

Strangekind Studio

presents

MERCY

Episode 2: MERCY

Written & Transcribed by Jae-in Hwan

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strangekindstudio@gmail.com

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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 depictions of alcoholism, misophonia (drinking sounds at 12:40-12:44, 12:58-13:01, 13:19-13:24, 19:56-19:59, 21:04-21:08), self-harm, ableism, ableist language, misogynistic language, graphic depiction of murder, and gunshots.

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

CREDITS

This episode features the vocal talents of Aurora Ave-Lallemant, Austin Sharp, Sneha Kumar, Matt Doherty, and Madison Diaz.

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: WELCOME TO MERCY

AMBIENT/SFX

A steam train slows to a stop. Sawyer and Gray walk through the bustling city.

GRAY (VO)

Mercy. It is a city not founded on anything of value: gold, oil, or fertile land. Rather, it's planted in the middle of nowhere with hard baked desert on all sides. Farming is done tens of miles away and imported goods are heavily relied upon, so isolated is this grimy oasis. Regardless, countless flock here for reasons of their own - whether it be hedonism, the arts, or the mystical.

The gauche and the refined rub shoulders here in Mercy - with marbled white mansions built amongst the soot covered slums. Crooked buildings pierce the dumb, blue sky like broken teeth in a broken mouth. And the cobblestone streets veer into well-trodden dirt roads, frequented by autocars and horses alike.

(Smiling) It's a ghastly place. Perfect for ghastly souls.

GRAY

What an oddity of a city! There's no rhyme or reason to anything!

(Giggles)

Well, Mister Sawyer. Wherever are we going?

SAWYER

(Irritated) We ain't goin' nowhere.

GRAY

It is part of our agreement. We drank on it-

SAWYER

You said you'd see it through. Well it got seen through. And now we part ways, free of debt and one 'nother.

GRAY

I quite disagree. There was no resolution to our little laetitia medusa problem. In fact, I'd say we are yet in the thick of it! Is that not why you are here? To find the source of the smuck?

SFX

Sawyer turns sharply to glare at her.

SAWYER

(Irate) The fuck did ye say?!

GRAY

The smuck, Mister Sawyer. It is how we categorise a group of jellyfish.

SAWYER

(Pause to process)

(Grunts) Oh.

SFX

They keep walking.

GRAY

After risking life and limb together, surely you could bring yourself to see me as more than a garrulous thorn in your side?

SAWYER

Do you always talk so...so...

GRAY

Yes, Mister Sawyer?

SAWYER

(Sighs) Never mind.

GRAY

Now I don't mind getting my hands dirty every so often – especially considering this is all part of my field work – however, looking at the state you are in? Well, it is a mite alarming.

SAWYER

Huh? What state? The hell are you talkin' about?

GRAY

To put it simply, Mister Sawyer – you are disgusting.

SAWYER

(Offended) You ain't so much a lily flower yourself, professor.

GRAY

(Rolls eyes) Were you not aware of the wide berth the other passengers gave us on the locomotive?

SAWYER

They just don't wanna interact with the likes of me. You are a very annoying exception.

GRAY

Well, I am sure prejudice could be a factor – but no, Mister Sawyer. It is because you stink to the high heavens.

SAWYER

Wha-?

(Sniffs himself)

I smell just fine!

GRAY

You are simply nose-blind to your own stench. But I assure you, there is a stench.

SAWYER

Now, I know I ain't playin' with a full deck here, Gray. But even I ain't gonna fall for a thing like 'nose-blind'.

(Scoffs)

Takin' me for a fool! Nose-blind.

GRAY

(Exasperated sigh) All I am saying is that we should find a place to bathe and rest before we go traipsing about. In public.

SAWYER

I gotta call on someone first.

GRAY

(Curious) Oh? I didn't think you'd have a sweetheart.

SAWYER

A sweet-?!

(Chokes on nothing, coughs)

It's an old acquaintance. Someone I met from my er...my last employment.

GRAY

And what was that, exactly?

SAWYER

It's nonya-

GRAY

None of my business, yes. It appears that anything to do with you is beyond my privy. How infuriatingly enigmatic you are.

AMBIENT/SFX

They enter an old, draughty building. Go up some stairs. Sawyer knocks on a door. Nothing. Knocks again. Nothing.

SAWYER

(Frowns) Hm.

SFX

He turns the knob. It turns easily.

SAWYER

(Uh-Oh) Hm.

GRAY

(Quietly) That one didn't sound so good.

SAWYER

(Quietly) His door's open.

GRAY

It appears so, yes.

SAWYER

He never leaves it open. Always keeps it locked, even when he's in.

GRAY

(Troubled) Hm.

SAWYER

Exactly.

GRAY

Gun out?

SAWYER

Not just yet. But uh. Keep your hand on your holster.

SFX

They slowly enter the room.

SAWYER

(Annoyed grunt) Can't see nothin'.

GRAY

All the curtains are drawn.

SAWYER

Get the ones behind his desk. I'll get these 'uns here.

SFX

They move to the windows. Draw the curtains.

A stunned silence.

GRAY

(Breathless, shocked) Oh. Oh, no.

SAWYER

(Dismayed) Ah, shit.

SFX

They walk around the apartment carefully. At times they step on broken glass and splintered wood.

SAWYER

The whole place has been ransacked.

GRAY

And this large stain in the middle of the office is, I believe, blood.

SAWYER

(Simultaneously) Blood.

GRAY

Yes.

SFX

Gray goes to the desk. Rummages around. She picks up a letter.

GRAY

Mister Samuel Beauford?

SAWYER

That's him. 'Skittish Sam' Beauford.

GRAY

This appears to be a missive regarding Mister Beauford's estate. The late Mister Beauford.

SAWYER

(Pissed, upset) Oh fuck. Oh, goddamn it.

Goddamnit, Beau!!!

SFX

He kicks a filing cabinet which rattles. A bunch of papers fall out.

GRAY

(Frowning) Now, Mister Sawyer. I understand you are upset – but please do refrain from uttering vulgarities–

SAWYER

The bastard got himself killed! He knew somethin' was gonna happen. He warned me 'bout it too, just before I left for Bliss. But I just...

(Shaky exhale)

I thought he were havin' a fit. He gets like that - all paranoid and ramblin'. Can't understand him half the time.

Maybe I...Maybe I shoulda listened.

SFX

Sawyer bends down to gather the papers.

GRAY

(Sympathetically) I am sorry, Mister Sawyer. You two were close?

SAWYER

(Gruffly) ...Close enough.

GRAY

You said he warned you about his death.

SAWYER

He's the one who sent me to Bliss. Was on the trail of somethin' big, he said. But that also meant he was attractin' attention. The bad kind.

GRAY

Then this...Mister Beauford, was your partner?

SAWYER

Not really. He just knew how to find things. Back in-

(Stops himself)

Back when we er...worked for our last employer, he was the man who had all the intel. Told us what was what and where to go.

GRAY

I see. And you left your previous employment together?

SAWYER

(Grunts a yes)

GRAY

Use your words, Mister Sawyer.

SAWYER

(Annoyed) Yeh, yeh, we 'left' together.

GRAY

Do you know who might have wished to hurt Mister Beauford?

SFX

Sawyer glances through the papers in his hands.

SAWYER

Naw. I ain't got a-

(Pauses)

(Something catches his eye) Huh.

GRAY

(Pauses in her search) Did you find something?

SAWYER

(Recognising) Huh.

GRAY

Your words, Mister Sawyer!

SAWYER

This here...these...uh...sketches. They look like the lotion medusas-

GRAY

Laetitia medusas.

(Surprised) Are you quite certain?

SFX

Gray approaches Sawyer.

SAWYER

It's either that or Beau's been drawin' jellyfish. But don't think the bastard's even seen the ocean.

GRAY

May I...?

SAWYER

(Grunts a yes)

SFX

Sawyer hands over the papers. Gray studies them.

GRAY

(Surprised & curious) Huh.

SAWYER

(Agreeing) Like I was sayin'.

GRAY

Fascinating. These appear to be notes - or rather, speculations - on the biology of the laetitia medusa. Although, the author of this study calls them shamblers.

(Scoffs) And I thought my appellation was uninspired.

SAWYER

You got a name for that there er-author?

GRAY

Hm. There is only one name I can find on these papers. I am not confident it is the author, however it may be worth following as a lead?

SFX

Gray shows Sawyer the paper.

SAWYER

(Fails to decipher it) Uh. The writin's all swoopy.

GRAY

It says 'Madame Ruin'.

SAWYER

Right.

GRAY

(Raises brow) Really. One might be convinced you have never learned to read!

(Pause)

You can read? Yes?

SAWYER

I can! And even if I couldn't, it wouldn't be any of yer business!

GRAY

(Simultaneously) -Any of my business. Yes.

(Sighs)

Well. We should find out if the carnival's in town.

SAWYER

This ain't the time to be visitin' no carnival, Gray.

GRAY

Madame Ruin, it says.

SAWYER

(Irritated) So?

GRAY

So considering the preternatural circumstances, our Madame of Mystery is most likely to be the kind of Madame found in a carnival. Would you not agree?

SAWYER

Like a – er – one of them fortune tellers?

GRAY

Precisely. It's either that or she keeps a house of...negotiable affections. Consider it a process of elimination.

SAWYER

I ain't followin'.

GRAY

A ranch of the scarlet variety.

SAWYER

Naw, you got yourself confused. It's called an apple orchard, see–

GRAY

I am speaking about a business in the midnight tumble.

SAWYER

Whatchu wanna do that for? You got a heartier 'tution than a blacksmith–

GRAY

(Not as a compliment, exasperated) You, Mister Sawyer, are an astounding man.

SAWYER

(Taken aback, touched) I...that so?

(Coughs awkwardly, chuffed) S'pose I can be.

GRAY

(Sighs) Regardless, the next logical step is to see about a carnival.

SAWYER

Alright. But er. I need to speak to Beau's folks.

GRAY

Of course. But first, a bath.

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SAWYER

I don't need a—!

GRAY

(Interrupting) Oh, trust me. You do.

SFX

Sawyer stomps out of the office.

SAWYER

(Grumbles angrily) Goddamn woman tellin' me what to do, like I'm still goddamn wet behind the ears—

GRAY

(Calling to Sawyer, gleeful) Getting your ears wet is the goal, Mister Sawyer!

SFX

Gray swans after Sawyer. The door slams shut.

SCENE TWO: NIGHTCAP

AMBIENT/SFX

The Hermon Hotel. Night. Gray's room as she brushes her hair.

GRAY

(Humming to herself, content)

SFX

A timid knock at the door.

GRAY

Come in!

SAWYER

(Through the door) Er. Gray? Was wonderin' if you were hungry. Uh. They got fixin's downstairs—

GRAY

Do come in, Mister Sawyer. It is a trifle attempting to decipher your incoherent mumblings with the door between us.

SAWYER

Huh?

GRAY

Come in!

SAWYER

Ah. It ain't proper for a man to—you're a lady so—

SFX

Gray sighs, gets up, and goes to open the door.

Sawyer flinches back.

SAWYER

Goddamn it, Gray! Put some damn clothes on, won't ya?

GRAY

I am wearing clothes.

SAWYER

That flimsy robe ain't much of nothin'!

GRAY

(Giggles) My. I didn't think you were a man of such delicate sensibilities.

SFX

Gray grabs Sawyer.

GRAY

Just come in before anyone sees you.

SFX

The door slams shut. Gray returns to her dresser and continues brushing her hair.

GRAY (VO)

I watch him in the mirror, shifting on his feet like he's got boots full of bees. The man cleans up nice. Beneath the thick layer of dirt and sweat, he's more youthful than I'd expected. Only a few years older than myself. There's a guileless give about his eyes as he glances about, all furtive and nerves, like he's just found himself in a lion's den.

I wonder about him. Wonder at how such a sturdy looking man could be so...pliant.

GRAY

You're acting like it's the first time you've been in a lady's room. Surely a man your age has seen more than a few powdered boudoirs?

SAWYER

Uh.

SFX

Gray spins around in her seat.

GRAY

Really?

SAWYER

Really what?

GRAY

Huh. You are full of endless surprises, Mister Sawyer.

SAWYER

(Not getting it) Er. Right. Look, I've been meanin' to say. You don't have to keep calling me Mister this or that.

GRAY

Very well. What would you prefer?

SAWYER

Sawyer's just fine.

GRAY

Surely by now we are on a first name basis?

SAWYER

(Gruffly) Are we?

GRAY

(Reminding him, coyly) How is your shoulder, by the by?

SAWYER

(Sighs) Wayne.

GRAY

Excuse me?

SAWYER

My forename. It's Wayne.

GRAY

Wayne Sawyer?

SAWYER

What's wrong with it?

GRAY

Oh, nothing at all. Only...it is a very proper name.

SAWYER

Yeah, well. My folks were proper people.

GRAY

The church going type?

SAWYER

(Grunts a yes)

GRAY

Are they...?

SAWYER

(Grumpy) Look - I only came up here to ask if you wanted to eat. If you don't want nothin', that's fine-

GRAY

Wayne.

SFX

Sawyer pauses.

GRAY

How would you like a drink?

SAWYER

(Hesitates) I-I shouldn't-

SFX

Gray holds up a bottle. Shakes it like bait.

GRAY

I picked up a bottle from the bar. A fine Dilstern bourbon. It would be a right shame to drink it all by myself. Especially on a fine night such as this one.

SAWYER

(Caving) ...Dil...A Dilstern, you say?

SFX

Time passes. Sawyer and Gray sit out on the balcony, drinking. It's a peaceful night. Carriages pass by every once in a while.

GRAY (VO)

As I thought. He has the liver of a drunk long abstained from his vice. If I could feel guilty, perhaps this would be the proper time for it. As it were...

GRAY

Another glass, Sawyer?

SAWYER

(Good mood) Why thank you, Gray.

SFX

Gray fills up his glass. They clink glasses and drink.

GRAY

It's so hard to see the stars here. In Bliss, I could see the entire universe, even beside a blazing fire.

SAWYER

Reckon it's all them fancy electrical lights they got on every street.

GRAY

You don't approve of electricity?

SAWYER

Some things ain't meant to be tamed.

GRAY

It's progress, Sawyer.

SAWYER

If I were a religious man, I'd say it was the devil's work.

GRAY

You aren't religious?

SAWYER

Not after what I seen.

GRAY

I would assume one might be convinced of the divine after an encounter with the laetitia medusa.

SAWYER

(Haunted) It weren't god that made those things. Not any god we know.

GRAY

(Intrigued) Whatever do you mean?

SAWYER

You're a professor of the occult. You don't need a man like me to tell you what you already know.

GRAY

I have come across...certain texts describing a variety of deific entities and their cults. I cannot confirm their existence – though not for want of trying, of course – which begs the question: what exactly have you seen?

SAWYER

(Irate) You're not gonna use me for your damn book, Gray.

GRAY

And I won't use you for my book, Sawyer. I am simply making conversation. This is a conversation. Although, I suspect you aren't very familiar with such a concept.

SAWYER

I know how to converse! I converse!!!

GRAY

Oh? With who?

SAWYER

With-

(Pause)

Well, he's dead now, I s'pose.

GRAY

And?

SAWYER

And. And uh. Folks.

GRAY

Such as?

SAWYER

Such as those that pay me to get things done!

GRAY

You are astounding, Sawyer.

SAWYER

So you keep sayin'!

GRAY

You don't have any other...acquaintances? What about your family?

SAWYER

(Pause)

(Gruffly, bitterly) I don't speak to my folks no more.

GRAY

Bad blood, I presume?

SAWYER

Somethin' like that. What about you?

GRAY

(Detachedly, a little cheerily) Oh, my folks are long gone from this world.

SAWYER

(Grim) Sorry to hear that.

GRAY

(Smiling) Don't be. It was, as one might say, an act of god.

(Giggles)

SAWYER

Don't make it any better. Loss is loss.

GRAY

I-

(Checks herself) Yes. It is. Their deaths were...one of the most defining moments of my life.

SAWYER

(Sentimental) They woulda been proud of you, Gray. Getting your education and becoming a professor like you did. Yeah, I reckon they'd be real proud.

GRAY

(Pause)

(Softly, perplexed) Thank you, Wayne.

SAWYER

(Sighs, tired)

I better get to bed. Need to get my head on straight before we visit the Beaufords.

SFX

He stands and knocks over his glass. It shatters.

SAWYER

Ah shit.

SFX

Sawyer bends down to clean up.

GRAY

It's fine, Sawyer. Go to bed.

SAWYER

You'll cut yourself-

GRAY

Not anymore than you would. You're all feet and no grace.

SAWYER

(Sighs) Yeah, yeah. You're probably right.

SFX

Sawyer drops the glass and shuffles back inside.

GRAY

Good night, Sawyer. And thank you for keeping me company.

SAWYER

(Grunts) Uh-huh.

SFX

Gray gets up and cleans up the glass.
She jerks back.

GRAY

(Hisses) Ah, shit!

(Sucks her bleeding finger)

(Sighs)

(Quietly, irritated) You're a fool, Daisy Gray. The biggest fool there ever was.

SCENE THREE: The Beaufords

AMBIENT/SFX

Morning. In the heart of Mercy. Sawyer and Gray are walking through the chaotic streets.

GRAY (VO)

In the searing light of the morning, Mercy is furious and ablaze; the iron rusted heart of the badlands. People of all colour, tongue, and dress, churn in the dust-kicked streets. Carriages and autocars alike travel through the congestion haphazardly. Every now and then, a body gets clipped, but the screams are lost to the human cacophony. It's an endless assault and I eagerly sink into it.

There's nothing like getting lost in a big city. Where the environ is like a force of nature, sweeping me away into the rapids of normality. Here I find the sweet illusion of wearing the same face as those around me. I don't need to craft myself bespoke for each and every interaction. All I have to do is let myself drift with the tide. And it's a rare respite. The quiet anonymity in the chaos and commotion. Here, I can shed Daisy Gray. And simply....be.

GRAY

(Happily) The sun's only just risen and it's already hotter than a steam engine!

SAWYER

That's Mercy.

GRAY

If this is autumnal weather, I dread the summers.

SAWYER

We only got two seasons out here. Blazin' hot and freezin' cold. There ain't no in between.

GRAY

Then winter will be—

SAWYER

Brutal.

GRAY

Such an unforgiving climate and yet Mercy thrives. Fascinating!

SAWYER

(Distracted) Huh? Sure.

GRAY

I've noticed that you have a penchant for wearing gloves. Surely, you would be cooler if you forggoed?

SAWYER

The Beauford's are just at the end of this road here.

GRAY

(Cheeky) Ah. None of my business, right?

SAWYER

Uh-huh.

GRAY

(Giggles)

SFX

They continue to walk. This part of town is quieter. More peaceful.

GRAY

So how long have you known the Beaufords?

SAWYER

You never stop with the questions, do you?

GRAY

I am a student, Sawyer. Seeking answers is what I do.

SAWYER

(Groans) Well, take a breath, wonchya? My head feels like it's gonna split right open.

GRAY

Really? I feel rather rejuvenated by our late-night libations~

SAWYER

Just...don't offer me a drink again. Got it?

GRAY

Whyever for?

SAWYER

I gotta keep my head on straight.

GRAY

Was it ever on straight to begin with?

SAWYER

Gray!

GRAY

(Giggles) Very well.

SAWYER

(Groans/sighs)

SFX

They arrive at the Beaufords. Sawyer knocks on the door politely. It opens.

MRS. BEAUFORD

(Surprised) Wayne.

SAWYER

(Awkwardly) Mornin', Mrs. Beauford. I just uh. I just heard 'bout Samuel.

MRS. BEAUFORD

Oh. Yes, of course. Please, come in.

SAWYER

Ah. I wouldn't wanna impose-

MRS. BEAUFORD

You're never imposing. As it were, I was just making some tea.

SAWYER

Thank you, Mrs. Beauford.

AMBIENT/SFX

They follow her inside. She leads them to the parlour.

They all sit and Mrs. Beauford bustles about setting out the tea.

MRS. BEAUFORD

Please, take a seat. I don't believe we had the pleasure...?

GRAY

Daisy Gray, ma'am. Doctor Daisy Gray.

MRS. BEAUFORD

A doctor? My! I don't believe I've ever had a person of such prestige call upon my humble home. And a woman doctor to boot!

GRAY

You flatter me, ma'am.

MRS. BEAUFORD

And how is it you came to know a doctor, Wayne?

SAWYER

Uh. It's a long story. Where's Mr. Beauford?

MRS. BEAUFORD

(Sighs) Wouldn't you believe it, he's at the store, intent on continuing trade. I told him, Harold, your only child just passed – may his troubled soul rest in peace – but he wouldn't hear a word of it, that stubborn old man! And he's gone and left me to organise the funeral and burial and all of the things that a man should be taking care of.

GRAY

(Scoffs)

SAWYER

(Sympathetically) Sounds like he may be mournin' in his own way. Sometimes...it's hard to face the thing that scares you.

GRAY

(Surprised) That is rather insightful, Sawyer.

MRS. BEAUFORD

(Agreeing with Gray) Isn't it just? But it doesn't make his behaviour any less upsetting.

SAWYER

If it helps some, I can fix up the burial for you. I know a man who can do it for a reasonable price. Five dollars at most.

MRS. BEAUFORD

Oh, would you, Wayne? I would be ever so grateful!

SAWYER

Sure. Ain't no skin off my nose.

MRS. BEAUFORD

Oh you are a good boy.

(Tearing up) I'm glad that Sammy had a good friend like you in his last years. He's always been such a troubled boy. Mind weren't right. Never really was. But he was so, so fiercely intelligent. I reckon he got it from my pa. He surely didn't get it from his foolish parents.

GRAY

(Dryly, blunt) I'm surprised you didn't throw him into the madhouse.

SAWYER

(Chastising) Gray!

GRAY

(Flippant) Isn't that what families do with 'troubled' children?

MRS. BEAUFORD

It was recommended by his physician. But Harold wouldn't hear it. He wouldn't have no son in an asylum, no sir.

GRAY

(Coolly) Hm. Well bully for him, I suppose.

SAWYER

(Perplexed) Uh. Mrs. Beauford. I only found out 'bout Samuel when I went by his office.

MRS. BEAUFORD

I see. Then you don't know how it happened.

SAWYER

No, ma'am.

MRS. BEAUFORD

Apparently, the sheriff ruled it as an accident. An unfortunate fall.

GRAY

(Not convinced) Uh-huh. And what do you think happened?

MRS. BEAUFORD

It...it's not my place.

GRAY

Go on.

MRS. BEAUFORD

(Pause)

Last week, Sammy visited us. I was...pleasantly surprised, of course. He doesn't often visit, you see. But this time, he was...different. Jittery.

SAWYER

Moreso than usual?

MRS. BEAUFORD

That's right. He was begging us to leave Mercy. Leave Temperance even. Said that the end of days was coming upon us. I...I don't think he was very well.

GRAY

(Contemplative) Or maybe he knew something no-one else does.

SAWYER

That ain't helpful, Gray.

MRS. BEAUFORD

No, no. I appreciate the thought, Doctor. Our Sammy has always had such...frightful fancies. Ever since he was a young boy.

GRAY

(Curiosity peaked) Was there some incident that might have triggered your son's...fancies?

MRS. BEAUFORD

Well, now that you mention it. Yes. When he was about seven, Sammy and his father went camping on the outskirts of Dignity. Prime deer hunting out there, Harold says. But on that trip, they came home a day earlier than usual. Harold said that Sammy saw something in the night. Up amongst the trees. My poor boy didn't speak for an entire month after that. And he weren't right ever again.

GRAY

Did he ever describe what he encountered?

MRS. BEAUFORD

Oh, it's pure nonsense-

GRAY

Indulge me.

MRS. BEAUFORD

(Sighs, fretting) When he could speak, he told me it was a fearsome, flying creature. Like a...a one-winged snake. I couldn't get much more out of him, I'm afraid.

GRAY

A one-winged snake?

SFX

Gray pulls out her notebook. Flips it open and starts writing.

GRAY

And did this...creature speak to Samuel at all?

MRS. BEAUFORD

I—I'm not certain. He never said anything about that. Doctor – do you know what might be ailing my son?

GRAY

Hmm. Just a case of wild imagination, I believe. Either that or he met the devil that night.
(Laughs)

SAWYER

(Chiding) Gray!

MRS. BEAUFORD

(Upset) Yes...it does appear so.

GRAY

Chin up, Mrs. Beauford! I'm sure Samuel is well at peace now. You needn't fret anymore.

SAWYER

Gray, you need to stop talkin'.

MRS. BEAUFORD

Thank you, Doctor. I too believe he is at peace.

SAWYER

(Sighs)

So. Samuel visited shortly before he...passed. What happened during his visit?

MRS. BEAUFORD

Well, his behaviour was...it was concerning. I wanted to call on the physician. But Sammy wouldn't hear of it. We ended up quarrelling and he left in a state.

(Tears up)

I should have followed him. Should have checked on him afterwards. But I...

(Sighs)

The things he said to me, Wayne. Oh, I was in a state myself. Fuming. Harold told me to give him space, so I did. I...I wish I weren't such a good wife for once. Perhaps my Sammy might have—

(Breaks down into sobs)

SAWYER

You can't blame yourself, Mrs. Beauford. You just can't. The guilt will...It'll eat you right up.

MRS. BEAUFORD

(Tearfully) You are a kind boy.

GRAY

So after this disastrous visit, I presume that is when Samuel passed?

MRS. BEAUFORD

Yes. Two nights ago, I heard of an accident on Providence Row. There was a death, they said. So I went by the office and saw it in-in shambles. The...blood on the floor. (Shaky breath, trying to calm herself)

The Sheriff reported it as an accident, but...but I reckon there's more to my Sammy's death than a simple fall.

GRAY

I can tell you right now that your suspicions are correct. When we were at the office, we saw clear signs of a struggle. I believe Samuel was murdered.

SAWYER

(Muttering under his breath) Goddamnit, Gray.

MRS. BEAUFORD

(Shocked) M-Murdered? But...whoever would want my boy dead?!

GRAY

That is what we are trying to find out.

MRS. BEAUFORD

Wayne – is it true? Was my Sammy...was he killed?

SAWYER

I...I don't rightly know, Mrs. Beauford. But if we find anything–

MRS. BEAUFORD

(Stern, upset) You come straight to me. You hear?

SAWYER

(Softly, sombre) You'll be the first to know.

SCENE FOUR: Madame Ruin

AMBIENT / SFX

A short time later. Gray and Sawyer leave the house and walk down the road. Back into the heart of Mercy.

GRAY

(Brightly) I think that went very well. Don't you? Oh, and that tea was delicious! I'm not really a big tea drinker myself. It's a bit too 'motherland' for me. No, I enjoy my hard liquor and strong coffee. Gets me through the day-

SAWYER

(Exploding) What the hell is wrong with you?!

SFX

They stop walking.

GRAY

(Wry amusement) A great many a thing, Sawyer, I'm sure.

SAWYER

Yeah, I'm beginning to realise that!

You-

(Frustrated exhale) You can't just be goin' around tellin' people their children were murdered!

GRAY

Would you rather I lie to her?

SAWYER

Keepin' your mouth shut ain't lyin'!

GRAY

It is lying by omission.

SAWYER

(Vein's about to pop) Goddamnit! You are-

(Frustrated growl) Ooooh!

You are somethin' Daisy Gray!

GRAY

That I am. And I must ask you, for the umpteenth time, to please refrain from using foul language—

SAWYER

And that!

GRAY

Pardon?

SAWYER

That-that thing you do! Actin' like a goddamn nun clutching your habit at one turn, then sayin' the most—maddening thing in the next! It don't make no sense. You don't make no sense!

GRAY

I make perfect sense to myself.

SAWYER

You—!!

SFX

Sawyer lurches towards Gray.

GRAY

(Coolly) Are you going to hit me, Sawyer? I can assure you, it isn't the first time nor will it be the last.

SAWYER

(Glares at Gray - then exclaims in annoyance)

SFX

They continue to walk.

GRAY

(Amused) My. You do have a temper.

SAWYER

You just have that effect on people.

GRAY

I suppose I do.

SAWYER

(Gruff, a little guilty) I weren't gonna hit you. I don't hit women.

GRAY

How chivalrous of you.

SAWYER

I'm sorry. Alright? I...I suppose I ain't dealin' with it very well.

GRAY

Hm? With what?

SAWYER

Beau. His mother. The leashin medusas.

GRAY

Lae-

(Sighs)

Yes. I can certainly appreciate how stressful everything must be.

SAWYER

And you? Do you deal with monsters and murder quite often? You ain't got a hair outta place.

GRAY

(Cheerfully) Not at all! I am but a greenhorn thrust into murky waters.

SAWYER

I find that hard to believe.

GRAY

Well, that is the truth of the matter. It's just all so...giddyng, I suppose I simply forgot to be frightened.

SAWYER

Perhaps I should throw you in the madhouse. Reckon you got too many bats in the belfry. Whatever a belfry is, anyway.

GRAY

(Hackles raised, triggered) You might admit yourself whilst you're at it, Sawyer. You could hardly be considered a 'stable mind'

SAWYER

(Wryly amused) Is that so?

GRAY

(Sharp-tongued, fast paced, ranting) You may not have exchanged more than two words to another human being – aside from your friend who is now, unfortunately, very much dead and murdered – but allow me to impart a nugget of wisdom that you sorely lack: a stable mind does not possess a deathwish as intent as yours. In fact, it rather opposes our instinct for survival.

SAWYER

Uh-huh. So I've been told.

GRAY

Furthermore, you are hardly the authority on social etiquette when you are, frankly, the most tactless man I'd ever met. And I have met my fair share of coarse, grunting beasts who have made it their personal philosophy to mate and murder at whim.

SAWYER

(Getting irritated) Are you quite done?

SFX

Gray stops walking. Turns to glare at Wayne.

GRAY

No. You obfuscate your true disposition beneath a rather shoddy veneer of civility and humanity. But run as you might, there is no winning against one's inherence. It is, quite simply, impossible. So you can drop the posturing and performance and allow me to be as I am and navigate the investigation as I see fit. Do you understand? Or must I break my words down so that your pea-sized belfry might hope to house them?

SFX

A tense silence.

GRAY

(Giggles) Oops. Did I go too far? Did I wound your ego?

SFX

Silence.

GRAY

(Eyes rolling) Come now, Sawyer. If you frown any deeper, you might wake up with canyons in your face. Everything I said was already known between us, was it not?

SAWYER

(Grumpy) It was.

GRAY

So you do have a mote of self-awareness!

SAWYER

I s'pose it were mighty foolish of me, presumin' to know more'n a professor. So...I apologise for pitchin' a fit at you. Next time, I'll just let you be.

GRAY

(Satisfied, smugly) Thank you.

(Begrudging) I suppose my assessment was a tad harsh.

SAWYER

It weren't. Like you say, it were nothing we didn't already know. And my ego ain't wounded! It just...took me by surprise is all. Didn't think you'd say so many things all at once like that. But I s'pose I deserved it.

GRAY

Oh? So it's just dirt in your eyes, then, causing them to water?

SAWYER

They ain't waterin'!

GRAY

They look rather wetted to me!

SAWYER

(Throwing up his hands) Think what you want then! Arguin' with you is like hollerin' at a damn mountain.

GRAY

For what it's worth, Sawyer. Despite your terrible temper and disposition, you will find that I am as sturdy in spirit as I am in body. Id est, I am impossible to be rid of.

SAWYER

(Grumpy) Yep. Juuust like a limpet.

GRAY

Precisely! On my part, I shall attempt to refrain from further assessments-

SAWYER

Thank you.

GRAY

-and, as a kindness, I shall allow you to curse and blaspheme to your heart's content.

SAWYER

Uh. Thank you?

GRAY

You are so very welcome.

SFX

Gray swans away.

AMBIENT/SFX

Gray and Sawyer are traversing through the perils of the carnival. There's a wall of noise - a heaving crowd around them, children screaming and laughing, rickety roller coasters and rides, and stall owners shouting at the two as they pass by.

SAWYER

(Groans/sighs, frustrated)

GRAY

Not a fan of the carnival, I take it?

SAWYER

(Grunts a yes)

GRAY

Be any more dour and you might poison the well!

SAWYER

Maybe this well ain't worth savin'.

GRAY

The sun is bright! And everyone is in a jolly mood! Look at the colours and gaiety! Smell the-the ah. Sweet treats!

(Sniffs)

Ooof. Nope, thaaat's body odour.

SAWYER

(Grumpy) It's hot and sweaty and there's far too many people packed together in a far too big of a space and there are far too many children-

GRAY

(Hates children, loves ribbing on Sawyer) Oh, what's wrong with children? They are a delight!

SAWYER

(Struggling to articulate) They're...they're sticky!

GRAY

Such is the nature.

SAWYER

Exactly.

GRAY

So where might one go about finding a mysterious Madame?

SAWYER

Could ask around. What about that there tent?

GRAY

The circus tent?

SAWYER

Is that what it is?

GRAY

(Beat) Sawyer. Is this your first time attending a carnival?

SAWYER

(Grunts an I don't know)

GRAY

You are a well travelled man and you have never once attended a carnival? Or a funfair? A circus?

SAWYER

Ain't them the same things?

GRAY

Oranges and apples, Sawyer!

SAWYER

I was too busy gettin' eaten by lila medusas. Ain't got time for dallyin' around.

GRAY

No, I don't imagine it's physically possible for a man like you to...'dally'.

SAWYER

You gonna barb me with your words again?

GRAY

No, no. I said I wouldn't. But you so do make it tempting!

AMBIENT/SFX

They enter the circus tent. The chaos outside is muted.

GRAY

Looks like they're setting up for a show tonight.

SAWYER

(Grunts)

GRAY

Excuse me!

SFX

A young circus worker approaches.

WORKER

You can't be in here, ma'am!

GRAY

We are looking for a Madame Ruin!

WORKER

(Hesitates) Oh. Uh. I'm afraid we don't have a Madame Ruin here. Sorry.

SAWYER

(Groans in dismay) Eurgh. So we came here for nothin'.

GRAY

How gullible you are, Sawyer! It is quite obvious that he is lying.

WORKER

(Totally lying) I-I ain't lying!

SAWYER

(Tired) Tell us where she is, boy.

WORKER

I'm getting Archie! He's our strongman, see, and he-he won't hesitate to toss you out on your rears! 'Scuse my language.

SAWYER

That right?

SFX

Sawyer grabs the worker's ear.

WORKER

Argh!! Ouch! My ear! Archie! Archie, help!! Owowowowow you're gonna tear it right off!

SAWYER

You got me curious 'bout why you ain't so forthcomin'. What is this Madame Ruin to you, huh?

WORKER

She-she ain't nothing to me!

GRAY

Ah! So you do know a Madame Ruin?

WORKER

I—Oh, tarnations.

GRAY

(Giggles)

Let him go, Sawyer.

SAWYER

(Irritated huff)

SFX

Sawyer lets the worker go.

The worker rubs at his sore ear.

WORKER

(Panting, relieved, whispering) Oh, thank the lord almighty!

(Hisses) Ouch.

GRAY

Now you know that my companion here has a temper, it might be to your benefit to be honest from hereon. Yes?

WORKER

(Begrudging) Fine.

GRAY

Wonderful!

WORKER

Sure, we got a Madame Ruin. But she ain't been properly working for months.

GRAY

Please do elaborate.

WORKER

There ain't much to say. Only that she's as crazy as popcorn on a hot stove.

GRAY

(Coldly) Oh? That is a rather interesting assertion for a carnival worker to make.

WORKER

Uh-huh. But she's been with us for so many years. Big boss is a soft man, so he won't let her go. Instead, we just let her set up out back where we don't get any customers. Let her think she's still working.

GRAY

(Dryly) How very kind of you.

WORKER

Yeah, well, I wouldn't advise going near her.

GRAY

(Drier than the Sahara) Because she's 'crazy'?

WORKER

That and...well...the things she says. Now, I don't buy into the whole psychic thing. It's the devil's magic, see, and-and I'm a man of the lord.

GRAY

(Losing her patience) Get to the point.

WORKER

But with Ruin. I don't know. She predicted Miller's consumption. Said she saw him bleeding from his mouth. Said he was gonna meet his ma and pa in less than a year.

SAWYER

Lemme guess. He died in a year.

WORKER

Right. Same goes with Old Peterson. Mrs. O'Reilly. And that's not even the worst of it. I'm convinced she can see right into a man's soul. Sees things she has no business seeing.

GRAY

(Curious) She sounds absolutely fascinating.

WORKER

Fascinating ain't the word I'd use. But sure. Point is, you best stay away if you know what's good for you.

GRAY

(Excitedly) Out back you said?

SFX

Gray promptly leaves.

SAWYER

Uh. Thanks.

(Grinning) And sorry 'bout the ear.

WORKER

(Disgruntled) Yeah. Yeah. Don't say I didn't warn you!

AMBIENT/SFX

Sawyer hurries after Gray. They walk to Ruin's tent together. It's deserted here - we can hear the carnival off in the near distance.

SAWYER

Gray! What the hell has gotten into you?

GRAY

Nothing but a sense of adventure and a healthy dose of curiosity!

SAWYER

(Not convinced) Gray.

GRAY

(Pause)

I just didn't like the way he described her is all.

SAWYER

Whaddya mean?

GRAY

(Scathing, bitter) Men are awfully frightened of things they don't understand.

SAWYER

(Huffs amusedly) I ain't understand you half the time but you don't scare me none.

GRAY

(Pause)

(Sincerely amused and pleased) You, Sawyer, are an anomaly.

SAWYER

I got two legs and two arms, don't I?

GRAY

(Utterly confused) Pardon?

SAWYER

And I ain't been to the sea for years.

SFX

Gray stops mid-step to stare at Sawyer.

GRAY

(Pause to think)

(Bursts out laughing when she realises) An anomaly, Sawyer! Not an anemone!

SAWYER

(Embarrassed, blushing) I said what I said!

GRAY

(Feeling better, fond) You are a right fool.

SAWYER

(Grinning) You're only just realisin' that now? Maybe you're the bigger fool betwixt us, professor.

GRAY

(Giggles) Maybe I am.

SFX

They keep walking.

SAWYER

Ah. This must be it.

GRAY

(Reading the sign) 'Madame Ruin. Knows all, sees all & tells all.'

SAWYER

Ominous name, that. Ruin.

GRAY

(Excited, like a kid) Hurry along, Sawyer! I want my fortune told first!

SFX

Gray hurriedly enters the tent. Sawyer reluctantly follows.

GRAY (VO)

The tent's dark and cramped, almost like a coffin. Pungent frankincense weighs heavy on every breath. There are an indeterminable amount of nick-nacks, trophies, and treasures

cluttered across every available space. For a hulking mass like Wayne Sawyer, every step is a precarious risk.

In the centre of the dizzying stage, is a small round table draped with carmine cloth. And a hunched figure in a crumpled black veil, like a widow in mourning. Madame Ruin is surprisingly young. At most in her mid-thirties. Though the look in her wide, wild eyes gives her an uncanny aura that seems to transcend age.

These are not the eyes of the mad. But the eyes of the omniscient.

GRAY

(Greeting) Madame Ruin.

RUIN

You have finally come.

SAWYER

(Snorts) You open with that line for every customer?

GRAY

Sawyer. Behave.

SAWYER

(Grunts) Eh.

RUIN

Sit. Sit. Please.

SFX

Gray and Sawyer sit down.

SAWYER

(Whispering to Gray) Why does it smell so weird in here?

GRAY

(Whispers back) It's frankincense.

SAWYER

(Sniffs) I don't like it.

RUIN

The incense aids in opening the spiritual channels. Unlocks the sacred door to the metaphysical.

SAWYER

(Incredulous) Uh-huh.

GRAY

Madame Ruin. My name is Doctor Daisy Gray and this is my surly companion, Mister Wayne Sawyer.

RUIN

Welcome, Daisy Gray and Wayne Sawyer. Your arrival has been long expected.

SAWYER

Suuure it has.

RUIN

You are not a believer.

SAWYER

Oh, I believe in a great many things, ma'am. But I'm afraid that don't extend to all this snake oil fiddle-faddle.

RUIN

She is not where you think she is.

SAWYER

Huh?

RUIN

The one that haunts you. She is not where you think she is.

SAWYER

(Pause)

(Irritated, scared) Oh no. I don't want any part of this.

GRAY

Mister Sawyer is simply here as an observer. I, however, would very much like to engage your services, Madame Ruin.

RUIN

You have questions.

GRAY

I do indeed!

SFX

Gray pulls out the notes from Beau's office. Places it in front of Ruin.

GRAY

Do you recognise these notes?

SFX

Ruin picks up the notes.

RUIN

They reek of death.

GRAY

That's right. They were found in Mister Samuel Beauford's office. We believe him to have been killed a few nights ago.

RUIN

You are correct in your assumption.

SAWYER

You couldn't know that.

RUIN

He was struck in the head. Several times. Died upon the second impact.

SFX

Gray pulls out her notebook. Starts taking notes.

GRAY

I see! The second impact you say?

SAWYER

(Pissed) Now see here! You don't use Beau's death to wrangle coin outta us.

RUIN

I see what I see, Mister Sawyer.

GRAY

And she hasn't yet solicited a transaction, Sawyer. So you can calm yourself-

SAWYER

I got half a mind to have you arrested as his killer! Why the hell was your name on these here papers, huh? What do you have to do with the locust medusas?

GRAY

Ah – ‘shamblers’, they are referred to in these notes. Which originate from you, I presume?

RUIN

Unfortunately not. I do not recognise this handwriting. However...I am familiar with these creatures, yes.

GRAY

(Eagerly) Please. Tell us anything and everything you know about them.

RUIN

They are of the stars. Called forth to serve a master.

SAWYER

You mean they’re...they’re summoned?

GRAY

A-hah! Just as I suspected!

SAWYER

How do we get rid of ‘em?

RUIN

Why do you concern yourself with this matter, Mister Sawyer?

SAWYER

They’ve been killin’ folk over in Bliss and seen headin’ to Mercy. Won’t be long ‘till they start killin’ here too.

RUIN

I suggest you end your quest here and leave Mercy while you are able.

SAWYER

I ain’t runnin’.

RUIN

You believe you have much to gain in this doomed city. However...I see only loss for you. A great many losses.

SAWYER

(Annoyed sigh)

It's like jawin' at a hitchin' post.

GRAY

Can you tell us how one might summon this creature?

RUIN

I cannot.

GRAY

Cannot or will not?

RUIN

They are one and the same, Doctor Gray.

GRAY

Very well. Then would you have any idea who might be behind the summoning?

RUIN

My sight does not extend to me such knowledge.

GRAY

Is there anything you might be able to tell us?

SAWYER

This is just a waste of time-

RUIN

Scarred palm.

SAWYER

(Sharp intake)

RUIN

I see a figure with scarred palms. I see a dangerous proposal. A dark tome written by a dead man's hand. I see the hunter. The haunter. A great war to be raged. And you. I see you both caught in the hands of chaos.

SFX

Gray furiously scribbles all this down.

GRAY

(Slowly, as she writes) "...caught in the hands of chaos."

(Excited, intrigued) But whatever does it all mean?

SAWYER

(Breathless, shocked) How did...how did you know about the...

RUIN

Beware, Mister Sawyer. She is not where you think she is.

SFX

Sawyer suddenly stands.

GRAY

Sawyer?

SAWYER

We gotta go.

GRAY

But I still have so many questions--!

SFX

Sawyer strikes the table.

SAWYER

NOW, GRAY!!!

SFX

Sawyer abruptly leaves.

GRAY

(Sighs)

Well, thank you for your time, Madame Ruin. And...thank you for these intriguing leads! I shall most definitely call upon you in the future. Although, I suppose you already knew that.
(Giggles)

RUIN

You too must be wary, Doctor Gray.

GRAY

Must I?

RUIN

The apple, though sweet, will oust you from your Eden. Preserve yourself and your efforts, and you may find salvation yet.

GRAY

(Pause to digest her words)

I appreciate the nebulous warning. One last question if I may.

RUIN

Of course.

GRAY

What happened to you, that they now think you to be mad?

RUIN

(Smiling) Farewell, Doctor Daisy Gray.

GRAY

(Laughs) In other words, it is none of my business.

(Half-joking) Farewell, Madame Ruin. It has been an absolute pleasure not getting to know you.

AMBIENT/SFX

Gray leaves the tent. She and Sawyer make their way back through the carnival.

GRAY

Got a bur under your saddle, Sawyer?

SFX

Sawyer says nothing. Just walks at a fast pace.

GRAY

Something she said struck a nerve in you.

SAWYER

Just a load of horseshit-

GRAY

Who is 'she'?

SAWYER

Huh?

GRAY

The 'she' Madame Ruin kept referring to. 'She is not where you think she is.'

SAWYER

(Lying) I ain't got a damn clue.

GRAY

(Not believing him) Right. Well, despite her impressive opacity, we did get a rather important lead.

SAWYER

The libby medusas are summoned.

GRAY

Precisely! A confirmation of my initial hypothesis. Question is, who is the summoner and how are they summoning? I suggest we track the next one we encounter and it may lead us to its master.

SAWYER

Before we do anythin' else, we gotta make a quick detour.

GRAY

Where to?

SAWYER

The undertaker.

GRAY

Ah. I suppose you do have a funeral to arrange.

(Excited) Oh! We could take the opportunity to confirm the cause of death. Died upon the second impact, she said.

SAWYER

(Upset) Watch yourself. Beau ain't a fun riddle to solve.

GRAY

(Forcing herself to act sombre) No. No, of course not. My apologies, Sawyer.

SFX

They leave the carnival. Walk down a quiet road.

GRAY

Seems a right shame to leave so suddenly. Do you not wish to at least see the sideshow?
Ride the ferris wheel?

SAWYER

Are you really in the mood to be ridin' the ferris wheel?

GRAY

Always! I'm also rather peckish for candied apples.

SAWYER

Eurgh.

GRAY

I don't think I have ever met a man who didn't like himself a candied apple!

SAWYER

(Helplessly) Gray. Please.

GRAY

(Beat) Very well. But next time-

SAWYER

Next time I'll buy you all the candied apples you want.

GRAY

(Perking up) Don't make promises you can't keep now.

SAWYER

(Weary smile) I take my promises seriously-

SFX

Sawyer stops walking. Gray stops too.

GRAY

What is it, Sawyer?

SAWYER

(Hackles raised) We've got company.

SFX

Gray pulls her gun from the holster.

STALKER

Oh I wouldn't do that if I was you. Not if you'd like to keep your pretty little skull intact.

GRAY

That's Doctor Gray to you, sir.

SAWYER

Whaddya want with us?

STALKER

(Menacing smile) Naught from you. Naught but your souls, that is.

SFX

BANG! Stalker fires his gun.

CLOSING MUSIC PLAYS
EPISODE 2 CREDITS