

PAPER TOWN

Written by

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A 10-Minute Screenplay

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EXT. PAPER TOWN STREET - LIMBO

MICHEAL CALLOWAY stands in the street of a town made entirely out of blank, white paper. Nothing seems to stir as he looks around, clueless to where he is, yet not panicking. He holds a plain metal zippo lighter in his hand. MARY-ANN suddenly appears beside him, seemingly out of mid-air.

MARY-ANN  
Hello, Micheal.

Micheal is startled, holding a hand to his heart.

MARY-ANN (CONT'D)  
My name is Mary-Ann.

Micheal tries to speak, but finds he cannot. He absently touches his throat.

MARY-ANN (CONT'D)  
Do not worry, Micheal. You will  
when you need to. Do you know where  
you are?

Micheal shakes his head.

MARY-ANN (CONT'D)  
Good.

EXT. PAPER TOWN STREET - LIMBO

Mary-Ann acts as Micheal's guide in Paper Town, touring him down the streets.

MARY-ANN  
Why have you come here, Micheal?

Mary-Ann slides her finger along the wall of a building as they walk, leaving a trail of black ink.

MARY-ANN (CONT'D)  
To Paper Town.

Micheal, following her example, tentatively writes on the wall "Escape".

MARY-ANN (CONT'D)  
From?

Micheal writes "Me".

FLASHBACK - ROOM - LIMBO

Micheal is angry, yelling at nothing, and lights a page of paper on fire with his lighter.

END FLASHBACK

EXT. PAPER TOWN STREET - LIMBO

Mary-Ann reaches out to the wall and takes away a plain, white page. She hands it to Micheal.

MARY-ANN

Running is never the answer

Micheal takes the page and starts folding it.

EXT. TOWER BALCONY - LIMBO

Mary-Ann stands at the railing of the balcony, overlooking Paper Town, while Micheal continues folding his piece of paper.

MARY-ANN

You made this place, Micheal. You always were fascinated with creation.

Micheal reveals an origami swan, which comes to life and flies away.

MARY-ANN (CONT'D)

A pity you were never made for it.

The swan falters and falls out of the sky. Micheal and Mary-Ann watch it plummet.

EXT. PAPER TOWN STREET - LIMBO

Mary-Ann is back to leading Micheal down the street. Life appears as they walk, with origami people, origami children, and origami animals seemingly unfolding out of the ground.

MARY-ANN

The son of man was born of hope.  
Yet you were birthed from the womb  
of misery.

Micheal unconsciously fingers the lighter in his hand, using it much like a stress reliever.

MARY-ANN (CONT'D)  
 You are an affliction on mankind,  
 Micheal. Even as a child.

FLASHBACK - YARD - LIMBO

YOUNG MICHEAL stands watching a dog he set on fire burn, his lighter still flickering in his hand.

END FLASHBACK

EXT. PAPER TOWN STREET - LIMBO

Micheal falls against the building wall and hurriedly writes out "Stop". Mary-Ann obeys, waiting calmly. Micheal writes "That's not me anymore".

MARY-ANN  
 You caged it?

Micheal writes "Yes".

MARY-ANN (CONT'D)  
 But not all of it.

FLASHBACK - HOUSE - LIMBO

Micheal is angry, yelling, fighting with his wife, a gun in his hand. A wedding photo is shattered on the floor. After they struggle, he fires a shot, kills her, and flees the house

END FLASHBACK

EXT. PAPER TOWN STREET - LIMBO

MICHEAL  
 (raspy, painful to speak)  
 No.

MARY-ANN  
 Justice is served on a bloody platter.

EXT. TRAIN OVERPASS - LIMBO

Micheal and Mary-Ann stand atop an overpass as a train rolls by beneath them.

MARY-ANN  
(matter-of-factly)  
You are a sick man, Micheal.

Micheal writes on the railing "I'm not".

MARY-ANN (CONT'D)  
You are fragile. Impressionable  
like paper. Only human, yet angry  
enough to boil the sun.

Micheal writes "Don't want to be".

MARY-ANN (CONT'D)  
But you are. And what came of it?

FLASHBACK - ROOM - LIMBO

Micheal cries in a corner, a gun in his hand. He puts the barrel in his mouth and fires.

END FLASHBACK

EXT. TRAIN OVERPASS - LIMBO

MICHEAL  
(raspy)  
I didn't... want to.

MARY-ANN  
No excuses. Lying does not become  
you.

EXT. PAPER TOWN STREET - LIMBO

Mary-Ann and Micheal walk down the street.

MARY-ANN  
I want to help you, Micheal.

MICHEAL  
(mild rasp)  
Help?

MARY-ANN  
To cure you.

MICHEAL  
(mild rasp)  
I'm not... sick. I don't need...  
any cure.

MARY-ANN  
You live in a cage, Micheal. I want  
to break the lock.

FLASHBACK - ROOM - LIMBO

Micheal struggles with himself, clutching at his bleeding  
head and flicking his lighter open repeatedly.

END FLASHBACK

EXT. PAPER TOWN STREET - LIMBO

MARY-ANN  
For you, Micheal. The part of you  
you so desperately tried to put  
down.

FLASHBACK - HOSPITAL - LIMBO

Micheal is being rolled down a hospital hallway in a gurney,  
with thick bandages wrapped around his head, his lighter  
still clutched in his hand. He is suddenly a bed, and the  
lighter is placed on the nightstand beside his bed.

END FLASHBACK

EXT. PAPER TOWN STREET - LIMBO

Mary-Ann approaches an origami man and touches a finger to  
him, lighting him on fire.

MARY-ANN  
And failed. Rabid dogs do not go  
quietly.

MICHEAL  
(alarmed)  
What are you...?

Micheal grabs a nearby pail of water and douses the origami man with it, putting the flames out. However, as he walks away, the origami man falls apart and to the ground as his wet limbs tear from his body. Micheal looks on aghast.

MARY-ANN

Look at what you have done.

MICHEAL

Why did you do that?

MARY-ANN

Why do you, Micheal?

MICHEAL

You didn't... You didn't need to.

MARY-ANN

(deeply)

Yet you made me.

Micheal understands there is more to what she said than on the surface level.

MICHEAL

What are you.

Mary-Ann walks up to him, standing at his side, and she strokes the zippo lighter held in his hand. She leans into his ear.

MARY-ANN

I am nothing.

Mary-Ann passes him by.

MARY-ANN (CONT'D)

You were made for fire. I am setting you back on you tracks.

MICHEAL

(desperate)

I don't want to! I'm a good person.

Micheal writes out "Help" on the sidewalk.

MICHEAL (CONT'D)

A good person.

MARY-ANN

Good people do not murder.

EXT. PAPER TOWN COURTYARD - LIMBO

Mary-Ann and Micheal appear in the Courtyard of Paper Town, where stands at the center a cage made out of paper and Mary-Ann beside it. A mob of origami people surrounds them, with "Help" scrawled across each of their faces and various surfaces. Micheal looks to the cage.

MICHEAL

What is that?

MARY-ANN

You are a monster. It is fair time you act it.

MICHEAL

What's in there?

MARY-ANN

A reflection. Look.

Micheal steps toward it, close enough to see inside. Caged within is Young Micheal, holding his zippo lighter with his eyes closed.

MICHEAL

Is that... That's-

MARY-ANN

When he was young, Micheal Calloway learned to repress his nature beneath social rules and regulations. He crafted the lock and the key he burnt. However, some rabid dogs are harder to put down than others.

MICHEAL

No. No, keep it away.

From the congregation, ghostly whispers of "help" drift in. Micheal backs away from the cage.

MARY-ANN

Running is never the answer.

MICHEAL

(fearful)

Stay away from me!

MARY-ANN

Embrace him.

The ghostly whispers crescendo as more join in. The edges of Paper Town begin to curl in on itself, like paper being lit on fire.

MARY-ANN (CONT'D)  
Embrace him.

MICHEAL  
(yelling)  
No!

MARY-ANN  
We demand vindication.

MICHEAL  
I won't!

MARY-ANN  
Come, Micheal.

MICHEAL  
Stop it!

MARY-ANN  
Come home.

MICHEAL  
(tearful)  
I have no home! Leave me be!

MARY-ANN  
Come back.

MICHEAL  
I can't...

MARY-ANN  
Embrace him...

Mary-Ann reaches for the lock to the cage.

MARY-ANN (CONT'D)  
... and be rectified.

MICHEAL  
(furious, yelling)  
GO TO HELL!

The lock burns in her hand.

MARY-ANN  
For he is you... and you are him.

She breaks the lock and Young Micheal opens his eyes. Micheal is petrified, his anger immediately subsided to shock. He is spellbound as Paper Town goes up in flames and the whispering roar increases.

MARY-ANN (CONT'D)

For he is you-

MICHEAL

- And I am him.

Paper Town is consumed in fire and vanishes.

INT. HOSPITAL - REALITY

Micheal wakes up in shock, inhaling deeply and arching his back slightly. He catches the attention of NURSE PAIGE and DR. TOWNSHEND at his bedside. He relaxes and pants heavily as the doctor inspects him.

NURSE PAIGE

He's awake!

DR. TOWNSHEND

Mr. Calloway.

(snaps fingers)

Mr. Calloway, you all there? You with us?

Micheal's attention wanders the room before centering on the doctor.

DR. TOWNSHEND (CONT'D)

Mr. Calloway, are you all here?

Micheal turns away from the doctor and looks to his nightstand, where his lighter sits.

MICHEAL

Yeah. Yeah, I'm all here, mister.

INT. HOSPITAL LOBBY - REALITY - AFTERNOON

Police officers speak with Dr. Townshend, questioning him in regards to Micheal. Several police cars are outside the hospital, lights flashing.

INT. HOSPITAL NICU - REALITY - AFTERNOON

Micheal stands in the middle of NICU. Babies are crying. A trail of gasoline leads its way to Micheal, where several jerry cans lay scattered at his feet. A few hospital nurses and attendants lay mangled around the room. Micheal is spattered with their blood. A trail of unraveled bandages lead to him. A gaping bullet wound blemishes the back of his head. He looks around at the crying children. He then flicks his lighter one, twice, three times. On the fourth strike:

BLACK OUT.

END.