

Strangekind Studio

presents

MERCY

Episode 1: BLISS

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PRE-SHOW NOTES

ACRONYMS

SFX - SPECIAL EFFECTS

VO - VOICE OVER

TN - TRANSCRIBER NOTE

SHOW NOTES

MERCY is a cinematic audio drama best experienced with headphones. For adult audiences only.

Wayne Sawyer is a grizzled jack-of-all-trades who helps the folk of Mercy for a mere pittance. When he meets the bizarre and enigmatic academic, Doctor Daisy Gray, they are both thrust into dangers beyond human comprehension. MERCY is a queer eldritch audio drama set during the tail end of the wild west.

Strangekind Studio presents stories that subvert tropes and challenge genre conventions. We spotlight characters who are part of the intersection, including characters who are LGBTQ+, disabled, neurodiverse, and BIPOC. Questions? Comments? Contact us at strangekindstudio@gmail.com or at linktr.ee/strangekindstudio

CONTENT WARNING

MERCY has potentially triggering content. This episode has content warnings for self-harm, violence and gore, graphic animal death, depictions of alcoholism, misophonia (drinking sounds at 16:45-16:52, 17:01-17:04, 18:21-18:25, 19:19-19:22), ableist language, misogynist language, gunshots, and murder.

This show is for adult audiences only. Listener discretion is advised.

CREDITS

This episode features the vocal talents of Austin Sharp, Aurora Ave-Lallemant, Bree Frankel, James Reece, and Sneha Kumar.

MERCY is produced by Madison Diaz.

The script supervisor is Matt Doherty.

Written, directed, and sound designed by Jae-in Hwan.

Visit our website to check out the full cast and crew list, and our socials:

<https://strangekindstudio.weebly.com/mercycastcrew.html>

The music used in this show can be found here:

<https://strangekindstudio.weebly.com/mercymusic.html>

SFX & Music sourced from EpidemicSound.com

SCENE ONE: BAIT

AMBIENT

Light rain. Whistling wind. Creaking rope. The steady drip of blood.

SFX

Spindly branches, near naked from autumn's shed, rattle as a pale wind whistles. A crow pecks at flesh.

SAWYER (VO)

(Grim. Quiet. A little dazed) The lil' fucker don't let up. Keeps peckin' like I'm already dead. The beak is sharp. Dredges through my open flesh like a probing finger. Comes away with a bit of meat. A drop of blood quivering off the tip. Then it tosses its head back, fat feathered neck rollin'. Gulps me down, all quick like.

(Weak, wry chuckle)

Didn't know crows ate people. Thought that was vultures.

SFX

Sawyer wriggles in his bonds. The crow squawks angrily. Flaps its wings.

SAWYER

Go on! Get, you lil' devil! I ain't for you!

SFX

Distant thunder. The crow hops back onto Sawyer's shoulder. Pecks at him again.

SAWYER

(Groans, frustrated)

SFX

A rickety wagon approaches.

GRAY

(Panicked) Don't crash, don't crash, don't crash, don't crash-!

SFX

The wagon keeps approaching. Dangerously fast.

GRAY

(Shrieking) DON'TCRASHDON'TCRASHDON'TCRASHDON'T-I'M GOING TO CRAAAASH!!!!

SFX

Gray yanks on the reigns. The horse rears. The wagon suddenly stops. A sudden, stunned silence. And then, Gray leaps to her feet - victorious.

GRAY

(Excited) HA-HA! Did you see that? Excellent manoeuvring, don't you think? Did you know that the man who sold me this wagon told me - and this I swear by mother's right foot (carved from pure oak it was) - he told me that a proper lady could never learn to drive a wagon. No, no. A pretty girl such as myself ought to be back at home, looking after the wee ones and keeping hearth for my husband. Well, you wouldn't believe the look on his face when I told him that I didn't have a husband! No sirree! Not only am I unwed, I am also a proficient driver of wagons - big and small-

(Pauses)

(Surprised) Well, I say! Are you aware that you are hanging from a tree?

SAWYER

What gave you that impression?

GRAY

Only that you are, I dunno, hanging from a tree!

SAWYER

Isn't that something?

GRAY

Well?

SAWYER

Well, what?

GRAY

Would you like to come down?

SAWYER

What for?

GRAY

Only that it's rather rude to be talking down to a person.

SAWYER

M'afraid I don't have much of a choice in the matter.

GRAY

Whatever do you mean?

SAWYER

(Grumpy) I mean: Mind your own damn business!

GRAY

(Stiffly) For both of our sakes, I did not hear such vulgar words pass your lips, good sir-

SAWYER

I mean it, lady. Scram!

GRAY

My name is Daisy Gray. Doctor Daisy Gray. And before you ask, no, I am not a practising physician. I am a student of the occult and preternatural phenomena, hailing from the State University of Elysium. I'm sure even a hardy, calloused man such as yourself would have heard of S.U.E.-

SAWYER

I didn't ask! If you don't get outta here-

GRAY

Now, I do apologise for interrupting whatever morbid quest you are currently undertaking. However, I seem to have misplaced my map - and by misplaced, I mean that it blew away in the storm. I am usually so careful with my belongings - especially prints and papers and the like - but it seems my luck has been sorely lacking these past few days. All this to say, if you can be so kind as to point me in the direction of Mercy, I should be ever so grateful.

SAWYER

(Hesitates. Wary) What you got in Mercy?

GRAY

Were you not listening? I am a student of the occult and preternatural phenomena. Such activities have been rife in Mercy, has it not?

(Pause)

I say. Are you aware that a crow is making you its meal?

SAWYER

(Growls) I'm aware!

GRAY

Well, this won't do at all. Silly, stubborn men know naught but getting themselves killed. And I am a woman of upstanding morals and character.

SFX

Gray cocks her gun. Points it at the rope.

SAWYER

(Alarmed) No-wait-!!

GRAY

(Smug) You are so very welcome.

SFX

BANG! The bullet whizzes through the rope. Sawyer drops into a muddy puddle.

SAWYER

(Grunts when he lands)

(Groans in frustration and pain) Goddamnit.

SFX

Sawyer climbs to his feet.

GRAY

There is no need for language like that-

SAWYER

I didn't need rescuin'!

GRAY

It certainly looked like you did!

SAWYER

You fuckin'--!

SFX

In the distance - an odd, hair-raising laughter.

GRAY

(Intrigued) What is that incessant laughter?

SAWYER

(Pissed. Quiet) You've fucked us both, lady.

GRAY

My name is Doctor Daisy Gray-

SAWYER

You need to ride that wagon outta here. Right this instant, Doctor Daisy Gray. You hear me?

GRAY

What have you summoned?

SAWYER

I didn't summon nothin'!

SFX

The laughing gets louder.

SAWYER

Shit - it's too late!

SFX

Sawyer runs to the wagon. Leaps on.

SAWYER

Drive!

GRAY

What-?!

SAWYER

(Shouts) I SAID DRIVE!

GRAY

(Yells) HIYAH!

SFX

She lashes the reins. The horse whinnies and bursts into a frenzied gallop. The laughter gets quieter as they leave it behind. But it's still on their tail.

GRAY

I can hear it - but I can't see anything!

SAWYER

Just drive, goddamnit!

SFX

Sawyer opens his satchel. Pulls out a molotov and a lighter.

GRAY

(Shrieks) This is no time for a drink! Not until you tell me what we are supposedly fleeing from!

SAWYER

I ain't drinkin'. This here's a strip of cloth and kerosene.

GRAY

Whatever do you need that for?

SAWYER

For the thing we're fleein' from.

GRAY

Which is?!

SAWYER

I don't know what exactly. But I've been tryna catch it for weeks now. Woulda burned it to coal if you hadn't shown up.

GRAY

It doesn't sound like any beast I know!

SAWYER

This ain't in your textbooks, professor. You said you were studyin' the occult and whatnot?

GRAY

If I should survive today, yes! That is the goal!

SAWYER

Well, consider this your first taste, then. Whatever this is, it's been causing trouble for the good folk of Bliss.

GRAY

Bliss?

SAWYER

A small farming community twenty miles east of Mercy.

GRAY

What kind of trouble?

SAWYER

Killin' livestock. Horses. Dogs.

GRAY

It could be any number of things. Wolves. Bears-

SAWYER

The way it left the bodies - ain't no work of a wolf or a bear. Sucked 'em dry - all their blood - leavin' shrivelled husks like they've been left out in the sun for months.

GRAY

But...that's impossible.

SAWYER

Should be. But it ain't. A month ago, it moved onto people. Killed a farmhand in broad daylight. And no-one saw a single thing. One moment, he was feedin' the pigs, then next, he was a dried up husk.

GRAY

Surely, this is all conjecture-

SAWYER

I saw his body for myself. Was paid to dig his grave when his mother asked me to find his killer. A deputy from Mercy rode on out. Took one look at the body and ruled it as heat-related death. But when I saw that body I knew. Whatever killed him weren't natural.

GRAY

Is that why you were strung up like that? You were, what - bait?

SAWYER

Til' you came and ruined it. Sure.

GRAY

How did you know it would come?

SAWYER

Blood. It draws it in. Smells it from miles away, I reckon.

GRAY

(To herself) Like a shark.

(To Sawyer) That is a rather confident assertion.

SAWYER

I asked around. The only livestock that were killed were already injured. And Buck? Well, he cut his hand earlier that day. Accident with a sickle. Wrapped it up and kept workin'. Bled right through the cloth.

GRAY

So your plan was to set yourself up as bait and when it came to...consume your blood-

SAWYER

Set it alight with kerosene.

GRAY

Were the ropes necessary?

SAWYER

I like a bit of theatrics.

GRAY

Yes, I'm starting to realise that!

SAWYER

Go left - down that road!

GRAY

HIYAH!

SFX

Gray yanks the reins. The wagon veers a sharp left. The laughter encroaches.

GRAY

That's all well and good, but the most pressing question remains! What manner of creature are we dealing with?

SAWYER

I don't know! Whatever it is, it's able to hide itself. Make itself invisible.

GRAY

That is physically impossible!

SAWYER

And yet, there it is!

GRAY

(Laughs. Exhilarated) Do you know why I use the word 'preternatural'?

SAWYER

This ain't the time for a lecture!

GRAY

It's because I believe the supernatural - the impossible - yet remains within the bounds of our physical reality! That is to say - we are witness to the miraculous metamorphoses of impossibility joining the realm of true possibility! AND IT IS SPECTACULAR!

SFX

The thing's laughter is earsplitting. There's a violent surge. A bodily slam. And the wagon flips. Crashes into a ditch. Gray and Sawyer are thrown from the wagon.

GRAY & SAWYER

(Panting, groaning, stunned)

SFX

Silence.

Sawyer drags himself upright.

SAWYER

(Panting) Hey. Hey! Get up!

GRAY

(Groans a tad dramatically) Oooo....ouch. I think I broke my everything.

SAWYER

(Hissing) Gray!

SFX

A giggle. It's uncannily close. Right in Sawyer's ear. Sawyer twists around. But he sees nothing.

SAWYER

(Whispers) Gray.

GRAY

(Dazed) What is it...?

SAWYER

I-

SFX

Another giggle. This time closer.

Sawyer twists around.

Again - nothing.

SAWYER

(Quiet. Carefully) I need you to move towards the wagon. Slowly. No sudden movements.

GRAY

(Hisses) Where is it?

SAWYER

Go. Wagon. Now!

GRAY

(Annoyed, whispered) Alright, alright!

(Shaky breaths as she moves)

SFX

Gray slowly crawls towards the upended wagon.

Sawyer shoves his hand into his satchel - there's the tinkling of shattered glass.

SAWYER

(Whispers, panting shakily) Fuck. No kerosene. Okay. Okay.

SFX

Sawyer pulls out his knife.

SAWYER

Do it the old fashioned way then. Like St. George and his dragon.
(Quiet, nervous laughter)

SFX

Another giggle. Right in his ear.

Silence.

Then - laughter bursts over their heads. The thing is right on top of them.

GRAY

RUN!

SFX

Sawyer books it. He dives for the wagon.

SAWYER

Pull it down! Flip it down over us!

SFX

They yank on the wagon.

SAWYER & GRAY

(Strains vocalisations as they pull the wagon)

SFX

The wagon flips over them like a tortoise shell. Not a second too soon -

CRACK! The thing starts smashing at the wood, trying to get to them. All the while, laughing hysterically.

GRAY

(Shrieks in panic) THIS IS NOT HOW I IMAGINED FIELD WORK WOULD BE LIKE!

SAWYER

Hold onto the wagon! Keep your head down!

GRAY

I'M GOING TO DIE! I'VE BARELY STARTED MY BOOK AND I'M GOING TO DIE AND FADE INTO ANONYMITY AND DAISY GRAY WILL BE JUST ANOTHER POOR SOD THAT BARELY MADE IT PAST TWENTY-FIVE! WHICH IN ALL CONSIDERATION IS A RATHER LONG LIFESPAN, BUT I DIGRESS--!!

SAWYER

(Harsh shout) GRAY!

SFX

The thing breaks through. Pieces of wagon goes flying. Sawyer and Gray are exposed. We hear the manic laughter. And a wet writhing - as though there are a thousand worms squirming against each other.

GRAY

(Awed) I can hear it. But...there's nothing. There's nothing-!

SAWYER

Gray!

SFX

Sawyer grabs Gray. He's about to run. But then the horse charges at the thing. Whinnies angrily.

GRAY

TULIP!

SFX

The thing strikes. Rips into the horse. The laughter stops. In its place is a gory, bloody squelching.

GRAY

(Awed, a hint of glee) Oh my god - it's eating Tulip!

SAWYER

I'm sorry, Gray-

GRAY

Better him than us!!

SFX

The thing drops the corpse of the horse.

GRAY

Oh my god. It's-

SAWYER (VO)

And there it is. Ghastly red, bulging, engorged with Tulip's blood.

GRAY

(Whispers, ecstatic) It's beautiful!

SAWYER (VO)

It has no face. No eyes. It floats in the sky like an immense, mindless jellyfish. Hundreds of long, thin tentacles sway beneath its pulsating body. And on the tips of each tentacle - a maw dripping blood onto the churned up mud below.

SFX

FWIP! A tentacle strikes.

SAWYER

(Cries out in shock, pain)

GRAY

(Screams in shock, verging on excitement)

SFX

It latches onto Sawyer's wounded shoulder. Drinks the very life out of him.

SAWYER

(Pained groans) Argh!!! You...ugly...fuckin'...bastard....!!!

SAWYER (VO)

I can feel its maw latch onto my shoulder. A hundred jagged teeth dig into raw flesh, the tentacle pulsing and writhing as it sucks the very blood from my veins. It feels bad. It feels intimate. Like it's not just my flesh it's wringin' dry, but my soul too.

SFX

The world starts to fade. Sawyer's dying.

A distant memory surfaces.

MAL (MEMORY)

What a great, big lug you are! Do you not know how to do anything? Papa says you're a fool. Are you a fool, Ahab? (Laughs)

SFX

BANG! A gunshot. Like with the rope, the bullet zips through the tentacle. Sawyer drops into the bloody mud.

SAWYER

(Gasping, coughing)

GRAY

(Panicked) Are you alive?!

SAWYER

(Panting, hoarse) Think so!

GRAY

(Pleased) Oh, bully!!!!

(Dismayed) Hey! NO! WHERE ARE YOU GOING?!!!

SFX

The thing retreats, the laughter verging on screeches of pain. It shoots up into the sky and disappears into the clouds.

Silence.

SAWYER & GRAY

(Breathing heavily, shocked)

GRAY

Oh, bother! She's gone!

SAWYER

(Numb) She?

GRAY

This is a day for the history books! You and me, friend! We've found an entirely new lifeform - one that defies the natural sciences as we know it! Or rather - redefines all sciences!

SFX

Sawyer drags himself to his feet.

SAWYER

(Faintly) It's not over. It'll be back.

GRAY

Wonderful! Should I tie you to the tree again? (Chuckles) You are sufficiently bloody enough, so we can skip a step or two! I say, are you quite alright? You've gone rather pale!

SAWYER

(Slurred) I'm fine. I just...

MERCY | 1.1 BLISS

SFX

Sawyer collapses.

GRAY

(Sighs) Fuck.

SCENE TWO: FIRESIDE CHAT

AMBIENT

Hours later. Night. The rain's long stopped.

A roaring fire. The hoot of an owl. Cicadas chirp.

SFX

Gray's scribbling furiously in her notebook. Sawyer stirs. Sits up.

SAWYER

(Groans)

GRAY

(Cheerily) Oh, good! You're alive!

SAWYER

Seems like it.

GRAY

How are you feeling?

SAWYER

Dizzy. Okay.

SFX

Sawyer sits up. Flinches.

SAWYER

(Pained grunt)

SFX

Sawyer feels his wrapped shoulder.

SAWYER

You did this?

GRAY

Well, it was between ruining my only clean skirt or letting you bleed to death. It was an obvious choice.

SAWYER

Thank you-

GRAY

But I thought better of it and decided to ruin my good skirt! I wasn't quite prepared to bury a man so early on in my expedition. Three times now I've saved your life.

SAWYER

(Taken aback) Um. Yes. You have. Thank you-

SFX

Gray slams her notebook shut. Sets it aside.

GRAY

I don't even know your name! I only just realised after I dragged you from the gates of hell. No offence, but you don't really seem like St. Peter's type.
(Laugh)

SAWYER

(Winces)

GRAY

Oops! Sorry. I suppose you're a bit sensitive after the encounter with the laetitia medusa.

SAWYER

(Irritated, confused) Lae-laesha-

GRAY

Laetitia medusa. Or in layman's term, the Mirthful Jellyfish! It's not very creative, I know, but I struggle with names. Always have. Speaking of-?

SAWYER

(Clears his throat) Sawyer.

GRAY

Sawyer? Like...Darwin? Or do you possibly have another name?

SAWYER

Sawyer'll do.

GRAY

(Sighs) Very well. Mister Sawyer. You must be wondering how you might even begin to repay me for saving your life not only once, but three times.

SAWYER

(Grunts a yes)

GRAY

And there is a very simple, very little-effort-on-your-part quittance you might offer your daring, darling saviour.

SAWYER

(Warily) Go on.

GRAY

Allow me to accompany you-

SAWYER

(Curtly) No.

GRAY

But you haven't even-

SAWYER

Absolutely not.

GRAY

Well, now you are being rude!

SAWYER

You saw what happened back there! You almost died-

GRAY

I believe the endangered soul was yourself, Mister Sawyer. And it was I who was aptly armed and freed you thrice from your grisly demise-

SAWYER

My answer, Doctor, is no.

GRAY

At the very least allow me to see this out. Once you have heroically vanquished the laetitia medusa, I shall be out of your hair. I have business to attend in Mercy after all. We will part ways, free of debt and one another.

SFX

Gray pulls out a flask. Hands it over to Sawyer.

GRAY

(Coyly) Do we have a deal, Mister Sawyer?

SFX

Sawyer stares at the flask.

SAWYER

(Sighs sharply. Pissed)

SFX

He snatches the flask and takes a long swig.

SAWYER

(Gruff) Deal.

SFX

Sawyer hands the flask back.

GRAY

Keep it. Looks like you need it.

SAWYER

More than you know.

SFX

Sawyer takes another swig.

Gray opens her notebook. Starts writing in it again. This time with less frenzy.

GRAY

Alright. Talk me through it. From the very start.

SAWYER

Huh?

GRAY

Clearly this isn't your first encounter with a preternatural creature.

SAWYER

(Grunts in affirmation)

GRAY

(Impatiently) Well? My book isn't going to write itself!

SAWYER

(Sighs) Uh. Strange things been goin' on for a while now in Mercy. Well, not just in Mercy. Got the surroundin' villages and in other areas of Temperance. Though I ain't been around the state since landin' in Mercy.

GRAY

You don't say. So you aren't a local?

SAWYER

God, no. I stumbled into Mercy two years back. Ain't left ever since.

GRAY

Why's that?

SAWYER

Folk were havin' a hard time. With the strange goin's on and the new policies an' all. Things had to get done and I could get 'em done.

GRAY

(Intrigued) That is awfully ambiguous, Mister Sawyer.

SAWYER

(Defensive) And you? How's a high-falutin' professor like yourself get to be such a crack shot?

GRAY

(Hums a laugh) It's a fancy of mine. Helps me wind down after a stressful disquisition. Perhaps you could enlighten me on why a man in such perilous employment hasn't armed himself with proper munitions? Sans a bottle of kerosene, of course.

SAWYER

(Pause) Never needed it before.

GRAY

Until today.

SAWYER

You were doin' the shootin'.

GRAY

You are unfathomably stubborn, Mister Sawyer. If I were any other woman, I might say it was charming.

SAWYER

(Huffs a laugh) What? You don't find me charming?

GRAY

Unfortunately, your machismo is much too coarse for my fair proclivities.

SAWYER

(Pauses. His brain struggles to process)

(And then, realising) Oh.

(Another moment. Then, perplexed. Serious) Oh.

GRAY

(Amused) Indeed.

SAWYER

That's right bold.

GRAY

For speaking my truth? Does it bother you, Mister Sawyer? Make you all hot under the collar? Worry not - I dare say the devil is far too busy to lure you into my sort of depravity.

SAWYER

(Quietly) No. No, I've...heard about it. At least 'mongst the men. Loggers and miners and such. Didn't know it happened with the women folk too.

GRAY

(Smiles) Quite. And quite often.

SAWYER (VO)

We don't say much after that. At least, I don't say much. I just sit there by the fire, downing backwash benzene, listening to Gray work her flap 'bout this or that. Don't understand half

the things she says but I...I reckon I could listen to her til' the sun comes up. Makes me feel like the world ain't so different. That my dragon ain't still alive - waiting to strike another innocent fool down 'cus I was too yellow to hold a damn gun.

SCENE THREE: BLISS

AMBIENT

Transition to Bliss. Day. It's hot. Sunbaked. Sawyer and Gray are walking into the village.

SFX

Footsteps hit packed dirt. Even after the storm last night, it's already dry as a desert.

SAWYER

You walk light for a lady.

GRAY

I lost most of my research when the wagon crashed. Countless hours of work turned to muddy pulp.

SAWYER

That's a real shame.

GRAY

And you? Do you usually carry a satchel of broken glass during your...well, whatever it is you do?

SAWYER

(Huffs a laugh) Don't see no point in packing more'n a day's worth.

GRAY

That seems rather short-sighted. What about food? Water? Bedding?

SAWYER

(Grunts an 'I don't know') Things tend to work out.

GRAY

(Scoffs in disbelief) You are a rather odd man, Mister Sawyer. Perhaps, I should be studying you instead.

SAWYER

(Amused) Won't take you no more'n a few minutes, I reckon.

GRAY
(Laughs)

SFX
They approach a crowd of villagers, yelling and panicking in the distance.

SAWYER
C'mon.

SFX
They hurry towards the crowd. Sawyer calls out to a young woman.

SAWYER
Hey. Miss. What's goin' on here?

YOUNG WOMAN
They found Clayton Colt dead! Just like Buck.

SAWYER
Colt's boy?

YOUNG WOMAN
Mm-hm.

SAWYER
Damn.

GRAY
Mister Sawyer. Look! His body!

SAWYER
(Irate. Upset) I know.

SFX
Gray pulls out her notebook. Starts scribbling.

GRAY
It appears that the deceased was a victim of exsanguination. His skin is an ashen grey. Not a colour to them. And his eyes – good lord, his eyes! They appear to have burst in his skull–

YOUNG WOMAN

He did it to himself. My brother Amos saw it happen. Thought Clayton was havin' a conniption 'til he dropped dead to the ground. Lookin' like...

SAWYER

Thank you, Miss.

YOUNG WOMAN

You take care now.

SFX

The young woman walks away.

GRAY

(Excitedly) It appears our laetitia medusa has struck again!

SAWYER

(Irate) Well don't sound too happy.

SFX

Gray bats Sawyer's arm.

GRAY

Oh, use that hunk of meat between your ears, Mister Sawyer! This is our opportunity to catch it - once and for all!

SAWYER

There ain't no catchin' a beast like that. We gotta burn it up.

GRAY

But that seems such an awful waste--!

VILLAGER #1

Issa vampire! I heard 'bout them devilish creatures afore. Worse'n witches they are! They come out at night and feed upon innocent folk, sucking every drop of blood from their bodies 'til they shrivel up an' perish!

VILLAGER #2

The Black Widow! Up on ol' Serenity Ridge!

VILLAGER #1

Abigail Thompson! Ain't this how her husband died?

VILLAGER #2

I was certain she was a witch. Never showin' her face. Always cloistered away in that gloomy ol' house. Pale as a corpse she is!

VILLAGER #1

This must be her doin'! She's a vampire! A devilish vampire, I tells ye! And she ain't stoppin' 'till we're all dead!

SFX

The villagers yell and exclaim angrily.

SAWYER

(Pissed) Damned fools. The lot of 'em! Couldn't tell skunks for house cats.

GRAY

What do we do? Surely they won't attack that poor woman?

SAWYER

Reckon she'll be burned at the stake by noon.

GRAY

How barbaric!

SAWYER

You got that gun of yours?

GRAY

Always.

SAWYER

C'mon. I got a feelin' that our laysha medusa ain't had its fill just yet.

GRAY

Laetitia- Right, yes. I'm coming!

SFX

Gray hurries after Sawyer. We transition to Serenity Ridge. The Thompson house. Sawyer knocks on the front door. Nothing.

SAWYER

Mrs. Thompson? Mrs. Abigail Thompson?

SFX

Nothing.

SAWYER

Mrs. Thompson - we're here to help you. Everyone seems to believe you're behind two deaths. One of 'em recent as this mornin'--

SFX

Footsteps approach from within the house. The door creaks open.

ABIGAIL

(Scared) I didn't do anything!

SAWYER

Yes, ma'am. We know that. But those folk down there? They ain't too happy, Mrs. Thompson.

GRAY

(Chirps) They think you're a vampire! Isn't that preposterous? (Laughs)

SAWYER

We believe you're in danger.

GRAY

But not to worry. I have a gun! And according to Mister Sawyer here, I'm a rather crack shot!

ABIGAIL

Who...who are you people? Why are you helping me?

SAWYER

I'm Sawyer. This is Gray--

GRAY

Doctor Daisy Gray at your service, Mrs. Thompson.

SAWYER

And we happen to know the real perpetrator behind those deaths. Including, I suspect, your late husband's.

SFX

A long pause. Then, Abigail opens the door wide and steps aside.

ABIGAIL

Come in. Hurry. Before anyone sees you.

GRAY

Thank you, Mrs. Thompson!

SFX

They step inside. Abigail locks the door behind them. They walk into the parlour and sit down.

ABIGAIL

Can I get you anything? Tea? Coffee?

GRAY

Ooo! I'd love a cup of tea-!

SAWYER

(Interrupting) Your husband's death, ma'am.

GRAY

Oh, yes! Pray, do tell us what happened. And don't leave a single detail out!

SFX

Gray pulls out her notebook. Flips it open.

SAWYER

(Chastising) Gray.

ABIGAIL

That's quite alright, Mister Sawyer. Um. Yes, Roger's death. Well, it happened six months ago. He was a rancher. Working on Mayor Strauss' farm-

GRAY

Obadiah Strauss? The Mayor of Mercy has farmland here?

ABIGAIL

Has so for generations, yes.

GRAY

Interesting. Carry on.

ABIGAIL

Well, Roger was a good worker. He mainly took care of the horses. Loved them to bits he did. One night there was a bad storm. Much like the one yesterday. Winds blew hard enough to strip the trees. Roger was worried about the horses. Weren't sure if they were being properly taken care of. 'Horses get real spooked during storms,' he said. And I didn't want him to leave. It was the middle of the night and the rain was coming down hard. But Roger, he...well, he loved those horses. I used to jest and say he loved them more than me.

GRAY

So he left but never came back.

AMBIENT/SFX

We hear an illustrative scene of Abigail's tale. The storming, galing night. Bucking, whinnying horses. Abigail's timid footsteps.

ABIGAIL

Hours went past. He knew I was a worrier. He knew not to stay out for too long. So I went to the farm myself. With naught but a shawl and an oil lamp. And he weren't there. The horses were kicking up a fuss. Bucking and screaming and frothing at the mouth. And my Roger was nowhere to be seen. Only...

GRAY

What is it?

ABIGAIL

I can't rightly explain it, Doctor. And I'm sure you'd think I was quite mad at the time. But I assure you - I know what I saw.

GRAY

You have villagers with pitchforks on their way up here, Mrs. Thompson.

ABIGAIL

Right. Yes. Of course. I was coming out of the stables when I saw them. Three hooded figures in the middle of the cornfield. It was past harvest, so the stalks were shorn low. What they were doing there, I don't rightly know. But they were raising their hands up in the air. And when I looked up-

SFX

Lightning cracks. The hair-raising laughter of the laetitia medusa.

ABIGAIL

I saw against the white flash in the night sky, swarming, teeming jellyfish, red as blood, and the sound of laughter. As if there were a thousand people high in the sky, laughing at my plight.

And so I ran. I ran all the way home, locked the doors and windows, and hid beneath my bed like a child. I didn't get a wink of sleep.

AMBIENT/SFX

We return to the present.

ABIGAIL

In the morning, Mister Colt came to my door and told me they found poor Roger. Dead in a ditch behind the saloon. Drenched in beer. They called it an accident. A drunken blunder. But the thing is, my Roger didn't drink. Never enjoyed it. And after I saw the body - I knew. I knew someone - or something - took my Roger away from me. But no-one believed me. They called me mad. Called me a fool. Called me a witch who cursed her husband.

GRAY

And now it's happening again.

SAWYER

I don't think it ever stopped.

GRAY

Whatever do you mean, Mister Sawyer?

SAWYER

I ain't checked myself yet - but if we were to visit Dignity ten miles south and Clarity eight miles north, they'd have similar deaths reported over the past six months. I'm sure of it.

GRAY

An interesting hypothesis.

SAWYER

It's ain't a hypo-nothin'. You saw how hungry that thing was yesterday. And so far, we only got livestock and three human deaths in Bliss? There's gotta be more we ain't aware of yet.

GRAY

What about Mercy? They could be feeding there. A large city like that - it's easy to go missing.

ABIGAIL

Excuse me, Mister Sawyer. Doctor Gray. You said you-you know what killed my husband?

GRAY

Laetitia medusa!

SAWYER

It may be difficult to believe-

ABIGAIL

No more difficult than my Roger drinking himself to death.

GRAY

It's an anomalous, undiscovered creature. Remarkably similar to those flying jellyfish you witnessed that night.

ABIGAIL

You mean to say-

GRAY

What you saw was very much real, Mrs. Thompson.

ABIGAIL

I knew it. I knew it was real. I know what I saw!

GRAY

Quite! Only, now our troubles have exponentially increased with your troubling testimony.

ABIGAIL

How so?

GRAY

We were almost eaten by the one we saw yesterday. Barely escaped by the skin of our teeth - thanks to my sharpshooting. And you claim to have seen - what was it? A swarm?

ABIGAIL

It appeared so. Ten or so, I'd say.

SAWYER

Shit.

GRAY

Mister Sawyer!

SAWYER

Sorry.

SFX

From outside, the angry mob approaches.

Sawyer moves to the window and peers out.

Gray cocks her gun.

VILLAGER #1

Mrs. Abigail Thompson! Come out peaceably and we won't need to set fire to your lovely abode!

VILLAGER #2

Murderer! Witch!! Vampire!!

VILLAGER #3

Come out, ye heathen, and face the holy judgement of the Lord Almighty!

GRAY

Murderer, witch, vampire! Like the unholy trinity! Why can't they make up their minds?
(Giggles)

ABIGAIL

What shall I do? They seem so angry.

GRAY

Stay put, my dear, and allow me and my associate to take care of the angry mob.

ABIGAIL

Perhaps I should go outside and speak to them. If we tell them about the creatures–

SAWYER

They're holding shotguns, Mrs. Thompson. They ain't here to talk.

GRAY

No. They want blood.

(Pause)

(Amused) Speaking of. Mister Sawyer. I believe you are bleeding. Have been for a while.

SFX

Sawyer jolts in surprise. Checks his shoulder.

SAWYER

Shit. And you only thought to mention it now?!

GRAY

I thought it could prove useful.

SAWYER

Useful? How?

GRAY

Well...you wanted to be bait - did you not?

SFX

Laughter. Just one. Then it's quickly joined by another. And another. And another. Until it seems like hundreds of voices are laughing.

SAWYER

(Ashen. Shocked) Gray - you-

GRAY

Sit tight, Mrs. Thompson. This may take a while. Oh, and Mister Sawyer. I'd advise you to close the curtains and step away from the window. Lest I'm forced to save your life - again.

SFX

Sawyer storms towards the front door. We hear gunshots and screaming. The men pounding and shaking the door to be let in. The squelching of rending flesh and breaking bones.

GRAY

What in the blazes are you doing?!

SFX

Gray rushes to the door and blocks it.

SAWYER

(Irate) Those things want my blood. I'm gonna lead 'em away from here.

GRAY

No.

SAWYER

They're all gonna die!

GRAY

Who? Oh, you mean the nasty trigger-happy horde of men who threatened to burn an innocent woman alive? Yes, yes, what a shame.

SAWYER

Move aside, Gray.

GRAY

I'd rather not.

SAWYER

Fine.

SFX

Sawyer lurches forward - but she raises her gun and pulls the hammer.

SAWYER

What are you doin', Gray? You gonna shoot me?

GRAY

We could avoid such unpleasantry if you simply stayed put, Mister Sawyer.

SAWYER

And let those men die?!

GRAY

We're all dead if you open that door. If there should be survivors from this travesty, I would rather it be us, wouldn't you?

SAWYER

You are a cold woman, Daisy Gray.

GRAY

(Smiling) Do not mistake rationality for callousness, Mister Sawyer.

Mrs. Thompson! What say you? Should we let those wretched souls inside? Keeping in mind that to do so would be a death sentence for everyone - including us.

SFX

A long pause. Outside, the villagers are screaming as the things feed upon them.

ABIGAIL

(Coldly) How silly of them. To be drinking so heavily this early in the morn.

SAWYER (VO)

I'm frozen in my indecision. Gun or not, I got a choice to make.

(Shaky breath)

But the last time I made such a choice - it ended with me disgraced and badgeless, and the blood of an entire family on my hands.

Is the Doctor right? Is to open that door, condemning us? Condemning Mrs. Thompson?

Do I dare presume to know better than a doctor? Who speaks with such conviction, I'm sure she could talk circles round the devil himself.

SFX

A long pause. A silent struggle.

Then, slowly, reluctantly, he trudges back to the couch and sits down.

SAWYER (VO)

(Grim. Defeated) No. I do not.

SFX

As the carnage happens outside, Abigail grabs a bottle of whiskey and pours everyone a drink.

SAWYER (VO)

We sit there. The three of us. Drinking whiskey and listening to them die. One by one by one. And the laughter. That goddamned laughter.

GRAY

(Softly. Sincerely) I'm sorry, Sawyer.

SAWYER (VO)

At some point, I start dreaming. Wide awake. Drink in hand. I dream.

AMBIENT/SFX

We're somewhere else. Many years ago.

A vast estate. Night. Cicadas chirp. Rope creaks against a tree branch.

MAL

Push me harder, Ahab!

SAWYER

(Laughing) I'm trying! You've gotten heavy.

MAL

It is rude to speak about a lady's weight!

SAWYER

(Chuckles) My apologies, Lady Skinner.

MAL

You Bates men are as weak as you are lily-livered! How could you be so awful at pushing me on the swing? It takes nothing more than a bit of brute force!

SAWYER

I'm what they call the runt of the litter.

MAL

Is that why they all pick on you so?

SAWYER

Who picks on me?

MAL

Your comrades in carmine! The things they call you when you're out of ear-shot! Really, Ahab. You ought to do something about your shoddy reputation.

SAWYER

Well, they don't call me Ahab out of affection.

MAL

I think it's a stellar name.

SAWYER

You do?

MAL

I always thought he was rather dashing. So singular in his obsession, he brought about his own demise.

SAWYER

Ain't it a cautionary tale?

MAL

Cautionary to who exactly? Government officials? Soft-palmed nobles? Certainly. But to a man like you, it keeps your heart pumping. Cautionary it is not, but rather, aspiration. You are a man who would strike the sun if it so offended you.

SAWYER

He ain't a man to admire, Mal. Took his ship and crew down with him. Man like that ain't worth a dime of admiration.

MAL

So, be better.

SAWYER

(Chuckles) 'Course. Why didn't I think of that?

SFX

Mal bats Sawyer playfully.

MAL

You big lug. Whatever would you do without me?

MAL & SAWYER

(Laughs)

SFX

Their laughter morphs into the laetitia medusas' laughter. The screams have long stopped. It's silent outside. Peaceful, even.

SAWYER (VO)

The warm afternoon light streams in through the gaps in the curtains, like orange blades in the gloom. Hours have passed. And I don't remember any of it.

SFX

Sawyer puts down his drink and stands up. He walks over to the front door.

GRAY

Sawyer - wait!

SFX

Sawyer unlocks the door and yanks it open. Steps out onto the porch.

SAWYER

(Dazed) What in the hell...?

SFX

Gray & Abigail join him on the porch. Something crunches like sand underfoot.

ABIGAIL

What is this? Snow?

SFX

Gray scoops up the sand-like substance. Pours it from her hand.

GRAY

No. No, it's not cold. It's more like ash. Like-

(Shocked exclamation)

Oh my heavens. It's-

SAWYER

People. It's people. Or what's left of 'em.

SAWYER (VO)

We stand there. Ankle deep in the remains of the dead. Watching the abominations float towards the horizon like bobbing red balloons. There are-

GRAY

(Quiet shock) That is not a swarm. That there is a veritable army! An infestation!!

SAWYER (VO)

There are hundreds. Hundreds of those goddamned bloodsuckers. And all of 'em were headin' in one direction.

GRAY

Mister Sawyer. They're going west.

SAWYER (VO)

They're goin' towards Mercy.

**CLOSING MUSIC PLAYS
EPISODE 1 CREDITS**