

Liars & Leeches

Episode 1- "Unpacked and Stored Away"

Created by Hemlock Creek Productions

Story by Marisa Ewing

Written by KJ Scott

THEME MUSIC BEGINS

NARRATOR

From Hemlock Creek Productions
comes the new, supernatural horror
audio drama "Liars & Leeches."

THEME MUSIC CONTINUES

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

"Liars & Leeches" is a horror audio
drama intended for mature audiences
only. It contains sensitive topics,
including discussions of gun
violence, as well as depictions of
domestic violence, stalking, and
murder. More specific details about
each episode are listed in the show
notes. Listener discretion is
advised.

THEME MUSIC CONTINUES

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

Liars & Leeches: Episode 1-
"Unpacked and Stored Away"

THEME MUSIC ENDS

SFX: Police Sirens

OFFICER

(through radio)

All available units respond to the
Cedar Grove Mall. Reports of shots
fired and multiple victims. Suspect
should be considered armed and
dangerous.

SFX: Ominous Whooshing Tone

S1- INT. Tonya's House

Melancholy Music Plays

NARRATOR

Tonya stared down at the picture of
her sister and brother-in-law,
their faces beaming up at her as
they waved to the camera.

(MORE)

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

Tonya remembered taking the picture of them a few years ago, the day they moved into this house. She wished she could go back to those simpler times.

NATALIE

(grunting as she's carrying a heavy box)
Hey, where do you want this box to go?

TONYA

(coming back to reality)
Oh, um...you can just set it over there for now.

Melancholy Music Ends

NARRATOR

It had been over a month since Tonya had moved into her sister and brother-in-law's old home, and she was having trouble accepting that it was hers now. Everywhere she looked were little reminders that she was here... and they were not.

NATALIE

(placing the box, catching her breath)
You know, this place isn't half bad. Victorian. Original flooring. High ceilings. I bet the hosts of one of those home renovation shows would love to get their hands on it.

TONYA

(defensive)
It's nice the way it is. If Tami and Jim had wanted to change anything, they would have.

NATALIE

(after a beat)
They would've wanted you to be happy, Tonya.

TONYA

(sighs)

NATALIE

And I think if painting a room a different color would make you happy, they'd cheer you on. The house is yours now, after all.

NARRATOR

And that was the hard part, Tonya thought. Tami and Jim had left her the house, but Tonya never imagined she'd be living here. She'd always assumed Tami and Jim would change their will to leave the house to their future children.

NATALIE

Okay so, bedroom and office are basically done. All we've got left are the kitchen and your clothes. Which, by the way, you could definitely do some Marie Kondo-ing of those. You've got stuff in there I swear I saw you wear ten years ago.

TONYA

Hey, my college style was unparalleled.

NATALIE

(jokingly)

Yeah, back in 2010. No one wants low rise jeans anymore. They're a torture device designed to make people feel shitty about themselves, no matter what TikTok is trying to tell us.

TONYA

You have a TikTok?

NATALIE

Absolutely not, but I follow enough people on Twitter who do, and they report back with what the youths are saying. Besides, Liz says that Gen Z is trying to make Y2K fashion come back.

TONYA

Well if Liz says so, it must be true.

NATALIE

Don't act skeptical. She's the one you hired for culture reporting.

(pause)

But seriously, we need to update your clothes. Moving is the perfect time to make a fresh start with a new wardrobe. You donate a few things, you buy a few more, suddenly you're a whole new woman.

TONYA

(hesitant)

I don't know.

NATALIE

(suddenly serious)

Have you decided what you're going to do with Tami's stuff? Jim's too?

TONYA

I'm not sure yet. I was thinking about storing them, or maybe giving them away, but I don't know...

NATALIE

Hey, hey, it's all good. Right now, let's put the stuff in boxes, put them in the attic, and you can take some time to think about it. Let's just focus on getting your stuff unpacked. The makeover can wait too.

TONYA

Thanks. I just... this is hard enough as it is, you know? This is Tami and Jim's home. Their room, their clothes, their furniture. You know what I found, the first night I stayed here?

NATALIE

What?

TONYA

(as if she's about to cry)

A pregnancy test.

NATALIE

(whispered)

Oh God

Soft piano music plays

TONYA

Tami had a couple in the medicine cabinet. They wanted a baby so badly. They had it all worked out. Two kids, two girls - they both wanted girls, Jim wanted to be a girl dad. That's why they decided to buy this place. They thought the yard would be perfect for kids, maybe a dog too.

NATALIE

Jesus. Was she...?

TONYA

No. She wasn't.

(voice breaking)

Little miracles, huh? It's not three deaths then...God...(she begins to cry deeply)

SFX: Natalie running to and hugging Tonya

NATALIE

It's okay. Just let it out. You're good. You're safe. And I'm here with you.

NARRATOR

Tonya had always been grateful to Natalie, in one way or the other. At the start of their friendship, it had been how upfront and honest Natalie had been about how much their boss had sucked. Over the past years, it varied; from honesty about outfits to support during late nights and writing tough stories at work. After Tami and Jim's deaths, Natalie had truly become Tonya's rock in every sense of the word, helping her survive every painful day. Natalie had held Tonya as she cried and had been upfront with her about how she needed to take better care of herself. Without Natalie, Tonya knew she'd probably still be in her apartment, curled under the covers and staring blankly at the wall.

TONYA

(still crying slightly)
It's such a cliché but I keep feeling like they're...they're gonna walk through that door any second. But then I wake up each morning, in their house, and I have to tell myself that they're...that they're not coming back and I'm just going to have to spend the rest of my life missing them.

NATALIE

(softly)
Grief's a bitch.

TONYA

(chuckling sadly)
You're telling me.
(she sniffles)
Thanks for spending a Saturday with my whiny ass.

NATALIE

Are you kidding? There's no other whiny ass I'd want to spend time with. Besides, you clearly weren't going to unpack without a little motivation.

NATALIE (CONT'D)

So, what room's next?

TONYA

For today? Just the kitchen.

NATALIE

How bad is it?

TONYA

Well, I've had a lot of takeout lately but you know. Dishes can pile up.

NATALIE

Oh boy.

NARRATOR

The idea of pushing forward and continuing to work made Tonya feel deeply exhausted.

(MORE)

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

All day, she'd been putting her sister and brother-in-law's things away and replacing them with her own. She needed air. She needed to get out.

TONYA

Hey, not to dump all this unpacking on you and run, but maybe I should go get something to make for dinner.

NATALIE

Wow, and here I was thinking the price for helping you move in was beer and a pizza.

TONYA

(laughing)

Given that we're not in our twenties, I figured my famous vodka sauce and pasta would work?

NATALE

God, you know I love that sauce and you haven't made it in forever. Pick up some frozen garlic bread and I'll be content.

TONYA

(chuckling)

You got it.

SFX: Car door closing and Tonya putting on a seatbelt. She turns on the car.

NARRATOR

As Tonya started her car, she took a moment to collect herself before leaving for the store. She stared at the house Tami and Jim had left her. It had been their pride and joy, a fixer-upper turned dream home. Tonya remembered her brother-in-law Jim spending so much time nitpicking over the yard- mowing the grass, trimming the bushes into just the right shape. But now the grass was overgrown, and the bushes unkept.

SFX: Tonya sighs. The car rolls out of the driveway. There is light thunder in the background.

S2- INT. GROCERY STORE

SFX: Light music playing over the speakers, shopping carts moving, muffled sounds from customers, cash registers beeping.

NARRATOR

In the past, Tonya had always found grocery shopping tedious. The bright artificial lights, the hum of the annoying music playing over the loudspeakers, and the dance of navigating past other shoppers was boring at best and frustrating at worst. After Tami and Jim's deaths, it had turned into a new kind of nightmare. At least this store was nearly empty; Tonya knew she couldn't deal with a large crowd today.

TONYA

(muttering under her breath)

Okay so I've got vodka, I've got pasta, alright. Oh, tomato paste next.

SFX: A customer drops a can, making a loud bang.

TONYA (CONT'D)

(startled)

Oh!

CUSTOMER

(to themselves)

Shit!

(Hearing Tonya's gasp from the end of the aisle)

Sorry! Butter fingers.

TONYA

(through gritted teeth)

All good.

SFX: Customer walking off

NARRATOR

Tonya gripped her basket tighter with sweaty hands, feeling her heart race.

SFX: Heartbeats, low drone

TONYA

(to herself)

You're fine, you're fine. They just
dropped a can. You're fine.

SFX: Heartbeats, low drone continue. Muffled police radio
chatter and heavy breaths from Tonya.

NARRATOR

Of course a loud bang would startle
her. It would startle anyone, but
especially someone whose life had
been affected by gun violence. But
that didn't make it any better.
Logic couldn't make her emotions
settle. She pictured Tami and Jim,
and how a few short bangs was all
it took to take them out of this
world.

SFX: Sounds continue, drone becomes overwhelming.

TONYA

(struggling to catch her
breath, starting to have
a panic attack)

Oh God. No. Fuck, not here Tonya.
Not here!

NARRATOR

The walls felt as if they were
starting to press in as Tonya tried
to breathe.

Ominous whooshing tone

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

She felt like dropping her basket,
running from the store and heading
for the safety of her house. For a
moment, Tonya considered texting
Natalie, whose dry wit might be
able to help calm and ground her.
But this was such a small thing,
and Natalie had already done so
much.

TONYA

(deep, shuddering breath)

Just breathe. You only have a
couple more things to get.

(MORE)

TONYA (CONT'D)

You can make it a few more minutes
without needing your hand held.
(she sighs) Ok.

SFX: The background SFX get abruptly quieter, though the heartbeats continue. Sounds of the grocery store gradually return, including the cash register and music over the speakers.

S3- INT. GROCERY STORE - LATER

CASHIER

Ma'am, I can take you down here!

TONYA

Oh, thank you.

CASHIER

(annoyingly cheerful)

Good afternoon! How's your day
been?

TONYA

(barely believably)

Good. It's good.

SFX: Cashier scanning grocery items. The music over the speakers begins to crackle. A low drone begins and build progressively as the narrator talks.

NARRATOR

As the cashier began ringing her up, Tonya noticed *him* for the first time. A man, tall and slender, but something about him made Tonya deeply uneasy. He was just standing there, frozen in the middle of the aisle, with no shopping cart or basket in sight. One of his hands was shoved deep into the pocket of a large, hooded trench coat, the other hung by his side, a diamond shaped tattoo inked on the back of his hand. Despite his face being obscured by the coat's large hood, (loud impact stinger) it was clear that his attention was fixed on Tonya.

CASHIER

Isn't the weather nice? It's a
perfect July day.

(MORE)

CASHIER (CONT'D)

Ok, not too hot, but still nice and summer-y, and it's supposed to be like that all week. Do you have anything fun planned?

TONYA

(nervously)

Just dinner with a friend tonight.

CASHIER

Aw, that's nice. You know, I was hoping to go into the city soon, see a musical on Broadway. Have you heard of that new one about like Emily Dickinson or whatever? It's supposed to be like really sad and like the entire audience leaves sobbing but I think it sounds good. Sometimes a really good performance will move you to tears, but I think that's just a sign that the show was really well done, you know?

(his voice trails off
as the Narrator starts to
speak)

NARRATOR

Tonya wanted to leave.

SFX: Drone intensity picks up heavily, and a pulsing sound begins.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

The store felt as if it were closing in on her, the walls pressing in and florescent lighting too bright. The store's air conditioning was way too high, and even in the hoodie she was wearing Tonya shivered. The Man was still watching her; even though she couldn't see his face, Tonya could feel his eyes on her. However, the cashier didn't seem to notice her distress.

CASHIER

Even though the audience seems to love it, I don't think the critics agree, but I totally don't buy their reviews. What do you think?

TONYA

I, um... I don't know. I'm not a big musicals person. I never went much when I lived in the city.

CASHIER

Woah, woah, woah, you lived in the city?! A boring little town like Cedar Grove must be awfully different than what you'd be used to in the Big Apple. What brings you out here?

TONYA

(wanting to leave,
starting to panic)
Sometimes life has plans for you that you don't expect.

CASHIER

Ugh I totally understand that. Like I was so excited to move into NYC last year, but have you seen those apartment prices? They are just so damn expensive. I'm not a millionaire you know. So now I live here to save money. Not much theater out here except the community theater. Have you seen them?- (his voice fades out)

NARRATOR

The Man stood unnaturally still, so much so that he could have been a statue. No one else in the store seemed to notice him except for Tonya. Every time she glanced over and saw The Man continuing to stare, she felt her unease turning into fear. Something was wrong. This man was dangerous. She knew that in her gut - beyond any sort of paranoia or trauma, this man was dangerous.

CASHIER

-And it looks like your total is \$25 even. Cash or card?

NARRATOR

Tonya could feel the anxiety coursing through her.

(MORE)

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

She felt exposed and vulnerable,
and longed to be back at the house
with Natalie. The Man still hadn't
moved, watching her as if he was
waiting for something.

CASHIER

Thank you for shopping at the
Hometown Farmstand! Please come
again!

SFX: Shopping bags rustling

NARRATOR

Tonya grabbed her groceries,
grateful to not have to speak with
the cashier anymore, and looked at
The Man one last time.

(pause)

The Man cocked his head to the
side, ever so slightly.

SFX: Loud whooshing sound, intense synthetic pulsing

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

Without warning, he began to stride
purposefully down the aisle towards
her, seeming to move faster and
faster with every step. His hand
started to move out of his pocket,
gripping something Tonya couldn't
see.

SFX: Tonya heavy breathing

Tonya lost the battle against her
panic. She started to run, heading
for the exit as fast as she could.
Her heart was pounding as she made
it to her car, almost dropping her
bags as she fumbled with her keys.

TONYA

(as she fumbles with the
keys)

Fuck!! Shit, fuck!!! Open!!!

SFX: The car door opens. Tonya tosses her bags into the
passenger seat, jumps in the car, and locks it behind her.

TONYA (CONT'D)

(tearfully, panicked)

Oh God, Oh God, Oh God.

NARRATOR

For a few minutes, Tonya simply sobbed alone in her car. In her mind, she thought back to the reports from the mall on that terrible, terrible day. How the shooter had simply stood there, watching people pass, before he'd opened fire. How it all had happened so quickly that survivors struggled to recount what happened. How Tami and Jim made the error of walking out of a store at just the wrong minute.

(pause)

As she began to breathe again - shallow, short breaths - she noticed that there were no loud noises or screams coming from the grocery store. No one else had run outside. There were no sirens. It was as if nothing had happened, as if The Man had evaporated into thin air. There was no threat. The panic remained though, and for a moment, Tonya considered calling Natalie again.

TONYA

Okay. Okay. You can do this. C'mon Tonya. It's just a ten minute drive.

SFX: Car starting

NARRATOR

Tonya pulled out of the parking lot, putting all of her attention into getting back as fast as she could. She tried to ignore how badly her hands were still shaking.

SFX: Car pulling out of the parking lot. Ominous whooshing sound.

S4-INT. TONYA'S HOUSE

NARRATOR

When Tonya made it home, she sat in the driveway for a few long minutes. The Victorian façade of the house towered over her, feeling almost imposing and unwelcome.

(MORE)

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

Tonya's hands gripped the steering wheel tightly. She knew she had to go back inside and face Natalie, but she didn't want to explain what had happened at the grocery store just yet. She wanted to curl up somewhere and rest, but as much as she wanted it, she couldn't let herself do that. She had to put on her best and bravest face and keep pushing forward.

SFX: Front door opening and closing

NATALIE

(as Tonya walks in)
Hey, you're back!

TONYA

(trying to sound like
everything is fine)
Yep. I got everything I needed.

NATALIE

While you were gone I got the kitchen sort of organized. You really need to buy plates that match. Also, I managed to get all those coffee mugs unpacked and stored away without breaking a single one, so your collection is safe.

(noticing that Tonya's
upset)
You okay?

TONYA

(lying poorly)
It's nothing. I'm just hungry,
that's all. Let's get dinner going.

SFX: Water boiling, dinner preparation

NARRATOR

Natalie didn't press Tonya for details as they made dinner. She instead focused on light, easy topics, like the new reality show she'd just binged. However, Tonya knew Natalie wasn't going to let her go so easily. She rarely let go of anything, which made her a keen journalist and a good friend- most of the time.

(MORE)

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

It also meant that today, despite Tonya's feigned sense of calm, she would try to investigate further. The subject would come up again tonight; Tonya was sure of it. The timing, as it turned out, was in the middle of dinner.

SFX: Eating, forks on plates

NATALIE

So, what happened at the store?

TONYA

(mumbling through a mouthful of pasta) I don't really wanna talk about it.

NATALIE

You looked like you'd seen a ghost when you got home. And since you won't talk to a therapist, it's time for Best Friend Therapy, which isn't as good as the real thing but it'll do in a pinch. So, what happened?

SFX: Tonya putting down her utensils

TONYA

(slowly)
...I saw a man.

NATALIE

Someone you knew?

TONYA

No. He was... I couldn't see his face. He was tall though. He had a trench coat on with a hood pulled up over his head. He was just staring at me. The whole time I was at the register, he was just...watching me.

NATALIE

Weird.

TONYA

And then when I was grabbing my bags, he just started rushing down the aisle towards me and...

(MORE)

TONYA (CONT'D)
and he looked like he was about to
pull something out of his pocket.

NATALIE
What? Are you serious?

TONYA
(getting progressively
more upset as she talks)
Yeah. And I just ran to my car - I-
I nearly forgot the damn groceries -
I couldn't breathe, I couldn't
think, I just sat there and I felt
like there was a weight crushing
down on me. I realized it's never
gonna stop. I'm always going to be
terrified of some random guy just
pulling out a gun wherever I am and
it sucks!

SFX: Tonya hits the table

TONYA (CONT'D)
It sucks, and I hate it, and I
hate... I just hate all of this.

NATALIE
(gentle)
Tonya...

TONYA
(crying)
And it's so fucking embarrassing.
I'm an adult. People go to grocery
stores all the time.

NATALIE
Hey, hey, it's not embarrassing.
It's totally normal for you to feel
like that. Also, that guy sounds
like a creep who was trying to
freak you out. So really, I'm
pissed at him.

TONYA
What the hell am I supposed to do,
Nat? I live in their house, in
their town, and every time I step
out of the house I'm convinced I'm
going to die the same way.

NATALIE

...Tonya, I've said it a thousand times, but I think you need a therapist. Because there's only so much I can do.

Soft piano music begins to play

TONYA

(annoyed)

I know.

NATALIE

(throwing Tonya's attitude back at her)

I'm serious. (more gently) You need someone who can help you with this, who's trained to deal with heavy shit and who can guide you in the right direction. 'Cause right now, you're falling apart, and I am not about to see my best friend's life get ruined. I am here for you, I am going to help you get the help you need, but you're going to have to take that first step.

TONYA

(barely holding back tears)

I just... it's so fucking hard.

NATALIE

I know, babe, I know. It's never going to be easy, but it'll get a little better someday. You can be angry and sad and miss them so fucking much, but I promise, you'll be able to start moving forward someday.

TONYA

(sarcastic)

How do you even find a therapist nowadays? And like... how do you find someone when you're going through this? Just walk into some therapist's office like "hi I'm Tonya, and my sister and brother in law were murdered in broad daylight in the middle of a mall."

NATALIE

I'll help. Just promise me that when we find a good fit, you'll go. I don't want you to just wallow.

TONYA

(sighing, resigned)

You're right. I hate it, but you're right.

NATALIE

Yeah, I usually am. Now come on, let's get all this cleaned up.

(pause)

Hey, I know I was going to take the train back to the city tonight, but why don't I take the couch instead? I don't want you to stay here alone.

TONYA

You're sure? Don't you have a plant to water?

NATALIE

You know I've killed all my plants. I have like a nasty, poisonous thumb. C'mon, we can watch some dumb movie on Netflix to unwind.

TONYA

That would be amazing, actually. Thank you. Seriously. But, um, you take the bedroom.

NATALIE

Oh come on, you don't have to pull the self sacrificing schtick with me. I'll take the couch.

TONYA

No, no, it's...it's... I've been sleeping on the couch ever since I came here. It feels wrong to take their bed. I mean, I tried the first night and it just felt like I was intruding.

NATALIE

...You know what I'm going to say.

TONYA

(annoyed)

I know.

NATALIE

Monday morning, I'm going to make some calls.

TONYA

No, on Monday morning, I need your latest article. You'll be focusing on that, not babysitting me.

NATALIE

I can multitask!

TONYA

I'm fine. Seriously. I'll do some research tomorrow. Pinky swear.

NATALIE

If you say so. But before bed, we are watching something really bad that we can make fun of. Like full on Statler-and-Waldorf heckling.

TONYA

(laughing)

That sounds perfect.

Piano music stops

NARRATOR

The rest of the evening was uneventful. Natalie didn't talk about therapy, and Tonya was able to distract herself a little with the ridiculous rom-com Natalie chose. When it was time for bed, Natalie hugged her tightly.

NATALIE

It's gonna be okay. Promise.

TONYA

(beat) I know.

NATALIE

(yawning)

Let me know if you need me at all tonight, but for now I'm going to pass the fuck out. Moving all your stuff today has me beat.

SFX: Natalie walking upstairs and closing the bedroom door.

SFX: melancholy drone plays

NARRATOR

As Tonya settled onto the couch under her favorite comforter, she noticed a picture of Tami and Jim on the mantle. Usually, the picture brought her joy, but today it felt strange. The eyes in the photograph were angled towards her, and she felt as though it was watching her; or rather, she felt as though something was watching her. After an hour of tossing and turning, she finally decided to get up and get a glass of water, hoping it would settle her enough to fall asleep.

SFX: water pouring.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

As she stood by the kitchen window, glass cradled in her hands, Tonya peered down the driveway that cut through the large front yard. In the dim streetlight at the end of the driveway, she thought she saw The Man from before. His hands were deep in his pockets, and the hood of his jacket once again covered his face. Though he was farther away, she knew his eyes were on the house...and on her.

SFX: Dog outside begins barking

TONYA

What the fuck.

She blinked, setting the glass down and pressing her face to the window to see if he was really there. By the time she'd done so, he'd vanished into the night, leaving Tonya to wonder if he was truly there at all.

SFX: Ominous whooshing sound

Outro Music plays

NARRATOR

Liars & Leeches: Episode 1-
"Unpacked and Stored Away" starring
Ryan Reid as The Narrator, Kendell
Byrd as Tonya, Newton "Newt"
Schottelkotte as Natalie, Tyler
Hyrchuk as the cashier, Jamie
Richard-Stewart as The Customer,
and Jess Floam as the Officer.

"Liars & Leeches" was produced by
Hemlock Creek Productions. The
story was created by Marisa Ewing
and the script written by KJ Scott,
with script editing provided by Meg
Williams. Dialogue editing, mixing
and mastering was done by Marisa
Ewing, sound design by Melissa
Pons, and music written by Nico
Vettese of We Talk of Dreams.
Additional recording assistance
provided by Jordan Alexander and
Trey Baker of Music City Studios.
To learn more about the show, cast,
and crew, visit
www.hemlockcreekprod.com. That's
Hemlock Creek P-R-O-D .com.

Thank you for listening. We will
return next week.

END OF EPISODE