



# A DARKER PLACE

CASES FROM THE 

## Festival Press Kit

Welcome to the world of *Cases from the DCA* - an interdimensional monster-hunt story about valor, love, and what it means to be a protector. Venture with us on this twisted sci-fi epic and into the depths of *A Darker Place*.



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*'A Darker Place: Cases from the DCA'* harkens back to the retro science fiction films and video games that inspired me as a kid, like *Star Wars*, *Aliens*, and the *Halo* collection. I wanted to create a heroic epic that felt like a lost '90s or early '2000s spec-ops action TV episode, but with a modern edge. It's the type of horror-imbued science fiction that I would have obsessed over as a kid: an amalgamation of everything that I love.

- Rowan Kelley, Writer/Director of *'A Darker Place: Cases from the DCA'*

Written and Directed by  
**Rowan Kelley**

A filmmaker who's always been attracted to difficult projects; genre and dark fantasy writer-director Rowan Kelley delves into science fiction with his sense for crafting epic, dark stories with heart, steeped in rich worldbuilding, expansive universes, thematic monsters, and adventurous narratives on a budget. Rowan aims to transport audiences to new worlds and offer an escape from our everyday lives.

*A Darker Place: Cases from the DCA* is a reimagined prequel to the director's 2021 short film, *A Darker Place: A Horror Short Film*, expanding the mythos and universe of *A Darker Place* and the DCA.

"If the original *Darker Place* was a very scrappy *Alien*, then this is more like *Aliens*. Bigger. Bolder. Meaner."



# Synopsis

A team of elite D.C.A. special forces operatives becomes the prey of a rogue anomaly, trapped inside a nightmarish dimension where reality bends to the creature's will.

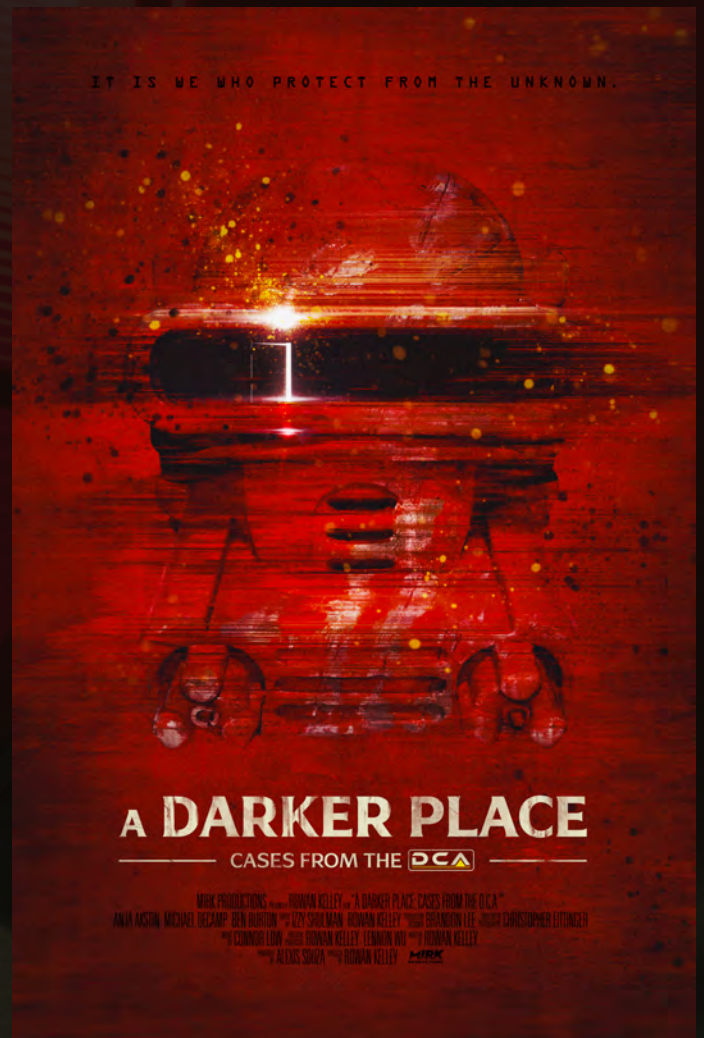
[Read more](#) ^

*A Darker Place: Cases from the DCA* begins in 1995 with an interview between SERGEANT RILEY STEELE, a new graduate of the Bio-Enforcement Academy, and a senior officer of the D.C.A. (Department of Creature Affairs). Riley has just been transferred to the D.C.A. Regional Facility SN-4 in Seattle, Washington. During her interview, they discuss the dangers she may face as a Bio-Enforcer and her desire to protect people from the unknown anomalies that threaten their world.

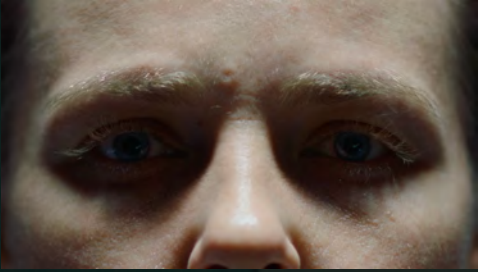
The story jumps forward to 1997, where a routine containment mission spirals out of control. What was thought to be a standard hunt turns out to involve a high-class, deadly anomaly codenamed Erebus, lurking deep within the rotting halls of an abandoned opera house. Riley, now a seasoned Bio-Enforcer of the covert government organization, joins a specialized team led by CAPTAIN JOHN THRUSH and STAFF SERGEANT "VEX" to regain control of the situation and terminate the creature.

Upon arrival, the team follows a mysterious signal to a pile of dead bodies within the auditorium. The remains of previously deployed D.C.A. squads confirm one thing: *they're being hunted*. Triggering its trap, Erebus reveals itself, using its ability to teleport through darkness to pull them into an inescapable, void-like dimension.

Trapped inside this creature's domain and its twisted cat-and-mouse game of survival, the team has no choice but to traverse this "Darker Place." Facing ominous floating doors, a hospital lost in time, electronic interference, and a stalking Erebus, our heroes encounter a cohort of unpredictable challenges. It seems the dimension may have a mind of its own, or perhaps worse, is being controlled by the very thing that they came to destroy. With the clock ticking and nowhere to hide, our heroes begin to wonder if they've finally met their match or if there is still hope for the mission. One thing seems certain, though . . . not everybody will be coming home.



# Media Stills





## Alexis Souza

Lead Producer

Through leading the producing team, Alexis's hands-on producing style helped ground the project's ambitious scale and practical logistics, overseeing the project from development through delivery.



## Christopher Eittinger

Director of Photography

Chris's visual instincts and cinematography helped define the mood of *A Darker Place*, crafting atmosphere and tension through camera, lighting, and shadow in every frame.



## Bennett Kim

First Assistant Director

Bennett's steady leadership ensure an efficient and safe on-set environment, keeping the production on time and on schedule each day. Without Bennett we might still be shooting.



## Brandon Lee

Production Designer

With his background in computer engineering, Brandon led the production design team in bringing the retro-sci-fi world of the DCA to life through beautifully crafted practical effects.



## Connor Low

Composer

Connor brought rhythm and musical life to *A Darker Place* with his incredible score. He allows audiences to not just watch *A Darker Place*, but to feel it through their bones, elevating the storytelling experience.



## Evan Nowack

Sound Designer

Evan's sound design enriched the atmosphere of *A Darker Place*, placing the audience in the center of the action. Mixing in Dolby Atmos, he sound designed an experience that surrounds, surprises, and unsettles.

# Main Characters



## Sergeant Riley Steele

Played by: Anja Akstin (*Walking Dead*)

A soldier haunted by the death of her sister, seeking to protect others from suffering a similar fate.



## Captain John Thrush

Played by: Michael DeCamp (*Us*, *Halo: Infinite*)

A battle-hardened captain, willing to sacrifice everything to protect those under his command.



## Staff Sergeant Rex Show, "Vex"

Played by: Ben Burton (*For All Mankind*)

The "mouth" and tracker of the team: talking trash, shooting fast, and always on the lookout.

# Official Trailer

**MIRK**  
PRODUCTIONS

# OFFICIAL TRAILER

A Darker Place: Cases from the DCA | Official Trailer

A Darker Place: Cases from the DCA | Official Trailer / @Rowankelleyfilm A team of D.C.A. Bio-Enforcers becomes the prey of a rogue anomaly, trapped inside a nightmarish dimension where reality bends to the creature's will. Starring: Anja Akstin (Walking Dead), Michael DeComp...

[youtube.com](https://www.youtube.com)



## Budget

- **Budget:** \$45,000 USD.

This high-concept production, made while attending Chapman University, overcame constant challenges through quick thinking and creative pivots, without compromising story integrity. The most challenging task was achieving the large, epic, blockbuster scale that director Rowan Kelley had envisioned for the project, all on a tight budget and timeframe. With the storyline set in Seattle, WA, but filming in Los Angeles, CA, every trick in the filmmaking book was used to realize the vision.

## Production

- **Production Schedule:** 5 weeks of pre-production, 6 day shoot.

Shot over two weekends with 12-hour days, the production of *A Darker Place* operated under a tight five-week prep window due to university constraints. From completing script development to creating costumes, casting, crewing, and securing all locations, everything had to come together quickly, demanding precision and urgency from a small team of full-time, ambitious student filmmakers. As the *Darker Place* creative team joked internally, this was definitely their "Hobbit" production challenge, referring to the similar struggles Peter Jackson and his team faced while making *The Hobbit*.

## Locations

- **Locations:** 3 different locations, 6 distinct on-screen environments.

With a tight shooting window and limited budget, locations were strategically selected and designed to serve multiple narrative functions. Three spaces were transformed into six distinct on-screen environments, maximizing both time and resources. Of all the locations, the abandoned theatre, a nod to *The Phantom of the Opera*, was the most difficult to secure. Additionally, the need to acquire a SWAT vehicle within 24 hours for upcoming scenes proved to be an unexpected and unique challenge for the producing team.

## Visual Effects

- **Visual Effects:** 170+ VFX shots.

Over 170 VFX shots were completed during the production of *A Darker Place: Cases from the DCA*. A single shot could be as simple as removing a light from the background, or as complex as adding a digital creature into the scene. In the spirit of Gareth Edwards and Film Riot, all VFX were created on a single laptop in the director's apartment. Most of the editing was also completed on the same laptop. Despite limited resources, the film achieved a visually ambitious look in order to tell the story without the backing of traditional studio support.



# CONTACT

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