

"D O M E S T I C"

written by

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FADE IN:

BLACK SCREEN.

DISPATCHER (V.O.)
Unit 2-Adam-12, copy a 415 family.
Possible domestic.
387 Holly Oak. Neighbors report
shouting. No weapons seen.

The hiss of RADIO STATIC overlaps with fractured police
codes.
Then, silence.

TITLE CARD: DOMESTIC

EXT. HOLLY OAK SUBDIVISION - SUNSET

Golden hour. A perfect suburban cul-de-sac: manicured lawns,
flags,
porch swings. A CHILD'S BIKE lies on its side in a driveway.

A MONARCH BUTTERFLY drifts lazily through the warm air.

A black-and-white POLICE SUV rolls to a stop outside 387
HOLLY OAK.

Doors open.

SGT. COLE MADDOX (late 40s) steps out. Decorated. Sharp eyes
that
have seen too much.

From the passenger side: OFFICER AVERY LANE (22), pretty,
bright,
still holding a rookie's tension under her polished veneer.

Cole hands Avery a folded CAD printout.

COLE
You lead. Knock and talk. Tactical
L.
Remember—domestics are coin flips.
Worst call we get.

AVERY
Yes, sir.

They approach the house. A brass plaque reads:

"THE MARCHES - HOME IS EVERYTHING."

Avery knocks. The porch light clicks on.

The door opens to CAROLINE MARCH (DAHLIA), mid-30s, immaculate, warm smile, PTA-perfect.

DAHLIA
Officers! Did we do something wrong?

AVERY
Evening, ma'am. We got a call from a neighbor—possible disturbance. Everything alright?

TOM MARCH (40) joins her, drying his hands on a dish towel. Handsome in a neighborly, harmless way.

TOM
We were cooking, had music up. Dancing in the kitchen like fools. Probably carried.

COLE
Mind if we come in? Just to make sure?

DAHLIA
Of course. Shoes on or off?
(beat, teasing)
Kidding. Come in.

They step inside.

INT. MARCH HOUSE - FOYER / KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

A lifestyle magazine spread. Gleaming marble counters. A roast resting on the stove. Candle burning.

Photos line the hallway: family vacations, charity events, prom night.

Dahlia pours sparkling water into crystal glasses. Tom slices bread.

COLE
Anyone else here tonight?

TOM
Just us chickens.

DAHLIA

Sometimes the neighbors... assume.
Everyone's paranoid these days.

Avery's eyes roam.

- An extra place set at the dinner table.
- A faint reddish smear on the doorframe.
- The faint hum of a generator below.

AVERY

Do you mind if I take a quick look
around?

DAHLIA

I'd prefer you didn't—
(smiles wider)
But safety first, right?

COLE

We can keep it consensual. We're
here to make sure
everyone's safe.

Tom and Dahlia exchange a look. It lasts a microsecond.

TOM

We have nothing to hide.

Avery moves down the hall, passing the wall of photos.
One frame hangs crooked. She straightens it.

CLICK. A bolt slides somewhere deep in the house.

Cole's head tips—he heard it. Tom's jaw tightens a fraction.

Suddenly, the FRONT DOOR LOCKS with a heavy CHUNK.

WINDOW BARS slam down—mechanized, synchronized.

Avery freezes. Cole's hand drifts to his holster.

Dahlia's tone drops, silken steel.

DAHLIA

Oh, sweet girl. You touched the
house.

Tom retrieves a REMOTE FOB from a drawer, sets it on the
counter
beside the bread.

Dahlia presses something under the island. The walls shift.

- Surveillance MONITORS descend from the ceiling.

- Panels slide open, revealing armor.
- Hidden alcoves yaw open like wounds.

Dahlia plucks a stained INDEX CARD off a magnet, reads with glee.

DAHLIA (CONT'D)

House rules.

(reads)

One: play fair.

Two: no calling friends.

Three: survive until dawn... and
you get the door.

Promise.

TOM

No one ever has. But we love a
tryer.

COLE

Gun!

Cole moves. Tom FLIPS the marble island—it SLAMS down like a
barricade.

Avery draws, but Dahlia's baton CRACKS her wrist. The gun
skitters
under the fridge.

Cole charges Tom—two strong men COLLIDE. They smash through
the
pantry door—

INT. HIDDEN STAIR / PANTRY - CONTINUOUS

Cole and Tom tumble down steel stairs into darkness. A cage
door
SLAMS shut overhead, trapping them.

Cole draws his baton, snaps it open. Tom grins, knife
glinting.

They circle in the dim red light. Predators in a cage.

CUT TO:

INT. KITCHEN - SAME

Avery scrambles, holding her wrist. Dahlia tilts her head,
smiling
like a proud mother.

DAHLIA
 You're very pretty. Did you do your
 own hair?

A section of wall slides open: a SERVICE TUNNEL glowing with
 cold LEDs.

TOM (O.S.)
 Dahlia. Downstairs. I'll herd.

Dahlia pats Avery's cheek, mock tender.

DAHLIA
 Run.

Avery bolts into the tunnel. Dahlia follows, baton tapping in
 rhythm.

CUT TO BLACK.

INT. SERVICE TUNNELS - CONTINUOUS

Concrete arteries run under the house. Painted stencils:
 "PANTRY →," "PANIC →," "PLAYROOM →."

Pipes sweat. The hum of generators. Cameras in every corner.

Avery moves fast, gunless, wrist aching. Breath steady.
 She rounds a bend—then freezes.

A NAILGUN SENTRY, rail-mounted, hums and swivels.
 Its red eye tracks motion like an insect.

Avery hugs the wall. The sentry whirs.

She unclips her RADIO, tosses it down the hall.

BZZZT—radio hisses.

The sentry tracks—FIRE.
 A storm of nails hammers the concrete.

Avery sprints past while it reloads with a pneumatic gasp.

Behind her—Dahlia steps into view. Baton spinning.
 She doesn't rush. She stalks.

DAHLIA
 That's it, little bird. Test your
 wings.

Avery disappears deeper into the maze.

INT. "PLAYROOM" - MOMENTS LATER

Pastel walls. Cartoon murals. Chains hang like swings.

On a chair sits MADDIE (16), zip-tied, eyes swollen, lip split.

Beside her, a POSTAL CARRIER (50s), uniform torn, shoulder bleeding.

Avery bursts in, scanning.

AVERY
I'm Officer Lane. We're getting
out, okay?

MADDIE
(shaking head)
They said that. Last time.

Avery crouches, rips a swing chain loose.
She sees it across Maddie's zip ties. Plastic bites, snaps.

On a shelf: a glass jar labeled "HOUSE RULES." Inside,
paper strips with smeared handwriting.

AVERY
What's your name?

MADDIE
Maddie. My mom... she's somewhere
else. In the caves.

AVERY
Okay. Maddie—when you see daylight,
you run.
Don't look back.

She turns to the postal carrier, pressing her undershirt to
his wound.

POSTAL CARRIER
(weak)
They watch everything. Always.

A LULLABY crackles from speakers. Music-box sweet.

DAHLIA (V.O.)
Little bird in a little cage,
Sing for me a little rage—

The LIGHTS CUT OUT.
Emergency RED floods the room.

Dahlia's SHADOW fills the doorway, mask on again.

DAHLIA
Peekaboo.

Avery yanks Maddie behind a soft-wall partition.
She snatches the swing seat like a shield.

Dahlia advances, baton tapping metal—TING, TING, TING.

DAHLIA (CONT'D)
You'll make a beautiful picture on
the wall.

She swings—CRACK! The baton splits the swing, glancing
Avery's shoulder.

Avery loops chain around Dahlia's arm, yanks—SNAP.
Elbow hyperextends. Dahlia SCREAMS—then LAUGHS through it.

DAHLIA (CONT'D)
Yes. Yes!

She HEADBUTTS Avery with the porcelain mask—CRACK.
Avery reels, blood spattering.

The POSTAL CARRIER groans awake, fumbling. His hand finds a
TRANQ DART
on a fallen tray. He jams it into Dahlia's thigh.

DAHLIA (CONT'D)
(staggering)
Not... fair...

The tranq slows her, doesn't drop her. Dahlia slashes wildly.

A steel GATE begins to descend across the exit.

Avery drags Maddie, scrambling—rolls under as the gate kisses
her boot.

Dahlia SLAMS against the bars, fingers clawing through.

DAHLIA (CONT'D)
Run, pretty. Run into the dark we
made!

INT. SUB-BASEMENT - ARMORY CORRIDOR - SAME

Cole staggers through dim concrete halls. Workbenches of clamps, saws, surgical order.

He touches his side—blood from a knife slash.

A sound behind. He pivots.

Tom steps out of shadow, knife low, guard high.

TOM
You like to fix what bleeds. So do I.

COLE
Difference is, I stop.

They CLASH—knife and baton in brutal exchange.

Cole feints retreat, baiting Tom. He slaps his baton against a PIPE—
"FIRE LINE" stenciled on it.

Gas hisses. Zippo flicks.

COLE (CONT'D)
House rules—play fair.

WHOOMPH. Fire ignites, rolling down the corridor.
A rusted DOOR at the end BLOWS OPEN.

Cole dives through. Tom staggers, laughing, half on fire.

INT./EXT. LIMESTONE CAVES - CONTINUOUS

A natural cavern. Ribbed stone. Underground river. Cold air.

Tom stumbles, smoldering. His smile twisted, mask half-melted.

TOM
Now we're in the marrow.

He vanishes between stone teeth. Cole follows, coughing, bleeding.

INT. "GALLERY" CHAMBER - LATER

Vaulted chamber lit by bare bulbs.

Walls lined with grotesque PORTRAITS—victims staged to smile.
Pageant sashes: MR. CITY, MRS. MERIT, OFFICER OF THE YEAR.

Avery enters with Maddie and the postal carrier.

She scans, gun drawn now (the postal carrier's sidearm).

A monitor flickers. Dahlia's face fills the screen, hair
damp,
mask cracked. Beautiful, furious.

DAHLIA (ON SCREEN)
Do you like our wedding album?

Feed cuts—to a LIVE VIEW of Cole in the caves, limping,
bloodied.

TOM (V.O.)
You can't save him and yourself,
rookie.
Math problem.

Avery stares down the camera.
She raises the pistol—POP. Sparks. Darkness.

AVERY
That's my math.

They move on, deeper into the dark.

CUT TO BLACK.

INT. CATACOMBS - "PANIC HALL" - LATER

A row of vault doors, each labeled in stenciled paint: PANIC
A, PANIC B, PANIC C...

The sound of muffled BREATHING behind steel.

Avery presses her ear to one.

AVERY
I'm Officer Lane. Can you hear me?

VOICE (O.S.)
We can. They keep us for the game.

AVERY
How many of you?

VOICE (O.S.)
Six. One... is gone.

Avery scans the doorframe: heavy bolts, magnetic locks.
She spots an access conduit above, climbs like a gymnast.

She rips an ELECTRICAL HATCH. Wires spill like veins.

She twists two together—ZAP. The magnets CLACK in sequence.

One by one, the vault doors swing open.

Inside:

- MADDIE'S MOM (40s), bruised but alive.
- A HANDYMAN (30s), shaking, wild-eyed.
- A COLLEGE GIRL (20).
- A NURSE (50s), solid, eyes like steel.
- A DEPUTY (late 20s)... but he's slumped, a burlap BAG with a drawn-on smile over his head.

The nurse pulls it free. The deputy's mouth is stitched into a grin.
Dead.

NURSE
Told him not to come in alone. They
love that.
They eat our rules.

Maddie and her mom crash together, sobbing.

Avery steadies the group.

AVERY
There's a ladder to the surface in
the caves.
When I find it, we move together.
Quiet, fast.
If someone can't run, we carry.

The postal carrier leans on the handyman and college girl.
The nurse hefts a rusty PRY BAR like a halberd.

They all look to Avery. She's twenty-two, but they'll follow her.

The INTERCOM crackles.

TOM (V.O.)
 We love a speech. How about the
 Pledge of Allegiance?

DAHLIA (V.O.)
 Or a recital. "Officer Lane will
 lie, Officer Lane will die."

Avery raises the pistol, shoots the speaker. POP. Sparks.
 Silence falls again.

EXT. BACKYARD - NIGHT

Moonlight. Fescue rippling. A whimsical GARDEN GNOME smiles.

The grass hides a web of TRIPWIRES, almost invisible.

Floodlights BLAST ON. The yard becomes surgical bright.

A METAL HATCH yawns by the shed—the cave ladder exit.

Cole hauls himself out, bloodied. He scans the yard with a
 detective's eye.
 Sees traps everywhere.

Behind him—bare feet in the grass.

COLE
 You don't lift your heel.
 Floors told on your father, didn't
 they?

Tom steps into the light. The porcelain mask grins.

TOM
 My father drank. Floors tattled.
 House taught me to move quiet.

They square off. Both knife-ready.

They circle, tension crackling. Then—Tom strikes.
 Cole parries, slashes back—scores a rib.

Tom LAUGHS, delighted.

TOM (CONT'D)
 God, I love cops who hit back.

They crash across the lawn.

Cole shoves Tom back into a TRIPWIRE—SNAP.

From the flowerbeds, concealed NAIL TURRETS deploy.
CHATTER-CHATTER-CHATTER-hail of nails slicing air.

Cole dives behind the BBQ island. Nails shred stone.

Tom grabs a shield—an old RIOT PANEL—from a rack by the shed,
advances under the storm.

Cole twists the BBQ PROPANE valve. Smells gas.

He flicks the Zippo, tosses it.

WHOOMPF. A sheet of fire ripples across the yard.
Turrets explode, flowers incinerated.

Tom shields himself, pushing forward through flame. Armor
blackening.

They CLASH again. Close, brutal.
Cole's knife digs into Tom's shoulder seam—SINK.
Tom's blade cuts into Cole's side—SINK.

Locked together, bleeding into each other.

TOM (CONT'D)
Sunrise opens the doors. But you
won't see it.

Tom HEADBUTTS through the mask. Cole's world flashes white.
He drops. Tom staggers away, trailing blood, toward the
hatch.

INT. CAVES - WELL SHAFT - SAME

Avery leads the group through. They see the LADDER. The smell
of grass.
Daylight feels close.

MADDIE
(whisper)
Please. Please..

Cole's face appears at the top—ragged, blood streaking him.

AVERY
Sarge!

COLE
Go. Follow the stars.

He points faintly-glow paint ARROWS on the wall, invisible until now.

But then-Tom's SHADOW. He drags Cole back, yanking him off the ladder.
They vanish into a side tunnel.

The group panics. Avery steadies them.

AVERY

Up! Now!

She shoves Maddie onto the ladder, then her mom, then the rest.

The postal carrier turns back, teary.

POSTAL CARRIER

Thank you.

AVERY

Don't waste it.

They climb. Avery pivots, pistol raised, and charges into the tunnel where Cole vanished.

INT. "BONE ROOM" - MOMENTS LATER

A chamber like a mechanical heart.
PVC pipes marked: AIR. WATER. FIRE.
The vascular system of the house.

Cole on his knees, Tom behind him, knife pressed to his throat.

TOM

Shoot him if you like. He'll
forgive you.
That's what partners do.

Avery enters, gun raised. Her eyes scan-pipes, gauges. The fogger rig.

She holsters the pistol. Draws her TASER.

AVERY

Sarge-eyes closed.

Cole doesn't hesitate. He squeezes his eyes shut.

Avery FIRES the taser into the fogger output.

Electricity arcs through aerosolized pepper spray.

FLASH FIRE blossoms. The room ignites.

Tom SCREAMS as his armor chars, mask fuses to skin. He drops Cole, flailing, on fire.

Avery grabs Cole, drags him out. Slams the vault door behind them.

The fire hammers it. Tom's laughter curdles to a wet choke.

Cole coughs, looks at her, even manages a grin.

COLE
Training bulletin's gonna love
that.

AVERY
I'll draw the diagram.

They stagger together down the corridor, smoke rolling behind them.

CUT TO BLACK.

INT. FOYER - PRE-DAWN

Cole and Avery emerge from the tunnels into the original foyer.

It looks the same, but now everything is poisoned.

Cole leans heavy on her. Blood darkens his uniform.
The digital display on the front door reads:

LOCKED - DOOR OPENS: 06:01

The wall clock: 5:52 A.M.
Nine minutes.

The house hums. Surveillance monitors flicker static.
One monitor shows the BACKYARD - Maddie and survivors fleeing across the street.
Another monitor: FIRE UNITS mobilizing down the block.

Cole sinks to one knee.

AVERY
Sarge—stay awake.

COLE
Nine minutes. I can give you eight.

A SLOW CLAP echoes. Avery spins, pistol raised.

From the dining room steps DAHLIA.
Her arm is splinted crudely, her hair burnt, but her poise intact.
She wears a NEW MASK – porcelain BRIDE with a mica-dusted veil.
She carries a pistol.

DAHLIA
My husband is dead.

COLE
(rasping)
He was a lousy dancer.

Dahlia levels the pistol.
She SHOOTS Cole in the leg–CRACK. He drops, screaming.

Avery FIRES–CLICK. Empty. Dahlia laughs softly.

DAHLIA
Rule one: play fair. You broke it.
So I'll break something too.

She advances on them. Avery steps in front of Cole, hands raised.

AVERY
You want me. I burned him. I'm the
one you want.

DAHLIA
Oh, darling. I want both. One to
watch the other die.
That's the recipe.

She squeezes the trigger–

Avery SNAPS her eyes to the crooked FRAME on the wall.
She JERKS it hard.

CLICK.

The house's SMART SYSTEM gluts.
SHADES slam down. LIGHTS die. TOTAL DARKNESS.

Dahlia fires blind–BANG–BANG–BANG.
Bullets stitch wallpaper.

Avery dives, grabs the CHEF KNIFE still lodged in the sink.
She slides low, slices across Dahlia's HAMSTRING seam.

Dahlia SHRIEKS, mask rattling. She lashes with her pistol—Avery blocks, they grapple on the tile, vicious and close.

Hair pulled. Eyes gouged. Teeth gnashing. Dahlia tries to BITE through Avery's cheek.

Avery rams her thumb into Dahlia's broken elbow. The pistol skitters.

Cole kicks it with his boot—slides it under the stove.

DAHLIA (CONT'D)
House—lights! House—!

Nothing. The system is fried.

Avery scrambles for leverage. She DRIVES the knife up under Dahlia's rib cage, into the seam of her armor. The blade SINKS.

Dahlia's body stiffens. A wet exhale.

DAHLIA (CONT'D)
(soft, almost tender)
I loved this house.

Her eyes glass. She slumps, dead.

Avery trembles, soaked in blood. The foyer is silent but for Cole's ragged breathing.

The digital door display BEEPS.
06:01.

STATUS: UNLOCKED.

The front door unlatches with three heavy CLUNKS. Fresh dawn air rolls in.

Avery helps Cole upright. Together, they limp to the open door.

EXT. HOLLY OAK STREET - DAWN

Neighbors cluster in robes. Phones out, recording. Paramedics rush.

The butterfly from earlier drifts lazily across the scene.

Maddie and her mom cling to each other on the curb.

The postal carrier weeps, laughing.

A DEPUTY approaches Avery.

DEPUTY
Anyone else inside?

Avery stares back at the house — windows black with smoke, roofline sagging. She sees the tunnels, the torture rooms, the trophies.

AVERY
No.

Paramedics haul Cole onto a gurney. He grabs Avery's wrist.

COLE
You led right. Not just alive—
right.

AVERY
Had your back.

COLE
You did.

They share a battered, ugly, perfect smile.
Cole is loaded into the ambulance.

Avery stands alone. Her BODY CAM blinks red on her vest.

She unclips it.
Turns it OFF.

She scans the cul-de-sac: each house immaculate, brass
plaques—
HOME IS EVERYTHING.

Across the street, a GARAGE DOOR opens.

Inside, for one heartbeat, a pegboard of TOOLS arranged in a
perfect smile.

The door closes.

Avery's jaw sets. Sirens swell.

She climbs into the ambulance.

MONTAGE - AFTERMATH

- CSI tapes off the March home. Photographs the grotesque “wedding album” wall.
- Internal Affairs reviews Avery’s body-cam footage. Notes the gap.
- A City Council press conference. Mayor preaches “community healing.”
- A funeral for the stitched-mouth DEPUTY. Honor guard. Avery stands at the back, eyes shadowed.

COLE (V.O.)
 It’s not the fight you see.
 It’s the one that’s over.
 The quiet before the next.
 The one you die in.

EPILOGUE

INT. UNKNOWN GARAGE – NIGHT (WEEKS LATER)

Another perfect suburban house. Another quiet street.

The garage door hums open. Inside:
 Orderly, surgical. Tools aligned on pegboards. A workbench spotless.

Two PORCELAIN MASKS hang drying – similar to the Marches’ but subtly different.
 One is a GROOM, jaw squared. The other a BRIDE, features more severe.

A PHOTO pinned above the bench:
 Tom and Dahlia March at a charity gala, smiling beside ANOTHER COUPLE.
 That couple beams back, teeth bright, eyes empty.

On the workbench: a fresh INDEX CARD, neatly written.

HOUSE RULES (V2)

1. Play fair.
2. No calling friends.
3. Officers only.
4. Survive until dawn? Let them go.

A MAN’S HAND enters frame.
 He picks up the GROOM mask. Tries it on. Turns toward the camera.

The mask’s painted smile eats the frame.

CUT TO BLACK.

FADE OUT.

THE END