Bedroom door, and continues into the Living Room where she finds--

**INT. MILITARY HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT**

Grandpa is duct-taped to the recliner, including his whiskey glass to his hand.

GERTIE

Grandpa...?

Grandpa stirs.

GRANDPA

Go to bed, child.

Grandpa tries to turn to one side, away from Gertie and realizes he can't. His eyes pop open.

GRANDPA

What the hell is going on? Gertrude?

What is this?

GERTIE

It immobilized you, sir.

Gertie thinks deeply as Grandpa struggles, still drunk, to get out of his binds.

GERTIE

(to self)

You still don't understand what you're dealing with, do you? Perfect organism. Its structural perfection is matched only by its hostility.

Gertie clutches the notebook in her hand, looking at it intensely.

GRANDPA

Quit quoting lines from mouth-breather movies and cut me loose! Now!

Gertie snaps back to reality.

GERTIE

Yes, sir, sorry, Colonel, sir.

Gertie runs into the kitchen and searches for something sharp.

Grandpa sees his whiskey glass and tries unsuccessfully to have it meet his lips. He gives up just as Gertie returns with scissors.

GRANDPA

This has got to stop, Gertie. I've told your Mother a thousand times-

GERTIE

I gotta show you something, Colonel. Please.

Gertie holds the solution to his escape hostage.

GRANDPA

Cut.

GERTIE

Only if you promise to come to see.

GRANDPA

I don't negotiate with terrorists.

Gertie isn't budging.

GRANDPA

I'll consider it.

**INT. MILITARY HOUSE - GARAGE - NIGHT**

The moving box lifts up and away, flooding the kennel with light, and exposing a very surprised Gertie and Grandpa.

GRANDPA

What the hell is that?

Gertie shakes her head, absolutely doesn't know.

Grandpa leans closer for a closer look at--

An egg-shaped thing resembling scotch eggs with bits of hair and goo.

GRANDPA

I know what it is.

GERTIE

You do?

GRANDPA

This is where the mold is coming from.

Grandpa looks around the garage at the warzone as he heads to the interior garage door.

GRANDPA

This house is beyond out of control.  
We should be walking around with  
hazmat suits with the way this  
operation is run. Like a bunch of  
monkeys tryin' to f- screw a football.

He reaches up for the garage door opening.

GERTIE

That IS the monster!

GRANDPA

While your Mother is out serving this  
country it's apparent what your Father  
isn't doing. You, little lady, are out  
of control!

Gertie manages to control her face, her tears.

The garage door starts to open.

GRANDPA

Take that kennel outside of this house  
and get this garage cleaned up. After  
that, you're confined to quarters  
indefinitely. Do you understand?

Gertie nods.

GRANDPA

I said do you understand?

GERTIE  
Sir, yes, sir.

GRANDPA  
Tomorrow, I'll get the professionals  
in line to get this house in shape and  
I'm not leaving until this situation  
is cinched up.

Gertie looks down as Grandpa walks toward the door.

GRANDPA  
(under breath)  
I need a drink.

BAM! The interior door shuts and she jumps.

She sits on a box. Danny sits behind her, back-to-back.

Crickets CHIRP from outside.

DANNY  
What do you think it is?

GERTIE  
I don't know, Danny.

DANNY  
You should put a lock on it. As you  
said, it's smart. We got to be  
smarter. Oh, you could call Animal  
Control - tell them it's a wild  
animal. What's it gonna do, locked up  
and locked outside the house?

GERTIE  
While I'm locked up in here where  
everyone hates me.

DANNY  
Don't say that.

GERTIE  
It's true. They put up with me. I bet  
they wish they could lock me up in a  
kennel and put me outside.

DANNY  
Gertie...

GERTIE

No! You caused all this. Grandpa says it was all Dad's fault, but it wasn't. It wasn't his fault.

DANNY

It wasn't Dad's fault. Don't say that.

GERTIE

I know. It was your fault, Danny. And now all of this, this is all your fault!

Gertie stomps off toward the kennel and drags it outside.

DANNY

I need to tell you something.

GERTIE

Don't care.

Gertie roots around in a toolbox to find a padlock.

DANNY

I'm leaving soon.

Gertie stops in her tracks and turns, padlock in hand.

DANNY

Can we go to my room?

Gertie looks sad. They never to go to his room for good news.

The garage door starts to close with the padlocked kennel outside.

**EXT. MILITARY HOUSE - NIGHT**

The garage door shuts. Cricket CHIRPS.

The egg emits a strange, low hum.

A cricket comes too close to the egg. The goo reaches out like a sticky hand toy, grabs it, and pulls it into the egg.

Crickets cover the driveway and herd toward the egg as the hum grows louder.

**EXT. HILLSIDE - DAY (FLASHBACK)**

Danny, dressed like a warrior in Genghis Khan's army, stands

atop a steep hill of tall grass and surveying a valley.

A cabin sits in the valley.

Wind GUSTS.

Dad walks by him and pats his shoulder.

Danny turns, now wearing a plastic shield on his back and a sword in his hand.

DAD

Come on buddy. Two more miles.

DANNY

Are we going to the general store?

DAD

We can have a look around before we leave, sure.

Danny runs ahead in a full charge down the path.

DANNY

Yeeeeeeaaaahh!

DAD

I know you're anxious to engage in glorious combat, but no more running ahead, OK?

Danny stops and swings his sword at the grass as he waits.

**EXT. GENERAL STORE - FRONT - DAY**

Danny and Dad walk through a parking lot toward a cabin turned General Store.

A few other HIKER CUSTOMERS prepare to start their hike or end their hike by customarily entering the store.

Danny spots a SHAGGY DOG, medium-sized and non-threatening, in the distance, laying in the grass at a tree line, panting.

DANNY

Dad. Look, a dog.

Dad checks his mobile phone, half paying attention.

DAD

Looks like Grandma is about ready to

give Gertie back.

Dad laughs.

DANNY

Dad!

DAD

What's up?

Danny points toward the Dog but all Dad sees is--

A HIKER carries an INJURED HIKER, lower leg area mangled and bloody, to the General Store porch.

HIKER

Help! Someone help!

DAD

Danny, can you go into the store without me? I'm going to help these folks.

DANNY

Is she going to be OK?

DAD

Yeah. She's gonna be fine. Looks like either an animal bite or maybe a poacher's trap got her. Okay, we're cool, right? Stay in the store - don't leave till I get you.

Danny nods and gives a half-hearted salute.

DAD

Great.

Dad runs over to the Hiker as they lower Injured Hiker, with the help of Hiking Customers, onto a bench.

DAD

Hey - retired Army Combat Medic here. Ambulance on the way?

HIKER

Yeah, we were right down there when it happened. Just BAM!

Injured Hiker moans in pain, or possibly from listening to Hiker, or both.

DAD  
I always carry my kit...

Dad pulls off his pack to get out his medkit and glances over his shoulder to see Danny entering the General Store.

DAD  
(to Injured Hiker)  
Mind if I take a look?

Injured Hiker nods through the pain.

**INT. GENERAL STORE - DAY**

Danny looks around at all the usual stuff: cheap toys, trail food, homemade beef jerky, trail maps, etc.

He spots the Shaggy Dog from the window.

The Dog limps along a tree line not far off from Danny.

DANNY  
Oh, no.

**EXT. GENERAL STORE - REAR FIELD - DAY**

Danny bursts out of the back door in a WWI Army Medic uniform and crosses a field toward the Dog.

MEAN DOG, imposing, emerges from the tree line, too far off for Danny to notice. Drool drips in excessive amounts.

**EXT. GENERAL STORE - FRONT - DAY**

Dad wraps the Injured Hiker's lower leg in sterile bandaging.

DAD  
Nice and clean.

HIKER  
What if it had rabies?

Injured Hiker gasps at Hiker. They didn't think of that.

DAD  
This wasn't a poacher's trap?

HIKER  
Last week there was a guy that got bit and got rabies. People drop unwanted dogs out here all the time. They may

look like people, but they ain't,  
they're monsters.

Dad processes as he finishes wrapping.

DAD  
But the wound didn't look like...

HIKER  
There was a bunch of them. Hit one  
with a stick real good. The others got  
my bear mace.

Dad looks down the road where the Hiker indicated, then to  
the General Store.

DAD  
Tell the ambulance it was wild dogs  
with suspected rabies. They'll know  
what to do.

Dad pushes through the Hiking Customers and into the store.

**INT. GENERAL STORE - DAY**

Dad searches for Danny in every aisle. Concerned at first,  
then frantic.

He passes by the window Danny looked out of earlier and hears  
a BARK. He stops and looks out the window. More BARKS, angry,  
aggressive.

**EXT. GENERAL STORE - REAR FIELD - DAY**

Dad runs out of the General Store at top speed across the  
field.

Mean Dog looks up with a bloodied maw, then runs.

Dad's face contorts as he slows and nears the tree line.

His foot stops at the edge of a torn, bloody plastic shield  
laying in the grass.

Gertie screams, O.S., muffled.

**INT. DANNY'S ROOM - NIGHT (PRETEND WORLD)**

Gertie's screams fade up as she lays on Danny's bed and holds  
a pillow to her face.

The room is similar to Gertie's but with "The NeverEnding Story" movie poster and "Conan the Barbarian." More fantasy than action-related paraphernalia.

Danny sits at the end of the bed and waits.

Gertie's scream turns into uncontrollable sobs.

DANNY

You've heard it before, remember?  
Grandpa got drunk at your birthday party, the one right after my funeral? Oh, and Mom and Dad had that big fight in the kitchen. That's when they said the D-word...

Gertie doesn't answer.

DANNY

Divorce.

Gertie flings off the pillow.

GERTIE

I don't want to talk about this. I don't want to talk about it!

DANNY

Nobody does. Gertie- I need to leave soon. You have to let me.

GERTIE

Why?

DANNY

You're getting older and I don't-

GERTIE

No, you're my brother and you're staying.

DANNY

Listen to me.

Gertie dismisses him.

DANNY

Listen to me! You have to accept that I'm dead, Gertie. You have to. Mom, Dad, Grandpa- they do, too, before it's too late! Before-

GERTIE

No!

KNOCK KNOCK.

The door opens.

**INT. MILITARY HOUSE - GERTIE'S ROOM - NIGHT (END PRETEND WORLD)**

Grandpa steps in and looks suspicious.

GRANDPA

Who're you yelling at?

GERTIE

I was singing.

GRANDPA

Huh. Rack out. You're going to school tomorrow.

GERTIE

But-

GRANDPA

Haven't you caused enough trouble tonight?

GERTIE

Yes, sir.

Gertie doesn't see the moment of guilt flash across Grandpa's face for the way he treats her.

He closes the door.

Gertie throws the pillow and lays down on the notebook.

She flops over the notebook to its back. The backing catches her attention.

Titled THE DOWN BELOW, it depicts tunnels leading down from within the Earth's surface to huts in an underground cavern with Mold Monsters running around.

Inside one hut is an "egg." Inside another is an open "egg" and multiple Mold Monsters jumping out. Behind the Earth are tens of Mold Monsters, ready to take over the world.

Gertie shoots up.

GERTIE

We won the battle, but not the war.  
They're here to take over!

**EXT. MILITARY HOUSE - DRIVEWAY - NIGHT**

The "egg" has grown to fill the kennel. A mound of dead crickets surrounds the kennel.

The egg pulsates.

A claw, smaller than the Mold Monster's, protrudes out of the egg. Then another.

It finds and works the padlock.

Suddenly three other sets of claws stick out in all directions and grab onto the kennel's bars!

**INT. MILITARY HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT**

Grandpa rummages around a moving box for a photo album with one hand as the other holds a glass of whiskey.

He drops into the recliner with the photo book and flips through a few pages. He stops and pulls out a picture of GRANDMA (50s), Okinawan, and smiling.

Grandpa smiles back.

GRANDPA

You made me a better man. And now that  
you're gone... I'm not sure what kind  
of man I am.

He drinks, but is interrupted by--

SMASH! Glass breaks down the hallway.

GRANDPA

Gertie!

**INT. MILITARY HOUSE - HALLWAY - NIGHT**

Grandpa storms down the hall, whiskey sloshing.

CRUNCH.

Grandpa pauses at the dark bathroom. He pushes the door open and flips on the light.

A broken window and glass on the floor.

GRANDPA

Gertie.

No one answers.

Grandpa investigates the scene and looks out the window. He slurs:

GRANDPA

Go ahead Gertie, run away. Run away from your problems. See how fast they catch you.

The toilet seat lifts an inch. Two MOLD MONSTERS, smaller than the original, eyeballs shine from inside the bowl.

GRANDPA

You deal with your problems. Head-on. Got it? Head-on, soldier!

BAM! The toilet seat slams against the tank. Grandpa looks down as a Mold Monsters launches from the watery bowl at him.

Grandpa screams and falls backward into the tub, cocooned by the shower curtain.

Two more Mold Monsters peer in over the broken window, malicious intent on their faces.

Grandpa fights the shower curtain and pops his head out.

GRANDPA

Where are you! Where...

The room is empty.

**INT. MILITARY HOUSE - HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER**

Grandpa stares at himself in the mirror, in ridicule. His chipped whiskey glass sits on the sink.

TINY FOOTSTEPS run by the door.

Grandpa looks curious but is unwilling to embarrass himself again. He ignores it and takes stock of the bathroom mess.

**INT. MILITARY HOUSE - GARAGE - NIGHT**

Gertie superglues the grate to the floor.

**INT. MILITARY HOUSE - HALLWAY - NIGHT**

Grandpa cracks the parents' Room door to check up. He watches the humps of their forms take breaths.

**INT. MILITARY HOUSE - HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER**

Grandpa stands in front of Gertie's room as if he's about to give a dress down to a soldier. He wobbles, drunker.

He holds the refilled, chipped whiskey glass, and decides to put it down on the floor.

GRANDPA

Gertie.

No answer. He deliberates leaving, but stays, tone softening.

GRANDPA

Gertie, I'm sorry. I am sorry. You're my only granddaughter. And I take things out on you, on- on a lot of people that don't deserve it. I've lost too much over the years. Soldiers. Your Grandma. Danny. I don't want to lose you, too. I'm sorry I'm just a lonely, pissed old grunt, and when I stop sucking air... Gertie, can you forgive me?

Grandpa cracks the door.

GRANDPA

Gertie, I'm giving it a full-court press here.

Grandpa sees the bed is empty, closes the door, and turns to see Gertie with her back pressed against the garage door.

Tears stream down Gertie's face.

Grandpa straightens, a proud man, as his eyes tear up.

TINY FOOTSTEPS. A blur runs across the living room.

Gertie sees it, and Grandpa turns just as the Mold Monster peeks around the corner, eyes glinting, snarling.

It disappears just as fast.

GRANDPA

You little-

Grandpa looks back at Gertie as if to confirm what he's seeing. She nods, slowly.

GRANDPA

Gertie. Into the garage. Now. It's time to get weaponized.

Gertie nods, firmly, as they back into the garage and close the door.

**INT. MILITARY HOUSE - HALLWAY - LATER**

The garage door opens and out steps--

Grandpa looks like Marion Cobretti from the movie "Cobra" and Gertie like Ellen Ripley from "Alien."

Gertie holds a crowbar, and Grandpa holds a golf club as they march down the hallway for war.

**INT. MILITARY HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT**

Gertie and Grandpa skulk into the Living Room.

Gertie turns on all of the lights.

GRANDPA

What're you doing?

GERTIE

It doesn't like light.

GRANDPA

It ain't gonna like this club shoved up its-

GERTIE

Over there!

Gertie points at the recliner.

Gertie and Grandpa close in on the recliner, weapons ready.

GRANDPA

HAH!

Gertie and Grandpa both look at an empty space behind the recliner, weapons raised.

GERTIE

I saw it.

Grandpa looks toward the kitchen and nods.

GERTIE

Roger that.

**INT. MILITARY HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT**

Grandpa and Gertie enter the kitchen. Above them, unnoticed, one of the Mold Monsters grips onto the ceiling, looking down on them.

GERTIE

It could be anywhere, Colonel.

Grandpa points to Gertie and then to the cabinets. He holds up a finger.

Gertie nods and prepares to open a cabinet. Grandpa prepares to swing.

He nods.

She yanks open the cabinet!

Nothing. They relax.

They prepare for the next one.

Pieces of ceiling plaster drop onto Grandpa's shoulder. He looks at it, curious, and then up--

A Mold Monster drops onto Grandpa's face and 'kisses' him. Grandpa struggles to get it off, screams muffled.

GERTIE

Grandpa!

Grandpa slams into walls and overturns furniture, as Gertie looks for an opening.

Grandpa strikes at the Mold Monsters. His strikes weaken, quickly.

BAM! Gertie hits it with the crowbar and SCHLOOP, its suction on Grandpa lets loose as it flies into the corner.

It flies into a wall, THUD, and drops into a motionless heap.

GERTIE  
Grandpa, are you OK?

GRANDPA  
What the hell are these things?

GERTIE  
Sure isn't mold.

Grandpa gives her a look as Gertie studies the Mold Monsters.

GERTIE  
It's smaller.

GRANDPA  
What do you mean?

GERTIE  
It was way bigger before.

Gertie references a size with her hands.

GERTIE  
What do we do now? Maybe set up a  
defense?

Gertie surveys the kitchen, turning away from Grandpa.

THUD.

Gertie turns and finds Grandpa slumped against the wall, on the floor, with another Mold Monsters sucking on his face.

A third monster watches her as it ties Grandpa's ankles together with Grandpa's shoestrings. It grins at her.

GERTIE  
Oh no. There's more than one.

The Mold Monsters sucking on Grandpa lets go, a look of satisfaction.

MOLD MONSTERS  
Ah mm.

Grandpa's head tilts toward Gertie. He manages:

GRANDPA  
Run.

Gertie runs on command out of the Kitchen.

A Mold Monsters points at the escaping Gertie, squeals!

**INT. MILITARY HOUSE - HALLWAY - NIGHT**

Gertie runs into her parents' Room just as the Mold Monsters round the corner.

**INT. MILITARY HOUSE - PARENTS' BEDROOM - NIGHT**

Gertie slams the door, locks it, and backs against it.

She looks around for something to further fortify: a nightstand, boxes, and a vacuum cleaner. She isn't sure it's enough.

GROAN.

She whirls around.

GERTIE

Mom! Dad!

She drops the crowbar, runs up to the bed, and is greeted by two sleeping, near dead, corpse-like people barely resembling Mom and Dad.

Goo seeps from every orifice, crusted, and staining everything.

GERTIE

No, Mom! Dad!

Gertie crawls into the bed and puts her head on their chests. They breathe, but barely.

She cries in desperation.

GERTIE

I don't know what to do. Please wake up.

Gertie spots Mom's cell phone. She dials 911 and the line picks up.

GERTIE

Hello! Hello! Please, we need help!

SCRATCHING on the line.

GERTIE

Hello?

SNICKERS from Mold Monsters.

GERTIE

How...

Gertie drops to the floor, defeated. The phone falls to the floor.

GERTIE

Danny. I need you.

Gertie looks around desperately but doesn't see him. Instead, she notices the shadows underneath the door. Then scratching on a window in the bathroom.

She reaches over and slams the bathroom door shut, and puts herself against it. She clenches her eyes shut and screams:

GERTIE

Danny! Danny! Danny, please!

Gertie opens her eyes and sees Danny sitting in front of her. Relieved, she scrambles to hug him but he holds up a hand. He's serious.

She sits back, confused, but still relieved.

GERTIE

I need your help. They got Grandpa. Mom and Dad. It's not good. And they're trying to get in. We gotta do something!

DANNY

Gertie. It's time.

GERTIE

What do you mean?

DANNY

You know what I mean.

GERTIE

Right now? Why right now? We're all going to die - I need you!

DANNY

I don't have a choice.

GERTIE

You don't have a choice?

Something deep down inside in Gertie boils.

GERTIE

You don't have a choice? How about when you chose to get killed? You're an idiot! You know what. I'm glad you're dead. I'm glad I don't have to watch over my older brother who is so stupid.

Danny looks hurt, but understanding of her anger.

GERTIE

Go. Go ahead. Leave.

Danny stands and holds out his arms for a hug.

GERTIE

No way. See what you did to my family? You're not my brother. You're just some kid that got himself killed.

Danny sighs and walks toward the door. Pauses.

DANNY

Remember I told you I had some ideas?

GERTIE

Go!

DANNY

Go to the Down Below. Go to where it comes from - defeat them where they come from and they'll never return. It's your only hope.

Gertie covers up and sobs.

DANNY

Love you, Gertie.

She looks up, wanting to tell him she loves him, too.

GERTIE

Danny?

The dark room. The window scratching. Her parents' ragged breaths. The door handle jiggles, rapidly. It all closes in on her.

Gertie huddles and cries.

**INT. MILITARY HOUSE - HALLWAY - NIGHT**

A Mold Monster hangs from the doorknob, pulling hard.

A hand reaches to grab the left whiskey glass.

The Mold Monster pauses, feeling something near and looks behind.

SPLASH! Whiskey flies into its face.

It screams and falls off the doorknob, rubbing its eyes.

Grandpa stands over it, unstable, but able to rear back for a punting soccer kick toward the Living Room.

**INT. MILITARY HOUSE - PARENTS' BEDROOM - NIGHT**

Gertie looks up, afraid, as she hears Mold Monster SCREAMS.

THUD! The screams fade and things BREAK in the Living Room.

The doorknob jiggles.

BAM BAM. Someone large rams the door with their shoulder.

GRANDPA (O.S.)

Gertie!

Gertie runs to the door, pushes away the barricades, and unlocks the door.

GERTIE

Grandpa!

Grandpa slides into the room, closes the door, and locks it.

The two survivors embrace in a hug.

GRANDPA

You're OK?

GERTIE

I'm OK. But Mom and Dad...

Grandpa looks up at the bed. He can barely stand. He thinks about how he'll make it over there.

Gertie runs over and supports him.

He smiles at her and lets her help him to the bed where he

sits heavily.

GRANDPA  
 (to Mom)  
 My baby.

Grandpa looks at Dad.

GRANDPA  
 My son.

He notices Mom's cell phone and grabs it.

GERTIE  
 I tried. It won't work.

Grandpa tries the number anyways, waits, and looks at the phone. Disbelief forms.

GRANDPA  
 We need to get help. We need to get help right now.

He tries another number - nothing.

SCRATCHING from the windows. Grandpa looks up from the phone.

GRANDPA  
 Surrounded. These miscreants!

GERTIE  
 Grandpa.

GRANDPA  
 What?

GERTIE  
 I know what I need to do.

GRANDPA  
 This is the Alamo, sweetheart. We make our last stand as a family.

GERTIE  
 You keep Mom and Dad safe.

Gertie picks up the crowbar.

GRANDPA  
 Don't get me wrong, Gertie, but you're just a kid.

GERTIE

I know. And I'm the only one who can fit.

Grandpa looks confused about "fit."

GERTIE

Trust me, Grandpa.

Grandpa begins to point at Gertie for a lecture but pauses. He looks around the battlefield. She's been right all along.

GRANDPA

I was too stubborn or too stupid to not listen before...Ok, Gertie, tell me what to do.

**INT. MILITARY HOUSE - HALLWAY - NIGHT**

The parents' Door unlocks.

Gertie steps out, looks both ways, and sneaks to the garage.

**INT. MILITARY HOUSE - GARAGE - NIGHT**

Gertie flips on the light and readies to strike but it's clear. Then she notices--

The garage is covered in mold.

GERTIE

Woah.

**INT. MILITARY HOUSE - GARAGE - MOMENTS LATER**

Gertie works to try and pry the grate up, but it's not giving. She keeps trying.

**INT. MILITARY HOUSE - PARENTS' BEDROOM - NIGHT**

Grandpa slides off the bed and puts his hands together, awkwardly. It's been a while. He prays.

MOM (O.S.)

Hey, Dad.

Grandpa looks up, surprised.

Mom tilts her head toward Grandpa and smiles, weakly.

GRANDPA

Hey baby. It's gonna be all right.

MOM

I saw Danny.

GRANDPA

You've been asleep all day. I see him  
in my dreams, too.

MOM

He was talking to Gertie. He was  
saying goodbye. I miss him so much.

Mom starts to cry.

Grandpa comforts her, again awkward, but meaningful. He wipes  
her face of the goo and tears with the blanket.

GRANDPA

It's OK. Everything's gonna be OK.

MOM

It's not, Dad. It's not. We're not OK.

GRANDPA

When your mother died, I felt this  
decay. Inside. These things eating me.  
Growing. Multiplying as I became...  
less. I was waiting, waiting to die,  
until Danny came along. And then  
Gertie. They put me back together.  
But, then we lost him and I fell right  
back apart.

Mom's hand covers his. She knows.

GRANDPA

It's not his fault.

MOM

Whose?

Grandpa looks at Dad.

MOM

Sometimes I have to remind myself,  
that. It's not fair. Those thoughts.

GRANDPA

It ain't. I want him to know that in

case these things get in and finish us off.

Mom looks confused.

MOM

Dad, it's past time we let these things out.

GRANDPA

You don't understand.

The doorknob jiggles, wildly.

GRANDPA

They're coming.

Mom pushes on Dad to wake him up.

MOM

Who's coming? You're scaring me.

Mom realizes something.

MOM

Where's Gertie?

Grandpa struggles to his feet.

A window BREAKS in the bathroom.

Mom shakes Dad.

GRANDPA

Those nasty little mold monsters.

MOM

Dad- where's Gertie? What are mold monsters?

She rocks Dad harder.

MOM

Wake up, wake up! Please wake up!

Grandpa faces off toward the bathroom door.

Mom realizes he's not waking up, then notices finally the goo. It's everywhere. On her, on him. Everywhere.

MOM

Dad! He won't wake up, please, do something! Go get a neighbor!

Grandpa retreats to Dad's beside.

GRANDPA

It's the Alamo, sweetheart, and they have us surrounded.

MOM

Who?

CLAWING at the bathroom door pulls her frightened attention.

**INT. MILITARY HOUSE - GARAGE - NIGHT**

Gertie strains. She and the crowbar tremble as she tries to dislodge the grate.

CHANG!

The grate flips off.

Gertie drops, exhausted.

She crawls to the hole, grabs the crowbar, and peers down the hole.

She retreats.

GERTIE

Danny, I can't do this. I'm just a kid.

Danny's hand lays on her shoulder.

DANNY

You have to.

GERTIE

Danny! You didn't leave!

Danny stands beside her in the same clothing, shield, and sword as Danny when he was attacked.

She hugs Danny, and this time he hugs back.

DANNY

I have one last thing to give you.

GERTIE

This isn't one of our games, Danny! I could die like...

DANNY

Like me. You're wasting time. This doesn't get better with time. The monsters- they're trying to get to Mom, Dad, and Grandpa.

GERTIE

You sound like Grandpa.

Danny takes off his sword and shield.

GERTIE

Those are just toys. I have this.

Gertie raises the crowbar.

DANNY

Believe.

GERTIE

This isn't pretend anymore!

Danny doesn't relent.

GERTIE

Fine. But, I'm taking this, too.

Gertie stops in front of the hole, still unsure. She turns to ask a question, but Danny's head is already shaking.

DANNY

I can't go with you. I'll always be with you.

Danny touches his own chest, over his heart.

Gertie shakes her head, not wanting to believe him.

GERTIE

What am I supposed to do when I'm there, in the Down Below?

DANNY

Face it. You only have until morning, remember?

Gertie gulps and looks at the hole. Turning back, Gertie

finds herself alone.

Gertie looks like she wants to run, but she touches her own chest, over her heart.

**INT. MILITARY HOUSE - GARAGE TUNNEL - NIGHT**

Gertie climbs down the claustrophobic tunnel, crying, afraid.

She nears the hatch and opens it with her foot to reveal absolute darkness.

She leans to get a better look--

The ladder breaks!

Gertie ricochets off the walls and falls into the open hatch.

**OVER BLACK**

**INT. MOLD MONSTER HOUSE - DAY**

A one-room, windowless cabin scaled for Gertie's size. Everything is covered in some kind of mold. It's the den of the Mold Monster!

Gertie wakes up on the mold-covered floor.

GERTIE

Ew! Ugh.

She looks around to see she's alone, then takes in her surroundings.

She finds photos of Young Gertie and Danny pinned to a wall.

GERTIE

What the...

She reaches out to touch a picture and a glop of mold from the ceiling drips on her hand.

GERTIE

No freaking way!

Gertie looks for a way to get back up the hole, but it's too high.

GERTIE

It was a trap. It was all a trap.  
Danny! You led me into a trap!

Gertie kicks and pushes things over. A glop of mold drops in her hair.

GERTIE

You gotta be kidding me! Thanks a lot!

She tries to get it out and notices a door, unsure how she missed it before.

Hesitantly, Gertie uses her shirt to try the door handle. It doesn't give.

GERTIE

Argh!

**INT. MILITARY HOUSE - PARENTS' BEDROOM - NIGHT**

The bathroom door's knob turns.

Grandpa lunges at the bathroom door and grabs hold of the knob as Mold Monsters claw at the other side.

Mom pats Dad's face.

MOM

Babe? Babe...? Come on, babe, wake up!  
Please!

Dad gulps for air.

MOM

Oh, thank God. Dad, he's back.

Grandpa looks thankful.

MOM

I thought I lost you.

DAD

I've been here all along.

MOM

Me, too.

DAD

And it'd be cool if it'd stay that way.

Mom and Dad embrace.

The lock on the bedroom door POPS open.

Mom's eyes go wide and she slides out of bed but falls.

GRANDPA

The door!

Mom gathers herself and crawls across the floor.

The door pops open an inch.

Mom slams herself against it and re-locks it.

MOM

We can't keep this up. What the hell  
are these things?

Grandpa looks away, not wanting to admit his agreement.

Dad leans up out of bed, using all of his strength.

DAD

What's going on?

SCRATCHING.

Plaster dust falls from the ceiling.

Grandpa and Mom look up to find the makings of a small hole.

A claw sticks through it to widen it.

Then, another!

**INT. MOLD MONSTER HOUSE - DAY**

Gertie paces.

GERTIE

Think. Think!

She stops to look at her shoe and goes to use the crowbar to  
remove the mold caking on the soles.

She pauses and studies the crowbar.

GERTIE

Improvise.

Gertie uses the crowbar on the door.

GERTIE

Open!

The door pops open and she falls on her rear-end.

Bright white light floods the room.

Gertie shields her eyes, gets up and walks into the light.

**OVER WHITE**

**EXT. GENERAL STORE - REAR FIELD - DAY**

Wind blows through tall grass, trees sway.

Gertie steps outside, eyes adjusting to the pre-dawn light, crowbar ready.

She notices the coming of the sun and gasps.

THUD, CLINK.

She realizes the door behind her is closed. She tries it.  
Locked!

GERTIE

Hello?

Nothing.

Danny's red shoes step from behind a bush at the tree line.

Gertie tries to pry the door open with the crowbar, no avail, then pounds the tool against the door.

GERTIE

Open up!

Gertie gives up and catches her breath. She feels something watching her and turns.

The Mold Monster stands in the shadow of the tree line. He's bigger than before. Hulking. Hungry.

GERTIE

You.

She points at it with the crowbar.

GERTIE

I got you once already. Leave my family alone!

Gertie charges at it.

Mold Monster charges at her.

They meet and battle back and forth.

The Mold Monster misses a strike but shreds the lower part of her shirt.

Gertie knocks the Mold Monster down with the crowbar.

GERTIE  
You're finished!

Gertie raises the crowbar for the final strike, but hears a door OPEN.

She looks behind her to find the Mold Monsters rushing her from behind.

She feels something clasp the crowbar.

The Mold Monster grabs hold of the crowbar and rises, seething. It rips the crowbar out of her hands.

Gertie backs away, surrounded by all of the Mold Monsters.

GERTIE  
Danny I need you!

Gertie looks around for Danny, but she's alone. It's over.

The Mold Monsters salivate goo, excessively.

She shrinks and trembles. Her hand brushes the plastic sword, and she looks around. They're out in the open. It's bright.

She gets an idea.

The Mold Monsters close ranks on Gertie, claws CLACKING.

Gertie, painted black and white like Conan from "Conan and the Barbarian," roars brandishing a two-handed sword.

The Mold Monsters take pause and look confused.

They chatter, sloppy clicks, and barks. Goo spittle flies.

Gertie waits, eyeing them.

Mold Monster points at her and gives a roar of its own.

The Mold Monsters close in and they fight.

Mold Monster hangs on the outside and watches, waiting for its time to strike. It seems to grow bigger.

Gertie and the Mold Monsters fight that wounds and bruises both alike.

Gertie takes the upper hand and the three Mold Monsters are defeated, until--

Mold Monster, even larger in size, turns her and grabs her by the throat, lifting her. A toothy victorious grin forms.

Gertie drops her weapons and grabs onto its wrists. She gets an idea and dramatically fakes her death, holding her breath.

The Mold Monster begins to lower her, feet hang an inch from the ground but becomes suspicious as her face turns red.

He lifts her and shakes her back alive! She gasps for air.

GERTIE

Ah!

She struggles, kicking and punching.

She glances toward the treetops. A ray of sun breaks through.

She realizes the futility. For a moment, defeat consumes her, but she notices something pushing against her back. The notebook!

Her eyes lock onto into its eyes, lasering.

GERTIE

I see you, monster. I see you.

Mold Monster doesn't understand but becomes nervous.

GERTIE

I said I see you, Mold Monster! I see you!

Mold Monster turns afraid as it holds onto her and shrinks.

It tries not to look at her intense stare but Gertie grabs a hold of its face and forces it.

It shrinks enough so that Gertie's feet gain traction on the ground.

GERTIE

Face me!

The Mold Monster lets go of Gertie and tries to push away, but Gertie keeps with it and holds tight, nose to nose.

GERTIE

I see you. And. I. Face. You!

The Mold Monster begins to shrink even smaller and decays.

Gertie's eyes penetrate through the monster.

All of the Mold Monsters shrink into a dissipating pile of mold.

Gertie stands alone, wavering, exhausted. The goo turns into dust and falls off.

A wind blows and catches the dust and the now ash remnants of the Mold Monsters.

GERTIE

I faced you. I faced you...

**INT. MILITARY HOUSE - PARENTS' BEDROOM - NIGHT**

The ceiling hole, now larger, is empty.

Dad sits up in the bed, grasping a lamp as a weapon.

Mom, Dad, and Grandpa watch the hole, stunned.

MOM

Where did it go?

Grandpa puts his ear against the bathroom door, then opens it, carefully.

He looks surprised.

GRANDPA

They're gone.

MOM

Are you sure?

DAD

Someone want to tell me what's going on now?

Mom uses the doorknob to get up, shakily and shuffles toward the bed.

GRANDPA

Careful.

MOM

We need to try the phone again.

The bedroom door jiggles.

Mom stops in her tracks.

Dad grips the lamp.

KNOCK KNOCK.

GERTIE (O.S.)

Guys?

MOM

Gertie!

Mom shuffle-runs to the door and opens it, embracing Gertie.

Grandpa watches, realizing Gertie must have defeated the monsters.

Gertie leans back from Mom and addresses the room.

GERTIE

I faced it.

DAD

Faced what?

Gertie smiles and looks around. She realizes she wasn't the only one 'facing it.'

Grandpa lays a hand on Dad's shoulder.

Dad, taken off guard, looks up questioningly to Grandpa.

Grandpa wears an apologetic, loving face.

Mom hugs Gertie again.

**EXT. JUNGLE - DAY (PRETEND WORLD)**

Gertie, a Zulu tribal warrior, dashes through thick underbrush carrying a banana leaf-wrapped package.

She skids to a stop and hides behind a large tree.

CRUNCH CRUNCH.

The silhouette of a JAGUAR passes by. GROWLS.

Gertie, confident, stands and strides into a clearing towards a hut under a tree.

The Jaguar appears at the edge of the clear, shadowed.  
GROWLS.

It launches after her!

Gertie stops and waits just outside the hut, unwavering.  
Bored, even.

The Jaguar readies for a pounce.

SNAP! A net surrounds Jaguar and lifts it into the air.

Gertie whirls around.

GERTIE

Hah!

Gertie turns on a heel and enters the hut.

**INT. SCHOOL - CAFETERIA - DAY**

Gertie strides into the cafeteria carrying a lunch box.

School Kids, in their usual groups, eat lunch and CHATTER.

Gertie unzips her lunch box-- a stash of MRE brownies.

School Girl notices Gertie and smiles.

Gertie smiles back and walks toward her with the brownies.

**INT. CAR (PARKED) - SCHOOL - DAY**

Grandpa puts the car in park and looks out the window.

Gertie sits on a wall talking to School Girl, both smiling.

Gertie sees Grandpa and hops to, waving at School Girl.

Gertie drops into the passenger seat.

GRANDPA  
Did it work?

GERTIE  
Maybe I'm glad you moved closer.

GRANDPA  
The jury's still out, huh?

Grandpa and Gertie wear matching grins.

GERTIE  
Drive on, Colonel.

**INT. MILITARY HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY**

Mom pulls out a cake from the fridge. The room is decorated for Thanksgiving. Covered dishes wait to be devoured.

Dad strolls in.

DAD  
Turkey is about ready. Is that... No.  
Couldn't be.

Mom shrugs as she pops the plastic case.

MOM  
Could be.

Dad comes up behind Mom and wraps his arms around her as she fixes some of the icing.

Dad looks at his watch.

DAD  
They're late. Your dad is off his  
game.

MOM  
Don't do it.

Mom wipes a dab of frosting on her finger, offers it to Dad.

Dad sucks it off.

DAD  
Buttercream! My favorite.

They share a loving look, smiles.

The front door OPENS.

GERTIE

We're home!

Dad lays out plates and looks up as Gertie and Grandpa enter, looking sly.

**INT. MILITARY HOUSE - KITCHEN - LATER**

Grandpa, Mom, Dad, and Gertie sit around the table and hold hands. Candles are lit. Food is laid out.

Grandpa finishes up his speech.

GRANDPA

And for that, we'll always give thanks. Lastly, to the ones we've lost. We will remember. We will love. And, we will live.

The family looks at one another in a solemn, but happy peace.

GRANDPA

Chow down.

**INT. MILITARY HOUSE - KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER**

Mom cuts the turkey. Silverware CLINKS against plates. They joke and laugh with each other.

DAD

So, Colonel, how's your watch working?

Mom shakes her head at Dad, "please, no."

Grandpa checks out his watch.

GRANDPA

It's fine. Did you do something to it?  
Did you touch my watch?

Dad can barely contain his laughter as he works his cell phone. He shows the time to Grandpa.

It shows Grandpa and Gertie entering the house earlier.

GRANDPA

So what?

DAD  
Check the time.

Grandpa does, and he's not impressed at first.

GRANDPA  
Well. I guess, you sly bastard, you  
got me.

Dad, Mom, and Gertie looks shocked.

DAD  
Say what?

Grandpa laughs.

GRANDPA  
You got me good.

Everyone else joins in the laughter.

Danny leans against the kitchen doorway, smiling, as he plays  
with a Rubik's cube.

Gertie senses something and looks over to an empty doorway.

**INT. MILITARY HOUSE - ATTIC - DAY**

Gertie signs her name to the notebook and replaces it where  
she found it.

MOM (O.S.)  
Gertie, dinner time.

GERTIE  
Coming!

Gertie hops to and climbs down the ladder.

**INT. MILITARY HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT**

A pan of hot dogs and pot of mac and cheese on the stove.

Gertie, Mom, and Dad eat off real plates at the kitchen  
table.

MOM  
I have a couple of days of leave I  
have to burn, does anyone want to go  
camping?

Dad raises his hand like a schoolkid.

Mom laughs.

Gertie sneaks a piece of hot dog into a napkin in her lap.

MOM

Yeah, OK. But what about--

Gertie looks up, wide eyes.

MOM

You?

GERTIE

Can we go fishing, too?

Gertie folds the hot dog up in the napkin and glances at the time on the microwave: 6:49 PM.

MOM

That's a great idea, Gertie. We can-

GERTIE

May I be excused?

MOM

Sure.

Mom and Dad share a look, shrugs, as Gertie bounces off.

**EXT. MILITARY HOUSE - FRONT YARD - NIGHT**

Gertie stands at the corner of the house, waiting and watching the neighbor's backyard.

The neighbor's outdoor lights pop on. A back door OPENS and SHUTS. The JINGLE of a dog collar.

**EXT. MILITARY HOUSE - SIDE YARD - NIGHT**

Gertie steels and marches toward the neighbor's fence.

The Happy Labrador appears, friendly, yet Gertie halts.

She unwraps the hot dog.

Happy Labrador sits, all tail wags and happiness.

Gertie, very carefully, extends her arm as far as it will go to drop the treat between the chain links.

The dog wolfs it down and Gertie resists the urge to retreat.

GERTIE

Hi. I'm Gertrude. But my friends call me Gertie. You can call me Gertie, I think?

The dog sits and waits for another treat.

Gertie decides to step closer and press her palm against the fence, holding her fear at bay.

The dog moves towards Gertie. Her eyes squeeze shut.

OVER BLACK

LICK LICK LICK.

RETURN TO SCENE

Gertie looks relieved as the dog licks her hand through the fence. A smile forms.

**EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD STREET - DAY**

A YOUNG BOY (around 9) sits on the sidewalk, overtop a street gutter. He looks unhappy.

Mold Monster's eyes reflect in the darkness of the drain. It moves forward into the light as it licks its lips and teeth hungrily.

GERTIE (O.S.)

Hey!

Mold Monster gasps and retreats, watching from the safety of the darkness.

Gertie stops in front of the Young Boy.

YOUNG BOY

Hey.

GERTIE

I heard there was a bunker around here and it's haunted. Is that true?

YOUNG BOY

Yeah.

GERTIE

So cool. Do you know where it is?

YOUNG BOY

Yeah...

GERTIE

I bet I can stay in there for ten seconds.

Young Boy suddenly becomes interested.

YOUNG BOY

No way.

Gertie stands her ground, "yes, way."

Young Boy stands.

YOUNG BOY

You're on.

They walk off together.

GERTIE

Lead the way. I'm Gertie.

They shake hands as Gertie glances over her shoulder at the drain, threatening.

The Mold Monster's eyes disappear in the darkness.

**FADE TO BLACK**