

THE DARK TOME
SEASON 1, EPISODE 7

"INK"

by JONATHAN MABERRY

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

15

INT. DEN - NIGHT

15

Cassie collapses to the ground, sobbing.

CASSIE
We killed him... Scott...

NICK
It was my dad.

CASSIE
We let him do it, Nick.

NICK
Yeah well if it wasn't Scott, it would have been you.

CASSIE
That's supposed to make me feel better?

NICK
No. I don't think it would.

Nick crashes to the ground, absently grabs one of the beers Scott left behind

NICK (CONT'D)
(sad chuckle) Looks like Scott left some beers.

CASSIE
Are you seriously...

FX - Nick cracks a beer.

NICK
I always said I'd never get into drinking... Well I always said I'd never do a lot of things. (slurps the beer) You think it's sealed?

CASSIE
Sure... I guess... I mean... I'm not really well versed in sealing up gates to the demon world.

NICK

Yeah... You're right... Someone probably needs to stay here. To guard it.

CASSIE

No, Nick...

NICK

That's why the Mortons have been here all these years. Sacrificing Harkers when we have to. Probably other people too. Someone has to guard the gate. And I'm the last one left. (pounds the rest of the beer) Suddenly it all makes sense.

FX - Nick crushes the can.

NICK (CONT'D)

I've been running from it for so long. Now I see it's been in me since I was kid.

CASSIE

You don't have to do this.

FX - Nick reaches over, grabs another can of beer, cracks it.

NICK

Coupla beers aren't going to kill me, Cassie. I need something to help me forget the demon. You best get on your way. Me and dad... We got a lot of catching up to do.

MUSIC - Sinister

FX - Warbly whoompf! PORTAL

INT. BOOKSHOP - MORNING

Cassie slams through the portal, knocking over books and other things.

CASSIE

(PANTING)

Gussy bursts in through the front door.

FX - Door open

GUSSY

Cassie, Cassie? What the hell are you okay-- Cassie...? Jeezum.

Gussy rushes to Cassie's side, comforting her.

CASSIE

He... He killed him...

GUSSY

He? He killed who?

CASSIE

There was this demon living in the basement and it needed human sacrifices and the dad was feeding the neighbors to it until the mom left but then that was too much so he started cutting his own wrists and eventually bled dry one day and then Nick - the son - he was trying to be better than his dad but then he killed him... Scott! His friend!

GUSSY

Sounds like a hell of a story.

CASSIE

It wasn't just a story, Mr. Gussy. It was... it was like it was real. I... (gulp) look at my neck.

GUSSY

Someone laid hands on you?

CASSIE

The ghost dad. He was trying to feed me to the demon. Do you think... Do you think he could've done it, Mr. Gussy?

GUSSY

I, uh, oh dear...

CASSIE

Mr. Gussy?

GUSSY

Let's rewind a minute. How'd you get yourself entangled in this particular story, Cassie?

CASSIE

Well, I was... I was upset, over what happened with um, Mom and Mark.

GUSSY

Uh-huh.

CASSIE

Then I started hearing something. A voice. The ghost dad's voice was calling to me from the book.

GUSSY

So the book called out to you? It asked you to go somewhere.

CASSIE

Yes.

GUSSY

Unlike the other times.

CASSIE

Now that you mention it... Yes. I guess all the other times I started reading the book and I came to the story. This time... The story came to me.

GUSSY

Jeezum, I'm sorry Cassie. That book is dangerous, I told you that, right?

CASSIE

Dangerous? What kind of dangerous, Mr. Gussy? (Beat) Oh my god, my guidance counselor was right.

GUSSY

Whoa-whoa-whoa! Hang on a dang minute! Don't let Mr. Carter scare you off the Dark tome!

CASSIE

But he was right! You ARE dangerous. Things DO happen to kids who mess around with the Dark Tome, isn't that right?

GUSSY

It ain't like that, Cassie...

CASSIE

Yes it is! You're too old to use it, you said the magic doesn't work right anymore, and now you just want to use me to get to wherever you want to go, you don't care if I get shredded alive by demons, do you?

GUSSY

No, Cassie, that's not true-

Gussy reaches to grab her wrist, Cassie flips out.

CASSIE

No. Don't touch ME!

FX - Lightning-like flash, Cassie's rage turns into an out of control lightning bolt that lasers out through the shop

GUSSY

H-holy! Cassie!

CASSIE

Oh, sorry!

GUSSY

You let out a fireball! Hot damn! Grab the fire extinguisher!

FX - Smoke alarm starts going off

CASSIE

Where is it?!

GUSSY

Behind the counter, there! You never want to trifle with fire when you have all these books laying around. Hand it over!

Cassie struggles, grabs fire extinguisher, passes it to Gussy, who starts spraying it. Fire dies down

GUSSY (CONT'D)

(Cough cough)

CASSIE

Is it out?

GUSSY

Ayuh.

CASSIE

I'm sorry.

GUSSY

Don't worry. It was a pile of John Grisham's.

CASSIE

I don't know what came over me. I didn't mean to. I did something like this at home, too.

GUSSY

Hey, relax, Cassie. I'm sorry. I shouldn't have grabbed your wrist. You're safe here, okay? I mean that. I'm not going to let anything happen to you. Let's um, just check outside...

FX - Gussy walks over to blinds, peers through, settles them again.

GUSSY (CONT'D)

Okay. None the wiser. Don't need the fire department charging up into here and destroying our magic book.

CASSIE

No... we wouldn't want that, would we.

GUSSY

You don't like these new powers you're getting?

CASSIE

I didn't exactly sign up for them.

GUSSY

You did trifle with the tome. On your own. On more than one occasion.

CASSIE

Which I found because of you. *you* left it out in the open. you kept talking about how amazing it was. How it was magic.

GUSSY

Maybe. But I didn't make you open it. Didn't make you read any words.

CASSIE

That's not exactly how I remember it. Didn't you say, "The walls between you and the next world are a little thinner" ?

GUSSY

I may have.

CASSIE

I guess I didn't know that the next world had demons in it.

Gussy sits down in a chair.

GUSSY

Cassie, girl, what can I say? You already learned... This world's got demons in it, too.

CASSIE

Yeah, it does.

GUSSY

(yawns) It's almost 5 in the morning. 'Bout time for me to be getting up proper. Can I safely leave you alone, or are you going to be trifling with the book again?

CASSIE

Like you care?

GUSSY

Cassie, I do care. I care that something... Something got you to run away from home in the middle of the night. And whatever happened back home, attracted some kind of spirit from the Dark Tome... You asked if the book was dangerous? Hell yes the book is dangerous. I thought I made that clear already. Can you make me a promise?

CASSIE

What?

GUSSY

Next time you open up the book, we travel together.

CASSIE

"Next time" ...?

GUSSY

If there is a next time, I meant to say.

CASSIE

Yeah, sure. I promise.

GUSSY

Okay. You up too? I'll make you some breakfast. I make a mean plate of scrambled eggs.

CASSIE

No. I'm good. I'm going to try and go back to bed.

GUSSY

Alright. You sleeping in the basement?

CASSIE

Huh?

GUSSY

You can't sleep out here. Bookshop opens at eight.

CASSIE

Oh, uh... Basement. On second thought, why don't I join you for breakfast?

FX - Transition

INT. GUSSY'S APARTMENT - A BIT LATER

FX - scraping up plates of food, Cassie has been scarfing it up pretty good.

CASSIE

Oh my gosh... I guess I was hungry.

GUSSY

Guess so. You just ate a half dozen eggs.

CASSIE

Sorry.

GUSSY

Sorry? Don't you be sorry. I was going to ask if you wanted any more.

CASSIE
No, I'm good. (beat) But do you
have any orange juice?

GUSSY
Yessah. Coming right up.

FX - Gussy goes to his fridge, gets out a jug of OJ, pours,
sets it down for Cassie, she slurps it right down.

CASSIE
Ugh. Head's pounding.

GUSSY
You out drinking last night?

CASSIE
No. Just... (sighs with the memory)
Just driving.

GUSSY
It was the prom, right?

CASSIE
Yeah.

GUSSY
I had an inkling. I mean. I read
the paper. Lots of ads for tux
shops and corsages.

CASSIE
Ah. Yeah it wasn't really like that
for me.

GUSSY
Yeah. I figured. I didn't even go
to my prom.

CASSIE
You didn't?

GUSSY
People have always thought I was a
bit... funny... Cassie. Back in
high school - now I am talking many
moons ago - there wasn't a girl
who'd talk to me. And honestly, I
wasn't too interested in talking to
them. It was always books I was
most interested in. If not books
set in the stars, then books about
the stars. Or folks who wrote about
parallel dimensions.

(MORE)

GUSSY (CONT'D)

Or the demon planes. I found it fascinating. Still do. But it never did help me land a date.

CASSIE

Yeah. I know what you mean. Luckily Kim is pretty cool.

GUSSY

Kim?

CASSIE

Uh, nothing. No one.

GUSSY

Cassie, I ain't gonna judge you, for anything.

CASSIE

Thanks. But seriously, it's nothing. We're just friends.

GUSSY

Uh-huh.

CASSIE

I haven't told her about any of this. Don't think I want to. (yawn)
Oh man, what time is it now?

GUSSY

Almost seven.

CASSIE

I should get to school.

GUSSY

Why's that?

CASSIE

Ummm because I'm a senior and I still want to graduate?

GUSSY

It's Saturday, Cassie.

CASSIE

It's Satur... what?

GUSSY

Prom night was Friday.

CASSIE

No it wasn't. They put it on Thursday. To try and punish us I think.

GUSSY

Not it the world we live in.

CASSIE

What? Don't say it like that, okay?

GUSSY

Say what like what?

CASSIE

"The world we live in" as if... there are other worlds.

GUSSY

You think there aren't?

CASSIE

Maybe, I mean, theoretically...

GUSSY

You think the Dark Tome is just an illusion?

CASSIE

I think... what?

GUSSY

You think the Dark Tome just brings you to stories that are... what... imagination?

CASSIE

Yeah.

GUSSY

What if they're real? What if it's all real? What if this kitchen, this little po-dunk town? What if this is what's fake, and the worlds in the Dark Tome are the real ones?

CASSIE

Oh, Mr. Gussy. I didn't sleep last night. I don't think I can handle this kind of conversation right now.

GUSSY

I always had a little bit of a theory... You remember that Buick Roadmaster we saw, in that village, um... Sauve- Majeure (SEW-Vay Majeure)? We didn't go backwards or forward in time, really, we went sideways. What if you went sideways?

CASSIE

What?

GUSSY

What if in the last story you went in, you slipped out of a world where prom was on Thursday and landed in a world where prom was on Friday?

CASSIE

Then I think I'd need to get some sleep before I'd really able to think about it.

GUSSY

(Chuckles) Maybe you would. Hey. You can crash on the sofa, okay? I'll get the book shop open. No one will bother you.

CASSIE

Okay. Sounds good. Thanks, Mr. Gussy. For everything.

GUSSY

(already leaving)
Any time, Cassie!

FX - Door opens, closes.

EXT. OUTSIDE BOOKSHOP

We follow Mr. Gussy down a staircase, to outdoors, early suburban morning ambience.

GUSSY

Ah... Beautiful morning, isn't it? A Saturday in May. (sniffs) Can even smell the lilacs blooming. Time to spend the rest of it in a bookshop.

FX - Door opens, Gussy enters.

FX - Door jangles, closes

INT. INSIDE BOOKSHOP

GUSSY

It does look like someone got in a fight in here. Fireball from angry teenager one, John Grisham paperbacks, negative five.

FX - Gussy starts picking up the ruined books, chucking them into the trash. Plop! Plop! Plop!

GUSSY (CONT'D)

You know what we really need these days is some good noir fiction. The kind of tough crackin' character who would never take any crap. I miss the good ol' pulp --

FX - KAPOOM! Thunder crackle, rain, distant

GUSSY (CONT'D)

Huh... Is that thunder? I swear I just looked outside and it...
(plays with the blinds again) It's beautiful outside, Ayuh. Which means that that sound of thunder came from... The book.

Gussy takes a few steps forward.

GUSSY (CONT'D)

Looks like we got ourselves into a bit of a vicious cycle here, Dark Tome. Cassie goes on an adventure and comes back leaving you all charged up, and me... Well... Where you thinking of taking me now?

MUSIC - Honky-tonk tune starts emanating from the book

GUSSY (CONT'D)

Yep... Another adventure, this one looks like (flips page) INK. By Jonathan Maberry. It starts... hm... It looks like a tattoo parlor and there's a guy standing in the doorway, with a suspicious look on his face.

(MORE)

GUSSY (CONT'D)

He's pulling something out of a trenchcoat pocket, handing it to a guy - must be the artist - and he holds it up to the light.

CAJUN JOE

What's this crap? Looks like blood.

MONK

Ink.

FX - Cajun Joe takes the cap off the vial and swirls it, sniffs it.

CAJUN JOE

(sniffs) Smells like blood.

GUSSY

He leans against the doorframe and doesn't say a word.

FX - WHOOSH! Sonic teleport

INT. TATOO PARLOR - NIGHT

MONK

This isn't my usual tattoo parlor.

GUSSY

You don't say.

MONK

I usually go to see my friend Patty Cakes. She's got a little skin art place just south of Boundary Street. It's a gritty little storefront tucked in between a leather bar called Pornstash and a deli called Open All Night, which, as far as anyone I know can tell you, has never been open. Patty never asks questions about where my ink comes from. She probably knows.

GUSSY

But tonight you're gracing this fine establishment.

MONK

That's right. This guy? He doesn't know me too well and I'm not a Chat ty Cathy even when I'm in a good mood. Which I'm not tonight.

FX - Another cascade of thunder outside.

MONK (CONT'D)

It's dark enough for the shadow crowd to be out. The neon and back-alley types. The cruisers who want to hit every game in town in the hopes that they can find the luck they misplaced five or ten or twenty years ago.

GUSSY

Like you?

MONK

(chuckles) Yep. Like me. The name's Monk. Guy over there? He goes by Cajun Joe. Place is called Switchblade Charlie's, and I bet Joe's got a switchblade. Looks the type, don't you think? And there are types, oh yeah, even when it comes to knives.

If he was bigger I'd figure him for a combat vet and that meant he might have a Ka-bar or bayonet in a sheath tucked on the inside of his denim vest. If he was a little guy he'd have a thrown-down. Maybe a .22 or a .25. Something he could palm; something with all the serial numbers filed off. But this guy... What do you see there?

GUSSY

Medium height. Medium Weight. Medium Build. Medium age. Your average scrappy white guy.

MONK

Completely unremarkable, yet, he's got a nervous tic to his left eye, you see? And there's gristle around the eye and a cauliflower ear, so he probably picked that up from the ring. Couldn't have been very good because the good ones can afford the surgery to fix the cartilage damage and they also don't work in dumps like these. His hands are steady, though, and his arms don't look too bulked up. He likes his speed. And he look at the skin art.

(MORE)

MONK (CONT'D)

Full sleeves, a collar rising to his ears, a burning cross on the back of his neck, and eighty-eight in burning red on the inside of his left wrist.

GUSSY

Eighty-eight? What the hell does that mean?

MONK

The two eights stand for the eighth letter of the alphabet -H and H. Heil Hitler. Cute, right?

GUSSY

(Groans)

MONK

Check out his other wrist. See the '14' there, on the arm of the hand holding the vial? That's shorthand for the fourteen-word credo of the white supremacy movement. The whole phrase is 'We must secure the existence of our people and a future for white children.'

GUSSY

Guy's a charmer.

MONK

Dickhead like Cajun Joe, he probably carries a switchblade because those knives make a guy like him think he has a big dick, and it makes other people scared. Too many 1950's gang flicks, too many movies since. People see a switchblade and they know they're going to bleed. You don't carry one to help you open packages or cut zip-ties. You carry one when you want to cut someone and you like seeing them get terrified as they realize what's going to happen.

CAJUN JOE

Who the hell you talking to? (beat) Fine, give me the silent treatment. What do I care. (shakes the vial some more) Come on.

(MORE)

CAJUN JOE (CONT'D)

How many people come into a tatoo parlor with there own ink? How do I know this shit is safe?

MONK

The hell is it to you?

CAJUN JOE

Okay. Your skin.

MONK

Okay.

Cajun Joe sets down the vial

CAJUN JOE

What kind of art you want?

MONK

Need you to finish a piece. Someone else started it but I need you to finish it.

CAJUN JOE

I like doing my own stuff.

MONK

You like getting paid?

CAJUN JOE

Well... yeah.

MONK

So that means you'll finish the tat?

CAJUN JOE

Alright. Whatever guy. What's the art?

Monk rustles a hoodie

MONK

A girl's face, on my forearm.

CAJUN JOE

Jesus, you got a few faces on there already. (peering) Girls, women. Boys. Men? You some kind of fag?

MONK

You want the job or not?

CAJUN JOE

Is that why you're wearing the long
sleeve hoodie? To hide more ink?
How many you got on you?

MONK

None of your business.

CAJUN JOE

These faces.... They're all black
and white. You thinking about
adding color? If so, I got to use
something else than what you
brought or they're going to turn
out like little red Indians.

MONK

It's just the outline. Take a look.

GUSSY

Monk turns his arm over and you can
see the face, three-quarters done
but you can't quite make sense of
it yet. He's got part of the nose,
some of the brow-shape, the corners
of the mouth. Enough so that you
can tell it's face, but still
generic. A woman. Not especially
pretty, but female.

CAJUN JOE

It's all in black. You use this
ink, it'll wind up two-toned.

MONK

It'll dry dark.

CAJUN JOE

It won't.

MONK

It will.

CAJUN JOE

You sure about that?

MONK

Dead certain.

CAJUN JOE

Okay... It's your skin, brother.

MONK

Don't call me brother.

GUSSY

Monk shoots Cajun Joe a look like it's meant to kill. And then I realize: Maybe that's exactly what he intends.

CAJUN JOE

Take that hoodie off and let's get to work.

FX - Hoodie thrown off.

CAJUN JOE (CONT'D)

(whistles) That's some collection. You got, what, a hundred faces tattooed on your skin?

MONK

Yeah. Maybe more.

CAJUN JOE

They all friends of yours?

MONK

Not really.

CAJUN JOE

Movie stars then? Some of them look familiar.

MONK

Do they.

CAJUN JOE

A little... Is that one that chick from the Mad Max film? Charlie Theory?

MONK

Charlize Theron?

CAJUN JOE

Yeah.

MONK

No.

CAJUN JOE

Oh. She was hot in that flick, even if she had a robot arm.

MONK

It's not Charlize Theron.

CAJUN JOE

Looks like her.

MONK

Not really.

GUSSY

Monk touches the tattoo, then turns to look at me.

MONK

The woman whose face is inked into the inside curve of my deltoid was named Molly Flanders. A great Irish name for a great Irish-American woman. Mother of two. R.N. at the E.R. over on the other side of Boundary Street. Dead now. Beaten to death by her husband because he wasn't man enough to face losing his job and because Molly got between him and the kids every time he was drunk. Molly died and so did her husband. Two separate but related incidents. Both very violent. I was involved in one of them. I put the husband in the ground and made it hurt all the way.

So, Molly was one of my people. One of the pale and quiet ones who come to see if they can hire me. I remember the first time I saw her, standing next to me at my corner booth at Dollar Bill's Tavern. Standing there with her swollen face, smashed lips, broken teeth, and broken neck.

I'd tried to talk her out of hiring me. Tried to explain how expensive it was. Not in dollars. In other ways. But... after he'd killed her, Molly's rat-shit husband had started in on the kids. One was in rehab now, learning to walk all over again. That was Kenny, ten years old and he'd never walk without leg braces. The little one, Lindsay, two, would have to figure out how to make the world work without being able to see it.

(MORE)

MONK (CONT'D)

Doesn't take more than a drunk's fist to do unfixable damage to a kid's face.

GUSSY

Jeezum. So Molly... hired you?

MONK

Molly didn't want to go into the dark without knowing her husband had paid, and paid hard. Going to jail wasn't enough. Not after what he'd done to the kids.

You see, that's how it usually works. The kind of clients who come looking for me don't want revenge for themselves. The price is way too high for that. No, they want me to step in when their killer is hurting -or in Molly's case has hurt-others. Sometimes they want me to stop the bad guy before he does something else to someone else. They want me to do what the cops can't. Or won't.

GUSSY

Uh-huh. A special kind of justice.

MONK

When a client wants to hire me on those terms, it means that they are willing to pay the price. Not my day-rate, which is what I get paid to find bail-skips or take photos of philandering spouses. No, that kind of work is what I do for greasy lawyers and greasier bail-bondsmen. Scumbags like J. Heron Scarebaby and Iver Twitch, guys who hire me for conventional gigs. But clients like Molly and a hundred others have to pay a higher price... but it's not to me. I'm not sure who they're paying. Who we're paying, because I owe something on that tab, too. Each time. The price is a total bitch. It's an absolute monster. I'm not sure I'd have the courage to pay it myself if I were in their shoes.
(beat) You wanna know, don't you?

GUSSY

I do.

MONK

I didn't know about my debt until I took my first client. A village girl in Tibet who'd been gang-raped by Chinese soldiers. The same soldiers who'd raped seventeen other girls and killed six of them. The same soldiers who were garrisoned outside of her village. The village where the murdered girl had four sisters. You see how it works?

GUSSY

I, uh... I think so.

MONK

I took that gig and hers was the first face inked onto my flesh. She's there, a few inches from my heart. Half an inch from a bullet wound I got in Iraq. See it there?

GUSSY

Yeah.

MONK

The girl and I both paid the price. And every single goddamn night we pay a little more of it. And now I'm here, at Switchblade Charlie's, with Cajun Joe.

~~CAJUN JOE~~

~~Jesus — H — Christ.~~

MONK

I usually keep the tats covered up, but I've had enough people see me without a short on for me to have a good read on how they react. Look at him... Cajun Joe's surprised by the number of tats. Confused at the theme. And disapproving of the skill. Patty Cakes is a great tattoo artist but I can't always provide a photo to work from. Sometimes Patty doesn't need one, not when she's totally in the zone. Sometimes she does. The tattoo artist in Tibet didn't.

(MORE)

MONK (CONT'D)

The dead girl had been his niece.
We both wept and we both screamed
at different times as he sank the
blood ink onto my chest.

CAJUN JOE

Take a seat. It's time to make some
ink.

[EPISODE BREAK]

Monk takes a seat in a reclining chair, creak. Cajun Joe
flicks on a lamp, evaluates.

CAJUN JOE (CONT'D)

All you want is the lines
connected?

MONK

Pretty much.

CAJUN JOE

This is nothing. Anyone could have
done this shit. Ten, fifteen
minutes.

MONK

I know.

CAJUN JOE

But you were in the waiting room
for two hours until I was free.

MONK

Sure.

CAJUN JOE

Why me?

MONK

I heard you were the man for the
job.

CAJUN JOE

Says who?

MONK

People. I asked around. Your name
came up.

CAJUN JOE

Which people?

MONK

Hey, I came here for some ink, not to marry you. I'll pay the rate for a full tat.

CAJUN JOE

You running a game on me or something?

MONK

No games ~~(beat, then narrating again)~~ That's true enough. I didn't come here to play. ~~(back to Cajun Joe)~~ Word is that you're good and I don't use second string artists.

GUSSY

Cajun Joe glances at the simplicity of the faces, and that's when he takes a longer, better look. At first glance they look simple, but really, they're not. Not if you really look at them.

M ONK

Patty Cakes has the touch. So did that guy at the Tibetan Village. And Mama Jewel in New Orleans. So did each of the artists who have left their mark on me. Maybe not the best fine-artists in the world, but when you look into the eyes of each of those faces and you pay attention, you understand why people say the eyes are the window of the soul.

CAJUN JOE

(wonder) Huh... That's some art.

MONK

So. Are we good?

CAJUN JOE

Yeah. Yeah. We're good.

Cajun Joe pulls himself away, starts turning on various machines, washes some things.

CAJUN JOE (CONT'D)

You mind if I add some of my own ink?

MONK

Sure.

Cajun Joe works the vial a bit

FX - Vial poured together

CAJUN JOE

Jesus. I mixed it fifty-fifty with black, and it's still red. What the hell's in that vial?

MONK

It's a special sauce. What's it matter?

CAJUN JOE

Special sauce. Uh-huh. You paying in cash?

MONK

Yeah. Small un-marked bills.

CAJUN JOE

Ha-ha.

~~FX - Bills start flipping onto the counter.~~

~~CAJUN JOE (CONT'D)~~

~~That it?~~

FX - more bills land on the counter

MONK

That enough twenties for you?

CAJUN JOE

Yeah. Let's get started.

MONK

(narrating) Most tattoo artists ask to see your I.D. State laws about verifying age and all, but I have a face like an eroded wall and I've been street legal for a lot of years. I look it. Besides, we both knew he was going to pocket whatever I paid him. That's why he didn't have me sign a waiver or provide my address and phone number. He could read enough about me to know that he shouldn't bother.

MONK (CONT'D)

(dialogue) That your design book?
Devils. Unicorns. Pirate chicks,
panthers. Skulls and snakes.

CAJUN JOE

Yep. All the usual shit. Thousands
more in the book.

MONK

What about the stuff over there?
Nazi zombies and storm troopers.
Swastikas and confederate flags.
That your specialty?

CAJUN JOE

I do what the client wants. Hold
on, running a razor over you.

FX - cajun joe takes a swipe with a disposal razor.

CAJUN JOE (CONT'D)

Not much hair left on that arm. And
we can skip tracing the drawing
onto you. Let's get right to it.

FX - Cajun Joe fiddles with a tattooing machine, which hums to
life. Pours ink and pours it into an 'ink cap' - good videos
on the internet to get a sense of the sounds of a tattoo shop
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kxLoycj4pJY>

GUSSY

Oh god, all the needles...

MONK

Yeah, sometimes those freak people
out, makes 'em pass out. Not me,
though. I feel my heartbeat
quicken. Soon, it'll begin to race.
I can almost feel the sweat lurking
inside my pores, ready to pop.

For me, it's the actual pain. Not
of a needle. Hell no, that's just
skin pain. What's that to someone
like me? Who gives a small, cold
crap about that.

No, it was part of the price I had
to pay when I took a job that as
the face stopped being a collection
of lines and became a person,
something in that person woke up.

(MORE)

MONK (CONT'D)

And it woke inside of me.

It started like a fever and then it turned into a scream.

FX - Woman's scream - weirdly effected

MONK (CONT'D)

Hard to explain.

Hard to sit through.

Patty Cakes usually insists I put a leather strap between my teeth. Helps to keep me from screaming. Makes it easier for her to work, though... she's very sensitive, you dig? Sometimes we both end up screaming.

Maybe Cajun Joe would end up screaming, too. Maybe we both would.

CAJUN JOE

How do you want me to do this. You don't have a picture of this broad. How am I supposed to know what she's supposed to look like?

MONK

Connect the lines.

CAJUN JOE

Not as easy as that.

MONK

I'm sure you'll make it right.

CAJUN JOE

Okay. Sure. For that stack of twenties, I'll do whatever you want me to. You ready?

MONK

Yeah.

GUSSY

Cajun Joe began to work.

MIDROLL BREAK

Sound of tattoo work, Cajun Joe concentrating hard, Monk relishing the pain.

MONK

The face looked like nobody for a while.
But I could feel her waiting to be seen.

Cajun Joe started with the jaw because that was the easiest to figure out. Most of the lines were done and it was simply a matter of connecting the chin to the jaw. It hurt, but it was still skin pain

CAJUN JOE

Who is she?

MONK

A woman.

CAJUN JOE

I know that. But can you tell me something about her? Help me see her?

MONK

I wanted to grab the needle out of his hand and stab him with it. The only reason I didn't is that I was not one hundred percent sure it was Cajun Joe I was looking for. After looking for two weeks he was at the top of my short list. Switchblade Charlie was on the list, too. And Bugsy the Mummy, another skin-jockey over on Shade Street, near that big club, Unlovely's. I had to be sure because otherwise I'm as bad as them. I'm really cool with righteous rage and harsh justice and all that movie vengeance crap, but collateral damage isn't in the game plan. Nor is an unfortunate accident. Making sure, being certain, makes this harder. It increases the risks, it ups the pain, and - for me and my client - it edges us closer to having to pay the whole ticket.

(MORE)

MONK (CONT'D)

If there was any way I could be certain without having the tattoo completed, then it would be a better end to the day. Not for Cajun Joe, mind you. But for my client. And for me.

Life is always a complicated sonnuvabitch. Always, always, always.

GUSSY

So. What'd you do?

MONK

I decided to tell him something about her. Some of what I knew. But here's the thing... I didn't actually know everything. I wouldn't ever get a full picture until there was... well... a full picture, you dig?

GUSSY

I s'pose

MONK

All I had to work with was bits of memory. Tastes of it.

MONK (CONT'D)

(to Cajun Joe) She worked over on the west said. In one of the clubs.

CAJUN JOE

Waitress? Some of those bitches over there are hot. And I mean smokin'. (beat) No? Hm... bartender, then? She looks a little like this Italian girl works at Sparky's--

MONK

She's not Italian.

CAJUN JOE

Oh.

MONK

Not a bartender.

CAJUN JOE

Uh-huh.

MONK

Prep cook. Worked in the kitchen.

CAJUN JOE

Worked. (beat) She's not there any more?

MONK

She moved on.

CAJUN JOE

Ran out on you?

MONK

She's still around.

CAJUN JOE

(laughs) Yeah I guess so. I mean, why else would you ink her onto your arm if she's gone, right?

MONK

I said nothing. All of those faces, female and male, seemed to be looking at him. No, let me change that, they were looking in him. I could feel it. Feel them. In a strange way they were all there with me. Like they always are. I'm never really alone except when I go into my special quiet place inside. Meditation is the only thing that works better than sugar. It doesn't stop the pain but it lets me be alone with my own thoughts. Right now, though, we were all watching Cajun Joe work.

CAJUN JOE

Finished the eyebrow. Whaddya think? (beat) Hm, not quite. There you go. Better. What about her cheeks? They as high as they look or do you want me to flatten them down?

MONK

Cheekbones are fine. Work on the hair.

CAJUN JOE

You got it, chief.

MONK

The hair was short and kinky. There was enough there for him to continue the shape and style. With every sting of the needle I felt a knife turn in my heart. There was a big bell ringing, deep and slow, in the back of my head. The echoes hurt like punches. I was sweating now and it took everything I had to keep it off my face and out of my voice.

CAJUN JOE

So this chick... she your sweetheart or what?

MONK

Never actually met her.

CAJUN JOE

What?

MONK

Do the lips.

CAJUN JOE

Uh... Okay. (beat) Can't tell how they're supposed to be.

MONK

Full.

CAJUN JOE

What?

MONK

She had very full lips.

GUSSY

Cajun Joe doesn't like this. Something about it shows on his face. But he says nothing. Just dips into the cup for more ink and starts to shape the lips on Monk's skin.

MONK

(aside) I wonder if she'll scream when the lips are done. I might.

CAJUN JOE

What's that?

MONK

Keep working. (narrating) But, no. The nose was the last thing. After that, well, all bets were off after that. The lips changed the whole picture, though.

CAJUN JOE

She looks...

MONK

Whatever he was thinking, he didn't finish. His eyes were locked on the image. It was more than a picture. It was becoming the portrait it was meant to be. Dark eyes, short hair, good lines. Not beautiful by Hollywood standards. Beautiful by human being standards, but I doubted Cajun Joe was capable of grasping that. Something was getting through to him, though.

MONK (CONT'D)

(smiling) Be careful, man, your hands are shaking.

Cajun Joe stops abruptly, reloads ink into his tools.

CAJUN JOE

You messin' with me?

MONK

(lying) No. I just want to get this done and get on my way.

MONK (CONT'D)

(narrating) So many expressions came and went on his face. Doubt, anger, fear, confusion. Mixtures and combinations of those and more. He absolutely knew something was hinky about all this. Knew it. And he knew that I knew he knew it. It was like that, but we hadn't broken through the fourth wall... not yet. We were still actors playing out the roles assigned us by our shared participation in the drama of daily, ordinary life.

That wall was crumbling, though. With every drop of ink he drilled into my skin it was crumbling.

(MORE)

MONK (CONT'D)

And with every drop I was getting closer to the truth. Soon I was going to know. Soon it was going to be certain. Either he was the guy or he wasn't.

Right now, though, his doubt was holding that wall in place. There was no guilt in his eyes. Not yet.

That needed more ink. So I waited while he thought about it, waited while he decided to go back to the job. Watched and waited while he finished the lips.

MONK (CONT'D)

(dialogue)

The nose. That's the last part.

MONK (CONT'D)

(narrating) There was very little to the nose. I'd left that part intentionally vague. Patty had understood when she did her part. The nose would clinch it, even in a black and white tat.

Cajun Joe starting to crack a bit at this part, really deep in the spell.

CAJUN JOE

What kind of nose does she have?

MONK

Short nose. Long philtrum. You know what a philtrum is? The gully under the nose?

CAJUN JOE

Yeah. I know.

MONK

Long philtrum. Pretty deep, too.

CAJUN JOE

And her nose?

MONK

Do the other part first.

Cajun starts to work again. Monk groans

MONK (CONT'D)

(pain)

MONK (CONT'D)

(narrating) It hurt. I bled. We both sweated. The room was cold but we both had lines running crookedly down our faces. He had a drop hanging from the point of his chin. It seemed to take forever to finish the gulley above those full lips.

MONK (CONT'D)

(in pain) Now the nose. It's uh (traces with hands) this long. Wide. Kind of flat from where she got it broken when her first husband knocked her around. Never set right.

GUSSY

Monk locked eyes with Cajun Joe as he said all this. Sweat ran like hot mercury down Joe's face.

CAJUN JOE

What the hell is this?

MONK

It's a tattoo. Finish the nose and then I'm gone.

CAJUN JOE

Yeah, sure.

MONK

Cajun Joe gets to work again, but his hands are shaking pretty bad. It wasn't going to be his best work and I'd have to wear it for the rest of my life. Life sucks in a lot of ways and that part wasn't anything major. I could see the muscles at the corner of his jaw bunching and I knew he was getting mad, too.

~~CAJUN JOE~~

~~(under breath) Jesus Christ...~~

MONK

Mad was okay. We could work with it.

(MORE)

MONK (CONT'D)

He worked on the nose, following my directions and suggestions. The more it took form the slower he worked. The nose made the face, you see. It pulled all of the parts together. It made it a very specific kind of face. Even in black and white. Even without the dark brown skin and the darker brown eyes that she had when she was alive. That nose and those lips turned the face from generic woman to black woman.

That's what he realized as he worked.

I watched him to see what that realization would do to him. That he was a racist dickhead was evident from the 88 and 14 tats. But being a racist dickhead isn't enough. Free country, free speech and all that crap. I don't go hunting for everyone whose philosophy pushes my ideological buttons. I'm not a fanatic and I'm not a sociopath.

I'm something else, and that something else needed this guy to be a very specific kind of racist dickhead.

I needed him to look at that face and do more than realize he was inking the features of an African-American woman on a customer's arm. Again, that was nothing. Like me, he probably inked all sorts of crap he didn't believe in. Nature of the game in a free country.

I'm not an artist but I've had enough tattoos to know something about it. There is a point when a collection of lines and curves stops being arranged ink and becomes an actual piece of art. I think it's when the subject matter comes into true alignment with the artist's technique. It's a kind of magic.

(MORE)

MONK (CONT'D)

The image becomes real, and when you look at it you're not seeing a painting or a drawing or a tattoo. You're not even seeing the stylized version of it that has been filtered through the artist's talent. You're seeing the actual thing. Look at Van Gogh's Café Terrace at Night and tell me you can't hear the sounds of laughter and conversation, of coffee cups clinking on saucers, of cutlery tinkling against plates or scraping on teeth, of the gurgle of wine as it's poured into glasses. Tell me you can't smell that wine, and the bread, the cheese, the meats. I can look at that painting, even a copy of it, and smell cigarette smoke, perfume, and fresh-cooked fish. Same goes for when I look at Gauguin's Tahitian Women on the Beach. If you can't smell coconut oil on warm skin and hear the soft crash and hiss of the surf then you have no soul.

GUSSY

Yeah, I hear what you're saying.

MONK

When Cajun Joe finished the last part of the nose, joining the lines that formed the right nostril, the face on my arm became a person. A woman. Not the representation of a murdered woman, but her. Actually her. Alive. Not in the way she had been before she'd been beaten and raped and slashed to red ruin. And not a ghost version of her. When I looked down at her face I saw the essential woman. The truth of her. The reality of her.

DENITA

(waking) Yes, I'm here.

MONK

It was so powerful because that acceptance of her kicked open a door in my head and my heart.

(MORE)

MONK (CONT'D)

Kicked it off the hinges and let all of her life pour into me. From the moment she woke up in her mother's womb until they zipped her into a body bag. I saw all of her life. It hit me in a rush and it feels like having forty-eight years of joy, pain, understanding, love, passion, ennui, compassion, dislike, hatred, giddiness, pity, and ten thousand other emotion shoved into me through that five-inch tattoo.

FX - Surge of sound design emotions that go with Monk's narration - baby squall, girl's laughter, 'happy birthday to you', club music, then SCREAM then zip of body bag. Super intense, with

DENITA

(screams)

MONK

I mainlined her entire life and the inrush nearly tore me apart.

All of the seventeen thousand five hundred and twenty days of her life flooded into me in five or ten seconds.

(Monk SCREAMS)

GUSSY

Cajun Joe staggers backward from his chair, his needles and the pots of ink falling and tumbling, clinking and splashing. If Monk is aware of it, he doesn't react. He's lost somewhere in that vision. The vision of a woman's life, rushing, whirling, tumbling, kicking, slashing as it whirls around in his head. And then... he calms down, a sort of clarity comes over him, and... he's thinking... something in particular...

Sound design follows Monk's description of woman's assault.

MONK

After the tsunami of life's emotions, it's the memories of what happened in the last final moments of her life. The hands grabbing her as she pulled the kitchen door closed and stepped into the darkened parking lot behind the club. Her ring of keys -the bar key, her car key, her house key- tinkled to the blacktop. Hands on her. An arm around her neck to choke off her screams. Another hand reached around, clamped on her stomach to pull her backward from the security light, into the shadows. Turning her, slapping her, a fist driving into her stomach, knocking the air and the hope from her. The hands grabbing cloth, ripping, exposing. Lips on her flesh. Lips forming words. Hateful words. Calling her a bitch, a whore, a slut as he ripped her clothes and forced her down and swarmed over her like a blanket of hate.

MONK (CONT'D)

She'd fought him.

She was a woman who worked nights and worked in a club that wasn't in the best part of town. She had pepper spray in her bag, but her bag was gone. She tried to punch, to claw, to bite. She fought to live. For her kids. For her sisters of color who had been consumed by monsters of this kind for hundreds of years. For women of every kind. For her own life.

And the man -if that word even fits- laughed at her and took her over and over again. Hitting her, breaking her. Destroying her.

What was left after the rape was unable to even move. Totally unable to fight.

The knife hadn't been necessary.

(MORE)

MONK (CONT'D)

In that last moment, while she lay already dying, she had seen the face of the man who had done this. His face. His clothes.

And his tattoos.

88.

14.

The world spun and spun around me but I forced myself back into the moment. Even with her screaming in my head, I returned to who and what I was, and why I was there.

GUSSY

Monk opens up his eyes, and Cajun Joe recoils. Sees something there he doesn't like. Something like a mix of terror and rage. And hate. Lots and lots of hate.

CAJUN JOE

Who the hell are you?

Monk speaks in his own voice, but there is a slight affectation to suggest a spirit has consumed him.

MONK / DENITA

My name is Denita King.

GUSSY

Cajun Joe has a switchblade in his hand, got there so fast I didn't see him pull it. Four-inch blade, glistening with oil. Sturdy, good for fighting. Monk smiles at him as he gets out of the chair.

CAJUN JOE

Who the hell are you?

MONK / DENITA

Time to die you bastard.

CAJUN JOE

I'll cut you.

MONK

Put the toy down.

Monk launches at Cajun Joe, grabs his wrist and breaks it, Cajun Joe howls, then Monk starts cracking his skull, again and again pummeling him with his fist.

CAJUN JOE
(SCREAMS)

GUSSY
I think I... I'll leave Monk to his work.

Gussy backs off from the scene, and pushes out the door

FX - Whoosh

INT. MONK'S APARTMENT, LATER

FX - Arrive Whoosh. Gussy staggers forward.

GUSSY
We're uh... uh... where am I? Not the ink parlor anymore. No it's uh... uh... Monk's place, I'm guessing. All the windows are painted black. There's um... There he is, laid out on his bed.

MONK
(murmuring a prayer under his breath) Give me the blessing of sleep, keep the voices out of my head, sweet sleep take me, keep the voices out of my head... (abruptly stops, speaks to Gussy, but also to US) They're always here. Always standing around my bed. Pale faces, gray faces. Most of them are silent. They stand here and stare at me, and sometimes at their own faces on my skin.

Denita King is here now, do you see her? She isn't silent. She's one of the screamers. She loved being alive. She loved her kids. And she fought so damn hard.

DENITA
(SCREAM - that erupts and warbles and becomes part of a background chorus of regrets, sorrows, howls)

MONK

Denita will scream like that every night for as long as I live. That was the price for her revenge and we'd both been willing to pay it.

God damn it.

My name is Gerald Addison. Most people call me Monk.

Tomorrow I'll get up, get washed, and maybe I'll spend the day chasing a bail skip. Or maybe a client will find me.

I lay here at night and listen to the screams. And the night closes around me like a fist.

Chorus of tortured voices reaches a fervor pitch, peaks, then...

FX - Whoosh! Gussy thrown back to his home world.