

Strangekind Studio

presents

MERCY

Episode 7: NEIGHBOR PT. 1

Written & Transcribed by Jae-in Hwan

Original Script Edited by Matt Doherty

Released on Friday 4 October

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 violence & gore, mentions of suicide attempt and suicidality, mentions of genocide, graphic depictions of historical racism & colonial violence (incl. lynchings, arson, and riots), racist slurs, graphic depiction of murder & death (22:12-22:45), alcohol use, smoking, mentions of drug addiction, sexual language (innuendos), themes of assimilation & colonialism, and misophonia (blood & gurgling at 22:12-22:45; coughing at 11:12-11:24).

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

If you are feeling suicidal, you are not alone and there is support available. You deserve to feel supported.

You can find help at the IASP website which lists hotlines and resources for your locality: <https://www.iasp.info/suicidalthoughts/>

If you are considering suicide or self-harm or are in danger, please call your local emergency services immediately to ensure your safety.

CREDITS

This episode features the vocal talents of Tenest Tang, Sneha Kumar, Aurora Ave-Lallemant, Austin Sharp, James Reece, Michelle Kan, Madison Diaz (SomethingExtraVA), and Matt Doherty.

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](https://www.epidemicsound.com), [Freesound.org](https://www.freesound.org), and [Pixabay.com](https://www.pixabay.com)

THE FOXKEY CHRONICLES LINKS

Our featured friend of the show is The Foxkey Chronicles: What Hides Beneath by Cole & Eleana Hill!

Listen to The Foxkey Chronicles now on all podcasting platforms or the RSS here:

<https://shows.acast.com/the-foxkey-chronicles>

NOTE ABOUT THE TAGLINE

The line quoted in this episode's tagline is from one of the many poems carved into the walls of Angel Island, where Chinese immigrants (amongst many others who weren't wealthy and/or European) were detained upon arrival. The full poem, labelled 'Poem 19', reads:

"Since our parting, another autumn has yet arrived.
I have become a distant traveller of far away places.
Remembering your great kindness, I know in my heart I have not repaid you.
Hoping to see good tidings, I'll depend on writing letters."

You can read about the history of Angel Island here: <https://www.aiisf.org/history>

ANNOUNCEMENT

JAE-IN HWAN

Hey it's Jae. Just a couple of important announcements before today's episode. Episode 7 is a heavy one with lots of triggering content & themes. It specifically deals with real historical racism & colonial violence, and deals with themes of assimilation & alienation. I highly recommend you check the content warnings and relevant timestamps in the description of this episode, before you listen. If you do have any concerns, suggestions, or comments about anything featured in this episode or throughout the run of this show, please don't hesitate to let us know.

Now on a lighter note, I would like to introduce our friend of the show, The Foxkey Chronicles: What Hides Beneath from the incredibly talented Cole & Eleana Hill.

The Foxkey Chronicles is a queer western folk horror set in 1874, about the residences of Murkwood, Texas, and the enigmatic force that hunts and steals them into the night. Foxkey is one of those shows that is high quality across all aspects of production and I can't recommend it enough. Have a listen to the trailer, and the special episode drop on our feed, and if you like what you hear - make sure to give them a follow and some love!

That's all for now! Thank you for listening. Until next time.

THE FOXKEY CHRONICLES TRAILER

INTRO MUSIC

NARRATOR (VO)

In The Foxkey Chronicles: What Hides Beneath, you'll follow us back through time to the Old West, and to a world filled with magic, demons, and gunslingers. There, the line between the light and the dark is guarded by the Foxkey Clan, a group gifted with supernatural powers to fight against the tides of evil.

SFX

Insidious laughter.

GRUFF MAN

What are we thinking here, Foxkey?

SMIRKING WOMAN

We're not letting this demon leave this mountain!

SFX

Gunshots.

NARRATOR (VO)

Vera Fowley - once Vera Foxkey - was a widow and a mother. One thing she was not was a witch. Together, with a motley crew of heroes, she must protect the town of Murkwood from the rising threat of Blight - the bringer of death - and her wretched children, The Whispers.

BLIGHT

Go, my children! Find them! Find the Chronicles!

SFX

The Whispers howling.

NARRATOR (VO)

With the help of a reclusive hero.

EZEKIEL

What am I even doing here?

NARRATOR (VO)

A self-conscious bookworm.

FELIX

Is that a demon?!

NARRATOR (VO)

And a mysterious woman.

CLARA

Don't you go making me shoot you!

NARRATOR (VO)

Can Vera face pure evil and bring justice to the town of Murkwood?

VERA

I haven't had to shoot a woman before, but there's a first time for everything.

NARRATOR (VO)

The Foxkey Chronicles is available now.

END TRAILER

SCENE ONE: JACK YUNG WITH A 'U'

AMBIENT/SFX

Where we left off in Episode 6. The bell tower. Night.

SAWYER grabs JACK.

SAWYER

NO!!! I ain't lettin' you go!!!! I ain't EVER lettin' you go!!

JACK

You'll fall with me!!

SAWYER

Then fall I will!!!! And it'll be your damn fault!!!

JACK

Sir-Mister Sawyer-please-!!!

SAWYER

(Panicked) AH FUCK!!!

SFX

They fall.

A crow caws like thunder. And SAWYER and JACK hit the ground. BAM!!!

Only - it isn't the ground. It's the crow.

The crow caws again - and flaps its wings - giant, immense, like a dragon.

SAWYER & JACK

(Pained exclamation as they land on LIL FUCKER)

JACK (VO)

(Groggy, confused) The sky lurches. The stranger is still and limp beside me. There's blood. His? Or mine? Feathers, black as night. Wings, larger than sails. And below us...is Mercy.

JACK

(Soft exhale as he loses consciousness)

SFX

As we fade out, we hear the steady swish of giant wings.

PAXTON

(Commanding) SPARTA!

AMBIENT

Slow transition to the office of Boomer & Ceely Incorporated. Morning. The bell tower in the Southern District tolls six times.

SFX

GRAY, SAWYER, LILA, PAXTON, and JACK are sitting on the couches. Somewhere nearby, LIL FUCKER caws and flaps about.

LILA

Here's your coffee, Mister Yung.

JACK

(Shaky, meek) Th-Thank you kindly, Miss Sassoon.

SAWYER

You got your head on straight, kid?

JACK

(Embarrassed) I have found my senses, yes.

(Guilty) My-my apologies, Mister Sawyer. I hope you weren't too hurt by the fall.

SFX

SAWYER picks up his 'coffee'.

SAWYER

Naw - just a lil' knock to the noggin'. Skull's tougher than a steel plate!

(Chuckles)

(Slurps loudly)

LILA

(Concerned, perplexed) Wayne, that's a paperweight.

SAWYER

(Startled) Wha-?

(Realises) Oh.

PAXTON

(Exasperated) Oh dear god.

SAWYER

(Mumbling, red-faced) Yeah-I was just...uh...checkin' it for...uh...whatever!

SFX

SAWYER trades the paperweight for his cup.

GRAY

(Chuckles) That was quite a dive you took! Thought I'd have to arrange for two caskets when we found you.

SAWYER

Don't sound too disappointed!

LILA

I am so relieved you are both alright. If it weren't for Sir Crow...

SAWYER

Yeah - how did Lil Fucker save us? Alls I remember is fallin' off the tower and-well, wakin' up to see Cross' doiled mug in my face.

PAXTON

(Coolly) I am sitting right here, Mister Sawyer.

SAWYER

(Flatly) I know.

PAXTON

(Snooty scoff)

SFX

PAXTON whips out his fan and flutters it before his own face.

PAXTON

To answer your crudely worded question, my corvine companion has the ability to - momentarily - manipulate his form.

JACK

(Wide-eyed) So...so the bird caught us?

PAXTON

Indeed, Mister Yung.

JACK

(Fully accepting) I see. Well, you have my thanks, Lord Cross. And you, uh-Sir Crow.

GRAY

(Surprised) You are taking this all rather well.

JACK

I've no reason to question your report.

GRAY

(Intrigued) None whatsoever? It goes against common sense, does it not?

JACK

Common sense is rarely, if ever, akin to the truth.

GRAY

(Pleased) My thoughts precisely. It seems you have a good head upon your shoulders, Mister Yung.

SAWYER

Yeah - so why the hell were you tryna take a dive, huh?

LILA (VO)

The young man - Jack, his name is - falls silent for a time, gazing down at the steaming coffee in his hands. He looks to be in his early twenties, yet he wears his youth badly. Dark shadows hang heavy beneath eyes that are weathered and aged, and it's disorienting to gaze upon him for too long. As though he's present in every age he's ever been and will be - and he is suffering greatly for it.

JACK

(Quietly) I don't belong here.

LILA

(Encouraging, softly) Of course you do, Mister Yung. Our door is always open to those who need a-

JACK

(Interjecting) No. No, I mean. I don't belong *here*.

LILA (VO)

He gestures helplessly around himself, with the countenance of one who has far too much to say, yet not enough strength to say it.

JACK

(Wryly, half-joking) Normally, I might be inclined to think you won't believe me. But seeing as you have a magical bird, maybe you wouldn't think my story too outlandish.

(Shaky laugh) Although, when I think on it, it is even outlandish to me.

GRAY

Nothing is too outlandish, Mister Yung. New knowledge is always considered so before being accepted as the truth.

LILA

(Gently, coaxing) Go on, Jack. We're listening.

JACK

(Pause to gather his thoughts)

My family was originally from the Guangdong province in China. My father and uncle worked on the railroads - as thousands of our people did. After a landslide killed my uncle and gravely wounded my father, he decided instead to work in a cigar factory which was, while poor in pay, a safer occupation.

AMBIENT/SFX

We're back in time. 1877, San Francisco. During this flashback, we hear illustrative SFX of JACK's narration.

JACK (VO)

My sister Emma and I were raised in a mining town outside San Francisco - and by then, the soil was already long soaked in the blood of the Ohlone people, for the violence of the white man was endless, as was their greed for gold.

SFX

Miners working their pickaxes. A battlefield with gunfire and screams.

JACK (VO)

That was the world we grew up in. The world that stripped us of our mother-tongue and mother-names. The kind of world that told us that people could be killed like rabid dogs and the government - the authority of this very land - would reward you handsomely for it. It was backwards. Barbaric. But it was the only world we knew.

SFX

A rabid dog barking - then mercilessly shot. Bodies dumped on the ground. Coins exchange hands and are counted. A gold piece spins on a table and falls just as a pickaxe bites into stone.

JACK (VO)

By the 70's, the mines bore naught but stone, and they were quick to pin the blame on us. Oh, they liked us yellow folk at first. Thought us quiet and peaceable. So long as we kept our heads down and kept to our place, they liked us real good.

SFX

We're in a mine, water leaking. Someone's mining. But there's nothing to be found. A riot breaks out. Angry voices shouting and howling. A couple screams as they are led to a tree.

JACK (VO)

But then the gold ran out and the town got poor. And the white folk, they got angry. Mad. They thought us thieves. They thought us the sly, cunning chinks, here to drain them of their prosperity. And so they took to the streets. Hung us up on the trees like balloons caught in branches.

SFX

The screams suddenly cut short. Falling bodies. Splintering bone. Swinging rope.

JACK (VO)

And the sickness, the madness, it spread in violent conflagration, and the embers caught on our homes and they burned us to the ground.

SFX

Fire catches alight; gains body and turns into a raging inferno. A home becomes rubble.

JACK (VO)

That's how I lost them. My family. They couldn't get out fast enough. And I didn't stay long enough to sift through the ashes for their bones. I skipped town before they could string me up too.

SFX

Night. Jack breathing shakily as he packs his bag and walks out of town, footsteps heavy.

JACK (VO)

And so it went for many years, until I found myself in the city of Mercy. Where I whiled the days away in stupor.

AMBIENT/SFX

Mercy. Night. We hear a rowdy saloon downstairs. A dog barking nearby. A couple arguing heatedly in the hallway outside. JACK enters his apartment and takes off his shoes. He sits at the dining table, exhausted.

JACK
(Tired sigh)

JACK (VO)
Like my father, I worked in a cigar factory. It was mindless, soul-crushing work, alleviated only by the reader who was a jolly fellow and oft turned proper stories into bawdy imaginings.

I remember that night returning home with stained fingers and a pilfered cigar, knowing that come morn, I would no longer be of this earth.

It was a relief, in a way. A great burden lifted from my shoulders. But there was also rage. Rage at the sheer unfairness of it all. Rage that I should end my life, while my family's killers might live to a ripe old age.

But the world can't be fair, when it's dictated by the will of a singular type of man.

JACK
(Muttering to himself) What's the big deal with these things anyway, huh?

SFX
JACK lights a match and puffs on the cigar.

JACK
(Chokes, coughs) Oh my god- That's disgusting-!!!

SFX
JACK slams the cigar down onto the table, crushing it.

JACK
(Angry, frustrated exclamation)

JACK (VO)
It was the anniversary of their deaths. And I could offer them no more of myself. I was-

JACK
(In an exhale, hoarse) Tired. I'm so...so tired.

SFX
JACK slumps, defeated. And then, there is muffled laughter through the walls.

JACK (VO)

But then. I heard it. My neighbours - who have thus far been silent – conversing so loud, I could make out their words. And it struck me from the very moment I heard that laughter. That voice.

Something extraordinary was unfolding - and I was in the very thick of it.

SFX

JACK stands and walks over to the wall. We hear sounds of cooking and people conversing loudly. A man coughs.

JACK (VO)

I pressed my ear against the wall - and my frightful suspicions were confirmed.

OTHER JACK

(Laughs loudly)

EMMA

(Crossly) It's ain't funny, Jack!!! I attended the meetin' drunk out of my skull and now they think I'm an out of control sot!!

OTHER JACK

No, no, you can't go around placing the blame on me, gaa1 ze2. You should learn to take responsibility for your own poor decisions.

EMMA

Why didn't you warn me it was liquor?!

OTHER JACK

I did! I did tell you! But you went ahead and guzzled the whole damned bottle anyway!

EMMA

I thought it was juice!!!

OTHER JACK

It tastes nothing like juice! Did you not think it odd after the first mouthful of varnish?

EMMA

No. It-it tasted rather good, actually.

OTHER JACK & MR. YUNG

(Laughs)

EMMA

Maa4 maa1! Do something about him, won't you?!

OTHER JACK

(Wheedling) Maa4 maa1 - gaa1 ze2 is five years older than me. Don't you think she should be able to take care of herself?

EMMA

You little devil-!

SFX

EMMA punches OTHER JACK in the shoulder.

OTHER JACK

(Pained exclamation)

SFX

OTHER JACK runs to MR. YUNG. Throws himself down beside him on the couch.

OTHER JACK

Lou5 dau6!! Do you think I deserve this kind of treatment?

MR. YUNG

(Chuckles)

EMMA

A no-good hellraiser like you should spend a week in the stocks! That should set you right.

OTHER JACK

Lou5 dau6 - did you know that your daughter was seen dallyin' with the grocer's boy yesterday?

EMMA

And he is a very respectable boy!! Unlike you!

MRS. YUNG

Now, now, children. Enough with your warbling. Why don't you both entertain yourself elsewhere?

SFX

Upon hearing his mother's voice, JACK jolts and claws at the wall.

JACK

(In shock, shaky, tearful) Maa4 maa1!

JACK (VO)

I couldn't believe it. *Shouldn't* believe it. But on the other side of that wall - I could hear my family. Alive and well. And most bewildering of all, I could hear *myself*.

SFX

JACK rushes out of his apartment and knocks furiously on the neighbor's door.

JACK

(Frantic, crying, shouting) Maa4 maa1!! Baa4 baa1!! It's me!!! Open up! Gaa1 ze2!! Emma! It's Jack! It's Jack - please-!!!

SFX

The door swings open.

NEIGHBOR

(Pissed) What the fuck are you doin', boy?! I'm tryna sleep!!!

JACK

(Shouting, desperate) Maa4 maa1!!!

SFX

JACK shoves past the NEIGHBOR and rushes into his apartment.

NEIGHBOR

(Enraged, shocked) HEY!!! YOU CAN'T COME IN HERE!!!

JACK

MAAMAA!! WHERE ARE YOU?!!!

SFX

JACK rushes about, searching for his family. But they are nowhere to be found.

JACK

(Sobbing, hysterical) You should be here!! You should be here! I heard you! I need you!! Please-!!!!

JACK (VO)

They weren't there. Impossibly, they were not there.

NEIGHBOR

(Apoplectic) Goddamn fuckin' chinks!! Like filthy rats you is, scurryin' bout places where you don't belong!

SFX

NEIGHBOR grabs JACK and flings him outside.

JACK

(Pained exclamation as he lands on the ground)

NEIGHBOR

(Insidious) You should consider yourself lucky that I don't haul your ass to the Sheriff!!! Go spread your blight elsewhere!! GET!!!

SFX

NEIGHBOR slams the door shut. A long, stunned silence.

JACK

(Lost, smally) Maa4 maa1?

SFX

There's no reply. JACK breaks down crying and hugs himself.

Time passes.

Back in his apartment, JACK sits back down at the dining table.

JACK

(Croaks, hoarse) It's finally happened. I've finally cracked.

(Weak, mirthless laughter)

OTHER JACK, EMMA, MRS. YUNG

(Laughs)

SFX

JACK sits upright.

JACK (VO)

And yet, I heard them.

SFX

JACK stands and returns to the wall.

JACK (VO)

Their cadence. Their tones. Their idiosyncrasies. The more I listen to them, the more I realise it must be real. Because it had been so long since I last heard their voices - this couldn't have been conjured by imagination alone.

And the things they say. They surprise me. They speak of memories that I do not hold. Of places and people unfamiliar to me. Of events that had never taken place.

AMBIENT/SFX

We hear scenes of another life and another world:

A walk through the countryside with bleating sheep.

A young Jack at the zoo, laughing as a parrot speaks.

The Yung family eating at a restaurant.

Young Emma swimming at the beach calling for her mother.

Young Emma and Jack laughing and playing with other children.

The Yungs at the circus, watching a lion do tricks.

The Yungs celebrating Chinese New year in the Western Quarter, with lively music playing in the streets.

JACK (VO)

In whatever world lies beyond this wall, my uncle never died in the landslide. My father never worked at the cigar factory. We didn't live in poverty, counting coins nor skipping meals. Our home was never incinerated; their bones never calcined.

From what I can gather - the deviation happened before I was even born. When my family decided to settle in Mercy, rather than San Francisco. I'd heard about it from my father - how there were two states they were considering: Temperance and California. And by a small nudge of fate, they decided upon California.

SFX

The Yungs drive a wagon on the road.

JACK (VO)

And thus, I found myself alone, decades later, the very last of my kin, smoking a pilfered cigar on the last night of my life.

But this other Jack. This...naive, happy man on the other side of the wall...

He knew not an ounce of my grief. And that roused an anger so foul and twisted, a mortal sin at once appeared commonsensical.

(Grim. Dark) I would not die tonight. Instead, the Other Jack would take my place on Naihe Bridge.

SFX

Fire erupts. The cracking of a mirror under great stress - until it explodes.
Naihe Bridge with the river running underneath.

JACK (VO

So...I dug.

SFX

JACK smashes a hammer into the wall.

JACK (VO)

I chose to dig behind the wardrobe in the rare and unlikely case I'd receive any visitors. Every night, after slogging away at the factory, I'd return home and press my ear against the wall. Waiting, waiting until the voices subsided, so I could continue my work.

My ill-tempered neighbour never complained of the noise, and his silence was confirmation I had set upon the right path. That just beyond this brick and stone, was the very life I had been cheated of.

And then one night, I swung my hammer, and instead of stone I struck...

JACK

(Determined exclamation as he makes one big strike)

SFX

Wood splintering.

JACK

(Panting, surprised) Wood?

SFX

JACK sets down the hammer. Checks the hole.

JACK (VO)

I placed my hand through the hole - which was impossibly dark, as though light could never reach within. And I felt it. The back of a wardrobe - much like mine.

JACK

(Panting, shocked) I'm through!!

JACK (VO)

All I had to do now was find the perfect opportunity to strike. When only the Other Jack remained in the apartment. Alone and vulnerable.

SFX

Time passes. Jack paces his room anxiously from wall to wall to wall. The sledgehammer drags across the ground behind him.

JACK (VO)

It's...odd. Thinking back on that time. I never considered myself particularly immoral. I always tried to live by my parents' example - of honest living and hard work. That windfall shall follow those who are patient and good.

But when my patient and good family were slaughtered for the crime of their existence - I knew their philosophy to be a lie. That righteousness and morality can never be in a world built upon cruelty and evils. Where those who take what they want should expect no punishment - but instead, reward.

So I discarded myself to indulge in mortal greed. To kill was to survive. And survive I would. Impossibly. Terribly.

SFX

JACK climbs through the wall.

JACK (VO)

I delved into that lightless hole in the wall - and...I don't quite know what I was expecting. Maybe something fantastical. A-A dissemination or a revelation. But it was a simple hole in the wall.

And though it seemed to go for an age, I just climbed through as I might a tunnel.

SFX

Jack hops down from the hole in the wall. It's quiet here. Different. There's something familiar yet alien about this place. Somewhere nearby, someone is coughing in bed. They are clearly sick.

JACK (VO)

The apartment on the other side was entirely different from my own. Though the wardrobe was in the same place, everything else was...alien. It was twice as large - large enough to fit a family of four. Not luxurious, but snug. It had every hallmark of a home. A chaotic kitchen, paintings and decor upon the faded walls, dining chairs sat askew, and four winter jackets hung upon the coat rack by the door.

OTHER JACK

(Weakly, groggy) Gaa1 ze2? Is that you?

SFX

JACK squeezes the handle of the hammer; drops the head to the ground - BANG.
He slowly makes his way over to OTHER JACK, dragging the hammer along.

JACK (VO)

I wish I could tell you I turned away. That I had an attack of good conscience and aborted my plan. I wish I could tell you I climbed back through the wall and covered the hole and lived my life with the graces of a man given a second chance.

But I am not that man. I am, indeed, an abhorrence. And thus, I acted as an abhorrence must.

SFX

OTHER JACK shifts in his bed.

OTHER JACK

(Groggy, confused) Lou5 dau6? Are you back already?

JACK (VO)

Gazing upon my own face, I thought I might recognise myself.

OTHER JACK

(Tired, groggy) I told you that I am well enough to be left alone. You shouldn't miss the weddin' for my sake.

JACK (VO)

I did not.

JACK

(Wild, maddened, bloodthirsty exclamation as he strikes)

SFX

The swing of the hammer-

OTHER JACK

(Choked exclamation as he's struck)

SFX

WHAM!! A gory, crunching impact as the hammer smashes into OTHER JACK's skull. WHAM! WHAM! WHAM! Over and over again, the hammer falls. Until the final blow completely obliterates OTHER JACK's head - leaving a gory, bloody pulp.

We hear OTHER JACK's bloody gurgling as he struggles to take his final breaths.

And then...

JACK

(Panting, shaky - shocked by his own actions)

SFX

OTHER JACK goes silent and still. We only hear the dripping blood.

JACK stumbles back and drops the hammer.

JACK

(Shocked, lost) That's it?

SFX

A long, uneasy silence. Drip, drip drip.

Time passes.

JACK grabs OTHER JACK's body and drags it to the hole.

JACK (VO)

I dragged the body through the wall. Discarded it on the floor of my apartment. And then I climbed back through and moved the wardrobe in place.

I wonder how long it took for the body to be found? Perhaps, it has yet to be, as I had no friends nor family to call by.

It was with a delirious sort of anticipation, that I cleared away the blood and the hammer, and climbed into bed to await my family's return.

SFX

JACK climbs into bed and settles.

AMBIENT/SFX

We transition into a montage, illustrating JACK's words.

Warm music plays.

It's deep winter with the icy gales and a howling blizzard.

JACK (VO)

I cannot explain how it feels to reunite with the dead. How it was a resurrection not only of my dear family, but also of myself. I had been the living dead, a ghoul, and I had in that singular instance, revived as the world revived with me and it became clear to me then – this was life. This was what I had forgotten for all those years.

SFX

Winter turns to spring. The soft rain and melting snows. Birds and critters stirring from their hibernation. And as JACK describes his family, it becomes summer - hot and thrumming with life in the lush countryside.

JACK (VO)

And they were so much younger than the well-thumbed portraits of my memories. My mother, with her beautiful long hair, kept neat with her favourite yellow ribbon.

SFX

MRS. YUNG humming as she brushes her hair.

JACK (VO)

My father, with his sun-weathered skin and deep laugh lines.

SFX

MR. YUNG laughs and coughs as he plays with a dog in the park.

JACK (VO)

And my sister, with her restless air and vibrant gaze.

SFX

EMMA laughs as she joins her father, chasing the barking dog.

JACK (VO)

They were returned to me, blazingly alive, and even if I were mad and this was but a dream, I was glad to immerse myself within.

I was happy. *God*, I was happy.

AMBIENT/SFX

Fade back to the YUNG's apartment.

JACK (VO)

After everyone had retired for the night, I moved the wardrobe to check on the hole.

SFX

JACK moves the wardrobe. He runs his hand over the wall. A shaky breath.

JACK (VO)

And it was gone. There was the brick and stone that I had painstakingly dug through – unmarred and untouched.

Though my plan went as intended, and though I had my family returned to me, the roots of unease took hold within, and would, over the next few years, grow into a new kind of madness.

AMBIENT/SFX

Another montage. A distorted reflection in the mirror. The same warm music plays, but over time it becomes off-tune, distorted, and unsettling.

JACK (VO)

You see, my mother wore the same yellow ribbon in her hair - but she was quick to anger at my father's jests. My real mother didn't anger. No, she loved his humour. She would smile and laugh, fleeting and crooked, quick with her jabs as she was with her words.

SFX

MRS. YUNG humming and brushing her hair - before slamming it down with an angry exclamation.

JACK (VO)

My father bore the same complexion and wrinkles - but he drank and smoked a pipe. My real father extolled the preservation of one's health, and never indulged in the vices of his peers. Tobacco, drink, opium - he exchanged for the prospect of longevity.

SFX

MR. YUNG pours himself a drink and lights a cigar. He has a severe coughing fit - it's obvious he's unwell.

JACK (VO)

Emma had the same restless air and gaze - but she was bookish and fastidious and seemed to dislike her brother. Ah - *me*, I should say. I wasn't certain if it was because she knew I was an imposter, but I would often catch her staring at me with heavy disdain.

SFX

EMMA writing and studying her textbook. She slams the book shut and stalks to her room. The door slams shut.

JACK (VO)

My Emma was sporty and rowdy and couldn't sit still long enough to read.

SFX

A baseball game. The batter hits the ball. Cheering and clapping. EMMA runs and skids to the next base.

JACK (VO)

We created our own language and games and protected each other against the cruelties of the world. She was my dearest friend and I hers.

SFX

JACK and EMMA as young children, giggling and playing.

JACK (VO)

And now, she is unrecognisable to me. As is my father. As is my mother. As is myself.

My family was not my family. This Mercy was not my Mercy. When I gazed up at the sky at night, the stars were not my stars. I didn't belong here. I didn't belong back in my home world either - but here, in this alien place, I truly, utterly did not belong.

SFX

Other Mercy. Night. A drunken JACK stumbling through the Western Quarter. He pauses to gaze up at the stars and releases a shaky breath. He opens a bottle of spirits and drinks as he continues stumbling on.

JACK (VO)

I felt this disparity, this rejection, so deeply, it drove me to despair.

SFX

JACK trips over his own feet and falls. The bottle smashes.

JACK (VO)

I complained of illness so I could remain in the apartment alone - and I dug with the determination of a dying man.

SFX

JACK swings a sledgehammer and BANG! He begins digging through to the other side. Time passes. He climbs through the wall - back to his world.

JACK

(Panting, catching his breath, confused) Where's the body...?

SFX

JACK slowly walks around the apartment.

JACK (VO)

My apartment looked the same as it did. Perhaps a bit more clean, a bit more warm. But everything was as it should be. The body however - was gone.

SFX

JACK walks to the window and opens it. It's bright and sunny. The Western Quarter is lively below. The bell tower from the Southern Quarter tolls six times.

JACK

(Huffed laughter, relieved)

(Pause)

(Warm, quiet, smiling) I'm home.

SFX

Quietly fade out.

SCENE TWO: A SECOND CHANCE

JACK (VO)

I lived my life with the graces of a man given a second chance.

AMBIENT/SFX

Montage of JACK settling back into his regular life. Making his bed. Washing. Dressing. Cooking. Walking to work. Rolling cigars at the factory. Walking back home in the evening. Eating dinner. Going to bed. Over and over again in a predictable and peaceful routine.

JACK (VO)

Oddly, none had noticed my miraculous resurrection - and it struck me just how much of a spectre I had been. To live and die and for none to notice. And I was determined to change. To make the best of this precious, banal life.

Though I would never find joy, I could find contentment. This I truly believed. And so with that nirvana within my sights, I set about my days, rising with the sun, working diligently til dusk, and trying to forget the other world that lurked behind the wall.

I lived as my folks had - though the reward was the soil beneath my feet. The very same I would share with my kin, when my time eventually came.

And for the first time...I reached out. I engaged in this world I had once so easily discarded.

AMBIENT/SFX

Cigar Factory. Day. JACK working his shift, rolling cigars. It's monotonous, repetitive work. The READER's voice is in the background of this scene. Every so often, the workers would laugh at their delivery.

READER

(Bawdy, dramatically reading a passage from 'Moby Dick' by Herman Melville)

'Squeeze! squeeze! squeeze! all the morning long; I squeezed that sperm till I myself almost melted into it; I squeezed that sperm till a strange sort of insanity came over me; and I found myself unwittingly squeezing my co-laborers' hands in it, mistaking their hands for the gentle globules. Such an abounding, affectionate, friendly, loving feeling did this avocation beget; that at last I was continually squeezing their hands, and looking up into their eyes sentimentally; as much as to say,- Oh! my dear fellow beings, why should we longer cherish any social acerbities, or know the slightest ill-humor or envy! Come; let us squeeze hands all round; nay, let us all squeeze ourselves into each other; let us squeeze ourselves universally into the very milk and sperm of kindness.

Would that I could keep squeezing that sperm forever! For now, since by many prolonged, repeated experiences, I have perceived that in all cases man must eventually lower, or at least shift, his conceit of attainable felicity; not placing it anywhere in the intellect or the fancy; but in the wife, the heart, the bed, the table, the saddle, the fire-side; the country; now that I have perceived all this, I am ready to squeeze case eternally. In thoughts of the visions of the night, I saw long rows of angels in paradise, each with his hands in a jar of spermaceti.'

SFX

TEN pricks themself with the scissors.

TEN

(Pained hiss)

SFX

JACK hands them his handkerchief.

JACK

Here.

TEN

(Shocked at Jack talking) Oh. I-I couldn't.

JACK

It's just an old handkerchief. Got a thousand back at home.

(Smiling) It's clean.

TEN

(Hesitating) Appreciate it.

SFX

TEN takes the handkerchief.

TEN

(Awkwardly, but curious) John, right?

JACK

(Friendly) Jack. Jack Yung with a 'u'.

TEN

Ten.

SFX

They shake hands.

JACK

Huh?

TEN

That's my name.

JACK

(Curious) Oh?

TEN

I don't very much like the one my folks gave me. So I just call myself Ten.

JACK

(Smiling, slightly rakish) I very much like that name, Ten. Why did you choose it for yourself?

TEN

(Half-joking) That's the number of women I've been with.

JACK

(Laughs, surprised)

TEN

Now, now. I know the good Lord says to save oneself for one's marriage. But this one has just too much love to share.

JACK

(Sarcastically) How pious of you.

TEN

Right? Anyways, I don't ever wanna wed. Couldn't imagine anything worse. Well, aside from torture I suppose. Or working at a cigar factory.

JACK & TEN

(Laughs)

TEN

I'll be honest. Didn't think you could even talk. Sat beside each other for a good few years now and you ain't ever said a word.

JACK

(Awkward, guilty) Aha. Yeah. I was...

TEN

Melancholic?

JACK

(Beat)

I think so.

TEN

I've had a fair few bouts of it myself. And being a yellow feller and all. Well, I'd imagine it's been hard. Being so far from home.

JACK

Actually, I was born here. San Francisco, to be exact.

TEN

Your folks came for the gold?

JACK

We came to survive.

TEN

How are they doing now? Better than surviving I hope?

SFX

JACK turns away and continues rolling cigars.

TEN

(Guilty) Oh. Sorry.

JACK

(Smiling, bitter) It's alright.

TEN

(Embarrassed, angry at himself) No, no. I always put my damn foot in my mouth-

JACK

(Interrupting, friendly) Say, Ten. You wouldn't want to get a drink after work? The first pint's on me.

TEN

(Surprised, pleased) Why I would be mighty agreeable to that, Jack, thank you.

JACK

(Relieved, pleased) Good. Very good.

TEN

(Beat)

(Worried) I didn't mean to bring up any unpleasantness. Are you really alright?

JACK

(Smiling) I reckon I will be.

(Amused) But more importantly - what in the heck is he reading?

TEN

(Grinning) Alls I know is that Melville feller is one sleazy sonuvabitch!

JACK & TEN

(Laughs)

JACK (VO)

So we had a drink.

SFX

The Gunwhale. Night. TEN and JACK having many drinks.

JACK (VO)

And then another. And five more after that.

And by night's end, I had a friend. Me. Jack Yung. The loneliest spectre in Mercy. With a friend.

SFX

TEN and JACK laughing and stumbling in the Western Quarter. Someone falls and smashes a bottle.

JACK (VO)

(Huffs a laugh)

I reckon that was the first night since the fire, going to bed with a smile on my face. I...had hope.

AMBIENT/SFX

NIGHT. JACK's apartment. He's sitting at the table, reading.

JACK

(Reading) 'Would that I could keep squeezing that sperm forever. For now, since by many prolonged, repeated experiences-', Oh, so it uh, goes on like this for a good few pages, huh?

SFX

JACK sits back in his chair.

JACK

I reckon Ten might be right about this Melville fellow.

(Chuckling)

JACK (VO)

But then. The unthinkable happened.

SFX

The door swings open. A STRANGER walks in.

JACK quickly stands, shocked.

STRANGER

Oh! You're home already?

SFX

The STRANGER closes the door, takes off her shoes, and sets grocery bags onto the kitchen counter.

STRANGER

(Brightly, chatty) I know I was supposed to be away for the rest of the week, but I got into another quarrel with my mother and you know how she can get. Have you been eating and sleeping properly whilst I was away? You've not been drinking every night, have you? I went by the store on my way home and thought I would rustle up a nice dinner. None of that greasy affair from the-

JACK

(Confused, awkward) Uh-excuse me, Miss. I'm sorry - I think you might have the wrong apartment?

STRANGER

(Thinks he's joking) Yes, yes, very funny, darling. Would you stop larkin' about and come and unpack the bags? I've been on the train for hours and I'm about dead on my feet. Are you reading? Since when do you read?

JACK

(Thinks she's unwell) Miss - I think you have me mistaken for someone else. My name is Jack Yung and-

STRANGER

(Annoyed) Why are you speaking like that? Stop playing the fool, Jack, and help!

JACK

(Growing anxiety and dread) I'm sorry - do you...do you know who I am?

STRANGER

(Crossly) Of course I do! You are my ridiculous beau who I dearly love despite myself. (Glances at Jack, frowning, concerned) Darling? Why are you looking at me like that?

JACK

(Shake exhale, shocked, whispering) No! Nononono-!!!

SFX

JACK rushes to the wardrobe, shoves it aside. And finds nothing.

JACK

(Panicked) NO!!

SFX

A figurative storm breaks out. Thunder rumbles above as the sea thrashes and heaves below.

JACK (VO)

The world I had returned to was not my own. I had - somehow - deviated from my original path, and emerged into yet another alien place.

In a sickening surge, all the wrongness of this world made itself known to me. All the niggling, uneasy thoughts I'd quashed in my desperation to live - to survive - surfaced like untethered buoys:

I'd never seen Ten before in my life.

The sun rose in the west and set in the east.

The clouds didn't move. The air was sweet instead of bitter.

And when I arrived, there was not a single thing left in my room. As though the Jack of this world had packed in a hurry and fled.

(Sighs, exhausted)

(Grim, quiet) Lies are just comforts we tell ourselves, to get through another day. I took up the hammer, and dug once again.

SFX

BANG! JACK digs through the wall. The STRANGER rushes to JACK.

STRANGER

(Screaming, alarmed) JACK!!! What are you doing?!!! The wall--!! What are you doing to the wall???

JACK

(Panting) Stay out of my way!!!

STRANGER

HAVE YOU GONE MAD?!!!

JACK

(Snarling, pissed) YES!!! So LEAVE before I swing at you too!!!!

STRANGER

(Pissed, yelling) What has gotten into you?!! Jack!!!

SFX

STRANGER grabs JACK's arm.

JACK

(Yells, pissed) I SAID, GET!!!

SFX

JACK shoves the STRANGER, sending her into the table. She kicks the table, enraged.

STRANGER

(Angry, upset) Eurgh!! You're a right bastard, Jack Yung!!!!

SFX

The STRANGER grabs her bag and shoves on her shoes. The slamming door, simultaneous with the hammer striking the wall.

JACK's voice becomes distorted and echoed as he narrates.

JACK (VO)

I dug. I climbed through. And it was, again, an alien place with an alien Jack with alien people. So I dug and dug and dug and dug, for days and months and years and years-

(Shaky exhale, exhausted, overwhelmed)

AMBIENT/SFX

The sound of the hammer striking the wall, over and over and over, as we slowly fade back into B&C OFFICE. MORNING.

JACK sets his coffee down. GRAY is scribbling furiously in her notebook. PAXTON is fanning himself.

JACK

(Tired, sombre) I can't tell you how many doors to how many worlds I opened. But I can tell you that I've been alive for longer than is possible, and even if I am to return home, I can't be sure of it - because I have long forgotten what home looks like.

LILA

And that is when you decided to climb to the belfry.

JACK

That's right, Miss. I'm real sorry for putting you all through that ordeal. But I...I really am at my limit.

(Voice breaking) I don't think I can take much more of this.

SFX

JACK buries his head in his hands.

LILA (VO)

Jack's story is...immense. Quite extraordinary. If it's conjured delirium, then its teller is an exceptional imagination. And if it's true...

Looking around at the others, I see a mix of reactions.

Daisy is wholly immersed, her eyes wide and excited, and pencil going at lightning speed across the page as she takes notes.

Wayne sits in deep contemplation, hand raking over his stubble as he attempts to parse through Jack's tale.

SFX

SAWYER's leg bounces and jitters, before he leans forward and sighs, rubbing his face.

LILA (VO)

And Paxton Cross sits languid and calm, fanning himself slowly as he stares heavy-lidded – not at Jack – but at Wayne.

SAWYER

Seems to me you're in a fair spot of trouble.

JACK

(Surprised) You...You believe me?

SAWYER

I believe you believe it. And that there's enough for me.

GRAY

(Agreeing) I think it is worth a preliminary investigation.

Lila? What are your thoughts, my dear?

LILA

(Agreeing, smiling) One does not shy away from a good story.

JACK

(Disbelieving, teary) I-I don't know if you're all as foolish as I am or-or exceedingly kind.

SFX

PAXTON snaps his fan shut.

PAXTON

Only pragmatic, Mister Yung. For you see, our company - Boomer and Ceely Incorporated - specialises in supernatural vexations.

JACK

(Surprised) I...I was not aware such a service exists. What a remarkable coincidence.

GRAY

Remarkable, undoubtedly so. Coincidence, it is far from.

SAWYER

(Gruffly, albeit kind) So how can we help you, kid?

LILA

Ooo, yes! Surely we can find a solution between the six of us.

JACK

(Confused) Six?

SFX

LIL FUCKER caws.

JACK

(Shaky laugh) Ah. But of course.

LILA

(Giggles) We mustn't forget the hero of the piece!

JACK

I'm not sure how you might be able to help me. If I am even within the bounds of help. But...I wish to return home. I want to breathe the air I grew up breathing and die upon the soil I was born. I even wish to see my Mercy, which I once loathed - now is to me like a shining dream; a momentary lustre I so easily discarded.

LILA

(Softly, wistful) I am familiar with shining dreams.

JACK

(Weak smile) Then you would understand my desire to return to it.

LILA

(Smiling) I think so, yes.

JACK

Ah - the matter of financing your investigation...

SFX

JACK pulls out a coin and sets it upon the table.

JACK

I have hundreds more where that came from. Though the tender itself may be...mixed. It is all gold. And gold, I had found, is consistently valuable.

SFX

LILA picks up the coin to inspect.

LILA

(Fascinated, wide-eyed) My word. Would you look at that? I've never seen such a coin in my life!

(Reading) 'The Great Republic of Equinox'.

(Frowning, confused) 'Equinox'?

JACK

It is what they called this country in the last place I was in.

SAWYER

We'll take the coin in payment.

JACK

(Relieved) Wonderful! I can bring by the rest-

SAWYER

(Interjecting) Just the one will be fine.

SFX

GRAY grabs SAWYER's arm and yanks him close.

GRAY

(Hissing, annoyed) Sawyer!

SAWYER

(Grunts when yanked)

(Annoyed) What?

GRAY

(Whispering, pissed) A single coin isn't enough to cover our expenses!

SAWYER

(Whispering, pissed) He's half-starved and sportin' a deathwish! I ain't takin' his money!

GRAY

(Whispering furiously) We are a business - or have you decided to don a habit and open a convent?!

SAWYER

(Furious whisper, outraged) Maybe it just don't feel right takin' from a kid who clearly ain't got enough to feed himself-!!!

GRAY

(Furious whisper - though a bit louder) Neither do we!!! You scarfed down the rest of the loaf that we were supposed to be savin' to break our fast!

SAWYER

(Overlapping, louder whisper) I got hungry! Y'all were takin' too long gettin' prettified for dinner!

GRAY

(Overlapping, forgetting to whisper) Says the man who spent near ten minutes being strangled to death by his own dress shirt!

SAWYER

(Forgetting to whisper, losing his temper) Ain't you cosied up to Cross for a reason? If you got expenses, then let the damn doilycloth pay!!

LILA

(Nervous, forced laughter) Ah-hahahaha! I'm sure we can clarify the matter of payment later -

(Glares pointedly at GRAY and SAWYER) - Daisy? Wayne??

GRAY & SAWYER

(Frustrated huff)

LILA

(Amused exasperation, like a teacher; sighs) Very good.

(To JACK) Now, would you mind showing us to your apartment, Jack?

GRAY

(Brightly, excited) Oh, yes! Your apartment!! Is it very far?

JACK

(Taken aback, disoriented) Uh-it's-it's but a short walk from the Gunwhale.

GRAY

And this is where the infamous interworldly wall is?

JACK

Yes, Doctor.

GRAY

(Excitedly) Then let us dally no longer!!

SFX

GRAY snaps her notebook shut.

SCENE THREE: THE DOOR

AMBIENT/SFX

The Western Quarter. Day. The usual hustle and bustle. A train passing by, blowing steam loudly.

We cut to:

JACK's apartment. The train goes by outside. JACK struggles to move the wardrobe.

LIL FUCKER flaps and caws around his head.

LILA

(Calling) Sir Crow! Oh, Sir Crow - come and perch upon my shoulder! We should give Mister Yung some breathing room!

SFX

LIL FUCKER flies over to LILA and plops down on her head.

LILA

(Amused) Ooorrr you can sit on my head, yes, that works too, I suppose.

JACK

(Strained vocalisation as he pushes)

SAWYER

Here, lemme help.

SFX

JACK and SAWYER shove the wardrobe to the side.

JACK

(Slightly out of breath) Thank you, Mister Sawyer.

SAWYER

(Slightly out of breath, grunts a reply)

JACK

(Slightly out of breath, a bit awkward) Here it is. The Wall.

SAWYER

(Gruffly, heavy dislike, to PAXTON) Go on then.

PAXTON

(Raising a brow) Pardon?

SAWYER

This is your thing, ain't it? All this, hocus-pocus shit?

PAXTON

(Offended) Hocus-pocus-?!

(Cuts himself off - takes a calming breath)

SFX

PAXTON limps over to the wall to inspect.

PAXTON

(Muttering to himself) It would be, I think, of great benefit, the muzzling of mutts that bark without thought. Lest I be struck with apoplexy.

SAWYER

(Narrowing his eyes) Are you callin' me a mutt?

(To LILA) Did he just call me a mutt?

LILA

(Grinning) Come here, Wayne. And let him work.

SFX

SAWYER trudges over to LILA.

SAWYER

(Grumbles under his breath) The hell is he doin' here anyway? Thinks he can poke about in a man's business...ain't like he owns the city yet anyhow...

GRAY

Well, Lord Cross? What is your diagnosis?

PAXTON

(Primly) Mister Yung is telling the truth.

LILA

(Curious) How can you be sure?

PAXTON

Put your ear to the wall, Miss Sassoon.

SFX

LILA steps towards the wall and presses her ear against the wall.

We hear the muffled soundscape of an unearthly realm. Monstrous howls and alien creatures roam about. It sounds like an entirely different universe.

LILA

(Soft gasp)

(Uneasy, startled) I-I hear it!

SFX

LILA stumbles back.

LILA

(Panting lightly, shaky) Another world...

SFX

GRAY and SAWYER also listen.

SAWYER

(Disturbed) Well, I'll be damned.

GRAY

(Excited squeal)

SAWYER

(Dismayed) Aw shit. Here we go.

SFX

GRAY paces from wall to wall as she rants.

GRAY

(Vibrating, fast rambling, excited) Oh my! OH MY!! This is ground-breaking, earth-shattering, reality-defying! Mister Yung, what you have brought to our attention is the most consequential scientific discovery of recorded human history!! And I am not known to easily make such definitive sweeping statements! If our hypothesis is correct in that this is a indeed an interworldly interdimensional interuniversal doorway that not only manipulates the known laws of space-time, but also confirms the many worlds speculations borne from the Ancient Greek Atomists; that infinite atoms call for infinite voids call for infinite worlds-

JACK

(During GRAY's rant: Wide-eyed, startled) Is she alright?

SAWYER

(During GRAY's rant: Amused) Yeah, it's just professorin' things. Like a pressure valve lettin' off steam, I reckon.

JACK & LILA

(Laughs)

SFX

BANG! PAXTON slams his cane down, interrupting GRAY's rant. She stops mid-step with a gasp.

PAXTON

(Loudly) You would be correct, Doctor Gray.

(Frowning, perplexed) *However*. Doors to other planes are rare and horrifically difficult to open - for many require mortal sacrifices and knowledge beyond those of layman's ability. To put it plainly: this door should not exist.

GRAY

And yet it does!

PAXTON

And yet it does.

LILA

And this is troubling?

PAXTON

For one, Miss Sassoon, doors do not appear out of thin air. They are built with intention and placed where intended. And there is the matter of how it is even possible for Mister Yung to travel so frequently through this door.

(To JACK) Mister Yung. In your original world - before your ill-fated travels - were you exposed to anything of the...supernatural fare?

JACK

I can't say that I was, sir.

PAXTON

And you are not aware of anyone in your bloodline who was gifted in the mystical arts?

JACK

My folks weren't even religious. They followed the customs of our motherland, for death anniversaries and weddings and the like. But nothing more than that.

PAXTON

I see.

(Pause)

(Slight hesitation) And are you familiar with the Herald?

JACK

Uh...

GRAY

Or the Friendly They?

JACK

(Shakes his head) Sorry.

LILA

Of the worlds you've travelled, have you ever come across a place of blue plains?

JACK

(Frowning, confused) Nothing of the like, no.

PAXTON

Interesting. Then it appears this door is fixed to a certain space and time. It is unchanging in this fixed point - though the surrounding environment is not.

GRAY

Then...what lies beyond is moreso world-adjacent?

PAXTON

(Agreeing) I should say so.

SAWYER

(Frustrated groan) Eurgh. This is makin' my head hurt.

PAXTON

(Coolly, clipped) Are you a gambling man, Mister Sawyer?

SAWYER

(Warily, muttering) ...Sometimes.

PAXTON

Then you would be familiar with dice games, ahh—for an example, Hazard. One attends a gambling hall and plays the game at the specified table. One throws the dice across said table and the numbers determine your fortune.

SAWYER

What does this have to do with the magic door?

PAXTON

We are at the table, Mister Sawyer. And that ‘magic door’ as you so eloquently put - is the die. Only, this die appears to have an infinite number of sides.

SAWYER

(Slowly, doing calculus) Huh. Sooo...so no matter what we roll or how many times we roll it, we’ll always be at the same table in the same gamblin’ hall.

PAXTON

A rather shoddy abstraction I know, but yes. To put it plainly, there are certain conditions that must be met in every world. For one: the location and time must be fixed, which is the anniversary of the Yung family’s passing. Two-

JACK

(Finishing Paxton’s sentence) Certain people must exist, such as myself and my family. Whether dead or alive.

GRAY

Mercy is always Mercy.

JACK

Yes, always.

LILA

Even if the legal tender and country might change.

PAXTON

And so on and forth.

LILA

(Uneasy) So...why is it different this time? Why does it...sound like that?

SFX

Everyone stares at the wall. We hear the muffled sounds of ghastly monsters prowling beyond.

GRAY

Did you do anything differently on your way to this world, Mister Yung?

JACK

(Pause to think)

(Then - realisation. A quiet intake)

(Quietly, spooked, wide-eyed) I thought it was my imagination - I-I hadn't been very well you see, not for a long while and-yes, I'm certain of it now. I heard a noise behind me, right on my heels, a terrible scraping and dragging like—

(Exhales shakily)

Like someone had followed me through.

SFX

We hear a flashback of JACK climbing through the tunnel. Someone breathes down his neck as they crawl through after him.

LILA

(Alarmed, uneasy) Who was it? Did you get a look at them?

JACK

No...No, I-I lost my senses for a time and I came to in that there bed. All tucked in and-and the wardrobe pushed back over the wall. There was no-one else but me. So I-I dismissed it as a bad dream or-or a symptom of my illness-

GRAY

That must be it! This time, there are too many players, so the rules have changed.

JACK

I couldn't bring myself to dig. The things I heard all through that night-
(Shudders) I haven't been back here since.

SAWYER

What about your folks? Are they alive here?

JACK

I called on them once. They got themselves a small farm out in Noble - got it cheap 'cus the soil is bad. But my parents worked the land and got it to grow.

(Sad smile) They did real well for themselves. But they're strangers to me, Mister Sawyer. As I am to them - despite their welcome.

LILA

And the Jack of this world?

JACK

A lawyer, if you'd believe it. Went to school and everything.

LILA

(Sincerely) That's very impressive.

JACK

(Darkly) You should have seen their faces light up when they saw me. The Jack of this world abandoned his folks for the lurid call of wealth.

GRAY

Point is - he is alive and present. And *you* cannot be.

JACK

(Wry amusement) They'd die of fright if they saw two Jacks in one room.

SAWYER

(Scratching his head) What the hell are we s'posed to do then? Ain't like there's a map or-or a guidebook for this kinda thing.

GRAY

To find a solution to a problem, Sawyer, one must understand the problem first. If we determine the specifications of this door, we may very well find a way to get Mister Yung home!

SAWYER

(Dismayed) Awwwww no. Nonono. I seen that look in your eye, Doc, and it ain't ever led to nothin' good!

GRAY

Like you so astutely deduced, there is no precedent for Mister Yung's situation. So a precedent we must set!

SAWYER

We ain't goin' in there, Gray!!!

JACK

(Anxious) I-I agree with Mister Sawyer. I'm not a gambling man myself, but I'd wager every coin I have that we wouldn't last a second on the other side of that wall.

PAXTON

I am inclined to believe that an expedition is the best course of action.

GRAY

Thank you!

SAWYER

(Irritated) You ain't a part of this, Cross!!

PAXTON

(Dryly) And yet you defer to my expertise when it so suits.

SAWYER

Don't you ever get tired?

PAXTON

(Coolly) Of what?

SAWYER

Sittin' on that giant stick all day long?

PAXTON

(Chuckles) My word, you are lascivious. I should be flattered by your clumsy esteem.

SAWYER

(Sputtering, red in the face) Wha-I-you—!!!

SFX

PAXTON whistles as if to a disobedient dog and raps his fan upon SAWYER's head.

SAWYER

(Grunt from the hit - it startles him more than it hurts)

PAXTON

(Primly) Stow away your fangs, Mister Sawyer, and make yourself useful.

(To JACK) Mister Yung - where do you keep your tools?

JACK

I've got the hammer right here!

SFX

JACK fetches the hammer.

PAXTON

(Glancing at SAWYER, dryly) Do set down your hackles, Mister Sawyer. Please understand that I am far too old and tired to coddle your temper.

SFX

PAXTON snaps open his fan.

LILA

(Diplomatically) Wayne, I think it's worth a quick look for the sake of research. You don't even have to go through the wall - you can stand out here in case anything goes wrong and-

SAWYER

(Irritated) If you think I'm gonna let y'all go in there without me, then you sure as hell don't know me at all, Miss Sassoon.

LILA

(Smiling) Ah. How silly of me.

SFX

SAWYER sighs and scrubs his face, frustrated.

SAWYER

(Begrudging) Just a look. Nothin' more.

LILA

Cross my heart!

SAWYER

(Sighs, holds out his hand for the hammer) Kid!!!

SFX

JACK returns and hands SAWYER the sledgehammer.

JACK

Here you are, Mister Sawyer! Only - I don't mind doing the digging-

SAWYER

(Gruffly) You've done enough. Stand back now - further. Further-yeah, that should do it.

SFX

Everyone steps back. SAWYER swings the hammer.

SAWYER

(Vocalisation as he swings the heavy hammer)

SFX

BANG!!!

LILA (VO)

While it might take an average person a few days, it only took our resident Berserker a few hours to dig through the wall; stopping naught to rest nor catch his breath.

As he dug, Daisy, Jack, and I conversed and speculated on what we might find, and Paxton Cross sat at the dining table, watching Wayne work with unwavering interest.

He had on that unsettling expression again, the one that speaks of ill-intent or malice. Though upon closer scrutiny, I'm not quite sure if it's wholly directed at Wayne - perhaps a phantom of his mind also shares the brunt of his ire.

SFX

BANG! SAWYER makes the final strike. We can hear the unsettling sounds of the other world with clarity.

SAWYER

(Panting, tired) I'm through!!

LILA

Oh, well done!

GRAY

Oh!

SFX

Everyone stands and crowds around the wall.

GRAY

(Wry smile) A stunning display of force, Sawyer.

SAWYER

(Chuckles, pleased, catching his breath) I mighta knocked down a fair few walls in my time.

GRAY

(Joking, sarcastic) Doors. Walls. What can't you do?

LILA & SAWYER

(Laughs)

PAXTON

(Detached interest) Hm. We should be able to see through to the other side. However...

SFX

PAXTON pulls out his lighter and flicks it on. He waves it before the 'door'.

LILA (VO)

It's pitch black. But...not just pitch. It's a darkness without real presence or form, and whatever light that might shine within simply ceases to exist.

GRAY

Fascinating. It appears that light cannot travel through these interworldly doors.

SAWYER

(Confused) Light can't but people can?

GRAY

(Thinking) Hm. They must be designed with only people in mind.

PAXTON

Ah - I'm afraid I cannot traverse within due to my limited mobility.

SFX

PAXTON taps his leg with his cane.

LILA

(Excitedly) I'll do it! I'll go!!

GRAY

Ooo, yes, and I!!!

SAWYER

Let me scope it out. Make sure there ain't any Lightnin' Medusas waitin' on the other side.

GRAY

(Protesting) But-!!

SAWYER

(Interjecting) I promise I won't break nothin' and-and ruin your discovery, Doc.

GRAY

(Impatient) Hurry, then!! And if there are any Medusas, don't you dare harm a hair on their head!

SAWYER

(Confused, annoyed) They ain't got no hair!

GRAY

(Shrilly) Figure of speech!!!

SFX

SAWYER tries to climb through the hole. And spectacularly fails.

SAWYER

(Panting, strained vocalisations as he struggles)

GRAY

(Laughing) Sawyer. I think there's been a slight miscalculation.

SAWYER

(Panting, straining) I ain't miscalculu-miscal-cala-miscalli-

(Snapping) I can make it!!!

LILA

(Amused, worried) I don't think you're going to fit, Wayne. Come down before you get hurt!

SAWYER

(Panting, straining) I...CAN...FIT!!!! HRRRGHHH!!!

(Exclaims/curses as he loses balance)

SFX

SAWYER falls in a heap.

JACK

(Worried) Are you alright, Mister Sawyer?

SAWYER

(Catching breath) Uh. Looks like I don't quite fit.

LILA & GRAY

(Laughing)

SFX

JACK walks over to SAWYER.

JACK

(Chuckles) Need a hand?

SAWYER

(Grunts a yes)

SFX

JACK helps SAWYER up.

LILA

(Excitedly) Well, it can't be helped! Daisy and I shall break ground instead!

SFX

We follow LILA's POV as she crawls through the wall. Everyone's voices in the apartment become increasingly muffled.

SAWYER

(Alarmed, worried) Wait – maybe we should get a rope or summin'--

GRAY

(Gleeful, excited, joking) Lila!! Shout if you get eaten!

SAWYER

That ain't funny, Gray!!! I got a bad feelin' about this.

GRAY

When have you ever had a good feeling about anything, Sawyer?

SAWYER

That's besides the point!

(To LILA - calling) Miss Sassoon, I reckon you should come back!

SFX

LILA jumps out the other side.

LILA

(Panting, vocalisation as she lands on her feet)

(Panting, laughing) But I'm already on the other side!

SFX

LIL FUCKER caws frantically.

GRAY

Lila!! Don't go wandering off now! I'm coming right through!

SFX

Debris shift. Brick and stone clatter and whiz through the air.

GRAY

(Alarmed) LILA!

SAWYER

(Alarmed) Miss Sassoon?!!

JACK

(Panicked) It's closing! Why is it closing?!!!

LILA (VO)

Before I can respond, brick and stone debris fly to their original position - and within seconds, the wall is smooth and whole.

The door is closed. And I am alone in this unfamiliar world.

SFX

LILA rushes to the wall.

LILA

(Panting, shaken, terrified)

(Panicked shout) DAISY!!!!!!

**CLOSING MUSIC PLAYS
EPISODE 7 CREDITS**