

Mercy

By

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OPENING CREDITS

computer screen with photographs of the scenes from our story intermingled with archive shots of the neighborhood as credits roll. a blank word document is opened on the screen and the white fills the frame. Title: *Mercy* is typed in.

FADE OUT TO WHITE

FADE IN FROM WHITE

EXT. EMPTY STREET, FALL NIGHT, NEW ENGLAND

the crisp air magnifies the skelletal face of the moon that stares hungrily down at the world. A decrepit house with flaking shingles and peeling paint, sags in its plot on the street. There is a faint crackle of dead leaves as a breeze moves through them and a vehicle rumbles far off.

on the other side of the street, MERCY, a 20 year old photography student, is taking pictures of the spectral nightscape. She takes a picture.

INT. CREEPY HOUSE, FRONT FOYER, CONTINUED

A front window catches the flash of Mercy's camera outside and a silhouette appears of something unseen watching her inside.

EXT. EMPTY STREET, CONTINUED

she crosses the empty street, steps over the cracked sidewalk and up to the front door. The porch moans with each step. She takes a few more pictures. Mercy is hesitant to if the door will open, but the latch clicks and the door swings in smoothly. Mercy hears a hollow suction noise, like a gasp.

The frozen metal sticks to Mercy's hand as she lets go, foggy fingerprints linger for a moment before disappearing. Mercy digs into her jacket pocket and pulls out a flashlight, clicking it on. With the light and her camera poised she walks over the threshold.

INT. CREEPY HOUSE, HALLWAY, CONTINUED

Mercy creeps through the house, taking pictures of the hallways heavy with dust and perceptible pallor, skeletal stairwells and silken cobwebs.

EXT. EMPTY STREET, CONTINUED

the dead house's windows sporadically glisten with flashes as Mercy makes her way through.

INT. CREEPY HOUSE, CENTER, CONTINUED

Mercy comes out of a hallway into the center of the house. There are no windows, but an eerie luminescence glows. In front of her is a massive wall that spans both floors and disappears into the shadowy rafters of the room. Mercy is compelled, fixated by the cracked parchment of wallpaper. She snaps a shot of the wall. The room is filled with a momentary light. She checks the camera screen and leaves without a second thought.

INT. CREEPY HOUSE, FRONT FOYER, CONTINUED

the deep shadow is cut by the light from outside as Mercy opens the door. She is satisfied with her night's work. She exits and closes the door behind her but something gets caught in the door's path and the door stops short of closing, the darkness inside hovers in the gap, filtering out into the night. Shadowy fingers edge around the door.

EXT. APARTMENT STREET, SUNRISE

Mercy walks quickly down the sidewalk to her apartment building. The grass beside the sidewalk is wilted with frost and glistens in the early day. The light breaks through the trees a few meters off. It lands on the sapling maple growing next to the building. The red bricks have a stark contrast between the pallid shadow and rusted red.

Mercy takes out her key and opens the door. as she lets it close, it hovers for a moment on its hydraulics, the pump hisses. The shadow cast by the frame grows more saturated as something extra fills the dark pool, slowing the door.

INT. APARTMENT BUILDING, STAIRWELL, CONTINUED

Mercy climbs three flights of stairs.

INT. APARTMENT BUILDING, HALLWAY, CONTINUED

Mercy opens the stairwell door and walks to the right down the hall to her apartment's door.

INT. MERCY'S APARTMENT, MAIN SPACE, CONTINUED

The window hits the door knob sparks with sunlight. her kitchen faucet quietly drips to itself and the refrigerator clicks on to a low hum. The windowsill, crowded with picture frames, cast geometrically shadows. A bird flies past the window casting a shadow that darts across the wall.

INT. MERCY'S APARTMENT, BEDROOM, MID-MORNING

the fireengine red alarm clock sits on the desk. the little metal arm between the two bells on top snaps and the clock starts to ring. Mercy grumbles under her duve. Slowly her hand reaches out, crawls up, groping for the clock. Mercy rips the covers off and silences the alarm. She retreats to her pillow for a moment, musters motivation and grudgingly, rises from bed. She lunges for her camera in a sleepy stupor and shoves the SD card into her computer reader. As the pictures load, she goes about her morning ritual.

Mercy comes back to her desk now fresh and with a bowl of cereal. She clicks through her digital photographs as she munches on the colorful mess.

She stops abruptly and drops the spoon back into the bowl. She leans in to inspect the screen. She fidgits with the keyboard. The old printer on the edge of her desk wheezes to life. With lots of mechanical clicks, a photo squeezes out. It is the photograph of the wall. But there is something in the picture that wasn't there before: a faint cloud in the bottom left corner that looks like a ghost. Mercy squints at the print. She stands up and walks over to get better light from the window.

MERCY
What the hell?

FADE OUT TO WHITE

SMASH CUT TO

INT. MERCY'S APARTMENT, BEDROOM

time lapse of desk and printer in front of the window as three days move forward. The printer keeps spitting out the picture sporadically at any time of day or night. The lights turn on at random hours as Mercy goes in and out, goes on her computer, prints more pictures.

SMASH CUT TO

INT. MERCY'S APARTMENT, LIVING SPACE, EVENING

the faucet is turned on in the sink at full power, making a tinny roar in the metal sink. Mercy starts washing two plates and dishes used for stir fry. The food refuse spirals down the drain.

MERCY

I swear that it wasn't there. like,
I know that its there now, but it
wasn't there when I took it. Swear
to God.

PUSH OUT

Mercy is in the kitchen talking over the countertop to her good friend BOWEN, after having dinner. Bowen is looking through several photographs of the plain wall. there is a nearly imperceptible increase in the blemshes as the photos progress.

BOWEN

well, it had to be, maybe it was
just dark when you snapped the shot
and you didn't see it.

MERCY

That's what I thought, but then
what about how its changing. every
time I go back to the house and
take a new picture, it's a little
darker. don't you see it?

Bowen looks through the pictures with increasing interest. There is something terribly off with the pictures.

BOWEN

I don't know Merc. It is possible
for supernatural stuff to show up
in film.

(CONTINUED)

MERCY
yeah? you think that's it?

She finishes the dishes, drying her hands with a kitchen rag and throws it into the corner of the counter as she sits down next to Bowen.

BOWEN
see these lines here? It's like
they're forming hyroglyphs or
something -

MERCY
(excited)
Shit! I didn't see that. It's like
its saying something. Writing on
the wall. Biblical shit.

she takes the pictures from Bowen.

BOWEN
Can you show me it?

INT. CREEPY HOUSE, HALLWAY, NIGHT

MERCY
Ah, don't you love the smell of
mould in the moonlight?

Bowen follows behind Mercy. He walks into a cobweb and lets out a squeal. Mercy laughs.

MERCY
seriously? Mr. Paranormal? It's a
little different than looking at a
computer screen, isn't it?

BOWEN
Um, obviously. I'd rather destroy
my eyesight looking at a screen
than choke on this nasty old-lady
smell this place is working.

A shadowy figure moves out of the dark corner off to their right. Bowen is startled.

BOWEN
What was that?!

MERCY
(snarkily)
What, Scooby-Doo did you see a
g-g-g-g-g-ghost?

(CONTINUED)

BOWEN

Shut up. There was something there.

MERCY

Yeah. Okay. I can't take you
anywhere nice.

They continue and turn a corner in the hall, at the end is
the Center.

BOWEN

I was wrong.

MERCY

To which of your many inaccuracies
are you admitting?

BOWEN

It doesn't smell like old lady. It
smells like the dead.

MERCY

(mumbling to herself more than
to Bowen)
good to hear that you took your
Vincent Price pills this morning

Bowen sits at the other end of the tiny second-hand couch,
all but forgotten by Mercy as she shuffles through her
picture.

INT. CREEPY HOUSE, CENTER, CONTINUED

BOWEN

Mercy?...

The wall stands solitary. It looms over the two. Mercy's
flashlight's beam gets lost high above them in the shade.
She searches the wallpaper.

MERCY

nothing. there's nothing...

she takes a picture and looks at the LCD screen.

MERCY

nothing...

Bowen is not looking at the wall. He jerks his head around
at deep corners of the room. A black figure darts just out
of his sight and he hears a whispered growl. The growl grows
louder and louder, but Mary can't hear it she is fixated on
the wall.

(CONTINUED)

SMASH CUT TO

EXT. EMPTY STREET, CONTINUED

Bowen drags Mercy out by the hand as quickly as he can. On the sidewalk, they stop.

MERCY

Jesus, Bowen. If I had known you were such a wuss I wouldn't have brought you.

She starts to walk down the street. Bowen spares one last uneasy look at the Creepy House. One of the tattered curtains in a front window moves, as something lets it fall back into place after watching the two leave.

CLOSER ANGLE

Time lapse of window as three days progress, the shadows closing in each day as season gets deeper towards winter. Occasional camera flash is seen in the window. On the last flash there is a silhouette in the window.

BOWEN V.O. (ON PHONE)

Can you just do me a favor and not go back to the place at least?

MERCY V.O. (ON PHONE)

whatever, fine. did you get the link I sent you?

INT. MERCY'S APARTMENT, LIVING SPACE

time lapse of the counter top over three more days, with the kitchen in the background and the light going on and off as mercy enters and leaves. A pile of books grows from a few titles: *All About Eve*, *Bill Brandt: Shadow and Light*, *A Confederacy of Dunces*, *Invisible Monsters: A Novel* to more titles like *The Paranormal Caught on Film*, *Ghosts Caught on Film*, *Photography and Spirit*, *Ghost in the Shell: Photography and the Human Soul*. The pile grows and shrinks. Books are opened and closed and left out. More titles that focus on solely paranormal topics.

BOWEN V.O. (ON PHONE)

(sigh)

yeah. Merc, I wouldn't get involved in this. Even if it is just a bunch of dumbass superstition.

(CONTINUED)

MERCY V.O. (ON PHONE)
(annoyed)
Christ Mom, forget it.
(hangs up, dead tone)

EXT. APARTMENT STREET

time lapse of Mercy's bedroom window over four days. The light inside goes on and off at random times, increasingly at night.

BOWEN V.O. (ON PHONE)
Mercy? Mercy?

The shadows grow longer, deeper, more sinister as the leaves fall from the trees and the naked branches claw the chilly air. The shadows seem to close in on Mercy's window as the days pass.

Phone rings several times. Mercy's voicemail pics up.

INT. MERCY'S APARTMENT, BEDROOM, NIGHT

Mercy's desk is littered pictures of the wall. the photos cover her laptop keyboard. She is sitting hunched over the desk, holding the picture in one hand and her head in the other, glaring at it.

MERCY'S VOICEMAIL
Why hello. this is Mercy's personal assistant. Mercy is out of the office on important business. Please leave me a message and I will be sure she gets back to you.

V.O. BOWEN ON PHONE
Merc? Mercy?! Hey where the hell are you? Goddamit Mercy! Put that goddamned picture down and pic up the goddamn phone!

Mercy barely aknowleges the message. she suddenly reaches to a pile of pictures. Realizing they're there she swipes them away to reveal an old chipped mug of pens. She grabs a red sharpie and carefully circles the darker spots on the burry cloud in the corner and colors in the slashes to make them more pronounced. She finishes and caps the marker, biting the tip as she scrutinizes the picture. She focuses on the foggy anomaly. After some time lapses, the amorphous figure slowly contorts into a face. Distubed, she tosses the photo away and rubs her eyes then rests her head in her hand.

(CONTINUED)

She peers out of her hands and sees the photo at the edge of her desk next to the window. The frosted glass is a veiled mirror in the looming night. She sits up, noticing something in the watery reflection. In the mirrored image of her desk is the picture and the markings, which difinitively spell out M-E-R-C-Y.

MERCY
(suddenly quite angry)
the fuck is messing with me?

she pushes back her chair, knocking it down. She storms out.

INT. MERCY'S APARTMENT, MAIN SPACE, CONTINUED

Mercy storms through, grabbing a jacket tossed carelessly over a chair and shoves her arms in as she fumbles with the door knob.

INT. APARTMENT BUILDING, HALLWAY, CONTINUED

Mercy opens the door and slams it shut storming off, with a determined intensity. But the slam is so forceful the door bounces back staying slightly ajar.

Time lapse shows the sunlight from the inside over the course of a day.

911 RECEPTIONIST
911. What is your emergency?

BOWEN V.O. (ON PHONE)
Um...my friend Mercy. Uh, Mercy Templin. No one has seen her - we can't find her - her apartment is open but she's not there...

911 RECEPTIONIST
Are you filing a missing person report?

CROSS FADE

INT. APARTMENT BUILDING, HALLWAY, DAY

There is police tape across the door, which is now open. Police officers, forensic investigators, detectives are walking around in Mercy's apartment.

(CONTINUED)

POLICE OFFICER V.O.(ON PHONE)
Hello, Mr. Collins. I'm calling
regarding the missing person report
you filed of Mercy Templin. We have
a development in you case...
(fades)

Bowen comes into the frame, ripping the tape off as he enters the doorway, agitated. The ambient noise of the crime scene is muffled. It snaps to proper volume as Bowen crosses the threshold.

INT. MERCY'S APARTMENT, MAIN SPACE, CONTINUED

Bowen stands in the doorway looking at the people walking past him. Some look up at him, some ignore him. DETECTIVE BLAKE walks over to Bowen.

DETECTIVE BLAKE
Mr. Collins, Detective Rory Blake.
Please come this way.

Detective Blake leads Bowen to the bedroom.

INT. MERCY'S APARTMENT, BEDROOM, CONTINUED

The scene is exactly how Mercy left it. There is a forensic investigator that leaves the room with Mercy's computer as Bowen and the Detective enter.

DETECTIVE BLAKE
We are hoping you can explain this.

The Detective takes a photograph from the desk that has been slipped into an evidence bag and passes it Bowen. Bowen stares at the picture. The red slashes are now vivid red. They glisten as if just painted on. Little drips are pilling at the bottoms.

DETECTIVE BLAKE
It's Mercy backward. This very
possibly might be a homicide, we
want you to come to the station to
give a statement.
(fades)

The audio grows more muted. Bowen is staring at the picture with wide, frightened eyes. But he is not looking at the blood-red writing on the wall. He is looking at the fog in the corner of the picture. It could be a imperfection in the print, or a discoloration on the wall. But Bowen can't stop

(CONTINUED)

seeing Mercy's face in the picture. Frozen in a horrific
scream.

FADE OUT