

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:

INT. UNIVERSITY LIBRARY STUDY HALL - DAY

ARTEMIS, 25, intense eyes, tall, sinewy. She sits at a desk. The room empty but for her. The out-dated heating system pitter-patters on and off. She focuses her eyes on a laptop screen. A LIBRARIAN, 50s, taps on the table. Startled, Artemis acknowledges the Librarian. She checks her wrist watch, time to go.

EXT. UNIVERSITY CAMPUS - NIGHT

Artemis walks outside through the golden path between the living world and wondering SPIRIT BEINGS. She's surrounded by the limitless purgation circulatory system that zaps Spirit Beings along geometric tunnels at the speed of light. A MAINTENANCE MAN, 60s, empties a trash bin. He knows night-owl Artemis.

A MOTHER SPIRIT and a CHILD SPIRIT appear. The Child waves at Artemis. But the Mother Spirit and Child Spirit gaze at something troubling behind Artemis. They vanish into a tunnel. Artemis turns around only to look into darkness. But then the outline of a large winged man. He flaps his wings blocking out light across the golden fractal grid. Artemis steps toward it. But it vanishes. She shrugs at her backpack, turns, and walks toward an all-night campus diner.

EXT. UNIVERSITY CAMPUS DINER - NIGHT

Artemis gazes inside through tall windows at a WAITRESS, 40s, a FRY COOK, 40s, and a HOMELESS PERSON stuffed in a back booth. COLLEGE BOYS stumble out through the doors. They whistle at Artemis. She ignores them. She walks inside.

INT. UNIVERSITY CAMPUS DINER - NIGHT

Artemis sits down at a booth. The waitress pours Artemis coffee. The waitress gently taps Artemis on her shoulder. Artemis sets her laptop down. She types. She sips coffee.

Two MEN, 30s, shuffle a scruffy GIRL, 18, petite, inside. They sit the Girl onto a stool. The Waitress glances over at the Fry Cook. Artemis notices.

She stares at the Men and the Girl. One of the Men stares back at Artemis. He reveals a handgun. Artemis holds her gaze on him. The Girl looks over at Artemis. She shows a hand sign at her side, four fingers over her thumb. Artemis gets up.

WAITRESS
(to Artemis)
Don't.

ARTEMIS
Let her go, or, I'll call the cops.

The Men glance at each other. The Taller Man gets up. But behind them SPIRIT WOMEN appear. They reveal themselves to the Girl. The Men cannot see them. They wave at her to run over toward them. The Girl looks at Artemis. She looks at the Spirit Women.

ARTEMIS
Run!

The Girl wiggles free, she runs toward the Spirit Women that cloak her within their golden tunnel. They disappear into the light. The Men run outside after her but she's escaped into the night. The Taller Man returns. He glares at Artemis.

TALLER MAN
Bitch!

The Taller Man strides over to tackle Artemis. He gets on top of her. He slugs her. Until the Fry Cook comes round the counter with a shotgun. He cocks it. He points it at the Taller Man's head. He menaces at the other Man.

FRY COOK
Git... or I'll drop ya both.

The Taller Man shoves Artemis to the floor. He spits at the Fry Cook. He smacks the other Man on the back. They leave.

Artemis struggles to get back inside the booth. The Fry Cook helps her. Her mouth bleeds, her left eye swollen.

INT. MEDICAL SCHOOL CADAVER LAB - DAY

Artemis with a swollen eye, 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.

MILITARY MAN
Artemis?

Artemis stares at the Military Man.

ARTEMIS

What?

MILITARY MAN

Do you really want to be a doctor?

Artemis starts to walk away. The Military Man walks with her.

MILITARY MAN (CONT'D)

You were brave last night, do you
want to learn how to defend that
little girl?

Artemis stops.

ARTEMIS

Who're you?

MILITARY MAN

I'm not what you see. I'm from the
other-side. This uniform is for
show. We've been watching you, for
a long time, you know this.

ARTEMIS

Go on...

MILITARY MAN

Perhaps take your talents to live
for a higher purpose, a purpose
that will make your parents proud?

Artemis considers the comment.

ARTEMIS

What are you asking of me?

MILITARY MAN

Asking you to learn to protect that
little girl from harm. Shall we
take next steps? Can we call you?

ARTEMIS

Sure.

Artemis shrugs. She walks away. The Military Man watches
Artemis leave. He looks down the hallway for someone. SATAN,
a winged angel with light blue skin color. He reveals himself
only to the Military Man. He sneers. Clueless STUDENTS and
FACULTY walk past and through Satan.

EXT. MILITARY TRAINING BASE - DAY

Artemis stands bouncing on her boots in fighting position. A TRAINER, 30s, punches her, 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 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, 30s, average build, a Special Forces Minder, but his gaze at Artemis direct, certain. Artemis looks at him. But he walks away.

EXT. MILITARY TRAINING BASE - DAY

Artemis trains with knives. She's ambidextrous. She slings knives at targets. But her Trainer goes quiet. Artemis turns to find Benjamin staring at her. The Trainer backs up.

ARTEMIS

Who're you?

BENJAMIN

This your roll?

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 grips one of Artemis' knives.

BENJAMIN

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

TRAINER

Sir?

Benjamin steps around Artemis reviewing her head to toe.

BENJAMIN
What are you five ten?

ARTEMIS
That's about right.

BENJAMIN
I like your short 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?

ARTEMIS
I want intensity in my life.

BENJAMIN
Intensity? We'll see about that.
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?

EXT. SENSITIVE COMPARTMENTED INFO FACILITY (SCIF) - DAY

Artemis steps up to an iron gate. A camera stares down. The gate opens. Artemis walks to a door. The door clicks open.

INT. SENSITIVE COMPARTMENTED INFO FACILITY (SCIF) - DAY

Artemis walks forward. Benjamin stands inside.

BENJAMIN

You have a choice to make. I'd like to date you. Or, we never happen, you choose to join us, if... you survive training. Pick.

ARTEMIS

What do you all do?

BENJAMIN

We kill bad people. To start, our need is for a strong female operator to kill human traffickers. We think the trapped girls will trust a female operator. The mission or me. Pick.

ARTEMIS

Everyone I've ever loved died. I choose the mission.

BENJAMIN

Training starts at Zero Six Hundred

Benjamin leaves the room.

INT. ASSASSIN TRAINING - DAY

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

ASIAN MASTER

Come.

Asian Master takes Artemis into a special padded room. There are other ASIAN MASTERS, 50s, waiting. Benjamin waits with them. Artemis notices three ASIAN MASTER SPIRITS.

ASIAN MASTER

How many?

ARTEMIS
I see three spirits...

ASIAN MASTER
Tell me more?

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
combat. Prepare yourself.

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
Let's go swimming.

EXT. ASSASSIN TRAINING, HELICOPTER - NIGHT

The helicopter flies out above waters. Artemis' blindfolded
with her hands tied behind her back. Benjamin opens a side
door, he shoves her out, dropping her into the waters. Two
NAVY SEALS follow her.

DARK WATERS.

Artemis bobs, spitting out water. She twists to free her
hands. The Navy Seals bob in the water behind her.

NAVY SEAL ONE
You can quit.

ARTEMIS
No.

Artemis 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. Benjamin sits watching. Artemis sits across from the Asian Master. Both have their hands resting down on their knees.

Satan appears. Satan conceals his presence. But the Asian Master senses Satan. Satan looks down at Artemis.

ASIAN MASTER

Do you sense this demonic force?

ARTEMIS

Yes.

ASIAN MASTER

You must resist it. Inside your mind you have a powerful rage. You must harness your rage. Do you understand?

ARTEMIS

I think so.

Artemis looks over at Benjamin. The Asian Master adjusts his pose. He breaths in. He breaths out.

ASIAN MASTER

Again, you sense this evil?

ARTEMIS

I know it's here.

Satan flaps his wings while spreading blue dust. He sneers down at Benjamin, the Asian Master, and then Artemis.

SATAN

Oh Artemis, I want you to learn hate. Hate is all I want from you.

And then from a crease in the light, an ANGELIC BEING, female, appears. She stands across from Satan.

ANGELIC BEING

(to Satan)
You are forbidden brother. Artemis cannot be touched. It is the law.

SATAN

Earth is mine. Her parents caused
my rage. She must pay.

ANGELIC BEING

Shall I cast you into an abyss for
a thousand years?

The Asian Master and Artemis sense both the Angel and Satan.

ASIAN MASTER

A supernatural war between love and
hate rages all around you.

ARTEMIS

I've sensed this since I was a
child. It's part of my life.

ASIAN MASTER

You see the dead? The spirit world?

ARTEMIS

Yes. I can talk to the dead before
they go on... I see them day or
night along their journey.

ASIAN MASTER

Then my visions of your parents are
correct. They accidentally invited
supernatural entities to follow
you. You exist at the intersection
between love and hate. But you must
remember, in your role with us,
assassins do not hate, they focus
on process. We do our job for a
higher purpose?

ARTEMIS

I accept this truth.

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. Satan vanishes. The Angelic
Being strolls through Artemis. Artemis senses the Angelic
Being. The Angelic Being vanishes.

ASIAN MASTER

Go to your final test.

INT. BLACK VAN - NIGHT

Benjamin and Artemis are inside. She checks her weapons.
Benjamin checks and rechecks her weapons.

BENAJMIN

The problem inside the house is an arms dealer. 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 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.

INT. ARMS DEALER'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Artemis moves through a dining room. Benjamin follows. She stops to listen. Nothing. 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 looks up at Artemis. She 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. 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. Clicking off rounds with his right hand until the clip empties. Artemis slides out a Kunai knife. 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. She drops his body.

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.

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.

ARTEMIS
Her?

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

ARTEMIS
Like me...

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 vans pull away from the Arms Dealer's house. The Arms Dealer and Benjamin's spirits are in Satan's possession. Satan flaps his wings to stir up blue dust.

SATAN
(to Arms Dealer)
Go to Hell. Seriously. Go now...

Satan snaps his fingers, the Arms Dealer vanishes.

SATAN
(to Benjamin)
I know where your girl's going next. A Kentucky hospital.

Satan examines Benjamin's eyes.

SATAN
Oh? This dead thing is new for you, you can talk, go on, say something interesting.

BENJAMIN
Leave her alone...

Satan ponders the situation.

SATAN
Ah, no. But welcome to my world.

Satan pulls Benjamin's Spirit back and forth like a balloon filled with helium. Satan considers the moment.

SATAN
But wait. What would Benny want? I know, I'll reveal myself to her. Yes. It will be her first assignment. She'll need guidance since, well, you're dead.

BENJAMIN SPIRIT
Don't kill her.

SATAN
I'll not kill her. I can't do that. But I will torture her with all sorts of obstacles. How delicious.

Satan claps.

SATAN
Ah, just now, a male model overdosed from fentanyl. Dead but not dead, oh how pithy... a perfect body to guide Artemis? This winged look a bit too much on the nose.

Satan transforms into a tall, handsome man, wearing a bespoke suit with shiny shoes. Satan grabs Benjamin's Spirit.

SATAN
Come along Benny. Let's travel to 'Kan-Tuck-ee'. We will be such the surprise couple for Artemis.

INT. WYLIE'S OFFICE - 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. So, that's out of the way.

Artemis examines the envelope contents. A thumb-drive.

ARTEMIS

What's up?

WYLIE

Hospital in Kentucky, a lot of dead women, they have bodies going missing, but you'll see that in the files. So forth...

Wylie sits back. He stares out the office windows.

WYLIE

Get this, the hospital has a compost pile that they use to grow mushrooms. I'm serious. The medical director is a Dr. Demetrius, impressive CV.

Artemis shifts her backpack forward.

ARTEMIS

Mushrooms?

WYLIE

Yeah, they tell me Dr. Demetrius is onto ground breaking discovers. I don't know this for a fact. Go up there quietly, drive up there, do your cemetery visits, and whatever you do with those spirits you see.

ARTEMIS

The dead talk to me. I think cemeteries are a good starting point. The dead don't lie. I like seeing the spirit world, they're mostly friendly to me.

WYLIE

Cemeteries spook me, good luck with that. It's your process, you get to pick your process. But pay attention, the victims are typically young women, sometimes girls.

(MORE)

WYLIE (CONT'D)

A few boys have disappeared from the area, too. And the hospital's expanded their ICU given the volume coming in. And by the way, many of these women were pregnant.

Artemis sighs. She zips up her backpack.

ARTEMIS

Opioids and human trafficking?

WYLIE

I think that's about right. Sadly, those two work well together.

ARTEMIS

Any names in the files?

WYLIE

No. That's your job. Keep in mind, nobody at the hospital system seemed to care until it hurt business. Go figure this out, terminate the bastards. I cannot stand harming the defenseless.

ARTEMIS

I'll go do my job. I promise.

WYLIE

I have no doubt. Dr. Demetrius knows you're coming. We told him you're a malpractice investigator doing a facility audit. No idea what that means. But he'll get you a security badge. By the way, determine if he's trustworthy or other, too.

ARTEMIS

It's my call?

WYLIE

That's the job Benjamin trained you to do. You need any weapons package, name it?

Artemis acknowledges Wylie. She shrugs.

ARTEMIS

I prefer my knives.

WYLIE

Good. They want us to terminate the problem, quietly. Let's do our job.

ARTEMIS

Do I have budget? How's that work?

WYLIE

Oh, I'll get you fake credit cards. A good amount of cash. This being your first assignment, I want you to focus on eradicating the problem. Call me if you need resources and what not...

ARTEMIS

Understood.

WYLIE

I'm told Dr. Demetrius's research is quite valuable. But if need be, you can eradicate him, too.

ARTEMIS

This might get weird. Sounds like bio-genetic engineering?

WYLIE

No idea. The fact is the opioid epidemic up there is a huge PR problem for the hospital. That's what they care about - PR. But they chose greed over human life, predictable, now go do your job. Make Benjamin proud.

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 drives away.

EXT. ARTEMIS'S SUV - DAY

Artemis drives into the Appalachian Mountains.

EXT. ARTEMIS'S SUV, SELENE, KY - DAY

Artemis parks in front of a hotel. She walks inside.

EXT. HOTEL ENTRANCE, SELENE, KY - NIGHT

Artemis walks out onto the sidewalk. She stops walking. She looks for Spirits Beings. Nothing but darkness, no golden fractal shapes. A stoplight blinks red. She looks over at the hospital facility. She strolls up the main street.

EXT. MOST HIGH CEMETERY - NIGHT

Artemis finds the cemetery. There are no Spirit Beings for Artemis to interact with. Confused. She contemplates. She steps farther into the grounds. She nears a mausoleum. Behind it the outline of a winged man's shadow. He flaps his wings.

ARTEMIS

What do you want?

SATAN

You.

Satan transforms into a human form, he 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 headstone. She grips down for her sidearm, but it's not there.

SATAN

No need for violence. Besides everything's dead here. You can't kill them twice lady justice. Maybe this look will suit you better?

The swarm morphs into a KING COBRA. It coils and hisses. Artemis works to control her breathing. But then 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. You're father did warn you about me. Hm?

Satan brushes off his coat sleeves.

ARTEMIS

I think I know... Otherwise...

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

SATAN

You'd be dead. D-E-A-D, dead.

Satan snaps his pointy fingers. The Raven flops dead.

ARTEMIS

This a nightmare?

SATAN

Oh no, this is not a nightmare. You thought this was a good idea? You'd outsmart everyone by asking the dead for information, right? little miss clairvoyant.

ARTEMIS

The spirit world has nothing left to hide. They'll talk to me.

Satan pokes and shoves at Artemis.

SATAN

Wyllie's disgustingly honest. He's like Benjamin. Well, you two stumbled into my mass opioid killing project. I do mass killing personally, no demons, just harvesting useful idiots.

ARTEMIS

What do you want from me?

Satan keeps poking at Artemis.

SATAN

You. But consider. A business created by humans that profits from getting innocent humans addicted to opioids and ruining lives. But big pharma needs to make a profit. They have quarterly results due for their investment masters! Oh, we both know you're no malpractice auditor. Whatever that is?

ARTEMIS

You're blocking my vision.

SATAN

Of course, it's my call, after all, Earth is my evil playground.

ARTEMIS

I'm here to do my job.

SATAN

I'm here to help you. And you're just like me, a killer.

Satan steps in front of the mausoleum. He buttons his coat.

SATAN

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

ARTEMIS

It's about process, not hate.

SATAN

I'm going to guide you, being this is your first assignment. Wylie's correct, we need to make Benjamin proud of his star pupil. You loved Benny, didn't you?

Satan taps his shiny shoe on the pavement.

ARTEMIS

Go away.

SATAN

Go away? I'm omnipresent. Go away where? So, let's make a deal. I'll nudge you toward the bad guys. But to add too the stakes - let me introduce you to - Benny!

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

ARTEMIS

Oh god...

Artemis drops to her knees.

SATAN

Not oh God? Say, Oh Satan! Besides, angels are not coming to help you, they don't work that way. But take heart, I'm here to guide you.

ARTEMIS

Please, let Benjamin go on...

SATAN

If you don't follow my guidance, guess who spends eternity with me?

BENAJMIN'S SPIRIT

Don't trust him, ever. Satan can't keep me for eternity. He's lying.

SATAN

Hush. I have a reputation to maintain. You can talk Benny, but be smart about it. Don't give her any clues. Please. Or, you get the hot poker up your ass... hm?

ARTEMIS

Let Benjamin go. He's dead.

SATAN

Silly humans. You play the short game. I need you to think eternity.

BENJAMIN SPIRIT

Keep me. Let her go...

SATAN

Nope. Now Artemis, investigations need clues. Go to the hospital. Meet Dr. Demetrius, he's an odd one, obsessed with the mycelia, you know, the stuff under your boots right now digesting all these dead bodies, and then it farts out mushrooms? Mother Nature is wacky.

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

SATAN

(to Benjamin)

Good boy, good boy. (to Artemis)
Hey, I enjoy theater popcorn. Do you? Stick with popcorn because I have a piece of advice, whatever you do, listen to me, don't eat any mushrooms from this forest. Ever!

Satan and Benjamin vanish. Artemis wobbles. She slips, falls, skids to her knees. She vomits. She manages her breathing, gets up, and staggers from the cemetery.

INT. ZOOM CALL FROM HOTEL ROOM - DAY

Wylie's looking at Artemis through a laptop screen.

ARTEMIS

I might be over my head.

WYLIE

You want me get you out of there?
It's your first assignment. No
shame in needing to get more
training.

Artemis contemplates the comment.

ARTEMIS

No. Let me think through this.

WYLIE

What's Dr. Demetrius like?

ARTEMIS

Typical doctor playing hard to
meet. Left him a message. I'll find
him soon enough.

WYLIE

Any idea who is are target?

ARTEMIS

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

WYLIE

You'll learn it's part of the job.
We end up in some nasty places
dealing with nasty people. Stay in
touch.

EXT. DOWNTOWN SELENE, KENTUCKY - DAY

Satan sits whittling. Artemis does not recognize him. 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.

SATAN

Oh look, Benny's here.

Benjamin's non-pulsed by Satan.

BENJAMIN

Satan wants you to know I grew up here, and, I have a little girl. I'm not sure where she is. Satan can't hurt me, I'm dead, waiting in purgatory. Don't listen to him.

Artemis nods. She purses her lips.

SATAN

Hush, Benny. Don't be a bitter party of one, dining alone. So, the little girl has a name, Laina.

BENJAMIN

(to Artemis)

Don't worry about her.

SATAN

Benny, simmer down. Laina's part of my master plan. You dead goofball... but I do enjoy your angst. I enjoy sensing your frustration.

(to Artemis)

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

ARTEMIS

So what?

SATAN

So what? Call over to the hospital again. I think Dr. Demetrius will add you to his schedule this time. But in the meantime, you need to go find a guy named Virgil. He's a local grocer. He always buys a handle and knows things.

ARTEMIS

Handle? Let Benjamin go on... he serves no purpose. It's all about my family. I feel that truth.

SATAN

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

(MORE)

SATAN (CONT'D)

It creates more product for human trafficking, a profitable business for your target. See what I did? I gave you a clue.

ARTEMIS

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

SATAN

It is. Your daddy taught you well about mythology and religion. But you care deeply for Benny. I can sense your feelings. It's a silly human thing to love what you never had. Humans are strange creatures. But love will cause you to follow my directions. Want me to torture Benny?

BENNY

Leave her alone. You're an asshole.

Satan looks back and forth at Benjamin and Artemis.

SATAN

I am an asshole. But I feel it now. Yuck, this selfless love crap. My mission is clear, I'll teach Artemis to hate me. Will you hate me? Please?

Satan waves. Benjamin disappears.

ARTEMIS

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

SATAN

Move along soldier, find Virgil out there in the forest. Oh, I'd go visit Dr. Demetrius soon... he's a wacko-doodle about his mycelia. His key research ingredient, what can he possibly do with mycelia? See? Another clue for you...

Satan vanishes.

EXT. MOUNTAIN ROADS - DAY

Artemis drives her SUV out into the forest. She parks near a modest grocery. There are metal trailers lined up behind it.

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? My smartphone's
worthless up here.

VIRGIL
It's a problem up here.

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

Virgil crosses his husky arms.

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
druggies 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. Trying to help her out
out of respect for Benjamin.

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 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 ignores 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.

ARTEMIS

I'm aware. Hey, 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 sits across from Artemis. Artemis examines her iPad.

DR. DEMETRIUS
Artemis? That's a Greek goddess,
but you don't look Greek or Roman.

ARTEMIS
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?

DR. DEMETRIUS
Here because I can implement my own
precision medicine, AI has
accelerated my research. 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. Are you behind the
cremation procedures? Word is you
all are unnecessarily keeping women
alive? I guess for more government
money?

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
And the women?

DR. DEMETRIUS
I have greatly voiced my opposition
to this activity. It's not the
standard of care.

(MORE)

DR. DEMETRIUS (CONT'D)
But it's important to understand,
physicians no longer control
healthcare decisions.

ARTEMIS
Thanks for the security badge.

DR. DEMETRIUS
Hey, want to see my mushroom farm?

ARTEMIS
Yes. But I need to check on a
patient first. A friends former
girlfriend. I'll reach back out.

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.

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 gets up and walks to the nurse's station.

INT. NURSES'S STATION, HOSPITAL - DAY

A NURSE, 30s, focuses 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 her kept alive.
Sorry, I need my job.

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

LAINA

You left me?

The Nurse turns around. 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.
Otherwise she'll end getting
addicted and pulling tricks. There
are seriously sick people round
these parts. Be careful. Go on.

ARTEMIS

Hey, I'm investigating an issue 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

What are you 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. Artemis stands up. He looks back down at Laina. He grunts. The Men start walking.

THE PROPHET

(to Artemis)

You should be wearing a mask.

ARTEMIS

You should leave her alone.

THE PROPHET

Be gone woman. Or join my flock?

The Prophet follows his men into the hospital.

SATAN

He's into little girls. Actually,
they are part of his business plan.
He has a few powerful pedos on the
books that pay well. That's icky
even for me, and I'm pure evil.

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. So far,
I have enjoyed your performance as
a malpractice auditor. But you
don't look like an auditor. Perhaps
a pocket protector with pens?

ARTEMIS

Do you always talk in circles?

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

SATAN

You will go out to visit your new
buddy, Virgil. Take princess. Ask
him to guide you into the forest.
Go find the Tree of Death. And then
go visit Dr. Demetrius' mushroom
farm. By the way, he magic
ingredient is hidden in this
compost pile. Death in plain sight,
how original? Ah, a clue for you...

ARTEMIS

Enjoying yourself.

SATAN

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

EXT. VIRGIL'S GROCERY - DAY

Artemis and Laina walk from the SUV toward the grocery.
Artemis stops, she 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.

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
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 keep them out
of my shop. The women are being
prostituted. I've been offered
their services. Not me...

ARTEMIS
Laina's mother?

VIRGIL
I think, well, I know so. Any who,
let's go out back...

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 hallway. They find Laina hiding inside her cardboard boxes.

VIRGIL

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

ARTEMIS

Come Laina.

VIRGIL

Go find her a safe place. Next time, come alone, then I'll take you out to the tree. But I'll only go out there during daylight.

INT. MUSHROOM FARM, HOSPITAL - DAY

Artemis and Dr. Demetrius stand inside a vast storage system with containers filled with mushrooms. Dr. Demetrius and Artemis wear respirators and hazmat suits.

DR. DEMETRIUS

This is the fruit, quite literally, of my labor, my passion. I'm free.

ARTEMIS

Why? I don't understand.

DR. DEMETRIUS

Like I told you. I don't have the government bothering me here.

ARTEMIS

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 and then down a corridor between the storage bins stopping to inspect several temperature controlled units.

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

Exactly. 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.

Artemis looks down remembering Satan's information.

DR. DEMETRIUS

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

Artemis stops. She ponders.

ARTEMIS

This has been a huge investment. You're going for something big?

DR. DEMETRIUS

I am. The hospital system has invested 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 door.

DR. DEMETRIUS

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

Outside the laboratory door, Artemis encounters a SPIRIT GIRL, 5, 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 me from the mean men.

INT. MYCELIA LABORATORY, HOSPITAL - DAY

Artemis and Dr. Demetrius remove their 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.

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 shelf covered with soil. He uses a scalpel to remove the top layer to reveal incubating 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.

(MORE)

DR. DEMETRIUS (CONT'D)
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. Hey, want to get dinner tonight?

ARTEMIS

That's a kind offer. But I have a work meeting tonight. But the mycelia you're studying interest me. I'll take a raincheck.

DR. DEMETRIUS

Very well, until our next visit.

EXT. MOST HIGH CEMETERY - NIGHT

Artemis steps into the cemetery grounds - Satan's waiting. 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...

ARTEMIS

She's not even aware she's dead. She said I'd protect her from mean men. Who are they?

SATAN

Oh she gave you a clue. Mean men. You'll meet them soon enough.

ARTEMIS

Release her, please. Whatever they did to her I don't want to know.

SATAN

True. She was so traumatized her brain blocked it all out. Very well, I can be kind.

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? It's not the mushrooms, he's playing around with the underlying genetic structure. I'll pass.

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

SATAN

I need to get these buffed out. Coal dust is everywhere here.

ARTEMIS

I never pictured you as a clothes horse.

SATAN

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

ARTEMIS

That's good to know. I think.

SATAN

The mycelia exist under ground, without the mushrooms, you might not be aware of them, lurking beneath your feet, everywhere, digesting the dead. Quietly spreading mushrooms across Earth.

ARTEMIS

You kind of described Dante's Hell. But without the fire. And whatever else... Heaven is in the sky, but you get to be the evil subterranean mole?

SATAN

Ouch, a blind mole? Maybe we'll take a tour together inside the mycelia?

(MORE)

SATAN (CONT'D)

I can share with you the seven deadly sins for your viewing pleasure?

ARTEMIS

I'll pass. So, why I am here?

SATAN

Well, first off, that's a deep philosophical question for humans and fallen angels. Secondly, 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 your intro to Lily, I think you should visit with Virgil. Go hike to the Tree of Death. A daytime adventure. I'll be waiting for you.

ARTEMIS

Do I have a choice?

SATAN

No. Oh, I have a magnificent treat for your eyes. I plan to put on a show for you. Of course, I will be performing in the nude.

ARTEMIS

Your more disgusting than even your own stereotype.

SATAN

Ouch, you're a blunt woman. I want you to hate me! Hate builds over time if properly administered. I'm teaching you hate. Hate me? Please?

ARTEMIS

I hate you. Happy?

SATAN

Oh, sweetie, you're not close to understanding hate, yet. And the treat from my performance, you will get to see all the elements for your investigation.

(MORE)

SATAN (CONT'D)

See, I'm guiding you. In the
meantime, may I introduce you to,
Lily!

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

It ain't my choice, I have to tell
you.

Artemis steps closer to Lily.

ARTEMIS

Go on.

LILY

My mom gave me away. They gave her
drugs. After, they did things to me
- she watched. And then they did
things to her.

ARTEMIS

Who did this? Can you be specific.

LILY'S SPIRIT

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

Artemis' emotions get the best of her. 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 frozen to the ground.

ARTEMIS
What?

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

ARTEMIS
Virgil?

LILY'S SPIRIT
Yes. Virgil was nice to me.

Lily's eyes appear to have found light. She smiles faintly.

LILY'S SPIRIT
I think I see light coming. You
told me the truth.

Lily's spirit vanishes into a brightly lit crease. Artemis stands alone within the cemetery grounds contemplating the situation. She realizes the golden fractal shapes have returned. She strolls back through the cemetery acknowledging the various Spirit Beings.

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

Say it.

ARTEMIS

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

Laina stares over at the TV.

LAINA

I'll be all right. I'm used to being alone and all. Will you help me find a job?

EXT. VIRGIL'S GROCERY - DAY

Artemis stands at the counter. Virgil has both hands on the counter. He's furrowed his eyebrows.

VIRGIL

I've been expecting your shadow.

ARTEMIS

You knew a girl, Lily?

Virgil 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?

Virgil looks up at the tin ceiling.

VIRGIL

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

ARTEMIS

I need to ask a favor? Guide me to
this Tree of Death. I think it's
the root cause of all this evil.
And I think the hospital's
indirectly 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 contemplates Artemis' statement of fact.

VIRGIL

I reckoned you were up to something
serious. It's in your eyes. I think
you can put a man down without
blinking.

ARTEMIS

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

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...

ARTEMIS
It's a job. I do my job.

EXT. FOREST - DAY

Artemis and Virgil hike along a trail. Virgil walks with a slight limp. The White Stag and Spirit Warrior appear. Virgil notices. Artemis looks at Virgil.

ARTEMIS
See him?

The Spirit Warrior stares at them with interest.

VIRGIL
I do.

ARTEMIS
What's his story?

VIRGIL
Not sure, I don't speak whatever
he's speaking.

Artemis and the Spirit Warrior stare at each other.

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. Telepathically.

VIRGIL
Now I know your real trick, lady
assassin that talks to the spirit
world. But, you're a modern lone
ranger, you sure you can manage
this mob?

ARTEMIS
No.

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.

Below them, a giant tree. Beneath the tree, are MEN, 20s/30s, and many WOMEN, 20s, worshiping the tree. The Prophet wears a goat's head with long horns.

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

Satan, wearing a skeleton mask, looks up into the forest toward where Artemis hides. Virgil ducks down. Artemis pushes back away 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

It is not good.

VIRGIL

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

ARTEMIS

It's a Kris sword. Not a Keris dagger. That one looks Indonesian. And quite expensive. Ceremonial. Quite sharp. It can cut a man's head off or worse.

VIRGIL

You sure do know your knives.

ARTEMIS

It's my job.

Artemis creeps up to look down at the service. The Women are naked. They dance around the tree. The Men stand within the circle. Beyond the Satanic worship five SECURITY GUARDS, 20s, holding weapons, each standing near tiki torches.

ARTEMIS

Good news, the guards can't see us.

VIRGIL

How so?

ARTEMIS

The forests canopy keeps the area dark. The torches are like stage lights. All they can see is black.

VIRGIL

I'd never figured that.

Satan dances with the Women.

SATAN

(at Artemis - O.S.)

These girls don't have a clue what they're doing. Yummy.

VIRGIL

This is sick stuff. I'm sorry.

ARTEMIS

It's not your fault. If you want to leave, I understand.

Virgil grunts. He waves for Artemis to keep going.

The women grab sling pouches from under the table. They wear latex gloves. They spread off-colored powder and 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.

The Women back away. The Men shift the table away. The Prophet takes the Kris sword and stabs it into 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. The tentacles slither back down into the ground.

The Men and Women hold hands and dance beneath the tree.

VIRGIL

Kinda sick to my stomach.

ARTEMIS

Yeah, I've seen more than I wanted.

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.

(MORE)

SATAN (CONT'D)

Oh, wait, one last clue? Remember,
I'm being helpful.

Artemis 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.

VIRGIL

This is sick. I'd bet my last dime
that powder ain't harmless.

SATAN

(to Artemis - O.S.)

Virgil's correct. Did you notice
what the fertilizer those girls
spread? Crushed fentanyl... The
mushrooms are transporting the
drugs in their flesh. Brilliant
madness. Wonder where or where do
they make their product? Every good
drug dealer needs a laboratory. Hm?

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

SATAN

(to Artemis - O.S.)

Artemis, wait, wait, while I'm
crushing this young thing, come
back, notice what's popping up near
the tree?

VIRGIL

If you want to take Laina, leave
this place, leave this town, I'll
never talk. They'll think she
disappeared like all the others.

ARTEMIS

I'll not do that. But I'll keep her
with me at all time going forward.

Artemis shakes her fists. She turns and crawls back up. She looks down at the surface in front and around the tree. Mushrooms. Hundreds of mushrooms begin to emerge.

SATAN

(to Artemis - O.S.)

What did I tell you? Don't eat the mushrooms. Or, you might end up down here enjoying my performance first person. As you can see, this body is gifted.

Artemis and Virgil begin to hike down the hill.

VIRGIL

How on earth are you going to manage this mess?

ARTEMIS

What's the saying? Kill the head of the snake the body dies.

VIRGIL

Guess so, but that's a big snake.

Virgil stops. The Spirit Warrior grunts.

VIRGIL

They've created a monster under that ancient tree. Didn't they? It hurts me what they've done to Mother Nature. They're abusing her. And unless I miss my guess, they're abusing those women and girls in ways I can't or better, I don't want to imagine. I've never felt more powerless. My bones feel old. I don't know what to do.

Artemis taps Virgil on the shoulder.

ARTEMIS

Hang tough. I need you. But I think I've met the snake that created that monster. But there's a nastier snake lurking down there that I cannot kill. Ever.

VIRGIL

I don't understand.

ARTEMIS

Never mind.

Virgil begins to cry. He wipes his face.

ARTEMIS

What? Tell me...

VIRGIL

There's somethin' other than a lamb
in that monster's belly? My
instinct, girls like Lily. That's
where them girls be disappearing.

INT. ARTEMIS'S HOTEL ROOM - DAY

Artemis rushes inside. Laina's in bed sleeping. Artemis
checks on her. Laina awakens. 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. The free
clinic. I donate all the proceeds
to help staff or families in need.

ARTEMIS

You have a one-of-a-kind operation
here. Your family like Selene?

Dr. Demetrius sighs.

DR. DEMETRIUS

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

ARTEMIS

I get it.

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

That is why I've got all these
processes. I must maintain them.

ARTEMIS

What else are you creating?

Dr. Demetrius' curious what Artemis really asked.

DR. DEMETRIUS

Well, to say it straight out, the mycelia are a natural structure for creating organs. Think of the wonderful outcomes if I can harness Mother Nature with AI?

ARTEMIS

Organs?

DR. DEMETRIUS

I'm close. Similar to cancer treatment, the mycelia injected with the recipient's own DNA, better their own genetic code - The mycelia learn to create organs that don't need anti-rejection drugs.

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. Dr. Demetrius examines the photo. He steps back.

ARTEMIS

This man part of your family?

DR. DEMETRIUS

My brother...

Artemis walks within the laboratory.

ARTEMIS

Have you shared any of this?

DR. DEMETRIUS

He's profoundly mentally ill.

ARTEMIS

I think he's blackmailing you.

DR. DEMETRIUS

He made a discovery let's say.

Dr. Demetrius 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 soon. You'll have to trust me.

DR. DEMETRIUS

You're not a malpractice auditor or whatever that's supposed to be. Who are you? Or, what are you?

ARTEMIS

Fair question, think of it this way, I clean up messes.

EXT. MOST HIGH CEMETERY - NIGHT

Artemis enters through the iron gates. 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. You like?

ARTEMIS

You're pure evil.

SATAN

Those young women worshipping me, they wore me out. My human body is chaffing in a few intimate spots.

ARTEMIS

Where's this going?

SATAN

Oh now, you're my lady justice.

ARTEMIS

Stop talking in riddles.

SATAN

A big clue before our big reveal.
Angels touched your forehead, they
gave you sight into the spirit
world. I know, I was there. Oh, the
reason, I hate you.

ARTEMIS

Who? You keep talking nonsense.

SATAN

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.

SATAN

Go during the day.

ARTEMIS

I did. It was not a good trip.

Satan grins.

SATAN

Laina will be safe. The hotel staff
are on the case. For now.

ARTEMIS

You know what Dr. Demetrius has
discovered. He'll save lives.

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

ARTEMIS

Come on, please give it up.

Satan covers up the body with the robe.

SATAN

Fine. Why would I let him help
humans? He needs to learn greed. A
deadly sin in your world, but not
in mine. Greed will work if he
cooperates with big pharma,
otherwise, he'll disappear into the
forest. His research lost...

ARTEMIS

I'd kill you if I could.

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

SATAN

Oh, this is called, winning. I want to channel that hate I sensed. Let the hate grow. Come on, hate me.

ARTEMIS

Why is Benjamin here?

SATAN

Oh, he's being a good boy. A reminder we need to make a deal. Maybe a deal for Benny's freedom?

BENJAMIN SPIRIT

Don't do a deal with this liar.

ARTEMIS

(to Benjamin)

I'll get you out of this. Somehow.

SATAN

I don't think so. Benny's a good pet to have. He's brutally honest. Now, run along. The forest awaits. This part of your journey causes me great excitement. Want to see my excitement?

Satan flaps his robe. Artemis leaves.

EXT. FOREST - DAY

Artemis hikes. She finds the satanic ritual site. She walks along the tree line finding a 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.

ARTEMIS

You can't scare me. Come out.

WOMEN SPIRITS, emerge from the trees. Behind them, the LITTLE GIRLS, 10 and under, 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 complains to us about you. We
are trapped for eternity.

ARTEMIS
What happened to you all?

LILITH
We gave Satan a blood oath. The
girls behind us, are innocent. We
help them feel safe before they are
finally taken.

ARTEMIS
Satan blocks them?

LILITH
Yes. They go on, eventually.

Artemis scans behind Lilith at the Women and Girls.

ARTEMIS
Where is your body? Sorry to ask,
but I think I know the answer.

LILITH
We were sacrificed to the tree.
Others were pregnant and left at
the hospital. The Prophet thought
the babies poisoned the tree.

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

LILITH
He buried some of us in the compost
pile. But he was respectful unlike
his brother.

ARTEMIS
I suspected. I haven't seen them,
yet. Satan blocked me from the
compost pile. Satan's toying with.

The Women and Girls begin to SCREAM. Satan emerges.

SATAN
(to Artemis)
Oh, did we learn?

Satan waves his hands. He engulfs the women into darkness.

ARTEMIS
You gave them no mercy.

SATAN
A contract is a contract. Besides,
I left them here for a bit longer.
I enjoy them being tortured souls.

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

SATAN
Not really. He's such a naive soul.
But his twin - he's madness by
definition. I've completely
unblocked you. The entire purgation
circulatory system will appear. And
you can see all those happy
wondering spirits zipping along
their golden highway to Heaven.
See, I'm helping. Now go get a
compost pile tour from Dr.
Demetrius. But, he'll be sad.

Satan snaps his fingers. He vanishes.

EXT. HOSPITAL PARKING LOT - DAY

Artemis and Laina walk together toward the hospital. An SUV
thunders past them. The Prophet gets out. 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 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 the eyes.

ARTEMIS

Your father agrees. I wish you had met him.

LAINA

I think I seen him in my dreams. It must be him. He whispers to me all honest and like. But he's in a dark place, I can't always understand.

ARTEMIS

I believe you. Come on, let's go find Dr. Demetrius.

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 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. And yes, I'm a scientist, I was curious what might happen as their bodies decomposed within my soil.

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.

Along the end of the compost three Spirit Women emerge floating next to each other. Dr. Demetrius unaware.

SPIRIT WOMAN ONE
 He's being truthful. We were all
 shunned by our families for
 worshipping Satan. We are doomed
 like the women in the forest.

Artemis looks at them. She acknowledges them.

DR. DEMETRIUS
 It was madness. I dug a deep hole.
 Yes. Right there. They thought I
 was doing my composting of garbage.
 The hospital management think I'm
 nuts. But I make them money.

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 walks through
 the Spirit Woman, 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.
 She glances over at the Spirit Woman.

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 from
 the nutrient dense human tissue.

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

What else?

DR. DEMETRIUS

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

Artemis looks over at the Spirit Women. She stares over at Laina. Dr. Demetrius gliding his fingers through the soil.

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.

The Spirit Women vanish. Satan appears only to Artemis.

SATAN

(to Artemis)

I'm proud of you lady justice. Using your clairvoyance to get all the facts to this non-mystery. As a bonus for your next steps, I'll make sure you and Dr. Demetrius are not disturbed. The groupies will not be anywhere to be found in the forest. Enjoy.

AMANITA

You'll keep the cult away from the satanic site? Correct?

SATAN

Enjoy the Tree of Death - it's madness but a logistically brilliant method to spread mushrooms laced with fentanyl.

(MORE)

SATAN (CONT'D)

Mother Nature's internet beneath
your feet. And I think the good
doctor will be heartbroken.

Satan vanishes.

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

What would my beloved mother say?

VIRGIL

I'd be sick to my stomach.

DR. DEMETRIUS

This is an evil place. But he knows
I'm here. He thinks I have no power
to stop him.

VIRGIL

How do you figure that?

DR. DEMETRIUS

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

Dr. Demetrius steps around the tree inspecting the trunk.

DR. DEMETRIUS

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.

(MORE)

DR. DEMETRIUS (CONT'D)

This is not a tree of death, it's a mother tree. A mother that's dying.

ARTEMIS

How so?

DR. DEMETRIUS

The mycelia I gave him. He stumbled on a way to supercharge her growth. He's abusing her for profit. It's all around our us. The other trees are trying to save this mother tree. But the mycelia's too powerful. Look at her limbs higher up, all I see is death.

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

Sorry, what's that mean?

Dr. Demetrius looks back over at Virgil.

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

But 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. Spread out
powdered drugs we think.

ARTEMIS

Fentanyl, heroin... I don't know
where they get their supplies.

DR. DEMETRIUS

He has a lab. It's the only logical
answer. It's not complicated or
interesting. Besides, we don't have
these drugs available at the
hospital. We do have fentanyl
patches, but that's short term use.
You said the earth came alive?

Virgil glances over at Artemis. She nods.

VIRGIL

Like I said, ground in front here,
wait, first, the women put on
gloves, they spread this powder all
over here. Then they watered it
into the soil. Killed the poor
lamb, tore its body apart, spread
it out.

ARTEMIS

Your brother stabbed the ground with a sword. It was a signal I guess.

DR. DEMETRIUS

He's murdering his followers to feed a monster, a perfect crime to create and peddle drugs. This mycelia can now sense the flesh, it has a regular feeding I suspect.

VIRGIL

That things sleeping, I hope, it came up out of the ground. It devoured that lamb in seconds. Then it just disappeared back.

Dr. Demetrius stepped carefully around the tree trunk. He observes the forest floor. He looks at Virgil.

DR. DEMETRIUS

What happened next?

VIRGIL

Well, they all started, you know what young bodies like to do.

ARTEMIS

Orgy. But what you are asking, mushrooms started popping up. I think they harvested them the next day after the party.

DR. DEMETRIUS

Now we know what happened to those missing women and girls. My once beautiful girl is digesting them. My brother got the idea from me. It's all my fault.

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. The mycelium system is the forests internet. All these trees talk to each other.

(MORE)

DR. DEMETRIUS (CONT'D)

They'll try to protect the young trees from this mycelia poisoning them with toxic drugs.

ARTEMIS

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

DR. DEMETRIUS

Please do. But 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 growing limbs in every direction. And I'm terrified what she's really going to do...

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.

ARTEMIS

An ugly death for someone innocently foraging for mushrooms.

DR. DEMETRIUS

Or they get accidentally addicted to fentanyl.

Artemis steps closer to Dr. Demetrius. Virgil's behind her.

ARTEMIS

What else?

DR. DEMETRIUS

What if the mushrooms become bait?

VIRGIL

Bait?

DR. DEMETRIUS

What if the mushrooms become toxic bait for drug addicts or people foraging for mushrooms accidentally overdose? Animals and humans will simply disappear, the mycelia will devour them.

VIRGIL

I got bad feeling.

DR. DEMETRIUS

My idiot brother has been feeding my creation animals and I'm afraid to say, woman and girls. It now craves to be fed. It's genetically modified to learn at an accelerated rate. That's what artificially intelligent genetic code does, until it learns it does not need humans to feed it, it will learn to feed itself.

ARTEMIS

You're saying it will start hunting for animals and human beings?

DR. DEMETRIUS

It will not distinguish between humans and animals, it will treat everything as food like a great white shark. An opioid epidemic hiding under our feet.

EXT. MOST HIGH CEMETERY - NIGHT

Satan leans back against the mausoleum. Artemis stands across from Satan.

SATAN

Oh, I feel so, so satisfied.

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. You know, humans create their own problems. I spark the fire and you humans spread it.

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 this body orgasm. Hard. Think about it, Dr. Demetrius' mycelia might eat an entire elementary school during playtime.

Satan faux wipes his eyes. He winks at Artemis.

ARTEMIS

I'll kill it too, somehow. Are you going to stop me?

SATAN

Stop you? No way. I orgasm watching you kill people or a monster. Yummy. I just ask you do it with hate in your heart. A simple request. I have simple needs.

Satan paces in front of the mausoleum.

ARTEMIS

I'll never hate. It's my job.

SATAN

An idea for you, it would be nice for Wylie to come for a visit. Dr. Demetrius needs Wylie to intervene to keep him out of prison. He knows his brother will betray him.

ARTEMIS

Why would Wylie do that?

SATAN

Greed. Your hospital clients investment needs a huge return that doesn't happen if Dr. Demetrius gets dragged into his brother's business, unless of course, you kill his brother first.

ARTEMIS

His brother deserves death. It's my job. Dr. Demetrius is Wylie's call. I'm not sure what Wylie will think about that monster in the forest.

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

BENAJMIN'S SPIRIT

Satan's a liar. Don't make any deals. He can't keep me.

SATAN

In a thousand years, maybe, I'm timeless, even dead you experience soul crushing time. (to Artemis) We will make a deal. Very soon...

ARTEMIS

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

Satan toys with Benjamin's Spirit.

SATAN

Perhaps a quick review of the facts and motivations. First, I have your Benny. You want to free Benny. Now, Benny's spawn, Laina, she needs you. You need to protect Laina. But at this point, we lack obstacles and motivations for you to advance our discussions.

BENAJMIN'S SPIRIT

Don't let Satan trap you.

SATAN

Benny, you're a serious Benny-downer, but I like your feisty nature. I do. But I do my best work making deals. It's what I am.

ARTEMIS

I'm not making any deals.

SATAN

Oh, darn, I think you will. But I'll work on flushing out incentives for you. Humans operate on incentives. I'll hang at the compost pile observing you telling Wylie about the dead and that monster while enjoying some theater popcorn. Get Wylie up here.

Satan and Benjamin vanish.

EXT. COMPOST PILE, HOSPITAL - DAY

Wylie, Artemis, and Laina walk up near the soil. Men are raking the soil. Satan stands across from the compost pile. Only Artemis can see him. He starts eating popcorn.

WYLIE

This our eco-friendly composting?

ARTEMIS

Yes.

WYLIE

(to Laina)

We'll need to find you a place to play.

ARTEMIS

I can't let her out of my sight.

WYLIE

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

ARTEMIS

Dr. Demetrius is waiting for us in his lab. Seems like the best spot.

Wylie considers the compost pile's contents.

WYLIE

Perhaps there are worse spots to be six feet under. Let's go.

INT. MYCELIA LABORATORY - DAY

Wylie and Artemis, Dr. Demetrius gather. Wylie's curiously examining the room. Laina's watching a laptop screen.

ARTEMIS

(to Dr. Demetrius)

This is Wylie. He's my direct report. I think it important you tell him everything.

DR. DEMETRIUS

(to Wylie)

Am I going to jail? If so, I understand but what will come of my research, my precious mycelia. (to Artemis) You told him about the forest?

Wylie ponders the comment.

WYLIE

Let's not worry about that thing in the forest just yet. Why don't you tell me about this lab and what you've been researching here.

Dr. Demetrius takes the hint to show off his work.

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.

WYLIE

That's interesting. And a bit worrisome.

Dr. Demetrius stops. He's put on gloves.

DR. DEMETRIUS

Ah, may I show you my work? I mean, are you with law enforcement, do I need to remain silent, or whatever I know from television.

WYLIE

No. We don't arrest people. Think of us as, let me think...

ARTEMIS

We clean up messes.

WYLIE

(to Dr. Demetrius)

To your concern, consider that we have really powerful organizations that sanction are work. We try to protect innocent people from bad guys, you're not a bad guy?

Dr. Demetrius stands up straight.

DR. DEMETRIUS

No. I promise you I'd never harm a patient or any living thing. My mycelia are my life's purpose, I'll protect her with my life.

ARTEMIS

I believe you. But I don't think it will protect you.

WYLIE

Go ahead, show us what you've got.

Dr. Demetrius snuggles on latex gloves and a mask. He hands the same over to Wylie and Artemis. They follow his example. He waves them to follow. He removes a tray.

DR. DEMETRIUS

I've studied them down to their genetic structure. The key being they are the Earth's hidden internet and digestive system. The mushroom is simply the fruit. I focus on the structure, not the fruit.

WYLIE

Never knew mushrooms were a by-product. I love mushrooms.

ARTEMIS

You don't want to eat these mushrooms.

Dr. Demetrius gently reveals the mycelia.

DR. DEMETRIUS

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

The living mycelia emerge.

DR. DEMETRIUS
(to Wylie)
Go ahead. Touch it.

Wylie touches the mycelia.

WYLIE
Good lord, it's like a snake or something. This is not normal?

DR. DEMETRIUS
No, of course not. I've been engineering its genetic structure, with help from AI. It learns at an alarming rate.

ARTEMIS
Tell Wylie where the soil comes from... so we can all here it from you. I told Wylie everything you told me. That you buried those women in the compost pile, what happened next?

DR. DEMETRIUS
As you can see and feel, I had a breakthrough, by accident. The soil seems to provide a magical mixture that the mycelia thrive in...

WYLIE
This soil from the compost with three decomposing women?

DR. DEMETRIUS
Yes. Ah, I'm sorry.

WYLIE
Maybe I'm an old softy, but explain this mushroom shroud stuff? Artemis said you wrapped them up...

DR. DEMETRIUS
Oh, I thought it a respectful thing to do. Mushroom suit, a eco-friendly way to share our bodies with nature. By now, those trees have likely found the bodies. The woman are nourishing the trees. It's how I plan to be buried.

WYLIE
Seems thoughtful, but not legal. Did the families know?

DR. DEMETRIUS

No one ever came for those ladies.
Best of my knowledge, no one has
ever come asking about them. It's
as if they never existed.

WYLIE

Tell me about your brother.

DR. DEMETRIUS

My family name is trashed... 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 sadly,
I learned too late, that's not what
he has been doing.

Wylie ponders the comments. He takes off the mask and gloves.

ARTEMIS

What are you thinking?

WYLIE

Dr. Demetrius, Artemis is going to
manage your brother, with extreme
prejudice. It's the best solution.
Do you understand?

DR. DEMETRIUS

I do.

WYLIE

If she asks for your help, you will
help her. Understood?

DR. DEMETRIUS

I'll do as asked.

WYLIE

Do something respectful near the
compost pile. A monument with
names, something that remembers
those women, and I suspect the
women from the forest.

DR. DEMETRIUS

Happy to do so. I'll make it
happen. Can I continue with my
research?

WYLIE

I'll end up spending extra time in purgatory for this. Yes. I have one comment for you to remember before I leave. You do not want meet me again.

ARTEMIS

What do we do about that monster? I think I can manage his brother, but that things beyond my capability.

Dr. Demetrius replaces the tray. He ponders.

DR. DEMETRIUS

I know what to do. I know her down to her genetic code. I'll end her suffering. My hope is that I don't kill the mother tree, too.

EXT. COMPOST PILE, HOSPITAL - DAY

Wyllie's holding Laina's hand as they walk. Artemis has her other hand. They stroll.

WYLIE

(to Artemis)

Do your job.

ARTEMIS

I'll take care of it.

WYLIE

Want me to take her with me?

Artemis contemplates.

ARTEMIS

I have a good situation at the hotel. I think we'll be all right. But I do have a personal question.

WYLIE

All righty, what's up?

ARTEMIS

Do you think I can adopt her? She's kind of my family now. I've never had a family.

WYLIE

I have no idea.

INT. RESTAURANT - DAY

Artemis sits with Laina at a booth. Laina's looking at her.

ARTEMIS
What'd you like?

Artemis inspects the menu.

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.

A WAITRESS, 50s, steps near the table.

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
Trying to move the overstock?

WAITRESS
That's about right, honey.

Artemis smiles at the waitress. She nods.

The order has been delivered. Artemis and Laina are enjoying
the food. Artemis starts to sweat profusely. Artemis loses
her grip, slips, and collapses onto the tile. Laina SCREAMS.

INT. MYCELIA PURGATORY - DAY

Artemis opens her eyes. Satan stands near a tubular opening wearing a coal miners helmet. Artemis realizes she's floating with a rope around her neck.

SATAN

What did I warn you not to do?

ARTEMIS

Don't eat the mushrooms.

SATAN

You didn't pay attention. Sweetie, fentanyl in tiny amounts can be deadly. Good news, you're barely alive. I have your spirit to play with. Do you know where you are?

ARTEMIS

No...

SATAN

We are within the genetic structure of Dr. Demetrius' mycelia. We are inside the monster. I'll show you its secrets. Yay!

ARTEMIS

What do you want from me?

SATAN

Do you like 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...

SATAN

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

ARTEMIS

She's innocent.

SATAN

You do realize I have your spirit
in my possession, not your body.
Dr. Demetrius has your body to deal
with... you're in the supernatural
world. Nothing is as it should be
in your limited human mind.

Artemis squirms. She almost vomits. Satan looks up at her.

SATAN

Motion sickness? You still can't
grasp I have your living spirit.

Satan pulls Artemis in front of a window.

ARTEMIS

What is this?

SATAN

Spirits get designated to a primary
sin category. I use the seven
deadly sins as my primary post-
death filter. After all, they are
all about self-hate. Let's play.

On the other side of the window a fat man sits at home.

SATAN

Here we go, which sin?

ARTMEMIS

Sloth.

SATAN

One down, very good, you're daddy
taught you well.

ARTEMIS

I can barely remember my parents.

SATAN

Oh the pity...

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

Well, what's your guess?

ARTEMIS

Gluttony.

SATAN

Nicely done.

Satan pulls Artemis down to the next window. Inside the next window, a woman throws dishes at a man.

ARTEMIS

Anger.

SATAN

Well done, lady justice, three out of three. But before we go to window number four. I'd like to share what else happens here inside the mycelia monster. She has pathways across the planet, but even she needs to be fed.

ARTEMIS

I, I don't want to see it...

SATAN

Don't go all squishy now, besides, this is the real Mother Nature at work. It's what fentanyl actually does best, it causes death, I exist for human death, come on...

Satan pulls Artemis down a dark tubular doorway. Down the tube Satan stops and points. Artemis does not turn her head.

SATAN

Come on, take a look at the monster mycelia's digestive work. Take a look or I'll bring Benjamin into this educational seminar?

Artemis opens her eyes. She looks. There are two dead women being digested. Their dead eyes gaze at Artemis.

SATAN

I call them the double payload.

ARTEMIS

What?

SATAN

They were fentanyl addicts. Their bodies sharing the drug residue as their human tissue also feeds the mycelia.

Satan pulls Artemis along a dark tubular path past decomposing women and girls. The bodies caught within the mycelia's lattice structure.

SATAN

You know Artemis, the mycelia act a lot like the purgation circulatory system you see, like when you caught me spying on you at school? But instead of a golden pathway for the spirits, it's a dark labyrinth these doomed souls can never escape. Well, until I pluck them into Hell.

Satan pulls at Artemis' spiritual body.

SATAN

You are just at the brink of death. But I'll not let you die, I can't do that... why? I'll explain soon as I continue to guide your journey.

ARTEMIS

I, I don't understand?

SATAN

Anyway, enough with the dead druggies, no one will ever find them or care. Let's go back and play seven deadly sins.

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. You're a tough hang. Maybe get Virgil to share some bourbon?

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

ARTEMIS

Greed.

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
closes her eyes.

SATAN

Nope. You have to look and answer.

Artemis opens them to look at the scene.

ARTEMIS

Lust.

SATAN

Maybe I should release you into
this orgy? Let them do disgusting
things to you. Check those perverts
out over there, four on one, wow!
Oh to be a powerless woman. She
worshipped me, this her reward.

ARTEMIS

That's not who I am.

SATAN

I know, silly you. But you should
know, I've been mining for souls in
my internet porn project too. Women
will do anything online for money.
They are proudly emancipated sexual
objects. Smart.

ARTEMIS

You're pure evil.

SATAN

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

Satan pulls Artemis over to a 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

That was quick. Impressive my dear.
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

Oh, you survived. Hey, I'll come
visit you in the hospital.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Artemis lays on a bed, hooked to monitors. Dr. Demetrius examines her medical chart. Artemis begins to awaken.

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 and a
tiny bit of fentanyl into your
food. They almost killed you.

Artemis sucks in deep breaths. She nods.

ARTEMIS

They have the little girl, I'm
trying to protect her. They'll
sacrifice her. It's your brother.

Dr. Demetrius stops. He considers Artemis' words.

DR. DEMETRIUS

This madness has to end. I'll go
with you.

(MORE)

DR. DEMETRIUS (CONT'D)
I figured out how to euthanize my
beautiful mycelia. I'm prepared. My
family names at stake, I have no
choice.

ARTEMIS
We need to hurry out to the forest.

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

SATAN
Artemis, oh, my Artemis...

ARTEMIS
Where is she?

SATAN
Are you prepared to bargain?

Artemis gets dressed.

ARTEMIS
If you tell me where she is?

SATAN
Dr. Demetrius has fallen so low, so
disgustingly weak to kill his own
creation. Any who, 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 and Benny's spirits
together for a thousand years just
for funzies.

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

EXT. MOST HIGH CEMETERY - NIGHT

Dr. Demetrius and Artemis enter through the iron gates. In front of the mausoleum Satan's masked and wearing a tuxedo.

SATAN

Welcome sinners. I will be your host for this evenings service. Will there be a human sacrificial offering tonight?

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

Take off that silly mask. A girl's life is at stake.

ARTEMIS

Focus on our goal.

Satan points at Artemis.

SATAN

Good, always focus on process.

DR. DEMETRIUS

Do you have any common 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
condition to be in. Yes.

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. It's potentially addictive.

SATAN
And you got him addicted. He then
went seeking synthetic fentanyl.
Instead your brother gave him
supercharged mushrooms. Shall I use
a baseball analogy, a twin killing?

DR. DEMETRIUS
I didn't kill him.

SATAN
I want to thank you and your
colleagues with the help of Big
Pharma for thousands of humans
getting addicted to opioids. Mass
killing is my jam, you feel me?

Satan golf claps. Dr. Demetrius bull rushes Satan. He knocks
Satan down. Artemis steps in to hold Dr. Demetrius off.

ARTEMIS
Breathe. You're being baited.

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. It's the hospitals, they are not - not-for-profits. Business people and politicians making healthcare decisions.

ARTEMIS

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?

ARTEMIS

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'm dead.

Satan waves his fingers and Dr. Demetrius freezes.

SATAN
(to Artemis)
Why do I hate you? While I have the
doctor in timeout, let's go on a
trip back in time. I'll show you
why I hate you.

Satan grabs Artemis and flies her into the darkness.

EXT. PLATEAU AT EPHESES - NIGHT

Satan and Artemis float above gazing down into the past.
Below Artemis' mother MRS. LAMB holds BABY ARTEMIS aloft. MR.
LAMB reads from a book. His voice and words indecipherable.

But a bright crease opens. A singular ANGEL BEING emerges.
The Angel Being glides over to hold Baby Artemis. The Angel
Being kisses Baby Artemis on the forehead. The Angel Being
hands Baby Artemis back to her mother. But then the Angel
Being glares over at Satan. Satan angrily flapping his wings
glaring back at the Angel.

Satan shakes Artemis just before he flies away.

EXT. MOST HIGH CEMETERY - NIGHT

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

SATAN
My sister gave you the ability to
see the spirit world by kissing
you. Oh how sweet...

ARTEMIS
So what? What did you do?

SATAN
Well, my sister forbade me, Satan
from being able to kill you. I
CANNOT KILL YOU! A pathetic human
being existing on my planet! I
decide who lives and dies!

Artemis gazes down at the ground. She stares at Satan.

ARTEMIS
You killed my parents.

SATAN
And I can torture you. I can kill
anyone or thing that you love.
(MORE)

SATAN (CONT'D)

I hate you beyond hate because I
will never be able to possess you!
You're pesky father should not have
been reading spells he could not
fully understand.

Artemis stands quiet. She contemplates.

ARTEMIS

I cannot out wit you. I'm not an
evil supernatural creature, you
are. Will you allow me to save a
little girl from certain death?

Benjamin's Spirit emerges. Satan floats him nearby.

SATAN

Do you want to make a deal?

ARTEMIS

What do you want?

SATAN

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

ARTEMIS

But what about Benjamin?

SATAN

If you kill with hate in your
heart. I will free the spirit. Is
that all you want?

Benjamin's Spirit tries to speak. But Satan blocks him.

ARTEMIS

Almost.

Satan waves his hands. Dr. Demetrius unfreezes. Benjamin's
spirit vanishes.

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... if I
know the time, I accept your terms.

SATAN

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

INT. VIRGIL'S GROCERY - DAY

Virgil's curious about Dr. Demetrius who carries a heavy
backpack. 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.

DR. DEMETRIUS

We're told you can guide us back in
a direction my brother will not
know about. It's for a child. I
come to kill the monster I created.

Virgil stares at Artemis.

ARTEMIS

They got her...

DR. DEMETRIUS

It's because of my brother. I need
to reason with him. I need to try
to save our family name.

VIRGIL

Laina? I'll not turn my back on
that child. But better, how you
goin' to kill that thing? You said
something different before...

Dr. Demetrius takes off his backpack. He removes a vessel.

DR. DEMETRIUS

The mycelia made a pill for itself.
I took the genetic code, duplicated
it to form a oval shaped structure
using a mushroom burial suit.

VIRGIL

Pardon?

ARTEMIS

I'll explain later, keep going.

Dr. Demetrius opens the vessel to reveal the pill.

DR. DEMETRIUS

As you can see, the mycelia have
engulfed the pill. Within the pill
I encased raw meat. The mycelia
will not be able to resist it. But
that's the easy part.

ARTEMIS

Easy part?

DR. DEMETRIUS

I'm brilliant.

VIRGIL

We know...

DR. DEMETRIUS

Sorry, the pill has been injected
with a flesh-eating bacteria. A
bacteria that I reverse engineered
to seek out and kill my mycelia's
genetic code structure.

ARTEMIS

Like a targeted genetic cancer
therapy. It eats the pill. It
immediately starts to die? A humane
execution.

DR. DEMETRIUS

Exactly. And I think this approach
will protect the mother tree, and
the forest from more harm.

VIRGIL

That's all fine, but how're you
goin' to get it to takes its pill?

DR. DEMETRIUS

I don't know.

EXT. FOREST - DAY

Virgil hikes along a trail followed by Dr. Demetrius and Artemis. The Spirit Warrior reveals his presence to Dr. Demetrius. The White Stag forages.

DR. DEMETRIUS
I don't believe what I'm seeing.

ARTEMIS
We are at the intersection between
the real and spiritual worlds.

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

Virgil stops.

VIRGIL
It's ain't the time for science.

DR. DEMETRIUS
Stay focused. Sorry. Of course...

ARTEMIS
This is an extraction process. We
need all the help we can muster.
They cannot harm the warrior.

DR. DEMETRIUS
Fascinating. But all those knives
strapped to you, these are your
trade craft?

ARTEMIS
These are my preferred tools.

VIRGIL
Those are weapons of war.

ARTEMIS
My mission tonight is to save
Laina. Simple. (to Dr. Demetrius)
Your mission is to kill that
monster.

DR. DEMETRIUS
Understood.

The Spirit Warrior comes back pointing across the river.
Satan's waiting.

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. Benjamin's tethered above him.

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 even mean?

SATAN
After you pass by me, I'll not
interfere.

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. Eat it.

Artemis looks back and waves for the group to follow. Satan vanishes with Benjamin's Spirit.

EXT. FOREST, OUTSIDE TREE OF DEATH SITE - NIGHT

Artemis, Dr. Demetrius, and Virgil hike up a steep incline toward the Spirit Warrior who stands with the White Stag.

Beneath them, a satanic worship service. Five men with weapons guard the perimeter lit up with tiki torches.

Women dance. The Prophet wears a goat mask. He prances near a giant bonfire. A table. A Kris sword. Laina 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

Artemis, what's your plan?

ARTEMIS

My prime one is Laina.

DR. DEMETRIUS

A life. A fragile life. I must
protect that child. I trust my
science. Yes. My science is for
good. Save that child.

Artemis glances up at Virgil. Dr. Demetrius pulls out the pill, he grasps it, He steps forward into the brush.

DR. DEMETRIUS

Life is short. The art is long.

Dr. Demetrius charges down toward the 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.

Virgil checks his gun. 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. But she'll
know she was loved. That is all I
have to offer, my life for her's.

(MORE)

VIRGIL (CONT'D)

But you're the one person here that
can save her. Now go save her.

Artemis 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

Let me get over there. I'll help
where needed. Godspeed.

Virgil limps away into darkness. The Spirit Warrior shakes
his spear. 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 toward the satanic site.

EXT. TREE OF DEATH SITE - NIGHT

Artemis makes it behind Guard One. He faces toward Artemis.
But Artemis' shrouded in darkness. Artemis scans for Laina,
she checks her watch. She locates her. The Prophet and Dr.
Demetrius are now arguing like brothers.

DR. DEMETRIUS

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

THE PROPHET

You gave me the mycelia. We share
its fruit with humankind.

Dr. Demetrius hands the pill to The Prophet.

DR. DEMETRIUS

Look brother, I brought an offering
for the mycelia. Take it.

THE PROPHET

What is this trick?

DR. DEMETRIUS

No trick. It's made from the magic
soil, the women from your flock
that I buried in the compost pile.
Remember?

THE PROPHET

Ah, you came to please me. I will share this after we sacrifice the virgin girl. At the tree next to her severed head. I have an idea!

Artemis senses her opening to deal with Guard One. Artemis grips a ten-inch kunai knife. She deep-knee bends forward, plunging the knife into the guard's chest. He freezes. He's unable to scream. She slits his throat with the karambit while pulling him back into the thicket.

DR. DEMETRIUS

Maybe let the girl go, she can't be that valuable? She's tiny, insignificant.

The Prophet hands the Kris Sword over to Dr. Demetrius. Dr. Demetrius grasps the sword.

THE PROPHET

Brother, Will you sacrifice the girl? For me? For Satan? We will share her flesh with your mother mycelia and your offering.

DR. DEMETRIUS

I, I...

Dr. Demetrius freezes.

THE PROPHET

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

The Prophet turns and grabs Laina. She struggles. But the The Prophet holds her down on the table. The Prophet also holds the pill like a football. Dr. Demetrius looks up at the moon.

DR. DEMETRIUS

It's not midnight, yet, right?

The Prophet looks up at a full moon. Laina struggles.

THE PROPHET

Yes brother, we must wait, we must do as Satan commands. These offering must be cared for... you were always the smart one.

The Prophet releases Laina. He moves over in front of the tree, he digs a spot in front of the tree for the pill. He looks back over at Dr. Demetrius. Dr. Demetrius looks down at Laina. He grips the sword tight.

DR. DEMETRIUS

Thank you, brother. I think. A good spot for the mycelia.

Artemis crawls over behind the next guard. Guard Two of Five. Artemis takes the knife. She leaps forward, stabbing the guard through his neck. Blood splashes Artemis's face. Guard Two. Dead flops to the ground. Artemis drags him into the brush. She turns to keep her eyes on Laina. She checks her watch. It's eleven fifty-nine...

THE PROPHET

Soon, the time is at hand. The blood of this girl will feed our mycelia queen. She will feast on your offering.

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. The fifth guard curious about where are the other guards.

DR. DEMETRIUS

I'll never harm this child. Never!

THE PROPHET

Satan commands it! Give me the sword. I'll lead you!

Artemis shifts around searching for Virgil. Nowhere to be seen. But 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

You have no power over me!

Artemis scampers over behind the Guards Three and Four. They are facing inward, watching the brothers arguing. Artemis grips two knives backwards. 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. She yanks out the knives. She slits their throats before they move. But she's been exposed. The Prophet points at her.

THE PROPHET

Fool! I knew that witch would come.

DR. DEMETRIUS

You're the fool. I'm sorry...

Dr. Demetrius stabs the Prophet. But it's only a glancing wound. The Prophet yanks the sword from Dr. Demetrius. He stabs Dr. Demetrius in the chest. Dr. Demetrius collapses in front of the tree. The pill rolls away along the ground.

The Spirit Warrior tries to protect Laina. The White Stag pushes the Prophet back. But the Prophet grabs the rope, pulling Laina onto the table. Laina kicks at The Prophet. Artemis runs toward the table.

Artemis flings a knife at the Fifth Guard. He dodges it. Artemis keeps running 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 grips the sword. He pins Laina to the table. The Prophet swings the sword aloft.

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. But he yanks her back to the table.

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

BENAJMIN'S SPIRIT

Artemis, get up! How did we teach
you to throw a knife?

Artemis screams. She grips for a knife, pulls out the Kaiken dagger (the gift from Benjamin). She takes a deep breath in, a breath out.

ARTEMIS

With process, follow the process.

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 sword. His blood spews. He collapses back against the tree next to Dr. Demetrius. The White Stag steps over between the Prophet and Laina. 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. She hobbles forward. She gets past the downed table. Laina hugs her.

ARTEMIS

You're safe. I need to do something scary. It's for your dad. Go find Virgil. He needs our 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. He's next to Dr. Demetrius. She steps back, grabs the pill and stuffs it into Dr. Demetrius' arms. She turns, she squares her body with the Prophet. With both hands she plunges the dagger into the Prophets chest, shoving it close to the Prophet's neck. But she stops. She pulls the dagger back.

ARTEMIS

To easy for you...

Artemis searches and grabs the Kris sword. The Prophet pushes at Artemis. Artemis yanks the goat mask off the Prophet. He stares up at her, bleeding profusely.

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. 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, all the addicts! Go meet Satan!

Artemis twists the sword backward. She whips the blade, slicing the Prophet's head off. She SCREECHES. Her eyes turn a hateful dark red. The Prophet's severed head drops next to Dr. Demetrius and the pill. His body flops next to Dr. Demetrius in death embrace. Artemis secures her dagger. The ground under the brother's begins to shake. Artemis looks back to find Virgil and Laina. She runs to them.

EXT. TREE OF DEATH SITE - NIGHT

Virgil slumps against a tree trunk. Bleeding. Artemis examines Virgil's wounds. Laina's holding his hand. The earth under the tree rumbles, it cracks open. A mycelia tentacle slithers up searching for food.

ARTEMIS

Virgil, can you move?

Virgil grunts. He pushes his boots into the ground. Artemis and Laina help Virgil shift up into the hillside away from the cracking ground and the mycelia tentacles. The Mycelia Monster absorbs Dr. Demetrius, The Prophet, and the pill. The remaining dead disappear into the ground with them.

At Laina's shoes a mycelia twists around her ankle. She screams. Artemis grasps a knife. She slices off the mycelia flinging it back into the site. But the mycelia keep emerging until they suddenly stop. They begin to fade back. Artemis grabs Laina. She patrols in front of Virgil. Virgil cough's up blood. Artemis kneels to hug Virgil.

ARTEMIS

Without you I'd have failed.

Virgil gasps his last. His stares blankly at Artemis. Artemis and Laina mourn Virgil's death. But Laina looks past Artemis. Laina screams. Artemis holds her close. Satan strolls across the site with Benjamin's Spirit in tow. Satan golf claps.

SATAN

A command performance, you killed with hate in your heart. Bravo!

ARTEMIS

We have a deal.

SATAN

(to Laina)
Look Princes, this is your daddy.

Benjamin's Spirit reveals to Laina. Laina walks unafraid toward Benjamin's Spirit. She stares up at him.

BENAJMIN'S SPIRIT

I'm sorry. I was not there for you.

LAINA

You been tryin' to talk to me while I'm sleepin'?

BENAJMIN'S SPIRIT

Yes. I don't know what to say. I'm sorry.

Laina defiantly points up at Satan.

LAINA

You done killin'? Whatever you are... ain't you the reason for all this killin'?

SATAN

I'll never be done killin', as you say it. Princess, learn not to drop your g's.

LAINA

I ain't no princess. I ain't scared of you. You done killed my momma. I see my daddy. I ain't got nothin' to fear from the likes a you. Kill me if you got the spine!

ARTEMIS

Come back, Laina. Don't waste your energy with evil. Come...

And from within the forest an ANGELIC BEING, timeless, emerges from darkness. It floats over next to Laina. Satan sneers at the Angelic Being. Artemis stands up.

ARTEMIS

Let Benjamin go on...

ANGELIC BEING

Well, brother, go ahead, show Laina what you are, I will not stop you.

BENAJMIN'S SPIRIT

(to Artemis)

Satan tricked you, remember what Satan said? 'I will free the spirit', it was not specific to me.

SATAN

Here's the deal. I'll free Benny or
I'll release the women and girls
hiding in the forest. Pick.

ARTEMIS

No. No...

ANGELIC BEING

(to Satan)

You must abide by this promise. Or,
our brothers will appear...

SATAN

I promise. Geez sister, you're a
buzz kill. Artemis, pick between
Benny and the women... my final
offer.

BENAJMIN'S SPIRIT

Pick the women, the girls... free
them from this evil.

Artemis cries. Laina hugs her legs.

ARTEMIS

I hate you. I hate you with every
cell in my body.

SATAN

Well, I feel your hate. I
accomplished my goal. Thank you.

ARTEMIS

You must release all the women,
even the ones that worshipped you,
those are my terms.

ANGELIC BEING

Satan?

SATAN

Well then, why not, they are all
released. Come along Benny.

Satan and Benjamin's Spirit vanish. The Angelic Being waves
into the forest. Hundreds of Spirit Women and Girls emerge.
The Angelic Being guides them toward a lit crease where they
vanish into the light.

ANGELIC BEING

(to Laina)

Come along with me. We need to
visit with Virgil.

LAINA
Virgil died.

The Angelic Being strolls with Laina over to Virgil's body. Artemis steps behind them. Virgil's spirit emerges.

ANGELIC BEING
(to Laina)
His body died. But he doesn't need
it anymore. He's smiling at you.

Virgil smiles. His spirit vanishes into the light.

ANGELIC BEING
(to Laina) Did Virgil hurt before
he died?

LAINA
He hurt before he died. I saw it in
his face.

ANGELIC BEING
And then Virgil's spirit just
smiled at you.

But then a Spirit Girl separates from the group. Laina tries to hide behind Artemis's legs.

ANGELIC BEING
(to Laina) Do you know her?

Laina's crying. The Spirit Girl tries to hug Laina, but she simply passes through Laina. Laina understands. She smiles.

LAINA
I thought you didn't like me know
more. I, I miss you.

The Spirit Girl smiles. She floats away with the group. The Angelic Being touches Laina's forehead.

ANGELIC BEING
For as long as you live, you will
see the spirit world. And you will
never be afraid. Ever.

Laina touches her forehead. She looks curiously up at the Angelic Being and then over to Artemis.

ANGELIC BEING
(to Artemis) Take Laina from this
place and never return.

ARTEMIS

What am I to do? I failed. I'm a
killer, that's all I am.

ANGELIC BEING

Failed? You out-witted Satan. His
pride allowed you to save the many.
You have free will to choose to
defend those that need help, to not
allow hate to guide your actions.
Remember to choose wisely.

Angelic Being strolls over near the Tree of Death. The
Angelic Being places a hand on the tree. Prays. Returns.

ANGELIC BEING

Dr. Demetrius' poison pill is
working. Look up into this Mother
Tree, what do you see?

Artemis looks at the tree.

ARTEMIS

New growth. The tree is healing.

ANGELIC BEING

Go follow the Spirit Warrior up
into the hillside. We have one last
cleansing. Go home. Be a mother.

The Angelic Being vanishes. The Spirit Warrior and White Stag
encourage Artemis and Laina to follow them into the hillside.

EXT. FOREST - HILLSIDE ABOVE TREE OF DEATH - NIGHT

Artemis and Laina hide within a natural cave. The White Stag
stands near the opening. The Spirit Warrior protects them.
And then, a great rumble, a lightning bolt smashes the ground
where the mycelia existed. And then a harsh storm that gives
way to a gentle cleansing rain. The forest comes back alive.

ARTEMIS

(to Laina) Let's go home.

INT. WYLIE'S OFFICE - DAY

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

WYLIE
(to Laina)
Hey there, are you having fun?

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
(to Laina)
Have you ever heard the word
adoption?

LAINA
No.

WYLIE
Let me explain with a question. 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.

EXT. FOREST - DAY

A wooded spot. The White Stag forages near downed tree limbs rotting on the forest floor. Mushrooms begin to emerge one-by-one until the area smothered in mushrooms.

FADE OUT.