

# **LADY MERCY:**

## **Characters & Series Arc**



**Created & Written**

**By**

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# LADY MERCY

*I come without refuge to you, giver of sacred rest.  
I come a fallen man to you, uplifter of all.  
I come undone by disease to you, the perfect physician.*

- Ganga Lahir, Poem to The Ganges River

## **LOGLINE:**

Haunted by her daughter's death, a hospice physician and a band of medical misfits run a euthanasia clinic caring for the terminally-ill, but soon become the centerpieces of a Supreme Court trial challenging the right to die.

## **SYNOPSIS:**

What if you or a loved one were terminally ill? The end was near, but there was an option to alleviate suffering...would you want to know what it is? If you said 'yes', then you're like millions who believe they have the right to go out on their own terms.

The Death With Dignity Act (DWD), or state-assisted euthanasia, is now legal in FIVE states: Oregon, New Mexico, Vermont, Washington – and recently, California passed a groundbreaking legislation. It's a historical story growing in real time. Yet most doctors are afraid of the controversial stigma and the medical community is timid to support.

Lady Mercy is about the doctor willing to lead the way, following a Seattle hospice physician named Dr. Lhasa Ganges: an Indian-American haunted by the slow undignified death of her child from Leukemia, who was too young for DWD. Today, believing death is a right and risking her reputation, Lhasa invests her life savings to open The Ganges: a full-service hospice dubbed after her surname and the same river known for redeeming the dead, where terminally-ill patients are cared for physically, psychologically, and if needed can seek DWD safely.

Lhasa recruits a team of trusted professionals – more so a band of medical misfits, including her ex-husband Oncologist, a PTSD-stricken Psychiatrist, and an orphaned nursing student. The Ganges becomes a home for these broken souls to redefine their lives. That is, until The Ganges' notoriety stirs national debate when media breaks the story and a conservative Senator running for president sets his crosshairs on Lhasa to bolster his campaign. As personal and political tensions rise, The Ganges' 1st patient pursues DWD: an extremely wealthy entrepreneur who donates a large part of his fortune to grow Lhasa's efforts. Yet the entrepreneur's ireful (greedy) family indicts Lhasa for murder, citing their patriarch was not of sound mind to make his own DWD decision. While Lhasa fights for the ultimate civil right, her case eventually reaches the Supreme Court to make history as her own world continues to crumble.

Lady Mercy is a reinvention of the medical drama that is not so much about death, but redemption. Dr. Lhasa Ganges is less Dr. Kevorkian, and more Mother Theresa: an incarnation of mercy, a dark angel, and an antihero who accepts she'll be vilified to make a change for the better...even if at the sacrifice of her own life and freedom.

## WHY LADY MERCY?



*Let us touch the dying, the poor, the lonely and the unwanted,  
and let us not be ashamed or slow to do the humble work.*

*– Mother Theresa*

Understandably, a show about ‘death’ spurs a gut reaction – but all great procedurals, medical dramas, and political thrillers deal intensely with the subject. However, Lady Mercy isn’t just about death, like the successful series Six Feet Under, but about how we approach our scariest outcome.

Lady Mercy is not just a well-rounded family drama either, but a shift in storytelling that can sustain for multiple seasons by examining a cultural commentary dominating next-day conversation and social media. Not only are the characters complex and the story universal, but also for the first time a series can coincide with groundbreaking history about the ultimate civil right.

The way Breaking Bad and The Sopranos redefined what one would do for their family, or how The Wire and True Detective challenged the law—Lady Mercy strives for empowerment, transcendence, and an ode to the human spirit. With Supreme Court cases redefining societal norms – from marriage equality rulings to redefining online privacy – the stigma of DWD will be at the forefront of discussion. Lady Mercy includes:

- Endorsed by The Death with Dignity National Center, offering promotion amongst its membership & affiliates
- Tense Drama w/ Medical Thriller Set Pieces & Diverse Cast
- Large Demographic & Widely Identifiable; Appeals to Baby Boomers
- Topical Relevance; Lends itself to Social Media and PR campaigns
- First Female Antihero Arc akin to Breaking Bad, Sopranos, and Mr. Robot.
- Diversifies Current Programming Slate & welcomes European Co-Productions and International Commercial TV Transfer

# CHARACTERS

## (LEADS)



*While I thought I was learning how to live,  
I have been learning how to die.*

*- Leonardo Da Vinci*

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### **DR. LHASA GANGES (30s-40s)**

- Guarded yet compassionate, resourceful, and highly intelligent. Palliative-Care Physician and Euthanasia Advocate. Educated at Oxford Medical School, Employed at University of Washington Medical Center.
- Lost her only daughter, Kali Rose, after her 10<sup>th</sup> birthday to Leukemia. Led to the dissolution of her marriage to Dr. David Carrell, though remain good friends.
- Operates The Ganges, a full-service hospice tending to terminally-ill patients, providing medical treatment, counseling, and DWD.

### **DR. DAVID CARELL (40s)**

- Stoic, slick, and radical thinker. Lhasa's ex-husband and Surgical Oncologist at University of Washing Medical Center; their marriage fell apart after Kali's death.
- Having remained friends and cohorts, Lhasa recruits David to join The Ganges. Within series is diagnosed with lung-cancer that may be terminal.
- David sets a date for euthanasia, but is unsure if he'll follow through upon his rekindled love for Lhasa.

### **DR. SILER SNOW (early 30s)**

- Introverted, sly, and unpredictable. Former Marine Lieutenant & Abnormal Psychiatrist at Harborview Medical Center who suffers from PTSD from the Iraq War; has prosthetic leg due to IED ambush.
- Recruited by Lhasa to counsel patients and confirm their mental health for DWD requests. Opens up to Aubrey Crest, both of whom suffered abusive childhoods.

### **AUBREY CREST (mid 20s)**

- Sarcastic, kind, and ambitious. She is the legal guardian of her younger sister, Grace (14), and a nursing student working as a health aid at the University of Washington Medical Center.
- When Aubrey's estranged, drug-addicted mother unexpectedly returns and ultimately relapses, Aubrey moves into The Ganges; she soon falls under Lhasa's professional and maternal wing. Also begins a romantic relationship with Siler Snow, who Grace becomes fond of as well.

### **SENATOR (R) ROBERT LAKEVIEW (50 - 60s)**

- Conservative, shrewd, and unwavering; former Navy Aviator in Vietnam and Harvard Bioethics professor.
- He is a major opponent of the Death with Dignity Act and targets healthcare reform to bolster his presidential campaign, and fixes Lhasa/The Ganges in his political crosshairs; aligns with disgruntled families to elevate an indictment of Attempted Murder/2nd Degree Genocide from local courts to a Supreme Court trial.

### **DIMITRI LOCH (40s - 50s)**

- CEO of Seattle Biotech firm and one of Fortune's richest entrepreneurs in America; a philanthropist at heart, Lhasa meets Dimitri halfway through the first season at a charity gala for children's cancer research.
- He admits himself into The Ganges following a terminal diagnosis, but his family resists the idea due to infighting over his unfinished will. But when Dimitri dies, he dedicates a large amount to help grow Lhasa's efforts.

**\*(Each episode features a new patient entering into the Ganges, and will create recurring storylines appropriate to character's arc.)**

## ABOUT LADY MERCY



*Death is not a law. It's a right.*

*- Jack Kevorkian*

Lady Mercy is not about death alone, but all its incarnations: the loss of love, faith, childhood, and even a way of life. Lady Mercy is not about giving up, but choice and transformation. More specifically, Lady Mercy is about a mother moving on after losing her only child, saving not only those around her as a doctor, but their friends and family from the same unnecessary suffering.

Lady Mercy, the figure, is Dr. Lhasa Ganges: a strong, modern female who as a Seattle palliative physician makes difficult decisions every day. As an Indian-English American, she has worked for the American Dream and uses her skillful knowledge to pay it forward. Lhasa treats her patients with kindness and precision care. She sees some make miraculous recoveries and enjoy a new lease on life. Unfortunately, she also witnesses many of them slip away, often slowly and undignified. We all have the right to live, but rarely the right to decide our demise. None of us ever learn how to say goodbye. But what if we had the time to?

As a Washington state resident, Lhasa always knew of one option, though it carried a heavy stigma: The Death with Dignity Act (DWD)... a prescribed lethal dose of Seconal. Yet today, most physicians and hospitals avoid DWD for its reputation. But Lhasa knew DWD could save the terminally-ill and their loved ones from a sad, prolonged ending.

A decade ago, Lhasa wasn't able to exercise DWD for her only daughter, Kali Rose, when she passed from Leukemia. Kali's passing was neither quick nor elegant like poetry, but akin to a long novel Lhasa wished would peacefully end. For beautiful Kali, DWD meant mercy. But she didn't qualify because she was too young. Yet hundreds of patients with no options left would eventually ask Lhasa:

*What is DWD? Does it hurt? How long does it take? And Lhasa would answer: It's legal and voluntary. It doesn't hurt at all. And it takes less than 10 minutes by oral medication and feels like slipping into a warm bath with loved ones beside. Does Lhasa risk her career, her reputation to become...who? Dr. Kevorkian...or really, Mother Theresa. Both controversial figures that changed the world, often at the cost of their own freedom.*

During Season One, Lhasa opens up The Ganges with her life-savings: a full-service, non-profit hospice converted from foreclosed housing. But she needs help to run The Ganges and turns to the best practicing doctor she knows: her ex-husband and Surgical Oncologist, Dr. David Carrell. Their marriage suffered after Kali's passing. They tried mourning and marriage counseling, but a piece of them had died. Yet the tragedy helped them face the truth: They had fallen out of love, but still cared for one another. David was the one man Lhasa could trust.

They would need a Psychiatrist to validate a patient's DWD request. They looked no further than a mutual friend, Dr. Siler Snow, an Iraq war vet whose tour took his right leg and paid for his education. Siler, while unpredictable with lingering PTSD, always puts others first with a kind but troubled heart. Then there's Aubrey Crest, a nursing student at the University of Washington who is the legal guardian of her teen sister, Grace. Their drug-addicted mother abandoned them years ago and Aubrey saved her sister from foster care, which meant working as a health aid during the day, attending class at night, and sleeping only after having dinner with her sister: their only precious time together.

This band of medical misfits rebuild a home at The Ganges, their patients becoming family whom they both come to love...and lose. Soon, media grabs hold of the story and attention catches like wildfire, drawing hundreds upon the doorstep of The Ganges – including the ire of conservative Senator Robert Lakeview who believes physician-assisted euthanasia is immoral, unethical, and quite frankly — genocide. Headlines dub Lhasa 'Lady Mercy' with her gift of eternal slumber. But Senator Lakeview won't let Lhasa and The Ganges rest for a minute. Nor will religious groups who threaten attacks against The Ganges.

Meanwhile, Lhasa soon falls back in love with her husband David after he's diagnosed with lung cancer, and her first DWDs are a pair of patients: including a terminal biotech entrepreneur, Dimitri Loch, who donates a large inheritance to grow Lhasa's efforts. However, his family indicts Lhasa on murder charges, claiming their wealthy patriarch was not of sound mind to make the decision to end his own life (though the family is really after their inheritance money). Senator Lakeview only adds fuel to the fire for his own political reasons, and garners similar public sentiment to claim Lady Mercy as a Merchant of Death. Lakeview takes this growing conservative support to bolster his presidential campaign run and goes after Lhasa publicly by smearing her 'clinic.' But a large consortium support Lhasa while she continues to do DWD, which is largely controversial and divides America. The controversy even reaches back home to Lhasa's father's village in Varanasi, India where his family clinic is burned down, nearly killing him, for supporting his daughter's sacrilegious ideals.

What starts as a state trial quickly elevates to the Supreme Court. All the while, life moves on: *Do Lhasa and David reunite; does he survive his cancer prognosis? Can Aubrey soften Siler and close the family circle she's long lost? Will Siler move beyond his own trauma? Above all, amidst a whirlwind of controversy and loss, can they all find happiness amongst a life of death?*

**Take a swim in the Ganges and be free.**

# SEASON ONE



*The fear of death follows from the fear of life.  
A man who lives fully is prepared to die at any time.*

*- Mark Twain*

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## EP. 1: Through the Black Hole

- Haunted by her daughter's death, Dr. Lhasa Ganges struggles to rebuild her life while working as a palliative physician. When a patient suffers a seizure, Lhasa invests her life savings to open The Ganges: a full-service hospice enabling the terminally-ill to seek private treatment, counseling, and as a last resort, Death With Dignity (DWD). But UW Hospital's Chief Physician warns the decision will kill Lhasa's reputation and career.

## EP. 2: Moving Day

- While secretly converting her new home, Lhasa recruits her ex-husband & surgical oncologist Dr. David Carell, PTSD-stricken psychiatrist Siler Snow, and nurse student Aubrey Crest to join The Ganges. As demo begins, David is diagnosed with terminal lung-cancer, but keeps it secret.

## EP. 3: 50 / 50

- Lhasa's patient Kit Abbott's health deteriorates, checking her into The Ganges as its first official inpatient. On the brink of eviction, Aubrey and her sister are surprised at home by their estranged drug-addicted mother. As their mother quickly relapses, turning unpredictable and violent, Aubrey and her sister move into The Ganges under Lhasa's supervision.

## EP. 4: Consent

- As romance sparks between Siler and Aubrey, a terminally-ill and famous biotech entrepreneur, Dimitri Loch, admits himself to The Ganges after meeting Lhasa at a charity event for children's cancer research. Later, UW's Chief Physician fires Lhasa and David for their DWD association. After visiting a fertility clinic to ponder a child again, Lhasa meets with David who finally reveals his cancer diagnosis.

### EP. 5: Brushfire

- A local journalist poses as a potential client to investigate The Ganges. Meanwhile, Siler withdraws from his PTSD meds and retreats into the woods of the Pacific Northwest, but Siler's trauma triggers a fugue state. His absence sends Lhasa and Aubrey to find a disorientated Siler firing gunshots at a group of local hikers that spark a massive brushfire.

### EP. 6: Smoke and Mirrors

- As news of the brushfire spreads, the undercover journalist releases an exposé on the Ganges. The story catches the attention of conservative Senator and Presidential Candidate, Robert Lakeview, who targets The Ganges for a political platform. Meanwhile, a brother admits his HIV-afflicted sister to The Ganges through unknown forged documents.

### EP. 7: Sunday Mass

- During a trip home to Boston for a close friend's funeral, David reunites with his Catholic Priest, Murphy Hill, who also runs a home for pregnant teenagers. Murphy introduces David to one such terminally-ill teen who's sought haven at the church from an abusive boyfriend. Also, Lhasa begins fertility treatments but soon discovers her own health may be at risk.

### EP. 8: 100 Milligrams

- As The Ganges 1st DWD date nears, Lhasa procures a lethal prescription, Secanol, but it soon goes missing – stolen from a depressed Grace: she's been using it as a downer, and nearly overdoses with her boyfriend, but IAubrey finds and admits her sister to the ER. Also, David begins chemo and an impromptu hangout rekindles old feelings between he and Lhasa.

### Ep. 9: Fertile Crescent

- As Lhasa contemplates artificial insemination, The Ganges floods with hundreds of patients seeking DWD, including the Boston terminally-ill pregnant teenager, and a live-broadcast visit from enemy number one: Senator Lakeview. Later, Dimitri reveals to Lhasa a large part of his fortune will be donated to The Ganges, some in offshore accounts.

### EP. 10: River of Ash

- When Lhasa discovers her father's clinic in India has been attacked due to her DWD involvement, she returns home during the spring festival of Holi. After a ceremonious dip in the Ganges River, Lhasa returns to Seattle to discover Dimitri has passed. However, amidst Kit Abbott's DWD, Lhasa's arrested on charges for attempted murder by Dimitri's ireful family.

## SERIES ARC:

### Beyond Season One



*If nothing else, there's comfort in recognizing that no matter how much we fail and sin, death will limit our suffering.*

- Chuck Palahniuk

**Season One** introduces us to the personal and spiritual journeys of the four pillars behind The Ganges: Lhasa, her husband David, Siler, and Aubrey – as well as many others who find their way to the clinic. The season concludes on a cliffhanger when, during a patient's DWD, Lhasa is arrested and indicted for attempted murder by Dimitri Loch's greedy family, which is also state-supported by Senator Robert Lakeview for his own political agenda.

**Further Seasons** follows the growing story (also in real time with DWD legislation) and local trial as hundreds flock to The Ganges seeking DWD, since it's still legal in Seattle despite those opposing it. Each new patient admitted to The Ganges builds their own story that weaves in and out of the series, while also growing more subplots on this continuous life-to-death journey.

Meanwhile, Lhasa and David begin to fall back in love after he's diagnosed with terminal lung cancer. Siler, recovering from a mental breakdown, continues to console patients through unfathomable trauma and their approaching DWD dates. While David enters into chemo, Aubrey, her sister Grace, and Lhasa's father ultimately move in to The Ganges. For Aubrey and Grace, it is a necessity because of their relapsed mother's passing and inability to financially support themselves. For Lhasa's father, he moves in for his own safety after his clinic in Varanasi, India is burned to the ground and extremists threaten his life.

However, a sudden brain disease (hereditary in Lhasa's family) leaves her father in a medically-induced coma, forcing Lhasa to once more endure the same suffering since watching her own daughter die. Lhasa reluctantly abides by her father's wish to not pull the plug in hopes he'll pull through. And even when he does, it's short-lived, culminating the series with where we began: The Ganges River, where Lhasa's father's ashes are finally laid to rest after she's finally won the Supreme Court trial. With her new family around her – even David, still fighting his cancer – this serves appropriately as the burial for the series itself: This time, death is not met with fear, but with peace and understanding.

**Visually**, throughout the series, Lhasa's surrealistic visions grow in scope and variety; many of them Buddhist influenced as her faith wavers: Is she losing her mind? Are these delusions caused from stress or sickness? Or, like *True Detective*, are these dreamlike sequences woven into the series's fabric itself to show the spiritual truth behind death's ugly, physical reality? This unique convention gives the series a distinct style and tone unlike other medical dramas before, examining death physically and existentially, as well as through the characters real experiences.

Lady Mercy, at its heart, is about all of us. It's about uniting against the darkness, not embracing the unknown with fear but with courage and reverence. It's the story of our nation now, divided by fear and false promises. This show tells death like it is, stares into the abyss, and illuminates the human spirit. Lady Mercy, and all those under The Ganges, are lights of hope to guide us.

In a show tackling themes as grand as life and death – throughout all the comedy and tragedy, laughter and tears – Lady Mercy empowers us to examine the ultimate antagonist none of us are immune to. But now we can stare death in the face and use its impact to demonstrate humanity's indomitable spirit with beauty, compassion, and of course...dignity.

