

"THE BROTHERS MARIO"

An apocalyptic re-imagining of the Super Mario Bros. mythology

Screenplay by Mike Schneider

ACT ONE: THE PLAGUE
ACT TWO: THE ABDUCTION

thebrothersmario.tumblr.com
onemikey.com
mikejudes@gmail.com
@onemikey

EXT. THE FOREST | SUNSET

A tiny clearing within a dense but alluring forest. The air is still. The trees are calm. There is quiet. A perfect place to take a nap or even sleep the day away...

Until a MILD EXPLOSION - originating underground - opens a HOLE IN THE EARTH. Dirt and rock erupt, then settle, as a skinny trail of black smoke wafts into the air.

Finally, a thin, middle-aged JAPANESE MAN surfaces. He is wearing a suit and holding an ALUMINUM CANISTER with the top sealed off like a thermos.

The Japanese Man gazes up at the sky and watches the sunset...

EXT. THE MUSHROOM KINGDOM | SUNSET

A lush peninsula with an island-like atmosphere. If a place could be too beautiful, this would be a contender.

Small but pitch perfect homes built on equal-sized plots of land dot the landscape. Gardens and farms are prevalent, the drivers of an agriculture-based economy.

SUPER: THE MUSHROOM KINGDOM, THE MUSHROOM WORLD

Soaring above the rest of the skyline is a MAGNIFICENT WHITE CASTLE, trimmed in gold.

SUPER: THE CASTLE OF PRINCESS PEACH TOADSTOOL

In time, the sun finishes descending and the kingdom quietly shuts down for the night. This is the moment the Japanese Man was waiting for. He emerges from the forest. Unfettered, he walks along a finely graveled road towards a RESERVOIR.

The Japanese Man arrives at the reservoir, which has been PIPED IN to a WATER FILTRATION SYSTEM. Using his fist, he breaks open the plastic casing around the filter.

Next, he unscrews the lid on the aluminum canister and turns the open container upside down --

GREEN, ACIDIC SLUDGE pours out into the water filtration system... And the Japanese Man begins to cry.

EXT. DARK LAND | NIGHT

Here, in contrast to the Mushroom Kingdom, there is only night. The sky is the deepest matte black. No clouds, stars, or moons. It is the void.

Across the landscape, however, jagged hills, black foliage, and medieval buildings manufacture a hot glow, like magma. They are their own light source, the lone light source.

SUPER: DARK LAND, THE MUSHROOM WORLD

There is no activity on the roads. Every single creature is stowed away, inactive...

Except for the Japanese Man, who is able to move unburdened as a result. Carrying another ALUMINUM CANISTER, he approaches a bridge to a floating island made of volcanic rock, where a CRIMSON CASTLE looms, massive and ominous.

SUPER: THE CASTLE OF KING BOWSER KOOPA

The Japanese Man stops, studies the castle. His eyes contain the residue of tears. He wipes it away. And then crosses the bridge, heading for the castle...

CUT TO BLACK.

ONE YEAR LATER

FADE TO:

EXT. THE MUSHROOM KINGDOM | DAY

The sun shines as brightly as before, but the environment has taken on a much darker hue.

A PLAGUE has beset the Mushroom Kingdom.

The streets are littered with HOMELESS, a mixture of humans and short, pale-skinned "toads" that look very much like people but are distinguished by having two dots for noses and by wearing giant mushrooms on their heads like hats.

Pieces of their SKIN have begun to DECAY. BONES are EXPOSED in spots where the FLESH has ERODED and fallen away. Some have lost fingers. Faces are breaking apart. Legs are hobbled.

These are THE AFFLICTED. They beg in the streets like lepers.

Healthy individuals navigate a marketplace, deflecting the afflicted while dressed in clothes that cover their entire bodies, including gloves and surgical masks.

Great care is taken by the unafflicted to avoid being touched by those who are ailing. For their part, the afflicted tease this notion, hoping to inspire acts of financial charity.

Through this gauntlet of indigence, we follow one healthy man as he trudges onward, carrying a pipe wrench, wearing weathered overalls and an iconic red shirt/hat combo...

The man, of course, is the plumber and hero MARIO aka "Super Mario." It has been 30 years since the first time he rescued the Princess from Bowser. He is now 52 years old. He looks every bit his age... And more.

While Mario's body still appears strong, his posture reflects the physical toll a countless number of adventures has taken.

The afflicted call out to him --

AFFLICTED

Mario. Super Mario. You save the Princess. Please, save us! We beg of you. It would make Rescue Day all the better...

Mario lowers his head to ignore them, a gesture born not out of callousness but out of helplessness.

After exiting the marketplace and leaving the rash of afflicted behind, he digs his knuckles into the small of his back, a useless attempt to extinguish a permanent ache. Grimacing, he looks back at the afflicted...

MARIO

We're all going to die.

EXT. THE CASTLE OF PRINCESS PEACH | DAY

Mario sets down his tools and holds out his arms for a pair of GUARDS suited in heavy surgical scrubs. Hoods cover their heads. Thick gloves coat their hands. Not a single segment of flesh is exposed.

The guards inspect Mario for signs of sickness. Finding nothing, they open the gates...

INT. THE CASTLE OF PRINCESS PEACH | DAY

Mario enters a gorgeous marble foyer lined with pink rugs. The walls are covered with portraits of the Princess, all depicting her as a beautiful woman in the prime of her life.

The Princess's ward, TOADSWORTH, an elderly toad with a white handlebar mustache and small round glasses, awaits at a distance, holding a cane. He greets Mario with an English accent --

TOADSWORTH

Tally-ho, Mario. You had no problem navigating the throngs?

Despite the chipper language, his mood is decidedly grim.

MARIO

The usual. They want help.

As Mario walks to Toadsworth, he gazes at each and every portrait of the Princess, adding --

MARIO

I'm good at two things, my trade and rescuing the Princess when needed. A plague...

Mario shakes his head, faces Toadsworth.

TOADSWORTH

Deep down they recognize that.

MARIO

I'm not so sure they do. Is she here?

TOADSWORTH

Currently indisposed, regrettably.

Mario's first thought causes a look of alarm.

TOADSWORTH

No no, not that. Thank heavens. Only a bit of a cold. She's been discussing the latest research with the scientists... Exhausting, particularly with all the preparations for Rescue Day.

MARIO

What about the scientists? They getting anywhere?

TOADSWORTH

I shouldn't comment, but... They've shown some progress towards a cure. She believes she can press them into getting all the way there.

He says this, yet the dourness of his demeanor is somewhat of a contradiction. Mario, however, shows full confidence.

MARIO

I know she can.

TOADSWORTH

Enough of that for now though. There's plumbing to be fixed! A clog in her shower drain, specifically.

Toadsworth leads Mario up a grandiose spiral staircase --

INT. PRINCESS PEACH'S BEDROOM / BATHROOM | MOMENTS LATER

Echoing voices awaken PRINCESS PEACH (47) in her gigantic canopy bed, entirely adorned in pink. Although now middle-aged, she desperately clings to the appearance of her youth through heavy make-up and plastic surgery.

Sleeping next to her is a naked young man, the perfect physical specimen. The Princess untangles herself from him to leave the bed. She puts on a robe, pink of course, and heads for the door to the master bathroom, which is cracked.

At the same time, Toadsworth ushers Mario inside the bathroom from the hallway, where there is a second door.

MARIO

Might need to come back with a snake, but we'll see.

TOADSWORTH

Pip-pip, Mario. Pip-pip.

Toadsworth exits. Peach watches Mario step into the shower, drop to his knees, and work on the drain with a screwdriver. Every movement appears to cause him some amount of minor pain.

After he finishes unscrewing the drain, he cocks his head - and catches the Princess in the doorway. She almost shuts the door on him, but stops. Rather, she slips inside the bathroom and gently closes the door behind her.

MARIO
How's your cold?

Peach sniffles, wipes her nose. She shrugs.

PRINCESS PEACH
Thank you for asking though.

MARIO
Still coming to look at the floats
later?

PRINCESS PEACH
Oh yes, I'll make it. You shall see
me there.

MARIO
Good. My favorite time of year.

PRINCESS PEACH
I would be concerned only if it
weren't. How could you not enjoy
being celebrated and adored so
lavishly?

MARIO
Plus, I get to have you at my side.

He smiles. She courteously does the same and then turns, as
if to go.

MARIO
Peach, you know...

She waits. He's searching for the right words, working
through how to verbalize something that's been on his mind.

MARIO
This year, for the first time...
Maybe it's just the plague, I don't
know, but I had this thought. I
wondered, How many more Rescue Days
are we gonna have?

PRINCESS PEACH
Why would you say that, Mario?
We'll have more. Many more.

MARIO
Me and you won't live forever. No
matter what. I haven't found
anybody else. Neither have you.
Never got married after all these
years. You ever think about that?

PRINCESS PEACH

I've had romances. I've been happy.

MARIO

I know, but sometimes I think back.
A lot of times I do. Especially now
with what's happening out there...
I wish things had gone different.

PRINCESS PEACH

Where is this coming from all of a
sudden? You sound like the public
or the press, conjuring fantasies
about us as if we were destined to
be lovers.

MARIO

Maybe we are.

PRINCESS PEACH

I cherish what you've done for me.
Who knows what terrors I might have
experienced inside Bowser's castle
had it not been for you rescuing me
time and again. But we had our
moment.

She starts to leave.

MARIO

Just think about it.

PRINCESS PEACH

I'm leaving.

She does, closing the door.

Mario looks down the open drain for the first time. His face
scrunches up at the extent of the clog. He stares at the door
to the Princess's bedroom...

Then screws the drain cover back on just as Toadsworth
returns.

TOADSWORTH

Prognosis?

MARIO

Need the snake. I'll come back
after we go over the floats.

He climbs out of the shower.

MARIO

Was gonna ask if she wanted to walk over together, but I figure she needs some time to get ready.

TOADSWORTH

A probable bet, yes. Indeed. We'll see you there then.

Mario nods and goes.

EXT. DARK LAND | NIGHT

A smattering of villains Mario has repeatedly battled wander the streets. Mushroom-shaped GOOMBAS, square SHY GUYS, snapping turtle-like KOOPAS... All portrayed here as hard and vicious.

Many, however, are not right. Plenty appear to be DISPLACED and HOMELESS. The movements of these creatures are stilted, as if it hurts to walk, as if they are ill.

In fact, the PLAGUE has beset Dark Land as well.

As seen in the Mushroom Kingdom, FLESH is in DECAY. BONES are VISIBLE. Some creatures have had ENTIRE CHUNKS of their BODIES completely break off.

Those that are healthy eyeball the others that are afflicted. Upon seeing the sickness out in the open, many duck inside. An accusatory air permeates. A paranoia...

INT. THE CASTLE OF KING BOWSER, THRONE ROOM | NIGHT

A vast chamber, open to the black sky above. A SUSPENDED BRIDGE extends from the entrance, across a lagoon of BOILING LAVA and to a RAISED DAIS, the centerpiece of the room.

On top of the platform, a THRONE MADE OF BONES, large enough to hold the fifteen-foot tall, 600-pound frame of KING BOWSER KOOPA, the obsessive, vengeful ruler of Dark Land.

Now middle-aged, his Tyrannosaurus Rex-like face is creased and scarred. Underneath a golden, but weathered, CROWN is an untamed shock of red hair. The shell that covers his back may be chipped and scuffed but its spikes are freshly sharpened.

In truth, Bowser has lived a life of failure. But any sadness he might have felt in the past has been replaced with anger and cruelty.

We have, however, caught him in a deeply pensive moment. He takes off his crown... Then rears back his head --

And BREATHES FIRE through the OPENING IN THE CEILING, launching a TREMENDOUS FIREBALL into the night.

On cue, the doors to the throne room open.

Enter Bowser's rather aloof oldest son and second-in-command, LUDWIG VON KOOPA, an aspiring composer in his late twenties who would prefer to traffic in art not violence - much to the chagrin of his father.

Consequently, Ludwig's part-dinosaur part-turtle face and body and the shell on his back are unmarred by combat. On his head, deep blue waves of hair are neatly styled, parted down the middle.

Ludwig holds onto a rope, tied to an AFFLICTED SHY GUY like a LEASH. The boxy red and white creature with a ghost-like face has lost flesh due to the plague - its entire left side slopes inward.

LUDWIG

I've been lingering outside for minutes, Father. With this poor specimen-

BOWSER

I regret to declare you've wasted your time.

LUDWIG

What? I thought this one's ailments were-

BOWSER

Unique, yes. Remove it from the castle.

The Shy Guy shakes in terror.

LUDWIG

After I deliver the subject to the laboratory, I'll be in the piano room, if you require me.

BOWSER

You'll do neither.

Ludwig is incredulous.

LUDWIG

Then what *will* I do?

BOWSER

First, you will release the afflicted. Then you will put it in charge of its own battalion.

The Shy Guy shrinks in disbelief. Ludwig expands from shock into anger.

LUDWIG

This creature has been living in squalor, eroding like all the others. It can't command the respect of a battalion!

BOWSER

Ludwig, you will do as I say, and you will do it now.

Acquiescing, Ludwig lets go of the rope. He is unable to look at the Shy Guy - who bows to Bowser and exits the throne room, dragging the rope behind.

LUDWIG

You took away its only chance to be a contributing member of society. The scientists would have benefitted from experimenting on it. The army will chew it up and spit it out.

BOWSER

In time, you will find yourself on the wrong side of history with that argument.

Ludwig begins to leave.

LUDWIG

I'm going to work on a composition.

BOWSER

Stay in this room.

Without saying a word, Ludwig relents.

BOWSER

The doors, Ludwig.

To protest, he takes far longer to draw closed the doors than he should. Afterwards, he faces Bowser, sulking.

BOWSER

The scientists have lost hope for a cure.

LUDWIG
They're working feverishly.

BOWSER
I have demanded that they lose
hope.

LUDWIG
You're moving forward with the
proposal for eradication...

Silence. Ludwig grows anxious.

LUDWIG
Larry can lead the killing. I
shouldn't have to take part. I
don't-

BOWSER
You have other interests, I know.

Bowser stares down his son.

BOWSER
Come closer.

A cautious Ludwig steps towards his father...

BOWSER
I show you this in confidence.

LUDWIG
Of course, Father.

Bowser extends his fist out towards Ludwig.

BOWSER
The plague has come to me.

Ludwig shudders, then recoils. A splotch of FLESH on BOWSER'S
HAND has begun to DECAY. BLOOD and BONE and SINEW can be seen
underneath.

BOWSER
You retreat from your own Father.
Are you disgusted by me?

Bowser comes off the throne, stalks after Ludwig...

LUDWIG
Not by you, Father. By your
condition.

Bowser grabs a squeamish Ludwig with his healthy fist and lifts him into the air. Ludwig squirms --

And Bowser drags his ailing flesh across the side of his son's face before throwing him to the ground.

Ludwig becomes frantic, wiping at his skin.

LUDWIG

You've given me the plague!

BOWSER

I've given you a gift.

LUDWIG

What?! Have you lost your mind?!

BOWSER

Inform everyone we leave tonight.

LUDWIG

We can't go anywhere now!

BOWSER

We can go anywhere we want,
especially the Mushroom Kingdom.

LUDWIG

But we aren't prepared! Luigi
hasn't even been diverted, let
alone Mario.

BOWSER

I want the entire army at my side.

Ludwig is further stricken by this revelation.

LUDWIG

For a simple abduction? Use the
Hammer Brothers.

BOWSER

Not this time.

LUDWIG

You're not making any sense! You
want to get the Princess, but you
also want us to die from the
plague. Why?!

BOWSER

If you were in possession of the same knowledge I am you would understand that question is irrelevant.

Bowser glares at his confused son.

BOWSER

Our siege goes through Sarasaland.

EXT. SUPER MARIO BROS PLUMBING / MARIO AND LUIGI'S HOME | DAY

A modest storefront, attached to a garage and a two-bedroom home. This is where Mario and Luigi both live and work.

The buildings are lorded over by an enormous sign spelling out "SUPER MARIO BROTHERS PLUMBING". Notably, the word "MARIO" is larger than all the others.

A photorealistic rendering of Mario, his fist raised, soars over top of the lettering while a similarly styled depiction of Luigi stands underneath the sign, holding it up.

A SWARM OF AFFLICTED toads and humans camps out in front of the buildings, ostensibly seeking assistance from their hero, Mario.

Onto the property walks LUIGI himself.

As Mario's twin, Luigi is a near-replica of his brother. The differences are slight: thinner, two inches shorter, his cap is green. His overalls are baggier and more rumpled.

Over time it will become evident that Luigi has lived in Mario's shadow his entire life. Still, he talks big. Unfortunately, he acts quite a bit smaller.

LUIGI

They're back.

Luigi says this to the creature at the other end of the leash he clutches in his hand.

The creature resembles a GREEN RAPTOR with a bumpy red fin running from the top of its head down its neck. Though fearsome, this is YOSHI, the Mario Brothers' loyal pet.

AFFLICTED

Mario. Where's Mario?

LUIGI

Not here. He's not with me.

Luigi walks forward.

AFFLICTED

We need Mario. Only he can save us.

The afflicted grow boisterous. They channel towards Luigi. Quickly, the situation turns threatening. Luigi locks up out of fear. The afflicted near him...

Until Yoshi BEARS HIS TEETH and ROARS - and the afflicted recoil. Separate.

AFFLICTED

Not Yoshi. Keep him away- Get him out.

A pathway opens for Luigi to safely reach the front door of the house. Yoshi snarls and sizes up the afflicted, insuring that they all stay back.

Luigi unlocks the door. He hesitates, then turns to face the afflicted, who have now scattered.

LUIGI

What if I could help you?

The afflicted stare back at him. They say nothing.

Luigi goes inside. We hear the door lock.

INT. MARIO AND LUIGI'S HOME | DAY

Sweat stains the front of Luigi's T-shirt. He does sit-ups at a furious pace. Apparently, he has none of the aches and pains of his brother. At the top of his next sit-up --

LUIGI

Four ninety-eight.

Just as someone BANGS on the front door of the house. Luigi is startled, but he keeps working out.

LUIGI

Four ninety-nine. One more.

Another, impatient knock. Still, Luigi finishes number --

LUIGI

Five hundred.

He leans back on the floor, breathes. Now, incessant banging. Finally, he bounces up.

After stepping over dumbbells to grab a towel off a portable chin-up bar and wiping down his face, he walks through the house to the front door.

Instead of opening it right away, he peers through the peep hole. He steps back and asks --

 LUIGI
Hello?

 DELIVERY MAN (O.S.)
Delivery.

 LUIGI
From who?

 DELIVERY MAN (O.S.)
Downey's, the Jeweler.

 LUIGI
I didn't buy any jewelry.

 DELIVERY MAN (O.S.)
Not you. Mario.

Puzzled, Luigi hitches open the door. The DELIVERY MAN, sweating from all the clothing he's wearing to cover his body, holds out a GIFT BAG.

 DELIVERY MAN
Mario might be upset I came early,
but I had to. They keep crowding
around the house. I saw them leave.
This was my best chance. Can you
sign for it?

Luigi does.

 DELIVERY MAN
I'm getting out of here.

Luigi closes the door in the wake of the Delivery Man leaving and pulls open the gift bag. He peers inside...

INT. TOAD'S HOME | DAY

Sitting at a desk in a lived-in office, TOAD (45) scribbles on a note pad. He is dressed in the billowy white pants, vest, and mushroom hat we have come to expect.

Physically, Toad has let himself go. His body is plump. His face is worn. But he is not a sad or unsuccessful individual.

Rather, he has found satisfaction by having only one interest in life: Mario.

Above the desk is a bookshelf lined with books written by Toad chronicling Mario's numerous rescues of the Princess. Small trophy-like publishing awards act as book ends.

An alarm clock goes off. Excited, Toad leaves the desk. He walks through his average, three bedroom house. It is dusty. There is barely any furniture. No photographs on the walls.

Toad reaches one of the two other bedrooms. It is being used to store memorabilia, all related to Mario, the Princess, and Bowser. A bulky old-fashioned still camera sits on the floor. Toad grabs it and gets ready to go.

INT. WAREHOUSE | DAY

An enormous storage space akin to a city bus depot but filled with extravagant PARADE FLOATS, covered in clear plastic and supported by wooden slats.

Although each float has a different design concept, all have been made for the same occasion: The 30th Annual Rescue Day Parade and Celebration.

The content of the floats, which feature handmade, painted carvings, reveals the subject of Rescue Day --

On one, Mario leaps over a fireball spit by Bowser. On another, Mario strikes a Koopa with a pipe wrench while also fending off a Goomba with his boot.

The REAL MARIO stands at the center of the warehouse, alone, fixating on a third float --

A wooden version of himself carrying Princess Peach in the same way a groom might lift his bride over the threshold of a honeymoon suite...

There is a significant CRACK in Float Mario's wrist. As a result, its hand has fallen away from the Princess's back.

Mario slips under the plastic sheeting, climbs onto the float, and extracts a tube of caulk of from his overalls.

Carefully, he squirts the adhesive into the cracked wrist of Float Mario, then holds the hand back in place and waits for the caulk to set. As he does --

TOAD (O.S.)
Amazing how long you've been doing
this, Mario.

Mario turns to see Toad entering the warehouse, already snapping photographs.

TOAD

Three decades, seventeen rescues
overall...

MARIO

A long time. I know.

TOAD

And to think you've given me enough
material for at least seventeen
more books. I can't find enough
time to write.

MARIO

Well, you should have extra time
now that it's hard to do much
outside. Not that you needed the
motivation.

TOAD

No, not that I needed it at all!

Mario lets go of Float Mario's repaired hand. It stays where it should - on the Princess's back. He comes down off the float, frustrated.

MARIO

Some of these things look like
hell. I'm tempted to repair a few
more myself.

TOAD

Soul of a hero, mind set of a
humble plumber - even after all the
accolades.

Mario checks his watch.

MARIO

She should be here by now.

TOAD

And still, his loyalty to the
honorable Princess Peach Toadstool
runs as deep as ever. Surely they
share a kind of love for one
another. But is it strictly
platonic? Or a romance that has
smoldered for decades...

MARIO

Why are you talking like that?

TOAD

This is what I've been working on,
for a piece about the thirtieth
anniversary. How does it sound?

Ignoring Toad, Mario walks towards a float that shows him leaping on top of a missile with a shark-like face. Unlike many of the other floats, it appears polished, new. In the meantime, Toad continues his spiel --

TOAD

The good citizens of the Mushroom Kingdom speculate. Rumors fly back and forth like winged Koopas preparing for assault. Mario rescues the Princess again and again from the evil leader of Dark Land, King Bowser Koopa. Photos are snapped and endlessly scrutinized. Body language is analyzed. Tone of voice is studied. But no hard evidence exists. What could be next for these two, both still unattached after all these years? We may never find out, unless Bowser overcomes his jealousy of the Mushroom Kingdom and its Princess or Mario finds a way to kill Bowser, thereby putting an end to his attempts at vengeance filled tyranny once and for all.

Toad takes a photograph of Mario.

MARIO

Cut out that last part. How am I gonna kill Bowser? Beat him to death with a wrench?

TOAD

You're probably right. Why even suggest it? I'd have plenty of disappointed readers if your adventures came to an end.

Mario reaches the float he's been walking towards. He stares at it. In the rendering, his body is out of proportion. He looks old. The missile is small and weak.

MARIO

This is the new float.

Toad joins him. He too is appalled.

TOAD
According to my sources at the
palace, the budget had to be
trimmed this year...

MARIO
Peach would cut back on champagne
before she did that.

TOAD
I'm not sure, Mario. She's never
been faced with a crisis on the
scale of the plague before either.

Mario taps his foot, looks back at the entrance...

MARIO
Where is she?

TOAD
How long do we wait?

INT. WAREHOUSE | LATER

Toad has taken to walking up and down the aisles between
floats with his camera, overindulging his desire for close-
ups of the various designs.

Mario is slumped on the floor with both hands in his overall
pockets, grinding his teeth. Eventually, he gets up to peek
outside --

MARIO
Sun's setting.
(shaking his head)
I promised I'd finish a job at the
castle before the end of the day.

TOAD
Let me go with you.

MARIO
Why? So you can see her cold's
gotten worse?

A beat. Toad nods.

EXT. SUPER MARIO BROS PLUMBING | DUSK

The afflicted have gone.

With angst, Mario throws open the door to the garage. It bounces back and nearly comes crashing down on him, but he's able to catch it with his hand.

I/E. GARAGE | MOMENTS LATER

Mario loudly digs through a supply bin, searching for the drain snake. After he finds it, he starts to leave - when Luigi appears outside the garage, holding up a RING BOX.

Mario freezes.

MARIO
Where'd you get that?

LUIGI
Downey's delivered it.

MARIO
They told me it wouldn't be ready
til tomorrow.

LUIGI
I had to scare a crowd away again.
Delivery guy was afraid he
wouldn't get another opening.

MARIO
So is it even done?

LUIGI
I didn't look inside.

Mario curses himself, goes after Luigi.

MARIO
Come on, give me the thing. I need
to fix a drain at the castle before
sundown.

LUIGI
Sun's already setting.

MARIO
That's my point.

Mario snatches the ring box from Luigi and buries it in the pocket of his overalls.

LUIGI
I feel like I have to say this...

MARIO

Say what?

LUIGI

Don't do it.

MARIO

Because you've been pining for her
your whole life.

LUIGI

Oh, right. I keep forgetting. If
that were true, I would have done
something about it.

MARIO

Says my sidekick.

LUIGI

When was the last time you were
with somebody else?

MARIO

You wanna answer the same question?

LUIGI

When haven't you dropped everything
the second she told you to?

MARIO

Why are you so angry?

LUIGI

I'm not angry. I'm looking out for
you.

MARIO

Like I need you to do that.

LUIGI

You do. You're not thinking
straight.

Mario scoffs.

MARIO

How often do you wake up in the
morning and wish Rescue Day was
about you instead of me?

A beat.

LUIGI
I'm your brother, and I think if
you propose to her you're going to
regret it.

Mario takes a step past Luigi, through the open garage door.

MARIO
I should take Yoshi with me in case
anybody acts up.

EXT. THE CASTLE OF PRINCESS PEACH | NIGHT

After Mario chains Yoshi to a post on the bridge leading up to the castle, guards again inspect him for signs of disease. Yoshi growls at them for invading his master's privacy.

Once he is cleared, Mario is ushered through the gates with his toolbox and drain snake.

INT. THE CASTLE OF PRINCESS PEACH | MOMENTS LATER

The scene in the foyer this time is far different than the last. Toadsworth, for one, is nowhere to be found...

More important, a small PARTY is being staged. A host of YOUNG MEN in their twenties and early thirties, dressed fancifully, drink and cavort with Princess Peach.

The Princess wears a pink, armless gown, as well as a golden crown with pink diamonds. White gloves extend up to her elbows.

She is, as she demands, the center of attention.

She is also blatantly drunk.

Obviously, the Princess's "cold" is not so bad she *had* to miss the float review.

Mario stops in his tracks. The weight of the ring box in his overalls suddenly becomes heavy. He is ashamed.

The music, coming from a mini orchestra, is so loud and everyone is so focused on the Princess that no one notices his presence. He nearly walks out. But instead, as he always does, he soldiers on, hoping to get to the job site unseen.

Unfortunately, the drunken Princess notices him walking by --

PRINCESS PEACH
Mario! Super Mario!

She goes to him, smiling. She throws her arms around him, looks in his eyes, nuzzles her head against his chest.

MARIO

Hi, Peach.

Mario's expression reverses dramatically. Even in this state, the Princess has the power to bring him happiness. Somewhat hesitantly, he drops his tools so he can hug her back...

PRINCESS PEACH

Meet my friends.

Mario looks up at the gathering of men, all of whom are now staring at him.

MARIO

Who are they?

Peach turns away from Mario's chest. She points at one man after another --

PRINCESS PEACH

There's William and David and
Bartholomew and Theodore. I think!
I really have no idea.

(to them)

I can't remember any of your names!

The sycophants all laugh. Peach whispers in Mario's ear...

PRINCESS PEACH

I'm using you to try to make them
jealous.

She cocks back her head and guffaws. Mario goes along with it, laughs too.

PRINCESS PEACH

Silly boy, why are you laughing?
That wasn't a joke!

She acts as if this is the funniest thing she's ever said in her life. Mario is far less amused. He releases her.

MARIO

I wanted to talk to you alone.

Grinning, only a touch away from maniacally, she shakes her head back and forth.

MARIO

I got something for you.

PRINCESS PEACH
I already have everything in the
world.

MARIO
Why didn't you come to the
warehouse?

PRINCESS PEACH
Would any of you like to tell Super
Mario why I didn't go see the
floats?

The men chatter amongst themselves. None, however, speak out.

PRINCESS PEACH
Okay then, I will. Because there's
no point, Mario. Why are you even
here?

He picks the snake off the ground.

MARIO
To fix your drain. And-

She cuts him off.

PRINCESS PEACH
And what?

MARIO
To ask you something. To give you
something.

PRINCESS PEACH
I told you-

MARIO
Come with me.

He reaches for her hand... She bats it away.

PRINCESS PEACH
Whatever you have to give me you
can give to me here.

MARIO
Please. Somewhere we can be alone.

PRINCESS PEACH
No!

The Princess is stern. Mario surveys the room. All eyes on
him. Even the orchestra has softened its playing.

He sets the snake back down.

Concealing as best he can the aches in his body, Mario gets down on one knee.

PRINCESS PEACH

Oh my GOD.

He plucks the ring box out of his overalls.

A hush falls over the crowd.

MARIO

Peach...

He opens the ring box, revealing an engagement ring.

PRINCESS PEACH

'Your highness.' Address me as your highness.

MARIO

I'm not-

PRINCESS PEACH

You're a commoner. These people may all think you're a hero, but I made you into a hero. You're nothing without me.

MARIO

You're drunk-

PRINCESS PEACH

I may be drunk, but I'm also being honest. Look at yourself! Pathetically interrupting my party with all these gorgeous men to fix my drain. And wait - maybe on the way you'll ask for my hand in marriage?!

She bursts into laughter.

PRINCESS PEACH

No, I will never marry you, Mario. You're a pet, like your dinosaur. I should call you Yoshi.

She faces the crowd --

PRINCESS PEACH

Call him Yoshi. Everyone, call him Yoshi!

The men hesitate. Whatever the circumstance, this is Super Mario, the great hero of the Mushroom Kingdom. But the Princess eggs them on. Finally, they listen, chanting --

THE MEN

Yo-shi, Yo-shi, Yo-shi, Yo-shi...

Mario stands. He collects his tools, turns his back on the Princess and walks away.

PRINCESS PEACH

But what about the drain Mario?
What about the drain?

She says this sarcastically, as if she's in the utmost agony. She laughs and laughs and laughs, drunkenly pirouetting back into the arms of her nearest admirer...

While Mario leaves the castle.

EXT. THE CASTLE OF PRINCESS PEACH | MOMENTS LATER

Behind Mario, the gates close. On the bridge, he crouches, puts his hands on his knees and shuts his eyes. Yoshi bucks towards his master, but the chain restrains him.

Head down, Mario retrieves the ring box from his overalls and, without looking, holds it out over the moat...

But he does not let it go.

He puts the ring box back in his pocket and unties Yoshi.

EXT. SARASALAND | DAY

A vast stretch of desert featuring Ancient Egyptian style pyramids. Huts are spread out in bunches, built near oases that are few in number.

SUPER: SARASALAND, THE MUSHROOM WORLD

At the center of it all stands an epic castle, constructed in the shape of a pyramid and surrounded by a high cement wall, which makes up for the absence of a moat.

SUPER: THE CASTLE OF THE HUMBLE KING

Like the Mushroom Kingdom, the population of Sarasaland consists of toads and humans - also battling the PLAGUE. Currently, however, they are under a more pressing kind of attack --

BOWSER OVERSEES A FULL-ON ASSAULT OF THE KINGDOM.

Now COVERED HEAD TO TOE in a SUIT OF ARMOR, he storms towards the castle. Koopas, Goombas, and Shy Guys act as FOOT SOLDIERS. Many if not most of these creatures show overt signs of the plague.

THE HAMMER BROTHERS, twin Koopa mercenaries, accompany Bowser. GNARLED and BRUISED are wiry strong, with faces marred by the residue of endless battles. War helmets protect their skulls. Each wields two SLEDGEHAMMERS, one per hand.

Behind them trails Ludwig...

The first signs of the plague are visible on his face. Tiny spots of decay, a patchwork of thin streaks.

He is distant, unnerved by what he is becoming and uninterested in the battle. He gazes off to the side, where his younger brother, LARRY KOOPA, gleefully pursues his own mercurial desires, tormenting a family of toads.

Larry uses his weapon of choice - a CHAIN - to make the toads "dance." Unlike Ludwig and his father, he is gaunt. His hair is cut into a mohawk and dyed turquoise. He looks too old for this style - but it fits his wildly unhinged demeanor.

Turning back, Ludwig braces himself as GUARDS line up to defend the castle...

Bowser removes his helmet - and COATS THEIR RANKS with FIREBALLS, sending them flailing.

Gnarled and Bruised attack. The Hammer Brothers, as we witness now, are sociopaths. No question, their usual intent is to kill - but they also take great pleasure in maiming.

Bowser uses his ARMORED FISTS to DESTROY a SECTION OF THE GREAT WALL that protects the castle, creating an OPENING for him and his minions to penetrate the grounds and breach the entrance. Simultaneously --

A young woman slips out onto a discrete second story balcony and drops to the sand.

This is PRINCESS DAISY (27), a tomboy for whom the words "fragile" and "dainty" do not apply. Wearing an orange and white jumpsuit and gripping a BROKEN CANDELABRA, she races off the castle grounds, past a BURNED GUARD, roiling in pain.

BURNED GUARD
Princess, where-

DAISY

My father will surrender without a fight. We need a hero.

BURNED GUARD

Who?

DAISY

Super Mario.

She kisses her hand, touches his forehead, and runs.

INT. THE CASTLE OF THE HUMBLE KING | DAY

The Hammer Brothers continue their wave of destruction, overwhelming the rest of the palace guard, the servants, and anyone else who gets in the way.

Ludwig follows, stepping over the dead bodies Gnarled and Bruised have left in their wake like discarded pieces of trash. All three enter the throne room, where the HUMBLE KING wastes away in a state of panic.

As he struggles to open a TREASURE CHEST, Bruised knocks him to the floor. Gnarled slaps his brother in the helmet, a show of appreciation.

LUDWIG

Leave him.

Ludwig snakes past the Hammer Brothers, who are practically slobbering to murder the Humble King. He opens the chest. Inside is a MAGIC WAND. Its top glows like fireworks.

Ludwig takes the magic wand and presses its hot end against the shoulder of the Humble King, who SEIZURES - and MORPHS into a CATERPILLAR.

With some semblance of regret, Ludwig watches the Humble King - in his new form - crawl across the floor while the Hammer Brothers compare the amount of blood on their sledgehammers.

For a moment, Ludwig looks away, towards an adjoining room, where he discovers an exquisite collection of MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS. His eyes light up. Quickly, he looks back down --

The Humble King/caterpillar is about to disappear inside a crack in the floor. Before he can, Ludwig pinches him between his fingers and locks him away inside the treasure chest. Ludwig then heads towards the room with the instruments...

EXT. THE CASTLE OF PRINCESS DAISY | DAY

Having emerged from an open stairwell, Bowser surveys the immediate impact of the invasion of Sarasaland from an observation deck on top of the castle. Below, a speck of a human being can be seen running --

It is PRINCESS DAISY, outrunning the chaos the foot soldiers are creating, barnstorming towards a sand weathered GREEN PIPE that extends vertically out of the ground.

She BASHES one Koopa with her forearm, causing it to suck inside its shell.

A Goomba staggers at her, jaws chomping. She jumps over it - and BEATS DOWN an oncoming Shy Guy with the broken candelabra, using it like a lead pipe with a sharp end.

She charges towards the green pipe, only to be surprised by the Koopa, which SPITS back OUT of its SHELL and SNAPS at her, feverishly --

But she sends it back inside permanently with one STAB of the candelabra.

The Goomba remains. She waits for the creature and its sharp incisors to get close... And then she CLOBBERS it.

Free of the foot soldiers and overconfident, Daisy LEAPS for the TOP OF THE PIPE instead of carefully climbing up it - and it costs her.

Her foot SLIPS. She FALLS. On the way down her head SMACKS the EDGE OF THE PIPE. Her eyes slam closed. She vanishes inside, possibly UNCONSCIOUS - but it appears she has escaped.

We return to Bowser... As Ludwig comes out of the stairwell and onto the observation deck.

LUDWIG

We were successful in removing the king.

BOWSER

It would be good for you to give him the plague. Did you?

Ludwig nods, lying without words. Bowser eyes the spots of plague on his son's face.

BOWSER

Give it to your younger sibling
next, wherever his whims may have
taken him.

LUDWIG

I was thinking, Father... Maybe I
could stay here. Keep control...

BOWSER

We've had a satisfactory test run,
Ludwig. Nothing more. Go find
Larry...

Bowser turns away from his son. He looks beyond Sarasaland to the Mushroom Kingdom and the castle of Princess Peach, which can be seen in the distance, the next kingdom over...

BOWSER

Peach awaits.

INT. MARIO AND LUIGI'S HOME, MARIO'S BEDROOM | DAWN

The sun has started to rise. At 5:30 AM, Mario wakes without the need of an alarm.

He sits up, but it hurts, not just because of his aching body but also because memories of the night before come rushing back, haunting him.

He dangles his legs over the edge of his bed and stares at the emptiness next to him before wiping the cold out of his eyes and looking to the floor.

The pipe wrench and the drain snake lie beneath him.

LATER

Mario showers. Several scars on his upper body are noticeable.

LATER

Mario leans against the kitchen counter, drinks coffee, and blankly looks out the window at a turret from the castle.

Luigi enters.

LUIGI

Morning.

Mario nods. Luigi opens the cupboard --

MARIO
I made you some already.

A steaming cup of coffee, cream and sugar added, waits for Luigi on the counter.

LUIGI
Thanks.

Luigi sips. He rests against the counter next to Mario.

LUIGI
Didn't see you when you got home
last night. How'd the job go?

MARIO
Didn't finish.

LUIGI
You heading back this morning?

MARIO
Not sure.

LUIGI
If you need help, or you need me to
take it...

Mario shakes his head.

LUIGI
Not trying to cut in, just...

MARIO
I know.

They drink in silence.

There is a BANG at the sliding glass door in the kitchen.
Yoshi, chained up outside, bumps against it. In his jaws,
there is a DEAD GOOMBA, bloodied, suggesting Yoshi killed it.

MARIO
What the-

LUIGI
A Goomba...

Mario walks towards the door.

MARIO

Could just be a stray. They never
use Goombas to divert us.

He pauses, thinks.

MARIO

You have anything scheduled this
morning?

LUIGI

I heard from Toad late last night.
Claimed he had an emergency. But
you know how he is. Half the time
there's nothing wrong, he just
wants to see one of us.

MARIO

See what you can find out about
this first.

Mario downs the rest of his coffee.

LUIGI

Where are you going?

MARIO

Back to the castle.

LUIGI

You're sure...

MARIO

I promised I'd do the job.

Mario drops his cup of coffee in the sink, then grabs the
drain snake and the pipe wrench off the kitchen floor.

INT. THE CASTLE OF PRINCESS PEACH, FOYER | MORNING

Whatever residue the party might have left behind has been
cleaned up. The foyer is empty except for Toadsworth, who is
waiting for Mario...

TOADSWORTH

The sun set and rose, but you came
after all.

Forcing himself not to look at the gallery of paintings of
the Princess, Mario walks all the way to Toadsworth before --

MARIO

I was here last night.

TOADSWORTH

Oh?

MARIO

Your princess got in the way.

TOADSWORTH

I'm sorry, I don't-

MARIO

Don't lie to me ever again,
Toadsworth.

INT. PRINCESS PEACH'S BATHROOM | MOMENTS LATER

Mario snakes the drain in the Princess's shower. As it goes on, the job is increasingly dirty and strenuous. At one point, he thinks he hears something inside the bedroom. He pauses, watches the door... And then gets back to work.

LATER

Finished, Mario cleans up. He turns the water on to make sure it flows smoothly. Afterwards, he lumbers out of the shower. In time, he approaches the door to Princess Peach's bedroom.

A beat.

He turns the handle. Locked. He chooses not to knock.

INT. THE CASTLE OF PRINCESS PEACH, FOYER | MOMENTS LATER

Mario nears the bottom of a grand spiral staircase, a location currently occupied by a suddenly upbeat Toadsworth.

MARIO

Fixed.

TOADSWORTH

Tally-ho, fantastic!

As a reaction to Toadsworth's peculiar overexcitement, Mario inspects him upon reaching the foyer...

MARIO

The clog in that drain was severe.

TOADSWORTH

I don't recall you ever providing
maintenance on it before. Routine
wear and tear most likely.

(MORE)

TOADSWORTH (CONT'D)

No matter, how much do we owe you
for the service?

Extracting a pad from his overalls, Mario writes up an
invoice and hands it to Toadsworth, who looks it over.

TOADSWORTH

Super Mario Brothers Plumbing,
excellent work and always
affordable... Say, how about I add
in a bit of a bonus for all the
trouble?

Toadsworth expects Mario to respond. He does not. So
Toadsworth goes on to count coins out of a pouch that is
strung around his waist...

TOADSWORTH

Actually, there's not much more
here than what I intended to give
you. Why not take the entire pouch?

Toadsworth unstrings the pouch from his waist and holds it
out for Mario.

MARIO

The drain was badly clogged, yeah,
but it was a regular job.

TOADSWORTH

For your troubles, Mario. Today and
last night.

Mario considers what Toadsworth is alluding to... And then
takes the pouch. He counts out what he is owed - and hands
the rest back to Toadsworth, who flinches then continues.

TOADSWORTH

Of course, we can still expect you
at Rescue Day in your usual role,
playing your usual part?

MARIO

Why would you ask that?

TOADSWORTH

The plague has caused numerous
stresses. Many people and toads
have not been acting themselves.
But you are a cherished hero,
Mario, not only of this court, but
also of the entire kingdom, as I
had hoped the bonus I offered you
would imply.

MARIO

Without me, there is no Rescue Day.
I'll be there. Will Peach?

TOADSWORTH

Absolutely! In her very best gown
and her very best mood. Yes!

MARIO

Goodbye, Toadsworth.

Mario walks past Toadsworth, leaving.

TOADSWORTH

Pip-pip, then. See you at the
festivities!

EXT. THE MUSHROOM KINGDOM | MORNING

Luigi pulls up alongside Mario in a van with the Super Mario Brothers Plumbing logo on the side. Yoshi is in the back.

LUIGI

Thought you might want a ride. Saw
a gang of afflicted back there,
heading this way.

MARIO

You think I can't handle them on my
own? Come on, what'd you find out
about the Goomba?

LUIGI

Covered in sand. Sarasaland, if I
had to bet. What do you think that
tells us?

MARIO

Well, it's not the way they usually
come for an abduction. But what
could they accomplish with one
stupid Goomba anyway?

Luigi looks in the rearview mirror. The procession of
afflicted is nearing.

LUIGI

I don't know, but hop in. They're
gonna be here in a minute.

Begrudgingly, Mario realizes his brother is probably right.
He opens the van.

I/E. VAN / THE MUSHROOM KINGDOM | MORNING

Mario sits in the passenger seat, thinking. Luigi drives.
Yoshi roams the back of the van, strapped to a short leash.

MARIO

Did you deal with Toad already too?

Luigi nods.

MARIO

What was his problem?

LUIGI

He actually wanted to talk to you.

MARIO

About what?

LUIGI

Your trip to the castle last night.

MARIO

I was at the castle this morning.

LUIGI

He heard something about you and
the Princess. That was his
'emergency.'

MARIO

What did he say?

LUIGI

That you proposed...

MARIO

And what, Luigi?

LUIGI

She told you off.

MARIO

She was totally hammered-

LUIGI

I warned you.

MARIO

Which makes you what? A hero?

LUIGI

Forget it, Mario.

Silence.

MARIO

What's Toad want? Is he writing a story about it?

LUIGI

He has no idea what to do. He kept saying he couldn't believe it, over and over. But he was also trying to understand why she didn't show up to look at the floats...

MARIO

He knows she had a cold.

LUIGI

Is that really enough reason-

MARIO

She's seen all the floats before, Luigi. The castle makes them. She didn't need to go.

A beat.

LUIGI

Okay.

Mario looks out his window. A young toad, age 11, runs alongside the van, trying to flag it down. The boy's face is spotted with the plague, and he only has one arm. To us, he will be known as the ONE-ARMED TOAD BOY.

ONE-ARMED TOAD BOY

Mario, Mario! Super Mario!

Mario shields his eyes, turns his head. The boy stops chasing the van. Remaining visible to Mario in the side view mirror, he goes so still it becomes sad, as if the life has been sucked out of him... Before fading away, deflated.

Up ahead, a pack of afflicted clogs the road. At the center of the pack, a man showcases a woman. The flesh on her face has been eaten away.

The van inches towards them. Luigi lays on the horn.

The afflicted slide away to avoid being struck. They canvas the side of the vehicle. In the back, Yoshi growls and snaps.

The van clears the crowd without further incident, but the burden of the plague is oppressive. It takes a while for the brothers to speak.

MARIO

Should I talk to him? Rescue Day's tomorrow. How much can he write before then?

LUIGI

Do you care what he writes?

MARIO

Of course I care what he writes.

Luigi parks. They're home.

MARIO

Be careful getting out. We should power wash the van.

Before Mario opens the door --

LUIGI

I know you didn't ask, and you don't need my help, but I think you should skip Rescue Day altogether.

MARIO

Come on Luigi, I can't do that.

LUIGI

You can do whatever you want. The way she acted, you don't deserve that.

Mario opens the door and gets out. He starts to walk away but stops to look back at his brother.

MARIO

You've wanted to save the Princess forever.

LUIGI

Ah geeze, Mario. Not this again.

MARIO

But you've never even tried. Why?

LUIGI

You always take the lead.

MARIO

You could try to beat me.

Luigi doesn't answer.

MARIO

Maybe I should have spent more time
trying to figure out a way to kill
Bowser.

LUIGI

You might still have a chance.

MARIO

We both might.

A beat.

MARIO

I don't think it's anything by the
way.

LUIGI

What?

MARIO

The Goomba. Keep an eye out, but
unless we find more let's assume it
was just a stray.

Luigi nods.

MARIO

I'll think about Rescue Day.

He goes.

INT. PRINCESS PEACH'S BEDROOM | NIGHT

The Princess is awake. A standing clothes rack, overloaded with potential gowns for Rescue Day, is set up behind her. She wears one option now, modeling it for herself in front of a wall-length ceiling-height mirror.

PRINCESS PEACH

It's not perfect.

She removes the dress and strips down to her underwear, revealing a body that has been finely tuned using all the tools wealth can buy. Still, she turns sideways and sucks in her non-existent belly.

She presses her hands against the "flab" at the base of her waist. Both hands, as well as her forearms, up to her elbows, remain draped in white gloves, as we saw earlier.

Peach faces the mirror straight on. She tugs at the fingers on her left glove, loosening them.

She does the same to the right. Then she shakes both of her arms violently until the gloves slide all the way off, uncovering her forearms...

Patches of the plague run across her flesh, thus explaining the reason for the gloves.

The sight, while not a surprise, drives her to tears.

EXT. TOAD'S HOME | NIGHT

A single light is on inside...

INT. TOAD'S HOME, OFFICE | NIGHT

Toad stands at a desk in front of a typewriter. He pecks at the keys, not because he doesn't know how to type, but because he isn't sure what to say.

The paper in the typewriter reads "Sources say" and nothing else. Toad has typed these two words upwards of twenty times.

There is a knock on his window. He looks --

Mario is tapping on the glass with his pipe wrench. He glares at Toad. Through the window, he loudly says --

MARIO
It didn't happen.

He does not release his gaze from Toad, who eventually takes the piece of paper out of the typewriter and tears it up.

Mario responds by turning away from the window. He stops half in shadow and half in a pool of street light to look back at Toad one last time before leaving...

EXT. SARASALAND | NIGHT

Foot soldiers stream inside the same green pipe we saw Daisy disappear into. Bowser, the Hammer Brothers, Ludwig, and Larry also approach. Gnarled and Bruised enter first, then Larry, who - like the Hammer Brothers - is plague-less.

Eyeing Larry's healthy skin, Bowser stops Ludwig.

BOWSER
You haven't done it yet, have you?

LUDWIG
I was waiting-

BOWSER
Do it in the tunnel.

LUDWIG
Why don't you?

BOWSER
For years you've resisted adopting
my methodologies. Why?

LUDWIG
Because I've seen them fail.

BOWSER
But I've finally adjusted. This is
a new path. You are my son, Ludwig.
I want you to be ready for the
world that is coming.

LUDWIG
What difference does it make? You
afflicted me with the plague
already. You keep me from my music.
I'm on an accelerated path towards
death, nothing else.

Ludwig begins to climb the pipe.

BOWSER
No. We are on an accelerated path
towards something else altogether.

LUDWIG
If what you claim is true then why
haven't you told anyone else about
it besides me?

BOWSER
You are my confidant. I don't
expect them to understand.

Ludwig looks back at his father.

BOWSER
Not until after the Princess is in
my clutches.

Ludwig drops down into the pipe. Bowser goes next. His
hulking frame just barely fits inside its diameter.

EXT. STAR PARK | MORNING

The largest park in the Mushroom Kingdom, centered around a monument-sized sculpture of an INVINCIBILITY STAR. The entrance is where the Rescue Day parade launches from - and therefore where all the floats are set up.

Behind the scenes, the Princess is having her makeup and hair done. She is anxious. As expected, she is wearing long white gloves with her trailing pink gown.

Next to the Princess, in an accompanying chair, is Mario, getting his hair trimmed. He is dressed in a tuxedo. His signature red cap rests in his lap.

He came after all - if ever there was any doubt.

Mario and the Princess are both trapped in their own minds. Neither speaks to one another or to the hair and makeup personnel.

When Mario finally looks towards the Princess, however, he can't help but notice her demeanor. He picks up on something else, too. Quietly, he says --

MARIO

You've never worn gloves to Rescue Day before.

PRINCESS PEACH

It's a new- A new look. For the thirtieth anniversary. This is the new me.

Her agitation betrays the confidence in her words. Mario offers a supportive thought --

MARIO

You look good. I like them.

She smiles. After a moment...

PRINCESS PEACH

I remember what I said the other night.

Mario grows visibly uncomfortable.

MARIO

And?

PRINCESS PEACH

I had too much to drink.

MARIO
That was obvious.

The Princess scratches her left forearm over top of the long white glove.

PRINCESS PEACH
You've always been very kind to me.
We've shared so much over the
years. I wouldn't be me without
you.

MARIO
I could say the same thing.

PRINCESS PEACH
It would be nice to hear you say it
out loud.

MARIO
Did you forget about the talk we
had in your bathroom?

PRINCESS PEACH
There should be a more elegant word
for that room don't you think?

MARIO
I almost threw away the present I
was going to give you, but I
couldn't do it.

PRINCESS PEACH
It would be reason to hold one more
luxurious celebration, it truly
would.

She reaches out, touches his arm.

PRINCESS PEACH
Maybe it's something we talk about
again after the parade.

Abruptly, she pulls her hand away from Mario, using it to scratch her other arm. He watches her.

MARIO
Be careful you don't rip the glove.

She stops scratching.

MARIO

I could give it to you at the end
of the parade. Would be a big
surprise, lot of excitement...

PRINCESS PEACH

Let's just try to make it through
this first.

LATER

Spirited on by Toadsworth, Mario and the Princess board a float in unison. The float is a basic recreation of Bowser's throne room, complete with a papier-mache version of Bowser, toppled, rummaging on his back.

In the process, they expose themselves to a small crowd of insiders, including Toad, who is here covering the proceedings. He appears troubled until...

Mario puts his hand on the Princess's back. They both beam. They bow together.

Toad sees that all looks right with the world.

TOAD

Mario! It's lovely to see you and
the Princess together!

He dashes back and forth capturing photographs from every angle as the chain of floats embarks.

EXT. PARADE ROUTE | DAY

While the floats move through the Mushroom Kingdom, a flood of citizens watches from the curb, showering Mario and Peach with adulation and a seemingly endless stream of confetti.

Toad trails their float from the sidelines, following its every move, scribbling notes and taking photos when he sees fit.

Luigi is also here, alone, to show support for his brother, although that support is decidedly muted. He is part of a crowd of healthy humans and toads near the road.

The afflicted have been segregated from this crowd, pushed far away from the parade route.

Guards from the palace, wielding batons and covered in scrubs, hoods, and gloves stalk the line to keep the peace - and maintain separation.

The afflicted can barely see Mario and the Princess over top of the excited, healthy throngs of supporters. Consequently, Mario and the Princess cannot really see them either.

As a result, the couple's mood has only gotten sunnier. The problems of the Mushroom World are forgotten. They move closer together, openly flirting, the adoration of the masses affecting them.

Toad relishes the moment, noting, "What exists behind the scenes, or caught up in the moment?"

For Luigi on the other hand, knowing what he knows, the shows of affection are too much for him to take. He grumpily makes his way out of the crowd, leaving the parade route behind and circumnavigating the afflicted - who pay him no mind.

Rather, they SHOUT WORDS OF ANGER at MARIO and PEACH.

THE ONE-ARMED TOAD BOY WE SAW RUN AFTER THE BROTHERS' VAN HURLS A ROCK --

It STRIKES the BASE OF THE FLOAT. Mario notices the sound. He glances, unable to tell what caused it, before returning his attention to the Princess and to the path of the parade --

As it suddenly becomes evident One-Armed Toad boy has unleashed a MAELSTROM OF VIOLENT DISSENT.

THE AFFLICTED SHOWER MARIO AND THE PRINCESS WITH ROCKS.

They take cover --

WHILE THE AFFLICTED CHARGE TOWARDS THE PARADE ROUTE.

The palace guards fight them back, using blunt weapons. But the afflicted outnumber the guards five-to-one. They OVERWHELM them, TEAR at their PROTECTIVE CLOTHING.

The healthy PANIC. They SCATTER.

Toad turns his camera every which way, undoubtedly producing shaky, blurry photos...

AS THE PARADE TURNS INTO A FULL BLOWN RIOT.

Luigi, fully outside the action, freezes. His mind races. He looks over his shoulder, to where he parked the Super Mario Brothers van --

LUIGI
They're scared of Yoshi...

On the float, Mario continues to shroud the Princess. He is pelted by rocks. He yells at the FLOAT OPERATOR, a toad --

MARIO
Can you speed this thing up?!

FLOAT OPERATOR
I'm taxing the motor already!

The Princess is shaking. To her, Mario says --

MARIO
We're gonna make it.

Guards fall back against the float, defending it in service to the crown and the hero. They manage to slow the afflicted down, creating an opening that Mario spots --

MARIO
Hang on to me, I think I can get us
to a safe spot.

The Princess wraps her arms around Mario's waist. He grips her by the shoulders. They move to the edge of the float -- but the guards could only hold off the afflicted for so long. Mario pulls up --

PRINCESS PEACH
What are you waiting for?!

MARIO
The gap closed!

The Princess screams as the afflicted reach the float. They claw at it, attempting to climb up the base even as it's moving. Mario retreats with her to the center of the float --

The palace guard cannot slow down the afflicted.

Others, however, can.

In the distance, a SHADOW falls over top of the ensuing parade route.

BOWSER. Alone. Nearly three times as large as any toad or human and fully armored, minus the helmet.

HE IS COMING FOR THE PRINCESS.

MARIO
Bowser... He's here.

The Princess peeks out from underneath Mario's grasp --

PRINCESS PEACH

But it hasn't been him since the first time. It's always the Hammer Brothers-

MARIO

When I'm not around or with you. He doesn't do *this*.

A beat.

PRINCESS PEACH

Run.

MARIO

What?

PRINCESS PEACH

Let him take me. It's chaos here. You're without weapons. This isn't your turf. But you know how to rescue me from Dark Land.

Mario has time to survey the area because the afflicted have begun to back off --

Although Bowser is still too far away to be able to see Mario and Peach yet, awareness of his presence - and fear - is rapidly spreading amongst the afflicted.

MARIO

I can't just run. Everyone will think-

PRINCESS PEACH

They already think you can't save them. So save me, Mario. Like you always do. Like I know you can. Not now, but when it's right.

Mario takes his arms off the Princess. He steps to the rear of the float before turning and looking at her...

And then he JUMPS.

When he hits the ground, he runs like hell. For a worn down middle-aged man, Mario still has a burst of life in his step when he needs it.

From afar, Toad, open-mouthed, stunned, watches... As does Luigi, from the opposite side of the parade route. He has gone nowhere. Done nothing. Now, he can't believe his brother is fleeing...

LUIGI
What's he doing?

Luigi pivots as Bowser bears down on the float. The Princess stands still, facing her soon-to-be captor. In the background, Toad scrambles away...

While we notice Bowser's path of destruction is precise. He is taking care not to target any of the afflicted. He lets this be known to them --

BOWSER
You have nothing to fear.

For Luigi, there is a clear path to the float.

LUIGI
I could make it.

And he could. We know he could. But he hesitates --

Bowser does not.

He BLOWS FLAMES at the few remaining GUARDS. None escape. SCREAMS as their flesh burns in the street and the fire spreads. An INFERNO.

Luigi breathes a sigh of relief that he didn't make the effort. He has seen enough. He FLEES, cutting past the afflicted, who are terrified despite Bowser's inexplicable assurances.

BOWSER HAMMERS BOTH FISTS INTO THE FLOAT, BREAKING IT IN HALF.

The Float Operator is CRUSHED. The Princess careens into the ground. Bowser SNATCHES HER with his armor-covered claw. He stares into her eyes. She is crying.

BOWSER
Are those tears real or are they
merely an act?

She looks back at him. From this vantage point, it is clear --

The PLAGUE has migrated to his FACE. The FLESH on his cheek has started to ERODE.

PRINCESS PEACH
You're afflicted...

BOWSER
Only if you mistakenly consider the
plague an affliction.

Her tears intensify. These most certainly are real.

PRINCESS PEACH
Mario will save me. He always does.

BOWSER
He is here now though, is he not?
He didn't care to stop me...

PRINCESS PEACH
He's best able to rescue me in Dark
Land.

BOWSER
Not this time.

PRINCESS PEACH
When have you not uttered those
words? Your jealousy is your
undoing. You will always lose to
us.

Her tears alleviate slightly at this assertion.

BOWSER
I admit jealousy once drove my
ambitions to send your kingdom into
turmoil... But that was long ago
replaced by my desire for vengeance
against you and Mario. And now even
that is replaced by something new.

Bowser finishes his response by clamping down over top of her face. She SCREAMS. He silences her. And, for the Princess, everything goes DARK.

EXT. THE MUSHROOM KINGDOM | DAY

The riot at the parade has fanned out into the Mushroom Kingdom at large, with the appearance of Bowser only adding fuel to the fire.

LOOTING and VANDALISM occur on a broad scale. VIOLENCE goes in both directions, the healthy against the afflicted and the afflicted against the healthy.

Mario cuts a path to the outskirts, stripping off layers of his tuxedo and carrying his signature cap in his hand while running, ducking around corners, staying in the shadows... Doing what little he can to obscure his identity.

And thus far, it's working. He has avoided detection... Until Luigi, driving the Super Mario Brothers van, bisects his route. Leaning out the window of the moving van, he shouts --

LUIGI
I saw you run away-

MARIO
Where were you?

To stay at Mario's pace, Luigi needs to slow down. Yoshi, we see now, is in the back of the vehicle.

LUIGI
Watching the parade.

MARIO
Stop the van. Get out. They'll see us.

As Luigi does --

MARIO
And lose the cap.

LUIGI
What about Yoshi?

MARIO
Keep moving.

They run. Luigi has to slow down to stay at Mario's pace.

MARIO
If you were at the parade, why didn't you do anything?

LUIGI
Because you took off. I thought there had to be a reason.

Mario finds a nook between buildings, where they can watch the van but stay secluded. He posts up. Luigi goes to him.

MARIO
Once the riot started, the parade was a mess. I couldn't stop Bowser. Not with all the afflicted.

Even as Mario speaks, he seems slightly unsure of himself. He seeks reassurance.

MARIO

I know how to get through Dark Land, right? That's where I'm at my best. I always save her. I never fail.

LUIGI

When was the last time Bowser did the abduction himself? It was the very first time, wasn't it?

Mario nods.

LUIGI

Why go back to that now?

MARIO

We're already on shaky ground because of the plague. Maybe it has something to do with that.

LUIGI

With nobody in power, this place will fold if there's much more turmoil.

MARIO

That just means we'll have to move fast to get her back.

LUIGI

I don't know if you can get out of the kingdom. It's anarchy. The riots are everywhere.

MARIO

People don't realize she's their only chance.

LUIGI

Come on, Mario. It's been a year and no progress.

MARIO

Behind the scenes there has. Trust me, she needs to figure it out.

LUIGI

She's always needed to figure it out. What's suddenly changed?

MARIO

I think... I think she has it.

A beat.

MARIO

She started wearing gloves. Out of nowhere. And when I snaked the drain...

LUIGI

What?

MARIO

It wasn't a normal clog.

LUIGI

Did you touch anything?

MARIO

I had gloves on. I'm fine.

LUIGI

It didn't hit your skin?

MARIO

Do you have to argue with me about everything?

LUIGI

How does me checking to see if you're okay count as arguing?

MARIO

See, you're doing it again.

Luigi shakes his head.

MARIO

Now are you coming with me to Dark Land or not?

INT. THE CASTLE OF PRINCESS PEACH, LAB | DAY

Ludwig stares out over a CANVAS OF DEAD BODIES, including GUARDS and SCIENTISTS - who had been working here to develop a cure for the plague... Until the Hammer Brothers MASSACRED EVERYONE, and Larry DESTROYED EVERYTHING with his CHAIN.

As the Hammer Brothers stroll past the corpses, seeking signs of life so they can enact more violence, Larry picks up a needle from a syringe and uses it to jab holes in portraits of the Princess.

GNARLED HAMMER

Time to give us the plague, Ludwig.

A look of surprise from Ludwig.

LUDWIG
What did Bowser tell you?

BRUISED HAMMER
We know he has it. You have it.

GNARLED HAMMER
We like what it does to the flesh.

LUDWIG
Aren't you afraid it will kill you?

GNARLED HAMMER
King Bowser said it won't.

LUDWIG
So he told you that. And you
believe him?

The Hammer Brothers nod. Ludwig examines them. The sadistic nature of their personas shines through in their demeanor post-bloodbath, which is profoundly unsettling.

LUDWIG
I can give you the plague. If you
haven't contracted it already from
this melee.

Although Larry is typically distracted, he picked up on this conversation. He looks at Gnarled and Bruised.

LARRY
You *want* the plague? Why would you
want the plague? I couldn't stand
to look like him!

LUDWIG
Our father ordered me to pass it to
you on the way here, Larry.

LARRY
You won't touch me. You won't ever
touch me!

LUDWIG
What if I already did, and you
simply didn't notice?

LARRY
No! There's no plague on me.

LUDWIG
Sometimes it takes a few hours for
the first signs to appear...

Larry begins to have what resembles a combination between a nervous breakdown and a withdrawal.

LARRY
I'll keep my youth. I'll keep it
forever!

Larry retreats from Ludwig.

LUDWIG
Where are you going?

LARRY
To talk to Dad. Should I blame him
for this? Or Mario? Who should I
blame?!

Larry exits the lab.

BRUISED HAMMER
We could have stopped him.

LUDWIG
It's all irrelevant now. Here...

Ludwig touches his fingers to the splotch of plague on his face. The Hammer Brothers approach. They lean down... And he wipes the plague onto their flesh.

E/I. THE MUSHROOM KINGDOM / VAN | DAY

The van shoots through the streets. The riot can no longer be avoided. People and toads dart in every direction. The violence between healthy and afflicted perpetuates.

At the wheel, Mario lays on the horn, swerves. If there isn't a path, he'll make one...

DEBRIS is HURLED at the VAN. A 2X4 with NAILS sticking out of it SMASHES into the WINDSHIELD.

Mario punches the brake. The piece of wood flies off the window. Afflicted swarm the vehicle. Mario slams the gas, speeding forward --

The side of the van BOOMS. A plague-ridden male toad spins, trips, collapses. Our supposition is that Mario just hit him.

LUIGI
You clipped him. You just hit
somebody.

MARIO
Don't think about it.

LUIGI
Did you see who threw the wood? She
wasn't sick.

MARIO
Luigi! Forget it!

EXT. SEWER PIPE SYSTEM | DAY

The van skids to a stop, off-road, some distance away from a
LARGE GREEN PIPE that extends out of the ground, equivalent
to the one we saw in Sarasaland, except in prime condition.

Mario, Luigi, and Yoshi get out. The brothers grip heavy PIPE
WRENCHES. They also have miner's HEAD LAMPS. At the end of
the approach to the pipe, both are taken aback by what awaits
them. That is, nothing.

LUIGI
You want to guess what this means?

MARIO
He wants me to go after him.

LUIGI
That's always what he wants. It
never keeps him from putting
someone here to try to stop you.

MARIO
You have a better idea?

LUIGI
Something's going on.

MARIO
Yeah, the Princess got abducted.

Dismissive, Mario straps his pipe-wrench to his back as a
samurai would a sword. He climbs up to the rim of the pipe
and descends. Yoshi leaps next... And a contemplative Luigi
goes last.

INT. SEWER PIPE SYSTEM | MOMENTS LATER

A dark, dank and cavernous tunnel that acts as a short cut between kingdoms. A ladder leads from the top of the pipe to the base of the tunnel.

Mario and Luigi lower Yoshi to the ground as best they can before climbing down the ladder. After reaching the bottom, they switch on their head lamps and proceed...

LATER

Yoshi explores in advance of Mario and Luigi, staying within the pools of light created by their head lamps. Outside of that light, it is total darkness. He sniffs something out.

MARIO

What you got, Yosh?

Mario closes in on Yoshi as he tears into the floor of the tunnel, which is covered in a thick layer of dirt.

LUIGI

I forgot we buried a couple stashes
just in case.

Yoshi splays dirt in every direction. In the end, he digs up a BURLAP SACK. Mario pries it away from him and looks down to open it, shining light on what's inside --

MUSHROOMS.

He sorts through the bag.

MARIO

Damnit, most of these are rotted...
No, they're *all* rotted.

He says this before reaching the very bottom of the sack.

MARIO

Hang on- Here's one. And... nope.
Just one. We got one.

Mario pulls the mushroom out of the sack and holds it up for Luigi to see. Then, without consulting his brother, Mario chomps a bite out of it. He stretches, cracks his neck... And then polishes the mushroom off.

Luigi looks at Mario, somewhat perturbed.

MARIO

You said it yourself, there are other stashes. We'll find one for you by the time we get to Dark Land.

INT. TOAD'S HOME | NIGHT

Toad goes over his notes on the parade. He has developed several photos, as well, including multiple shots of Mario running away from the Princess's float...

His typewriter holds a sheet of paper with the headline for a story in progress --

"Super" Mario No Longer Super?

Struggling to write anything further, Toad walks to the BATHROOM, which he has turned into a MAKESHIFT DARKROOM. Inside, several more PHOTOS of the catastrophe at the parade are in the process of developing.

One in particular - which Toad is seeing for the first time - draws his immediate attention. Although whatever the photograph depicts is obscured from us, Toad's reaction is not... What he sees shakes him to the core.

Recovering, Toad snatches the photo - and bolts out of the house.

EXT. MARIO AND LUIGI'S HOME | NIGHT

A horde of plague-ridden Shy Guys gathers outside. Larry leads them.

LARRY

Mario! Come out!

After "asking" Mario to appear, Larry does not wait for a response. He circles the building and SHATTERS every piece of GLASS with his chain.

The Shy Guys bounce inside, through the windows.

Although Larry could enter the house through the broken sliding glass door, he attempts to obliterate the wooden front door instead. SHRAPNEL flies, but the door does not split. Filled with angst, he gives up, KICKS it in --

INT. MARIO AND LUIGI'S HOME | CONTINUOUS

With Shy Guys bustling about, Larry stampedes through the house, breaking whatever he so chooses.

LARRY

Mario! Where are you?!

On the way to the garage, he passes the broken sliding glass door...

And misses seeing TOAD, standing in the backyard, breathing heavily. Toad came to see Mario. But now that he sees Larry instead, he takes off, fortunately remaining undetected...

As Larry bursts into the garage --

No van. The final sign Mario is gone. Larry yells unintelligibly - and then continues smashing things.

EXT. SEWER PIPE SYSTEM | NIGHT

Running for his life, Toad arrives at the green pipe, surprised - but also a touch relieved - to discover the presence of the Super Mario Brothers van.

He climbs into the pipe...

INT. SEWER PIPE SYSTEM | NIGHT

The section of the tunnel where Mario, Luigi, and Yoshi are takes a 90-degree turn.

MARIO

Yoshi, check around this corner. I swear we buried one around here.

Mario points Yoshi towards an area. Yoshi sniffs, but fails to come up with anything.

Luigi, meanwhile, leaks ahead. His miner's lamp brightens a portion of the tunnel further up the track...

A THIN FIGURE DARTS INTO AND THEN OUT OF THE LIGHT.

LUIGI

Hey!

Luigi jogs forward, stops.

MARIO

What is it?

LUIGI
I saw someone.

Luigi keeps going. Mario chases after him, quickly taking control of the situation by getting out in front of his brother and leading the way.

The figure enters the light again. This time it occupies it long enough to disclose an identity - that of PRINCESS DAISY, the young woman who fled Sarasaland amidst Bowser's invasion.

Appearing somewhat dazed, she starts to back away.

MARIO
Is that- Princess Daisy, is that you?

Silence. Luigi whispers --

LUIGI
Something's wrong with her.

MARIO
She probably can't recognize us from this far away.

As Daisy continues to retreat, Mario walks forward --

MARIO
It's me, Mario. And you know my brother, too, Luigi. Bowser kidnapped the Princess again. We're on our way to Dark Land.

Daisy slows.

DAISY
Can you help me get out of here?

Mario and Luigi exchange confused looks. Daisy stops.

MARIO
You're lost? Or is it because you don't have any lights?

She raises the piece of the broken candelabra with the sharp end that she used to aid in her exit from Sarasaland.

MARIO
You don't remember us?

Mario and Luigi get close enough to Daisy to have a conversation at normal volumes. Yoshi pulls up the rear. At the sight of a stranger, his mean streak comes out --

DAISY
Keep it away from me.

MARIO
Luigi, grab him.

Luigi grabs Yoshi's dangling leash, restraining him.

MARIO
Daisy, it's me... Mario.

He takes off his signature cap, shows her.

MARIO
I rescued you once. From Tatanga.
Your friend, Peach... She asked me
to do it, and I did. You don't
remember? This was years ago...

DAISY
Don't ask me questions. Tell me how
to get out.

LUIGI
Where are you trying to go?

DAISY
I said don't ask me questions.

LUIGI
If you came in, you have to know
how to get out.

MARIO
His point is this isn't a maze.
It's a straight shot. Just keep
walking one way or the other until
you reach an opening. Climb up,
you're out. Make sense?

She doesn't respond.

MARIO
Daisy, is everything-

DAISY
Why do you keep calling me Daisy?!
Stop. I don't know who that is.
Just stop, please! Stop it.

A beat.

LUIGI

Do you wanna go back to Sarasaland?
You have to go-

DAISY

I don't remember where I came from.

MARIO

What about why you left?

DAISY

I told you I don't remember
anything at all!

MARIO

You never said that.

She brandishes the broken candelabra. There is a real sense
she might be dangerous.

MARIO

Listen, we're not gonna hurt you.

DAISY

How can I know that? I don't know
you. I can't trust you.

MARIO

I'm Super Mario...

DAISY

I have no idea who you are.

She doesn't appear to be lying, but she also isn't backing
down. Luigi looks to Mario - who yanks the leash out of his
brother's hands and angles a frothing Yoshi at Daisy. She
jumps back, takes a warning swipe with the candelabra.

MARIO

I don't know why you're lying, but
I've had enough of this. You're
going to let us pass...

DAISY

I don't care where you go. Just
keep him away, or I'll slice him
open.

MARIO

Then step to the side of the
tunnel.

Slowly, Daisy begins to do so... As she does, Mario and Luigi are able to notice DRIED BLOOD on the back of her head, from when she slipped and fell and smacked into the pipe.

LUIGI

What happened to your-

MARIO

Luigi, shut it.

Cautiously, Mario walks forward. He holds Yoshi back. Luigi follows. Daisy looks increasingly erratic. When the trio gets past her, they walk backwards, just to make sure she doesn't do something rash...

LUIGI

If you keep walking in the direction we came from, there's an opening not too far ahead. To the Mushroom Kingdom, where we live.

She stares at Luigi.

DAISY

You're kinder than your brother.

She plunges into the darkness.

LUIGI

You see her hair? I think she has some kind of head wound. That's what's wrong.

MARIO

Either way she's out of her mind...

LATER

The brothers and Yoshi push onward, encountering increased visibility. Moonlight shines down into the tunnel through an exit. A ladder runs up and out. Mario heads towards it.

LUIGI

The plague's up there. We're safer staying underground all the way to Dark Land.

MARIO

It's our usual route, Luigi.

As Mario nears the ladder, he BUCKLES over and breaks into a sudden SWEAT. Luigi goes to him --

LUIGI
You alright?

MARIO
Just the mushroom taking effect.

Gradually, he arches back up.

MARIO
I think it hurts worse the older I
get.

Mario rolls up his sleeve. His arm has added muscle mass, strengthened. When Luigi studies his brother's face, he observes a more chiseled visage.

MARIO
But to your point, you can't know
how safe-

He stops himself at the sound of someone running at them --

TOAD.

TOAD
Mario! Bowser didn't leave with the
Princess. Luigi, listen!

MARIO
What are you talking about?

TOAD
Look.

Toad produces the photograph he took from his darkroom for Mario and Luigi --

The image is of the RIOT... But in the background a blurry, only partially in the frame Bowser can be seen taking the Princess back to her own castle, not towards the sewer pipe system and on to Dark Land as is to be expected.

TOAD
I went to find you at your house,
but Larry Koopa was there. He was
vandalizing everything.

MARIO
Bowser has always taken her to Dark
Land. Always...

He is troubled. Not only is his plan falling apart but so is his handle on the order of the world.

TOAD

I thought I understood everything about the Super Mario, Princess Peach, and Bowser saga until I watched you abandon her while she was in the throes of danger at the parade.

Mario fires back --

MARIO

Bowser had the advantage there. I have it in Dark Land.

TOAD

Counterintuitive, yes, but accurate given your history. I realized that was your strategy when I discovered you had gone to the pipe. I thought it was quite brilliant, actually.

LUIGI

Except it turns out the plan didn't make any sense because she isn't in Dark Land.

MARIO

You had your chance to do something at the parade and you didn't do it.

He turns to Toad --

MARIO

Are you sure she's at the castle?
One hundred percent sure?

TOAD

I haven't confirmed it, but-

MARIO

Then we don't know.

LUIGI

Come on, Mario. You saw the photo. Toad's making the right assumption.

MARIO

But that's all it is. If I go back and she's not there it's a waste.

LUIGI

You can say the same exact thing if we go all the way to Dark Land - except it's farther. A lot farther.

Mario goes quiet. After a moment, Toad speaks up.

TOAD

During the riot, all I heard was
bewilderment, from toads and humans
alike. What had their hero done?
Who had he become? I don't want to
have to write about that.

MARIO

So we turn back.

EXT. THE MUSHROOM KINGDOM | NIGHT

Meanwhile, just as the riots have calmed and sleep is a thing to be had, the Hammer Brothers enter the streets, commanding Goombas, Koopas, and Shy Guys - all afflicted with the plague - to initiate an assault on the kingdom-at-large.

HOME INVASIONS are enacted on a broad scale. Whole families are murdered if they resist, as Bowser's minions and foot soldiers seize terrain...

At the same time, Ludwig cavorts with the afflicted. The splotch of decayed skin on his face acts as a sympathizing factor. He approaches the One-Armed Toad Boy and his family, two parents and an older brother and sister --

LUDWIG

I am with you, together in having
no choice but to embrace the
plague. Not only myself, but also
my father.

ONE-ARMED TOAD BOY

Bowser is...

LUDWIG

We have come to instigate a
realignment of power.

Ludwig hands coins out to the family.

LUDWIG

The healthy have oppressed you for
long enough.

Ludwig gestures towards a home but shields his eyes from it. The door is open. Inside, Goombas assail a young couple, expunging them. Only their 5-year-old son survives, but he is hobbled. Instinct pushes him to run.

Ludwig addresses One-Armed Toad Boy's family.

LUDWIG

This home belongs to you now.

One-Armed Toad Boy seizes on the opportunity, entering the home first. His parents and siblings, however, hesitate.

LUDWIG

There is little point in not accepting it. If you don't, someone else will.

He leaves things there and walks away. Before long, the rest of One-Armed Toad Boy's family streams inside the house.

INT. DUNGEON | NIGHT

Princess Peach braces herself against a musty stone wall. Bowser enters. He lowers his head and eyes, casting an imposing stare. He sheds his armor onto the cement floor.

PRINCESS PEACH

Why are you staying here? You despise my kingdom. What do you want from us?

As Bowser stalks towards the Princess, dusty shards of artificial light illuminate different portions of his flesh. Besides his face, which we saw earlier, the plague has spread from his arms to his chest, to his thighs...

PRINCESS PEACH

A cure? Is that what you seek? We don't possess one yet. But if we combine our resources-

BOWSER

Your lab has been destroyed and your scientists have been murdered.

PRINCESS PEACH

Why, why would you do that?! We would have had a cure within days.

Angered, Bowser stomps forward, coming within inches of the Princess's nose.

BOWSER

You're lying. Look me in my eyes and say that.

She holds her resolve. But she does not speak.

BOWSER

True or false, 'within days' is now
'within weeks.' At the very least.
Maybe months. Perhaps years as I
exercise my dominance...

PRINCESS PEACH

We'll all be dead before then.

BOWSER

Many of us will die, yes. But not
forever.

A look of incomprehension crosses the Princess.

BOWSER

What you fail to realize is that a
cure is unwarranted. So no, that is
not why I am here. I have come to
prepare you to make a presentation
to our kingdom.

PRINCESS PEACH

You're offering nonsense. I won't
listen to you. I won't take part in
any presentation.

BOWSER

You will.

Bowser presses his plague infected fist towards the Princess,
threatening her with the sickening decay. The action drives
her to meet his eyes...

PRINCESS PEACH

It is a weak threat.

She raises her arm, still adorned in the long white glove,
and holds it in front of Bowser's face. Tears begin to form
in her eyes. Then, she tugs at the fingers of the glove,
removing it to reveal oval splotches of the plague.

Bowser is taken aback. He leans away...

BOWSER

Remove the other glove.

She does, exposing more plague.

BOWSER

And your dress.

Shaking, and now pouring tears, the Princess is overcome by
paralysis. Bowser ROARS --

BOWSER

Do it now!

The Princess trembles as she pulls out of her dress, down to her underwear, showing Bowser the seemingly healthy skin on her skinny body. Instinctively, she covers her chest with her plague-ridden arms... She breaks down.

Bowser devours her with his eyes. He actually smiles.

BOWSER

I wasn't making a threat. You
having the plague is crucial to the
entire presentation.

The Princess's tears intensify.

BOWSER

My only regret is that you acquired
it from someone other than myself.
From Mario, perhaps?

She spits out --

PRINCESS PEACH

No.

BOWSER

I can't say I'm surprised. I always
felt you were using each other.

PRINCESS PEACH

He never used me. He'll save me.

BOWSER

Are you worried he hasn't come yet?
You shouldn't be. What else will he
do? He will come in time, and when
he does, he will discover the rules
of the game have changed.

The Princess descends further into the depths of fear. She
sinks to the dungeon floor.

BOWSER

Everything you both believe is
going to die.

EXT. SEWER PIPE SYSTEM | NIGHT

The consortium of Mario, Luigi, Toad, and Yoshi exits the
pipe.

They find that the Super Mario Brothers Plumbing van has been OVERTURNED and RANSACKED. The purveyors of this act, however, are nowhere to be found.

Mario addresses Toad --

MARIO

Was it like this when you got here?

Toad shakes his head no. Mario grits his teeth. He goes to the van. Up close, the damage is even worse...

The company logo has been DEFACED. The usually red color scheme on Mario has been painted YELLOW. HORNS have been marked on his head. "DEATH TO" has been scrawled next to "Super," and "NO MORE HEROES" has been painted on the roof.

After taking this in, Mario bends down, puts his hands underneath the side of the van, flexes his legs... and LIFTS the vehicle UP, righting its axis.

Toad is excited. The show of strength boosts his hopes.

TOAD

I thought it looked like you were on a power-up.

MARIO

Get in. We're going to the castle.

LUIGI

You got a plan?

MARIO

Yeah, my plan's to make sure that's where she's being held as fast as I can.

They all load into the van. Thankfully, it starts. As Mario drives away, we linger back, picking up on MOVEMENT in the darkness. It belongs to DAISY. She listened to Luigi and left the tunnel, yet she is just as lost now as she was before.

Frightened, and desperate for somewhere to go, she trails after the rear lights on the van and the stream of its exhaust...

E/I. THE MUSHROOM KINGDOM / VAN | NIGHT

The Super Mario Brothers van journeys away from the sewer pipe system and into the streets, traveling on back roads in the hopes of avoiding confrontation. The aftermath of the raids, however, remains prominent.

CORPSES have been shoved aside into the divides between buildings. Broken glass, splintered wood... Residue of the home invasions and store robberies threatens to restrict the path of the van.

MARIO

This can't all be from the riots.

Mario navigates slowly. The scenery has driven him, Luigi, and Toad into a distraught silence. Amongst the homeless, there are now more healthy individuals than there are afflicted.

TOAD

It looks like the healthy families
have been displaced...

Three of these families, exhausted and hungry, guarded and on the defensive, form a kind of blockade in the middle of the street.

Mario is forced to stop the van.

MARIO

You can't stand there!

He gestures, bashes the horn. In the back, Yoshi rises,
GROWLS.

Off in the distance, we notice the ONE-ARMED TOAD BOY lingering, repeatedly tossing a wooden baseball bat into the air and catching it. He watches Mario as...

The healthy families converge on the van like bees to nectar - except they are ANGRY. They ROCK the vehicle, assault its sides and GRAB FOR THE DOORS --

MARIO

Get the locks!

Mario slams down the lock on his door at the last second, thwarting the crowd. Toad and Luigi cover their doors, too. But at the same time --

A father/attacker BREAKS the REAR WINDOW of the VAN, and a rabid-looking Yoshi LASHES OUT to defend his masters. He catches the NECK of the man in his jaws and TEARS --

LUIGI

Yoshi! No!

Luigi leaps into the back to restrain Yoshi. Mario ELBOWS him in the neck. Yoshi YELPS, lets go of the man's flesh. Luigi wrestles him to the ground...

With total malice, the healthy REACH IN through the BROKEN WINDOW, PUNCHING, CLAWING. Mario jams the gas pedal. He splits the crowd, gets away...

One-Armed Toad Boy watches them go. He has stopped playing catch with the bat.

Toad huddles into the corner of the van, as Luigi pins Yoshi down and looks up, making eye contact with a MOTHER in the fading crowd... She pleads --

MOTHER

They raided our homes. Took them
away, gave them to the afflicted.
Maybe you, Luigi. Maybe you can
save us.

And in fact the discrepancy between how she and her brethren look at Luigi and how they just treated Mario is vast.

EXT. CASTLE VANTAGE POINT | NIGHT

The van arrives at the top of a hill that serves as an adequate vantage point on the castle - not so close to cause alarm, especially in the darkness, but not so far away that Mario and company are unable to see everything.

They leave the van, keeping Yoshi inside. For now, there are no words... And what they observe on the artificially lit castle grounds does nothing to inspire conversation. Quite the opposite...

BECAUSE THE CASTLE HAS BEEN COMPLETELY TAKEN OVER.

Afflicted Goombas and Shy Guys troll the grounds. LAKITUS - Koopas that hover on CLOUDS and hurl SPIKED BALLS - float around its turrets, acting as sentries in the sky.

Koopas with the plague scale the castle. Some TEAR AWAY ITS GOLDEN TRIM while others PAINT THE WALLS BLACK.

Worse, near the moat, the Hammer Brothers operate a primitive FIRING SQUAD. Servants and guards and some of the men from the Princess's foyer party have been lined up in CHAINS. One-by-one they are selected for execution...

Gnarled and Bruised - both splotched with plague - trade off as executioner, THROWING SLEDGEHAMMERS at a chosen individual's SKULL, killing them in a single strike.

The bodies of the dead are dumped into the ever-dirtying water of the moat.

MARIO

I've never seen anything like this.

Mario is aghast. The same can be said for Toad and Luigi, who are both quiet.

MARIO

If she's inside, I'm going to need a Fire Flower, at least. Maybe an Invincibility Star...

LUIGI

How long's it been since one fell out of the sky?

Mario doesn't know.

LUIGI

Toad?

But Toad can't answer because he just noticed someone in line for the firing squad --

TOAD

There's- I think that's Toadsworth.

Yes, it is Toadsworth. And Bruised has just plucked him out of the lineup.

Mario, Luigi, and Toad watch helplessly as BRUISED EXECUTES TOADSWORTH. The body of the Princess's ward is then thrust into the moat.

TOAD

The architect and orchestrator of Rescue Day...

MARIO

They're going to kill everybody.

A beat.

TOAD

What about the Princess?

He turns to Mario, who reacts to his own disquiet by becoming defensive.

MARIO

We don't even know for sure that she's here, Toad.

Toad barely listens. He is too stricken by the grim possibilities...

TOAD

Your heroism could never be reclaimed.

MARIO

He's not going to kill her.

But even Mario can't fully believe this. As he stews, Luigi slinks to the opposite side of the van...

LUIGI

Can you see around the back?
There's a giant hole.

He's referring to the rear of the castle. Mario and Toad move in his direction. In fact, the hole is shaped to fit Bowser.

MARIO

A special entrance for Bowser.

LUIGI

That's what I thought, too.

MARIO

Question is whether he's come and gone or still inside.

TOAD

Mario, look over there, across from the hole... That's one of your floats.

Specifically, the float Mario and the Princess occupied during the parade, Bowser's throne room - albeit rebuilt and re-imagined.

The wooden carving of Bowser spitting a fireball - which was on a separate float - has been setup here, next to a wooden carving of the Princess, young and joyous, while a papier-mache Mario lies on his back, sprawled out in defeat.

A banner hangs over top of the float, attached to two posts --

LUIGI

Does that say-

TOAD

Abduction Day.

MARIO

He wants to win her over. Prove that she doesn't have to lose what she loves... Which means he hasn't killed her.

LUIGI

Yet.

MARIO

He won't.

LUIGI

You can't say that for sure. Not anymore.

MARIO

He hates me for making him look like a fool for so long. If nothing else, he'll use her to lure me in.

LUIGI

You're so convinced she's worth going after.

MARIO

She's the princess, Luigi.

LUIGI

So what? How do you know we wouldn't be better off without her? Tell me one thing she's done for us.

MARIO

She's spearheading the search for a cure.

LUIGI

The so-called search, right.

Dismissive, Luigi shakes his head and retreats towards the van. Toad lobbs a question at him --

TOAD

Luigi, can I ask... Did you disagree with Mario's strategy to cede the Princess to Bowser at Rescue Day?

MARIO

He has nothing to say about that.

Luigi stares back at Mario.

LUIGI

Actually, I do. I don't think he ever should have gone to Rescue Day in the first place.

Luigi gets inside the van and slams the door closed. Toad is stunned by this revelation. He has no time to dwell on it, however, due to movement at the back of the castle...

BOWSER exits out of the giant hole. PRINCESS PEACH is at his side. He is armor-less. She is without her white gloves. Even at a distance it is possible for Mario and Toad to tell without question that both are victims of the plague.

TOAD

Maybe it's makeup. Only a ruse, in order to...

Mario shoots a look at Toad, denouncing his improbable idea.

MARIO

She needs to find a cure now. At all costs.

They watch, as Bowser shows the float to the Princess. Inside the van, Luigi watches while checking his brother's reaction, which is unpleasant and unsure.

TOAD

321 days have passed since the last Invincibility Star fell.

MARIO

So we're due.

TOAD

Any day now. So long as this isn't a year nothing falls... But who can say?

Mario goes to the van and opens the driver side door. He asks Luigi --

MARIO

We don't have any Fire Flower paste left do we?

Luigi shakes his head no.

LUIGI

I could maybe scrape together some residue.

MARIO

Or go get more flowers from Fire Mountain.

LUIGI
How much time do you think you
have?

Now it's Mario's turn to shake his head. As he gets inside
the van --

MARIO
I don't know.

LUIGI
I could try. Maybe.

MARIO
You're going to have to do more
than try.

Mario puts the vehicle in gear.

EXT. TOAD'S HOME | NIGHT

The van pulls up out front. Like so many other homes, Toad's
has also been RAIDED and VANDALIZED.

Toad gets out of the van.

MARIO
You gonna be safe here?

TOAD
Is anyone going to be safe
anywhere?

He closes the door.

TOAD
You'll come to me before you make
your attempt on the castle?

Mario nods.

TOAD
If you save her from this, and she
can cure the plague, it will be
your most heroic conquest yet.

Toad walks to his front steps. To enter, he has no need to
unlock the door - it has already been separated from its
hinges.

EXT. SUPER MARIO PLUMBING / MARIO AND LUIGI'S HOME | NIGHT

Finally, Mario and Luigi have made it home. Unfortunately, the building is in tatters. Every window is broken. Shingles have been torn off the roof. There are holes in the facade. Supplies in the garage are strewn all over.

Since he can't get into the garage, Mario parks in the driveway. He lifts his pipe wrench off the floor of the van.

MARIO

Stay here with Yoshi. Get in the driver's seat. In case we need to run.

Luigi collects his pipe wrench.

LUIGI

I can go in with you.

MARIO

Just be ready.

Mario exits the van, leaves the door swinging in the wind. Luigi moves past Yoshi - who is still chained inside - pops open the passenger side door and slips into the front seat. He inches his door closed as Mario approaches their home...

The front door is lying on the porch. Mario steps over it and goes inside --

INT. MARIO AND LUIGI'S HOME | CONTINUOUS

Evidently, Larry Koopa and his gang of Shy Guys spent considerably more time here after we left them because the entire place is TRASHED.

As Mario stands in the entrance, staring straight ahead, however, he sees no immediate sign that his enemies remain... That is until he steps forward and turns towards the kitchen.

LARRY KOOPA IS WAITING WITH HIS CHAIN DRAPED OVER HIS SHOULDERS.

LARRY

Why hello there, Mario.

His nostrils flare up. He sniffles, swipes at them.

MARIO

Get out of my house.

LARRY

But I don't have what I want!

MARIO

What's that?

Larry pulls the chain off his shoulders, allowing it to dangle in his right hand.

LARRY

Good question! One I've been trying to answer with bottles and drugs and drugs and bottles... The meaning of life! In this case though, it's not really what I want because I never get what I want. It's what you deserve!

Larry walks forward, scraping the end of the chain across the tile flooring. Mario steels himself, readies his pipe wrench.

LARRY

The only dilemma is that my dad wants to give you something, but I think you should be slaughtered. Can I hold back? Only time will tell!

AND THEN LARRY ATTACKS --

He whips the chain out at Mario, who dodges. It strikes the wall behind the sink, gouging a hole in it.

Mario lunges back at Larry, wielding the pipe wrench. His first swing is a miss. On the follow through, he grabs Larry's chain and hangs onto the metal for a second - but Larry rips it away.

LARRY

Ah, victory slips through your fingers! Now for the jaws of defeat!

The fight intensifies. Mario clubs after Larry with the pipe wrench, using it like a baseball bat, while Larry erratically swings the chain in every direction, taking a scorched earth approach.

The chain is a cumbersome weapon - hard to aim and slow to reset. Mario uses this to his advantage. The mushroom power-up has greatly improved his fluidity, his speed, and his strength. His aches and pains are gone...

Until he takes a SHOT from the CHAIN right across the CHEST.
He spins backwards --

LARRY
Boom! Like a top!

Larry chops at Mario's ankle, trying to take him down. Mario jumps, about a foot higher than average --

The chain smacks against the floor - and Mario comes down on top of it with both of his boots.

Larry yanks the chain back - but Mario uses his weight and his strength to keep it grounded to the floor.

Larry yells. He wraps the free end of the chain around his fist and charges Mario, rearing back to punch --

But Mario is faster. He BASHES Larry's arm with the pipe wrench. Larry recoils and drops the chain - only to come after Mario like a wrestler --

Mario shoots backwards and SWINGS, striking Larry in the RIB CAGE and stopping him in his tracks.

He swings again --

The pipe wrench connects with Larry's SPINE. Unexpectedly, he stays upright - so Mario levels another swing - but at the last second Larry suddenly BUCKLES. The result --

MARIO STRIKES LARRY IN THE SKULL.

A slash of BLOOD flies through the air, SPLAYS across the wall.

Larry goes down.

A POOL OF BLOOD forms on the kitchen floor.

He stays down.

Mario drops the pipe wrench.

E/I. MARIO AND LUIGI'S HOME / VAN | NIGHT

Worried that Mario has not yet re-emerged, Luigi watches the house from the driver's seat with the engine still running. Yoshi is active in the back seat.

Out of nowhere, the passenger side door pops open. Luigi jolts --

It is DAISY.

Yoshi darts at her, but the chain restricts his mobility. Still, she leaps back, frightened...

LUIGI
You scared-

DAISY
What is he doing? He's scaring me.

LUIGI
He's chained. He can't hurt you.

She watches Yoshi, uncertain.

LUIGI
Is something wrong? How did you-

Daisy slides into the van. Luigi is taken aback.

LUIGI
You can't be here right now. I'm glad you got out of the tunnel, but something's going on inside.

DAISY
I need you.

LUIGI
What?

DAISY
I'm so scared but I think you need me too. For some reason I don't know. Or can't remember.

She touches his face.

DAISY
You're warm.

Luigi looks at her deeply. Just for a moment, he forgets every other concern.

MARIO (O.S.)
Luigi...

Mario has stepped outside onto the front porch. He signals for Luigi without really looking at the van and then goes back inside.

To Daisy, Luigi says --

LUIGI
I need to go.

DAISY
You really don't. But I'll come
back for you. I think we can help
each other.

On that note, Daisy leaves the van - and runs away.

Luigi sits for a few seconds, trying to fully process what
just occurred, before turning off the van and getting out.

INT. MARIO AND LUIGI'S HOME | MOMENTS LATER

Mario and Luigi stand over Larry's dead body. They stare down
at something previously unseen on the back of his neck... A
FRESH STREAK of PLAGUE.

MARIO
He grabbed me, tried to wrestle me
to the ground.

LUIGI
Did you touch his neck?

MARIO
I don't know. I don't think so.

A beat.

MARIO
Bowser wants to give me something.

LUIGI
That's what Larry said? You have
any idea...

MARIO
That's all he said. Who knows.

Then, immediately, as if avoiding the issue --

MARIO
Moving the body right now is risky.
We're gonna have to leave it.

LUIGI
For how long? We're just going to
keep a corpse in our kitchen?

MARIO
It's got the plague, Luigi! I don't
know, at least until the blood
dries.

Luigi stares at the body.

LUIGI
Or we could leave the house... Get
out of the Mushroom Kingdom
altogether.

Mario looks at his brother.

LUIGI
Why stay? So we can die here?

MARIO
We just found the Princess-

LUIGI
And she's trapped inside a castle
where the guards all have the
plague and they're killing anything
that gets close.

MARIO
You seriously want me to quit...

LUIGI
Everything is stacked against us.
The plague, Bowser, the Princess.
You even lost the support of the
public.

MARIO
I can get it back.

LUIGI
How? By rescuing Peach? By saving
someone they've grown to hate?

MARIO
That'll end when she cures the
plague.

LUIGI
Find those people in the street
that almost tore you out of the
van. Go talk to them. See what they
think. No matter what...

Although usually brash with his words, this sentence is hard
for Luigi to complete. Mario prompts his brother.

MARIO

What?

LUIGI

If you go to the castle, I'm not
going with you.

Mario struggles to respond, having never anticipated hearing
these words from Luigi.

MARIO

Then where are you going?

LUIGI

Away.

MARIO

Where, Luigi? Somewhere the plague
doesn't exist?

LUIGI

I'll write you a letter when I get
there and hope you're still around
to read it.

A beat.

LUIGI

Come on, Mario. Come with me.

MARIO

I'm going to save her.

LUIGI

Don't do that.

MARIO

She's all I know.

There is truth in this, but the decision is heavier and more
complex than a single sentiment. The moment weighs on both
brothers...

LUIGI

At least wait it out, see if an
Invincibility Star falls.

MARIO

For how long? They already tried to
kill me once. What if it takes
another year?

LUIGI

What if it comes tonight?

Mario takes a moment before responding.

MARIO
I should try to sleep.

He walks towards his bedroom.

LUIGI
I'll tie Yoshi up out front to
guard the place.

Mario nods. Sincerely, he adds --

MARIO
I hope you're still here when I
wake up.

Before going into his bedroom and closing the door.

INT. TOAD'S HOME | NIGHT

Toad stands in the doorway of his Mario memorabilia room. All of his collectibles have been pilfered or desecrated. Equally troubling, the One-Armed Toad Boy is sleeping on the floor, on top of a bed of pillows.

The boy's brother, sister, mom, and dad are also here. They have found respite on the floor. Their chests rise and fall in slumber. Evidence of the plague can be seen on each.

Toad breathes heavily, unnerved. The One-Armed Toad Boy stretches, yawns... And wakes up.

He sees Toad watching him.

He bounces off the pillows, then grabs his baseball bat from underneath them. The child walks towards Toad, avoiding his family members on the way.

Toad scuttles backwards...

The One-Armed Toad Boy follows.

Once Toad believes he is out of earshot from the memorabilia room and the boy's family, he speaks --

TOAD
This is my house.

ONE-ARMED TOAD BOY
You're Toad. I know. I used to want
to grow up to be just like you.
Then I got sick.
(MORE)

ONE-ARMED TOAD BOY (CONT'D)

I was one of the first ones. Everyone said I'd be lucky if I could even go to school. Then the plague took my arm, and my family got sick. My parents lost their jobs. We lived in the street. Mario wouldn't help us. That made me mad. But you kept writing nice things about him. I didn't understand that either. It made me want to be like you less. I started the riot at the parade and then finally someone helped me and my family. Ludwig gave us coins and a house. But I wanted a better house. So we took yours. It was empty. I didn't know where you were. Now we have two houses. Before the plague, we could barely afford one house. Now we got two for free. Maybe some day I'll like you again, Toad. Maybe if you start hating Mario. Who knows?

The One-Armed Toad Boy shrugs... And leaves the house.

Toad stares.

INT. MARIO AND LUIGI'S HOME, LUIGI'S BEDROOM | NIGHT

Wearing a single boxing glove, Luigi quietly smacks a heavy bag. He has broken a light sweat.

The shadow of a human appears in the window facing the backyard. The shadow grows, before being replaced by its creator, Daisy.

She stands still, gripping the broken candelabra and looking at Luigi. He stops with the bag, picks up a towel, dabs his face...

They keep their eyes on one another.

INT. MARIO AND LUIGI'S HOME, MARIO'S BEDROOM | "NIGHT"

Mario sleeps...

Until the clock hits 5:30 and he rolls up to a sitting position, his body, as always, acting as a natural alarm. As he comes awake, however, he becomes confused.

It is PITCH BLACK.

Mario grabs the clock on his nightstand.

MARIO

5:30...

He peers out the window. Not even a whisker of sunlight.

Mario climbs out of bed, leaves the bedroom. He searches the vandalized home for clocks. One still hangs on the wall in the living room, another active on the coffee maker.

Both say 5:31.

He goes outside through the broken sliding glass door and stares up at the sky - it may as well be midnight.

MARIO

The sun didn't come up.

A beat.

MARIO

Luigi, the sun didn't rise!

Mario turns back inside, hurries to Luigi's bedroom door --

MARIO

Luigi.

Nothing. Mario opens the door --

Luigi is not inside.

Mario checks the garage. The van is GONE. He rolls the garage door up, spirals back outside, to the front yard, searching for signs of his brother, signs of what is going on...

When he remembers Yoshi.

The pet is down on his haunches, as if asleep. Despite all the noise, he still hasn't moved.

MARIO

Yosh.

Mario continues to call Yoshi's name as he walks towards him... Yoshi continues to be still.

Mario reaches him, pets his neck. Something is wrong with Yoshi's head. It is bruised. The markings of the type of blow that would knock someone unconscious.

Mario lifts his hand away, looks at it.

BLOOD.

In addition to the blow to the head, Yoshi's THROAT has been SLIT. He is dead.

Mario stands... He covers his eyes with his hand.

EXT. MARIO AND LUIGI'S HOME | LATER

Mario drags Yoshi across the grass, to the backyard, to the shed that was his outdoor home. He slides the body inside, shuts the door.

INT. MARIO AND LUIGI'S HOME, MARIO'S BEDROOM | LATER

Mario adds extra layers of clothing to his body, wrapping a scarf around his neck, putting on a black balaclava and pulling on gloves, insuring no part of his skin is uncovered.

He lifts his pipe wrench off the bed, latches on to it...

One article of clothing remains. Mario's trademark red "M" cap. Without it, given that his entire body and face are obscured, no one will be able to tell who he is.

He picks the cap off the bed... And tugs it down over his skull.

He leaves the bedroom.

INT. MARIO AND LUIGI'S HOME, KITCHEN | MOMENTS LATER

Mario passes through. For the first time, he notices a JAR resting on the kitchen table. It is labeled with a symbol, a red, yellow, and white FLOWER, glazed with an aura of FIRE.

There is also a NOTE underneath the jar --

"I scraped together what I could, but I don't think it's enough."

Mario examines the inside of the jar, which is lightly dusted with a flaky substance that resembles pepper.

MARIO

It isn't.

Mario finishes reading the note --

"I'll wait for you at the pipe until noon. -L"

He floats it back onto the table.

EXT. SEWER PIPE SYSTEM | "NIGHT"

In darkness, even though it is now officially the morning, Luigi stands on top of the pipe. Daisy sits next to him.

Luigi looks out over the expanse of the Mushroom Kingdom, able to see the turrets of the castle. But he watches something else - the road - hoping to see some sign of Mario...

EXT. MARIO AND LUIGI'S HOME | "NIGHT"

Mario walks outside, into the street, to a place where the outlines of the castle, his own personal lighthouse, are visible in the distance, thanks solely to artificial lamps...

Because the moon is gone from the sky.

Noting this, Mario begins his journey towards the castle, an expedition to clash with Bowser and save the Princess unlike any he has undertaken in his life.