

THE DARK TOME
SEASON 1, EPISODE 3

Featuring "BREATHE MY NAME"
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Draft 1

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MUSIC - Theme of THE DARK TOME, eerie, sense of mystery, wonder...

INT. SCHOOL - DAY

FX - School bell rings. Murmurs of teenagers in hallway

CROWD
(murmurs, gossiping) Do you see her? Yeah I heard she was suspended... She and Cathy Skillings got into it... Yeah Cathy's going to beat her ass...

FX - Cassie walks by, setting off a sequence of whispers

FX - opens up locker, starts putting stuff away

GRETA
Hey. Cathy says she's coming back for you. (BEAT) Hey you listening to me? You blacked out her eye and Mitchie Freeman dumped her. She is pissed at you.

CASSIE
I don't care.

FX - Locker door closer. Cassie starts walking. As GRETA taunts her, crowd reacts

GRETA
Hey, you better keep an eye out! Cathy is coming for you, and you know what, she won't be alone! (BEAT) Don't just walk away from me!

COUNSELOR
Hey! Cassie.

CASSIE
Yeah -

COUNSELOR
Come in here for a minute.

GRETA
Hey, Mr. Carter -

COUNSELOR
Get to class, Greta.

FX - Counselor closes door.

CASSIE

You didn't have to do that.

COUNSELOR

I don't want you getting into a fight on your first day back to classes.

CASSIE

Don't worry about me.

COUNSELOR

But I do, Cassie. Mrs. Fowler gave me this essay you wrote for her. It was... interesting. It was supposed to be a narrative of the time you spent doing community service work and what you learned.

CASSIE

Yeah?

COUNSELOR

(clears throat) "The first time I traveled, I traveled alone. I was guided to hell by a man who murdered his cousin and I came back with a bird that sang when people told it lies."

CASSIE

That's what happened.

COUNSELOR

Look, Cassie... I OK'ed you reading to Mr. Gussy because I was excited to see you interested in anything, quite frankly. But, I'm beginning to think that was a mistake. Mr. Gussy is a strange man. I'm worried he's filling your head with strange ideas.

CASSIE

Wait... You're worried about me, and Mr. Gussy?

COUNSELOR

Children who spend time with him... Things happen. The kinds of things you talk about in this story... (flips page) There's a history... (MORE)

COUNSELOR (CONT'D)

Ah, when I was a student here,
there was a kid I knew who started
visiting him a lot, and soon he was
talking about these crazy things --

CASSIE

Just - shut up. Mr. Gussy is the
one person who treats me like a
normal person.

COUNSELOR

Cassie, you don't know Mr. Gussy.

CASSIE

Are we done here, Mr. Carter?
That's what I thought.

FX - Cassie leaves the office

COUNSELOR

Hey... Cassie!

FX - Door slams!

EXT. SCHOOL GROUND - AFTERNOON

Outdoor New England high school environment, Cassie walks
along pavement.

CASSIE

(growls to self) Can't catch a
break...

GRETA

Hey, you, book head!

FX - Whiff!! Softball whizzes past Cassie's head.

CASSIE

Hey, watch it!

GRETA

I told you not to walk away from
me!

CASSIE

Look, leave me alone, okay, I --

SKILLINGS

You should've changed schools,
bitch

FX - Cathy Skillings has snuck up on Cassie, grabs her, forces her against tennis court chain-link fence

CASSIE
Urrrrnnkkkk!

SKILLINGS
Come on, Greta, get the scissors --

CASSIE
Look, we had it out, what the hell else do you want?

SKILLINGS
Payback.

FX - Scissors start snick-snacking

GRETA
Cut me a good chunk, Cathy, I want to see if it stays curly after it's off her

SKILLINGS
You know I got kicked off the cheering team? I might lose my scholarship because of you.

CASSIE
Good. It's about time your flapping mouth bit you in the ass.

GRETA
Shut her up, Cathy.

FX - Snip!

SKILLINGS
Ooh, that's a nice souvenir. How about another?

FX - Snip!

CASSIE
Ah! You cut me!

SKILLINGS
I'll cut you some more. What do you think, Greta? I want her to remember this.

GRETA
Yeah... Give her a little slice where no one will see it.

CASSIE
 (struggling) Let - go of me, let
 go!

SKILLINGS
 You shouldn't have got me
 suspended, bitch, you shouldn't
 have... Huh? What are you doing?

FX - Dreamy recollection (Agnes from Book 2)

AGNES
 (memory) The earth answers when I
 call it by name. I know its name
 because we are family.

CASSIE
 (starts speaking in an old tongue)
 Namatharash-derealash-mertakulah-
 dath...

FX - wind starts whipping up around them, thunderstorms
 crackle.

SKILLINGS
 Hey... what the hell... What are
 you saying...

CASSIE
 Duluth-keratahknk...

FX - Thunderclap overhead

SKILLINGS
 (shrieks) Oh! Oh! Oh shit!

GRETA
 Cathy! Holy shit - shit - your
 skin. It's.... Oh god, like,
 pimples are completely taking over
 your face.

SKILLINGS
 It burns!

CASSIE
 Hold onto that hair, Greta. You'll
 need some now.

GRETA
 Don't touch me you freak - ahhhh!!

FX - Cassie touches Greta and her hair starts coming out

GRETA (CONT'D)
 What the hell did you do!?!!

CASSIE
 I've learned a few tricks, is all.

COUNSELOR
 (Off) Cassie! Cassie! What is going
 on over there?!

CASSIE
 (yells) Just spending time with my
 friends, Mr. Carter. (beat, then
 intensely to the girls) Go ahead
 and tell him. I dare you.

SKILLINGS
 Let's get out of here, Greta...

FX - Greta and Skillings beat feet. The thunderstorm comes
 rolling in. Heavy thunder, lightning crackles, transition
 to...

INT. MR. GUSSY'S BOOKSHOP

FX - Door opens, jingling. Cassie takes a few steps, her feet
 are sloppy and wet.

GUSSY
 Cassie - jeezum crow you look like
 a drowned rat. You swim all the way
 down here?

CASSIE
 Storm came up. All of a sudden.

GUSSY
 Ayuh? How was school?

CASSIE
 Great. Glad to be back.

GUSSY
 (hesitant) Good. You need to keep
 focused, you know. You're in your
 last few months as a senior. Don't
 want to spoil it now.

CASSIE
 Of course not.

GUSSY

Well, alright. Say, I been doing a little more research on the tome.

CASSIE

Yeah?

GUSSY

Yeah. I think maybe there's a way to sort of... I dunno, steer it a little. Like, think of a magic eight ball.

CASSIE

Okay... ?

GUSSY

It's just a little ball with a doohickey in it, spins around when you shake it up, right?

CASSIE

Right...

GUSSY

Well, except, it's magic, right, but what makes it magic, exactly? It's thinking something. It's about asking it a question.

CASSIE

Soooo.... what? You think the Dark Tome will respond if we ask it a question?

GUSSY

In a manner of speaking, yes. Or at least, it's worth a shot. Whaddya think?

CASSIE

Sure. Why not?

GUSSY

That's the spirit! Okay. We learned last time that I can kind of cull up the book if I have you along as a helper. So let's take a stab at it, if you don't mind.

CASSIE

Sure.

GUSSY

Oh, before you come over, lock the door, spin the sign around to 'Closed.'

CASSIE

Yeah. Of course...

FX - Cassie does as instructed.

CASSIE (CONT'D)

Hey, Mr. Gussy?

GUSSY

Ayuh?

CASSIE

I, uh, my guidance counselor, uh... He was starting to tell me something...

GUSSY

What's that?

CASSIE

Nevermind. Nothing.

FX - Cassie approaches Gussy, pulls out a seat, then settles down at the table.

CASSIE (CONT'D)

Let's get started.

GUSSY

Okay. Here goes. Clear your mind. Focus on the book, lay your palms flat, on the table. Feel the cold wood there. You feel it? Good. The Dark Tome is like a little space heater, it warms up everything it touches. It's listening, I think. So I'm going to speak to it.

Hey, Mr. Tome... We're looking for a story again, we met a lot of demons and we been to hell, but what we're really trying to learn about, is if there's any way to find people who... who been to the other side. Okay?

CASSIE

(whispered) Is that what we're doing?

GUSSY

(hissed back) I told you! (rises again) That's the question I've got for you, tome. Can we summon anyone back from... beyond? Cuz I got a couple a two people I'd sure like to summon.

FX - Little magical twitter, signals that something has changed, not sure what

INT. MINING SHAFT - NIGHT

Cassie and Gussy have transported to a mining shaft, but it's not immediately clear that anything has changed. Slight more reverb on their voices.

GUSSY

Well, uh. It doesn't seem like anything's changed, we're still, uh...

CASSIE

In the bookshop? I don't think so. Look.

GUSSY

Oh. I guess you're right. It's sure dark here. Can't see much of anything.

CASSIE

Over there. There's a head lamp coming our way.

GUSSY

Ah, hell. That means we're underground, Cassie.

CASSIE

What?

GUSSY

Look, now you can see... It's a coal mine shaft. Over there, there's a pile of rubble. Down there... Someone's coming.

CASSIE

You think we're... We're under...

GUSSY

The Dark Tome's missing, too. We're stuck here.

CASSIE

Whoa, whoa, whoa, I didn't exactly sign up for ...

TOMMY - the narrator of this claustrophobic story, strides out of the darkness and starts fiercely recounting his tale

TOMMY

We should've been crushed, all of us, it would have been better if the mine collapsed on top of us all and crushed us under tons of stone and earth and coal. Better that, by far, than dying a little bit with every breath of poison air. Better than seeing the fear in the faces of the guys, the guys I've looked up to my whole life. Better than seeing the desperation in my father's eyes.

GUSSY

Hey, hold on, young fellah, calm down.

TOMMY

You shouldn't be here. There's not much oxygen left. You're sucking some of our air.

CASSIE

Are we? I... uh... This is complicated. We're here to hear you're story, I think.

TOMMY

My story, you want -- (CHUCKLES!) Trapped under the earth, only hours to live, and you want to hear a story. Oh that's rich, that's rich... Okay... I'll tell you, though, we only have time, right? And I... I might never get back to see Jake again. I should tell somebody.

GUSSY

Alright... well... go on...

TOMMY

My name is Tommy Betts, and I'm a coal miner just like my dad, and his dad before him, and his before - and so on. When I was young, I used to tell my dad that he should watch out. That if he dug too deep he might break through right into Hell. We went to Church every Sunday, back then, and I was sure scared of hell.

CASSIE

For good reason.

TOMMY

And demons. I was sure, when I saw my dad and his buddies come up from the caves, caked in black dust and spitting black paint in their saliva, I was sure they'd find demons do here too.

GUSSY

Sounds plausible.

TOMMY

I told myself I'd never be a miner, I'd find something else to do with my life, but, then I was eighteen, and next thing you knew I was down here in shaft 39 and it was a worse kind of hell than anything I learned about in church. Even the bravest men experience claustrophobia down here, in the deep underground, with the walls pressing in and the weight of a mountain hanging above you. The slightest tremor might be the end of days. Two miles into the heart of a mountain, and you might as well be floating in space. It's a special kind of damnation, being a miner. No matter how careful you are, once you go down deep, you're on your own.

Rick Nilsson used to put it like this

FX - Cutaway, to a game of cards. Men laughing, cracking beers, etc.

RICK

Tommy, being a miner is like playing Russian roulette every day for the rest of your life. Any morning you might wake up, and you found the chamber with the bullet. Without warning.

AL

Don't scare the boy, Rick.

RICK

Come on, Al, you know it better than anyone. Sooner or later, your card might be up.

Back to scene

TOMMY

Well, for me and my dad, Al, and for Nilsson and Jerry Tolland and Rob McIlveen and Randy Wisialowski and a dozen other guys, our card played on the tenth of April.

FX - dreary rain FX

TOMMY (CONT'D)

It was raining, that morning... Yesterday, I think it was, or was it the day before? Ah, but you know, we didn't care that it was raining. Underground, it don't matter what the weather's like outside. In fact, the shittier the day the better. It's the beautiful days you wish you could be at home with your wife, tossing ball with your boy and doing a little barbecue. My boy, Jake, he's just five. But sometimes I left him flip the burgers. On stormy days? Well, I don't mind so much. At least it's dry down here.

So on that morning, we waited for Wisialowski to show up. The guy was always late and almost always hung over when he did show. But Hanson, the shift super, he wouldn't let us go down until the whole shift arrived. We were supposed to be there by 7:30, right?

(MORE)

TOMMY (CONT'D)

Well, at quarter to eight, just when Hanson was about to let us go down and dock Wisialowski for the day, the guy pulls into the lot.

FX - ext ambience, pouring rain in parking lot

WISIALOWSKI

Sorry I'm late, guys!

Miners grumble

AL

Bullshit. Standing in the right waiting for that asshole.

TOMMY

I'm in no hurry to get down there.

AL

Not the point, kid.

TOMMY

(narrating - chuckles) Wasn't much to say to that. Wasn't ever any arguing with the old man. Even his eyse seemed chiseled out of stone, made of the same stuff we were digging into. He had a scar on his left temple from a fight years back, when one of his crew had gone stir crazy down in the mine. My dad was the one who was finally able to subdue the head case, but not before the guy tried bashing his skull in. That was my dad - not the kind of man to start shit, but the kind to put an end to it.

Back to scene - raining, et al.

HANSON

Alright, listen up! Wisialowski, you paying attention?!

WISIALOWSKI

Ah, yeah. Sorry boss.

HANSON

This is the last time you're late, Randy. I'm saying this in front of everyone, so nobody can complain you weren't warned. Every time you're late, you cost us money.

(MORE)

HANSON (CONT'D)

You're all going down twenty-five minutes later than scheduled. Multiply that by eighteen, and you're looking at seven and a half hours of accumulated time. So the next time you're late, I'm docking you - and only you - for the total accumulated time you've delayed the entire crew. And if there's a time after that, you'll be fired. You understand?

WISIALOWSKI

Sure do.

HANSON

Good. Now get on that damn mantrip

During this passage, add FX to accompany our descent into the underground...

TOMMY

(narrating) The mantrip was a cable car that lowered us into the mine and drew us back up again later. Only when we were down into the ground with the lights flickering around us and the mantrip's wheels squeaking on the metal rails did the miners start to grumble.

MINER 1

Freakin' Hanson, "I'll dock you seven and a half hours"

MINER 2

Bet he's back at his desk already, drinking coffee

MINER 1

Guy's never worked a real day in his life. Never had coal dust under his fingers. Ain't that right, Tommy?

TOMMY

(in scene - grunts)

MINER 2

You think he deserved it, that right? Maybe. The guy's a slacker and a drunk, but you know, he can dig some coal.

MINER 1

What'd you do this weekend, Tommy?

TOMMY

I'm building a tree fort for Jake. Ain't much of a carpenter, but it's coming out all right. Took Melissa out to dinner Saturday night at that new place, Evergreen. No place to go for beers, but you want to make the wife happy, bring her there.

MINER 2

Expensive?

TOMMY

Not like you'd think. Shit, they know nobody around here can afford expensive.

MINERS

(chuckle)

TOMMY

(narrated) That was the last of the banter. The deeper you went, the quieter we got. It often last well in to the first hour after work began, until we became acclimated again. Some people might think it was fear that made us quiet, but, I thought it was more like respect. When you worked this deep in the ground, you got to give the mountain its due.

FX - mantrip squeals, slows, stops. Men start to disembark

JERRY

You smell something?

TOMMY

(sniffs) No...

MINER 2

You're just paranoid, Jerry.

JERRY

I swear I smell something.

TOMMY

(sniffs again) I got nothing.

JERRY

Probably just me. McIlveen and I found that methan leak on Friday while we ere drilling a bolt hole in the roof. Patched it up ourselves, so I'm not worried about that. But it's got me on edge.

TOMMY

I'm never not on edge.

TOMMY (CONT'D)

(narrated) My dad always told me - paranoia can save a miner's life.

(CUT - aside about the dad and dirty jokes)

TOMMY (CONT'D)

We were deep in Shaft 39 when a frown creased my forehead. I caught a scent that made my nostrils flare and my upper lip curl. It reminded me of the odor that filled the house every time my wife ran the self-cleaning program on the oven.

JERRY

(approaching) You sure you don't smell something?

TOMMY

I smell it now.

MINER 2

(off) What the hell is that STINK?!

TOMMY

Oh, shit.

JERRY

It's behind us.

TOMMY

Duck!

FX - Whuumpppp! Grinding noise, then a settling of ground, dust, rock, etc. as the shaft caves in.

Tommy is excitable, but the rest of the miners are grave

TOMMY (CONT'D)

What the... what the hell was that -
- hey guys --- guys ---

TOMMY (CONT'D)

(narrating) The faces of the miners around me blanched; I looked at my father and saw a momentary flicker of fear before he recovered.

AL

We'll figure it out.

ROB

Holy shit...

JERRY

We're screwed. (coughs then chokes)

The other miners start to gag and cough as well

AL

(loud) Hey everyone! This way! Everybody with me! And follow procedure. We're gonna be fine. We've just gotta by ourselves some time until Hanson gets a team down here to get us out.

Miners reluctantly agree, start following Al away

TOMMY

(narrating) Nobody but me had seen the flicker of fear in my father's eys. They all nodded and fell into step behind him. But I couldn't ignore the fact that we were going deeper into the mountain farther away from the surface and clean air with every step.

*** BREAK ***

GUSSY

So that was... when, you think?

TOMMY

Maybe yesterday? Look, we started as we had been trained. McIlveen and Jerry hung a plastic curtain across the shaft. We had put on emergency oxygen packs - rescuers, we called 'em - and over the top of Jerry's, his eys were wild. His hands shook as he tucked the curtain up as best he could.

FX - Clang! Clang Clang! - sledgehammer bein wahcked against plates and bolts that support walls

TOMMY (CONT'D)

You hear that? That was my dad. Usually it's ill advised, to start banging like hell on the plats and bolts that support the walls and ceiling of the mine. But this was a special occasion. Anything we could do to get the people above to hear us. By now there would be a rescue attempt going on; folks would be looking for some sign of our location. The hammer on metal might be the only way to signal them.

Behind pa was Nilsson. Nilsson sat on the floor against the back of the coal rib, his face covered with a bandanna - no rescuer for him. Of the eighteen men, only ten had working oxygen packs... the other rescuers were faulty. The guys who had working oxygen packs were taking turns, just like they were taking turns with the sledgehammer.

GUSSY

Wait... You didn't have enough oxygen packs?

TOMMY

Makes you sick, doesn't it? These things are meant to save lives, give us enough air to last until someone could get to us... but nobody ever bothered to test them.

It was right around then that Jerry tapped me on the shoulder. He gestured to the plastic curtain they'd just put up.

JERRY

What do you think? Cozy, huh?

TOMMY

Just like home.

JERRY

(chuckles)

TOMMY

Ah, yes. Home. I'd been trying not to think of home, of Melissa and Jake. Had they heard the news by now? Would Melissa tell Jake that Daddy was trapped down in the mine. No way. She wouldn't do that to the kid; he was only five years old. But Melissa would be trying to find someone to stay with him so that she could come and stand out there at the mouth of the mine, waiting.

She wouldn't be there yet. But soon... She'd be out there waiting for me.

I didn't want to let her down. When I thought about leaving her alone... leaving Jake to grow up without his dad, well... My heart hurt so much I thought I might scream. No, better not to think of home.

CASSIE

Jeez... So... this plastic curtain, what did it do?

TOMMY

It created an enclosure about fifty feet square, to keep out the methane and god knows what else what out there. It wasn't a lot of room for eighteen guys. It wasn't a lot of air, either. The guys without working rescuers would suck up the remaining oxygen in no time.

I watched my father slinging the sledgehammer. Dad had come home from the mine every night, black with coal dust and too exhausted to play very much with me. I'd done my damndest to be different. To make time for Jake whenever I could. But even with the best of intentions, well, you fall short. Like, the tree fort wasn't finished yet.

Jake had never even asked what would happen if the mine collapsed. At five, the possibility hadn't even occurred to him.

(MORE)

TOMMY (CONT'D)

Somehow he'd managed to avoid the fear that lay always beneath the friendly conversation of the entire community. I hadn't been that lucky. I don't remember how old I was when I first ask my dad about what would happen in a cave-in. I'd seen something about it in an old movie on television.

Watching dad now - still so strong and grim while closing in on fifty - I remembered the way he'd softened. He'd crouched down low to get even with me, and ruffled my hair.

AL

You've got nothing to worry about, Tom-Tom. Anything goes wrong down there, the Lost Miner will get us out.

BOY TOMMY

The Lost Miner?

AL

That's right. He's the ghost of a miner maybe your great-grandfather's age - back in the real old days. Back in 1941, the folks who survived that say it was a tall, broad-shouldered man who got the timbers out of the way so they could crawl out. No one ever recalls seeing him before or since. Except... Old Bob Carsey says he bumped into someone once, when he got himself turned around and nearly lost forever down there. A big fellah, with patched up trousers and a real old fashioned lantern. He got Carsey turned the right direction round and then seemed to just disappear into the mine - Bob called out to him but he was long gone. They say he's down there, waiting... Looking to help out care of miners in trouble, if ever they were to call on him. So you hear what I'm saying son? If there's ever trouble, we'll just call out to the lost miner.

TOMMY

Well, I asked my dad to tell that story again and again as I grew up, till by the time I was eleven I realized it was just that - stories the old timers tell, and when my dad realized I didn't believe in them any more, well, it was a hell of a loss for both of us.

It was Al's turn at the sledgehammer now. He turned to glance at Nilsson and the others who were without oxygen packs, then wiped the sweat from his brow. Dad was no ghost, and he sure wasn't lost, but I thought the old man might be our best hope. So I went over to him.

TOMMY (CONT'D)

(in scene) Dad. Have a rest. Let me take a few whacks.

AL

(winded) Just one more, Tommy.

TOMMY

I mean it, dad.

AL

Alright then.

FX - Sledgehammer passed over to Tommy

TOMMY

You all right?

AL

I will be. Give it a go, Tom.

Tommy starts taking some swings (gets 3x done in this passage).

TOMMY

(while swinging, effort) We're gonna be all right. Just gotta hunker down, now, try not to suck up any more air than we need. Sip at it. Make it last. They'll be here.

TOMMY (CONT'D)

I kept an eye on my dad's face, looking for a crack in his mask of confidence and found none. Maybe it was for my benefit - mine, and the rest of the crew's - but right then I thought my father actually felt confident that, even with so little air for so many of us and with the toxins seeping in around the edges of the curtain, they would be rescued in no time. Two miles into the mine, out of contact with the surface, and my dad believed in salvation. Blind faith.

FX - Tommy puts down the hammer, takes a few steps.

TOMMY (CONT'D)

(winded)
Hey Dad?

AL

Yeah?

TOMMY

You remember the lost miner?

AL

Sure I do. I've been thinking about him, too.

TOMMY

Did he have a name? The original guy, I mean. The one who died.

AL

Sure. He was a Dutchman, I think they said. Ostergaard? Something like that.

TOMMY

Ostergaard. Ostergaard...

TOMMY (CONT'D)

(narrating) For some reason, just having the name made me feel better. I grinded the handle of the sledgehammer the same way my mind wrapped around the name of the Lost Miner. Like it was all I had in a bad way. Something I had to hold onto.

(MORE)

TOMMY (CONT'D)

I swung the hammer against a metal support plate and the clang reverberated up my arms. I barely noticed as my dad walked away. I barely noticed anything, just enjoyed the simple swing of the hammer. I counted hammer blows to keep my mind busy. At thirty-two, I took a break.

Rob McIlveen was sprawled on the floor, a t-shirt over his face. He looked asleep or dead, but the rise and fall of his chest made it clear he was still breathing. In the flickering light, Nilsson had gone awfully pale. He had a rescuer covering his nose and mouth now, getting oxygen, but the way he clutched at his chest, I thought maybe he was having a heart attack.

I got to fifty-seven swings of the hammer, then Jerry Tolland took over. I hesitated, hating the thought of just sitting there waiting to run out of air. But I could barely lift the hammer anymore.

So I staggered to the far wall and sat down. After a few minutes I tried to offer my oxygen pack to Randy Wisialowski, but the guy waved it away.

WISIALOWSKI

(rasping)

I just gave mine up a few minutes again. Besides, you've been trying to signal, working your lungs. Wouldn't be fair to cut off your air now. (coughs) Shitty day to come into work, huh?

FX - they both chuckle, morbidly

WISIALOWSKI (CONT'D)

(the laughter sends him into a choking fit, he settles down)

Quiet for a moment

TOMMY

Randy?

WISIALOWSKI

(sluggish) Yeah?

TOMMY

You ever hear about the lost miner?

WISIALOWSKI

Sure. Everyone knows that story. You don't grow up with family in the mine and not hear that old tale.

TOMMY

So you think it's just a story.

WISIALOWSKI

Of course it is. Jesus, kid, you better just sit there a bit, soak up some oxygen.

TOMMY

But if the story's based on a real guy who died in the mines, how do we know, right? I mean, every legend starts somewhere, right?

WISIALOWSKI

Did you miss the part where the guy died?

-- PART 1 and 2 BREAK --

Tenor changes, the situation is now desperate.

TOMMY

Nine or ten guys had taken turns with the hammer before, at last, none of them were strong enough to lift it. Jerry and Bob had fallen unconscious. Bob had been in and out for a while, but nobody could wake Jerry.

We didn't talk much, we wanted to conserve air. What little conversation took place down here in the heart of the mountain was in whispers, men sharing regrets and fears.

(MORE)

TOMMY (CONT'D)

Wisialowski talked about the way his drinking had driven his wife, Lorraine, away, and how he would have done it all so differently if he had it to do over. Some of the men were writing notes on scraps of paper from their wallets or on torn pieces of clothing, just wanting to leave something behind, some reassurance or a farewell or last expression of love. They told each other it was just in case.

GUSSY

Just in case.

TOMMY

Yeah. I stare across the small enclosure to my father. He stared right back, never looking at Jerry, who lay with his head on my dad's lap, unmoving.

WISIALOWSKI

Christ, is he...

AL

Quiet.

TOMMY

My dad's grim expression was enough of an answer. None of the others were foolish enough to ask the question. Or perhaps they just didn't want to acknowledge that death was in our midst.

TOMMY (CONT'D)

Ostergaard

TOMMY (CONT'D)

I said the name. Heard it echo across stone and the coal rib and the curtain. The men who were left turned to look at me.

WISIALOWSKI

What's that?

TOMMY

The lost miner. We've gotta call on hin. Nobody else is coming. We're gonna die down here, we don't get some help.

MINER 1

Are you freakin' thick? We tellin' ghost stories now, or you got brain damage from the freakin' methane?

TOMMY

Gotta call him. (struggles to feet)
Ostergaard! Osteraard! You gotta come, man. We need you now.
Ostergaard! We need your help or we're gonna die down here!

AL

Tom

TOMMY

What, dad --

AL

Shut it, boy.

TOMMY

(narrator) I flinched, hunched down a bit, pulled the rescuer back over my face. I closed my eyes and whispered the name into my mask.

TOMMY (CONT'D)

(whispered) Ostergaard...
Ostergaard... Ostergaard.

TOMMY (CONT'D)

(narrating) I nodded off, I guess. When I woke, I was suffocating.

TOMMY (CONT'D)

(in scene - lurches awake, gasping for breath)

TOMMY (CONT'D)

(narrating) The oxygen in my rescuer had run out. I tried to roll over and sit up, but my body was slow to respond to my mind. I managed to loll my head off to one side and then proper myself up enough to look around.

Sometimes I drank a little, but this wasn't like being drunk. It was more like what it must feel like for people who take too many sleeping pills or Hollywood types into heavy narcotics.

(MORE)

TOMMY (CONT'D)

The small space between the curtain and the coal rib seemed to shift and blur. My eyelids felt heavy. Nearby, Wisialowski had curled up into a fetal ball, softly crying. Raymo had sprawled onto the stone floor on the tunnel on his face, breath coming in long, shallow hisses, body twitching. Jerry Tolland sat against the wall with his knees up under his chin, arms draped over his legs. He looked so serious there. It took me a minute to understand that Jerry was dead.

TOMMY (CONT'D)

(in scene) Dad?

TOMMY (CONT'D)

I gazed toward the far wall, where my father had been sitting with Nilsson. Someone shifted there. In the fading glow of their remaining lights, a hand rose up - my father, signalling that he had not yet breathed his last. But it wouldn't be long. Whatever rescue might be in the offing, it needed to happen now. The sledgehammer lay on the floor forgotten.

I ran out my tongue to wet my lips, opened my mouth in a last prayer. But instead of Jesus, the name that came out my mouth was the lost miner's.

TOMMY (CONT'D)

(hoarse) Ostergaard...

TOMMY (CONT'D)

My eyes were eve heavier. I slumped back to the ground. As I lay there listening to the silence, feeling the weight of the mountain closing in around me, I knew there would be no rescue. We were alone.

Pain began to spread in a band across my chest. Every breath felt more difficult than the last. For several long moments, I succumbed to unconsciousness again. Then a sound made my eyes flutter open.

LOST MINER

(groans, low and sougning, then
hacks and coughs through gas mask)

Lost Miner continues in background, breathing through gas
mask ala Darth Vader

TOMMY

There was a man standing in the
midst of the enclosure. He was
dressed in full mining gear, but
wore an old-fashioned sort of
miner's helmet with a light on the
front and a black gas mask beneath
it.

TOMMY (CONT'D)

(gasps) You...

TOMMY (CONT'D)

The figure leaned down and touched
Wisialowski on the shoulder, and
the crying man went silent and
still. No weeping. Not so much as a
shudder of breath. And then the
strange figure, a coal-smeared
silhouette, began to move through
the enclosure, pausing to reach
down a comforting hand to the other
men. As he passed amongst them, he
almost seemed to float, and the
edges of the figure blurred like
heat haze over summer blacktop. And
when he touched them, one by one,
they became still. As the lost
miner moved toward the coal rib -
toward the place where I'd seen my
father raise one weakened hand - I
closed my eyes. I heard a rattling
hiss of breath and then nothing. I
felt so cold.

Becomes silent for a moment

CASSIE

Hey, where'd he go?

GUSSY

He just upped and ... vanished.

CASSIE

He was there, right? You saw him...
He told us his story.

GUSSY
You was sitting right there with
me, Cassie.

CASSIE
I was... um... Mr. Gussy?

GUSSY
What?

CASSIE
Where's the book?

GUSSY
The book - oh... Oh! Oh hell on
wheels how are we going to get out
of here with out the ---

CASSIE
There's a light down there. We
should go.

GUSSY
Cassie, look, if anything happens --

CASSIE
Let's just go, Mr. Gussy, one thing
at a time...

GUSSY
Alright...

FX - they pad a little bit down the corridor

GUSSY (CONT'D)
Look, there's a little plastic
divider. And, some men inside.

FX - they push open the plastic, and immediately recoil

CASSIE
(SHRIEKS) They're dead, they're all
--

GUSSY
Ssssh, girl, this is a graveside,
best not to disturb the ... dead.

CASSIE
Mr. Gussy? What are you -- oh...
Oh...

FX - The low gas mask sound returns - it's Ostergaard!

GUSSY

It's him.

CASSIE

Ost.. Osta---

GUSSY

Ostergaard. (Raises voice) Hey,
Ostergaard. We're just witnesses of
the story, you have no dominion
over us, you hear!

CASSIE

Dominion, what do you mean domin---

GUSSY

Shush! (raises voice again) I - uh -
compell you! Show us the way out of
here! Give us our book back! We're
not a sacrifice for your mine!

Gas mask breathes in, out, a few more times, then twists into
a demonic chortle, then out.

CASSIE

Mr. Gussy, I don't like this. The
other stories, they didn't... um...
I didn't think, maybe --

GUSSY

Wait. Hold on a moment. There, on
the wall.

CASSIE

What?

GUSSY

Someone's carved something...
There's not much light left, but I
can almost make it out... It
reads...

CASSIE

Breathe My Name. By Christopher
Golden.

GUSSY

Breathe my name...

CASSIE

Ostergaard...

FX - whooshing transport sound, then

EXT. HOUSE - LATER - DAY

FX - ambulance siren, sound of paramedics in back of ambulance

TOMMY

Unnnngghhh!

PARAMEDIC 1

He's awake

PARAMEDIC 2

Give him more oxygen

FX - whoosh from tank

PARAMEDIC 1

Ironic, isn't it? Only reason he had enough oxygen down there is cause the other guys died first.

PARAMEDIC 2

Makes me sick thinking of it. He got lucky. Lucky in the most screwed up kind of way.

PARAMEDIC 1

All those poor bastards. If they'd lived any longer, he wouldn't have made it either.

FX - sirens howl again, then take on a dreamlike texture, making it clear this has been a memory

MELISSA

Babe, you alright? (beat) Babe?

TOMMY

Unhhh, yeah, me? I'm fine.

MELISSA

You look like you're in a trance.

TOMMY

I was just looking at Jake playing in the sprinkler. Cackling like a lunatic. June came fast, didn't it?

MELISSA

Yes. It did. Hey, brought you a beer.

TOMMY

Thanks. (takes a haul)

MELISSA

Dinner will be ready in a little while. You should get Jake in here, get him in something dry.

TOMMY

You got it.

MELISSA

You sure you're okay? You're... not still having waking nightmares, Tommy?

TOMMY

Just a little tired. Catch you in a minute, okay?

MELISSA

Okay.

They kiss, lightly, Melissa exeunts. Tommy takes another haul of the beer and sets it down

JAKE

Daaddddy!!!

Jake rushes in from the lawn, tackles his dad, they both laugh.

TOMMY

(laughing) Oh - oh all over me - you're soaked, Jake...

FX - turns sprinkler hose off.

TOMMY (CONT'D)

Look, mom wants you to put something dry on.

JAKE

She's going to want you to put something dry on, too.

TOMMY

No doubt. C'mere, bud.

FX - Tommy picks up the boy, who laughs the whole time.

MELISSA

(off) Dry clothes, Jakey!

JAKE

I can do it! I'll get 'em!

TOMMY

There you go.

Jake rushes off. Melissa enters again.

MELISSA

It's been so good for him, having you home for a while. It's been good for you, too.

TOMMY

Yeah.

Melissa kisses him again.

MELISSA

I'll serve up.

Melissa walks off.

TOMMY

Come out. I see you there.

CASSIE

We weren't trying to hide or anything.

TOMMY

So you made it out of the mine?

GUSSY

Took a bit of doing.

TOMMY

So you saw all that? You saw Melissa, huh? There's so many thoughts I might have shared with her, but I've never been that kind of man. (chuckles) Just like my dad I guess. I don't want to tell her how being home with Jake makes it easier to deal with my dad's death... And maybe it makes it harder, too. I just want every moment home with them, because the doctor was clear about the prognosis... Another week, two at most, and I'll have to be back at work. I'll have to go back into the mine.

FX - Jake runs down the stairs

JAKE

Check it out, dad! My Bulldozer T-shirt! VRrrrrroooooommm!

TOMMY

Good job, buddy.

JAKE

And nowwww dinner!

MELISSA

Yes, your majesty. Coming right up.

JAKE

Then brownies!

MELISSA

But of course.

TOMMY

(to Gussy and Cassie) You see the stuff on his shirt? Bulldozers, yep, but also a crane. Kid's been talking about construction non-stop for weeks. Melissa thinks maybe he wants to build stuff. Me? I want him to go to college. No one in my family has ever been to college. But that's what I want for him. Somewhere far away from West Virginia. Far away from the mine.

Of course, college costs a lot of money, don't it? Nobody in the Betts family had ever gotten that kind of education. Hell, I was the first one to finish high school. We're a mining family. It might be hard for you to understand. The odds are against us being anything different.

So, that means that tonight, before bed, I'm going to tell Jake the first of the stories. Oh, I've told my son stories almost every night, the past couple of months. All kinds of stories. But starting tonight, from time to time I'll include the tale of the ghost of a lost miner name Ostergaard. I'll tell him the best I can, make them as real as possible. It won't be difficult.

(MORE)

TOMMY (CONT'D)

Jake loves ghost stories. But I have to make absolutely certain that he believes. Just in case.

FX - transition whoosh. Rain lapping down

INT. GUSSY'S BOOKSHOP, NIGHT

CASSIE

(panting) Holy... holy crap... we made it... we made it back... right... ?

GUSSY

Yes... that's right, the old oak table's right here, just where we left it.

CASSIE

And the book.

GUSSY

That's right. The book didn't go nowhere.

CASSIE

Look at that.

GUSSY

What?

CASSIE

There's coal dust on you, right up underneath your fingernails.

GUSSY

Yes... little souvenir, I s'pose.

CASSIE

So is that what you wanted? Did the tome answer some... question for you?

GUSSY

In a manner of speaking, yes.

CASSIE

Yes? Yes, what?

GUSSY

It's a little hard to explain. You know uh... you know what happened to me.

CASSIE

You had a wife. Something happened to her, that's all I know.

GUSSY

She was pregnant. Got pretty depressed. She hanged herself in the bathroom. That was... April 10th, 1980. I've been looking for her - for them - ever since.

CASSIE

So? So you thought the Dark Tome could somehow lead you to them?

GUSSY

Well think about it, Cassie, it's obvious. The Dark Tome opens other worlds. I just need to get to a world where they're alive. Where the sleeping pills didn't wreck her mind.

CASSIE

All I've learned is that things are getting more dangerous, Mr. Gussy. When we were down in that mine... I was worried we might not make it out. I think... I think it's possible that we could get stuck in one of these stories. Or... or maybe worse.

GUSSY

Ayuh.

CASSIE

"Ayuh" - that's all you have to say?

GUSSY

I told you you was trifling with something powerful. But you said you were up for the job. You telling me you're not?

CASSIE

I don't know...

GUSSY

It's that Mr. Carter, isn't it? George Jenkins Carter Jr., his dad and me were buddies growing up.

(MORE)

GUSSY (CONT'D)

His family still thinks the ill
that befall his pa was my doing. It
was not, I assure you. He was the
fool who wanted to spend the night
up in Derry. Now, look... I can see
it in you, Cassie. You've felt the
power, haven't you?

CASSIE

Yes... I have.

GUSSY

You need to be careful. You might
be learning something from this
book, but you still don't know,
what you don't know. (beat) Hey,
Cassie, where you going?

CASSIE

To get some fresh air!

FX - Door closes.