

---

FADE IN:

INT. POST OFFICE - NIGHT

RUBY, she/her late 20s white, approaches the POST OFFICE CLERK and hands her a slip of paper. The clerk flashes a customer service smile and disappears behind the counter. Ruby stands and picks at her nails with her hands half hidden in the long sleeves of her winter coat. Snow piles on the ground outside. The clerk emerges with a box.

CLERK

Here you are! Have a great day!

Ruby sort of nods and bows at the same time as she grabs the large package the Clerk hands her. Ruby scurries off out the door as the Clerk watches with a concerned and disgusted expression.

INT. RUBY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Ruby enters the living room as quietly as she can manage with her swishy winter coat and large box in tow. Her MOTHER (60s) is in the living room too. Her back is turned as she is sitting in an old but comfortable armchair, facing the TV, as she watches an infomercial about varicose veins.

Ruby hangs up her coat, it still has her name tag from the gas station on it. It's more convenient that way. She creeps around, her footsteps camouflaged by the blaring TV.

MOTHER

Ruby. I know you're home. I also know you have a new order of your shit in at the post office.

Almost camouflaged.

RUBY

I know, mother. I went and collected it just now. I'm sorry.

MOTHER

You need to stop using all your money on that bullshit. It all just sits in piles in that fucking Hoarders episode of a room you have.

(beat)

I don't understand why I even had a kid like you.

Ruby is nodding and clutching her box as she leans closely into the embrace of the wall. Her jaw is clenched tightly.

MOTHER (CONT'D)

I wish you were someone else. Right now, you're nothing! You should've been someone else. Maybe a teacher or a nurse or a talk show host. Someone perfect.

(beat)

Not like you!

Ruby's Mother breaks into a cackle which dissolves into a hacking fit. Ruby pushes herself along the wall, turns the corner and creaks her way into her bedroom as tears well up in her eyes. She closes the door slowly and quietly as the sound of the TV continues to fill the living room.

Her Mother's silhouette burns into the wall behind her.

INT. RUBY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

The walls of Ruby's bedroom are lined from floor to ceiling with shelving units. There is a small break in the shelves for a loft bed and a desk underneath.

Every inch of space in the room is filled with something. Anime merchandise is perched in every corner of the small, claustrophobic bedroom. The figures of the various colorful characters from almost every anime or manga you can think of are positioned perfectly on shelves. Wall scrolls and tapestries are flung around the piles of cardboard boxes stacked to the ceiling. There are so many eyes in this one room.

Ruby begins to sob violently. Through her tears she begins to open up today's package. Inside is a figure of a perfect pink-haired girl with a skimpy armor-like outfit. Ruby gazes at the small girl and takes her out of her packaging as if she is an artifact.

Ruby stops crying and begins to breathe slowly. She clutches onto the figure and brings it close to her chest like its a baby bird.

RUBY

Perfect.

INT. GAS STATION - DAY

Ruby stares out the window of the gas station. The only one in town. And yet, there are no customers.