

# THE LAST LIVING QUIMBLY

A one act play by Brad White

*In a struggling small town desperate for a miracle, eccentric Professor Winslow unveils a shocking discovery—the last living Quimbly, a rare and completely invisible creature that could put their town on the map. As skepticism turns to hysteria, belief becomes unstoppable, leading to bizarre rituals, mass chaos, and one mayor's desperate attempt to stop the madness before it's too late. But in a world where perception is reality, does it even matter if the Quimbly is real?*

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# The Last Living Quimbly

## Cast of Characters

PROFESSOR WINSLOW: An eccentric visionary, confident and persuasive.

MAYOR CARSON: Skeptical, practical, grumpy.

MRS. FINKLE: A retired schoolteacher, prone to sentimentality.

RANDY: Eager to believe, easily influenced.

HAROLD: The town baker, good hearted.

OFFICER HENDERSON: A well-meaning but somewhat clueless officer of the law.

TOWNSPERSON 1: Anyone

TOWNSPERSON 2: Anyone

### SETTING:

A small-town meeting space. At center stage sits a large dog cage, completely covered with a cloth. A few chairs are arranged facing the cage, giving the setup of a small-town announcement.

### AT RISE:

From off stage, Mrs. Finkle enters alongside Randy. She walks slowly and deliberately, clutching her purse like it contains national secrets. Randy follows with an eager bounce, wearing an oversized jacket and carrying a suspiciously large thermos.

MRS. FINKLE

You know, Randy, I have a good feeling about this one.

RANDY

Oh, me too. You can tell just by the smell of the room. It smells... important.

MRS. FINKLE

Last time I had this feeling was before the great potato sculpture unveiling.

RANDY

The one that turned green and collapsed?

MRS. FINKLE  
It was still art.

*They sit near the front, eyeing the covered cage.*

RANDY  
What do you think's in there?

MRS. FINKLE  
Hopefully not bees. There was a bee year, you know.

*HAROLD enters, holding a to-go coffee and looking mildly skeptical in the way only a man with flour in his hair can.*

HAROLD  
Evening.

RANDY  
Harold! You think it's bees?

HAROLD  
I hope not. I'm still recovering from the time he built that biofuel depot behind my bakery.

MRS. FINKLE  
Oh, I loved that. The whole town smelled like French fries for three months.

RANDY  
I miss it. It was like living in a happy meal.

HAROLD  
It also exploded.

MRS. FINKLE  
Just the once.

*They settle in. Randy leans forward, peering toward the cage.*

RANDY  
He told me this one's gonna put the town on the map.

HAROLD

That's what he said about the giant kite.

MRS. FINKLE  
(shuddering) Oh, don't bring up the kite.

RANDY  
I thought it was cool! Until it took out the power lines.

HAROLD  
My nephew still twitches every time he sees string.

*Mayor Carson enters the stage, already annoyed. He carries a small notebook and mutters to himself.*

MAYOR CARSON  
Let me guess. He's discovered a unicorn that runs on compost.

*He notices the cage.*

MAYOR CARSON  
Oh, good. A cage. That's always a promising start.

MRS. FINKLE  
Now Mayor, don't start in before he even opens his mouth.

MAYOR CARSON  
I didn't say anything about the Kudzu Festival, did I? And where did that get us?

MRS. FINKLE  
It was kind of pretty.

MAYOR CARSON  
You couldn't even see the street signs! Or the fire hydrants! Or my garage! I had to climb out the second-story window for a week. And let's not forget what came next—his *flytrap phase*. He said he imported "harmless carnivorous flora" from the Amazon Rainforest. Harmless! They were the size of patio umbrellas and hissed when you got too close. We lost three cats, a Pomeranian, and I'm pretty sure a UPS driver's shoe is still inside one of them. And he had the gall to tell me they were "environmentally engaged."

RANDY  
They were *awesome*.

HAROLD

I wouldn't describe them that way. I still haven't told my wife what happened to her cat.

*Professor Winslow bursts in with his usual flair—coat flapping, hair slightly windblown, holding a stack of dramatic notecards he won't use.*

PROFESSOR WINSLOW  
Friends. Neighbors. Believers in possibility...

*He scans the room, eyes gleaming. The crowd stills.*

PROFESSOR WINSLOW  
What I am about to reveal will change this town's destiny.  
Forever.

*He places a reverent hand on the cloth-covered cage. The tension grows. Even the Mayor, arms crossed, watches with faint curiosity.*

*Winslow steps back, building the moment.*

PROFESSOR WINSLOW  
Tonight... you will witness something no one else on Earth has ever seen.

*He reaches for the cloth—then stops.*

PROFESSOR WINSLOW  
But first, let me ask you this...

*Lights slowly dim as he prepares to make the reveal. The town leans forward.*

MAYOR CARSON  
Winslow, this better not be another one of your projects. Last time you had us invest in a corn maze with no exit.

PROFESSOR WINSLOW  
(defensive)That was an artistic statement!

MAYOR CARSON

(scoffing)It was a death trap, Winslow. We had to call in search and rescue.

PROFESSOR WINSLOW

It was to promote advanced problem solving in children.

MAYOR CARSON

All you promoted was hysteria. I almost lost the last election because of it.

MRS. FINKLE

(squinting at the cage)What's in there, Professor Winslow? ... Is it dangerous?

PROFESSOR WINSLOW

(excited)Not dangerous—revolutionary.

*The group shifts uncomfortably.*

MAYOR CARSON

(skeptical)Winslow... tell me you didn't trap a bear.

PROFESSOR WINSLOW

(chuckling)Oh, much rarer than a bear.

MRS. FINKLE

A... tiger?

PROFESSOR WINSLOW

(grinning)Rarer than a tiger.

RANDY

(quietly)It's not an alligator, right? You know about my thing with alligators.

PROFESSOR WINSLOW

No alligators. No bears. No tigers. No—(dramatic pause)—ordinary creature.

*Beat. The group leans forward slightly.*

PROFESSOR WINSLOW

What I am about to show you... is the key to our town's future.

*He grabs the cover. The crowd tenses. Winslow pauses for dramatic effect, then whips the cloth away—The cage is*

*empty. Silence. The townspeople stare.  
Then—*

HAROLD  
(smirking)Well, hell. I guess it got away.

*Laughter ripples through the group.  
Winslow remains completely serious.  
When the laughter dies down, he steps  
forward.*

PROFESSOR WINSLOW  
(soft, commanding)No.

*Beat. The crowd waits.*

PROFESSOR WINSLOW  
It has not "gotten away."

*Another beat. They wait for the  
punchline. It doesn't come.*

MAYOR CARSON  
(flat)Winslow.

PROFESSOR WINSLOW  
(leaning in)The Quimbly... is the only creature on Earth that is  
completely invisible.

*A long silence. The crowd stares at the  
empty cage. Then, snorts of laughter.*

HAROLD  
You got me. Good joke. Real funny.

PROFESSOR WINSLOW  
(serene)It's not a joke.

*The laughter dies. People glance at  
each other.*

MAYOR CARSON  
(scoffing)Winslow, this is a new low. An invisible creature?  
That's the best you could come up with?

MRS. FINKLE

(slightly defensive)Well, just because we can't see it... doesn't mean it's not real.

MAYOR CARSON

Oh, come on! Are you all seriously falling for this? He's standing there telling us he has nothing in a cage, and you're nodding along like it makes sense?

RANDY

(sheepishly)Well... I mean, you can't prove it's not there...

HAROLD

Yeah, and, I mean, if it was real... imagine what it could do for the town!

MAYOR CARSON

(frustrated)Oh, for God's sake! This is how it starts! First, it's "just imagine," then it's "well, maybe," and the next thing you know, we're building a Quimbly World theme park with a gift shop selling plush toys of an animal no one has ever seen!

PROFESSOR WINSLOW

(smoothly)Now, that's an idea. A theme park. People would come from all over—

MAYOR CARSON

(snarling)I was being sarcastic, Winslow!

*The crowd murmurs. There's hesitation now—people want to believe, but Mayor Carson is holding firm.*

MRS. FINKLE

(sweetly)Mayor, sometimes faith is all we need.

MAYOR CARSON

Oh, give me a break—

RANDY

If we don't believe in it, how can we ever hope to see it?

*The crowd is turning. Winslow watches as belief begins to spread. Mayor Carson glares at them all, still refusing. Winslow steps forward, locking eyes with him.*

PROFESSOR WINSLOW

(low, persuasive) Mayor... what if you're wrong?

*Silence. The tension is thick. Carson's jaw tightens. He folds his arms but says nothing. Winslow smiles, knowing the battle isn't over—but the tide is shifting.*

*Professor Winslow stands confidently, surveying the group.*

MAYOR CARSON

(flat, arms crossed) Alright. Let's just take a step back. (gesturing to the cage) So, we're all just going to pretend this... thing is in there? We're all going to act like it's real?

RANDY

(defensive) We're not *pretending*, Mayor. We're... keeping an open mind.

MRS. FINKLE

(nods) And I have to say, the idea of being home to something this rare... it's rather thrilling.

HAROLD

(shrugs) Not that I'm buying completely in on this...but, what's the harm in a little belief? It's not like we'd be the first town to make something up for tourism.

MAYOR CARSON

(firm) This isn't some folk tale! This is a *lie*! You're all letting Winslow pull you into some elaborate joke—

PROFESSOR WINSLOW

(interrupting) Not a joke, Mayor. A *vision*.

*He steps toward the cage, placing a reverent hand on the bars.*

I understand this is difficult for you to accept. You want proof. You want something tangible. The Quimby does not *demand* to be seen. It simply *is*. It exists beyond our limited understanding, beyond the constraints of what our eyes allow us to perceive. But... that does not mean it is not *real*.

*The people in the room murmur, nodding. Winslow turns to them, feeding on their growing acceptance.*

RANDY

(to Carson) You always say we need something to put this town on the map. Well, what if this is it?

MAYOR CARSON

Oh, for the love of—so we're just going to declare this invisible *thing* the town's greatest attraction?

MRS. FINKLE

It wouldn't be the first time people came to see something they couldn't actually see. The Loch Ness Monster, *Bigfoot*—

HAROLD

(nodding) Heck, I once paid five bucks to see "The World's Smallest Horse" and all they had was an angry chihuahua in a cowboy hat.

*Laughter. Mayor Carson pinches the bridge of his nose, exasperated.*

MAYOR CARSON

(rubbing temples) I cannot believe this is happening.

PROFESSOR WINSLOW

(calm, persuasive) Mayor, belief is the strongest force in the world. It builds cathedrals. It starts revolutions. And sometimes... it turns a forgotten town into a destination.

*Beat. The crowd is with him now. Winslow sees it. He turns to them, his voice growing more triumphant.*

Imagine the headlines! "*The Last Living Quimbly: The World's Rarest Creature.*" Imagine the visitors. The economic boom. Our town, alive again.

*Excited murmurs spread. A few people nod enthusiastically. Carson, however, remains a brick wall.*

MAYOR CARSON

(flat) And if no one actually sees it?

PROFESSOR WINSLOW

(soft smile)That will only make them want to see it more.

*Silence. The townspeople look at each other. Winslow has won them over. After a moment, Winslow steps forward and places the cloth back over the cage, as if sealing the decision. He looks out over the room, nodding in satisfaction.*

PROFESSOR WINSLOW  
Tomorrow.. we tell the world.

*(Lights fade to black.)*

*Lights up. The meeting space is dimly lit. The room is empty, save for the cage, still covered. After a beat, a figure cautiously peeks in—HAROLD. He glances around nervously before creeping inside.*

*Harold hesitates, staring at the cage. He takes a few slow steps forward, then looks over his shoulder as if making sure no one else is around.*

HAROLD  
(muttering to himself)  
Alright, Harold. Just a quick peek. No harm in a quick peek.

*He reaches out and carefully lifts a small corner of the cloth. He squints, as if trying to see something. He tilts his head, perplexed, then lifts the cover a bit more.*

*Beat. He leans in closer. Then, ever so gently, he unlocks the cage door and opens it a crack.*

HAROLD  
(whispering)I mean, if it's invisible... how do we know it's still—

*A sudden noise from offstage—a loud creak or a footstep. Harold gasps, panics, and instinctively jumps back, bumping the cage. The door swings fully*

*open. He stares at it, eyes wide in horror.*

HAROLD  
(terrified whisper)  
Oh... oh no.

*Footsteps grow louder—someone is coming! Harold frantically throws the cover back over the cage and bolts out of the room just as Professor Winslow enters. Winslow pauses, frowns, sensing something is off. He slowly steps toward the cage.*

*Beat. He reaches out, lifts the cloth... and freezes.*

*His expression shifts from confusion... to understanding... to an intense, solemn dread. He straightens, turns to the empty room, and softly, gravely—*

PROFESSOR WINSLOW  
(low, dramatic)  
The Quimbly... is gone.

*Beat. The realization settles. He slowly steps away from the cage, then takes a deep breath. With an air of authority, he nods to himself, then strides toward edge of the stage. He looks out as if searching the area. Mrs. Finkle walks onto the stage and up to the Professor.*

MRS. FINKLE  
I just wanted to stop by and see how the little thing is doing.  
Is it hungry? Does it need..

PROFESSOR WINSLOW  
The Quimbly is gone.

MRS. FINKLE  
What? Oh, my goodness. What? How?

PROFESSOR WINSLOW  
When I came in this morning, the cage door was open.

MRS. FINKLE

Oh my. You don't think...

PROFESSOR WINSLOW

I don't know. Someone might have let him out but Quimblys are very crafty, perhaps it let itself out.

MRS. FINKLE

We have to do something.

PROFESSOR WINSLOW

Gather the others. We'll let them know and then alert the town.

*Mrs. Finkle nods and exits the stage. The professor paces back and forth in the room. After a moment, Mrs. Finkle returns with Randy and Harold.*

RANDY

We just heard. What happened? I mean who would let it out?

HAROLD

(sheepishly) Uh, yeah. Who would do such a thing?

PROFESSOR WINSLOW

That doesn't matter now. We just need to get it back. It may not be able to survive on its own.

MRS. FINKLE

Oh, the poor thing.

HAROLD

We'll let everyone know. We have to find him.

MRS. FINKLE

(To professor) Him?

PROFESSOR WINSLOW

Uncertain.

RANDY

We'll find him Professor.

HAROLD

We, uh, won't let you down.

MRS. FINKLE

What are we waiting for? The poor little thing needs us.

*Mrs. Finkle, Harold and Randy exit.*

*The Professor paces, looks out the door, goes over and looks at the cage, sits down and then starts pacing again.*

PROFESSOR WINSLOW

(muttering to himself) This is bad. This is bad. Who would open the cage? Why?

*The Professor wanders to the edge of the stage as if looking out the door again. As he does, Randy comes running in.*

RANDY

Professor, the town all knows now. Everyone is searching. Randy is forming units for each part of the town. Most of the people believe.

PROFESSOR WINSLOW

Not everyone is as perceptive as you, Randy.

RANDY

Uh, we'll find it, Professor.

PROFESSOR WINSLOW

That's good news. I think we..

RANDY

(Interrupting)And...I swear I felt something brush past me near the general store. It was quick—like a breeze, but... *alive*.

*Mrs. Finkle enters breathless.*

MRS. FINKLE

The lady's auxiliary is fanning out across the town. We have to find the Quimbly

RANDY

I just told The Professor; I think it just ran by me by the bookstore. I felt a breeze, but it was quick.

*Harold enters carrying a giant net.*

MRS. FINKLE

Oh my, that makes sense! The Quimbly is probably frightened! Poor thing, it's never been outside the cage before!

HAROLD

(squinting)How do we know it didn't just... you know... leave?

RANDY

(defensive)Because it wouldn't. The Professor said the Quimbly wants to be here. It chose us.

*Townsperson 1 runs onstage, waving wildly.*

TOWNSPERSON 1

(excited)I found something! I think it's Quimbly fur!

*Gasps. Everyone gathers as the Townsperson holds up a clump of something that, to the untrained eye, looks a lot like lint.*

MRS. FINKLE

(clutching her chest)Oh, heavens. That's definitely from the Quimbly.

HAROLD

(skeptical)It looks like pocket lint.

TOWNSPERSON 1

(offended)It's *Quimbly fur!*

*Before the debate can continue, another TOWNSPERSON runs in, panting.*

TOWNSPERSON 2

My son said he saw it! Or something. He swears it was sitting right outside his treehouse! But then it... it vanished!

*More murmurs of awe. The energy is building. People nod in agreement—this is real, it is happening.*

*Mayor Carson enters, arms crossed, looking at the town with utter exasperation.*

MAYOR CARSON

(flat)Alright, what fresh nonsense is happening now?

MRS. FINKLE  
The Quimbly escaped.

MAYOR CARSON  
What? (Snarky) How would you know?

MRS. FINKLE  
The whole town is searching.

RANDY  
(excited)We've found *evidence!* Fur, footprints, *witnesses!*

MAYOR CARSON  
(flat)Footprints.

MRS. FINKLE  
(nodding)Yes! Someone found indents in the grass!

MAYOR CARSON  
(unimpressed)Grass. Indents.

HAROLD  
(defensive)Well, *something* stepped there!

*More excited murmurs. One of the townspeople holds up a completely normal-looking stick.*

TOWNSPERSON 1  
And this was snapped in half right where the Quimbly was last seen!

*Gasps. People stare at the broken twig in reverence.*

MAYOR CARSON  
(deadpan)Oh no. Not a stick.

*Everyone ignores him, their energy growing. Winslow clears his throat.*

PROFESSOR WINSLOW  
(loud, commanding)My friends!

*The room hushes. People turn to him, eager.*

PROFESSOR WINSLOW

You have done *wonderful* work. The Quimbly is close—I can feel it. But we must remain calm and strategic.

*Nods of agreement. Winslow paces, thinking.*

We must remember the Quimbly's one weakness. It cannot resist...

*Dramatic pause. Everyone leans in.*

RANDY

(breathless)What? What is it?

PROFESSOR WINSLOW

It cannot resist a hat... placed upside-down on the ground.

*Silence. The crowd processes this information. Then—nodding. Agreement.*

HAROLD

(low, serious)That makes sense.

*Two people wearing hats immediately remove them, flip them over, and placing them on the stage. Someone places a bowl upside-down for good measure. Mayor Carson watches completely dumbfounded.*

MAYOR CARSON

(slowly, horrified)You have all lost your minds.

*More murmurs of agreement—we must be patient—this will work. Winslow surveys the room, smiling.*

PROFESSOR WINSLOW

Now, we wait.

*Silence. The townspeople stand still, staring at the upside-down hats, as if expecting something to appear. The moment stretches...*

*Winslow slowly goes over and sits at a desk at the edge of the stage.*

*Everyone runs out except the mayor.*

MAYOR CARSON

Winslow, I don't know what kind of game you are playing here, but you need to put a stop to it.

PROFESSOR WINSLOW

My dear Mayor Carson, this is no game, we must find the Quimbly before something bad happens to it.

MAYOR CARSON

Okay. Okay. You may have all the others fooled with this Quimbly nonsense, but I, for one, am not. I'm not sure what kind of angle you are running here, but it feels like a scam. I just can't quite put my finger on it.

PROFESOR WINSLOW

I assure you Mayor; my intentions are completely honorable. I am merely trying to take advantage of the fact that we have...had a living Quimbly that has the potential to reverse the fortunes of this town.

MAYOR CARSON

You're trying to take advantage of something alright, I just...

*Randy runs on stage.*

RANDY

(running in) Larry at the seafood shop said the Quimbly probably likes fish, so everyone is hanging fish from trees all over town.

MAYOR CARSON

Oh for god's sake.

PROFESSOR WINSLOW

Couldn't hurt.

RANDY

Mrs. Finkle went to Walmart and bought practically every hat they had and has covered the surrounding area with upside down hats.

*Mrs. Finkle enters wearing several hats. Harold follows closely behind.*

HAROLD

All the box traps are set. I made fourteen of them. Put a hat under each one.

PROFESSOR WINSLOW

Good thinking.

MRS. FINKLE

(Worried) I only have a few more hats to put out. Should I hit Target and see how many more I can get?

PROFESSOR WINSLOW

Let's just see what happens for now. I just have a feeling the Quimbly has not gone far.

*Mayor Carson steps in front of Winslow.*

MAYOR CARSON

(furious) That's it! That's ENOUGH!

*Everyone stops, looking at him. The silence is eerie. Randy still clutches his net.*

MAYOR CARSON

This town has gone completely INSANE. Do you even hear yourselves? Running around like lunatics, flipping over hats, smearing fish guts on trees—

RANDY

(defensive) The Quimbly is drawn to unusual scents.

MAYOR CARSON

(ignoring him) I thought I was going crazy this morning wondering what was happening. Children are tearing through the streets! People are climbing on rooftops! Two people nearly got into a fistfight over a footprint in the mud! And I saw a grown man dive headfirst into a fountain because I guess he thought the Quimbly might be drinking from it!

*The group exchange glances. Some shuffle awkwardly, but no one denies any of it.*

MAYOR CARSON

And do you know who is to blame for all of this?

*Beat. He slowly turns to face Professor Winslow.*

MAYOR CARSON

(low, firm) This has gone beyond a joke. This is civil unrest. You've turned this town into a circus of madness. And before someone gets seriously hurt, I'm putting an end to it.

*Officer Henderson enters the stage. He looks uncertain—he's been part of the search too.*

PROFESSOR WINSLOW

(carefully) Now, Mayor. Let's not be rash. I understand your concern, but surely an arrest is excessive.

MAYOR CARSON

No. You fooled the town, but you didn't fool me. And I am not going to let this madness continue. You're going with Officer Henderson until all of this... blows over.

*A murmur spreads through the crowd. Some people protest weakly.*

MRS. FINKLE

(softly) Mayor... is that really necessary? I've already written a short poem about the poor little thing.

*Mrs. Finkle pulls a piece of paper out of her purse.*

MAYOR CARSON

With all due respect Mrs. Finkle, I don't...

*Mrs. Finkle interrupts him and starts reading her poem.*

MRS. FINKLE

Little Quimbly, soft and sweet,  
I wish that I could see your feet.  
Or maybe just your ears or tail,  
Or hear you sneeze or yelp or wail.

I'd feed you cookies, brush your fur,  
If only you would kindly purr.  
I'd build a bed and sew you socks,  
And keep you safe in a cardboard box.

Some folks say you're not quite real,  
But I know what my heart can feel.  
So Quimbly dear, please stay a while—  
You make our little town...

(beat)

Worthwhile.

*She dabs her eyes. Randy starts clapping first, way too loud.*

MAYOR CARSON

(gesturing wildly)Hells bells. This is insane. LOOK AROUND.

*Silence. They look around. The absurdity of the moment briefly settles in. Winslow sighs and turns to Henderson.*

PROFESSOR WINSLOW

(soft, persuasive)Henderson, surely you see what's happening here. This is not an act of disruption... it is an act of faith. You felt it too, didn't you? That stirring in your gut? The undeniable sense that the Quimbly is real?

*Henderson hesitates. He frowns. Shifts uncomfortably. Then, very quietly—*

OFFICER HENDERSON

(muttering)I mean... it *could* be real.

*The Mayor spins on him.*

MAYOR CARSON

Oh, for the love of—not you too!

*He grabs Henderson by the arm and gently shoves him toward Winslow.*

MAYOR CARSON

(gritted teeth)Just take him in before I lose my mind.

*Beat. Henderson awkwardly clears his throat. He looks at Winslow.*

OFFICER HENDERSON

Uh. Professor Winslow... I'm going to have to ask you to come with me.

*Winslow smiles gently. He nods. He doesn't fight. As he moves toward Henderson, he turns to face the townspeople.*

PROFESSOR WINSLOW

(calm, almost smug) My friends... Do not let this deter you. Keep believing. Keep searching. The Quimbly is still out there.

*Beat. Then—Mayor Carson groans in frustration.*

MAYOR CARSON

Oh, for—DON'T ENCOURAGE THEM!

*But it's too late. The group nods, emboldened. Someone murmurs, he's right. Another whispers, we can't stop now. Winslow is escorted offstage, but not as a defeated man— as a martyr. As he exits, the townspeople stare after him, then exchange determined glances. The belief has only deepened.*

*Lights fade to black.*

*Lights up. The room is dimly lit. Officer Henderson enters with Winslow, glancing around nervously.*

OFFICER HENDERSON

(speaking quickly, nervous) I could get in big trouble for this, you know. You were officially detained. I could lose my job.

PROFESSOR WINSLOW

And yet, you still let me out. Why?

OFFICER HENDERSON

Because... because what if you're right? What if every minute wasted is a minute the Quimbly is slipping further away?

*Winslow nods knowingly, placing a hand on Henderson's shoulder.*

PROFESSOR WINSLOW

That, Officer, is the first step toward true enlightenment.

*Henderson looks like he's second-guessing everything. Winslow paces, thinking.*

PROFESSOR WINSLOW

We may have one last chance to lure him home. But it's risky. Dangerous, even.

OFFICER HENDERSON

I... I can handle it. What do we need to do?

PROFESSOR WINSLOW

The tornado siren. We need to set it off.

OFFICER HENDERSON

I... I'm sorry, what?

PROFESSOR WINSLOW

The Quimbly is a creature of instinct. When startled, it seeks the safest place it knows—its home. That cage is the only place it has ever known safety. If we trigger the siren, the Quimbly will—*(Dramatic pause)*—come home.

*Henderson looks at him like he's lost it, then glances around the room, conflicted. He opens his mouth, closes it. Then, with a sigh, he pulls out his radio.*

OFFICER HENDERSON

I don't know. I...the mayor is going to kill me.

PROFESSOR WINSLOW

But I think you do know, don't you?

*Henderson picks up the radio and holds it to his mouth.*

OFFICER HENDERSON

*(into radio)*Dispatch, this is Henderson. I, uh... I need to... uh... test the tornado siren. Routine safety check.

*Pause. Crackle of static.*

RADIO VOICE

*(confused)*It's not the second Thursday of the month, Henderson.

OFFICER HENDERSON

I know. I know. Come on, Bernie. Special safety check.

*Long pause. Then—*

RADIO VOICE

(sighs)Copy that. Five seconds.

*Henderson lowers the radio. He looks at Winslow. Winslow nods. A moment passes. Then— A LOW WAIL BEGINS. The tornado siren starts, growing LOUDER. Winslow closes his eyes, standing tall, arms slightly outstretched. Henderson, uncomfortable, fidgets. Then—The SIREN CUTS OUT. Silence*

*Winslow opens his eyes. Henderson exhales. They stand there. Nothing happens.*

OFFICER HENDERSON

(quietly)Well, that was stu—

*Before he can finish, the CAGE DOOR SLOWLY SWINGS SHUT ON ITS OWN.*

*Beat. Silence. Winslow and Henderson stare at the cage. Henderson's mouth opens slightly. Winslow steps forward, reverently. He places a gentle hand on the cage and flips the lock on the cage door.*

PROFESSOR WINSLOW

(whispering)He's back.

*Beat. Henderson is frozen. He stares at Winslow, then at the cage, then at Winslow again. Footsteps are heard approaching. Randy enters, out of breath.*

RANDY

(panting)Professor! Still no sign of him! We looked everywhere.

PROFESSOR WINSLOW

(turning, serene)That's because he's already home.

*Randy stares, then turns and runs back offstage, shouting the news. Moments later, the core group bursts in—Mrs. Finkle, Randy, Harold, overjoyed.*

RANDY

(laughing)The Quimbly is back! I knew it!

*They celebrate, hugging, laughing, excited. Just as the moment reaches its peak, Mayor Carson storms in, livid.*

MAYOR CARSON

(yelling)HAVE YOU ALL COMPLETELY LOST YOUR DAMN MINDS?!

*Silence. Everyone turns. Carson is furious.*

*The townspeople are buzzing with excitement. Winslow stands proudly by the now-covered cage, basking in the adoration of his followers. Mayor Carson stops dead in his tracks when he sees Winslow free.*

MAYOR CARSON

What the hell is this?! Why are you out of detention?!

*The crowd quiets. Winslow just smiles. Officer Henderson shifts uncomfortably.*

OFFICER HENDERSON

(clears throat, hesitant)Uh... that would be... me, sir. I let him out.

MAYOR CARSON

(utterly incredulous)YOU WHAT?!

*The townspeople murmur. Henderson stands his ground but looks sheepish.*

OFFICER HENDERSON

(awkwardly)It... it just didn't feel right, locking him up. The Quimbly was still out there, sir, and every second counted.

*Carson grips his head like he's getting a migraine.*

MAYOR CARSON

(near breakdown) Oh, for the love of—! What is WRONG with all of you?! You've lost your minds! You're running around like lunatics chasing an invisible—

*He stops, realizing he's said this before. He exhales sharply, composing himself. Then, with as much authority as he can muster—*

MAYOR CARSON

(serious, firm)

No. This ends NOW.

*The room erupts in low protest—voices overlapping.*

RANDY

But he's back, Mayor!

MRS. FINKLE

You can't shut this down—we're so close!

HAROLD

Don't ruin this for everyone just because you don't believe.

TOWNSPERSON

I'm a believer.

MAYOR CARSON

(raising his voice)

Enough! You're all chasing a ghost! You've gone from hopeful to hysterical!

*He looks around the room. No one is with him. Frustrated, he softens slightly, trying a different tack.*

MAYOR CARSON

Fine. Let's make a deal.

*He points to the cage.*

MAYOR CARSON

If I stick my hand in that cage and don't feel a damn thing, will you all agree to cut this nonsense out?

*The crowd murmurs again. Randy looks unsure. Mrs. Finkle looks ready to cry. Winslow steps forward, suddenly alarmed.*

PROFESSOR WINSLOW

Wait—Mayor—perhaps we don't need to resort to—

MAYOR CARSON

(interrupting)

No, no. I want to. Because you've all made a circus out of common sense. And if it takes me proving this is empty to end it—so be it.

*He approaches the cage slowly. Winslow watches him, tense. The townspeople fall into reverent silence.*

PROFESSOR WINSLOW

(quiet, a last plea)

You don't understand. The Quimbly only responds to belief. You go in there with doubt... he may not let you feel him at all.

MAYOR CARSON

(flat)

I'll take my chances.

*He stands over the cage, pauses, breathes, then slowly reaches his hand inside. The moment stretches—silent, thick with tension.*

*Then—he jerks his hand back. Eyes wide. Beat. He wanders around the room muttering to himself.*

MRS. FINKLE

What is it?

MAYOR CARSON

(stunned, barely a whisper)

I... I think it just licked me.

*GASPS. The room ERUPTS. Cheers! Clapping! People hugging! Carson looks utterly shaken, unsure what just happened. Winslow only nods knowingly, a small, satisfied smile on his face.*

*The crowd immediately starts making plans—talking over each other excitedly.*

RANDY

(excited)We need t-shirts! '*I Saw the Quimbly!*' With an outline of, uh... something mysterious!

MRS. FINKLE

Oh! And plush toys! Every tourist will want a Quimbly of their own to take home!

HAROLD

We'll need a themed baked good! *Quimbly Crunch Muffins! Quimbly Claws!*

OFFICER HENDERSON

We should have a guided tour—call it *The Quimbly Trail!* We'll take people on walks through town and tell the legend!

MRS. FINKLE

A festival! *Quimbly Days!* We'll have a parade, a Quimbly costume contest, maybe even a Quimbly-themed dance!

OFFICER HENDERSON

(sincerely)We'll have to put up signs—'*Home of the Last Living Quimbly!*' Right at the town border.

MAYOR CARSON

(still pale, muttering)Oh my god, this is actually happening...

*The excitement continues to build. Winslow steps forward, spreading his arms.*

PROFESSOR WINSLOW

(booming)And so, my friends... the age of the Quimbly begins!

*The crowd erupts once more. The belief is now unshakable. The town is forever changed. Winslow steps back, looking toward the covered cage with a glint in his eye. The lights fade to black.*

*Curtain*