

Mothman in New York

A full-length play

By Josh Miguel Ewing

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Characters

DR. CRAM
MOTHMAN
LUCY
ELLIOT

Setting

New York City, NY. Recent.

Key

A forward slash (/) indicates an overlap in speech.

An asterisk (*) in the action lines indicates a new slide in Dr. Cram's Powerpoint. The contents of the slide don't matter as much, so long as they break up the pace of her lectures and are funny.

The text has been punctuated to serve the music of the play, not grammatical convention. Dashes are used sparingly and generally indicate a hard interruption.

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September 15th

Lucy walks home past a couple of trashcans on the street when Mothman suddenly pops out of one.

MOTHMAN

Are you avoiding me?

LUCY

AAAH!

(pepper sprays)

MOTHMAN

It's me--

(wheezing)

Mothman.

LUCY

Yeah, I recognized you.

MOTHMAN

(chokes)

Am I dying?

LUCY

No. Maybe? Crap, now I'm scared.

MOTHMAN

Maybe!?

LUCY

No you're not dying. Here let me...

Lucy takes out a bottle of water and washes out Mothman's eyes (somehow).

LUCY

Better?

Mothman nods.

MOTHMAN

So uh, have you? You haven't come by our alley these past two weeks. And you know where my nest is so I figured if you wanted to find me you could / but--

LUCY

On top of the Brooklyn Bridge?

MOTHMAN

Yes.

LUCY

That's hard to get to on legs. They don't just let you up.

DR. CRAM

It was beyond difficult getting a camera up there. Eric Adams you're never getting that 200\$ fine back.

MOTHMAN

Oh! I'm sorry! I didn't know that.

LUCY

Why/ would you?

MOTHMAN

I can fly you up. If you want?

LUCY

... No... no... really? No. Could you? Carry me?

Mothman holds out a hand.

MOTHMAN

I'd like to try.

Lucy hesitates with her head, but her hand takes his.

Mothman spins Lucy into his arms (Hold on tight, spider monkey) as his wings extend out behind him. They begin to flap, taking him and Lucy off the ground and into the air.

Eventually they land somewhere. Presumably on the Brooklyn Bridge but who has the budget? The lights of the city flicker beneath them.

LUCY

Why did you come here?

MOTHMAN

Oh this is a funny story.

LUCY

If there's another gun in this.

MOTHMAN

There might be. So my nest down in West Virginia was this old factory right? They made dynamite there way back when. It's been overgrown as long as I'd been there. But I guess it looked cool enough that all of the teens would hang out there and um...

LUCY

Fuck?

MOTHMAN

Yeah. There was this one car, a blue pick-up with the flat bed? I remember because they never used the back, they'd just keep it in the front and slam the horn all night long. They came every week for months. It was a good alarm clock. Consistent. Until one night I don't wake up from the horn but the two of them fighting. I couldn't hear what they were saying though, wish I did. The fighting died down too quick for me to get close enough to eavesdrop. Then they drove off. After that the pick-up stopped coming. But then, a couple seasons later, it came back. No honking though. Instead the pick-up was sitting there in the dark and the two of them were in the back, looking at the stars and talking about something. And I really wanted to know what they were talking about so I got a bit closer. I still couldn't make out what they were talking about but I could see their faces. All that time I'd never seen their faces. He was looking at the sky but she was looking at him and I remember thinking just look at her. Look at her. But no, then he looked at me. He points. She screams. He pulls out a gun.

LUCY

God damn it!

MOTHMAN

Fires. And I guess it hit something in the factory because then the whole thing explodes.

LUCY

What is happening in West Virginia?

MOTHMAN

I got launched above the clouds, catch myself there, and realize I'd never been this high up. So I just looked around. And in all that darkness there was this one great big light in the distance. I don't know why but it felt, warm. Not actually. It was actually real cold but, I saw this light and I knew I had to fly there.

LUCY

Like a moth to a flame.

MOTHMAN

Hm?

LUCY

You've never heard that? Moths are attracted to light. That's probably why you can't fly during fireworks. Too many shiny lights pulling you in every direction. Same as what drew you to New York.

MOTHMAN

Huh. / I guess so.

LUCY

Not to diminish it or anything, it's still a very nice story. Romantic, almost. By powers unknown you were drawn to the city. Like fate. I'm jealous.

MOTHMAN

You're jealous of a Mothman?

LUCY

You have direction. You felt a calling and you followed it, not a lot of people get that. You should be proud. In comparison I... I worry that I'm not a person who does things. Like the life I have, I don't think I chose it so much as it just pooled around me. I never really want anything. Or if I do not badly enough to chase it. I'm just dull.

MOTHMAN

You're not dull.

LUCY

It's okay. I accept it. I'm dull.

MOTHMAN

Well if this thing about moths you say is true than you can't be dull. Because here we are with every bright light in New York City and all I can look at, or think of, or want to be near, is you.

LUCY

Oh.

Beat.

MOTHMAN

If you were a person who did things, what would you want to do?

Lucy kisses Mothman.

MOTHMAN

Can you do it again?

Lucy tackles Mothman to the ground with a kiss.

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DR. CRAM

Small point of correction...

*

It's going to bother me if I don't bring it up. This'll only take a second though.

*

It is generally well-known and well-documented that nocturnal insects have a curious fatal attraction towards artificial light sources. "Like a moth to a flame", Shakespeare once wrote. But Shakespeare, poetic as he may be, likely doesn't know the reason why they do this. It is not because moths have a general yearning for death, or even light. In fact, they're not really flying *towards* anything at all.

*

The light-compass theory postulates that moths navigate by flying at a constant angle to the moon. One must remember that before the invention of fire and eventually electricity, the moon was the only light source most nocturnal animals interacted with. It was a distant point in the sky, that always stayed in the same place in the sky. It was a reliable reference point for a moth to navigate their three-dimensional space.

*

So what happens when moths encounter a second light source? Much brighter? Much closer? They try to treat it as they would the moon, flying at an angle, but they can't.

*

They get confused. They're not attracted to a light, just overwhelmed by it. And instead of flying *towards* anything as if its a choice, their flight pattern instead devolves into a disoriented spiral closer and closer to their doom.

*

So... do that with that.

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