

STARRY NIGHTS
SHOOTING SCRIPT
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CUT TO:

1 EXT. CEMETERY - DAY

ONE CONTINUOUS SHOT: A whitewashed TOMB, covered in WREATHS and reflecting crisp WHITE paint, one raised grave among dozens in an overburdened cemetery. It is QUIET as we PULL AWAY, slowly, grazing over the tomb and swinging around to find the slowly encroaching sound of INDISTINCT MUSIC.

It's coming from PAULIE - early 20s, disheveled, stoner, gravedigger - who is using a crowbar to pry open a nearby dilapidated TOMB. He's alone, wearing faded BLUE COVERALLS and a pair of HEADPHONES, just another day at work. In the FOREGROUND, he fails to notice the top of the new tomb shift and open in the BACKGROUND. A child, a CHILD ZOMBIE, climbs out of the fresh tomb. He's ashen, not yet rotting, and more befuddled than dangerous. Paulie continues his work, oblivious, as the Child Zombie staggers away slowly, lost.

CUT TO BLACK

FADE IN/OUT TITLE

2 TITLE: STARRY NIGHTS

CUT TO:

3 EXT. CEMETERY OFFICES PARKING LOT - DAWN

The sun is barely over the horizon, just nicking the tops of GRAVESTONES. It's QUIET, just the FAINT HUM OF CICADAS and the occasional bird CHIRPING. In the parking lot, JACKIE - Latina, mid 30s, tough, leans butch - sits on the trunk of her CAR, drinking coffee out of a STYROFOAM CUP. She's dressed in BLUE COVERALLS, her name in script on a white patch, and a BANDANA tied loosely at her neck. She scrolls through her PHONE as she waits.

At first it's CLOSE UPS of news articles with terrifying headlines: HOW CLOSE ARE WE TO HERD IMMUNITY?; RISING DEATHS AS HEALTHCARE WORKERS TAKE THEIR OWN LIVES; WHAT YOU CAN DO TO STOP THE SPREAD, etc. etc.

Jackie closes her news app and pauses, looking around. The cemetery is deserted, almost peaceful. She opens social media - it's full of calls to action, memorials to loved ones, and nostalgia: "#tbt to when we could travel!" Jackie stops on SOPHIE's post. CLOSE UP: in a bar, dimly lit, a group of friends laugh. The photographer was part of the fun, the shot is blurry. Sophie - Haitian, mid 30s, leans femme - is

laughing, eyes closed, smile wide, and her hand rests on a YOUNG MAN's arm.

The RUMBLE OF A MACHO BEATER breaks the silence and Jackie quickly clicks off her phone. The beater pulls up behind Jackies' car and JUAN gets out. He's prematurely graying but has soft angel cheeks and he's wearing matching BLUE COVERALLS. He sees Jackie and about-faces, reaching back into his car for the BANDANA hanging off the rearview mirror.

Juan walks back toward Jackie, and they give each other a head nod in greeting. He sits on the hood of his car, facing her, and pulls out a PACK OF CIGARETTES, putting one in his mouth and offering the pack silently. Jackie hesitates.

JUAN

Doesn't count if you didn't buy 'em.

Jackie half smiles and leans over to take a cigarette.

JACKIE

Heard from Paulie?

JUAN

Latin time.

JACKIE

We're here.

Juan smiles and shrugs.

JUAN

Paulie's too young to give a shit.

They smoke in silence for a long beat, staring at the sun rising over the cemetery. Finally, Jackie stands and puts out her cigarette.

JACKIE

Ready?

JUAN

(sighing)

No.

Jackie nods, knowingly. Juan stands and they both pull their bandanas over their noses.

4 INT. CADAVER TENT: MAKESHIFT CEMETERY FIELD OFFICE - DAY

The meeting has already begun by the time Juan and Jackie

push into the TENT. The frazzled FUNERAL HOME DIRECTOR is speaking at a makeshift PODIUM, and Jackie and Juan move stealthily to take their seats in the FOLDING CHAIRS. An embalmer (BRENDA), a woman with a surgical mask and big hair, is questioning the Director.

 EMBALMER (BRENDA)
...inside, where it's not so hot.

 FH DIRECTOR
You know we can't have it inside,
there are too many of us, it violates
protocol.

 EMBALMER (BRENDA)
I wouldn't tell.

Jackie and Juan move to sit next to one another and the Director notices.

 FH DIRECTOR
 (emphatically)
Ten feet!

Jackie picks her CHAIR up and scoots further away from Juan. The other half dozen attendees are likewise isolated.

 FH DIRECTOR
 (annoyed)
As I was saying, the new mandate
doesn't account for the increased
volume, so you'll be eligible for
overtime pay.

Brenda pipes up again.

 EMBALMER
 (angrily)
Forget OT, what about PPE? This shit
isn't enough, Jerry.

The woman waggles her MASK.

 FH DIRECTOR
You have to keep your mask on Brenda,
we've talked about this.

Jackie and Juan exchange a glance.

 FH DIRECTOR
I have an order in for more masks and

gloves, but they are on backorder.

EMBALMER (BRENDA)

I can't keep dunking this in bleach,
it's going to disintegrate.

FH DIRECTOR

Look, a friend at the hospital has
promised to give me face shields for
the embalmers, so that's a start. But
we'll have to be judicious with the
gloves.

The two embalmers look at one another and nod.

FH DIRECTOR

It's just a start. More will come.

JACKIE

What about us? Are we getting masks or
face shields?

The Director looks uncomfortable.

FH DIRECTOR

Jackie, you know we have limited
resources. I have to triage here.

JACKIE

What does that mean?

FH DIRECTOR

It means that those most at risk get
the resources first. You, Juan, and
Paulie should have limited contact
with the new cadavers. The embalmers
are highest risk.

JACKIE

What about the old cadavers?

FH DIRECTOR

You're only moving their caskets,
Jackie, you're not touching the actual
body. That's not high risk.

EMBALMER (BRENDA)

I think it's wrong to exhume the dead.
We should leave them in peace.

FH DIRECTOR

(exasperated)

We are not exhuming them, we are simply cremating the oldest remains to better utilize our grounds. What other option do we have? There is no space left and this is a county order. For the safety of the living, we have to make some difficult decisions.

(beat)

There's another thing I'd like to talk to you about.

The Director looks around.

FH DIRECTOR

Where the hell is Paulie?

JUAN

Said he wasn't feeling well.

The Director visibly blanches and the embalmers look over sharply at Juan.

FH DIRECTOR

Has he been tested?

Juan looks uncomfortable.

JUAN

Uh... I think he's hungover, boss.

The tension dissipates and the Director looks both relieved and more annoyed.

FH DIRECTOR

Jesus Christ. At a time like this.

(beat)

Okay, well, Juan you can fill him in. Basically, the schedule is changing. You'll be doing ten tens now with five days off in between. Your shifts will be staggered so only one embalmer will be in the room at any given time and gravediggers will work separate areas of the cemetery.

EMBALMER (BRENDA)

Ten tens? Are you nuts?