

FADE IN:

INT. A DUSTY DISUSED CHAPEL - NIGHT

The back of THE SISTER's (woman, 50+, sturdy) head is shrouded in a food-service type cap. She is leaning over something unseen, movement of other people in her periphery. Moonbeams spill from an open doorway, the only light in the space.

She leans back, closing the eyes of the man lying on the stone floor as she does. He is dead, but he didn't die where he lays.

She takes a moment to look steadily at her three companions in turn. Each is dressed in a blue cotton jumpsuit, surgical gloves, shoes covered with cotton booties, and a food-service cap - exactly like THE SISTER.

A moment of stillness. Almost reverent.

THE SISTER gives a nearly imperceptible nod and the foursome gets to work. Their movements are precise and practiced.

THE STRIPPER (woman, early 20s, voluptuous) reaches into the front pocket of the man's jeans and pulls out an expensive cell phone. She turns it off before removing the SIM card. She pulls a lighter out of her pocket and melts the small piece of plastic. She returns the phone and the melted lump of card to his pocket.

Meanwhile, THE DA (woman, 30s, slight) pulls up his shirt sleeves looking at his wrists. The first is bare, but the second wrist is wrapped in a smartwatch. She removes it and promptly crushes it under her heel. Satisfied that it is no longer functional, she returns it to his wrist.

THE MORTICIAN (woman, early 30s, beautiful) turns away from the body to retrieve a plastic shopping bag from the shadows. She pulls a bundle of dirt-colored fabric from the bag and looks to THE SISTER who nods her approval reaching for the cloth. THE MORTICIAN pulls the paper receipt from the bag and hands it to THE STRIPPER, where it promptly becomes ash. The shopping bag is next. Leaving a smelly lump of plastic that is tucked into the dead man's pocket with the phone.

Satisfied, THE SISTER flicks her wrists, and the fabric snaps before fluttering down over the body. Again, with practiced precision, the four women have the man shrouded in moments, three large, looping knots strategically tied around his body.

Another nod from THE SISTER, and the three younger women each slip a hand under one of the knots, lifting the body from the floor. While it is clear the weight is a strain, they do not fumble.

THE SISTER pulls the straps of a large bag over her shoulder as she stands, turns on her heel, and exits through the open doorway, her silhouette silver in the moonlight.

EXT. GRAVEYARD - NIGHT

Using the abundant moonlight THE SISTER leads the way through the stone tombstones, stopping once they reach a plot covered with a green tarp and sets down her bag. The three women wait patiently, sweat beading on their brows, as THE SISTER peels back the tarp to reveal a freshly dug grave beneath. She reaches into the bag and pulls out a length of grass green hose. She affixes it to a nearby irrigation spigot, twists the handle. She's careful to keep the stream of water that begins to flow aimed into the empty grave.

She watches intently as the fresh dirt below turns to a thick muck. Satisfied with the consistency, she moves aside, allowing the others to take her place at the edge.

As one, the women slide their hands free from the fabric knots and allow the shrouded body to drop into the void. Barely a breath as they watch him sink into the mud. Behind them, THE SISTER unties a second tarp, this one covering the mound of excavated dirt. She takes a handful and steps back into place next to the grave.

Each woman turns and takes her own handful. One by one, they toss it atop the body below, taking a moment for personal reflection. THE SISTER goes last her lips moving in silent prayer.

Breaking the stillness, she uses a shovel to add a few more scoops of soil, masking the mud they just created. THE MORTICIAN watches fascinated while the other two women recover the mound, fastening the tarp back into place.

THE SISTER returns the shovel, careful to place it back exactly as she found it. The other three women busy themselves with collecting the hose and fastening the second tarp back over the gapping hole.

Finished with their tasks, the women nod to each other as they turn back the way they came. Each one gets lost in the darkness as they slip silently into the night. Last to leave the site, THE DA scans the grass around the grave for any signs of their presence. There aren't any.

INT. LOCKER ROOM - NIGHT

The four women are congregated in a boy's locker room, urinals lining the back wall. The lockers are a drab brown color and the cinderblock walls are a dirty-looking white. It is old and has definitely seen better days, however, the scattering of posters on the wall are modern and new.

Already dressed in baggy sweatpants and a tank top, THE STRIPPER is stuffing the caps, gloves, and booties in a brown paper bag. She is taking care to move quietly as any sound made echoes in the acoustics of the bathroom.

In a camisole and pencil skirt, THE DA stands in front of an open locker. She removes a single sheet of paper, folded in half, from her briefcase, handing it to THE STRIPPER.

THE STRIPPER pauses in her collection of gloves to scan the writing on the sheet. She nods before handing it to THE MORTICIAN who is pulling a simple t-shirt dress over her head.

THE MORTICIAN reads the sheet nodding as she goes. Her face isn't as solemn as the other three women, but it's a subtle glow. Blink and you've missed it.

She hands the sheet to THE SISTER before stepping into her Birkenstock sandals and gathering the four jumpsuits from the bench.

THE SISTER stops buttoning her crisp white shirt long enough to read the sheet. Behind her, THE MORTICIAN is hanging the jumpsuits on hooks inside the janitor's closet. THE SISTER nods her own agreement, refolds the paper, and slips the sheet into the pocket of her black skirt.

EXT. THE YARD - NIGHT

THE SISTER's hand holds open an industrial-looking door as the other three women pass through the opening, blinking as they leave the warm glow of the building for the cool darkness of night.

All clear, the hand carefully closes the door to keep it from clanging into the quiet stillness. The exterior of the door does not have a handle - clearly not meant for ingress.

EXT. THE YARD - NIGHT

The three women scurry quietly across the expanse of grass, feeling exposed in the open space, headed for the row of trees on the other side.

EXT. WOODS - NIGHT

Safely ensconced in the trees, the three women pause a moment to listen - making sure that all is clear. THE STRIPPER nods first, feeling safe to continue, she heads off into the blackness between the trees. THE DA and THE MORTICIAN wait a moment more, on high alert, before heading off in their own directions.

EXT. 24-HOUR COFFEE SHOP PARKING LOT - NIGHT

A compact, economy car - new and spotless - pulls into the parking lot. The fluorescent lights of the chain coffee shop glare off the windshield.

Parked, the driver's side door opens and THE MORTICIAN slides out. Carrying a large brightly-colored purse, she heads into the shop.

A dark nondescript sedan slowly rolls up the street - coming from the same direction as THE MORTICIAN - it pulls into the empty lot across from the coffee shop and parks. No one gets out of the car.

EXT. STRIP CLUB PARKING LOT - NIGHT

An electric car pulls into the parking lot of a seedy strip club continuing around to the back of the building. Bass is thumping from the club and the customer lot is full of cars, a handful of men are gathered near the entrance under a cloud of smoke.

INT. THE STRIPPER'S CAR - NIGHT

THE STRIPPER puts her car in park and pushes a bulging brown paper bag into the floorboard to reveal the noise-canceling headphones beneath. The thumping base immediately stops as she slides them over her ears, replaced by blissful silence.

She closes her eyes, the pink glow of the neon sign highlights her face as she relaxes into the headrest. A few deep breaths are all she gets before the alarm on her phone goes off, vibrating in her lap. With a sigh she turns off the "WORK" alarm and grabs her backpack from the backseat.

The music teases the edges of the silence when she opens the car door.

EXT. 24-HOUR COFFEE SHOP PARKING LOT - NIGHT

THE MORTICIAN exits the building paper coffee cup in one hand and a small pastry bag in the other. She smiles broadly after her first sip of coffee, bubbling with excitement.

She hops into her car, tosses her pastry bag and purse on the passenger seat before pulling out of the parking lot and carrying on down the street.

Just as she turns the corner, the sedan pulls out and follows.

EXT. PARKING DECK - NIGHT

A luxury SUV pulls into a reserved parking spot in a parking deck attached to a modern high rise apartment building.

INT. THE DA'S SUV - NIGHT

Her movements measured and precise, THE DA puts her vehicle in park and removes the keys from the ignition. Unbuckling, she gathers her briefcase from the seat next to her and her silver travel coffee mug - long empty - from the cup holder.

EXT. PARKING DECK - NIGHT

THE DA steps out of the SUV, shifting the briefcase and coffee mug to her right hand, and her self-defense key chain to her left.

She scans the empty deck before making her way to the elevator. She stays alert to her surroundings, constantly scanning between cars and under trucks and SUVs. Her movements are not timid - more like a soldier watching for the enemy. Always on alert.

She pushes the button for the elevator and angles herself so that her back is to the wall - not the empty space of the parking deck nor the soon-to-open doors of the elevator.

With a ding the doors slide open and she steps inside, not relaxing until the doors start to slide shut.

INT. THE DA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Gray, glass, and shining white marble fill the space. One wall is made entirely of windows, looking out at the city skyline 20+ stories up. The rest of the walls are concrete - the floor and ceiling too.

The door handle jingles, and THE DA enters. After deadbolting the door behind her. She removes her black heels, a pair of red bottoms before they are neatly placed under the entry table.

Barefoot, she places the handful of mail in the designated holder, before depositing her briefcase in an empty barstool. She continues on to the sink, washes her mug, and sets it neatly in the in-sink dish rack.

Next, she pulls out a wine glass and adds a generous pour from the half-full wine bottle on the countertop. She leans against the island, taking a moment to savor her first sip.

EXT. FRONT PORCH - NIGHT

THE MORTICIAN bounds up the wooden steps of her front porch, purse slung over her shoulder, nearly empty coffee cup and jangling keys in one hand, and the still full pastry bag in the other. She stops and transfers the pastry bag to her teeth so she can pick up a small package sitting on the welcome mat.

She opens the front door and steps inside, flipping on a light as she does.

The sedan slowly rolls by, stopping a few houses down to parallel park among the other cars on the street. The lights and ignition shut off, but no one gets out of the car.

INT. THE MORTICIAN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Inside, the walls are painted a cheerful goldenrod, but not much of the paint can be seen due to all of the art and photographs hanging on the walls. The space is stuffed with furniture, and there are plush rugs nearly overlapping and taking up most every inch of the hardwood floors.

She isn't a hoarder. Not quite. But the space could make a visitor feel claustrophobic. She slings her purse on an empty rung of a coat rack, next to a white lab coat with "St. James Funeral Home" embroidered above the right breast pocket.

Her attention mainly focused on the package, she kicks the door closed behind her and heads down to the kitchen where she tosses the coffee cup in the sink and plops down at the vintage Formica table. Only her seat is empty, stacks of books, magazines, and boxes fill the other three chairs. The top of the table is littered with bags of chips, empty plastic storage containers and other debris.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

THE MORTICIAN is visible in the kitchen window. She takes a bite of her pastry and sets it down on a napkin before cutting the tape on the top of the box.

Through the windshield of the sedan, a hand is visible resting on the steering wheel. Headlights from a passing car briefly illuminate the woman within, she is intently watching THE MORTICIAN.

EXT. STRIP CLUB PARKING LOT - NIGHT

THE STRIPPER, still wearing her headphones, passes a burly bouncer who is at the back door having a smoke break. The bouncers lips move in greeting, the sound of his hello drowned out by the music and the headphones. She nods in reply anyway as she enters the back door, passing through his cloud of smoke.

INT. STRIP CLUB BACKROOM - NIGHT

She weaves through cases of beer, kegs, and boxes of liquor. The bass thumping is a little louder now - too much for the headphones to cancel. She passes through a curtained doorway into the chaos of the dressing room.

A few other dancers are scattered around in various states of getting ready, laughing and chatting amongst themselves. Another unheard greeting as one of the dancers acknowledges THE STRIPPER--she waves her fingers in reply as she tosses her bag down next to a vacant vanity.

She plops down in front of the mirror and begins pulling makeup out of her bag.

INT. DA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

THE DA who is now in comfier, neutral-colored lounge clothes. She has her laptop, a few files, and the wine glass set up on the bar. There is a bowl of baby carrots next to her, half-eaten. She finishes an email, double-checking one of the files before clicking send.

INT. THE MORTICIAN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Tape cut, THE MORTICIAN excitedly reaches into the box and pulls out several toy troll dolls with jewel colored eyes and tufts of brightly colored hair.

Pleased, she looks through the open doorway into an office space. Here the blinds are closed, but there is a lamp on the desk illuminating the mostly dark room. She smiles broadly as she gazes at the shelves behind the desk. The simple wooden shelves are lined with 20 or so troll dolls, similar to the ones in her hand. But something about the hair seems...off.

INT. STRIP CLUB - NIGHT

Dabbing glitter onto her eyelids, THE STRIPPER's face is contoured, highlighted, and powdered. As she leans into the mirror to sweep on some eyeliner, behind her, a YOUNG DANCER enters the dressing room from the front of the house. A couple of the other women surround her immediately, YOUNG DANCER has tear tracks in her foundation, her lip is bleeding, and her cheek is bruised.

THE STRIPPER doesn't notice the commotion in her attempt to perfect her eyeliner wings.

INT. DA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

THE DA exits her email application and switches to Twitter/Threads social media page where she types out: "3 AM by Matchbox 20 was such an overrated song. Why 1994?"

She finishes off the last of the wine looking very satisfied while clicking post.

INT. THE NAVE - NIGHT

Sensible rubber-soled shoes walk across a gleaming floor in a dimly lit room. They stop in front of a life-size statue surrounded by flickering candlelight. Natural-colored hose and the hem of a dark, below-the-knee skirt meet the gleaming floor as THE SISTER kneels.

Hands folded in prayer, she closes her eyes, murmuring softly. She crosses herself. Her fingers lightly skim over the simple golden cross hanging from her neck en route to her pocket where the folded sheet is hidden. From the depths of the black fabric, she pulls the paper. She rolls it into a funnel shape, dipping the coned tip into the nearest lit votive. She watches the paper burn for a moment and then uses it to light four candles with decisiveness.

The paper has almost burned itself to her hand by this point, ashes falling into the molten wax of the various votives below. She whispers another short prayer, face stern, and lights a fifth candle. Before the flame can burn her fingers, she drops the paper into the wax and watches as the remnants blacken and disappear.

The tentacles of smoke curl and weave upwards momentarily blurring the serene face of the statued woman. THE SISTER rises like the smoke, straightening her simple habit as she does. Her eyes shift to the massive cross behind the altar, she pauses, eyes locked on the face of the sculpted figure hanging there. She tilts her head slightly as if listening, an almost imperceptible nod, and then...

TITLE CARD