

DON'T EAT THE MUSHROOMS

By Robert C. Hall

Adapted from the novel, AMANITA

"If we stay where we are... we die there. We become like mushrooms, living in the dark, with poop up to our chins," Terrance McKenna

FADE IN:

EXT. OLYMPIC STADIUM, ATHENS, GREECE - DAY

AOIFE, 25, (pronounced EE-fuh), an athletic Irish javelin thrower practices her craft with other Olympians. She flings a javelin at a perfect angle that she's admiring, while sweating, breathing heavy. But MALACHI, 30, a nerdy soul with field credentials, engrossed studying the leaf shaped cauldron stumbles in the path of the descending javelin. Aoife screams at Malachi who turns smiling. He waves at her. But Malachi's left foot receives the javelin's pointy end. Malachi collapses. Aoife sprints at Malachi. Team medics rush toward Malachi. But he hops up, he waves them off. Malachi seems amused. He yanks the javelin out of his steel toe leather boot. Aoife stops at Malachi. She's out of breath.

AOIFE

Are you daft, man?

Malachi hands the javelin to Aoife. Aoife snaps the javelin back. She inspects it. Malachi grins waving his hand at her.

MALACHI

Ah, I love your red hair. You're like an ancient warrior queen.

Aoife looks down at the odd man but she's entranced by his oblivious nature. She touches the tip of her javelin.

AOIFE

You bent my javelin.

Malachi presses his round frame glasses back up his nose.

MALACHI

Sorry, would you like to see my javelin? I mean, I have ancient javelins. I've been scouting for them here for my antiquities business.

Aoife smirks at Malachi. They have a love at first sight stare that happens when polar opposites share their orbits.

AOIFE

Are you flirting with me?

MALACHI

Yes. I really do have ancient
javelins. I do. Come to my hotel?

EXT. PARTHENON - NIGHT

Aoife and Malachi stroll through the ancient site. Malachi's sharing inaudible facts and points at historical spots. He translates the Greek for her. She's smitten by his passions. They hold hands, Aoife's hand brushes through Malachi's hair.

INT. OLYMPIC VILLAGE RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Aoife and Malachi enjoy a sumptuous meal with bottles of wine. Aoife's eyes entrance Malachi.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Aoife and Malachi make passionate love. And magic happens.

MONTHS PASS

INT. HOSPITAL DELIVERY ROOM - DAY

Aoife delivers a baby girl. Malachi's in awe the moment the physician hands the baby to Aoife. Her tired eyes seek guidance from Malachi.

AOIFE

What'a we do now, my love? My
family shunned me. You're lucky,
you're an orphan.

Malachi searches his mind for answers. He chuckles.

MALACHI

I've been keeping a sacred
meteorite. We'll go get married,
ask for God's blessings.

AOIFE

You're a crazy man. Give her a
magical name? Go on...

Aoife cries. She holds the baby close to her chest.

MALACHI

Artemis. We'll name her Artemis.
Goddess of the hunt, protector of
children. I have visions for her.

AOIFE

I just want her to be strong. I
want her to a warrior.

MALACHI

We need to take her to the Temple
of Artemis, in Ephesus, yes, of
course. There we offer her to God.

EXT. THE TEMPLE OF ARTEMIS, EPHEBUS, GREECE - NIGHT

Aoife in a blue hooded tunic holds BABY ARTEMIS, < 1, wrapped in a white blanket. She kisses her baby on the forehead. She gazes over at Malachi gripping a meteorite fragment aloft. He throws the meteorite into a deep hole. He covers it. He kneels praying up toward the full moon. He stands.

Malachi opens an ancient book. He begins to whisper the Ephesian Letters. He glances above the book searching for movement. And then, the ARCHANGELS, timeless, and other ANGELS, timeless, appear, strolling in a glowing circle draped in the colors from a rainbow.

Malachi's hands shake. He fumbles the book, dropping it. They cower close together. Aoife kisses Malachi. Aoife nods at Malachi, she steps forward, kneels, holding her baby aloft.

ARCHANGEL BARACHIEL, timeless, gives Aoife a white rose, he accepts Baby Artemis from Aoife. ARCHANGEL GABRIEL, timeless, luminous, places a white lily for Baby Artemis to clutch. They share the baby with their brothers and sisters. ARCHANGEL MICHAEL, timeless, unsheathes his sword. Archangel Barachiel kneels. He unfolds the blanket to expose Baby Artemis' right foot.

Archangel Michael touches Artemis on the forehead with the sword. Archangel Michael carves a lightning bolt symbol on her heel. He glares over at SATAN, timeless. Satan sneers back at them, existing outside the circle in the darkness.

SATAN

A challenge for me, brother?

ARCHANGEL MICHAEL

You cannot touch her, ever.

Archangel Michael, Archangel Gabriel, Archangel Barachiel, and all the Angels stare at Satan.

SATAN

I'll not *touch* her. But, that
little man should not be reading
spells he does not understand.

Satan smirks at US. He knows. We know. Oh know.

TIME PASSES

INT. MALACHI AND AOIFE'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

ARTEMIS, 10, scampers in front of her parents. Malachi hugs Artemis. Aoife provides a strict look.

AOIFE

Did you complete your assignments?

ARTEMIS

Yes, mother.

AOIFE

Did you practice your throwing?

ARTEMIS

Yes, mother.

AOIFE

How did I teach you?

Artemis, a gangly girl, stands soldier-like.

ARTEMIS

Focus on the process with joy.

MALACHI

Off you go, I'll tell you a story about the goddess Artemis, later.

Artemis flops down and curls her right leg up. She points at the heel of her right foot. She gazes up at her parents.

ARTEMIS

Should I worry about this?

Malachi and Aoife glance over at each other. Malachi winks at his Aoife. He touches the lightning bolt symbol.

MALACHI

Oh, it's just a birth mark.

ARTEMIS

Is it bad?

AOIFE

You'll be fine.

Artemis slinks back and grabs her arms around her knees. Malachi looks at her, he glances over at Aoife.

AOIFE

What is it? Speak up, my daughter
tells her truth without fear.

Artemis looks down at the carpet. She stares at her mother.

ARTEMIS

Am I, you know, not right?

MALACHI

Are you asking about what you see?

ARTEMIS

Yes. I've never told anyone at
school. But I'm not sure how to
feel. I know they don't see, the
same things I see.

AOIFE

Are you afraid?

ARTEMIS

I see wondering spirit people
everywhere, they seem nice, they
smile at me. But...

Aoife glances over at Malachi. Malachi contemplates what his
daughter expresses without words. He sighs.

MALACHI

Are you seeing dark spirits?

ARTEMIS

There is one, he has red eyes.

Malachi leans forward to tap Artemis on the knee.

MALACHI

If you see that one, close your
curtains. Do not interact with it.

AOIFE

Focus on summer camp. It will be
fun. We'll leave early in the
morning, so go get your rest.

Artemis nods her head. She studies her parents. She gets up
and runs toward her bedroom.

INT. ARTEMIS'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Artemis sits near her window. She waves from behind the glass
watching the bright SPIRIT BEINGS. They wave back.

But the intense lights fade. The Spirit Beings vanish. Darkness. Artemis presses her face near the glass.

Satan appears beneath a street lamp, floating above the concrete. He hisses at her. He snaps his pointy tail. Artemis stumbles back. She grabs her blanket, folding it over her head and shoulders. She crawls underneath her bed.

EXT. SUMMER CAMP, CHECK-IN DESK - DAY

Artemis slogs her bag and javelins. YOUNG COUNSELORS, 25+, chit-chatting among active CHILDREN yelling and screaming. Malachi and Aoife wave at her.

AOIFE

Focus on the process, champions
learn the process.

MALACHI

Go get them mistress of the hunt.

ARTEMIS

You're so weird - why did you all
name me after a goddess, so weird.

INT. MALACHI AND AOIFE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Malachi and Aoife snuggle together post coitus. A DEMONIC SPIRIT enters the home. It opens a natural gas line. It strikes a match once, it strikes a match twice - a flame.

EXT. MALACHI AND AOIFE'S HOME - NIGHT

The home explodes. Satan sneers. His red eyes light up. He eats popcorn from a paper bag. He licks his pointy fingers. He reveals sharp fangs. Satan points at his DEMONS.

SATAN

Well done. That was really well
done. I have no idea what your
names are. But, I mean, our girl
Artemis' parents are - well-done!

INT. HOME FOR ORPHANS BEDROOM - NIGHT

Artemis somberly sits cross-leg on a bunkbed. She watches the other GIRLS talking, giggling. The windows covered. Satan's nearby eating popcorn with his Demons.

SATAN

Ah, all alone. Boohoo... Dad
shouldn't have been reading from
that pesky book. It's his fault.

INT. HOME FOR ORPHANS BASEMENT - DAY

Artemis saws her javelins in half and stuffs them into the
garbage. She starts to cry, but stops. Her face toughens.

ORPHAN GIRL SPIRITS, appear. They comfort Artemis.

EXT. HOME FOR ORPHANS PLAY GROUND - DAY

A big girl bumps Artemis to the ground. Artemis leaps back up
and slugs the girl. She jumps onto the girl punching her
without mercy. The other girls step back watching. A teacher
steps in to stop the fight. Artemis has dark eyes.

Satan appears and golf claps. His Demons all golf clap.

SATAN

Anger. Our girl's an angry lass. In
a few years our young protege will
learn hate. Hate is our mission.

Time Passes

INT. MEDICAL SCHOOL CADAVER LAB - DAY

ARTEMIS, 21, stuffs her goggles into her bag, slips off latex
gloves. She ignores her gossiping CLASSMATES. She walks out
into a busy hallway. A MILITARY MAN, 40s, approaches Artemis.
She stops to listen. She examines a leaflet the Military Man
shares. She taps it with her hand. She nods in agreement.

Satan watches. The Military Man grins over at Satan. Satan
sucks on a straw, drinking his beverage. GURGLING. He gives
the Military Man a thumbs up. He burps.

SATAN

Good job. Got our girl recruited
into the dark arts. Good job.

EXT. MILITARY TRAINING BASE - DAY

Artemis stands bouncing on her boots in fighting position. A
large TRAINER, 30s, punches her in the face, knocking her to
the ground. Blood drips from her nose. But she snaps back up,
daps the blood with her forefinger. She tastes it.

She advances at the Trainer. The crowd of young MEN, 20s, taunt her. She spits at them. She wrong-foots the Trainer, kicks him square in the chest, and knocks him backward. She threatens forward. He waves her off. But behind the Men, stands BENJAMIN, 30, average build, a Special Forces Minder, but his gaze at Artemis direct, certain. He walks away.

Satan watches her. He claps, gobbling down popcorn. He picks corn remnants with his pointy fingernails and flicks them at his Demons. But he stops. He notes Benjamin's watching her.

SATAN

Our girl has attracted a special
forces 'minder', a tough guy with a
brain, ah, this is bad luck.

EXT. MILITARY TRAINING BASE - DAY

Artemis trains with knives, ambidextrous, slings a long knife with her right hand into a target, and with her left hand flings a long knife at another target but it bounces off. But her Trainer goes quiet. Artemis' turns to find Benjamin staring at her. The Trainer backs up. Satan's eating popcorn.

ARTEMIS

Who are you?

BENJAMIN

Benjamin. This your roll?

Artemis nods. Benjamin inspects all of Artemis' military weapons. He glares over at the Trainer.

BENJAMIN

Glock 17? That's 31 ounces full.

TRAINER

Standard issue.

BENJAMIN

Lose it. Get her a Sig P365X, it's
24.4 ounces full. You can do better
than this, want to get her killed?

TRAINER

Sorry, Sir. Knives?

Benjamin examines the long knives. He steps over and pulls one out of a target. He picks up the other off the ground.

BENJAMIN

No good. She needs precision with lengths that work with her hands. These can't be easily hidden.

TRAINER

Recommendations? Sir.

Benjamin steps around Artemis reviewing her head to toe. Satan follows Benjamin. Satan sniffs at Artemis.

BENJAMIN

What are you five ten?

ARTEMIS

That's about right.

BENJAMIN

I like your short red hair. Now shave it off. Gain muscle mass with flexibility, you're too skinny.

Benjamin steps back. He stares into Artemis' eyes.

ARTEMIS

You're blunt.

BENJAMIN

(to Trainer)

Get her an Indonesian karambit for close combat. (to Artemis) Always carry it with you, always. (to Trainer) And the Kunai package, eight ounce, ten inch. That's a ten to fifteen foot range. (to Artemis) Ever killed a human being?

ARTEMIS

No.

BENJAMIN

Why'd you drop out of medical school? You had good grades.

ARTEMIS

I want intensity in my life.

BENJAMIN

Intensity? You'll have to learn to kill. You know where the SCIFs at?

ARTEMIS

I think so.

BENJAMIN
Show up tonight. Eighteen hundred.

ARTEMIS
Are you asking me out?

BENJAMIN
Yes. Still coming?

Artemis nods. She stares at Benjamin who turns and leaves.

EXT. SENSITIVE COMPARTMENTED INFO FACILITY (SCIF) - DAY

Artemis steps up to a square iron gate. A camera stares down at her. The gate clicks open. Artemis walks to a front door. The door clicks open. Artemis walks forward. Benjamin stands inside. Satan's watching. Satan stares at his spastic Demons.

SATAN
Calm down idiots. We've got action.

BENJAMIN
You have a choice to make.

Artemis searches the dimly lit room for any hints. She nods.

BENAJMIN
I'd like to date you. Or, we never happen, you choose a lifetime mission to protect humanity. Pick.

ARTEMIS
I like you. But I don't want you to die. Everyone I've ever loved died. I choose the mission.

Satan drops his bag of popcorn and dances.

SATAN
That's my girl... seek violence, hate one another - that's our mission.

BENJAMIN
Training starts at Zero Six Hundred

Benjamin nods. He leaves the room.

INT. ASSASSIN TRAINING - DAY

Artemis meets a ASIAN MASTER, 50s, he lacks a sense of humor. The Asian Master shows Artemis a multitude of knives, daggers, spears, swords, and throwing stars. She reaches to touch one but the Asian Master smacks her hand. Satan laughs.

ASIAN MASTER

Come.

Asian Master takes Artemis into a special padded room. There are other ASIAN MASTERS, 30s, waiting. Benjamin waits with them. Artemis notices three ASIAN MASTER SPIRITS, timeless.

ASIAN MASTER

You see them, too?

ARTEMIS

I see three...

ASIAN MASTER

More? If you are truly clairvoyant.

Artemis inspects the Asian Master Spirits.

ARTEMIS

The first one lost his right hand.
The middle one is taller, the third
has an eye patch.

Asian Master bows.

ASIAN MASTER

Now you will relearn hand-to-hand.

The Asian Masters surround Artemis. She gets her ass kicked. Benjamin stares down at her.

BENJAMIN

You can quit.

Artemis gets up and wipes sweat and blood off her face.

ARTEMIS

No.

BENJAMIN

Good. Let's go swimming.

EXT. ASSASSIN TRAINING, HELICOPTER - NIGHT

Artemis' blindfolded with her hands tied behind her back. The helicopter flies out above waters.

Benjamin opens a side door, he shoves her out, dropping her into the waters. Two NAVY SEALS, 30s, follow her. Satan's in the helicopter wearing a diving suit with mask. He follows.

DARK WATERS.

Artemis bobs, spitting out water. She twists to free her hands. The Navy Seals bob in the water behind her. Satan swims circles around them with a faux dorsal fin.

NAVY SEAL ONE

You can quit.

ARTEMIS

No.

Artemis wiggles. She frees her hands. She yanks off the blindfold. She searches the dark waters for land. She looks up at a full moon. She swims due east. The Navy Seals follow.

INT. ASSASSIN TRAINING - DAY

Asian Master has set Artemis' weapons roll across a table inside a room. Benjamin sits on a chair watching. Artemis sits on the floor cross-legged across from the Asian Master who has sat cross-legged. Both have their hands resting on their knees. Satan sits next to Benjamin. But Satan's not eating popcorn. Satan glares at the Asian Master.

ASIAN MASTER

I, I sense an all powerful demonic force that follows you. It hates you beyond hate. A dark void without end. But I cannot see this force, it is beyond my abilities. Do you sense this force?

ARTEMIS

Yes.

ASIAN MASTER

In your journey, you must resist hate. Inside your heart you must learn not to fear love. Your parents still love you. Benjamin loves you. But inside your mind you have a powerful rage. You must harness your rage. Do you understand?

ARTEMIS

Yes.

Artemis looks over at Benjamin. He nods. The Asian Master adjusts his pose. He looks over at Artemis. He gazes down. He readjusts his pose. He breaths in. He breaths out. He lays his hands upward atop his knees.

ASIAN MASTER

Your parents opened you to a universal authentic consciousness. Your need for intensity is the electromagnetic war going on inside your essence between love and hate. It will be the time travel wave you navigate within your life's quantum bubble. These entities I am not allowed to see, they exist beyond my sensing abilities. They are always watching you. I am certain. Because they are watching you, you must decide to remain within your authentic consciousness. This authentic nature is the intersection between life and death. Your mission goes beyond this company, the divine challenges you to seek the truth. Seek it.

The Asian Master prays. Artemis prays. Artemis and the Asian Master get up, they walk in a circle. The Asian Master snags two shooting stars. He flings them at Artemis. She catches them midair with her right and left hands between the thumb and forefingers. She stares at the Asian Master prepared to fling them back at him. He bows.

ASIAN MASTER

Go to your final test.

Benjamin gets up and leaves the room. Satan sits stewing in rage. A rage beyond description. And then, Archangel Michael appears, he glosses Artemis' shoulders, he sits next to Satan. Archangel Gabriel and Archangel Barachiel appear strolling in a circle around Artemis. Angels appear strolling in the opposite direction. Archangel Barachiel tosses rose pedals at Artemis' feet. Archangel Gabriel stops. He kisses Artemis on her forehead. They all vanish leaving Artemis alone in the room. She senses she's all alone. And her parents spirits appear, Aoife and Malachi. They hold hands and their spirits walk through Artemis. They vanish.

INT. BLACK VAN - NIGHT

Benjamin and Artemis inside an autonomous van. She has her knives and weapons. Benjamin's in a black outfit checking his handgun. He checks and rechecks her weapons.

BENAJMIN

The problem inside the house is an arms dealer. You've gone through the models. The team prepped the house - alarms off, so forth. He's responsible for thousands of US soldiers deaths. Solve the problem.

ARTEMIS

Does it matter the method?

Benjamin pulls out a dagger. He hands it to Artemis.

BENJAMIN

No. This is a Kaiken dagger, it's a gift. You have the karambit?

Artemis nods and reveals the weapon. Benjamin opens the van's side door. Artemis and Benjamin blend into the darkness behind a large house. They scramble along a fence line. Artemis opens a first floor window. They crawl inside. Satan's inside waiting. Artemis and Benjamin move past Satan. Satan snaps his fingers at Artemis.

SATAN

Girl power. Two snaps.

INT. ARMS DEALER'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Artemis moves through a dining room. Benjamin follows. Satan follows. She stops to listen. Nothing. Satan sniffs at her. She turns through an open doorway, steps down a hallway toward a half-open door. Artemis gets to the door but a LITTLE GIRL, 5, flings open the door. She's holding a doll. She looks up at Artemis and screams. Behind her the ARMS DEALER snags a handgun. He points it at Artemis.

BENJAMIN

Gun. Down.

Benjamin shoves Artemis into the bedroom. Arms Dealer shoots Benjamin in the neck. Blood sprays the wall. The Little Girl scampers back to the Arms Dealer. Artemis glances over at Benjamin. He has dead eyes. The Arms Dealer keeps firing and missing Artemis who forward rolls. The bullets shatter a lamp. The Arms Dealer hoists the Little Girl up with his left arm. But Artemis slides out a Kunai knife, twists to evade another bullet that nicks her shoulder. She drops to a knee flinging the knife into the Arms Dealers' right shoulder. He drops the gun. Artemis bull rushes into him. She pushes the Little Girl onto the bed. Artemis grips her karambit with her left hand, whipping it around to stab the Arms Dealers' neck and slices open his external jugular vein.

Artemis flips the knife upwards, shoving it into the Arms Dealer. She clasps him tight, staring into his eyes until he bleeds out. Lifeless. His body drops dead on the carpet.

Artemis yanks out the knife. She reaches over to grab the Little Girl's hand. Artemis steps over to Benjamin's body. She kneels. She kisses his forehead. The Little Girl picks up her doll. Artemis holds her hand and they walk out. Satan appears. He examines the Arms Dealer and Benjamin's bodies.

SATAN

She killed without hate. This is a problem. I need to think.

I/E. BLACK VAN - NIGHT

The Little Girl sits on the front seat wrapped in a Mylar blanket. Along the floor two body bags. Artemis and a SPECIAL FORCES MINDER stand at the door. Artemis stares at the bags.

SPECIAL FORCES MINDER

You passed.

Artemis keeps looking down at the bag with Benjamin's body. Artemis glances over at the Little Girl. She looks at the Special Forces Minder. He nods.

ARTEMIS

Her?

SPECIAL FORCES MINDER

The target you erased murdered her mother. She's an orphan, for now.

Artemis stares down at the concrete road.

SPECIAL FORCES OFFICER

In a week, you'll report to Wylie.
He's your new domestic Minder.
Focus on your mission. Protect the innocent, like that little girl.

EXT. BLACK VANS - NIGHT

The black vans pull away from the Arm's Dealer's house. The house starting to smoke before burning. Satan has the Arms Dealer and Benjamin spirits. Satan's bemused. His Demons hunker together waiting for his guidance.

SATAN
(to Arms Dealer)
I have one thing to say, go to
hell. Seriously. Go now...

Satan snaps his fingers, the Arms Dealer vanishes.

SATAN
(to Benjamin)
I know where your girl's going.
It's her father's fault. He should
have never read the Ephesian
Letters out loud. Thought he could
protect his precious daughter from
evil spirits. Don't poke the Satan.

Satan strolls. He stops. He ponders the situation.

SATAN
Wait. I'll reveal myself to her.
What body can I inhabit? Make a bad
impression?

Satan stares into the darkness. Satan sneers. Satan claps.

SATAN
Ah, just now, a male model od'd
from fentanyl. Oh pity...

Satan transforms into a tall, handsome man, wearing a bespoke
suit with shiny shoes. Satan grabs Benjamin's spirit like a
child's helium inflated balloon.

SATAN
Come along Benny. We need to get
you back to Kentucky. You will be
such the surprise for Artemis. Oh,
and your little girl, did you think
I'd not notice Laina, too?

INT. WYLIE'S OFFICE, CADEACUS REINSURANCE - DAY

Artemis sits near a desk. WYLIE, 60s, hands Artemis a tiny
manila envelope. Wylie sits down in the other chair. He huffs
out and pats his empty left breast pocket.

WYLIE
I loved to smoke. You ever?

ARTEMIS
No.

WYLIE

Sorry about Benjamin. He was a good man. So, that's out of the way.

Artemis examines the envelope contents. A thumb-drive.

ARTEMIS

What's up?

WYLIE

Hospital up in Kentucky. You need to figure it out. It's a mess.

ARTEMIS

Mess?

WYLIE

We've got cremations, bodies going missing, but you'll see that in the files. They claim a novel virus infected the hospital staff.

Wyllie sits back. He stares out the office windows.

ARTEMIS

What else?

WYLIE

The hospital has a compost pile that they use to grow mushrooms. The medical director is a Dr. Demetrius, impressive CV, not sure what's up with him. Get me?

Artemis shifts her backpack forward.

ARTEMIS

Mushrooms?

WYLIE

Go up there quietly, drive, just show up unannounced. Do your cemetery visits, whatever you do...

ARTEMIS

I'm clairvoyant. The dead talk to me. It's not a trick.

WYLIE

It's demonic. I don't want any part of it. But it might be useful.

(MORE)

WYLIE (CONT'D)

The hospital management will think you're a malpractice investigator working for the reinsurer - reinsurer's rarely get directly involved. So, you have free reign, go play the part... then find and terminate the problem.

ARTEMIS

Maybe this doctor? It's mostly my call?

WYLIE

That's the job. You need any weapons package, name it.

Artemis acknowledges Wylie. She shrugs.

ARTEMIS

I prefer my knives.

WYLIE

I'm aware. Serious drug problem up there. Hurting a lot of people.

ARTEMIS

Do I have budget? How's that work?

WYLIE

For now, I'll approve everything, so don't worry about resources. Find the source of the problem. Eradicate the problem.

ARTEMIS

Understood.

WYLIE

We think Dr. Demetrius's research valuable. But we're not sure he's trustworthy. But I think you might have multiple targets. You can eradicate them all - you choose.

ARTEMIS

This might get weird?

WYLIE

Correct. This fentanyl business is hurting the hospital portfolio. A lot of physicians were lied to that it was not addictive. It's highly addictive. It's become a huge domestic problem.

(MORE)

WYLIE (CONT'D)

we think this hospital is primary source. And more to the point, someone's hurting innocent people. That's the mission. Stay in contact.

INT. ARTEMIS'S SUV - DAY

Artemis unfurls her chef's knife roll to expose her shiny military-grade knife set. She pulls out the Kaiken dagger that Benjamin gave her. She inspects it. She returns it and rolls the knives back up. She locks them in a safe under her seat. She shifts the car gear and drives away.

EXT. HOTEL ENTRANCE, SELENE, KY - NIGHT

Artemis walks out onto the sidewalk. Parked cars here and there, but no meaningful traffic, and modest brick buildings. She stops walking. She looks for wandering Spirit Beings. Nothing. Suspicious. A stoplight blinks red. She looks over at the hospital facility. She strolls up the main street toward the local cemetery, Most High Cemetery.

EXT. MOST HIGH CEMETERY - NIGHT

There are no roaming Spirit Beings for Artemis to interact with. She crosses her arms and contemplates. She steps slowly farther into the cemetery grounds, past lines of headstones. She nears a mausoleum. The outline of a man's shadow. Behind him lurk Demons - black smoky apparitions. Artemis stops.

ARTEMIS

What do you want?

SATAN

You.

Satan, in a human form, skips toward Artemis. He skids to a stop. He flashes jazz hands, dissolves into a swarm of flying black ANTS. The swarm gathers closer toward Artemis. She steps to the side behind a tall marble headstone. She grips down for her sidearm, but it's not there.

SATAN

No need for violence. Maybe this look will suit you better?

The swarm morphs into a KING COBRA. It coils and hisses at Artemis. It slithers toward her. Artemis works to control her breathing. The King Cobra morphs into a handsome man wearing a tailored suit with shiny black shoes.

ARTEMIS

What, what are you?

SATAN

Really? I'm insulted. Do you
remember me from your childhood?
You're father did warn you.

Satan brushes off his coat sleeves. He fiddles with his
pocket square. Satan glares at Artemis. Her eyes open wide.

ARTEMIS

I think... I know. Otherwise...

Artemis gazes up into the trees. Her eyes search for
solutions - a RAVEN CAWS down at her.

SATAN

Dead.

Satan snaps his pointy fingers. The Raven flops dead.

ARTEMIS

This is just a nightmare.

SATAN

Oh no, this is not a nightmare.

ARTEMIS

Wha... what do you want with me?

Satan strolls around Artemis. Satan pokes and shoves at
Artemis. Artemis kneels behind the headstone, gripping it for
support. Satan snaps his forked tongue at Artemis.

SATAN

You and Wylie stumbled into my mass
killing project. You have to hate
humans to profit from killing the
innocent. And, we both know you're
no malpractice investigator...

Artemis stares at Satan with bewilderment. Satan steps in
front of the mausoleum. He buttons his coat.

ARTEMIS

It's my job. I'm committed to it.

SATAN

Do you like my bespoke suit? It's
British, Savile Row. Hate is our
mission. I will teach you hate.

ARTEMIS
I'm not like that.

SATAN
I'm going to guide you, being this
is your first assignment.

Satan taps his shiny shoe on the pavement. Artemis sucks in deep breaths. She searches the ground for a thought.

ARTEMIS
Go away. I don't hate.

SATAN
Let's make a deal. I'll nudge you
toward the bad guys. Make your
secretive committee happy. But to
add to the stakes - let me
introduce you to - Benny.

The Benjamin's spirit appears, floating next to Satan.

ARTEMIS
Oh god. Please, please...

Artemis gazes over at Benjamin. He's forlorn.

SATAN
Not God. Me. Oh Satan... get it?

ARTEMIS
Please, let Benjamin go.

SATAN
I know your mother was quite
strict. If you don't complete your
tasks, guess who spends eternity
with me?

Benjamin's spirit floats. He shakes his not to listen.

SATAN
Investigations need clues. Go to
the hospital next. As Wylie said,
go play your part...

Satan toys with Benjamin like a child with a hot-air balloon.

SATAN
I enjoy theater popcorn. Stick with
popcorn because I have a piece of
advice, whatever you do, listen to
me, don't eat the mushrooms. Ever.

Satan and Benjamin vanish. Artemis wobbles back toward the iron gates. She slips, falls, skids to her knees. She vomits. After a brief moment, on all fours, she manages her breathing, gets up, and staggers past the gate.

INT. HOSPITAL CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

GENE, 50s, the hospital's general counsel sits next to LORETTA, 50s, following Gene's every whim. They are across from Artemis, still reeling from encountering Satan.

GENE

You're a malpractice investigator?
You seem different than I'd expect.

Loretta nods at Gene. She turns to stare blankly at Artemis.

ARTEMIS

We've got a lot of death cases.

GENE

Fentanyl patches. That's what they're claiming gets them hooked.

ARTEMIS

It's highly addictive?

LORETTA

It is. But we are not getting them hooked.

ARTEMIS

Sorry to ask a stupid question,
where have the bodies gone missing?

GENE

A viral outbreak. We're not going to endanger the community.

LORETTA

We have to keep the hospital disinfected, our crematorium is the ultimate disinfection method.

ARTEMIS

I bet. This Jerome Jenkins. Is he any good? I'm not a lawyer.

GENE

He thinks he walks on water.

ARTEMIS

What's the story with the mushrooms?

Gene and Loretta glance at each other. They pause for a second too long. But Artemis waits. She ponders.

GENE

Nothing to worry with - we might be a not-for-profit, but I promise you, are masters demand we make a profit. You know this.

ARTEMIS

I do. Can you set up a meeting with Dr. Demetrius?

GENE

We'll need some time to set that up. He's quite busy.

ARTEMIS

Can I take a tour of the facility? I need to familiarize myself.

INT. HOSPITAL WAREHOUSE - DAY

Loretta escorts Artemis to the active hospital warehouse. The two WORKERS, 20s, load a big rig with boxes and boxes overflowing with mushrooms.

LORETTA

Dr. Demetrius is studying, with FDA approval, the medicinal types.

ARTEMIS

The giant compost pile is part of this mushroom project?

LORETTA

It is for eco-friendly education.

ARTEMIS

Where's the farm for all these mushrooms?

LORETTA

It's the large building you walked past. It's right in front of the campus, hiding in plain sight.

INT. ZOOM CALL FROM HOTEL ROOM - DAY

Wyllie's curiously looking at Artemis through a laptop screen.
Artemis sits at her room's desk.

ARTEMIS

I did say it might get weird. It
has. I might be over my head.

WYLIE

You want me get you out of there?

Artemis contemplates the comment.

ARTEMIS

No. Let me think through this.

WYLIE

What's the hospital like?

ARTEMIS

It's super clean. But we both know
cremating bodies does not meet any
standard of care I remember from
medical school.

WYLIE

What's Dr. Demetrius like?

ARTEMIS

Typical doctor playing hard to
meet. I'll find him.

WYLIE

Any idea who is are target?

ARTEMIS

No. Let me talk with this lawyer. I
do know once I figure this out. I
want out of this town. It's got a,
ah, seriously evil vibe.

INT. JEROME JENKINS' OFFICE - DAY

JEROME, 60s, tall, calm. He sits behind his wooden desk - a
computer to his right side. Artemis sits in front of him.

JEROME

I don't want to be rude. You don't
look like any malpractice claim
manager I've ever dealt with.

Artemis shifts her backpack open. She retrieves a laptop.

ARTEMIS

I recently transitioned out.

JEROME

Oh. Thank you for your service. I'm a former Marine.

ARTEMIS

Got it. What's your thinking about these cases? I'm on the reinsurance side, not the primary, so I don't typically get involved like this.

JEROME

I know all the families. It's not a money grab or other. This is home.

ARTEMIS

Given that, I'm don't mean to get cute. You have a number in mind?

Jerome nods. He leans back in his high-back chair.

JEROME

That's where all this ends up. It's about money. Are we talking global?

ARTEMIS

If we can bundle all these cases up. Yes. I'm sorry about all the loss. It's terrible.

JEROME

You don't mess around. I appreciate that. Can I noodle on this?

EXT. DOWNTOWN SELENE, KENTUCKY - DAY

Satan sits on a long bench, whittling. Artemis does not recognize him at first. He grins at Artemis. He slices off his thumb. He bleeds. Artemis runs over to help.

SATAN

It's just a scratch.

Satan's thumb heals. Artemis knows who she's dealing with and steps back. Benjamin's spirit appears.

ARTEMIS

Cute. What do you want?

SATAN

Oh look, Benny's here.

BENJAMIN

I'm from here, Artemis. Made a mistake. Satan wants you to know I have a little girl, not sure where, and not sure why. Satan can't hurt me, I'm dead, waiting in purgatory.

Artemis nods. She purses her lips.

SATAN

Hush, Benny. She has a name, Laina.

BENJAMIN

(to Artemis)

Don't worry about her.

SATAN

Benny, simmer down. Laina's part of my plan. You goof ball...

(to Artemis)

She'll soon be an orphan. Like you. You have a soft spot for orphans, like the little girl at the Arms Dealers demise?

Satan smirks at Artemis.

ARTEMIS

So what?

SATAN

In the meantime, you need to go find a guy named Virgil. He's a local grocer. He knows things.

ARTEMIS

Let Benjamin go on... he serves no purpose. It's all about me, right?

SATAN

Ah, selfless love. You two are way to disciplined. But Benny hooked up with Laina's druggie momma. He scored a direct sperm hit. Those sperm bullets... mighty powerful.

ARTEMIS

Purgatory's temporary. Focus on me, let Benjamin go on...

SATAN

It is. But you care deeply for Benny. I can sense your feelings.

BENNY

Leave her alone. You're an asshole.

Satan looks back and forth at Benjamin and Artemis.

SATAN

That's it, I feel it now. You taught Artemis not to kill with hate, thou shalt not murder. My mission is clear, I'll teach Artemis to hate this asshole.

Satan waves. Benjamin disappears.

ARTEMIS

I already do. But you've blocked me - I'm not seeing any spiritual activity except for Benjamin.

SATAN

I don't want to ruin the surprises. Move along soldier, find Virgil out there in the forest. Oh, I'd go visit with this Dr. Demetrius soon... he's wacko-doodle.

Satan vanishes.

EXT. MOUNTAIN ROADS - DAY

Artemis drives her SUV out into the dense Appalachian forest. She parks near a modest grocery. There are metal trailers lined up behind it on a flat earthen spot.

INT. VIRGIL'S GROCERY - DAY

VIRGIL, 60s, a bear of a man. He waves over at Artemis. She closes a metal door behind her. She inspects the tiny shop.

VIRGIL

I guess you're lost?

ARTEMIS

That obvious? Anybody think of using road signs. My smartphone's worthless up here.

VIRGIL

It's a problem. Kids use them for target practice - it's not smart.

ARTEMIS

Say, I'm looking for a little girl,
named Laina. Helping out a friend.

Virgil crosses his husky arms. He squints at Artemis.

VIRGIL

Benjamin's girl? Best I know, he's
dead. What you be wanting with her?

Virgil inspects Artemis's appearance. He shrugs.

VIRGIL

You don't look like one of them
wackos up in the forest worshiping
trees. You're not high?

ARTEMIS

No. I was with Benjamin the night
he died. I'm told his daughter's
all alone. I'll help her.

Virgil grunts. He nods.

VIRGIL

I ain't seen her lately. My best
guess is she's at that hospital.
Her mother got pregnant - again.
This time, I think she finally did
it to herself. Drugs. It's not like
getting a handle, handles are the
better way to go.

Artemis nods. She crinkles her eyebrows. Virgil chuckles.

ARTEMIS

Handle?

VIRGIL

Bourbon. You do realize you're in
Kentucky? Smart drinker gets a big
bottle with a handle - cheaper.

Artemis considers the comment.

ARTEMIS

I guess drive out the way I came
in? Wait. Tell me about these
wackos. Worshipping trees?

VIRGIL

Drug people, they come in here.

Virgil reveals a double-barrel shotgun from under the counter. He verifies it's loaded.

VIRGIL

I'm prepared for them, if need be.

Artemis unzips her coat to reveal her Sig.

VIRGIL

Nice one. Word is they worship trees. Most of them be harmless, except for their leader. Big boy, calls himself a prophet.

Artemis zips up her coat.

ARTEMIS.

Lovely. Anyway, you said the girl's at the hospital?

VIRGIL

I'd think so. Be careful and don't be up here at night. I'm not sure if the hospital's any less dangerous. You stick out, sorry, obvious you ain't from here.

ARTEMIS

I have a meeting with a Dr. Demetrius at the hospital. You know of him?

VIRGIL

Don't know him. Seen him. Way smarter than me. Big boy, too.

INT. HOSPITAL CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

DR. DEMETRIUS, 40s, of Greek descent with penetrating eyes. Gene's his acting pretorian guard. Artemis keeps her eyes focused on Dr. Demetrius.

DR. DEMETRIUS

Artemis? That's from a Greek goddess, but you look European. An attractive European, if I may.

GENE

She's from our reinsurer, hopefully getting us out of these claims?

ARTEMIS

I'm just investigating. You're the medical director? I understand you have a special interest in mushrooms?

DR. DEMETRIUS

I am. And, I do.

ARTEMIS

Your CV is impressive, not to be mean, but, why are you here?

GENE

That's not a nice question.

DR. DEMETRIUS

Oh, no worries, Gene.

(to Artemis)

Here because I can implement my own precision medicine, AI. The mushrooms are a personal journey. In short, nobody bothers me here. The larger systems have accountants poking and prodding into every expense - it's annoying. It stifles innovation. Make sense?

ARTEMIS

Makes sense. What are your thoughts on these claims? Are you behind the cremation procedures?

DR. DEMETRIUS

I am. It was a difficult decision. But a novel virus can wipeout a community if not dealt with harshly. It's even more important given my mushroom farm. A bug like Candida Auris, or similar, can kill all my life's work in a few days.

ARTEMIS

You think you can defend the cremations in court? They'll poke a hole in the standard of care.

DR. DEMETRIUS

I'm confident I can persuade a jury that our solution was for the best. Hey, want to see my mushroom farm?

GENE

I'm not sure about that.

ARTEMIS

Maybe another day, but thanks. I
have a prior commitment.

INT. OBSTETRICS WARD, HOSPITAL - DAY

Artemis walks up to a nurse's station. A NURSE, 20s, points over at a specific room. Artemis enters a room with a woman, RUTH LYNN, 30s, in a coma, hooked to a life-support system. Beneath her is LAINA, 7, scruffy, curled up within a blanket. Laina stares at Artemis with the rhyme from Benjamin's eyes.

ARTEMIS

Hey there, are you Laina?

Artemis kneels. She keeps her arms open and free.

LAINA

Who are you?

ARTEMIS

I'm a friend of your dad's.

LAINA

I ain't got no dad.

Artemis nods. She gets up and walks to the nurse's station.

INT. NURSES'S STATION, HOSPITAL - DAY

A NURSE, 30s, wrinkled uniform with sunken eyes. She's focusing on a computer screen. Artemis looks into other patient rooms with women on life support. Artemis steps nearby the counter. The Nurse does not look at Artemis.

NURSE

You in the girl's family?

ARTEMIS

No. The woman looks dead to me.

NURSE

Hospital wants them kept alive.
Sorry, I need my job.

The Nurse turns her back to Artemis. Beneath Artemis's right leg, Laina appears, looking up at her.

LAINA

You left me. Who are you?

The Nurse turns. She gazes at Artemis. Artemis touches Laina's head looking down at her.

ARTEMIS

It's okay. I'll not leave you.

NURSE

Take her. She's got no one.

Artemis looks back down at Laina.

ARTEMIS

I'm working on a legal matter for the hospital. Any chance I can get your perspective?

NURSE

No.

EXT. PARK BENCH, COMPOST PILE - DAY

Satan appears next to Artemis. Startling Artemis. Laina's skipping in the grass. The hospital grounds are active with human activity. Satan's snacking on popcorn.

SATAN

Oh, your life has gotten complicated. Popcorn?

ARTEMIS

No. You've trapped me here. Happy?

SATAN

I don't do happy. What are you going to do with princess?

ARTEMIS

I have no idea.

SATAN

I think you're about to see some local troublemakers. I enjoy popcorn while watching a show.

Shiny black SUVs drive into the parking area. They park. A large man, THE PROPHET, 40s, muscled, walks like an all-knowing being. He wears a surgical mask. He has MEN, 20s & 30s, with him, who are making way for him toward the hospital's side entrance. He stops. He gazes down at Laina, reaching his large hand out to touch her hair.

ARTEMIS
(to Prophet)
Something I can help you with?

The Prophet turns and stares at Artemis. She stands up. He looks back down at Laina. He grunts. The men start walking again toward the hospital door.

THE PROPHET
(to Artemis)
You should be wearing a mask.

ARTEMIS
You should leave her alone.

THE PROPHET
Be gone woman.

The Prophet follows his men into the hospital.

SATAN
He's into little girls? Kinky.

Satan offers Artemis popcorn.

ARTEMIS
He's sick.

SATAN
You sure, I have an unlimited supply of popcorn? They have a problem here with little girls and women just magically disappearing.

ARTEMIS
What's your point?

SATAN
I feel your inner conflict.

ARTEMIS
Do you always talk in circles?

Satan eats a handful of popcorn. He pokes out his forked tongue. He points at Artemis. Satan crosses his long legs.

SATAN
You will go out to visit your new buddy, Virgil. Take her. Ask him to guide you into the forest. Go find the Tree of Death.

ARTEMIS
Enjoying yourself.

SATAN

A bonus for your journey. I'll stop blocking you. Your clairvoyant self can now bloom. See, I'm helping.

Satan vanishes.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM, HOSPITAL - DAY

Artemis sits next to the big table, tapping her pencil on the wooden surface. She stares at Gene and Loretta. Gene unloosens his cheap tie. Loretta has her arms crossed.

ARTEMIS

I stumbled into your OB department.
It acts more like an ICU?

LORETTA

Addicts. We get mostly women who are pregnant - we don't know why.

GENE

We have to treat them. You know this, it's the law.

ARTEMIS

This is not a money-making scheme?

GENE

Not really. We do work with the government codes. It's a timing issue with these poor souls.

ARTEMIS

Are you keeping these women alive unnecessarily? I went down room after room in the OB ward, several women hooked to life-support, tell me I'm wrong?

LORETTA

Well, you see, we have to be in compliance per our masters in Nashville. You know them?

ARTEMIS

We reinsure the entire healthcare system. I am quite aware of them.

GENE

You understand then that each hospital is its own profit center?

ARTEMIS

I do. But what are you all doing?

LORETTA

Those women are fentanyl victims.
They get dumped at our ICU.

Artemis sits back in her chair. Her eyebrows furrowed.

GENE

Dr. Demetrius approved this
protocol. We don't turn our back on
our own. And yes, we are
compensated for our services.

Gene looks down and glosses his hands across the table top.

ARTEMIS

You're keeping these women alive
long enough to get more government
money? That's your timing issue?

LORETTA

In a way, yes.

EXT. VIRGIL'S GROCERY - DAY

Artemis and Laina walk from the SUV toward the grocery.
Artemis stops, she instinctually looks back at a hillside. A
giant WHITE STAG forages. Near the White Stag with a spear in
hand, a Cherokee SPIRIT WARRIOR, timeless. He yells at
Artemis. The White Stag pushes over a small tree blocking its
path. The Spirit Warrior keeps yelling over at Artemis.

INT. VIRGIL'S GROCERY - DAY

Artemis and Laina walk up to the counter. Virgil stands
behind it. He waves over at them.

VIRGIL

Well, look who showed up.

ARTEMIS

Thanks for the help.

VIRGIL

(to Laina)
You all right?

Laina looks up at Virgil. She nods.

ARTEMIS
I need to help Laina pack some
clothes, so forth...

VIRGIL
If I hear you, you're taking her
in? Their trailer's out back.

Artemis sucks in a deep breath.

ARTEMIS
Until I find her family. The least
I can do for Benjamin.

VIRGIL
You're good person.

ARTEMIS
Another matter, can you guide me
out into the forest? I'm told there
is, don't laugh at me, a so called
Tree of Death?

Virgil glances down at Laina.

VIRGIL
Maybe, but I'll not go out there
with her. And if we go out there
we'll need to be packing. Here me?

ARTEMIS
Yes.

VIRGIL
It's a drug cult. I bet you it has
something to do with the hospital.

I/E. LAINA'S TRAILER - DAY

Virgil steps in front of the metal front door. He opens it.
Laina scurries inside. Artemis and Virgil follow her inside
the trailer. But they encounter a black, moldy mess.

Artemis and Virgil cover their noses. They step down a narrow
hallway. They find Laina hiding in her cardboard box. Artemis
waves for Laina to come to her. She glares over at Virgil.

VIRGIL
I don't pry. I had no idea how bad
this was. Get her out of here.

ARTEMIS

Come Laina. Let's find you some proper clothes.

INT. ZOOM CALL FROM JEROME'S OFFICE - DAY

Artemis has her laptop computer open. Wylie's face appears on the screen. Jerome has his elbows on his desk. Artemis sits on the other side checking the screen settings.

ARTEMIS

(to Wylie)

We're good.

WYLIE

(to Jerome)

This is very off the record?

JEROME

Agreed. I've never dealt directly with you reinsurance boys and girls. We don't have visitors from London in small-town Kentucky.

WYLIE

I grew up in a small town. It's part of why I wanted to talk directly with you. You need that hospital to stay open.

JEROME

Very true. I'm not motivated by money - it's part of it - it has more to do with these families.

ARTEMIS

This hospital has unique, ah, methods.

WYLIE

I'll be direct. These people are corrupt. This is not how our other hospitals do business. Why has the FBI not shown up?

JEROME

I'll tell you straight out, the local police, the sheriff, they're all in on the take. Ignore them.

ARTEMIS

Hospital paying them? Or, there's somebody else, out in the forest?

Jerome nods. He sits back on his chair.

JEROME

You're quite perceptive. It's a drug dealer. They scare me.

ARTEMIS

Tell me about this Virgil character, you have to know him?

Jerome half-grins. He chuckles.

JEROME

I've known Virgil since I was a boy. If you're asking, he's trustworthy. What's he up too?

ARTEMIS

Nothing. He helped me find a little girl. Her mom's likely dead. Drugs. But she was pregnant. It appears there are numerous women like her showing up at the hospital.

Jerome sighs. He glances over at the computer screen at Wylie and back over at Artemis. He nods.

JEROME

That squares with my client's statements. I've never gone up there, but I'm told there's a cult involved. It's all related.

WYLIE

You think the hospital and this cult are in league together?

JEROME

I do. But I have no proof.

ARTEMIS

I feel terrible for those women, it's not right. It's pure hate. I have a meeting with the Dr. Demetrius, his mushroom farm.

JEROME

That will be interesting. I do not understand what he's up to...

WYLIE

I promise we'll make every effort to settle these claims - fairly. We'll not be lawyering up.

(MORE)

WYLIE (CONT'D)

But if you have names, we'd welcome
you sharing those names?

JEROME

Absolutely.

INT. MUSHROOM FARM, HOSPITAL - DAY

Artemis and Dr. Demetrius stand inside a vast storage system
with container after container filled with all varieties of
mushrooms. Dr. Demetrius and Artemis wear respirators.

DR. DEMETRIUS

This is the fruit, quite literally,
of my labor. My freedom.

ARTEMIS

Why? I don't understand.

DR. DEMETRIUS

I don't have the government
bothering me here.

ARTEMIS

Are these respirators for bacteria
and viruses? You're quite serious.

DR. DEMETRIUS

Exactly. I cannot afford any
infection - it would eradicate all
my work in hours, if not seconds.

Artemis walks near the mushroom bins. She gazes up at the
tall steel frames. She gazes down a long corridor dark and
forbidding between the storage structures.

ARTEMIS

What else are you doing here?

DR. DEMETRIUS

You're very observant. We need new
natural drugs, new forms of
penicillin, antibiotics born from
nature. Do you know what kills more
people in hospitals?

ARTEMIS

Sepsis.

DR. DEMETRIUS

This is about emerging science in
quantum computing, AI, and most of
all, fungi.

ARTEMIS

You lost me?

DR. DEMETRIUS

The fifth kingdom. Ten times the size of the plant and animal organisms. Have you studied mycelia?

ARTEMIS

No.

DR. DEMETRIUS

Mycelia is the mother of mushrooms. From rot, death, she creates life.

ARTEMIS

You're going for something world-changing?

DR. DEMETRIUS

I am. Your company, has invested a large sum into my research. They want money. I want credit for changing the world.

Dr. Demetrius opens a black box, within it, he uses his thumbprint and a biometric eye scanner to unlock the thick laboratory door.

DR. DEMETRIUS

Let me show you my mycelia laboratory. She's beautiful.

Outside the laboratory door, Artemis encounters a tiny SPIRIT GIRL, 8, unaware she's dead. She's in a golden particle haze. She smiles at Artemis. Artemis senses her, she looks down.

SPIRIT GIRL

I see you, Artemis. I know you'll protect us from the mean men in the forest.

INT. MYCELIA LABORATORY, HOSPITAL - DAY

Artemis and Dr. Demetrius remove the respirators. They individually walk through an infrared scanner. Dr. Demetrius puts on a hairnet and encourages Artemis to do the same. He hands her a lab coat and surgical gloves.

DR. DEMETRIUS

We can never be too careful.

ARTEMIS

You're obsessed with mushrooms.

Artemis examines numerous stainless-steel scientific incubators within the ultra-clean laboratory.

DR. DEMETRIUS

Not mushrooms, the mycelia. She is the structure underneath, like our brains, she lives in darkness and reacts to her environment.

Dr. Demetrius pulls out a long shelf covered with soil. He uses a scalpel to remove the top layer. He points at a ghostly white network of mycelia.

ARTEMIS

This is mycelia?

DR. DEMETRIUS

Glide the tip of your fingers over them. Be gentle. They're growing.

Artemis touches the mycelia. She yanks her hand back.

ARTEMIS

That was weird. It felt alive.

DR. DEMETRIUS

They are alive.

Dr. Demetrius points at various incubators.

DR. DEMETRIUS

Eat those you die from liver damage. If you eat those, you're in for a serious trip. Life and death are within a few feet of each other. All are born from Mother Nature's digestive system. The mycelia.

ARTEMIS

By the looks of this lab, you're altering their structure, their gnome. The equipment appears focused on genetic sequencing.

DR. DEMETRIUS

Correct. Penicillin was invented by accident - look it up. I'm inventing new therapies within strict safety processes. I work on process to protect the public.

ARTEMIS

Do you fertilize these things?

DR. DEMETRIUS

A good student in your day?

ARTEMIS

I paid attention.

DR. DEMETRIUS

When I die I'm going to be wrapped
in a biodegradable mushroom suit.
What will happen to my body?

ARTEMIS

Maggots?

DR. DEMETRIUS

Mycelia will absorb my rotting
flesh. I'll be digested back into
Mother Earth. I'll give back.

ARTEMIS

That I have never heard of doing.

Dr. Demetrius pinches soil from the tray.

DR. DEMETRIUS

But the magic comes from the
organic matter in this soil. I
created a soil that the mycelia
love. Those examples I showed you
have, what I theorize, is a perfect
pH level, with just enough acidity
to create an ideal breeding ground.

ARTEMIS

These are all patents of yours?

DR. DEMETRIUS

No. I don't want to share it with
any government entity. It's a
secret until I can verify the
science. Your people understand.

ARTEMIS

Seems straightforward to me. But I
need to focus on my real work. I'll
need to sit down with you to go
over these claims.

DR. DEMETRIUS

Sounds quite boring. Fine with me.

EXT. MOST HIGH CEMETERY - NIGHT

Artemis steps into the cemetery grounds - Satan's waiting. Artemis sucks in deep breaths. She faces Satan near the mausoleum. But she notices spirit activity this time.

SATAN

Did you like the little girl in Dr.
D's mushroom farm? So cute...

Satan sucks on straw downing his beverage quickly. He burbs.

ARTEMIS

Let the girl go, made your point.

SATAN

Very well.

Satan waves his hand.

SATAN

Done. See, that was nice of me. Did
you enjoy your visit with Dr.
Demetrius? Any evil thoughts?

ARTEMIS

He's brilliant, eccentric, and
harmless. He's not a killer.

SATAN

I think you understand why I told
you not to eat the mushrooms?

ARTEMIS

The mushrooms he showed me? Yes.

Satan brushes off his fancy suit. He wets his fingers and polishes his shiny shoes. He sighs.

SATAN

I need to get this buffed out.

ARTEMIS

I never pictured you as a clothes
horse.

SATAN

It amuses. This human body feels
like it needs finely tailored
suits. I inhabited a dead male
model. Don't worry, I'll give him
back to purgatory. Timing issue.

ARTEMIS

That's good to know. I think.

SATAN

I want you to meet Lily. She's floating behind me. Poor thing.

ARTEMIS

You're a sick bastard.

SATAN

Just being true to my inner self. After, I think you should visit with Virgil. Oh, I plan to put on a show for you. I will be performing in the nude.

Satan vanishes. And the spirit of a girl appears above a headstone. Artemis walks toward her. LILY'S SPIRIT, 9, a tiny girl. Her gaze fixed at Artemis.

LILY'S SPIRIT

Am I dead?

ARTEMIS

Yes. Can you see a bright light? If so, I think you should go there.

LILY'S SPIRIT

It's all dark. So, I'm dead. Good. I be better dead than where I was.

Lily stares forward blankly. She pauses.

LILY'S SPIRIT

I was told to tell you how I died.

ARTEMIS

I don't want to know.

LILY'S SPIRIT

My mom gave me away. They did things to me - she watched.

ARTEMIS

Gave you? Who? Oh god.

LILY'S SPIRIT

The prophet man. He did things to me. Other men, too. It hurt.

Artemis cries. She wipes her face.

ARTEMIS
I don't want to ask you.

LILY'S SPIRIT
You have too.

ARTEMIS
How did you die?

LILY'S SPIRIT
They was going to kill me, feed me
to a tree. I seen it before.

Artemis stares at Lily. She steps closer to Lily.

ARTEMIS
What?

LILY'S SPIRIT
I got away. But they caught me.
Shot me in the back. Mr. Virgil was
out in the woods. He fired back at
them. He tried to save me...

Lily's spirit vanishes into a brightly lit crease.

INT. ARTEMIS'S HOTEL ROOM - DAY

Artemis stretches her long legs on the carpeted floor. She
performs basic strength training. Laina's watching TV.

ARTEMIS
I have an appointment today. I need
you to promise me you'll stay here.

LAINA
I like it here.

ARTEMIS
Good. I told the hotel staff that
you can order food, and they'll
bring it to you. Do you understand?

LAINA
Yeah. Can I watch TV?

ARTEMIS
Yes. I need you to promise to stay
here.

Artemis leans back on the floor with her arms hugging her
knees. She sighs. She looks up at Laina.

LAINA

What?

ARTEMIS

I checked with the hospital. Your mother died. I'm sorry.

Laina nods. She stares over at the TV.

EXT. VIRGIL'S GROCERY - DAY

Artemis stands at the counter. Virgil has both hands on the counter. He's furrowed his eyebrows and pursed his lips. There are no other customers in the tiny shop.

VIRGIL

I been expecting your shadow.

ARTEMIS

You knew a girl, Lily?

Virgil nods. He crosses his arms. He grunts.

VIRGIL

You don't miss much, do you?

ARTEMIS

Laina's mother died.

VIRGIL

You're full of good news. Laina all right?

ARTEMIS

I think so. I have her at my hotel. The staff seems trustworthy to watch after her. Correct?

Virgil looks up at the tin ceiling.

VIRGIL

I've known the owner since birth. She's a good woman.

ARTEMIS

Like Jerome?

VIRGIL

We all think the world of Jerome. Everybody knows everybody. If we had a rat here, I'd tell you.

Virgil taps on the counter top. He huffs.

VIRGIL

Jerome's the reason Lily got a proper burial.

ARTEMIS

I need to ask a favor? Guide me. I need to find this Tree of Death. I think it's the root cause of all this evil. And I think the hospital's involved with this cult.

Virgil contemplates Artemis' request.

VIRGIL

Couple years ago, they sold the hospital. Ever since we've had drug problems, ask me, it's that fentanyl crap or whatever they call it. It's about greed. Hate.

ARTEMIS

They sent me to clean it up.

VIRGIL

I reckoned you were up to something serious. It's in your eyes. I think you can put a man down without blinking. You know how to use that fancy knife you've got there.

ARTEMIS

All I need is for you to show me where to find this tree.

Virgil steps back and leans against the back counter.

VIRGIL

That's your trick, isn't it?

ARTEMIS

I don't follow.

VIRGIL

You're a girl. Girl's aren't supposed to be professional killers. But you are...

EXT. FOREST - DAY

Artemis and Virgil hiking along a trail. Virgil's packing a shotgun with a pistol strapped to his waist. He walks with a slight limp.

The White Stag and Spirit Warrior appear in the dense brush. Virgil notices. Artemis looks at Virgil, aware that they both can see the Spirit Warrior.

ARTEMIS

You see him, don't you?

Virgil glances back at Artemis. And nods at the Spirit Warrior. They stop walking. The Spirit Warrior stares at them with interest. The White Stags bites at twigs.

VIRGIL

I do.

ARTEMIS

What's his story?

VIRGIL

I don't know, but I think he got trapped here, not sure. I don't speak whatever he's speaking.

Artemis stares over at the Spirit Warrior. She sighs.

ARTEMIS

He chose to stay for his people. It's part of his sacred duty to protect the forest.

VIRGIL

How'd you do that?

ARTEMIS

I've always been able talk to spirits. A gift I use in my process.

VIRGIL

Now I know your real trick, don't I? Let me say this, Jerome and me are old now, not much we can do about this cult. You sure you can manage this?

ARTEMIS

No. I might get killed. But my mother taught me to follow a process. It keeps me focused.

VIRGIL

Then we'd best get processing up this hill. I don't like being out here after dark.

EXT. TREE OF DEATH SITE - DAY

Artemis, Virgil, and the Spirit Warrior trek toward a high spot on a hill. The White Stag follows. Music BLARING. The glow from a fire. They reach the crest of the hill, and below them, a giant tree. Beneath the tree, a few MEN, 20s/30s, and many WOMEN, 20s, in black togas, worshiping the tree. The Prophet wears a goat's head with long horns and a large pentagram on the mask's forehead.

The Prophet stands behind a long wooden table. On the table, a Kris sword. Behind The Prophet, a lamb tied to the tree.

Satan, wearing a skeleton mask, turns. He looks up purposefully into the forest toward where Artemis hides. Virgil ducks down. The Spirit Warrior does not care if they can see him or not. Artemis pushes back from the hilltop.

SATAN

(to Artemis - O.S.)

Do you like my mask, too? The
Prophet's goat mask is too much on
the nose. Don't you think?

Artemis lies on her back, contemplating the situation.

VIRGIL

This ain't good.

ARTEMIS

No. It is not good.

VIRGIL

That's a serious looking blade down
there. You now what it is?

ARTEMIS

It's a Kris sword. Indonesian. And
quite expensive. Quite sharp. It
can cut a man's head off.

VIRGIL

You know your knives, don't you.

Artemis rolls over and creeps up to look down at the service. The women take off their togas. Naked. They dance in a circle around the tree. The men stand within the circle. Beyond the satanic worship five SECURITY GUARDS, 20s, holding weapons, each standing near tiki torches. They are all drunk or high.

ARTEMIS

The guards can't see us.

VIRGIL
I'm confused. How so?

ARTEMIS
The torches are like stage lights.
All they can see is black. Dumb.

VIRGIL
Well now, I'd never figured that.

Satan hops and dances with the women.

SATAN
(at Artemis - O.S.)
These girls don't have a clue what
they're doing. Yummy.

Virgil wipes sweat from his brow. He breathing heavy. The
Spirit Warrior backs down the hillside with the White Stag.

VIRGIL
I had no idea 'bout this. This is
sick stuff. I'm sorry.

ARTEMIS
It's not your fault.

The women grab sling pouches from under the table. They begin
to spread off-colored powder in front of the tree. They then
water the ground. The music stops. The men bring the lamb
forward. The Prophet grabs the Kris sword. He holds it aloft.
He then slits the lamb's neck, causing blood to spew from the
animal. The lamb frantically BAAS. It dies. The men flop the
dead animal onto the table. The Prophet begins to slice the
animal into pieces, flicking the meat onto the ground in
front of the tree.

The women back away, forming a circle. The men shift the
table away from the tree. The Prophet takes the Kris sword
and stabs it into the ground. They all back away from the
tree. They all stare at the ground.

The ground beneath the tree begins to shake, crack, and
partially cave in. Thick, snake-like tentacles emerge,
sucking down the lamb meat. The tentacles sop up the muddy
topsoil. It devours the remaining meat. The tentacles slither
back down into the ground beneath the tree.

The Men and Women howl with enjoyment waving and shaking.
They hold hands, they skip and dance beneath the tree.

VIRGIL
Kinda sick to my stomach. Can we
get out of here?

ARTEMIS

I've seen more than I wanted. Yes.

SATAN

(to Artemis - O.S.)

Don't go now. The best parts about to happen. An orgy. I've got my eyes on a young one. Oh, wait, one last clue? I'm being helpful.

Artemis stops. She shuts her eyes. She opens them. She crawls back up the hill to peek down. The Prophet takes off his mask. A larger version of his identical twin, Dr. Demetrius.

ARTEMIS

Shit.

Artemis retrieves her smartphone. She snaps a photo of The Prophet. She covers her eyes with her hand from the ongoing orgy. She backs away. The loud music fading.

SATAN

(to Artemis - O.S.)

Did you notice what the fertilizer those girls spread? Crushed fentanyl... The mushrooms are transporting the drugs in their flesh. Brilliant madness.

Satan LAUGHS. The laugh reverberates across the forest. Artemis and Virgil hike back down the hillside. The Spirit Warrior and the White Stag follow.

VIRGIL

If just want to take Laina, leave this place, I'll never talk.

INT. ARTEMIS'S HOTEL ROOM - DAY

Artemis rushes inside. Laina's in bed sleeping. Artemis checks on her. Laina awakens with bed-head hair looking up at Artemis. Artemis kneels. She hugs Laina.

INT. MYCELIA LABORATORY - DAY

Dr. Demetrius points to all his mycelia and mushroom discoveries. Artemis seems interested.

ARTEMIS

You make edible mushrooms, too?

DR. DEMETRIUS

It's the crop that we can use to help sustain the hospital. I donate all the proceeds.

ARTEMIS

You have a one-of-a-kind operation here. Your family like Selene? Sorry, I don't mean to be personal.

Dr. Demetrius nods. He sighs.

DR. DEMETRIUS

I'm divorced. Being married to a physician has its drawbacks.

ARTEMIS

In my line of work, its not practical.

DR. DEMETRIUS

My ex-wife is a rich woman. I like it that way. She's still a friend. My children have a great mother.

ARTEMIS

Your work, it's all here? It's not shared outside of this laboratory.

DR. DEMETRIUS

Your company understands the secretive reasoning. That is why I've got all these processes.

ARTEMIS

What else are you creating?

Dr. Demetrius look at Artemis. He's curious what she really asked.

DR. DEMETRIUS

The mycelia are a structure for creating organs. Think of the wonderful outcomes.

ARTEMIS

Lungs? Heart?

DR. DEMETRIUS

I'm close. If I can harness the mycelia - a perfect natural solution to human suffering.

ARTEMIS

Then I'm sorry.

DR. DEMETRIUS

Sorry? At this phase in my research, it's important to protect the public. It's nothing to be sorry about - it's all process.

Artemis removes her smartphone. She shares a photo from her smartphone. Dr. Demetrius examines the photo. He steps back.

ARTEMIS

I think this man is part of your family? I think he betrayed you.

Dr. Demetrius wobbles back against a stainless table. His eye's staring at the smartphone.

DR. DEMETRIUS

My brother.

Artemis puts the smartphone in her pocket. She walks within the laboratory. She examines the stainless equipment.

ARTEMIS

Have you shared any of this?

DR. DEMETRIUS

He's profoundly mentally ill.

ARTEMIS

I think he's blackmailing you.

Artemis stares at Dr. Demetrius. He slumps. He huffs.

DR. DEMETRIUS

He made a discovery let's say.

Dr. Demetrius glides his hands down to find a chair. He sits.

ARTEMIS

I'll try to get you out of this mess. I have a meeting tonight.

DR. DEMETRIUS

I don't understand?

ARTEMIS

I suspect you will very soon.

EXT. MOST HIGH CEMETERY - NIGHT

Satan stands near the center. Artemis enters through the iron gates. She walks over and faces him. Satan's wearing a black robe. A diadem crowns his head with long goat horns.

SATAN

This body needed to wear something loose fitting. The robe is perfect, black silk velvet. From my stay at home collection. You like?

ARTEMIS

I'd call you all sorts of disgusting names, but you don't care.

SATAN

Allow the hate inside you to come out. Those women worshipping me, they wore me out. My human body is chaffing in a few spots.

ARTEMIS

Where's this going?

SATAN

Oh now, you're my lady justice.

Artemis furrows her eyebrows. She crosses her arms.

ARTEMIS

What are you saying?

SATAN

That lightning bolt, the scar on the bottom of your right heel. It's your lady justice mark.

ARTEMIS

So what?

SATAN

I'm excited for you. Go into the forest, there's an open field not far from where they worship me. Go linger for a bit.

ARTEMIS

I don't like being up there at night.

SATAN

Go during the day. Laina will be safe. For now. Don't worry.

ARTEMIS

You know what Dr. Demetrius has discovered. He can make organs, he'll save lives. But you want to block him. It's all about hate.

Satan flaps his black robe revealing he's naked underneath.

SATAN

Why would I let him help other humans? He needs to learn greed. It's like the inventors of fentanyl, what a greedy lot.

ARTEMIS

I'd kill you if I could.

Satan grins. Satan points at Artemis. Benjamin's spirit appears. He's not amused, floating above Satan.

SATAN

Oh, I'm winning. I want to channel that hate. Let the hate grow.

ARTEMIS

What about Benjamin?

SATAN

Oh, he's being a good boy. Off you go... the dead ladies wait.

ARTEMIS

(to Benjamin)

I'll get you out of this. Somehow.

SATAN

I don't think so.

EXT. FOREST - DAY

Artemis hikes. She finds the satanic ritual site, the grounds plentiful with deadly mushrooms. She walks along the tree line finding a large flat clearing. She senses spirits.

ARTEMIS

I know you're here.

From within the darkness beneath the trees, SHRIEKS. A GHOSTLY HARBINGER fires itself at Artemis. Artemis does not move. She walks closer towards the trees and the darkness.

ARTEMIS

You can't scare me. Come out.

WOMEN SPIRITS, 18 and older, emerge from the trees. Cloaked in black robes. There behind them, the LITTLE GIRLS, 10 and under, in white robes. They are peeking at Artemis from behind tree trunks and rock outcroppings. A woman steps forward. LILITH, 25 at death, sanguine.

LILITH

We know who you are.

ARTEMIS

How?

LILITH

Satan owns our souls, he lies to us about you. We are trapped.

ARTEMIS

What happened to you all?

LILITH

We gave Satan a blood oath. The girls behind us, are innocent. We help them feel safe.

ARTEMIS

Satan blocks them?

LILITH

Yes. They go on, eventually.

Artemis shifts and walks closer to Lilith. She scans behind Lilith at the women and girls.

ARTEMIS

Where is your body?

LILITH

The Prophet murdered us. We were sacrificed to the tree. Others were pregnant and left at the hospital. I think The Prophet didn't want to be hassled with babies.

ARTEMIS

It's always the simplest answer.
Dr. Demetrius?

LILITH

He buried some of us in the compost pile. But he was respectful.

ARTEMIS

I suspected. I didn't see them.

The women and girls begin to SCREAM. Satan emerges.

SATAN

(to Artemis)

Oh, did we learn a lot?

Satan waves his hands. He engulfs the women into darkness. Their screams fade into the distance.

ARTEMIS

You gave them no mercy.

SATAN

A contract is a contract.

ARTEMIS

The compost pile. You blocked me. Dr. Demetrius is in on all this?

SATAN

He's such a naive soul. But his twin - he's madness by definition. Maybe settle these silly claims? And we can get down to business?

Satan snaps his fingers. He vanishes.

INT. JEROME'S OFFICE - DAY

Artemis sits across from Jerome. Her computer screen shows Wylie looking back.

ARTEMIS

We have to settle these claims. I hope we can keep the hospital open.

JEROME

I'm listening.

ARTEMIS

Dr. Demetrius has a twin brother. He's quite dangerous. A lunatic. He's the source of the problem.

JEROME

I did not know this.

ARTEMIS

He's been murdering women. He hacks them up and buries them in the forest under a giant tree.

Jerome's mouth opens. He breathes in deeply. Exhales.

JEROME

This is sick. And it's criminal. I feel numb from hearing this, thinking of my friends' children.

ARTEMIS

If the women get pregnant after being raped, they're left at the hospital's ICU. I think they're expendable, thrown away like trash.

WYLIE

(to Artemis)

This is nuts. We need to get you out of there post haste.

ARTEMIS

I think Dr. Demetrius buried some of the women on hospital grounds in their compost pile. His brother knows this. He tricked his brother.

JEROME

The reason I have a little girl outside my office playing with crayons?

Jerome leans his elbows onto his desk toward Artemis.

ARTEMIS

I can't let her out of my sight. They are aware of her.

WYLIE

This is criminal, not malpractice. We don't allow murder, ever.

JEROME

How do you all propose we settle these matters? I think this will bankrupt the hospital. The press gets wind of this? It's over.

ARTEMIS

Dr. Demetrius does not know I know what he's been doing. I need to talk with him.

(MORE)

ARTEMIS (CONT'D)

Either way, I promise. I'll terminate his brother.

Jerome ponders Artemis' statement.

JEROME

Didn't think you were a medical malpractice investigator. I guess you're not real reinsurance.

WYLIE

We're contractors. Artemis cleans up messes in the healthcare niche. Our bosses know Dr. Demetrius has world-changing scientific discoveries. Hope to save him.

JEROME

You mean the hospital systems source of more revenue.

ARTEMIS

Dr. Demetrius has advanced genomic science in that laboratory.

WYLIE

Fair statement, Jerome. The company has made an enormous investment in Dr. Demetrius. We need to protect our investment. And eradicate the problem. Plain and simple.

Jerome nods. He looks back over at Artemis.

JEROME

In the military, I think they'd call you a liquidator? This is my home. I'll keep quiet.

EXT. HOSPITAL PARKING LOT - DAY

Artemis and Laina walk together toward the hospital. A black SUV thunders past them into the parking lot. The Prophet gets out, wearing a surgical mask. He sees Artemis and Laina. He points at them.

THE PROPHET

Woman - wear a mask. You violate my orders.

Artemis nudges Laina behind her legs.

ARTEMIS

You don't tell me to do anything.

THE PROPHET

I am lord over all that I see. You are an abomination. Woman do what they are told to do.

ARTEMIS

I'm packing. And I promise I will use it. I trust your ears work?

Artemis opens her jacket to reveal her Sig. The Prophet grunts. But doesn't move. He dagger points at Laina.

THE PROPHET

The child is not yours. I should be shepherding this child. Her mother was among my flock.

ARTEMIS

Here to visit your brother? Me too.

The Prophet studies Artemis. He looks at Laina. He gets back into his SUV. He drives away. Laina pulls on Artemis's pant leg. She looks up at Artemis.

LAINA

I know him. He's mean.

ARTEMIS

Sorry?

LAINA

He'll kill me. I seen him kill.

Artemis kneels down. She hugs Laina.

ARTEMIS

I'll protect you. I promise.

LAINA

I knows. It's in your eyes. You can tell what people be like by looking them in them dead in the eyes.

INT. COMPOST PILE, HOSPITAL - DAY

Dr. Demetrius walks with Artemis. Laina's sitting on a park bench. They stroll across the bluegrass and the rich soil.

ARTEMIS

How many?

DR. DEMETRIUS

Three. I know where each one is buried. Two under those oak trees. The last one is the midpoint between the first two.

ARTEMIS

I don't want to go digging anybody up. Why did you do this?

Dr. Demetrius looks down at the soil. He glances over at Laina. He shrugs toward Laina.

DR. DEMETRIUS

She was inside her mother's patient room. She was all alone. Nobody came. Nobody cared.

Dr. Demetrius kneels and clutches a fistful of soil.

DR. DEMETRIUS

I thought how horrible it was that nobody cared about these women.

ARTEMIS

You didn't get noticed?

DR. DEMETRIUS

The first time was this poor young girl. Over there. She was fragile. They took her down to the morgue. I went down to the morgue one night. I retrieved the body. I signed it out with a messy signature. No one ever asked...

ARTEMIS

Very doctorly of you.

DR. DEMETRIUS

It was madness. I dug a deep hole. Yes. Right there. They thought I was doing my composting of garbage. They think I'm nuts.

ARTEMIS

But it wasn't garbage.

DR. DEMETRIUS

No. I had sewn her up into a biodegradable mushroom suit. I buried her under that oak tree.

ARTEMIS

I don't understand why there?

Dr. Demetrius waves for Artemis to follow. He glances back over at Laina. He whispers.

DR. DEMETRIUS

The tree's root system will find the body. As she decomposes, she nourishes the tree. She gives her body back to Mother Earth. I swear I didn't desecrate her body. I said a prayer over her. I still do.

Artemis steps next to the tree. She looks down at the soil.

ARTEMIS

The soil is the magic fertilizer?

DR. DEMETRIUS

Ugly to admit now, but yes. I don't know why. It's like the mycelia came alive, they become strong.

ARTEMIS

How'd your brother find out?

Dr. Demetrius gulps. He nods.

DR. DEMETRIUS

I think the hospital staff. He pays them off, has eyes everywhere. I didn't think they'd do anything.

ARTEMIS

Well, you were wrong about that. What else?

DR. DEMETRIUS

I shared my mycelia with him. He said he wanted to grow mushrooms. Silly notion... it should be harmless I thought.

ARTEMIS

I think we should go out into the forest. I know a place you need to visit.

DR. DEMETRIUS

Am I going to prison?

ARTEMIS

I don't know. We'll need your expertise to deal with a problem your brother has created - a deadly problem hidden out in the forest.

EXT. TREE OF DEATH SITE - DAY

Artemis and Virgil lead Dr. Demetrius onto the grounds around the satanic site. The ground covered with mushroom varieties. Dr. Demetrius inspects the soil near the tree trunk.

DR. DEMETRIUS

This is my brother's doing?

ARTEMIS

Yes.

DR. DEMETRIUS

He's lost his mind. What would my beloved mother say.

VIRGIL

I'd be sick to my stomach. I am.

DR. DEMETRIUS

This is an evil place. But he knows I'm here.

VIRGIL

How do you figure that?

DR. DEMETRIUS

He's my identical twin. Twins intuitively sense each other.

Dr. Demetrius steps around the tree inspecting the trunk.

DR. DEMETRIUS

All these mushrooms are dangerous. This is a death harvest.

Dr. Demetrius kneels and presses his hands on the ground near the tree trunk. He moves down farther. He presses his ear to the ground.

VIRGIL

What's that about?

DR. DEMETRIUS

Warmth. Too much warmth. I'm afraid of what I'd see below this surface.

ARTEMIS

What do you think is down there?

DR. DEMETRIUS

The mycelia I gave him. He stumbled
on a way to supercharge her growth.

Dr. Demetrius steps through the site looking below downed
logs. He inspects beneath groupings of rocks.

ARTEMIS

What are you looking for?

DR. DEMETRIUS

Amanitas. Like that one, Amanita
muscaria - fly amanita - used in
entheogens for centuries.

VIRGIL

What's that mean?

Dr. Demetrius looks back over at Virgil. He nods.

DR. DEMETRIUS

Sorry, these are psychoactive,
hallucinogens - used in spiritual
meetings for centuries.

Dr. Demetrius keeps searching.

DR. DEMETRIUS

Where are you, my love?

Artemis and Virgil step back and watch Dr. Demetrius. He
points at a mushroom hidden behind a rotting tree log.

DR. DEMETRIUS

Ah, there you are. My I introduce,
Amanita phalloides - eat her,
you'll die a horrible death.

VIRGIL

That one looks edible to me.

DR. DEMETRIUS

That's her lure. A honey-sweet
scent. Quite dangerous. I'll not
touch her without gloves.

Dr. Demetrius points back over at the tree.

DR. DEMETRIUS
What's beneath the tulip poplar.
That abused girl scares me. I'm not
sure I'd go digging in there.

Artemis points up the hill toward the location where they
watched the satanic ceremony. She steps closer to the tree.

ARTEMIS
We came here one night. We kept
hidden up there behind the hill.

DR. DEMETRIUS
What happened?

Virgil points his shotgun down at the ground near the tree.

VIRGIL
The earth here came alive. I'm a
bit nervous standing here. They fed
it a cut up lamb. Powdered drugs.

ARTEMIS
Fentanyl, heroin...

DR. DEMETRIUS
Now I know what happened to these
missing women and girls. My once
beautiful girl is digesting them.
Oh god. My family name.

Dr. Demetrius ponders the tree and the ground.

ARTEMIS
What are you thinking?

DR. DEMETRIUS
The soil and the mycelia are
learning. This soil and the trees
are conscious. They communicate
underground in symbiosis.

ARTEMIS
I'm going to deal with your
brother. I have too.

DR. DEMETRIUS
We have a much bigger problem than
my idiot brother. I cannot
eradicate her. Cut off a limb and
the mycelia grow another. She's a
perfect learning machine.

VIRGIL

I know the forest, that ain't good.

DR. DEMETRIUS

She's sort of like a burrowing mole. She produces mushroom fruit. If the mushrooms she's producing are laced with fentanyl and heroin. A blind death spreader across the forest. And beyond...

VIRGIL

You mean mushrooms that I think are harmless, ain't harmless?

DR. DEMETRIUS

Exactly. The Amanitas are easy to spot, but not the mushrooms my mycelia produces. They are genetically engineered to appear like a grocery store mushroom.

EXT. MOST HIGH CEMETERY - NIGHT

Satan leans back against the mausoleum. He smokes a cigarette. He wears a silk suit. His shirt sleeves are ruffled french-cuffs. Artemis stands across from him.

ARTEMIS

What?

SATAN

Oh, I feel so, so satisfied. I don't smoke. This is part of my performance. French cuffs work for all occasions don't you think?

ARTEMIS

Why are you so satisfied?

SATAN

I told you from the beginning. Mass killing is my passion. I am, you know, the Evil ONE.

ARTEMIS

Am I supposed be surprised?

SATAN

Oh, stop it. I did tell you not to eat the mushrooms. Now you know why. Mass killing makes me orgasm.

Satan faux wipes his eyes. He winks at Artemis.

ARTEMIS

Are you going to stop me?

SATAN

Stop you? No way. I orgasm watching you kill people. This body craves multiple dopamine fixes. Yummy.

Satan flicks the cigarette away. Puts his hands behind him. He paces in front of the mausoleum.

SATAN

Make the silly legal matters go away. It'll be nice for Wylie to come for a visit. And then, we should make a deal?

ARTEMIS

No. I don't want any part of your deals. You're disgusting.

SATAN

Darn, my reputation. I have your Benny? Laina needs you? Love is such a mess. Hate is my mission.

Benjamin's spirit floats near Satan. He looks stern.

SATAN

Say hi, Benny. Artemis wuvs you...

Satan and Benjamin vanish.

EXT. COMPOST PILE, HOSPITAL - DAY

Wylie, Artemis, and Laina walk up near the soil. Men are raking and turning the soil with refuse. Wylie nods. Satan stands across from them pointing down at the compost pile. Only Artemis can see him. He starts eating popcorn.

WYLIE

This our eco-friendly composting?

ARTEMIS

Yes it is.

WYLIE

(to Laina)

We'll need to find you a place to play. I bet the hospital's got something just for you.

LAINA

It does. I used to walk to it.

Wyllie realizes why she has walked the hospital halls alone.

ARTEMIS

I can't let her out of my sight.

WYLLIE

Understood. That big critter is still on the loose. End him.

Wyllie looks up into the hillsides. He gazes at the modest community with brick buildings and quaint homes.

WYLLIE

It's pretty up here. We have this next part all sorted out?

ARTEMIS

I think so. Dr. Demetrius and Jerome are inside waiting for us. And Gene, general counsel, he'll cooperate, wants to keep his job.

WYLLIE

Let's get this behind us.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM, HOSPITAL - DAY

Wyllie and Artemis sit at one end of the conference table. Jerome has taken a midpoint, setting his files next to his laptop. Dr. Demetrius and Gene sit across from Jerome. Dr. Demetrius's face resolute.

WYLLIE

We all know why we are here.

GENE

We've learned our lessons. We'll...

Wyllie holds his hand up. He stares at Gene.

WYLLIE

Hush. All you need to do is be a witness. If this gets screwed up you're the first head on the chopping block. Clear?

Gene slinks back into his chair.

JEROME

Let's dispense with pleasantries?

WYLIE

I agree.

Jerome slips on a pair of reading glasses. He breaths in and out. He nods over at Dr. Demetrius.

JEROME

Dr. Demetrius, you understand this is a completely off-the-record? But none of this will be forgotten.

DR. DEMETRIUS

I do. I'm sorry.

JEROME

Thank you for that. Believe it or not, a bit of contrition goes a long way in these matters.

WYLIE

I'll second that notion. Continue.

JEROME

Doctor, I have simple questions. My moral and ethical obligation is to my clients. So, tell me about your research?

Dr. Demetrius acknowledges the question. He moves forward.

DR. DEMETRIUS

I've always been fascinated by mycelia. The hidden lattice structure underneath everything on earth. In fact, the largest organism on earth is a mycelium.

JEROME

Have you been bio-engineering this?

DR. DEMETRIUS

I've studied them down to their genetic structure. Yes. It's not often known that mushrooms and humans DNA are about fifty-percent the same. But otherwise, the key being they are the Earth's digestive system. The mushroom is simply the fruit. I focus on the structure, not the fruit.

JEROME

I'm over my head. I posit that you're by far a worldwide expert in the subject matter.

DR. DEMETRIUS

I am. That's fair.

JEROME

If I understand you, the compost pile you created has mycelia?

DR. DEMETRIUS

It's hidden but if you dig down a bit, you'll find this white lattice-like structure. It looks like spider webs in the soil.

JEROME

I have a list of names. Can you read this list? Let me know if you recognize the names? If so, did you treat any of them?

Jerome pushes a piece of paper over to Dr. Demetrius. He picks it up. He reads over the list.

DR. DEMETRIUS

I treated many of them. Perhaps other physicians treated the other names. I assume this list is of patients at the hospital?

JEROME

No. Some of those names are for missing women and girls. You will note, there are no men or boys involved.

Dr. Demetrius covers his face with his hands.

DR. DEMETRIUS

My family name is trashed.

JEROME

Can you explain why?

DR. DEMETRIUS

My brother.

(to Artemis)

She took me out into the forest. I think I know where some of these poor souls met their end.

(MORE)

DR. DEMETRIUS (CONT'D)

I gave my brother some of my modified mycelia. I stupidly thought he'd just be growing mushrooms, maybe some with hallucinogenic properties, to get high. But that's not what he has been doing.

Jerome contemplates Dr. Demetrius' statement. He looks over at Wylie. He nods.

JEROME

(to Wylie)

I think I've heard enough. The missing, I cannot help. But the one's we agree on, perhaps we can start there?

WYLIE

Maybe go over to your office?

JEROME

That's fine with me.

WYLIE

One last thing, Dr. Demetrius, the company has decided that a large scholarship fund will be established here for domestic abuse victims and their families.

Wylie gazes over at Dr. Demetrius. Dr. Demetrius nods.

WYLIE

We hope that will go a long way to express our sympathies. We think you should participate on the not-for-profit board and personally oversee things?

DR. DEMETRIUS

It would be my honor. Thank you.

WYLIE

(to Gene)

Turn that compost pile into a green space. We think a nice monument with names would be a good idea.

GENE

Why yes, personally see to it.

They all get up to adjourn the meeting. Dr. Demetrius and Gene leave the conference room. Jerome nods at Artemis. He leaves. Wylie and Artemis sit alone.

ARTEMIS
I have work to do.

WYLIE
I'll see you back in St.
Petersburg.

ARTEMIS
I'm scared.

Artemis stares forward.

WYLIE
You want out?

ARTEMIS
No. You think I could adopt Laina?

WYLIE
I didn't expect that. I'll check
into it. Just get back home first.

INT. RESTAURANT - DAY

Artemis sits with Laina at a diner. The diner's busy with local customers. She looks over the menu. Laina's looking at her. She's not touching anything.

ARTEMIS
What'd you like?

Laina doesn't answer. Artemis contemplates.

ARTEMIS
It's okay if you can't read.

Laina turns her head. She crinkles down. She whispers.

LAINA
Momma never showed me.

Artemis inspects the menu. She grins over at Laina.

ARTEMIS
Do you like strawberry milkshakes?

LAINA
I don't know.

ARTEMIS

Let's see if you like milkshakes.
Maybe a cheeseburger... yeah, I bet
you'd like a cheeseburger and
french fries.

Laina just nods her head. A WAITRESS, 50s, steps near the
table. She winks down at Laina. Smiles at Artemis.

WAITRESS

What ya have?

ARTEMIS

She'll have a small strawberry
milkshake. Cheeseburger and fries...
Why not? I'll have the same.

The waitress turns to walk away. She stops.

WAITRESS

Oh, chef, well the owner, we ain't
fancy here. Has a special on
roasted vegetable medley. Okay, he
ordered too much vegetables. I'll
throw-'em in for free?

Artemis laughs. She smiles at the waitress.

Minutes pass and the order has been delivered. Artemis and
Laina are enjoying the food. Laina smiles. But Artemis starts
to sweat along her brow. She blinks her eyes rapidly. She
grips the table. Artemis loses her grip, slips, and collapses
onto the tile. Laina SCREAMS.

INT. MYCELIA PURGATORY - DAY

Artemis opens her eyes. Satan smirks over at her, standing
near a tubular, round shaped opening. Satan shakes his head.
Satan's wearing a mining helmet and a black jumpsuit. Artemis
looks down to realize she's floating above the floor with a
rope around her neck.

SATAN

What did I warn you not to do?

Artemis breaths in and out. She nods.

ARTEMIS

Don't eat the mushrooms.

SATAN

You didn't listen, silly human.
Now, do you know where you are?

Artemis scans, her eyes unfixed, sunken.

ARTEMIN

No.

SATAN

I have you at the meridian between heaven and hell - but it's a special kind of purgatory. It's within the genetic structure of Dr. Demetrius' mycelia. These souls are being digested to heaven or to me.

ARTEMIS

What do you want from me?

SATAN

I want you to see how it all works. How the spiritual mechanical clock ticktocks. Do you enjoy my outfit? I'm mining for souls. Get it?

Satan prances forward. He taps Artemis's cheek.

SATAN

And, by the way, right now, Dr. Demetrius is trying to save your life. Maybe you'll live? Or, maybe you'll leave Laina to the druggie wolves. Yikes.

ARTEMIS

Oh god, please... no.

SATAN

Oh, ditto for Benny. If you don't exist, well, I'll keep him.

Artemis squirms. She fights to get free. Her breathing irregular. She almost vomits. Satan looks up at her.

SATAN

Motion sick? Suck it up lady justice. It's time to play.

Satan yanks on the rope, pulling Artemis over in front of a large rectangular window.

ARTEMIS

What is this?

SATAN

Spirits get designated to a primary sin category.

(MORE)

SATAN (CONT'D)

The seven deadly sins are about self-hate. A bonus we have seven that are polar opposites. The game - can you name the sin or the other? Let's play.

Artemis's face rubs against the glass-like surface. A man sits at home on his couch in pajamas.

SATAN

Here we go, which sin?

ARTEMIS

Sloth.

SATAN

One down, what about, well, lets forget those heavenly virtues. Boring. Let's focus on self-loathing, it's such a rich vein for mining. I want you to learn self hate... it's my mission.

Satan yanks Artemis down the tubular path. In the next window, a man and woman are eating bags of potato chips. They are drinking copious amounts of wine. Satan stares expectantly up at Artemis.

ARTEMIS

Gluttony.

SATAN

Nicely done.

Satan pulls Artemis down to the next window. Satan whistles. He skips along. Inside the next window, a woman throws dishes at a man. Satan pulls on the rope.

ARTEMIS

Anger.

SATAN

Well done, lady justice, three out of three. Let's go to number four.

Satan pulls Artemis in front of a window. Inside, a woman closely watches another woman with a handsome man.

SATAN

Give me your best answer?

ARTEMIS

Envy.

SATAN

Ah, you're down to three. I'm proud
of you. Motion sick and all.

Satan pulls Artemis along the way. She's facing a window.
Inside the window, a man counts his coins, one by one.

ARTEMIS

Greed. Easy one.

Satan grins. Satan golf claps.

SATAN

Ah, five out of five, but note,
this one, you cannot turn away
from, I forbid it.

Satan pulls Artemis along and in front of the next window.
Inside the window, an aggressive orgy takes place. Artemis
turns away. Artemis closes her eyes.

SATAN

Nope. You have to look and answer.

Artemis opens them to look at the scene.

ARTEMIS

Lust. Are you happy now?

SATAN

I don't do happy. I do hate. Maybe
I should release you into the orgy?
Let them do disgusting things to
you. Check those perverts out.

Satan points at a couple of deviants.

ARTEMIS

That's not who I am.

SATAN

I know. But I've been mining this
internet porn project. It's better
than drugs, alcohol, combined. The
Roman's would even blush. Young
women will do anything online for
money. I'm proud of them.

ARTEMIS

You're evil. Disgusting.

SATAN

Oh shucks. You get me. I have one
last window for you to consider.
It's my favorite window.

Satan brings Artemis to the last window. A man with perfect hair, a wide-toothed smile. He's relaxed. He appears supremely confident, checking his gold watch.

SATAN

My favorite televangelist died.

ARTEMIS

Pride.

Satan leans forward. He looks up beaming at Artemis.

SATAN

He's in for a big surprise. He
thought he could fool, you-know-
who. Think you can fool me, too?

Satan holds Artemis aloft like a balloon. He releases the rope. Artemis rises into a bright light. Satan's munching and throwing popcorn.

SATAN

Oh, you survived. I'll come visit
you. We can discuss contract terms.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Artemis lays on a bed, hooked to monitors. Dr. Demetrius examines her medical chart. Artemis begins to awaken. Her legs move. She blinks her eyes rapidly.

DR. DEMETRIUS

Welcome back from your trip.

ARTEMIS

Where's Laina?

Dr. Demetrius shrugs. He sets the chart down.

ARTEMIS

I have to get out of here, now.

DR. DEMETRIUS

Slow down, I had to pump you full
of high-end milk thistle. I think
they snuck Amanita muscaria into
your food. They almost killed you.

Artemis sucks in deep breaths. She nods.

ARTEMIS

They have a little girl, I'm trying
to protect her. They'll sacrifice
her. Remember that tree?

Dr. Demetrius stops. He considers Artemis' words.

DR. DEMETRIUS

This madness has to end. I'll go
with you. My family names at stake.

ARTEMIS

Fine. Let me get dressed. We need
to hurry out to the forest.

Dr. Demetrius leaves the patient room. Artemis's feet land on
the tile floor. Satan appears. Satan in full winged bloom.

SATAN

Artemis, oh, Artemis, my pet.

ARTEMIS

Where is she?

SATAN

Are you prepared to bargain?

Artemis gets dressed. She closes her eyes.

ARTEMIS

If you tell me where she is?

SATAN

Dr. Demetrius has fallen so low, so
disgustingly weak. You know where I
want to meet?

ARTEMIS

The cemetery.

SATAN

Get your weapons. All those pointy,
pointy knives. And bring the good
doctor with you. At the cemetery,
I'll offer my terms.

ARTEMIS

And if I don't accept?

SATAN

Laina dies a horrible death. And
I'll trap her spirit for a thousand
years with Benny in purgatory, just
for funnzies.

Satan flaps his wings, creating a dusty plume. Vanishes.

EXT. MOST HIGH CEMETERY - NIGHT

Dr. Demetrius and Artemis enter through the iron gates. Dr.
Demetrius scanning, seeking, and touching anything real.
Artemis knows the journey. And before them, in front of the
mausoleum, stands Satan. Satan masked and wearing a tuxedo.

ARTEMIS

Now what?

SATAN

Do you like my tuxedo? It's
bespoke, Savile Row, a classic
British suit tailored only for
life's winners.

DR. DEMETRIUS

Who are you, man? This is not a
time for jokes. Take off that silly
mask. A girl's life is at stake.

ARTEMIS

Focus on our goal. Find Laina.

Satan points at Artemis.

SATAN

Good, always focus on process, just
like mommy taught you.

DR. DEMETRIUS

Do you have any sense, man?

SATAN

(to Dr. Demetrius)

Do you like my goat mask? It's just
like your brother's. You'll see.

DR. DEMETRIUS

Who are you?

ARTEMIS

Focus on our goal.

Satan pokes his forked tongue out of the mouth hole.

DR. DEMETRIUS
What? What was that.

SATAN
(german accent)
Herr doktor, I have a question for
you. Ya?

Satan strolls over and points down at a tombstone.

SATAN
Did you, ya, treat this poor soul?

Dr. Demetrius steps over. He reads the name. He thinks.

DR. DEMETRIUS
A coal miner. He had severe back
pain. It was chronic. Terrible.

SATAN
Good memory. Ya, you treated him
with fentanyl patches. Ya?

DR. DEMETRIUS
It's a standard of care. But, it's
used for less then seventy two
hours.

SATAN
You got him addicted. He then went
seeking fentanyl. He's dead.

DR. DEMETRIUS
I'm sorry. But I didn't kill him.

SATAN
I want to thank you and your
colleagues with the help of Big
Pharma for killing thousands of
humans. I think you all deserve a
hateful award.

Satan golf claps. Dr. Demetrius screams and bull rushes
Satan. He knocks Satan down. He balls up his fists, but
Artemis steps to hold him off.

ARTEMIS
Breathe. Don't let it get to you.
You're being baited. Focus.

Satan snaps back up on his feet. He fixes his mask. He
brushes off his tuxedo, thoroughly.

SATAN

Not a good idea, doctor. And this tuxedo is brand new. But you and your other healthcare peeps made a lot of money off these poor souls.

DR. DEMETRIUS

It's true. I don't lie. In truth it's the hospitals, they are not - not for profits.

ARTEMIS

Get to it. Where is she?

SATAN

Oh Artemis. I am so proud of you.

ARTEMIS

What do you want?

SATAN

I made you in my image. I lured you into the dark arts. And, I succeeded beyond my wildest dreams. And yet, I don't dream?

Satan flings off the goat mask. He spits at them.

DR. DEMETRIUS

What, what are you?

SATAN

Oh, you know?

Dr. Demetrius eyes open. His knees shake.

DR. DEMETRIUS

This is a nightmare. That's all.

ARTEMIS

No. It's real. Focus.

SATAN

Ah, you're so disciplined - lady assassin. Let's see, perhaps Dr. Demetrius might like to see me in my most beautiful form?

Satan transforms into a beautiful winged angel. Floating. He floats within a cascading powder blue haze.

DR. DEMETRIUS

I have to be dead.

Satan waves his fingers and Dr. Demetrius freezes.

SATAN
(to Artemis)
Why do I hate you?

ARTEMIS
I know, my father.

SATAN
You're pesky father read the
Ephesia Grammata. Your mother
offered you to God. It got God's
attention. They should have paid
attention to me... big mistake.

Artemis stares down at the ground.

SATAN
My brother Michael touched your
forehead with his sword. You are
gifted at seeing the spirit world.
He carved a lightning bolt on your
right heel. God marked you. I am
forbidden from touching you. For
that insult, I will kill anything
you love! Even a little girl...

Artemis stares at Satan. Satan transforms back into the man
in the tuxedo. He sneers. He shows his sharp white fangs.

SATAN
Do you want to make a deal?

ARTEMIS
What do you want?

SATAN
I demand you kill his brother with
hate in your heart. Once Caine
kills Able, it's you're opening. I
need to feel your hate. Do you
accept my terms?

ARTEMIS
Yes... yes.

Satan waves his hands. Dr. Demetrius unfreezes.

DR. DEMETRIUS
We'll find another way. Please
don't kill me, I mean us.

SATAN

Go find Virgil. He'll have the Warrior. They'll guide you into the forest. A path his brother is unaware of...

ARTEMIS

When? You know the when.

SATAN

At midnight tonight she'll be sacrificed. One second past the hour.

ARTEMIS

And Benjamin?

SATAN

If I get hate. Benny gets to hang with my brother's and sister's. Besides, he's already dead. I don't care either way.

INT. VIRGIL'S GROCERY - DAY

Virgil watches Dr. Demetrius. He looks over at Artemis. He purses his lips and furrows his eyebrows.

VIRGIL

You two look as guilty as a house cat after eating Junior's goldfish.

ARTEMIS

We need to go out to the forest.

VIRGIL

You need to go out to the forest. I need to stay right here.

DR. DEMETRIUS

We're told you can guide us. It's for a child. She's in danger.

Virgil stares at Artemis.

ARTEMIS

Laina's in danger. They got her.

DR. DEMETRIUS

It's because of my brother. I need to reason with him. It's my family name at stake.

VIRGIL

Laina? I'll not turn my back on that child. She's had enough of this nonsense for a lifetime.

EXT. FOREST - DAY

Virgil hikes along a trail followed by Dr. Demetrius and Artemis. They walk deeper into the forest when the Spirit Warrior appears with his White Stag. He says nothing. He reveals his presence to Dr. Demetrius.

DR. DEMETRIUS

I don't believe what I'm seeing.

ARTEMIS

This is not a logical world. This is the spirit world.

DR. DEMETRIUS

Hm? I always wondered about the visual spectrum. Human eyes cannot see infrared. Or...-

Virgil stops. He's shaking his head.

VIRGIL

It's not the time for science.

DR. DEMETRIUS

Stay focused.

ARTEMIS

Think about it like you're performing a surgical procedure. It's an extraction process.

DR. DEMETRIUS

All those knives strapped to you, these are your trade craft?

ARTEMIS

These are my preferred weapons. Guns make loud noises.

VIRGIL

Those are weapons of war. They ain't made to hunt for food.

ARTEMIS

I'm a warrior. My mission tonight is to save Laina. Simple.

The Spirit Warrior has patted the White Stag to move forward. The White Stag huff along the path. The Spirit Warrior points down a narrow opening in the trees.

VIRGIL

We'll be coming to a river to cross
out here in the sticks. The Warrior
knows this forest. He'll guide us.

The Spirit Warrior comes back to them pointing across the river. Satan stands waiting. He wears his best suit.

ARTEMIS

I'll handle this.

DR. DEMETRIUS

You are a brave woman.

VIRGIL

I don't want to know what that is.

DR. DEMETRIUS

I wish I didn't know what it is.

EXT. FOREST - DAY

Artemis walks up to Satan. Satan stands near a willow tree. He has Benjamin tethered above him. Benjamin nods.

ARTEMIS

I thought we had a deal?

SATAN

I have submitted my plan to those
who are behind the invisible light.

ARTEMIS

What does that mean?

SATAN

After you pass by me, I'll not
interfere. What happens beyond this
point is left to fate. Bad luck to
you and yours.

ARTEMIS

I'll be holding you to the deal.

SATAN

Or what?

ARTEMIS

I'd rather die fighting to save
Laina's life, than live in your
darkness.

Artemis looks back and waves for the group to follow. Satan vanishes with Benjamin. She stops. She looks upward searching for a sensation, for an entity unseen by human eyes.

EXT. FOREST, OUTSIDE TREE OF DEATH - NIGHT

Artemis, Dr. Demetrius, and Virgil hike up a steep incline toward the Spirit Warrior who stands at the crest with the White Stag. Beyond them firelight, loud music.

The group reaches the crest. Beneath them, a satanic worship service. Five men with weapons guarding the perimeter lit up with tiki torches. A group of women dance. The Prophet wears a goat mask, he prances back and forth, near a giant bonfire. A table with a Kris sword on top set at the center. Laina has been roped to the tree.

VIRGIL

I see five men. They have shotguns.
The women - they're all drugged up.

DR. DEMETRIUS

My brother has shamed my family.

VIRGIL

Simmer down big fella. Artemis,
what's your plan?

ARTEMIS

My prime one is Laina.

DR. DEMETRIUS

A life. A fragile life. I must
protect that child.

Artemis glances up at Virgil.

ARTEMIS

Dr. Demetrius go with Virgil to the
other side. The Warrior and I will
go down there and figure this out.

Dr. Demetrius steps forward into the brush. His chest out.

DR. DEMETRIUS

Life is short. The art is long.

Dr. Demetrius charges down toward satanic site.

VIRGIL
(to Artemis)
They'll kill him.

ARTEMIS
That's why he just quoted
Hippocrates. His blood oath.

VIRGIL
I best get moving.

ARTEMIS
I don't know if I can do this.

Artemis looks up at Virgil with questions in her eyes. Virgil furrows his bushy eyebrows. He checks his gun. He gazes over at the fierce Spirit Warrior. He stares down at Artemis.

VIRGIL
Listen here. Laina's facing death.
She knows it. I'll not turn my back
on her. If I die, I die. She'll
know she was loved. That is all I
have to offer, my life for her's
all I have to give. But you're the
one person that can save her, if
Benajmin were here, would you
expect him to save you?

Artemis nods. She wipes her face. She takes off her jacket revealing all her weapons. She takes off the Sig's safety.

ARTEMIS
Take your time, friend. If I don't
make it out, if at least I get
Laina out of this, you'll be there
for her? Do you understand?

Virgil stops. He contemplates what Artemis said.

VIRGIL
I didn't think of it that way. Let
me get over there. I'll help where
needed. Godspeed.

Artemis clenches her jaw. Virgil turns and limps away into the darkness. She looks up at the Spirit Warrior. The Spirit Warrior shakes his spear. He waves it aloft. He moves. The White Stag follows close behind.

Artemis checks her weapons one last time. She closes her eyes. She opens them. And she crawls down into the flora and fauna toward the satanic site.

EXT. TREE OF DEATH SITE - NIGHT

Artemis makes it behind Guard One, in a black toga, like the rest of the crowd. He faces toward Artemis. But Artemis' shrouded in darkness. Artemis scans for Laina, she checks her watch. She locates her scrunched next to the tree. The Prophet and Dr. Demetrius are arguing like brothers.

DR. DEMETRIUS

We can treat the disease you have.
I love you, brother.

THE PROPHET

These are my flock. You gave me the mycelia. We share its fruit with humankind. Satan thanks you.

DR. DEMETRIUS

You're peddling drugs. That thing is toxic. I came to destroy it. I came to save that girl. I came to save you from eternal damnation.

Artemis senses her opening to deal with Guard One. The brothers are raising their voices at each other. Artemis grips a ten-inch kunai knife. She deep knee bends forward, plunging the knife into the guard's chest. He freezes. He's in shock. He coughs blood. She slits his throat with the karambit while pulling him back into the thicket. She makes certain he's dead. She retrieves her knives. She turns to look for Laina. Laina's in the same position, cowering. The other guards are in the same positions. She looks at the brothers. She checks her watch.

THE PROPHET

Brother, eat the mushrooms. Take a trip with us beyond the forest.

DR. DEMETRIUS

I cannot accept this evil.

THE PROPHET

Be part of Satan's army. Be part of tonight's sacrifice. Come Brother.

The Prophet holds his hand out for Dr. Demetrius. Dr. Demetrius swats his hand away.

DR. DEMETRIUS

You will leave that child alone.
Take off that silly mask. Protect our family name. Please.

Artemis crawls over behind the next guard. Guard Two of Five. The shotgun dangles in his right hand. He looks up into the darkness. Artemis takes the knife. She leaps forward, stabbing the guard through his neck. Blood splashes Artemis's face. Dead before he flops to the ground. Artemis drags him into the brush. She turns to keep her eyes on Laina. She verifies that Laina's unharmed. The remaining three guards maintaining their original positions. She checks her watch.

THE PROPHET

You do not understand. The blood of
this child will feed our mycelia
queen. It will please Satan.

Artemis gazes along the visible line of the half-circle beyond the firelight. Guards Three and Four are close together. Sharing a spliff. The last in line, Guard Five, appears focused. He watches Dr. Demetrius and the Prophet. He grips a double barrel pump action shotgun. He scans his area. Artemis steps back into the darkness, she contemplates Guard Five. She looks over at Dr. Demetrius.

DR. DEMETRIUS

You'll have to kill me first!

Artemis shifts around searching for Virgil. Nowhere to be seen. The Prophet picks up the Kris sword. He waves it above his head. The Spirit Warrior rushes in between the brothers. The White Stag ambles behind Dr. Demetrius. The Prophet backs up and points at the Spirit Warrior.

THE PROPHET

Why have you come? You have no
power over me. Get back. Get back.

Artemis scampers over behind the Guards Three and Four. They are facing inward, watching the brothers arguing. They are amused, and checking out the half-naked women still dancing to madness. Artemis grips two knives backwards. She calculates the distance difference from her and the two guards. She forward rolls along the ground picking up speed, leaping high to stab the guards in their upper backs. She plunges the knives deep into them with all her shoulders power and using gravity. They hit the ground. She yanks out the knives. She slits their throats before they move. But she's been exposed. The Prophet points at her with the Kris sword. The Prophet yells at his brother.

THE PROPHET

Fool! I knew that witch would come.
I will honor my Satan!

The Prophet has the Kris sword aloft. He grabs the rope, pulling Laina onto the table.

But Dr. Demetrius dives in between them. The Prophet stabs Dr. Demetrius in the back. The sword slices through Dr. Demetrius. Laina wiggles. She kicks at The Prophet.

Artemis flings a knife at the Fifth Guard. He dodges it. Artemis runs toward the table. She glances over at Guard Five only to see him pointing the shotgun at her. He moves the barrel in line with her path. He fires. Artemis snaps sideways from the buckshot hit. The guard steps toward Artemis, pumping out the spent shell, preparing for a kill shot. But behind him, Virgil steps out into the torch light.

VIRGIL

Drop it, drop it now!

The Guard Five wheels around. He points the barrel at Virgil. They fire. Virgil gets belly shot. He slams backward into a tree trunk. But Guard Five wobbles but keeps his feet. Artemis grabs a ten-inch knife, throwing it at the guard. It hits him in the throat. He flops backward, drops the shotgun.

Artemis tries to get up, she grips the Sig 365x, dragging her leg, but she crashes into a downed log. She stumbles. The gun slips away from her grasp.

The no longer hypnotized women scatter and scream. They rush between the Prophet and Laina. The Prophet pulls the Kris sword back out of his dead brother. He shoves Dr. Demetrius's body off the table. He pins Laina to the table. The Prophet swings the Kris sword into the air.

But the Spirit Warrior flashes up and throws his spear at the Prophet. The Prophet ducks. The spear harmless. But the White Stag rushes behind the Spirit Warrior, crashing into the table, knocking it over, and Laina to the ground. Laina screams. She rolls away from the Prophet.

Artemis crawls on one leg sideways. Bleeding, grasping, clawing her hand along the ground for the gun. But from someplace unforeseen, Artemis hears her mother's voice. She gazes up toward the sky. She stops.

AOIFE (O.S.)

Artemis, get up, how did I teach
you to throw a javelin?

Artemis screams. She grips for a knife, pulls out the Kaiken dagger. She takes a deep breath in, a breath out.

ARTEMIS

With process, with joy, mother.

She flings the dagger with her left hand while dropping to her right knee.

The knife hits its mark into the Prophet's neck just below the mask. A deep wound. He drops the Kris sword. His blood spews. He collapses back against the tree. The White Stag steps over between the Prophet and Laina. The White Stag pushes the Prophet away with its antlers. The Spirit Warrior flings himself over with the White Stag trying to cover Laina.

Artemis gets on her hands and knees. But she stumbles to the ground. Her breathing heavy. She touches her bleeding left hip joint. But she hobbles forward. She gets past the downed table. Laina hugs her. Laina whimpers. Artemis trying to catch her breath. She looks around.

ARTEMIS

You're safe.

Laina pushes with her face against Artemis. Sobbing. Artemis grabs Laina by the shoulders, she looks her in the eyes.

ARTEMIS

I need to do something scary. It's
for your dad. Go over and find
Virgil. He needs your help.

Laina shifts from Artemis. She obeys. She scampers toward Virgil. But she looks back several times at Artemis.

Artemis pulls the dagger out of the Prophet. He's alive. She squares her body with the Prophet. With both hands she plunges the dagger into the Prophets chest. He gurgles blood. Artemis sits back staring at the bleeding Prophet. She clutches her karambit shoving it close to the Prophet's neck. But she stops.

ARTEMIS

To easy for you.

Artemis searches and finds and grabs the Kris sword. The Prophet moans. He drives his boots to push back but the tree trunk blocks him. Artemis yanks the goat mask off the Prophet. He stares up at her. Artemis growls. Her face contorts. Her neck muscles bulge.

ARTEMIS

This is for Lily, the innocent girl
you raped, you murdered.

Artemis plunges the Kris sword into the Prophets throat. He spews blood from his mouth. He chokes. She grinds the sword deep into his thick neck. He gasps. She yanks the sword back. She holds it aloft staring down at the Prophet.

ARTEMIS

This is for all the victims of
predatory thieves like you! Go meet
Satan!

Artemis twists the sword backward. She stops midair. She positions it with both hands above her head. She swirls her shoulders and in a slingshot motion. She whips the blade, slicing the Prophet's head off. She screams. Her eyes turn a hateful molten dark red. The Prophet's severed head drops.

The Spirit Warrior chants, kneels, gazing up at the sky. He holds his spear high. Artemis backs away. She crumbles back into the table. She wipes her face. She flings the Kris sword into the forest. The Prophet's dead eyes stare at her.

Artemis gets up. She limps over to find Virgil. He slumps back against a tree trunk. Bleeding from a serious belly wound. He squints at Artemis. His breathing shallow. Artemis presses her forehead against Virgil's forehead. Laina's holding his hand.

ARTEMIS

Without you I'd have failed.

Virgil coughs up blood. His mouth quivers. He gasps his last.

ARTEMIS

Go on eagle scout.

EXT. TREE OF DEATH SITE - DAY

Artemis and Laina follow the Spirit Warrior and the White Stag away from the Tree of Death. The dead bodies are strewn across the satanic ritual site. And then, Satan arrives with Benjamin. Laina SCREAMS. Satan blows her a kiss.

SATAN

I hope you appreciate that my hair
is well-coiffed. My bespoke suit is
a simple touch of class. The shoes
are, of course, Italian leather.
These moments just demand my
thoughtful perfection. You like?

ARTEMIS

Let Benjamin go.

SATAN

I hate you.

ARTEMIS

Let Benjamin go. We have a contract. You said it.

The ground rumbles under their feet. Artemis looks back over at the tree. It shakes.

SATAN

Oh, that fentanyl spreading machine is hungry. Momma needs to feed her death fruit. And look at all this blood and guts you created for her. Well done.

Satan golf claps. He strolls over to inspect Artemis's work.

SATAN

You assassinated the entire party. I don't need to process those through purgatory. Nope. They got their one-way ticket to hell.

ARTEMIS

Let Benjamin go, we'll be on our way. Happy?

SATAN

By now, you know I don't do happy. It's not part of what I am. I must be true to my evil being.

ARTEMIS

I did as required. I killed that asshole with hate in my heart.

SATAN

You did. I felt your authentic performance. But, I'm Satan for hell's sake. Besides, we had only a gentlemen's agreement. We didn't do the contract binding with blood pinky swear. Opps.

ARTEMIS

I'll talk to the dead. God gave me that gift. I'll find an answer.

SATAN

God? What can you, silly human, have an inkling of God?

The Tree of Death shakes. The earth beneath it rumbles.

ARTEMIS

I'll ask one more time. Let
Benjamin go free into Heaven.

SATAN

Heaven? I prefer purgatory. Legal
limbo for Benny. I have the power.

Artemis looks around the forest. She gazes into the trees.

ARTEMIS

I sense we are not alone. You
wished me bad luck. I think you'll
need some good luck, quite soon.

And from a bright light slicing along a tall crease emerges Archangel Michael. In his shiny armor with a giant golden sword. With him, Archangel Gabriel, in a pure, simmering robe with white wings floats forward to hand Artemis a white lily. Archangel Barachiel, in a luminous robe, he floats over and hands a white rose to Laina. Satan sneers at them. Satan growls. And Satan transforms into a winged BLACK ANGEL, timeless, with long horns and a snapping tail.

SATAN

You can have your souls.

Satan releases his hold on Benjamin. Benjamin's spirit maneuvers behind Archangel Michael. Satan sneers. Satan flaps his wings. Satan vanishes.

The Tree of Death continues to rumble and shake. Archangel Gabriel walks toward it. He waves his hands. The tree. The earth, calms, briefly.

The crease begins to brighten. It opens to reveal ANGELS, timeless, they are all wearing multi-colored robes. And behind them, a modest figure emerges. THE BEING, eternal, neither a man nor a woman, but a quiet, humble, powerful presence. (The face of The Being hidden.)

The Spirit Warrior kneels before The Being. The Being touches the Spirit Warrior's head. The Spirit Warrior smiles. The Being brushes the White Stag's mane.

The Being turns and gazes up into the dark forest. The many Spirit Girls cascade down into the valley. The Angels are receiving them. And then The Being, waves at the forest. The many Spirit Women emerge from darkness. The abused. The addicted. The prostituted.

The Being motions over at Benjamin to come near. The Being motions for Laina to come near. And Laina looks up to see her father's face. Benjamin smiles at her. Laina smiles.

The Being motions for Artemis. She stands next to Laina. The spirit of Benjamin showers through them. He vanishes.

THE BEING

(to Artemis)

Your mother and father love you
from a place you cannot see, yet.

Artemis holds Laina close. Artemis looks up to The Being.

ARTEMIS

But, I'm a killer?

THE BEING

Yes you are. You have taken many
human lives. Did you hate them?

ARTEMIS

No.

THE BEING

Some humans have dark hearts that
refuse to love. So we need special
women or men to be tasked to
perform a duty. But I exist in the
supernatural world, I try not to
interfere with human free will.

ARTEMIS

Am I always to be a killer?

THE BEING

Perhaps you have another duty - the
duty to be a loving mother?

The Being waves for the Angels to encourage the spirits of the women and girls into the bright crease. They begin to leave. But Laina spots a SPIRIT GIRL, 7, a kind spirit. Laina hides her face with her hands. The Being notices. The Being notices everything but waits for the moment.

THE BEING

(to Laina)

Do you know her?

Laina stands motionless. The Being waves the Spirit Girl over. Laina tries to hug the Spirit Girl. But she cannot hug a spirit being. Laina feels the girl's spirit move through her. She emerges smiling at the Spirit Girl.

LAINA

I thought you didn't like me know
more...

The Spirit Girl smiles at Laina. She turns to go with the rest of the Spirit Women and Spirit Girls.

THE BEING

(to Laina)

Do you know what your name, Laina, means?

LAINA

No.

THE BEING

In Greek, it means, "shining light". You're my shining light.

Laina looks up at The Being. She wipes her tears. She smiles.

THE BEING

Let's go say hello to Virgil.

The Being walks with Laina holding hands toward Virgil's body. The Being kneels and touches Virgil's forehead. The spirit of Virgil emerges from his body. Laina's impressed.

Virgil looks around. He nods at The Being. He smiles at Laina. And Virgil floats away into the crease.

The Being walks back over with Laina next to Arthemis.

ARTEMIS

(to The Being)

What are we to do?

THE BEING

Do? Live your life with every decision you make based on love. Don't waste love, it's too precious. Love one another.

ARTEMIS

Satan? I cannot stop Satan.

THE BEING

This planet is infested with Satans. Satan can never enter the spiritual realm, but you can, if you decide. You have free will. above all things, do not be afraid.

The Being waves for everyone to leave. They vanish through the bright crease, except for Archangel Michael. He glares over at the Tree of Death.

The Tree of Death's limbs shake wildly. The soil beneath the tree starts to crumble. The mycelia monster's tentacles begin to emerge. It sucks the Prophet's body down into the ground.

THE BEING

Artemis. Take Laina and follow the
Warrior and the Stag. You will find
a cave where you will be safe.

The Being stares at Archangel Michael. Archangel Michael unsheathes his golden sword. The Being vanishes.

Artemis grabs Laina up. She runs behind the Spirit Warrior and the White Stag. They head toward the hillside and into the forest. The wind, lightning, and rain begin to intensify.

Artemis turns while running. She looks down at Archangel Michael. He approaches the mycelia monster and the tree.

EXT. THE CAVE ON THE HILL - DAY

Artemis and Laina are inside. The Spirit Warrior a few steps from the opening. The White Stag protects the opening. The weather has reaches hurricane-force levels.

ARTEMIS

(to Laina)

Get down and behind me.

Laina hunkers down. The White Stag uses its giant body to protect her. The Spirit Warrior points down for Artemis. to watch Archangel Michael.

EXT. TREE OF DEATH SITE - DAY

Archangel Michael takes his golden sword in hand, holds his sword high above him. A piercing white light incinerates everything. Archangel Michael sheaths his sword and vanishes.

EXT. FOREST VALLEY - DAY

Artemis and Laina walk down from the hillside after the battle. The Spirit Warrior and White Stag are behind them. Stillness. Calm. But for birds chirping.

No Tree of Death, no dead bodies. In its place, there are fresh tree plantings and dense grass. And the spot where Virgil lost his life, a yellow and red peddled rose bush.

ARTEMIS

Let's go home.

INT. WYLIE'S OFFICE - DAY

Artemis sits on a side chair in front of Wylie's desk. Wylie sits down on the other chair. He's amused at Laina drawing with pencil and paper. Wylie nods over at Artemis.

WYLIE
(to Laina)
Hey there, little lady, are you
having fun with Artemis?

Laina looks up at Wylie. She brushes her hair away.

LAINA
We got ice cream. I've never had
ice cream. I like it.

WYLIE
Would you like to always get ice
cream with Artemis?

Laina's confused. She looks back at Artemis.

ARTEMIS
(to Laina)
Wylie has a question for you. Do
you understand me?

LAINA
I think so.

WYLIE
Have you ever heard the word
adoption?

LAINA
No.

WYLIE
Do you want Artemis to be your
mother?

Laina looks at Artemis. She looks back at Wylie.

LAINA
Yes.

WYLIE
Artemis is your mother.

Laina springs up onto Artemis. They hug.

FADE OUT.