

ACHLYS

Written by

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EXT - THE WOODS - DAYLIGHT

1

ANIKA (mid 20s) is running through The WOODS with the sun shining through the trees. Birds are chirping and the soft rumble of a nearby river can be heard. Her long green dress catching in the nearby trees. In her hair lies a delicate tiara resting against her curls. Contradictory to her surroundings of beauty, there is a dark, unknown evil chasing her through these woods. A large dark shadowy figure bumbles behind her, encasing her in a bubble of darkness contrasting her bright surroundings.

She continues to run across the woods, stumbling in her heels when she turns to look at the figure behind her. The shadow disappears when Anika looks directly into the camera and she stumbles again, this time crashing to her knees. She places her hands on the ground in front of her, watching the soil and dried leaves on the ground inch over her fingers and slowly cover over the backs of her hands.

Anika looks down, shaking the dirt off her hands in disgust and wipes them on the her dress while standing up. She places her hand on a nearby tree to steady herself when she feels her palm sink into the tree like quicksand.

SMASH CUT TO:

1A

TITLE CARD: "ACHLYS".

1A

2

EXT - THE WOODS - TWILIGHT - CONTINUOUS

2

She pulls her arm back in shock and watches the tree sap continue to pull like honey.

She looks up and sees all of the trees bare and the sky darkening with flashes of red.

Anika tries to pull her hand away from the tree but it continues to stretch as she looks around her in fear. She can hear a loud grumbling coming from somewhere behind her.

The tree sap suddenly snaps back and Anika falls over onto her back and sees the woods turn into a conglomerate of all of the seasons, with both dead and bloomed trees.

She sits up quickly, afraid to touch anything. She makes her way to her feet with her eyes closed as if that could protect her from what is to come.

CUT TO:

3

EXT - THE WOODS - DAYLIGHT - MOMENTS LATER

3

Anika slowly opens her eyes to the sounds of birds chirping once again.

She does a slow rotation in her spot while looking up. It seems to be the same place as it was before, just not in the dark.

Even more frightened, she stumbles away from the tree she was previously touching and backing up further into the woods behind her.

She turns around, finding herself in a completely new section of the woods than she was in previously. She starts to run hoping to find a way out of the seemingly never ending woods.

She turns again, once, twice, not noticing that the world is moving around her faster than normal. She looks up, ignoring the world swirling around her unnaturally fast.

She snaps her head down, trying to counteract the dizziness when she notices that under her feet is no longer dirt but concrete.

CUT TO:

4

EXT - THE TAVERN - DAYLIGHT - CONTINUOUS

4

Anika looks down at the concrete under her feet before looking up around her. Instead of the woods, she finds herself on the doorstep of an abandoned midcentury house. The woods are no where to be found. Behind her, she turns slightly to see a small abandoned town center. The door flutters open, beckoning her closer and closer to the entrance of the tavern.

As she reaches towards the door, it slams shut with shake.

She pulls her hand back for a second before she continues her motion of wrapping her hand around the doorknob. After hesitating for a few seconds, she knocks on the door, which creaks and pushes inwards with the motion.

ANIKA
(softly)
Hello?

She pushes the door open all of the way and steps through the frame. It swings violently behind her, slamming.

MATCH CUT TO:

5

INT - THE TAVERN - AFTERNOON - CONTINUOUS

5

Anika steps into the tavern and turns around to the sound of a door slamming. The door she just walked in through is still open.

Anika cautiously goes to the open doorway and tries to put her hand out the opening, but it can't go farther than the frame, as if stopped by an invisible forcefield. She presses against the invisible wall and hears a low tone. Her hand looks like it is sinking into a soft pillow, in thin air.

Knowing this door is no longer an option for escape, Anika turns back around to the room while taking in the dated furnishings of the home.

Even though the sun is shining outside, she can't see very far into the room, eye line stopping at a bar in front of her.

On the bar top, a few steps into the room is a matchbox and an unlit lantern. Piles of previously lit matchsticks cover the bar. Anika runs her finger through the dust covering the bar top, before reaching for a match and strikes it before lighting the lantern in front of her.

The lantern flickers on as the rest of the room lights up with soft yellow glow.

Anika looks up into the room and grips the lantern tightly.

ANIKA

Hello?

Anika walks further into the room and runs her hand along the bar in front of her once again. She holds up her finger to her face and inspects the layer of dust it has gathered.

ANIKA (CONT'D)

Is anyone in here?

Behind her, the bar still has uninterrupted dust. Further on the bar is a small antique bowl with a collection of gold coins. She picks one up in her other hand.

The lights flicker.

She looks further into the room and sees an armchair, shockingly clean compared to its surroundings. Spiders crawl over the arms of the chair, disappearing after finishing their pathways.

Anika walks along the back of the chair to further examine the strange object. The spiders are nowhere to be found.

She continues to wander around the back of the chair before sitting down and flaring out her dress. She still holds the coin as she inspects it in her hand.

SUDDENLY:

All of the lights turn red and flicker across the room like a fast spinning disco ball.

Suddenly she finds herself wrapped in the armchair, struggling against the vines that are holding her against the chair.

THE BARKEEPER

Good morning. How did you sleep last night?

THE BARKEEPER blinks in front of her. He is dressed in a suit and white gloves while holding a silver tray. Placed on the platter is a single wine glass full of pomegranate and a bottle of shimmery yellow liquid. He bows down slightly in front of her, balancing the platter.

Anika blinks. She struggles in her bonds. She opens her mouth to speak before the barkeeper cuts her off.

THE BARKEEPER (CONT'D)

I'm glad to hear it. Would you like some tea this morning?

The barkeeper straightens before pouring the bottle into the glass. The liquid pours dark. Spiders climb over themselves to tumble out of the cup and onto the tray.

Anika stares at them in horror before shaking her head.

She drops the coin

ANIKA

(angrily)

What is this? Why would I ever eat that? Why should I listen to you? You know nothing of me, or who I am. You couldn't-

The barkeeper places the tray on the bar and walks back to Anika before leaning in.

THE BARKEEPER

(interrupting, softly)

You are no one special here child. You are eternally one of many and you are eternally one of none.

She tries to respond, but finds her mouth full of pomegranate seeds. They tumble out her mouth as the vines pull Anika tighter to the chair.

Behind The barkeeper her tiara sits gently on the bar, lightly covered in dust. The tray is no where to be seen.

THE BARKEEPER (CONT'D)

Now dearest, it would do you well to listen to others every so often. Perhaps next time you will accept my guidance, but for now... it's time for bed. Don't forget to pick up the phone when it rings for you.

He leans over and turns the lantern in her hand off.

MATCH CUT TO:

6

INT. LIBRARY - CONTINUOUS

6

Anika opens her eyes to a quiet, claustrophobic library. The shelves are a muted brown with red and green books, and the armchair has made a reappearance in the room. The room is lit in candles and there is a man sitting on the armchair in a suit and a pair of wire glasses. This is THE LIBRARIAN.

Anika finds herself sitting at a desk, old-fashioned with a quill and ink. At the corner of the table sits an old rotary phone, white with gold accents. It seems out of place in the room.

Anika turns to the Librarian who is still sitting in the chair, pipe in his mouth. He doesn't look at her. She reaches for the phone.

THE LIBRARIAN

Do you not know your history?

Anika SNAPS her head towards him. She stares at him blankly and blinks before speaking.

ANIKA

Of course I do. I know who I am, you *all* should know who I am. I am my history.

THE LIBRARIAN

(laughing)

It's rather early for you, isn't it dear? Your history is in this room, everyone has a book. Look around.

Anika looks at the shelf across from her, focusing on the titles of the books in front of her. An array of names along the spines of the books of various levels of decay.

The Librarian drags his hand across the spines of the books, before stopping on the book labeled ANIKA. He pulls the book out and places it gently on the table in front of her.

She reaches to open the book before the Librarian pushes his fingers down on the cover closing it.

THE LIBRARIAN (CONT'D)

As I said earlier, your history is more important than your ego.

He places the book titled ACHLYS open on top of the first book. It opens to (Hesiod, Shield of Heracles) in Greek.

ANIKA

I can't... I can't read this.

The Librarian looks her up and down.

THE LIBRARIAN

Hmm.

He waves her hand and the book changes to English, focused on a paragraph (in notes).

She reads silently for a few seconds before...

ANIKA

This is me? What on Earth are you talking about?

Her nose starts to bleed and the Librarian laughs manically, contrasting his earlier gentle movements.

The phone rings in the background.

He slides ACHLYS off ANIKA and flips ANIKA open to the center of the book. In it is a still of a barren landscape of dead, broken trees.

THE LIBRARIAN (V.O.)

This isn't Earth, dear girl. That's
where you are mistaken.

CUT TO:

7

EXT - TEA PARTY - MAGIC HOUR/TWILIGHT

7

VOID: In a seemingly endless white void from all directions sits a rough circle, the same flowers and armchair from before sit in the center, along with a circular mahogany table and its matching chair. There is a pristine floral tea set for four set up on the table. The flowers are lining the circle in a border separating the mossy floors under the table from the snow on the outside.

Anika is sitting in the armchair, the flowers in the chair are swaying lightly in the breeze.

She peers around the table, taking in the delicate setup of pastries and fresh fruit. Across the table from her is THE DOORMAN sitting on the mahogany chair, watching her. He is dressed in a floor length black cape with the hood pulled up and over his head. The borders of his being seem to flicker against the snow behind him and if Anika looks quickly it seems like she could see through him.

The Doorman reaches across the table to scoop a few strawberries and a croissant onto his plate. Using his left hand he puts a strawberry into his mouth and it disappears into the darkness of his hood. He stares at her, whole body facing her.

ANIKA

Be back? Be back where? Where am I?
Who are you?

She reaches out to poke a scone. It presses in like a stress ball. The tips of her fingers turn a deep emerald green, matching her dress. She looks at her hands, flipping them over a few times, in horror.

She looks up to the Doorman with a glare. He lets out a deep chuckle before speaking.

THE DOORMAN

Help yourself. It's your last
chance.

The Doorman gestures across the table to the set tea party with his left hand.

Anika struggles in the vines that have her tied down to the chair. The Doorman tilts his chin back to watch her struggle.

THE DOORMAN (CONT'D)

You have never managed to learn
have you? You've done this many,
many times, silly girl.

He flicks his left wrist in her general direction. The vines loosen and fall to the ground in loose circles around the armchair.

ANIKA

(angrily)

I've never been here before. Why
did you say that?

She leans forward in the chair.

ANIKA (CONT'D)

Are you the one who has been
talking to me? Were you the one on
the phone? Why are you doing this
to me?

The Doorman hums in response. He looks at her, unmoving and silent, head tilted forward as if to encourage her to continue.

Anika reaches for the small sandwich in front of her and scoops it up into her hand. She looks up at the Doorman briefly before looking down at the collection of dust the sandwich has transformed into. She shakes her hand off in surprise before reaching for another plate.

This time she grabs a croissant and puts it onto her plate. The doorman tilts his head back as she watches it turn into dust in front of her.

Anika looks up at The Doorman.

ANIKA (CONT'D)

(aggressively)

I did what you want. You
do not **get** to ignore me.
Answer me!

He stands, his chair falling back as he speaks. His right hand is hidden within the folds of his robe as it blows behind him in anger. He slams his hand down on the table, where everything jumps on impact.

THE DOORMAN

(forcefully)

That is *enough* from you. You have said *enough*. I am no one but the end, and the beginning, and the entrance to all eternity. I do not speak unless spoken to, I do not speak for others, and I do **not** speak to the likes of you.

Anika opens her mouth to speak but finds herself unable to. She drops the handfuls of dust that are pouring out of her hands before wrapping them around her throat.

The Doorman looks at her with his chin raised for a second before he takes a deep breath and snaps his left hand. In a flash he was back to sitting down, placing his hand gently on the table like it had never moved in the first place. He pours himself a cup of tea before he continues to speak.

THE DOORMAN (CONT'D)

(gently)

Now. Would you like some tea? It seems like your time is coming to an end once again.

Anika shakes her head, still unable to speak. She looks around her frantically, trying to find a way to escape, one hand creeping down from the table to grab the knife.

THE DOORMAN (CONT'D)

No? Well I assume that means you have your payment prepared this time.

Anika, still with a hand around her throat, lifts up the knife, pointing it at the other.

The Doorman rolls a berry through his fingers. He stares at her.

He leans forward in his chair until the knife touches the tip of his hood. He unfurls his fingers on his other hand where there is a coin slot carved into his hand with a bag of coins attached below.

THE DOORMAN (CONT'D)

Rather dramatic this time, aren't you?

His left hands reaches out to grab the knife, twirling it in his fingers.

THE DOORMAN (CONT'D)

And yet... no payment.

The Doorman closes his fingers over his palm. He drops it back under the table.

THE DOORMAN (CONT'D)

You will never learn, will you?
You're here for a reason. You are
not special. We are all synonymous
in infinity. Death is but a dance.
This is your home now, so. Drink
the tea.

He takes the teapot and tilts it into Anika's cup, instead of tea pouring out, thick, gloopy, blood with clumps of pomegranate guts slinks out of the spout and falls into the cup.

THE DOORMAN (CONT'D)

No payment? Take a drink. It's not
your first time and it certainly
won't be your last.

Anika looks down at the cup and holds it with both of her hands. She inches it closer and closer to her mouth to take a sip.

THE DOORMAN (V.O.)

Maybe one day you'll learn to
listen. But for today? Drink your
tea little girl, and go to bed.
You'll be back here soon enough.

Anika takes a sip of the curdling blood and pomegranate tea, swallowing a mouthful. Suddenly she gets an overwhelming urge to cough, and opens her mouth to find it full of flowers. She coughs to clear her throat, drowning the bouquet of flowers stuck in her mouth.

CUT TO:

8

INT. - POOL - UNKNOWN

8

Anika appears in a pool, knee deep in water with THE LIFEGUARD in a suit sitting stiffly in the lifeguard chair. Her dress pools around her. She coughs. A singular flower tumbles out of her mouth.

He grins at her with dead eyes, robotic.

Anika looks at him for a second before trying to run through the water to get away from him. She finds herself sinking slowly in the water.

She sinks until the water is up to her waist.

THE LIFEGUARD

(droopily)

Isn't it so overwhelming that your sorrow tastes the same as the sea? My sadness is so consuming that it fills the cracks of the earth and the warmth of the sun does nothing except boil my tears until all that is left is misery. It's your misery too. It's time for you to make your choice once again. I hope for your sake you make the right decision this time.

Before Anika can respond, vines circle her upper body and yank her backwards into the water.

THE LIFEGUARD (V.O.)

Haven't you heard? All that is in death is in life, and all of the silence and sorrow is but a dance.

Water covers Anika's face.

CUT TO:

9

INT. - STAIRCASE - UNKNOWN

9

Anika appears in the base of a staircase, which splits at the top with the left side having a bright light, shining through the doorway. If she concentrated, for a second, she could almost hear the birds chirping and the wind blowing. On the right side is a mirror with her own reflection staring back at her. The stairs near the mirror is littered with gold coins.

Anika looks at the open doorway for a second, and then inches closer to the mirror. She makes it to the mirror and looks into it, placing her palm onto her reflection.

Behind her the sunlight door slams closed. Anika looks over her shoulder at the closed door and leans into the mirror.

It fractures.

We watch one of the fragmented pieces fall to the ground, through it Anika is running through the forest once again.

FLASH CUT TO:

10 EXT - THE WOODS - DAYLIGHT - CONTINUOUS 10

Anika SLAMS her hand on a nearby tree to steady herself when she feels her palm sink into the tree like quicksand.

JUMP CUT TO:

11 EXT - THE WOODS - TWILIGHT - CONTINUOUS 11

She pulls her arm back in shock and watches the tree sap continue to pull like honey.

JUMP CUT TO:

She looks up and sees all of the trees bare and the sky darkening with flashes of red.

JUMP CUT TO:

The tree sap suddenly snaps back and Anika falls over onto her back and sees the woods turn into a conglomerate of all of the seasons, with both dead and bloomed trees.

JUMP CUT TO:

She turns around, finding herself in a completely new section of the woods than she was in previously. She starts to run hoping to find a way out of the seemingly never ending woods.

JUMP CUT TO:

EXT - THE TAVERN - AFTERNOON - CONTINUOUS

The door to the tavern flutters open to the bar top of matches, the lantern, and the tiara.

ROLL CREDITS

The door remains open as a spider crawls over the tiara before disappearing. Dust lightly coats everything in the room and there are gold coins littering the floor.

CUT TO BLACK.