

THE DARK TOME  
SEASON 1, EPISODE 2

Featuring "THE BREAD WE EAT IN DREAMS"  
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Draft 2

9-12-2016

EXT. ALLEY OUTSIDE CASSIE'S HOUSE

MUSIC - Theme of THE DARK TOME, eerie, sense of mystery, wonder... transitions to something mischievous

CASSIE

(NARRATING) I wouldn't exactly call my life normal, but things have gotten a little weird since I started experimenting with this Book called "The Dark Tome". It started with this cranky old bookkeeper I know, Mr. Gussy. He helped me find the book. But it was I who first opened it. First experimented with where it could take me.

FX - CREEEEAAKKK!!! Cassie climbs out, and down, fire escape.

FX - Cassie drops to a street, runs.

CASSIE (CONT'D)

(to self)

This is pretty funny Cassie. Most girls your age would be sneaking out to go find a boy. You are breaking into a used book store. Okay. Not really breaking in. He left the key. In fact...

FX - key wriggles, door opens.

CASSIE (CONT'D)

He's waiting, isn't he?

(NARRATING) When I say other worlds, I mean... literally. Like, last time we opened this thing up, I went to Italy 100 years ago and let out a demon bird that sings when people lie. If I had any sense, I would stay home now. But. I can't. I don't want to. I just want to find...

CASSIE (CONT'D)

Mr. Gussy?

CASSIE (CONT'D)  
 (narrating)  
 The old fart was supposed to be in  
 the hospital, recovering from  
 surgery.

INT. DOWNSTAIRS, BOOK SHOP

GUSSY  
 (MILD CURSING - ALMOST COMICAL) Son  
 of a fishtrap... Rotten goose  
 loving snake...

CASSIE  
 Mr. Gussy?

GUSSY  
 If you do that one more time to me  
 I'll pay the sasquatch's sister to  
 come and --

CASSIE  
 Hey -

GUSSY  
 Oh! Ha! What the - Cassie, what  
 the hell are you doing sneaking up  
 on an old man in the middle of the  
 night?

CASSIE  
 Me? I - I just came...

GUSSY  
 You came for the book, of course.  
 That's good. I need you. The damn  
 thing isn't working.

CASSIE  
 What?

GUSSY  
 Look at it, it's just sitting there  
 like a piece of stale bread.

CASSIE  
 Really? It doesn't... talk to you?

GUSSY  
 This is what I'm saying, Cassie!  
 You have something special. I  
 guess maybe because you're young.  
 (MORE)

GUSSY (CONT'D)

The book doesn't work the same way  
with everybody. With you, the  
walls between this world and the  
next are a little thinner.

CASSIE

Let me look at it.

(NARRATING) The tome was ancient,  
timeless maybe. When I picked it  
up, yes, there was something to it.  
Warmth. It started glowing and  
almost smelled like...

CASSIE (CONT'D)

Is that bread?

GUSSY

(SNIFFS) Why, bread of the most  
delicious kind.

CASSIE

It's coming from the book.

GUSSY

I can almost make out the words,  
that's the title of the next story.

CASSIE

Yes... you're right. "The Bread We  
Eat in Dreams" by Catherynne M.  
Valente.

GUSSY

Well read on, then. I'm hungry.

CASSIE

Why don't you do the honors?

GUSSY

You think it'll work?

CASSIE

Try it, Gussy.

Gussy starts reading, FX transition through VO.

MUSIC - Mysterious and magical

EXT. SAUVE-MAJEURE -- MORNING

GUSSY

In a sea of long grass and tiny yellow blueberry flowers some ways off of Route 1, just about halfway between Cobscook Bay and Passamaquoddy Bay, the town of Sauve- Majeure puts up its back against the Bald Moose Mountains. It's not a big place--looks a little like some big, old cannon shot a load of houses and half-finished streets at the foothills and left them where they fell. The sun gets here first out of just about anywhere in the country, turning all the windows bloody-orange and filling up a thousand lobster cages with shadows. Further up into the hills, outside the village but not so far that the post doesn't come regular as rain, you'll find a house all by itself in the middle of a tangly field of good red potatoes and green oats. The house is a snug little hall-and- parlor number with a moss-clotted roof and a couple of hundred years of whitewash on the stones. Sweet William and vervain and crimson beebalm wend out of the window-jams, the door-hinges, the chimney blocks. There's carrots in the kitchen garden, some onions, a basil plant that may or may not come back next year.

You wouldn't know it to look at the place, but a demon lives here.

FX - Outside, birds, bucolic country scene.

CASSIE

Well, here we are. A rather cheerful part of... Downeast Maine, I guess?

GUSSY

Looks it. Reminds me of a place I grew up. Only... Wrong time, I think. Look at that car - a 1966 Buick Roadmaster.

CASSIE

So?

GUSSY

Buick stopped making that car in 1958.

CASSIE

Oh.

GUSSY

So we ain't exactly in Kansas anymore, kid.

CASSIE

Well, now what?

GUSSY

Dunno. The book looks blank. Wait. No. I think... hm. Says something about a door.

CASSIE

Well the last door I walked through brought me down to hell. And this one... At the cottage?

GUSSY

It's just the front door to the home of a demon.

CASSIE

Sounds like fun.

FX - Gussy and Cassie walk across lawn, open gate.

Through the window, hear Agnes singing a little demon song.

AGNES

(WHISTLING) Humm dee doo, dee da lee doo, if I were a demon, I'd cook you...

GUSSY

"Agnes G," the mailbox says.

CASSIE

Agnes. Not a terribly scary name.

FX - knock knock knock

Agnes' singing stops. She walks to the door.

AGNES

Oh, my guests! My, but you're right on time. The bread just came out of oven.

CASSIE

We could smell it.

AGNES

I'm sure you could. (SNIFFS) You still have the smell of hell on you, don't you?

CASSIE

That was another story.

AGNES

Hell is a large country, sweet. What's your name?

CASSIE

Cassie.

AGNES

Cassie, like Cassandra?

CASSIE

Yes, that's right.

AGNES

A girl who saw too much. And how about you, old timer?

GUSSY

Folks know me as Mr. Gussy.

AGNES

You look like you might be the great- great-grandson of those that burned me at the stake. Ah, but we're getting ahead of ourselves. Please, you all come in.

FX - AGNES leads Cassie and Gussy into the house.

INT. AGNES HOUSE - DAY

They enter the home, settle in to some chairs.

AGNES

Make yourselves at home. It's a modest abode, but it's stood a long time. Well. Where to start.

(MORE)

AGNES (CONT'D)

My real name is Gemegishkiri hallat, and in hell I was neither male nor female, but when I was banished from hell through the black door I came out Agnes, and Agnes I've stayed. After about five hundred years, I've gotten used to it.

CASSIE

Wait... you were kicked out of hell?

AGNES

That's right. I showed up here before there was a town, pushed out of hell and through a red oak in the primeval forest that would eventually turn into Schism Street and Memorial Square and into a white howl of snow and frozen sea-spray. I was naked, branded with four-spoked seals, wheels of banishment, and the seven psalms of hell. My hair was burnt off and I had no fingernails or toenails. When my hair grew back - black, of course - the 16th century offered me quite a range of options for covering female skin from chin to heel. That made it easier to hide the diamond trident-brand of Amdusias. But my fingernails never came in. Funny, isn't it? No one one really ever noticed.

FX - Kettle whistling.

AGNES (CONT'D)

Oh, and that's the tea. How do you like it?

CASSIE

A bit of honey.

GUSSY

Black.

AGNES

Naturally. Coming up!

FX - Agnes fiddles in the kitchen, retrieving the tea.

## AGNES (CONT'D)

You may have noticed my bees  
buzzing as you came in, the  
lovelies, they are especially fat  
and happy this year, the currants  
came in as plump as marbles, as  
just as shiny.

Ah, so where was I? The ice and  
lightning lasted for a month after  
I came, and my footsteps marked the  
boundaries of the town to come, my  
heels boiling the snow, my breath  
full of thunder. And oh Goodness  
was I hungry in those days, and  
when the hunger took me, I howled  
out the primordial word for 'stag'  
into the whipping storm, and one  
would always come, his delicate  
legs picking through the drifts,  
his antlers dripping icicles. I  
ate my stags whole in the dark,  
crunching the antlers in my teeth.  
Once, I called a pod of seals up  
out of the sea and slept on the  
frozen beach, their grey mottled  
bodies all around me. My heat  
warmed them, and they warmed me.  
In the morning the sand beneath  
them ran liquid and hot, the seals  
cooked and smoking. I knew I had to  
build myself a little house, so  
that spring, I set to work.

I put my ear to the mud and  
listened for echoes. The sizzling  
blood of the earth moved beneath me  
in crosshatch patterns, and on my  
hands and knees I followed the  
patterns until I found what I was  
looking for: a patch of earth that  
shared a cherry tree and a water  
line with the house of  
Gemegishkirihallat in Hell.

## GUSSY

You, what? You found a place that  
intersects hell?

## AGNES

Something like that. You see, Hell is a lot like a bad neighbor: it occupies the space just next to earth, not quite on top of it or underneath it, just to the side, on the margins. And you can find those margins if you know how to listen. When I found the spot, I spoke to the trees in proto-Akkadian and they understood me; they fell and sheared themselves of needles and branches. Grasses dried in a moment and thatched themselves, eager to please me.

With the heat of my hands I blanched sand into glass for the windows; I demanded the hills give me iron and clay for my oven, I growled at the ground to give me snap peas and onions. Some years later, a little Penobscot girl got lost in the woods while her tribe was making their long return from the warmer south.

She did not know how to tell her father what she'd seen when she found him again, having never seen a house like this one, with a patch of English garden and a stone well and roses coming in bloody and thick. She only knew it was wrong somehow, that it belonged to someone, that it made her feel like digging a hole in the dirt and hiding in it forever. I offered some food to the girl, a lump of raw, red, bleeding meat. I have always been a most excellent host. Don't you agree?

Gussy and Cassie agree

## AGNES (CONT'D)

Before he marked my flesh with his trident, Amdusias loved to eat my salted bread, dipping his great long unicorn's horn into my black honey to drink. The child didn't want the meat I offered her, but that didn't bother me one bit.

(MORE)

AGNES (CONT'D)

Everybody has a choice. That's the whole point. How is that tea?

CASSIE

Lovely.

AGNES

Oh Good. That tea is the rarest keemum from the birth of China, it would never grow in this harsh climate but for how I snarl at it to keep its sense through the bitter wind. Now. You want to know about the town, right? Suave-Majeure? It belongs to me, of course. I called it to myself. You see, a demon cannot function alone. If we could, then banishment would be no hurt. A demon craves company. I was a wolf abandoned by my pack. I could not help how I sniffed and howled for my litter-mates, nor how that howl became a magnetic pull for the sort of human who also loves order, everything in its place, all souls accounted for, everyone blessed and punished according to strict and immutable laws. (SIGHS) It proved easier to find folks of the intensely religious persuasion than the ones who spoke my language.

The first settlers were mostly French, banded together with whatever stray Puritans they'd picked up along the way north. Those Puritans would spice the Gallic stew of upper Maine for years, causing no end of trouble to me.

I suppose to be fair, I was in fact a witch and a succubus and everything else they ever called me but that's no excuse for being such poor neighbors, when you think about it. So I waited.

(MORE)

## AGNES (CONT'D)

I waited for Martin le Clerq and Melchior Pelerin to raise their barns and houses, for Remy Mommacque to breed his dainty little cow to William Chudderley's barrel of a bull, for John Cabot to hear disputes in his rough parlor.

I waited for the Papist Hubert Sazarin to send for both money and a pair of smooth brown stones from Sauve-Majeure Abbey back home in Gironde, and use them to lay out the foundations of what he dreamed would be the Great Cathedral of St. Geraud and St. Adelard, the grandest edifice north of Boston. I waited for the Puritan Thomas Dryland to get drunk on Magdeleine Loliot's first and darkest beer, then march over to the Sazarin manse and knock him round the ears for flaunting his Papist devilry in the face of good honest folk.

I waited for Dryland to take up a collection amongst the Protestant minority and, along with John Cabot and Quentin Pole, to raise the frame of the Free Meeting House just across of what would eventually be called Schism Street, glaring down at the infant Cathedral, and pressed Quentin's serious young son Lamentation Pole into service as pastor.

I waited, most importantly, for little Crespine Moutonnet to be born, the first child of Sauve-Majeure. I waited for the Dryland twins, Reformation and Revelation - what names!- for Madame le Clerq to bear her five boys, for Goodwife Wadham to deliver her redoubtable seven daughters and single stillborn son.

I waited for Mathelin Minouflet to bring his gentle wife over the sea from Cluny, who arrived already pregnant, soon to bear a son sired by Mathelin's own brother who had assumed him dead.

(MORE)

## AGNES (CONT'D)

I waited for enough children to be born and grow up, for enough village to spring up, for enough order to assert itself so that I could walk among them and be merely one of the growing, noisy lot of new young folk fighting over Schism Street and trading grey, damp wool for hard, new potatoes.

FX - Market sounds. Cacophony, etc

## AGNES (CONT'D)

It was then I appeared in Adelard-in-the-Garden Square, the general marketplace ruled wholly by an elderly, hunched Hubert Sazarin and his son Augustine. I laid out my wares among the tallow candles and roasting fowl and pale bluish honey sold by the other men.

Now in those days, a woman selling in the market caused a certain amount of consternation among the husbands of Sauve-Majeure. Young Wrestling Dryland, though recently bereaved of his father Thomas Dryland, whose heart had quite simply burst with rage when Father Simon Charpentier arrived from France to give Mass, had no business at all sneaking away from the Protestant market across the street to snatch up a flask of Sazarin's Spanish Madeira.

But there he was, and Wrestling worked himself up into a fury when he saw me gathered together in a black bonnet and luxurious assortment of breads.

EXT. MARKET 16TH CENTURY - DAY

## WRESTLING

Under whose order do ye dare consort with the men here in the market?

AGNES

Pardon, sir? Try a bit of my cross-buns. Here, with butter, fresh from a Jersey cow, as rich as the splendor in Spain.

WRESTLING

Oh, I... (NIBBLES) Oh that's delightful. Are these raisins? By the Grace of our Father the Lord Jesus Christ where in this foresaken land did ye find raisins? And... what act of God or his opposite granted ye the smallest measure of sugar? And to dust it on the surface, like it twas a pittance! Speak, woman!

AGNES

(understated)

Perhaps it was his opposite indeed, Sir. Would ye like to take some home?

WRESTLING

(rattled)

Indeed.

INT. AGNES HOME

AGNES

Wrestling shut his mouth completely, and meekly purchased a round of my bread even though his mother Anne made a perfectly fine loaf of her own. In fact, he purchased a bit of braided French bread just like the one before you. Please, do take a bite.

GUSSY

Don't mind if I do.

FX - Gussy nibbles some.

GUSSY (CONT'D)

My, that tastes like heaven

AGNES

Funny you should say that, as my previous occupation was as the baker of Hell.

CASSIE

Wait, really?

AGNES

Oh yes. It had been my peculiar position, my speciality among all the diverse amusements and professions of Hades, which performs as perfectly and smoothly in its industries as the best human city can imagine, but never accomplish.

FX - some Hellish FX sprinkled into this passage for effect

AGNES (CONT'D)

Everything in its place, all souls accounted for, everyone blessed and punished according to strict and immutable laws. I baked bread to be seen but ultimately withheld, sweetcakes to be devoured until the skin split and the stomach protruded like the head of a child through the flesh, black pastry to haunt the starved mind. My ovens were cathedral towers of fire and onyx, my under-bakers Akalamdug and Ekur would pull out soft and perfect loaves with bone paddles.

But also I baked for my own table, where my comrades Amdusias, King of Thunder and Trumpets, Agares, Duke of Runaways and his loyal pet crocodile, Samagina, Marquis of the Drowned, Countess Gremory Who-Rides-Upon-a-Camel, and the Magician-King Barbatos. We all gathered to drink the wines crushed beneath the toes of rich and heartless men and share my bread. I prepared the bloodloaf of the great Emperor's own infinite table, where, on occasion, I was permitted to sit and keep Count Andromalius from stealing the slabs of meat beloved of Celestial Marquis Oryax.

(MORE)

## AGNES (CONT'D)

In my long nights, in my long house  
of smoke and miller's stones, I  
baked the bread we eat in dreams,  
strangest loaves, pies full of  
anguish and days long dead, fairy-  
haunted gingerbread, cakes wet with  
tears. The Great Duke Gusion, the  
Baboon-Lord of Nightmares, came to  
me each eve and took up my goods  
into his hairy arms and bore them  
off to the Pool of Sleep.

Those were the days I longed for in  
this lonely house with only one  
miserable oven that did not even  
come up to my waist, with my empty  
table and not even Shagshag, the  
weaver of Hell, to make me the Tea  
of Separation-from-God and ravage  
me in the dark - like any good  
neighbor should.

Those were the days I longed for in  
my awful heart—a demon has no heart  
as you do, my dears, a little red  
fist in my chest. No, a demon's  
body is nothing but heart, its  
whole interior beating and pulsing  
and thundering in time to the  
clocks of Pandemonium.

And that's when it came to me - the  
idea to bake my most perfect breads  
and bring them to Adelard-in-the-  
Garden. I would have my pack again,  
here between the mountains and the  
fish-clotted bay. I would build my  
ovens high and feed them all, feed  
them all and their children until  
no other bread save that cooked  
from my infernal oven would sate  
them. They would love me abjectly,  
for no other manner of loving had  
worth.

CASSIE

And...?

AGNES

They burned me as a witch some  
forty years later.

CASSIE

They - what?

GUSSY

Jeezum...

AGNES

Oh, you know how these country people are.

GUSSY

Ayuh. They don't like things a little outside the ordinary.

AGNES

I think it was envy, mixed with hardship. As you might expect, it was one of the Protestants who did it, a descendant of Wrestling Dryland, the pastor who had first confronted me in the Catholic market.

You see, when asked, I would tell folk I was a member of a convent on the other side of Bald Moose Mountains, and I traveled into the bay country to sell the sisters' productions of bread, and lived in my little house as a hermit, consecrated to the wilderness in the manner of St. Viridiana or St. Julian.

GUSSY

Who were they, exactly?

AGNES

Products of my imagination, of course, but it was enough to set the mind of the country priest Father Simon to ease. The story of the local hermitess was quite a relief, you see, since a woman alone is a kind of unpredictable inferno that might at any moment light the hems of the innocent young (CHUCKLES) If they only knew.

(MORE)

## AGNES (CONT'D)

Oh, the local Protestants spoke of Sister Agnes with great reverence, of how she had such a fine hand at pies and preserves, it couldn't hurt to let little Piety and Thankful go and learn a bit from her—even if she was a Papist demoness, her shortbread would make you take Communion just to get a piece.

## GOSSIP 1

She's a right modest handmaiden, don't you think?

## GOSSIP 2

Oh what nonsense, I was hoping Isabelle could take our daughters Marie and Heloise to learn their letters from her.

## GOSSIP 1

She sings so beautifully at Christmas Mass, didn't you hear? Poor Christophe Minouflet fell into a swoon when she sang the Ave—why not let our girl Beatrice learn her scales and her octaves at her side?

## GOSSIP 3

And what of the garden? Don't you want to know what she does the soil up there? Why, at my lot it is more rock than dirt.

## GOSSIP 1

Someone must learn how she makes her pumpkins swell and her potatoes glow with red health.

## GOSSIP 2

Have you seen the peas? They come up almost before the snow can melt. And the blueberry bushes - by June they groan with the weight of their dark fruit.

## GOSSIP 3

Yes, we must let young Annabelle and Elisabeth and Jeanne and Martha go straight away and study her methods, and if a seed or two of those hardy crops should find its way into the pockets of our girls' aprons, well, such was God's Will.

The gossips all agree.

## AGNES

Thus did I find herself with a little coven of village girls, all bright and skinny and eager to grow up, more eager still to learn everything I could teach. I'm not embarrassed to say that I wept with relief and the peculiar joy of devils. I took them in, poor and rich, Papist and Puritan, gathered them round my black hearth like a wreath of still-closed flowers—and I opened them up.

FLASHBACK - a scene in Agnes' kitchen

## AGNES (CONT'D)

You see Mary Beth, the way you spin the wool, if you use it like so...

## MARYBETH

Oh, I see!

## AGNES

Like silk in your hands.

## RUTH

Oh Sister Agnes!

## AGNES

Yes, Ruth.

## RUTH

Please show me how you work the dough.

## AGNES

Oh yes, I'll show you the sweetest breads, darling, such that you'll rue the humble loaf of your mother.

ISABELLE

Sister Agnes, why is your Bible so much heavier than Father Audrien's?

AGNES

Whatever do you mean?

ISABELLE

His doesn't have the Gospel of St. Thomas or of Mary Magdalene.

MARYBEATH

Oh yes! And what of the books of Two Thieves? I've never heard such on Sunday Morning.

AGNES

Nay, child, I doubt you would have. I doubt it indeed. There are many bits of knowledge that your Sister Agnes will share with ye, that ye will never learn in Church. Stay here with me, and I'll teach ye all ye might ever hope to know.

Back in contemporary scene.

AGNES (CONT'D)

(SIGHS) I suppose you might say I got careless. Perhaps I did - but let it be said, a demon never has a large measure of care to begin with. The girls seated around my table like Grand Dukes made me feel like my old self again, and who can resist a feeling like that? Not many, and a demon hasn't even got a human's meager talent for resisting temptation, even if it may lead to their own immolation.

It all started with Sébastienne Sazarin...

Cut to Scene... A kitchen-table conversation

SAZARIN

I do not like her, I tell ye, she has the devil about her!

HUSBAND

Ye send our blessed Basile to her, to learn lace, do ye not?

SAZARIN

Only for I'll be damned if Marguerite le Clerq's brats would outshine a Sazarin at anything, and if Reformation Dryland's plain, sowed grand-daughter made a better marriage than my own girl, I'd just have to lie down dead in the street from the shame of it. That doesn't mean I have to like it.

HUSBAND

Sounds like a mean spirit has come to resist in thee, dear wife, not Sister Agnes.

SAZARIN

Think ye that, husband? Have ye not seen the way dear Basile comes home? Smiling in a secretive sort of way, her breath quick and delighted? She does her work so quickly and well that there is hardly anything left to do here.

HUSBAND

Isn't that what you send her for, woman? Be glad for ease, for it comes but seldom.

SAZARIN

It's unwholesome, a woman living alone out there. I wish Father Audrien would put a stop to it.

HUSBAND

Ah, but you know that won't be so. Before Father Simon - god rest his soul - passed from this earth he confided to Father Audrien that he felt Sauve-Majeure harbored a Saint.

SAZARIN

A Saint? Father Simon called that succubus a Saint?!

HUSBAND

Peace on ye, woman! You know that Father Simon dreamed that the writ of Saint Agnes's veneration might arrive from Rome one day and with it, we could secure the finances to build the Cathedral of St. Gerard and Adelard, the dream of your own great-great-grandfather.

SAZARIN

What mean you, husband? That the demonness will help us build the Cathedral?

HUSBAND

A cathedral requires more in the way of coin and time than even we Sazarins can manage. With such a great weight upon him, how can you expect Father Audrien to censure the hermit woman on which it all depends?

SAZARIN

(grudging)

You are right, husband. I shall speak no more of it... Of... the Saint.

AGNES

While all seemed right with the Papists, with the Puritans I had no such luck - Pastor Pole had no such hesitation. Lamentation Pole had raised his only son Troth to know only discipline and abstinence, and no other boy could begin to compete with him in devotion or self-denial. Pastor Pole's sermons in the Free Meeting House (which he would rename the Free Gathered Church) bore such force down on his congregation that certain young girls had been known to faint away at his roaring words. He condemned with equal fervor

FX - Cut to church, congregation ooh, ahh, and terrified by the Pastor's rant

## PASTOR

Harvest feasting, sexual congress  
 outside the bonds of marriage,  
 woman's essential nature... all of  
 these things are the work of the  
 devil! And let me add to that the  
 ridiculous names the Sazarins and  
 other Papist decadents saddle  
 themselves with, for they are not  
 fooling God with their vanity. Nay,  
 Believers! Can I get a hallelujah!

CROWD - "Hallelujah"

## AGNES

The grumbling might have stayed  
 just that, grumbling, if not for  
 the sopping-wet summer of '09 and  
 the endless, bestial winter that  
 followed. If it had not been bad  
 enough that the crops rotted on the  
 vine and sagged on the stalk, cows  
 and sheep froze where they stood  
 come December, and in February,  
 Martha Chedderley discovered  
 frantic mice invading her thin,  
 precious stores of flour.

Yet while the rest of town  
 suffered, my little garden thrived.  
 In May my tomatoes were already  
 showing bright green in the rain,  
 in June I had bushels of rhubarb  
 and knuckle-sized cherries, and in  
 that miserable, grey August I sent  
 each of my students home with a  
 sack of onions, cabbages, apples,  
 squash, and beans. When Basile  
 Sazarin showed her mother her  
 treasure, her mother's gaze could  
 have set fire to a block of ice.  
 When Weep-Not Dryland showed her  
 father, Wrestling's eldest and  
 meanest child, Elected Dryland, my  
 winter's store, his bile could have  
 soured a barrel of honey.

Schism Street was broached.

Sébastienne Sazarin, prodding her  
 husband and her priest before her,  
 walked out halfway across the  
 muddy, contested earth.

(MORE)

## AGNES (CONT'D)

Pastor Pole met her, joined by  
Elected Dryland and his mother,  
Martha and Makepeace Chedderley,  
and James Cabot, grandson of the  
great judge John Cabot.

On the one side of them stood the  
perpetually unfinished Cathedral of  
St. Geraud and St. Adelard, its  
ancient clerestory, window pane,  
and foundation stones standing  
lonely beside the humble chapel  
that everyone called the Cathedral  
anyhow.

On the other, the clean steeple and  
whitewash of the Free Gathered  
Church.

## PASTOR

She's a witch. She's a succubus.  
Why should we starve when she has  
the devil's own plenty?

## AGNES

You know this song. It's a classic,  
with an old workhorse of a chorus.

## SAZARIN

My girl Basile says she waters her  
oats with menstrual blood and reads  
over them from a Gospel the Father  
says no righteous soul should know.

## GOSSIP 3

My maid Weep-Not says her cows give  
milk three times a day.

## GOSSIP 1

Our Lizzie says she hasn't got any  
fingernails. She holds Sabbats up  
there and the girls all dance naked  
in a circle of pine.

## GOSSIP 2

My Bess says on the full moon  
they're to fornicate with a stag up  
on the mountain while Sister Agnes  
sings the Black Vespers. If I ask  
my poor child, what will I hear  
then?

AGNES

Oh, I heard them down in the valley. I heard the heat of their whispers, and knew they would come for me. And I waited, as I had always waited. It wasn't long.

James Cabot made out a writ of arrest and Makepeace Chedderley got burly young Robert Mommacque and Charles Loliot to come with him up the hill to drag me out of her house and install me in the new jail, which was the Dryland barn, quite recently outfitted with chains forged in Denis Minouflet's shop and a stout hickory chair donated out of the Sazarin parlor.

I didn't fight when they bound me and gagged my mouth to keep me from bewitching them with my devil's psalms.

It did not actually occur to me to use my devil's psalms against them. I was curious. I did not yet know if I could die. The men of Sauve-Majeure carried me in their wagon down through the slushy March snow to stand trial. I only looked at them, my gaze mild and interested. Their guts twisted under my hollow gaze, and this was further proof of my witchy nature.

Ah, but it took much longer than anticipated. The Catholic and Protestant factions in Sauve-Majeures had never agreed on much, and they sure as spring couldn't agree on the proper execution of a witch's trial.

PASTOR

Hanging!

AGNES

Said Dryland and Pole.

SAZARIN

Burning!

AGNES  
Insisted Sazarin and Le Clerq.

PASTOR  
It should be one judge

SAZARIN  
Nay, a whole bench!

GOSSIP 1  
I think we should bring forth  
testimony from our children.

GOSSIP 2  
Nay, we should judge her 'fore the  
look in her eyes as the charges are  
read

GOSSIP 3  
A water test!

SAZARIN  
A needle test!

GOSSIP 1  
Who will read the questions?

GOSSIP 2  
What questions will they read?

SAZARIN  
Dr. Pelerin should examine her, he  
who has been to school in Boston,  
where they know about such dark  
medicine.

PASTOR  
Nay, we should hear from midwife  
Sarah Wadhma, she knows about  
curses that can be played on the  
female maind.

GOSSIP 1  
Our own stalwart Pastor Pole should  
have the credit of ferreting out  
this devil!

SAZARIN  
Never, tis a duty fit only for the  
Church in Rome!

HUSBAND  
What name should the town bear on  
its warrsnts?

SAZARIN

Sauve-Majeure

GOSSIP 2

A nest of snakes and Papistry!

PASTOR

Help-on-High!

GOSSIP 3

A den of jackals and schismatics!

GOSSIP 1

Who will have her garden when she is gone?

GOSSIP 2

Who will have our house?

ALL

I want it! I want it! (descends into babbling chaos)

AGNES

And I waited. I waited for my girls to come to me - and they did. First the slower students who craved my approval, then finally Basile and Weep-Not and Lizzie Wadham and Bess Chedderley and the other names listed on the writ of execution though no one had asked them much about it. I slipped my chains easily and put my hands to their little heads.

In scene - Barn/Prison

AGNES (CONT'D)

(in scene)

Go and do as I have done. Go and make your gardens grow, make your men double over with desire, go and dance until you are full up of the moon.

BASILE

Are you really a witch?

AGNES

Ventured Basile Sazarin, who would be the most beautiful woman Sauve-Majeure would ever reap, all the way up til now and further still.

(MORE)

## AGNES (CONT'D)

(in scene)

No. A witch is just a girl who knows her mind. I am better than a witch. Look at the great orgy coming up like a rose around me. No night in Hell could be as bright.

## AGNES (CONT'D)

And it was then that I took off my black wool gown before the young maids. They saw my four-spoked seals and my wheels of banishment and the seven burnt psalms on her skin. They saw that I had no sex. They saw my long name writ upon my thighs.

## GIRLS

(ALL GASP)

## AGNES

They knew awe in that barn, and they danced with their teacher in the starlight that sifted through the moldering hay.

FX - Girls / Agnes in Bachhanalian hooting/hollering dancing, drumming, etc...

BACCHANAL FADE OUT.

## AGNES (CONT'D)

A certain revered minister, Goodman Mather, came to visit me while I waited for my trial.

## CASSIE

Goodman Mather he was (thinks) he was behind the Salem Witch Trials, right? I read about it in school --

## AGNES

The same.

Pastor Pole managed not to wholly prostrate himself before the famous man, but took him immediately to speak with the condemned woman, of whom that illustrious soul had heard of all the way down in Salem: a confirmed demoness, beyond any doubt.

(MORE)

AGNES (CONT'D)

Pastor Pole's own wife Mary-in-the-Manger brought a chair to seat the honored minister upon, along with what cider and cheese they had to spare... cider made from my ruby red apples and milk from my own Jersey cow- but I digress.

Goodman Mather looked upon me, a black-clad woman chained in a barn that made itself out to be a prison. My still gaze sounded upon his soul and boomed there, deafening.

GOODMAN

Art thee a witch, then?

AGNES

No.

GOODMAN

But not a Christian lady, either.

AGNES

No.

GOODMAN

How came you to grow such bounty on your land without the help of God?

AGNES

My dear Goodman Mather, there is not a demon in Hell who was not once something quite other, and more interesting. In the land where the Euphrates runs green and sweet, I was a grain-god with the head of a bull. In the rough valley of the Tyne I was a god of fertility and war, with the head of a crow. I was a fish-headed lord of plenty in the depths of the Tigris. Before language I was she-who-makes-the-harvest-come, and I rode a red boar. The earth answers when I call it by name. I know its name because we are family.

GOODMAN

So. You admit your demonic nature?

AGNES

I would have admitted it before now if anyone had asked. They ask only if I am a witch, and a witch is small pennies to me. I am what I am, as you are what you are. I want to live, as all creatures do. I cannot sin, so I have done no wrong.

GOODMAN

Ah.

FX - drinks

AGNES

He wet his throat with my cider. His hand shook upon the tankard. When he had mastered himself he spoke quickly and softly, in the most wretched tones. He poured out onto the ground between him all his doubt and misery, all his grief and guilt.

GOODMAN

I... fear that I was wrong, that I sent innocent women - and girls - to death, for only imagined afflictions against God... But what if they were not witches, and we, the accusers, were the ones who were the demons? I fear that all the blood of the innocents may weight me down when I reach the gates of paradise, and bring me to the other place.

AGNES

I suppose he gave me all this because I proved to him his whole heart, his invisible world. I proved him a good man, despite the hanging hill in his heart.

GOODMAN

Tell me that I will know the Kingdom of God in my lifetime. Tell me the end of days is near—for you must be the harbinger of it, you must be its messenger and its handmaiden.

(MORE)

GOODMAN (CONT'D)

Tell me the dead will rise and we will shed our bodies like the shells of beautiful snails, that I will leave behind this horror that is flesh and become as light. Tell me I need never again be a man, that I need never err more, nor dwell in the curse of this life. Tell me you have come to murder this world, so that the new one might swallow us all.

AGNES

I looked on him with infernal pity, which is, in the end, not worth the tears it sheds. Demons may pity men every hour of the day, but that pity never moves.

(IN SCENE) No.

FX - Agnes stands, chains drop to the floor.

GOODMAN

(ponders)

No... No... You... what are you doing?

AGNES

Behold me. Behold my darkness, the wheels of banishment, my seven burn psalms. Behold my whole name, Gemegishkirihallat, scrawled across my inner thighs and my sexless hollow, and let your flesh succumb to me.

PASTOR

No!

AGNES

Yes, Pastor. Behold me, and... Feel me.

FX - Agnes moves closer.

AGNES (CONT'D)

Feel the reality of your flesh.  
Feel the arrow of your need.

PASTOR

No... No I...

Agnes is intimate now - whispered into our ear.

AGNES

Feel the beauty of temptation. Of succumbing. Do you succumb?

PASTOR

(as in sexual climax)  
... Yes. Yes!

AGNES

(Groans in pleasure)

Fade out.

BACK IN THE HOUSE

FX - nervous tinker of the cups, plates, etc.

AGNES (CONT'D)

Well, they burned me at dawn, before the Free Gathered Church could say anything about it. It was bad enough that they had brought Minister Mather to their town. The Catholics of Sauve-Majeure would not stand to let a Protestant nobody pass judgment on me, their very own witch. There were few witnesses: Father Audrien, who made his apologies to Father Simon in Heaven, Sébastienne and Hierosme Sazarin with young Basile clutched between them, Marguerite le Clerq and her husband Isaac. The Church would handle their witch, and the schismatics, to be bold, could lump it. The Protestants had all those girls down in Salem-Rome had to have its due in the virtuous north.

FX - blend of 'in scene' outdoors an narration. Wind through pine trees

AUDRIEN

(in background)  
Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name; Thy Kingdom come; Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us...

## AGNES

Father Audrien tied me to a pine trunk and read my last rites. I did not spit or howl, but only stared down the priest with a gaze like dying. I said one word before the end, but no one understood it. Each of the witnesses lit the flames so that none alone would have to bear the weight of the sin.

## AUDRIEN

... and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen

FX - Torches set, flames rise

## AGNES

A year later, Sébastienne Sazarin would insist, drunk and half-toothless, hiding sores on her breast and losing her voice, would rasp to her daughter, insisting that as Sister Agnes burned she saw a bull's head glowing through the pyre, its horns molten gold, and garlanded in black wheat.

FX - roar of a flaming bull god

## AGNES (CONT'D)

Marguerite le Clerq, half-mad with syphilis her husband brought home from Virginia, would weep to her priest that she had seen a red boar in the flames, its tusks made of diamond, its head crowned with millet and barley.

FX - roar of a flaming boar god

## AGNES (CONT'D)

Hierosme Sazarin, shipwrecked three years hence in Nova Scotia, his cargo of Madeira spilling out into the icy sea, would tell his blue-mouthed, doomed sailors that once he had seen a saint burn, and in the conflagration a white crow, its beak wet with blood, had flown up to Heaven, its wings seared black.

FX - roar of a flaming crow god

AGNES (CONT'D)

Father Audrien dreamed of my  
burning body every night until he  
died, and the moment my bones  
shattered into a thousand fiery  
fish, he woke up reaching for his  
Bible and finding nothing in the  
dark.

Cutaway --

AUDRIEN

(rising from bed, gasping)  
Father in Heaven... I burned a  
Saint Alive.

Back to the house --

AGNES

(BEAT) More tea?

CASSIE

Ah - yes.

GUSSY

Please.

FX - Tea poured.

CASSIE

I'll help myself to more honey.  
It's divine.

AGNES

I'm sure it is.

FX - Cassie stirs honey for a moment - a disquieting silence.

GUSSY

You died?

AGNES

It wasn't so bad. My house stood  
empty for a long while. Daisies  
grew in my stove. Moss thickened my  
great Bible. The girls I'd drawn  
close around me grew up. Basile  
Sazarin became so lovely men winced  
to look at her. She married a  
Parisian banker and never returned  
to Sauve-Majeure.

(MORE)

## AGNES (CONT'D)

Weep-Not Dryland bore eight daughters without pain or even much blood, and every autumn took them up to the top of the Bald Moose to howl at the night sky while her husband slept in his comfortable bed.

Lizzie Wadham's cloth wove so fine she could sell it in Boston and even New York for enough money to build a school, where she insisted on teaching the young ladies' lessons, the content of which no male was ever able to spy out.

And whenever Weep-Not went up to Sister Agnes's old house to shoo out the foxes and raccoons and keep the garden weeded, she saw a crow perched on the chimney or pecking at an old apple, or a boney old cow peering at them with a rheumy eye, or a fat piglet with black spots scampering off into the forest as soon as she called after it.

The cod went scarce in the bays. The textile men came up from Portland and Augusta, with bolts of linen and money to build a mill on the river, finding ready buyers in Remembrance Dryland and Walter Chedderley. The few Penobscot and Passamaquoddy left found themselves corralled into bare land not far from where one of their little girls had once run crying from a strange doorstep in the snow.

The Free Gathered Church declined into Presbyterianism and the Cathedral of St. Geraud and St. Adelard remained a chapel, despite obtaining a door and its own relic—the kneecap of St. Geraud himself—before the Sazarin fortune wrecked on the New York market and scattered like so much seafoam. And me? I waited.

(MORE)

## AGNES (CONT'D)

I had found burning to be much less painful than expulsion from Hell, and somewhat fortifying, given the sudden warmth in the March chill.

When they buried the charred stumps of my bones, I was grateful to be in the earth, to be closed up and safe.

I thought of Prince Sitri, Lord of Naked Need, and how his leopard-skin and griffin-wings had burnt up every night, leaving his bare black bones to dance before the supper table of the upper Kings. His flesh always returned, so that it could burn again. When I thought about it, he looked a little like Thomas Dryland, with his stern golden face. And Countess Gremory, she'd had a body like Basile Sazarin had hid under those dingy aprons. The Countess would ride her camel naked through the boiling fields to knock on my door, when I'd had a door.

When my burned bones dreamed, they dreamed of them all eating my bread together, in one house or another, Agares and Lamentation Pole and Amdusias and Sebastienne Sazarin and lovely old Akalamdug and Ekur serving them. With these dreams, I slowly fell apart into the dirt of Sauve- Majeure.

Sometimes a crow or a dog would dig up a bone and dash off with it, or a cow would drag a knuckle up with her cud. They would slip their pens or wing north suddenly, as if possessed, and before being coaxed home, would drop the scavenged bone in a certain garden, near a certain dark, empty house.

FX - musical transition - times of change

## AGNES (CONT'D)

The lobster trade picked up, and every household had their pots.

(MORE)

## AGNES (CONT'D)

Schism Street got its first cobblestones, and cherry trees planted along its route. Something rumbled down south and the Minouflet boys were all killed in some lonely field in Pennsylvania, ending their name. In the name of the war dead, Pastor Veritas Pole and Father Jude dug up the strip of grass and holly hedges between Faith-My-Joy Square and Adelard-in-the-Garden Square and joined them into Memorial Square.

The Dryland girls married French boys and buried whatever hatchet they still had biting at the tree.

Raulguin Sazarin and his Bangor business partner Lucas Battersby found tourmaline up in Bald Moose mountain, brilliant pink and green and for a moment it seemed Sauve-Majeure really would be something, would present a pretty little ring to the state of Maine and become its best bride, hoping for better days, for bigger stones sometime down the way—but no. The tourmalite seam was shallow, and the mine closed down as quickly as it had sprung up, and that was all the town would ever have of boom and bustle.

One day Constance Chedderley and Catherine le Clerq came home from gathering blackberries in the hills and told their mothers that they'd seen chimney smoke up there. Wasn't that funny? Deliverance Dryland and Restitue Sazarin, best friends from the moment one had stolen a black-gowned, black-haired doll from the other, started sneaking up past the town line, coming home with muffins and shortbread in their school satchels. When questioned, they said they'd found a nunnery in the mountains, and one of the sisters had given them the treats as presents, admonishing them not to tell.

(MORE)

## AGNES (CONT'D)

The mill went bust before most of the others, a canary singing in the textile mine of New England. The fisherman trade picked up, though, and soon enough even Peter Mommacque had a scallop boat going, despite having the work ethic of a fat housecat.

A statue of Minerva made an honest woman of Memorial Square, with a single bright tourmaline set into her shield, which was promptly stolen by Bernard and Richie Loliot.

First Presbyterian Church crumpled up into Second Methodist, and the first Pastor not named Pole, though rather predictably called Dryland instead, spoke on Sundays about the dangers of drink. Oh, and he also spoke of a lady up in the hills... Old Agnes...

FX - crossfade Agnes and Pastor

## PASTOR 2

Agnes, don't you know Agnes? Oh, she has lived up there... I don't know, just always has, right? Making her pies and candies and muffins. A nicer old lady you couldn't hope to meet. Right modest, always wearing her buttoned-up old-fashioned frocks even in summer. Why, Marie Pelerin spends every Sunday up there digging in the potatoes and learning to spin wool like the wives in Sauve-Majeure did before the mill.

Folks in church laugh, agree

## PASTOR 2 (CONT'D)

Janette Loliot got her cider recipe but she won't share it round. We're thinking of sending Maude and Harriet along as well. Young ladies these days can never learn too much when it comes to the quiet industries of home.

CASSIE

Mr. Gussy?

GUSSY

What's that?

CASSIE

The pages are getting foggy. I think you need to read some more.

GUSSY

I need to - ah - ah yes, that's right.

(READING)

Far up into the hills above the stretch of land between Cobscook and Passamaquoddy Bay, if you go looking for it, you'll find a house all by itself in the middle of a brambly field of good straight corn and green garlic. It's an old place, but kept up, the whitewash fresh and the windows clean. The roof needs mending, it groans under the weight of hensbane and mustard and rue. There's tomatoes coming in under the window sill in the kitchen, a basil plant that may or may not come back next year.

Jenny Sazarin comes by Sunday afternoons for Latin lessons and to trade a basket of cranberries from her uncle's bog down in Lincolnville for a loaf of bread with a sugar-crust that makes her heart beat faster when she eats it.

She looks forward to it all week. It's quiet up there. You can hear the potatoes growing down in the dark earth. When October acorns drop down into the old lady's soot-colored wheelbarrow, they make a sound like guns firing.

Agnes starts the preserves right away, boiling the bright, sour berries in her great huge pot until they pop.

FX - making preserves in the kitchen

AGNES

Now - you see that, it means the berries are at just the right temperature, heat helps them give up their sugar, not unlike young girls...

JENNY

D'you know they used to burn witches here? I read about it last week.

AGNES

No. I've never heard that.

JENNY

They did. It must have been awful. I wonder if there really are witches? Pastor Dryland says there's demons, but that seems wrong to me. Demons live in Hell. Why would they leave and come here? Surely there's work enough for them to do with all the damned souls and pagans and gluttons and such.

AGNES

Perhaps they get punished, from time to time, and have to come into this world.

FX - Agnes stirs the pot.

AGNES (CONT'D)

These are just about ready to --

JENNY

What would a demon have to do to get kicked out of Hell?

GUSSY

The warm autumn sun lights up young Jenny's face, a gentle, bookish girl who looks so much her ancestors, Hubert Sazarin and Thomas Dryland. Gemegishkiri hallat tightens her grip on her wooden spoon, stained crimson by the bloody sugar it tends.

The demon shuts her eyes. The orange coal of the sun lights up the skin and the bones of her skull show through.

AGNES

Perhaps, for one moment, only one, so quick it might pass between two beats of a sparrow's wings, she had all her folk around her, and they ate of her table, and called her by her own name, and did not vie against the other, and for that one moment, she was joyful, and did not mourn her separation from a God she had never seen.

FX - Cranberries popping in a kettle.

JENNY

Oh. Auntie Agnes, can I have some cream? I so love your cream.

AGNES

You may child, any time.

GUSSY

The sun goes down over Bald Moose mountain, and the lights come on down in the soft black valley of Sauve-Majeure.

FX - Page flips.

GUSSY (CONT'D)

I guess that's the end.

AGNES

Sure you don't want to stay for another cup? What did you say your name was? Oh yes, Cassandra. The girl who saw too much. I can help you see more, so much more.

CASSIE

What was the word?

AGNES

Pardon?

CASSIE

When they were about to burn you. What was the word?

AGNES

(conspiratorily)  
Stay for another cup of tea, I'll tell you.

CASSIE

I don't know that I can. I can't -  
right? The story's over.

AGNES

Oh dear Cassie, I think you're  
story is about to begin.

GUSSY

Nope, you're right, Cassie, it's  
high time to be leaving.

CASSIE

I would like to know. You can teach  
me things? About the Dark Tome?

AGNES

Oh yes. The Dark Tome is thicker  
than the Bible, and more  
interesting still. You only need to  
understand the language beyond  
words.

GUSSY

Goodbye!

FX - Smack! Boom slammed shut.

INT. GUSSY'S BOOKSHOP, BASEMENT

FX - crickets, etc (some sort of identifying sound needs to  
be created to make it clear when we have returned to the  
'real world')

CASSIE

Mr. Gussy! What the hell!

GUSSY

You can't be spending too much time  
with a demon, Cassie.

CASSIE

She could've - would've - shown me  
things!

GUSSY

I think you learned enough from  
just the story she told, don't ya  
think?

CASSIE

I learned that men are jerks, but  
I'm pretty sure I already knew  
that.

GUSSY

Look now, I'm only looking out for  
you, you don't know where this book  
can take you.

CASSIE

Maybe I do, and you just won't let  
me go.

GUSSY

You're just a girl, Cassie

CASSIE

And you're not my dad!

GUSSY

No, but you also don't know what  
you're trifling with. You know what  
I had to do to get this book? You  
know what it does to people?

CASSIE

No.

GUSSY

No. Well, maybe we'll tell that  
story next.

CASSIE

You promise.

GUSSY

Come back tomorrow.

Music - Dark tome theme, mystery