DON'T EAT THE MUSHROOMS

By Robert C. Hall

Adapted from the novel, AMANITA

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

FADE IN:

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

MRS. LAMB holds BABY ARTEMIS wrapped in a blanket. She gazes over at MR. LAMB, who grips a meteorite fragment aloft. He throws the meteorite into a deep hole. Mr. Lamb opens an ancient book. He begins to whisper the Ephesian Letters.

MR. LAMB
Askion, Kataskion, Lix, Tetras, Damnameneus, Aision...

Mr. Lamb repeats the words until a dark mist and a bright mist emerge. Mrs. Lamb backs away, clutching Baby Artemis to her chest. The dark mist forms into a winged, blue-skinned male figure, SATAN. The bright mist forms into a female figure, DIVINE BEING, winged within pure golden light.

Mr. Lamb drops the book. Satan picks up the book. He sets it on fire. The Divine Being smiles at Mrs. Lamb. She opens her glowing arms. Mrs. Lamb shares Baby Artemis.

SATAN
How quaint, saying magical words. You cannot protect your child from me. Or yourselves...

The Divine Being kisses Baby Artemis' forehead. She hands Baby Artemis back to Mrs. Lamb.

DIVINE BEING
This child has my protection, you cannot touch her.

SATAN
Look at me, humans. I am beyond beautiful, worship me?

MR. LAMB
Never.

MRS. LAMB
NEVER!

DIVINE BEING
I grant this baby the gift to see the spirit realm. She will be a divine warrior who will defeat you!

SATAN
A challenge from my divine sister?

Satan glares at Mr. and Mrs. Lamb. They cry. The Divine Being floats between Satan and the Lambs.

DIVINE BEING
Teach her to never have hate in her heart. That is my only protection for her mortal soul. From this moment, I cannot interfere.

The Divine Being glances at Satan. She vanishes. Satan waits a moment. He flaps his wings.

SATAN
Divine warrior?

MRS. LAMB
I beg you, don't hurt my baby.

SATAN
Oh, I cannot kill her. But I will teach her to hate. And her soul will be mine.

Satan vanishes. The Lambs cower embracing Baby Artemis.

EXT. THE LAMB’S MANICURED FRONT YARD - DAY

The Lambs play with ARTEMIS, 3. She giggles. She points at SPIRIT BEINGS. The Lamb's cannot see the SPIRIT BEINGS.

MRS. LAMB
Satan will kill us.

INT. THE LAMB’S SPLIT-LEVEL - ARTEMIS' BEDROOM - NIGHT

ARTEMIS, 13, watches spirit activity beyond her window, but it stops. Artemis opens her windows. She climbs outside.

EXT. THE LAMB’S MANICURED FRONT YARD - NIGHT

Artemis steps on the sidewalk. Beneath streetlights, Satan and the Divine Being appear. Artemis sees them. She trembles. Satan vanishes. Mrs. Lamb steps out from the home.

MRS. LAMB
Artemis?

The Spirit World reenergizes around Artemis. Artemis looks back at the Divine Being who smiles at her. Mrs. Lamb sees the Divine Being, too. The Divine Being vanishes.

MRS. LAMB
Artemis? I don't know what to say.

ARTEMIS
What's wrong with me?

MRS. LAMB
Nothing. You're beautiful, come...

ARTEMIS
Why do I see things?

MRS. LAMB
Come. Let's go to bed.

ARTEMIS
Do you love me?

MRS. LAMB
I love you, always... Come...

EXT. SUMMER CAMP, CHECK-IN DESK - DAY

Mr. and Mrs. Lamb are dropping Artemis off. Artemis walks toward the camp dragging her bag.

MR. LAMB
Have fun, goddess of the hunt.

Mrs. Lamb grimaces at Mr. Lamb. CHILDREN are playing.

ARTEMIS
Why'd you name me after a goddess?
They make fun of me. I'm a freak.

INT. THE LAMB'S SPLIT-LEVEL - PARENTS' BEDROOM - NIGHT

Mr. and Mrs. Lamb snuggle. Satan stands at the end of the bed. The Divine Being stands behind Satan.

DIVINE BEING
Please don't.

SATAN
They were warned.

EXT. THE LAMB'S SPLIT-LEVEL - NIGHT

Satan watches it explode. He's pleased. But the Divine Being has taken the LAMB'S SPIRITS into her possession.

DIVINE BEING
Proud of yourself?

SATAN
Take them, they mean nothing.

DIVINE BEING
Foolish pride.

INT. ORPHANAGE BEDROOM - DAY

Artemis sits on a bed. She watches the other girls, but gets off the bed. She strolls into a hallway. She opens a door.

INT. ORPHANAGE UTILITY ROOM - DAY

Artemis sits alone on concrete stairs. A SPIRIT GIRL emerges.

SPIRIT GIRL
Hi.

ARTEMIS
You talk?

SPIRIT GIRL
If I want to...

ARTEMIS
Don't you go to heaven, or?

SPIRIT GIRL
They talk about you.

ARTEMIS
They? How do you know?

SPIRIT GIRL
Not sure. I know things without trying to know things.

ARTEMIS
I miss my parents.

SPIRIT GIRL
They know. They love you.

ARTEMIS
Are you real?

SPIRIT GIRL
I'm here. We share the same world. Hey, you're meant to be a divine warrior. Did you know that?

ARTEMIS
I don't know what that means.

SPIRIT GIRL
I am told you will protect the innocent from evil.

ARTEMIS
How? I'm a girl.

SPIRIT GIRL
Divine warriors are meant to help people. You'll figure it out.

TIME PASSES. ARTEMIS GROWS UP A LONER.

INT. UNIVERSITY MEDICAL SCHOOL LIBRARY/STUDY HALL - DAY

ARTEMIS, 25, intense eyes, tall. She sits at a desk. The room empty but for her. The outdated heating system pitter-pats. Her eyes focus on a laptop screen. A LIBRARIAN, 50s, taps on the table. Startled. Artemis acknowledges the Librarian. She checks her wristwatch, time to go.

EXT. UNIVERSITY SOUTH FLORIDA CAMPUS - NIGHT

Artemis walks outside, surrounded by the limitless fractal system that zaps Spirit Beings along geometric tunnels heading toward their eternal destinations.

A MAINTENANCE MAN, 6os, empties a trash bin. He knows night-owl Artemis. Artemis walks toward an all-night campus diner.

EXT. UNIVERSITY SOUTH FLORIDA CAMPUS DINER - NIGHT

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

INT. UNIVERSITY SOUTH FLORIDA CAMPUS DINER - NIGHT

Artemis sits down at a booth. The waitress pours Artemis coffee. Artemis sets her laptop down. She sips coffee.

Two MEN, 30s, shuffle a GIRL, 16, inside. They sit the Girl onto a stool. The Waitress glances over at the Fry Cook. Artemis notices. The Girl shows a hand sign at her side, four fingers over her thumb. Artemis gets up.

WAITRESS
(to Artemis)
Don't.

ARTEMIS
Let her go.

The Taller Man gets up. But behind them, SPIRIT WOMEN reveal themselves to the Girl. The Men cannot see them. They wave at her. The Girl looks at Artemis. The Divine Being appears. Artemis sees the Divine Being smiling at her.

ARTEMIS
Run!

The Girl wiggles free, she runs toward the Spirit Women that cloak her. They disappear into the light. The Men run outside after her, but she's escaped. They return.

TALLER MAN
Bitch!

The Taller Man strides over, tackles Artemis. He slugs her. The Fry Cook comes round the counter with a shotgun. He cocks it. He points it at the Taller Man's head. He menaces.

FRY COOK
Get out, or I'll drop you both!

TALLER MAN
(to Artemis)
You cost me a lot of money, bitch.

FRY COOK
Get out. You have no shame!

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

The Fry Cook helps Artemis. The Divine Being smiles at Artemis. Artemis looks over at her.

ARTEMIS
What do you want from me?

The Divine Being vanishes. The Fry Cook and Waitress look at Artemis curiously. They saw nothing.

INT. CAMPUS DIVE-BAR - NIGHT

Artemis has an ice pack on her eye. The BARTENDER, 60s, places a shot of whiskey in front of her. BENJAMIN, 30s, lifts his shot glass. He steps over and sits next to Artemis.

BENJAMIN
Night owl? Got into a fight?

Artemis contemplates the shot.

ARTEMIS
I'll be all right.

Benjamin and Artemis kick back the shots. Artemis shakes her head, she coughs from the alcohol burning her throat.

BENJAMIN
Kentucky bourbon, my mother's milk.

ARTEMIS
Kentucky? What's it like?

BENAJMIN
Like going back in time.

ARTEMIS
You military?

BENJAMIN
That obvious? Yeah. I'm between jobs. What's your story?

ARTEMIS
Medical school, reason I don't sleep. I guess this is the best career for me. You know?

BENAJMIN
Being a doctor's cool, better to save lives than take them.

ARTEMIS
I'm not sure where I'm going.

BENJAMIN
Let's have another round?

Artemis and Benjamin enjoy the drinks. Benjamin touches Artemis' hand. She doesn't pull away.

ARTEMIS
Why not? You live downtown?

BENAJMIN
No. I come and go. But I see a reason to hang in St Pete?

INT. ARTEMIS' SINGLE BEDROOM APARTMENT - NIGHT

Artemis and Benjamin make passionate love.

INT. ARTEMIS' SINGLE BEDROOM APARTMENT - DAY

Artemis gets up. Benjamin's left a note. Artemis reads the note. A phone number. She flips the note into the trash.

INT. MEDICAL SCHOOL CADAVER LAB - DAY

Artemis, with a black eye, stuffs her goggles into her bag. She ignores her gossiping CLASSMATES. She walks out into a busy hallway. A MILITARY MAN, 40s, approaches Artemis.

MILITARY MAN
Artemis?

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. You want to learn how to really defend girls?

ARTEMIS
Who're you?

MILITARY MAN
I'm not what you see. Perhaps use your talents for a higher purpose that will make your parents proud?

ARTEMIS
What are you asking of me?

MILITARY MAN
Aren't you meant to be a divine warrior?

Artemis contemplates.

ARTEMIS
Divine warrior?

MILITARY MAN
It's time you accepted your destiny. But you must decide.

Artemis leaves. SATAN reveals himself only to the Military Man. Clueless STUDENTS and FACULTY walk past him.

EXT. MILITARY TRAINING BASE - DAY

A TRAINER, 40s, punches Artemis, knocking her to the ground. The CADETS, 20s, taunt her. She wrong-foots the Trainer, kicks him square in the chest. She threatens forward. He waves her off. But behind the Cadets, stands Benjamin. He gazes at Artemis. Artemis looks at him. Benjamin walks away.

EXT. MILITARY TRAINING BASE - DAY

Artemis slings knives at targets. But her Trainer goes quiet. Artemis turns to find Benjamin staring at her.

BENJAMIN
(to Artemis)
This your roll?

Artemis shrugs. 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.

TRAINER
Sir?

Benjamin steps around Artemis, reviewing her head to toe.

BENJAMIN
Gain muscle mass with flexibility.

ARTEMIS
You’re blunt. But I knew that...

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.

EXT. SENSITIVE COMPARTMENTED INFO FACILITY (SCIF) - DAY

Artemis steps up to an iron gate. The gate opens.

INT. SENSITIVE COMPARTMENTED INFO FACILITY (SCIF) - DAY

Artemis walks forward. Benjamin's waiting inside.

BENJAMIN
You have a choice to make. I left you my private number.
(MORE)

BENJAMIN (CONT'D)
You never called. We never happened. You can choose to join us if you survive training. You have to pick. No going back.

ARTEMIS
What do you all do?

BENJAMIN
We kill bad people. To start, we need a strong female operator. We think female victims will trust a female operator. Pick.

ARTEMIS
Everyone I've ever loved died. I do care about you. But I want you to live. So, I choose the mission.

BENJAMIN
Training starts at Zero Six Hundred

Benjamin leaves the room. Artemis tears up a bit.

INT. ASSASSIN TRAINING - DAY

An ASIAN MASTER, 50s, he shows Artemis a multitude of knives, swords, and throwing stars. She reaches for one, but the Asian Master smacks her hand.

ASIAN MASTER
Come.

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

ASIAN MASTER
How many spirit beings?

ARTEMIS
Three.

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. He nods at the living Asian Masters.

ASIAN MASTER
Now you will relearn hand-to-hand combat. Prepare yourself.

The Asian Masters surround Artemis. They kick her ass. After, Benjamin stares down at her.

BENJAMIN
You can quit.

ARTEMIS
No.

BENJAMIN
Let’s go swimming.

EXT. ASSASSIN TRAINING, CHINOOK HELICOPTER - NIGHT

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

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 swims away.

INT. ASSASSIN TRAINING - DAY

Artemis sits with the Asian Master. Benjamin's nearby. Satan conceals his presence. But the Asian Master senses Satan.

ASIAN MASTER
Do you sense a 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. Benjamin's blank-faced. The Asian Master adjusts his pose. He breathes in. He breathes out.

ASIAN MASTER
Again, you sense this evil?

ARTEMIS
I know it's here.

Satan sneers down at Artemis.

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

The Divine Being, appears. She stands across from Satan.

DIVINE BEING
(to Satan)
Artemis cannot be touched.

SATAN
She must suffer. Her parents tried to trick me. She must pay for their insolence.

DIVINE BEING
You killed them, you arrogant fool. Finished? Or shall I cast you into an abyss for a thousand years?

The Asian Master and Artemis sense both the Divine Being and Satan. Satan growls at the Divine Being. She smiles at him.

ASIAN MASTER
A supernatural war rages around you. Do you know this?

ARTEMIS
It has all my life.

ASIAN MASTER
You see the supernatural world?

ARTEMIS
I see it day or night.

ASIAN MASTER
Your parents accidentally invited supernatural entities to target you. You have a divine gift. But remember, we do not hate. Ever. Emotions cloud a mission's purpose. Understand?

ARTEMIS
I accept this truth.

Artemis and the Asian Master get up, they walk in a circle. The Asian Master flings a knife at Artemis. She catches it. Satan vanishes. The Divine Being strolls through Artemis. She vanishes. Benjamin nods approval at the Asian Master.

ASIAN MASTER
Go to your final test.

INT. BLACK VAN - NIGHT

Benjamin and Artemis check and recheck her weapons.

BENAJMIN
The problem inside the house is an arms dealer. He’s responsible for thousands of deaths. Solve the problem.

ARTEMIS
Does it matter the method?

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

BENJAMIN
No. A Kaiken dagger, it’s a gift. You have the karambit?

Artemis reveals the weapon. Benjamin opens the side door. Artemis and Benjamin blend into the darkness behind a large house. 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 into an open doorway and steps down a hallway toward a half-open door. Artemis gets to the door, but a LITTLE GIRL, 5, flings it open.

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, missing Artemis who forward-rolls. The Arms Dealer hoists the Little Girl up with his left arm. Clicking off rounds until the clip empties. Artemis slides out a Kunai knife. She drops to a knee, flinging the knife into the Arms Dealer's right shoulder. He drops the gun. Artemis bull rushes into him. She pushes the Little Girl onto the bed. Artemis grips her Kaiken dagger with her left hand, whipping it around to stab the Arms Dealer. Artemis flips the knife upwards, shoving it into the Arms Dealer. She clasps him tight, staring into his eyes until he bleeds out. Dead.

Artemis grabs the Little Girl’s hand. Artemis steps over to Benjamin’s body. She kneels. She kisses his forehead and closes his dead eyes. The Little Girl picks up her doll.

I/E. BLACK VAN - NIGHT

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

SPECIAL FORCES MINDER
You passed.

Artemis stares at Benjamin's body bag. She glances over at the Little Girl.

ARTEMIS
Her?

SPECIAL FORCES MINDER
The target you erased murdered her mother. She’s an orphan, for now. We'll take care of her.

ARTEMIS
Like me...

SPECIAL FORCES OFFICER
In a week, you’ll report to WYLIE. He’s your new domestic Minder.

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
(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 with a serious opioid problem. Big Pharma pleases me, you'll see.

Satan examines Benjamin's eyes.

SATAN
Oh? This dead thing is new for you, you can talk. Go on...

BENJAMIN
Leave her alone.

Satan ponders the situation.

SATAN
Ah, no. But welcome to my world. Now you'll learn what human suffering really means.

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

SATAN
What would Benny do? I know, I’ll reveal myself to her. Yes. It will be her first assignment. She'll need guidance since, well, you're dead. Perfect way for me to teach her to hate. My only goal for her.

BENJAMIN SPIRIT
Don't kill her.

SATAN
Too easy, Benny. But I will torture her with all sorts of obstacles. Making a human suffer is fun.

Satan claps.

SATAN
Ah, just now, a male model overdosed on fentanyl. A perfect body to guide Artemis? This winged look a bit on the nose.

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

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

INT. WYLIE'S OFFICE - DAY

WYLIE, 60s, hands Artemis an envelope. Wylie 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, girls, they even 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 Dr. Demetrius.

ARTEMIS
Mushrooms?

WYLIE
Yeah, they tell me Dr. Demetrius is on to 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 plan to do.

ARTEMIS
I think cemeteries are a good starting point. The dead don't lie.

WYLIE
Cemeteries spook me, good luck with that. It's your process, you get to pick your process. So, the hospital's expanded their ICU given the opioid epidemic up there. We think they're all about profit, happy to have addicts showing up at the emergency department, more government money. Get me?

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. We think the women are used to peddle fentanyl, not sure how they are making it or getting it. We think you're perfect for this assignment.

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 problem.

ARTEMIS
I'll do my job. I promise.

WYLIE
I have no doubt. We told the administration you’re a malpractice investigator doing a facility audit. No idea what that means.
(MORE)

WYLIE (CONT'D)
Determine whether they are all trustworthy or not.

ARTEMIS
Is it my call?

WYLIE
That’s the job Benjamin trained you to do. Do you need any weapons package?

Artemis acknowledges Wylie. She shrugs.

ARTEMIS
I prefer my knives.

WYLIE
Good. Terminate the problem, quietly. Let's do our job.

ARTEMIS
Do I have a 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 be focused on eradicating the problem. Focus on your process.

ARTEMIS
Understood.

WYLIE
To be clear, 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-engineering mushrooms?

WYLIE
No idea. The opioid epidemic up there is a huge PR problem for the hospital and big pharma. That's what they care about - PR. Think about that? Make Benjamin proud.

INT. ARTEMIS’S SUV - DAY

Artemis unfurls her knife roll, revealing the 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 MODEST SUV - DAY

Artemis drives into the Appalachian Mountains.

EXT. ARTEMIS’S MODEST SUV, SELENE, KY - DAY

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

EXT. HOTEL ENTRANCE, SELENE, KY - NIGHT

Artemis walks out onto the sidewalk. She looks for Spirit Beings. Nothing but darkness. She strolls up the main street. She locates the local cemetery. Most High Cemetery.

EXT. MOST HIGH CEMETERY - NIGHT

Artemis realizes there are still no Spirit Beings to interact with. Confused. She contemplates. She steps farther into the grounds. Near a mausoleum, the outline of a winged man’s shadow. He dissolves into a dark mist. Satan transforms into human form and skips toward Artemis. Artemis reaches down for her sidearm, but it’s not there.

SATAN
You can't kill me, divine warrior.

ARTEMIS
Who, what are you?

SATAN
I’m insulted. You've seen me.

ARTEMIS
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.

Satan snaps his pointy fingers. The Raven flops dead.

SATAN
You think you'll outsmart everyone by asking the dead for information?

ARTEMIS
They'll talk to me.

SATAN
Unless I'm hanging around, they'd best not get caught in my mycelia purgatory. It's not hell.

Satan steps over and he pokes and shoves at Artemis.

SATAN
You stumbled into my mass opioid killing project. I do mass killing personally, no demons.

ARTEMIS
What do you want from me?

Satan keeps poking at Artemis.

SATAN
To suffer. So, big pharma's been killing for me. Greedy, greedy, from hiding the truth. I'm pleased.

ARTEMIS
Are you blocking my vision?

SATAN
It's my call, after all, Earth is my evil playground, princess.

ARTEMIS
I thought you enjoyed death.

SATAN
No, I enjoy human suffering. It completes me. But I'm here to help you. And yes, you're just like me, a killer. But you haven't learned hate, why?

ARTEMIS
It's about helping people.

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

SATAN
Do you like my bespoke suit? It’s British, Savile Row.

ARTEMIS
I don't care.

SATAN
Hate is our mission, divine warrior.

ARTEMIS
My job is about process, not hate.

SATAN
I’m going to guide you, since this is your first assignment. Wylie's correct, we need to make Benjamin proud of his star pupil.

Satan taps his shiny shoe on the pavement.

ARTEMIS
Go away.

SATAN
Go away to where? I'm Satan. So, I’ll nudge you toward the bad guys. But to add to the stakes - let me introduce you to - Benny!

Benjamin’s Spirit appears, floating next to Satan.

ARTEMIS
Oh god...

SATAN
Not oh God? Say, Oh, Satan! And, by the way, that Divine Being you see, she's not coming to help you. But take heart, I'm here to guide you. Perhaps you two worship me?

ARTEMIS
Let Benjamin go on.

SATAN
Pity, I'll take that as a no. Hey, 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.
(MORE)

SATAN (CONT'D)
You can talk, Benny, fine, but be smart about it. Don't give her any clues. Or you get the hot poker up your ass?

BENJAMIN SPIRIT
Let her go. You're an asshole.

SATAN
Nope. Now, Artemis, investigations need clues. Go to the hospital. Meet Dr. Demetrius, he's obsessed with the mycelia.

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

SATAN
(to Benjamin)
Good boy, good boy. (to Artemis) Hey, the hospital has a special relationship with a wicked big-pharma babe, you'll see. By the way, do you enjoy theater popcorn?

ARTEMIS
What are you asking me?

SATAN
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 staggers away.

INT. ZOOM CALL FROM HOTEL ROOM - DAY

Wylie looks at Artemis on a laptop screen.

ARTEMIS
I might be over my head.

WYLIE
You want me to get you out of there?

ARTEMIS
No. Let me think through this.

WYLIE
What’s Dr. Demetrius like?

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

WYLIE
Any idea who our target is?

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
It's part of the job. Later.

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 steps back. Benjamin's Spirit appears next to Satan.

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. Satan can't hurt me, I'm dead.

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

BENJAMIN
Don't worry about her.

SATAN
Simmer down. Laina's part of my master plan. Bitter, bitter...
(to Artemis)
She'll soon be an orphan. You have a soft spot for orphans?
(MORE)

SATAN (CONT'D)
The little girl at the Arms Dealer's demise? You sliced him up, with that gift from Benny-a bloody execution. Yes, I enjoyed your performance.

ARTEMIS
So what?

SATAN
So what? Call over to the hospital. Dr. Demetrius will add you to his schedule, but with his hospital masters. But in the meantime, you need to find a guy named Virgil. He’s a local grocer. He always buys a handle, and he knows things.

ARTEMIS
Handle what? Let Benjamin go on.

SATAN
You two were way too disciplined. Benny's sperm bullets were mighty powerful. It creates more product for human trafficking, a profitable business for your targets. See what I did? I gave you a clue.

ARTEMIS
Focus on me, let Benjamin go on.

SATAN
No. You care for Benny. So, love will cause you to follow my directions. Or, I can torture Benny? I can make him suffer?

BENNY
You’re an asshole.

Satan looks back and forth at Benjamin and Artemis.

SATAN
I am an asshole. Poor Artemis, afraid to let love in her heart. Or hate? But Benny got into you, figuratively and literally.

BENAJMIN
God, you really are an asshole.

SATAN
Thank you. And I am beautiful. My mission is clear, I'll teach Artemis to hate. Hate me?

Satan waves. Benjamin disappears.

ARTEMIS
I do. But you've blocked me. What are you hiding from me?

SATAN
Clues. But I'll let you have more clues as I guide you toward hate. So, move along, divine warrior, find Virgil. Oh, Dr. Demetrius is a wacko-doodle about his mycelia. His key research ingredient, see? Another clue for you.

EXT. MOUNTAIN ROADS - DAY

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

INT. VIRGIL'S GROCERY - DAY

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

VIRGIL
I guess you're lost?

ARTEMIS
My smartphone's worthless up here.

VIRGIL
It's a problem.

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

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

Virgil inspects Artmemis'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.

Virgil grunts. He nods.

VIRGIL
My best guess is she’s at that hospital. I think her mother finally did it to herself. Drugs are not like getting a handle, handles are the better way to go.

ARTEMIS
I'll bite. Handle what?

VIRGIL
Bourbon. You do realize you’re in Kentucky? Smart drinker gets a big bottle with a handle, cheaper.

ARTEMIS
Whatever. I guess drive out the way I came in? Wait. What's the story about tree worshipping?

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 revealing 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.
Sorry I asked. The girl’s at the hospital?

VIRGIL
I’d think so. Be careful and don’t be up here at night. You stick out.

ARTEMIS
I'm aware. Hey, I have a meeting with 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, sits across from Artemis. Scott Diabolos, 40s, hospital administrator, walks into the room. He sits. Artemis examines her iPad.

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

SCOTT
Welcome, I'm Scott Diabolos, hospital CEO. How can we help?

ARTEMIS
(to Dr. Demetrius)
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.

SCOTT
Dr. Demetrius has made my job a lot easier. His mushrooms are amazing and quite profitable. How can we help with your audit?

Artemis considers the question.

ARTEMIS
Are you both behind the cremation procedures? Word is you all are unnecessarily keeping patients alive?

DR. DEMETRIUS
It was a difficult decision. But a novel virus could wipe out all my life's work.

SCOTT
The hospital does get CMS' blessing, so we give our patients the time they deserve. We're a not-for-profit, but we do focus on being profitable, we must get paid.

DR. DEMETRIUS
I have voiced my opposition to this practice. But it's important to understand, physicians no longer control healthcare decisions.

A knock on the door. Mephisto, 30s, sassy, walks inside. She taps Dr. Demetrius on the shoulder. He ignores her. Scott gets up to hug her. She sits next to Scott.

SCOTT
Artemis, Mephisto is our trusted pharmacy representative. Her company has helped keep us open.

MEPHISTO
Hi. You're serious-looking. What's your line of work?

ARTEMIS
Ah, malpractice auditor.

MEPHISTO
Dr. Demetrius and Scott are key partners with Suckler Pharmaceuticals. A lot of coal miners here in constant pain. We make their pain go away with a monthly prescription.

SCOTT
A profitable solution. We are winning thanks to Mephisto's help and Dr. Demetrius' brilliant research.

ARTEMIS
Mephisto? Unusual name...

MEPHISTO
So is Artemis. Dad called me his little demonic spirit.

DR. DEMETRIUS
Are we making deals with the devil?

MEPHISTO
Dancing with the genetic devil is a big pharma art form.

Artemis packs up her laptop.

ARTEMIS
(to Scott)
Thanks for the security badge.

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

ARTEMIS
Yes. But I need to check on a patient-a family friend.

Artemis gets up.

SCOTT
I'm sure we'll pass any audit.

MEPHISTO
You should try Dr. Demetrius' mushrooms, he'll take you on a carpet ride through your mind.

DR. DEMETRIUS
Cute. I don't make those type mushrooms. (to Artemis) I welcome your visit. When you're ready.

ARTEMIS
I'll be in touch.

INT. OBSTECTRICS WARD, HOSPITAL - DAY

A NURSE, 20s, points Artemis over to a room. Artemis enters-a WOMAN, on a bed, in a coma. Beneath the bed, 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 toward the nurse’s desk. Artemis looks into other patient rooms with women on life support. Artemis steps near a desk. The Nurse does not look up.

NURSE
You in the girl’s family?

ARTEMIS
No. The woman looks dead to me.

NURSE
The hospital wants her kept alive.

Beneath Artemis’ right leg, Laina appears, looking up at her.

LAINA
You left me?

The Nurse turns around. Artemis touches Laina’s head.

ARTEMIS
It’s okay. I’ll not leave you.

NURSE
Take her. Otherwise, she'll end up pulling tricks. Evil people round these parts. Be careful. Go on now.

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.

SATAN
What are you to do with princess?

ARTEMIS
No idea.

SATAN
I enjoy popcorn while watching a show. Popcorn?

SUVs drive into the parking area. They park. THE PROPHET, 40s, walks like an all-knowing being. He wears a surgical mask. He has MEN, 20s & 30s, with him. They walk toward the hospital's entrance. He stops. He gazes down at Laina.

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 keep walking.

THE PROPHET
(to Artemis)
Wear a mask.

ARTEMIS
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 powerful pedos on the books that pay well. That's icky even for me. A clue?

Satan offers Artemis popcorn.

ARTEMIS
He's sick.

SATAN
You sure? Girls and women keep disappearing. Why?

ARTEMIS
What's your point?

SATAN
I have enjoyed your performance as a malpractice auditor. Bravo.

ARTEMIS
Do you always talk in circles?

Satan eats a handful of popcorn. He pokes out his forked tongue. Mephisto strolls past Laina. She waves, walks over.

SATAN
Oh, look, my little demon spirit. But she can't see me.

MEPHISTO
You brought your daughter?

ARTEMIS
Not mine, helping her out.

MEPHISTO
Blessed is he who has no family.

ARTEMIS
Can I help you?

Mephisto points over at the compost pile.

MEPHISTO
Compost pile at a hospital?

ARTEMIS
It's strange.

MEPHISTO
I'm told it's Dr. D's magic fertilizer. You have a good day with your new friend.

Mephisto strolls away and goes inside the hospital.

SATAN
Not many humans quote Karl Marx. She's an ambitious little Red Riding Hood. I like her.

ARTEMIS
What do you want?

SATAN
I want you to visit your new buddy, Virgil. Take the princess. Ask him to guide you into the forest. Find the Tree of Death.
(MORE)

SATAN (CONT'D)
And then visit Dr. Demetrius' mushroom farm. By the way, his magic ingredient is hidden in this compost pile. Death in plain sight? Ah, another clue for you?

ARTEMIS
Enjoying yourself.

SATAN
A bonus for your journey. Once you get to Virgil's grocery, I'll stop blocking you. Your clairvoyant self can now bloom. See, I'm helping.

EXT. VIRGIL'S GROCERY - DAY

Artemis and Laina step out from the SUV. Artemis looks back at a hillside. A WHITE STAG forages. Nearby, a SPIRIT WARRIOR, timeless. He yells at Artemis in his language.

INT. VIRGIL'S GROCERY - DAY

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

VIRGIL
Well, looky here.

ARTEMIS
Thanks for the help.

VIRGIL
(to Laina)
You all right?

Laina looks up at Virgil. She nods.

ARTEMIS
Can you help me get Laina some clothes? She has a trailer here?

VIRGIL
Sure, their trailer's out back.

ARTEMIS
The least I can do for Benjamin.

VIRGIL
You're good person.

ARTEMIS
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. Hear me?

ARTEMIS
I hear you.

VIRGIL
It’s a drug cult. I keep them out of my shop. The women are being prostituted, I suspect worse.

ARTEMIS
Laina's mother?

Virgil nods at Artemis.

VIRGIL
Any who, let's go out back.

I/E. LAINA’S TRAILER - DAY

Virgil opens the metal front door. Laina scurries inside. Artemis and Virgil follow her. But they encounter a black, moldy mess. Artemis and Virgil cover their noses. They step down a hallway. They find Laina inside her cardboard boxes.

VIRGIL
I had no idea.

ARTEMIS
Come Laina.

VIRGIL
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. Dr. Demetrius and Artemis wear respirators and hazmat suits.

DR. DEMETRIUS
This is the fruit, quite literally, of my labor, my passion.

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.

ARTEMIS
What else are you doing here?

DR. DEMETRIUS
You’re very observant. We need new natural drugs, new forms of penicillin. Do you know what kills more people in hospitals?

ARTEMIS
Sepsis.

DR. DEMETRIUS
I search for solutions to kill deadly bugs like sepsis. Fungi are the root to emerging science using quantum computing and AI.

ARTEMIS
You lost me?

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

ARTEMIS
No.

DR. DEMETRIUS
Mycelia's the mother of mushrooms. From rot, death, she creates life.

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

DR. DEMETRIUS
I am. As you already figured out, I've kept Mephisto and her pharma leeches out of my lab. All they want is money. All I want is credit for changing the world.

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

DR. DEMETRIUS
Let me show you, 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. Be careful, there's an evil lady, too.

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.

Dr. Demetrius pulls out a soil-covered shelf. He uses a scalpel to remove the top layer to revealing mycelia in incubation.

DR. DEMETRIUS
Glide the tip of your fingers over them. Be gentle. They’re growing.

Artemis touches the mycelia. She yanks her hand back.

ARTEMIS
That was weird. It felt alive.

DR. DEMETRIUS
They are alive.

Dr. Demetrius points at various incubators.

DR. DEMETRIUS
Eat those you die from liver damage. If you eat those, you're in for a serious trip. Life and death are within a few feet of each other. All are born from the mycelial underworld.

ARTEMIS
If I were a religious person, a sort of hell on earth?

DR. DEMETRIUS
No. My mycelia are beautiful.

ARTEMIS
You're altering their structure, their genome. 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 protocols.

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
You'll decompose.

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

ARTEMIS
Never heard of someone doing that.

Dr. Demetrius pinches soil from the tray.

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

ARTEMIS
This is all patented?

DR. DEMETRIUS
No. I don’t want to share it with any government entity or certainly not big pharma. It’s a secret I'll take to the grave, or 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. The mycelia interest me. I'll take a rain check.

EXT. MOST HIGH CEMETERY - NIGHT

Artemis steps into the cemetery grounds - Satan’s waiting near the mausoleum. But she notices spirit activity.

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. A lady? Who are they?

SATAN
She gave you clues. As instructed. I think you've met them.

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

SATAN
Her brain blocked it all out. I'll let her go as a good-faith gesture, since you're learning to hate me.

Satan waves his hand.

SATAN
Done. 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 warned you not to eat the mushrooms?

ARTEMIS
The mushrooms he showed me? I'll pass. He's playing around with mycelial genetic structure. I thought that's your playground?

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
Why are you a clothes horse?

SATAN
This body feels like it needs finely tailored suits.

ARTEMIS
What's up with the mycelia?

SATAN
The mycelia thrive underground, lurking beneath your feet, like me, everywhere, digesting souls.

ARTEMIS
You kind of described Dante's Hell. And whatever else, you get to be the evil subterranean mole?

SATAN
Ouch. Maybe you'll take a tour inside my mycelia?

ARTEMIS
So, why am I here?

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

ARTEMIS
You’re a sick bastard.

SATAN
After you visit with Lily, I think you should visit with Virgil. Go hike to the Tree of Death.

ARTEMIS
Do I have a choice?

SATAN
No. But a treat for your eyes. I plan to put on a show. Of course, I will be performing in the nude.

ARTEMIS
You're more disgusting than even your own stereotype.

SATAN
You're a blunt woman. But hate builds over time. Hate me?

ARTEMIS
I hate you. Happy?

SATAN
Oh, sweetie, you don't understand hate. And as a treat from my performance, you will get to see all the elements for your investigation. 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, 11.

LILY’S SPIRIT
Am I dead?

ARTEMIS
Yes. Can you see a bright light?

LILY'S SPIRIT
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.

Artemis steps closer to Lily.

ARTEMIS
Go on.

LILY
My mom gave me away. They gave her drugs. They did things to me. And then they did things to her.

ARTEMIS
Who did this? Can you be specific.

LILY'S SPIRIT
The Prophet man. There was this woman behind him, in a red hood. She just watched.

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. The Woman was holding a big knife.

Artemis stares at Lily, her boots frozen to the ground.

ARTEMIS
What happened?

LILY'S SPIRIT
I got away. They caught up with 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
Virgil held me close until I died, I wasn't afraid to die with him.

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

Lily's Spirit vanishes into a brightly lit crease. Artemis stands alone within the cemetery grounds. The Divine Being appears and she smiles at Artemis.

ARTEMIS
I don't understand you.

The Divine Being vanishes.

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 a meeting. I need you to stay here. You can order food, hotel staff knows. Understand?

LAINA
Can I watch TV?

ARTEMIS
Yes. Promise me you'll stay here.

Artemis leans back. She sighs. She looks up at Laina.

LAINA
Say it. I see it in your eyes.

ARTEMIS
Your mother died. I'm sorry.

LAINA
I best find a job. Help me?

EXT. VIRGIL’S GROCERY - DAY

Artemis closes the door. Virgil's at the counter.

VIRGIL
I've been expecting your shadow.

ARTEMIS
You knew a girl, Lily?

VIRGIL
You don’t miss much, do you?

ARTEMIS
Laina’s mother died.

VIRGIL
Laina all right?

ARTEMIS
I think so. I have her at my hotel. The staff seems trustworthy?

Virgil looks up at the tin ceiling.

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

ARTEMIS
Guide me to this Tree of Death?

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. It’s about greed.

ARTEMIS
They sent me to clean it up.

Virgil considers Artemis' statement.

VIRGIL
I reckoned. It’s in your eyes.

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
Girls aren’t supposed to be professional killers.

EXT. DENSE FOREST - DAY

Artemis and Virgil hike along a trail. The White Stag and Spirit Warrior appear-Virgil and Artemis notice.

ARTEMIS
See him?

VIRGIL
I do.

ARTEMIS
What’s his story?

VIRGIL
Not sure.

Artemis and the Spirit Warrior stare at each other.

ARTEMIS
He chose to stay. It’s part of his sacred duty to protect the forest.

VIRGIL
How’d you do that?

ARTEMIS
I’m can talk to spirit beings.

VIRGIL
Now I know your real trick, lady assassin that talks to the spirits. You sure you can manage this mob?

ARTEMIS
No.

EXT. DENSE FOREST - TREE OF DEATH SITE - DAY

Artemis, Virgil, and the Spirit Warrior trek uphill. The White Stag follows. Music BLARING. They crest the hill. Below them, a giant tree. MEN, 20s/30s, and WOMEN, 20s, worshiping the tree. The Prophet wears a goat’s head. A WOMAN in a red hooded cloak paces behind them. A wooden table with a Kris sword on top. A lamb tied to the tree next to the Woman.

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? The Prophet's goat mask is too much on the nose.

Artemis lies on her back, contemplating the situation.

VIRGIL
This ain't good.

ARTEMIS
Not good.

VIRGIL
That's a serious blade down there. You know what it is?

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

VIRGIL
You know your knives.

ARTEMIS
It's my job.

Artemis creeps back up to look down at the service. The Women are naked. They dance around the tree. The Men stand within the circle. The red-hooded Woman keeps clear of them all. Beyond the Satanic worship, five aimless SECURITY GUARDS, 20s, holding weapons near tiki torches.

ARTEMIS
The guards can't see us.

VIRGIL
How so?

ARTEMIS
The forest 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.

ARTEMIS
If you leave, I understand.

The red-hooded Woman disappears behind the tree. She returns wearing a respirator and slips on latex gloves. She holds two plastic bags full of powder. She waves the Women over, where she dumps off-colored powder from the bags into their sling pouches. The naked women are not wearing any protective gear. The women spread the off-colored powder at the base of the tree. They water the ground. The music stops.

The Men bring the Lamb forward. The Prophet grabs the Kris sword. He holds it aloft.

SATAN (O.S.)
(to Artemis)
He's praying to me, consecrating the sword. I'm flattered.

The red-hooded Woman accepts the sword from The Prophet. The Men hold the Lamb still. The red-hooded Woman stabs the Lamb. She then slits the Lamb’s neck, causing blood to spew from the animal. The Lamb frantically BAAS. It dies. The red-hooded Woman thrusts the sword aloft. She gives it over to the Prophet.

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 red-hooded Woman sneaks behind the tree and disappears.

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 part, an orgy. I’ve got my eyes on a young one. Oh, wait, two last clues? 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 and heroin. The mushrooms are transporting the drugs in their flesh. Wonder where they got the mycelia to make the mushrooms? Wonder where they make their product? A drug dealer wearing a little red hood who just went hiding. Who could she be? Clues, clues, clues.

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 town. I’ll never talk.

ARTEMIS
I'll keep her with me from now on. I have a job to do.

VIRGIL
She's in danger.

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.)
Don't eat the mushrooms. As you can see, this body is gifted. Ouh-la-la

Artemis and Virgil begin to hike down the hill.

VIRGIL
How will you manage this mess?

ARTEMIS
Kill the head, the snake dies.

VIRGIL
That's a big snake.

Virgil stops. The Spirit Warrior grunts.

VIRGIL
I've never felt more powerless. My bones feel old.

Artemis taps Virgil on the shoulder.

ARTEMIS
Hang tough. I need you. I've met the snakes that created that monster. But a nastier snake lurks down there.

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 been disappearing.

SATAN (O.S.)
Ah, Virgil's sad. Maybe you should take little Laina from here? Or, well, you saw her future.

INT. ARTEMIS'S HOTEL ROOM - DAY

Artemis rushes inside. Laina's in bed sleeping. Artemis checks on her. Laina awakens. Artemis hugs Laina.

INT. MYCELIA LABORATORY, HOSPITAL - DAY

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

ARTEMIS
Edible mushrooms?

DR. DEMETRIUS
It's the crop that helps sustain the hospital. I donate the proceeds to help staff or families in need.

ARTEMIS
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 secrecy.

ARTEMIS
What else are you creating?

Dr. Demetrius' curious what Artemis really asked.

DR. DEMETRIUS
The mycelia are a natural structure for creating organs. I'm serious. Think of the outcomes if I can harness Mother Nature with AI?

ARTEMIS
Organs?

DR. DEMETRIUS
I’m close. The mycelia injected with the recipient's own DNA. 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 all part of the process.

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

ARTEMIS
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
She made a discovery, let’s say.

Dr. Demetrius sits. He slumps.

ARTEMIS
Mephisto?

DR. DEMETRIUS
She works with my brother. She is evil. Am I going to jail?

ARTEMIS
I've a meeting. I’ll try to get you out of this mess.

DR. DEMETRIUS
I don’t understand?

ARTEMIS
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 needs 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 chafing in a few intimate spots.

ARTEMIS
Where’s this going?

SATAN
Oh now, you’re my divine warrior. I'm teaching you hate. I accepted the challenge. Hate me?

ARTEMIS
Stop talking in riddles.

SATAN
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. Silly girl.

ARTEMIS
I did.

SATAN
Laina will be safe. The hotel staff are on the case, for now. Just make sure she avoids Mephisto.

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
Prude. Greed will work if he cooperates with Big Pharma's Red Riding Hood, otherwise, he'll disappear into the forest. His research lost forever. Pity.

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
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. Now, run along. The forest awaits. This part excites me. Want to see my excitement?

Satan flaps his robe. Artemis leaves.

EXT. DENSE FOREST - DAY

Artemis hikes. She finds the satanic ritual site. She jogs 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 you.

ARTEMIS
How?

LILITH
Satan hates you. He's obsessed with you. He wants your soul.

ARTEMIS
What happened?

LILITH
Satan has our blood oath. The girls are innocents. We help them feel safe before they are taken.

ARTEMIS
Satan blocks even them?

LILITH
They go on, eventually, he delays them for his sick reasons.

Artemis scans behind Lilith at the Women and Girls.

ARTEMIS
Where are your bodies?

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

ARTEMIS
Dr. Demetrius?

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

ARTEMIS
The reason Satan blocked me from the compost pile. Satan's just toying with me.

The Women and Girls begin to SCREAM. Satan emerges.

SATAN
Oh, did we get answers to clues?

Satan waves his hands. He engulfs the Women back into darkness. The Girls scramble to hide behind the rocks.

ARTEMIS
No mercy? Let them go, you tricked them with opioids. They didn't know what they agreed to. Bastard.

SATAN
A contract is a contract. I enjoy them being tortured souls.

ARTEMIS
Dr. Demetrius is in on all of this?

SATAN
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 toward Heaven.

ARTEMIS
Mephisto? She sold her soul?

SATAN
Not just her. Oh no, all of big pharma. They enjoy all the deadly sins, until, well, they die. And I collect on our contract.

ARTEMIS
I won't make any deals with you, and I won't lower myself to hate. I have free will.

SATAN
Well, challenge accepted. Now take 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 toward the hospital. An SUV thunders past them. The Prophet gets out. He sees Artemis and Laina.

THE PROPHET
Woman - wear a mask.

Artemis nudges Laina behind her legs.

ARTEMIS
Screw you.

THE PROPHET
I am lord over all that I see. You are an abomination. Women do what they are told.

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

Artemis opens her jacket, revealing 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
He's mean.

ARTEMIS
Sorry?

LAINA
He'll kill me. I seen him kill.

Artemis kneels. She hugs Laina.

ARTEMIS
I'll protect you.

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

ARTEMIS
Your father agrees. I wish you had met him.

LAINA
I hear him in my dreams. He whispers to me, says he's sorry. But he's in a dark place.

ARTEMIS
Let's 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.

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. Nobody came. Nobody cared.

Dr. Demetrius kneels and clutches a fistful of soil.

DR. DEMETRIUS
I thought how horrible it was that nobody cared. 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.

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

SPIRIT WOMAN ONE
Our families shunned us. Satan has our souls in his possession.

Artemis acknowledges them.

DR. DEMETRIUS
It was madness. I dug a deep hole. They thought I was composting of garbage. The hospital management thinks I'm nuts. But I make them money. That's all they want me to do. Make lots of money.

ARTEMIS
But it wasn't garbage.

DR. DEMETRIUS
No. I had sewed 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 and glances back 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
This 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
Mephisto. She lurks behind everything at the hospital.

ARTEMIS
Red Riding Hood.

DR. DEMETRIUS
Sorry?

ARTEMIS
I believe you. Big Pharma has long tentacles into healthcare.

DR. DEMETRIUS
Mephisto's blackmailing me. Not my brother, he's not smart.

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

ARTEMIS
We need hike into the forest.

DR. DEMETRIUS
Am I going to prison?

ARTEMIS
We'll need your expertise to deal with a problem your brother created - thanks to Mephisto.

The Spirit Women vanish. Satan appears only to Artemis.

SATAN
(to Artemis)
Divine warrior, 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 at the Tree of Death.

AMANITA
Will you keep the cult away?

SATAN
Yes. Dr. Demetrius will see a logistically brilliant method to spread mushrooms laced with fentanyl. Mother Nature's internet beneath your feet. The good doctor will be heartbroken.

ARTEMIS
And Mephisto?

SATAN
Good thinking. Okay, I'll block her. I'll send her shopping for overpriced hand bags.

ARTEMIS
Is she under contract?

SATAN
Oh? Another interesting question.

Satan vanishes.

EXT. TREE OF DEATH SITE - DAY

Artemis and Virgil lead Dr. Demetrius to 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.

Dr. Demetrius steps around the tree and inspects the trunk.

DR. DEMETRIUS
This is a death harvest.

Dr. Demetrius kneels and presses his hands on the ground near the tree trunk. 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. 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. 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 entheogen for centuries.

VIRGIL
Sorry?

DR. DEMETRIUS
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. May I introduce, Amanita phalloides - eat her, you’ll die a horrible death.

VIRGIL
It 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
Mephisto. It's the only logical answer. Her greed has no end. You said the earth came alive?

Virgil glances over at Artemis. She nods.

VIRGIL
Killed a poor lamb, tore its body apart, spread it out. This thing came out of the ground, ate everything in sight.

ARTEMIS
Mephisto killed the lamb. 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 mycelium can now sense the flesh, it has a regular feeding, I suspect.

VIRGIL
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 doing what young bodies like to do.

ARTEMIS
Orgy. But what you are asking, mushrooms started popping up. I think they harvested them.

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 forest's internet. All these trees talk to each other. They'll try to protect the young trees from this mycelia poisoning them.

ARTEMIS
I’ll deal with your brother. I have too.

DR. DEMETRIUS
Please do. But we have a much bigger problem than my idiot brother or Mephisto. I cannot eradicate her. Cut off a limb, the mycelia grow another. She’s a perfect learning machine growing limbs in every direction, underground, almost invisible.

VIRGIL
That ain’t good.

DR. DEMETRIUS
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 the mushrooms my mycelia produce aren't. 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. Either way, it's bad.

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 and accidentally overdose?
(MORE)

DR. DEMETRIUS (CONT'D)
Animals and humans will disappear, the mycelia will devour them.

VIRGIL
I got a bad feeling.

DR. DEMETRIUS
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 doesn't 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.

EXT. MOST HIGH CEMETERY - NIGHT

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

ARTEMIS
Satisfied?

SATAN
Mass suffering is my passion. Humans create their own problems. I spark the fire, you humans spread the flame. Simple.

ARTEMIS
What do you really want?

SATAN
Oh, stop it. I want you to hate.

Satan faux wipes his eyes. He winks at Artemis.

ARTEMIS
I'll kill them all, somehow. Are you going to stop me?

SATAN
Stop you? No way. I orgasm watching you kill. Yummy. I ask you to do it with hate in your heart-a simple request from a simple supernatural creature. Hate me? Please.

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. Mephisto will turn him in and take credit.

ARTEMIS
Why would Wylie do that?

SATAN
Greed. Your hospital client's 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. So does Mephisto. It's my job. Dr. Demetrius is Wylie's call.

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 forever.

SATAN
I'm timeless, but even dead, you experience soul-crushing time. (to Artemis) We will make a deal. Very soon...

ARTEMIS
No way. 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, needs you. You need to protect Laina. But right now, we lack obstacles and motivations for you to advance our deal making.

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 flesh out incentives for you. Humans operate on incentives. 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 waving over at Artemis. 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 hugs Laina gently. He nods.

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

INT. MYCELIA LABORATORY - DAY

Wylie, Artemis, and 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 become of my research, my precious mycelia? (to Artemis) You told him about the forest?

WYLIE
Let's not worry about that thing in the forest, just yet. Why don't you tell me about this lab?

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 learned from television?

WYLIE
No. We don't arrest people.

ARTEMIS
We clean up messes.

WYLIE
(to Dr. Demetrius)
We have powerful organizations that sanction our 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 mycelia down to their genetic structure. 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 it with AI's help. The mycelia learn at an alarming speed. It scares me now.

ARTEMIS
Tell Wylie where the soil comes from... so we can all hear it from you. That you buried those women in the compost pile-what happened next?

DR. DEMETRIUS
I had a breakthrough, by accident. The soil seems to provide a magical mixture that the mycelia thrive in, a supercharged genetic outcome.

WYLIE
Soil comes from that compost pile?

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, mushroom suit, a eco-friendly way to share our bodies with nature. Those trees have found the bodies. The women are nourishing the trees as they decompose.

WYLIE
Do the families know?

DR. DEMETRIUS
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. Who is this pharma rep?

Dr. Demetrius backs up. He crosses his arms.

DR. DEMETRIUS
My family name is trashed... The pharma rep is named Mephisto. She found out about the compost pile. Blackmailed me, I had to give my brother the mycelia. She's the brains behind everything, he's the muscle. I'm sorry.

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

ARTEMIS
What are you thinking?

WYLIE
Dr. Demetrius, Artemis will 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. Mephisto?

ARTEMIS
Mephisto has become my new primary target.

WYLIE
(to Dr. Demetrius)
Do something respectful near the compost pile-a monument with names, something that remembers those women.

DR. DEMETRIUS
Happy to do so. Can I continue with my research?

WYLIE
I'll spend extra time in purgatory for this. Yes. I have one comment for you to remember before I leave. You don't want meet me again.

ARTEMIS
What do we do about that monster? That thing, it's beyond my capabilities.

Dr. Demetrius replaces the tray. He ponders.

DR. DEMETRIUS
I have an idea. Some how, I'll end her suffering. My hope is that I don't kill the mother tree, too.

WYLIE
You make that happen, I'll guarantee your research gets a huge investment.

EXT. COMPOST PILE, HOSPITAL - DAY

Wylie's holding Laina's hand as they walk. Artemis has her other hand.

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 my family now.

WYLIE
I have no idea. Do your job.

INT. LOCAL HAMBURGER JOINT - DAY

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

ARTEMIS
What'd you like?

Artemis inspects the menu. Laina shrugs.

ARTEMIS
Do you like strawberry milkshakes?

LAINA
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 many 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. Artemis loses her grip, slips, and collapses onto the tile. Laina SCREAMS. Mephisto appears. She kneels to whisper at Artemis.

MEPHISTO
(to Artemis)
We'll get you to the hospital. Don't worry, I'll take care of Laina.

Mephisto grabs Laina's hand. They walk away.

INT. SATAN'S MYCELIA PURGATORY - DAY

Artemis opens her eyes. Satan stands near a tubular opening wearing a coal miner's 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
Sweetie, fentanyl in tiny amounts can be deadly. Good news, you're barely alive. Know where you are?

ARTEMIN
No.

SATAN
The genetic structure of Dr. Demetrius’ mycelia. We are inside the monster in the forest. Yay!

ARTEMIS
What do you want from me?

SATAN
Do you like my outfit? I’m mining for souls. Get it? Mining helmet?

Satan prances forward. He taps Artemis’s cheek.

SATAN
And, right now, Dr. Demetrius is trying to save your life. Maybe you’ll live? Or maybe you’ll leave Laina to Mephisto?

ARTEMIS
No.

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. You're in the supernatural world.

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

SATAN
Motion sickness?

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.

ARTEMIS
Don't hurt Laina.

SATAN
Oh, the pity, not my call.

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
Wait. I want to share what else happens here inside the mycelia monster. 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 suffering.

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. Two dead women are being digested. Their dead eyes gaze at Artemis.

SATAN
I call them the double payload.

ARTEMIS
What?

SATAN
They were fentanyl addicts. Their bodies share the drug residue. Their human tissue feeds the mycelia. Bang, bang...

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

SATAN
The mycelia act a lot like your the purgation circulatory system. But it's a dark labyrinth these doomed souls can never escape.

Satan pulls at Artemis' spiritual body.

SATAN
You're at the brink of death. I'll not let you die, I can't do that, bad form.

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 the seven deadly sins game.

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

SATAN
Give me your best answer?

ARTEMIS
Envy.

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

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

ARTEMIS
Greed.

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, 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. Oh, a powerless woman. She worshipped me, this is her reward.

ARTEMIS
That’s not who I am.

SATAN
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 looks up, beaming at Artemis.

SATAN
Impressive, my dear. He’s in for a big surprise. He thought he could fool you-know-who. Oops!

Satan holds Artemis aloft like a balloon. He releases the rope. Artemis rises into a bright light.

SATAN
Oh, you survived. Hey, I’ll visit you in the hospital. We can begin our deal-making.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

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

DR. DEMETRIUS
Enjoy your trip? I almost lost you.

ARTEMIS
Where’s Laina?

Dr. Demetrius 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.

ARTEMIS
They have the little girl. They’ll sacrifice her. Mephisto has her.

Dr. Demetrius stops. He considers Artemis’ words.

DR. DEMETRIUS
This madness has to end. I figured out how to euthanize my beautiful mycelia. I'm prepared. With my families names at stake, I have no choice.

ARTEMIS
We need to hurry.

DR. DEMETRIUS
Fine. I'll go with you. We can do this together. It ends tonight.

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. You know where I want to meet?

ARTEMIS
The cemetery.

SATAN
Get those pointy knives. And bring the good doctor. 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.

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 evening's service.
(MORE)

SATAN (CONT'D)
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 was that...

SATAN
(faux german accent)
Herr doktur, I have a question, 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. In terrible condition. 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, if that's your point.

SATAN
And you got him addicted. Your brother gave him supercharged mushrooms. A twin killing. Get it? You're a twin, sense of humor, not even a smirk? Pity.

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 sufferings, my jam, do 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
And this tuxedo is brand new. But you and your other healthcare peeps made a lot of money off these poor souls. Tell me the truth.

DR. DEMETRIUS
It’s the hospitals, they are not, not-for-profits. Businesspeople and politicians making healthcare decisions, not physicians.

ARTEMIS
Where is she?

SATAN
Oh Artemis. I am so proud of you.

ARTEMIS
What do you want?

SATAN
I lured you into the dark arts. And I succeeded beyond my wildest dreams. And yet, I don’t dream? I'm in nightmares, which can be fun.

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

DR. DEMETRIUS
What are you?

SATAN
Oh, you don't know?

ARTEMIS
Focus.

SATAN
Ah, you’re so disciplined - divine warrior. 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)
While I have the doctor in timeout, let's go back in time. I'll show you why I hate you.

Satan grabs Artemis and flies her into the darkness.

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

Satan and Artemis float above, gazing down into the past. Below, Artemis' mother, Mrs. Lamb, holds Baby Artemis. Mr. Lamb reads from a book. His voice and words are indecipherable.

Satan and the Divine Being appear. Satan sets the book on fire. The Divine Being kisses Baby Artemis on the forehead.

DIVINE BEING
Teach her to never have hate in her heart... From this moment, I cannot interfere.

EXT. MOST HIGH CEMETERY - NIGHT

Satan and Artemis return. Satan transforms back into the man in the tuxedo.

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

ARTEMIS
So what?

SATAN
Well, my sister forbade me to kill you. I CANNOT KILL YOU! I decide who lives and dies! She challenged me. I intend to win this challenge.

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

ARTEMIS
You killed my parents.

SATAN
I enjoyed it. I can kill anyone or anything that you love.

Artemis stands quietly. She contemplates.

ARTEMIS
I cannot outwit 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
If you make a deal?

ARTEMIS
What do you want?

SATAN
Simple. Kill with hate in your heart. 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 spirits. Is that all you want?

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

ARTEMIS
If that is all I can expect.

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

DR. DEMETRIUS
Please don’t kill me, I mean us.

SATAN
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, she becomes mycelia food.

INT. VIRGIL’S GROCERY - DAY

Virgil's curious about Dr. Demetrius, who carries a heavy backpack. He glares at Artemis.

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
No. You need to go out to the forest. Not me. It's dark outside.

DR. DEMETRIUS
It’s for a child. I come to kill the monster I created.

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
Ai made the mycelia a pill. A poison pill. I took the genetic code, duplicated it, and formed an 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 bacterium. A bacterium that I reverse-engineered to seek out and kill my mycelia's genetic code structure.

ARTEMIS
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 take its pill?

DR. DEMETRIUS
I don't know.

EXT. DENSE FOREST - DAY

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

DR. DEMETRIUS
What am I 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 ain't the time for science.

DR. DEMETRIUS
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. Those knives strapped to you-these are your trade craft?

ARTEMIS
My preferred tools.

VIRGIL
Tools? 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.

VIRGIL
I don't want to know what that is.

DR. DEMETRIUS
I wish I didn't know what it is.

EXT. DENSE FOREST - DAY

Artemis walks up to Satan. Satan stands near a willow tree. Benjamin's tethered above him.

ARTEMIS
We have a deal?

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

ARTEMIS
What does that even mean?

SATAN
I cannot 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. Bite me.

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

EXT. DENSE 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 by tiki torches. Women dance. The Prophet wears a goat mask. He prances near a giant bonfire. A table. A Kris sword. The red-hooded Mephisto holds a rope that's around Laina's neck.

VIRGIL
I see five men. They have shotguns. The women - they're all drugged up, look at them. Sad.

DR. DEMETRIUS
My brother has shamed my family.

VIRGIL
Artemis, what's your plan?

ARTEMIS
My prime one is Laina. Dr. Demetrius, Mephisto's in the red hood, she's my other target.

Dr. Demetrius ignores Artemis. He stares down.

DR. DEMETRIUS
A life. A fragile life. I must protect that child from her. I trust my science. Yes. My science is for good. Save that child from Big Pharma that is my destiny.

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'd 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 hers. But you're the one person that can save her. Now 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 I can at least get Laina out of this, will you 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 downward toward the satanic site where Dr. Demetrius has emerged.

EXT. TREE OF DEATH SITE - NIGHT

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

DR. DEMETRIUS
I love you, brother. Get help.

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
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. But 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 insignificant.

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

THE PROPHET
Brother, will you sacrifice the virgin? For me? For Satan? We will share her flesh with the mother mycelia.

DR. DEMETRIUS
I, I...

Dr. Demetrius freezes.

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

Mephisto drags Laina forward. Laina struggles. The Prophet holds Laina down on the table. The Prophet also holds the pill like a football. Dr. Demetrius looks up at the moon.

MEPHISTO
Welcome, Dr. Demetrius. Big Pharma has a master we must worship.

DR. DEMETRIUS
It's not midnight yet, right?

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

THE PROPHET
We must wait, we must do as Satan commands. These offerings must be cared for...

MEPHISTO
Take the virgin, I'll manage this offering from Dr. Demetrius.

The Prophet grabs the rope connected to Laina. He keeps her on the table. Dr. Demetrius looks at Laina. He grips the sword tightly. Mephisto examines the poison pill.

MEPHISTO
What's with this ball? You wouldn't trick us, would you?

DR. DEMETRIUS
Thank you, brother. I accept this honor. What? It's not a ball.

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-five.

THE PROPHET
The blood of this virgin will feed our mycelia queen. She will feast on my brother's offering.

MEPHISTO
I'm not so sure. Maybe sacrifice the virgin, if Dr. Demetrius dares to honor us?

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, the Prophet, and Mephisto. He grips a double-barrel pump-action shotgun. He scans his area. Artemis steps back into the darkness. The fifth guard curious about the other guards' whereabouts.

DR. DEMETRIUS
I'll never harm this child. Never!

MEPHISTO
Liar!

THE PROPHET
Satan commands it! Give me the sword.

Artemis shifts around, searching for Virgil. Nowhere to be seen. But the Spirit Warrior rushes in between the brothers and Mephisto-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!

MEPHISTO
Kill your brother, Satan commands it!

Artemis scampers over behind the Guards Three and Four. They are facing inward, watching the argument. Artemis grips two knives backward. 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.

MEPHISTO
The witch! Kill 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 Spirit Warrior tries to protect Laina. The White Stag pushes the Prophet back. But the Prophet presses Laina down onto the table. Laina kicks at The Prophet. Artemis runs toward the table. Mephisto takes the opportunity to hide behind the tree with the poison pill.

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 lines the barrel up 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 torchlight.

VIRGIL
Drop it now!

The Guard Five wheels around. He points the barrel at Virgil. They fire. Virgil gets a belly shot. He slams backward into a tree trunk. But Guard Five wobbles but keeps his feet. Artemis grabs a ten-inch knife. She flings it at the guard. It hits him in the throat. He flops backward and 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 Men and 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 toward 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 reaches for a knife, pulls out the Kaiken dagger (Benjamin's gift). 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 in 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 leaps 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. 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. She squares her body with the Prophet. With both hands, she plunges the dagger into the Prophet's chest, shoving it close to the Prophet’s neck. She pulls the dagger back.

ARTEMIS
Too 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 Prophet's 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! 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. His body flops next to Dr. Demetrius in a death embrace. Artemis secures her dagger. The ground under the brothers begins to shake. Artemis looks back to find Virgil and Laina. She runs toward them.

EXT. TREE OF DEATH SITE - NIGHT

Virgil slumps against a tree trunk. Bleeding. Artemis examines Virgil's wounds. Laina holds his hand. The earth under the tree rumbles.

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. But from behind them, Mephisto appears. She's holding the poison pill and a handgun. She points the gun at Artemis.

MEPHISTO
Thanks for the handy work. Now, I control everything. And Dr. Demetrius' ball? I think not.

A mycelia tentacle slithers up searching for food-Mephisto's about to fire the weapon. But Laina rushes into her. Startling Mephisto. Artemis leaps at her, grabbing the gun from Mephisto. The mycelia monster's tentacles whip around Mephisto's legs, dragging her into the monster. Artemis reaches to pull Laina back. Laina wiggles free from Artemis' grasp, she kicks the poison pill at Mephisto.

LAINA
You forgot your ball!

The Mycelia Monster absorbs Dr. Demetrius, The Prophet, Mephisto, and the poison 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. The mycelia monster disappears into the ground.

Artemis grabs Laina. She patrols in front of Virgil. Virgil coughs up blood. Artemis kneels to hug Virgil.

ARTEMIS
Without you, I’d have failed.

Virgil gasps his last. He 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 toward Benjamin's Spirit, defiantly. 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.

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, don't 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. He's dead. 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 the Divine Being emerges from darkness. It floats over next to Laina. 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 spirits', it was not specific to me.

SATAN
See, sister, I'm always in control. But I can be friendly. Here's the deal. I'll free Benny, or I'll release the women and girls hiding in the forest. Pick.

ARTEMIS
No. No...

DIVINE BEING
(to Satan)
You must abide by this promise. Or, our brothers will appear, careful.

SATAN
Geez, sister, you're a buzzkill. 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 have accomplished my goal. Thank you. I win.

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

DIVINE BEING
Satan?

SATAN
Well then, why not? They are all released. Come along, Benny. Oh wait, I sense Mephisto's on her way.

MEPHISTO'S SPIRIT appears. She looks stunned.

SATAN
Mephisto? I had big plans for you. Oh well, I have one thing to say. Go to hell.

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

DIVINE BEING
(to Laina)
Come along with me. We need to visit with Virgil.

LAINA
Virgil died.

The Divine Being strolls with Laina over to Virgil's body. Artemis steps behind them. VIRGIL'S SPIRIT emerges.

DIVINE 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. But then a Spirit Girl separates from the group. Laina tries to hide behind Artemis's legs-Laina's crying. The Spirit Girl tries to hug Laina, but she passes through Laina. Laina understands. She smiles.

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

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

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

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

DIVINE BEING
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.

DIVINE BEING
Failed? You outwitted Satan. His pride allowed you to save the many. I tricked him. You have free will to choose to defend those who need help, not to allow hate to guide your actions. I hope you choose love over hate, but it's your human decision. Choose wisely.

Divine Being strolls over near the Tree of Death. The Divine Being prays. She returns. DR. DEMETRIUS' SPIRIT emerges. The Divine Being waves for him to follow the group. He smiles.

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 Divine 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. A harsh storm that gives way to a gentle cleansing rain. The forest comes 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 by Laina drawing with pencil on 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.

FADE OUT.