

THE DARK TOME
SEASON 1, EPISODE 9

"HOW GUSSY GOT THE BOOK"

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Draft 1

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

INT. BOOKSHOP - LATER

Cassie and Gussy are thrust onto the bookshop floor, gasping.

CASSIE
We're here... back in the
booshop... Safe...

FX - door opens, off. Someone enters the bookshop.

COUNSELOR
Hello? Helloooooo?

CASSIE
Oh, crap, that's my guidance
counselor!

GUSSY
Ssh. I'll take care of it.

CASSIE
How...?

GUSSY
I got it, okay?

There is a presence in the far end of the room, Gussy addresses, stepping out from behind a stack of books.

GUSSY (CONT'D)
Hi there, can I help you? --

Guidance counselor is idly flipping through some titles.

COUNSELOR
Mr. Gussy. (raises eyebrow) You had
a fire in here?

GUSSY
Some moron came in here with a
cigarette, I was out back, next
thing I hear was the guy yelling,
he'd set a stack of John Grisham
paperbacks on fire. Lucky I keep a
fire extinguisher handy. Obey all
the fire codes.

COUNSELOR
Hm. Too bad he didn't burn up the
Stephen Kings.

GUSSY

Something I can help you with,
George?

COUNSELOR

You still looking for unseen
worlds? Finding unsuspecting people
and sending them off with your...
tome?

GUSSY

Are you looking for a particular
title? This is a bookshop, you
know. For paying customers.

COUNSELOR

I am very interested in a
particular book. One which is
rightfully my father's. A book
which should have been burned. My
dad didn't have the guts to do it,
so I'd like to.

GUSSY

I don't follow you.

Counselor pulls out a piece of paper, reads.

COUNSELOR

"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." You know what this is? It's
a personal essay from Cassie
Pinkham about what she learned in
community service. At the hospital
bedside of Mr. Gussy.

GUSSY

Girl has a colorful imagination.
Reads a lot of books.

COUNSELOR

Girl has not appeared at school for
over a week.

GUSSY

'Scuse me?

COUNSELOR

She was last seen at the senior prom, ten days ago, she left with Kim Norridge, also a senior. Cassie came home in the middle of the night, and apparently there was an - ah - domestic altercation.

GUSSY

Is that right?

COUNSELOR

There were raised words between her and her mother's boyfriend, and windows were broken in their apartment. Cassie stormed out. She hasn't been seen since.

GUSSY

You're coming to me looking for a missing girl? Who do I look like, Sam Spade?

COUNSELOR

I thought that maybe you would have seen her. She was spending a lot of time here before she went missing.

GUSSY

Can't help you. Isn't this something the police should be looking into?

COUNSELOR

The police have been looking, believe me. They've been digging through Cassie's social media accounts and they've been questioning her friend Kim. But you know as well as I do, Mr. Gussy, that they're not going to find her. Not out there. I thought you might appreciate me coming to you first, before the police got involved. They might not appreciate literature as much as I do.

GUSSY

I'm afraid I can't help you, George. Last I saw Cassie, it was the night of the prom, same as you. Sent her off and wished her well, haven't seen her since.

COUNSELOR

(beat) So that's how it's gonna be?

GUSSY

It is.

COUNSELOR

I thought that might be your answer. Okay. Well, when it all goes down, Mr. Gussy, you'll only have yourself to blame.

GUSSY

Sorry I couldn't help you, George. I'll keep an eye out for the girl. She's a smart kid. I'm sure she knows better than to get herself into trouble.

COUNSELOR

Yes, she's smart. That's exactly what I'm worried about.

Counselor reluctantly exits the bookshop

FX - door shut.

CASSIE

Thank you, thank you Mr. Gussy.

GUSSY

Quiet now. We're getting you downstairs. Up here ain't safe anymore.

FX - Gussy opens trap door, they head down.

CASSIE

Did he say... ten days? I've been missing for ten days?

GUSSY

You heard him right.

CASSIE

Last time, when I came back from the prom, it was Saturday, instead of Friday, but now... Mr. Gussy, what's going on?

GUSSY

Remember our conversation about going sideways? Well, looks like we veered real sideways this time.

CASSIE

Ten *days*?

GUSSY

Cassie, you just heard, we're in a red hot pile of trouble right now, but before we go any further, I think I better fill you in... I think it's time to tell you how I came across the Dark Tome.

MUSIC - Ominous, over, out.

CASSIE

I'm listening.

GUSSY

Take a seat.

Cassie crunches down

GUSSY (CONT'D)

Your guidance counselor, George, his pa was named of Billy. Billy and me, we were roommates back in University, back in 1972.

At first, we didn't take to each other too well. Billy, he liked to stay out late and party. Would come into our dorm room smelling like the moppings of a dive bar. Me? I'd be asleep early, usually falling asleep with my nose in a book. I grew up with poor, honest folk, I was the first in my family to go to college, and I didn't want to waste my opportunity by swilling down to the bottom of a bottle. Besides, I had other 'extracurricular' interests.

CASSIE

Demons. Portals. Other worlds?

GUSSY

(wry grin) Ayuh. That sort of thing, you want to attempt with a clear head. Billy and me, we didn't get along. Not at first.

CASSIE

But then something changed.

GUSSY

It's funny, really, how you can go from wanting to wring someone's neck to having them become one of your true buddies. We each had to get one step closer to each other's worlds. I never showed him what I was *really* tinkering with, outside of my school work.

CASSIE

Uh-huh.

GUSSY

You see, Cassie, I had a beaten up copy of a copy of De Vermis Mysteriis (dee wermis mysterreeus), missing a bunch of pages, all faded and torn, something I got at a yard sale. But I was sure I could get it to open me a portal. I went through about a thousand candles and incense sticks and cornmeal and chalk outlines, even plenty of chicken blood, but nothing. Not till one night when Billy walked in on one of my little experiments.

FX - Flashback

Dorm room, Gussy is in midst of ceremony, there is low, Ram-Dass style meditative music in the background.

YOUNG GUSSY

I've drawn out the symbols, I think that's what the book says. Minus the corner that was torn out. Just need to pour out the blood, and we'll be ready to... Ah, crud. I forgot to get any blood. Might have to knick myself then --

FX - Door opens.

It's 1972. Billy comes into the dorm room, singing a song popular at the time, totally shitfaced, staggering through Gussy's experiment

BILLY

I've been searching for a heart of goo-hooooold, and I'm getting old -
deedle dee deeeeeeee

YOUNG GUSSY

What in the hell are doing? Get away from my gate!

BILLY

Gussy? Gussy man? Are you smoking pot or wha.....? (sees the design) What is thaaaaat?

YOUNG GUSSY

Like I said. A gate. I've been working on it all night.

BILLY

That's craaaazy dude.

Billy gallumphs onto the floor.

YOUNG GUSSY

Hey! What I say! Be CAREFUL! It took me hours to make this.

BILLY

Gussy, my man, you need to relax a little. Get out once in a while, you know?

FX - slosh of a liquor bottle.

BILLY (CONT'D)

You want a slug?

YOUNG GUSSY

I don't. I'm happy right the way I am. (Beat) Hey, what happened to your hand?

BILLY

My... huh? Oh... I climbed over a fence on the way back (chuckles) We were over in the girls dorm and the campus police showed up and so we grabbed the booze, bolted for the fence... I caught my hand going down and --

YOUNG GUSSY

Can you, uh, just hold your palm over there, and squeeze out a drop of blood?

BILLY

A drop of... what?

YOUNG GUSSY
Help me out here, Billy.

BILLY
You're one weird dude, Gussy. You really want me to squeeze out blood onto your symbol -- (beat) -- okay, okay sure, heh, sure, why not... I'll do it if you take a haul of whisky. Got a deal?

YOUNG GUSSY
Yeah. Sure.

FX - Billy passes over the bottle, Gussy takes a haul. Like a typical amateur drinker, winces, nearly spits out.

YOUNG GUSSY (CONT'D)
Ughhh!

BILLY
(Cackles) Nice!

YOUNG GUSSY
Okay! Okay! Your turn!

BILLY
Yeah yeah okay. I'm gonna need some of that after I... I'm a... what? Holding my hand over...?

YOUNG GUSSY
Right there. Um, let me fix the symbol on the cornstarch.

Just a little... (Billy grunts)

FX - Blood droplet falls, hits the drawn guard with a sizzle

BILLY
Holy!

YOUNG GUSSY
Yes! It's working!

BILLY
Working! It's wha - whahaaa?

YOUNG GUSSY
Look at the cornstarch! It's glowing red like fire. It's like it showed in the book.

(MORE)

YOUNG GUSSY (CONT'D)

Now - oh, right, the words. "aperi spirituum ad portam!"

FX - Crackle sizzles through the room. then an undertone of humming as magical energy starts to rend a portal

BILLY

It's... It's beautiful!

YOUNG GUSSY

I can see through, now, the gate is opening in the floor, it's a different world, all... red, like Mars, except... more orange kind of... no... this isn't a surface of a planet, is it? It's... there's a roof, you see the shadows there, it's glowing along the surface, you can almost see... people moving.

FX - Alluding to THE CAVE scene later, which is a hellish depiction of people chained up and forced to witness BILLY and a sadistic set of tribal drummers performing before them for all eternity, we now have the soundtrack switch to a thrumming tribal drum, and now some drumming starts reverberating through the gate.

BILLY

I hear music... It's so... good...
(starts to hum along) thum-tha-tha-tha-thum, thum-tha-tha-tha-thum...

YOUNG GUSSY

It's... (concerned) It's getting hot. Very... hot... It's smoking... Oh, damn! The book! It's catching fire!

BILLY

I can hear them... They're speaking to me... There's a voice there, speaking to me. Do you hear it? Do you hear it Gussy?

YOUNG GUSSY

What? Billy?

BILLY/DEMON

I said, "DO YOU HEAR IT GUSSY"

YOUNG GUSSY

Billy... quick, go out in the hall, grab a fire extinguisher!

FX - Flame licks up, ignites the book.

BILLY
 (back to self)
 A fire - what?

YOUNG GUSSY
 It's burning up the floor!

BILLY
 I can hear them, they're singing to
 me... calling out...

YOUNG GUSSY
 Dammit, Billy! (thinking) Water..
 Need water... Uhh.... Here!

Gussy grabs a glass bottle of water, smashes it across the
 floor, the gate dissolves in a hissing sizzle.

BILLY
 Beautiful...

YOUNG GUSSY
 Too unstable. I must've messed up
 the pattern on the western edge...

BILLY
 (coming to) You gonna do that
 again?

YOUNG GUSSY
 (crestfallen) Can't. Look what
 happened to my book.

BILLY
 We'll get you another.

YOUNG GUSSY
 (chuckles) Get me another. Right.
 Where you gonna find another
 magical book, Billy?

BILLY
 Where'd you find that one?

YOUNG GUSSY
 A yardsale.

BILLY
 Yardsale... Well, there you go.
 We'll go yardsaling tomorrow. How
 does that sound?

YOUNG GUSSY

"We?"

BILLY

I like my parties, Gussy, don't get me wrong, but that... THAT... that was the real deal. Wherever that was... I want to go back.

MUSIC - Bridge

GUSSY

So that was the start of me and Billy being running mates. We hit up every yard sale in Maine, New Hampshire, most of Massachusetts and even into Rhode Island. Always looking for a book that was half as powerful as my De Vermis Mysteriis (dee wermis mysterreeus). We never did find any books, but we got to be good friends. Despite being a little different on the outside, we had a lot in common. His dad was an engineer and wanted him to be one, too, but he wanted to be a painter instead. I told him about growing up in a family of union mill-workers, how I never fit into that, either. And yeah, I ended up drinking with him, the next time after that first gulp of whisky, it was a glass of wine at the end of an epic but unsuccessful road trip to Providence. Soon we'd go through several bottles in a single night. I could barely keep passing grades in my classes, nothing was as important as the hunt for another magic book. That is, not until Olivia.

CASSIE

Olivia... She was... Your wife?

Gussy still finds it tough to talk about Olivia.

GUSSY

...Eventually. I told you about my trouble finding a girlfriend in high school, and that was true enough, and it wasn't much easier in college.

(MORE)

GUSSY (CONT'D)

I was too much in my own world
(chuckles) The world of all these
books, you know?

But sometimes you can be in your
own world, and people can enter
your orbit. I was in the library
studying late for exams, by that
point I was down to one test away
from passing or flunking out, and
the truth of it finally gripped me -
flunking out of my freshman year of
college was scarier than any demon
Billy and I might've invited over
from the other plane of existence.

Ironically, it was my philosophy
course that I was about to fail out
of. Not because I didn't know the
material - jeez, Billy and I would
get a bottle of wine open and talk
about Descartes till dawn if we had
the inkling - but because when it
came time to try and put those
thoughts onto paper, all I could
manage were incoherent scribbles.
Instead of writing up my thoughts
on the freedom of man and the
coherence of reason, I would doodle
up pictures of gates. Latin
inscriptions I might imagine
surrounding them.

I thought if maybe I could sober
up, hide up in the library, I could
get something that looked like a
senior essay written down. But then
she sad down across from me.

FLASHBACK - library

OLIVIA

Excuse me, could I borrow a pen?

YOUNG GUSSY

Hnh-wha- ? Pen - oh, right, yeah,
um (rummages in pack) Here ya go.

OLIVIA

Thanks. You having a hard time with
this Cave thing too?

YOUNG GUSSY

The-- wha? Cave?

OLIVIA

You're in Professor Whichers class,
right? Intro to Philosophy?

YOUNG GUSSY

Oh, yes, yes that's right. The
Cave. Of course.

OLIVIA

So... what do you make of Plato's
cave? Don't you think the people
would figure out they're chained up
after a while? Wouldn't they figure
out they weren't being shown the
real things, but instead were just
observing the shadows of things
cast by the puppet show on them?
Wouldn't that happen... By itself?
How could anyone just sit there and
buy it? Who could really sit there
for ever and ever and just follow
along with an illusion?

YOUNG GUSSY

I uh, I dunno. I think maybe
there's two kinds of humans, on the
one hand, you got those who accept
the situation they find themselves
in. They see what's in front of
them, and are inclined to say,
"Well, that's the way the world
works." Then there's another batch,
the ones who think, "Hm, well I
know that's what I'm seeing now,
but I'm not sure I buy that. I'd
like to go check it out for myself.
Test the limits." Them latter half.
They're the explorers. The artists.

OLIVIA

And which are you?

YOUNG GUSSY

I thought I was one of the latter,
but now I'm not so sure.

OLIVIA

It makes you wonder exactly how
you'd know whether you were on your
way to getting out of the cave or
not.

YOUNG GUSSY

How's that?

OLIVIA

Okay so the second part, those people who recognize that the shadows on the wall of the cave are just facsimiles of the real thing and decide to go out and look for the real things, go to the light and all that. Well what's to say that you're actually making progress to the light? What if you're just moving deeper in the darkness and you don't have anyone to tell you different - like, you and me, we *think* we're getting an education. This school around us? That's what it's designed to be, an institution of light, right? But what if this school is all part of the shadow puppets, too? And we're just fooling ourselves, being led by a bunch of people who just want to show us the very best shadows on the wall of a cave that they've finished exploring? It's all very useful and functional, but it's still not real. It's still not the truth.

YOUNG GUSSY

You're forgetting another part of Plato's analogy. The part about intention.

OLIVIA

I thought you said you hadn't studied.

YOUNG GUSSY

Studied, maybe not, but I got a good drunk on and talked about it with a friend a time or two. One time, we got to talking about the people making the shadow show. You were just saying, well, what if those people are stuck in the cave themselves, and that's all they know? That could be. "The blind leading the blind" and all that.

But what if they do know what else is out there, and they have made a decision to keep people in the dark?

(MORE)

YOUNG GUSSY (CONT'D)

To shackle 'em up and keep 'em entertained so they can go ahead and do... well, whatever it is they want to do.

OLIVIA

You think people who know the truth... would choose to hide it?

YOUNG GUSSY

Look around us, um, what did you say your name was?

OLIVIA

Olivia.

YOUNG GUSSY

Hi. Olivia. Folks just call me Gussy. Look, we got something fishy smelling going on with the Watergate Hotel and a President who just walked his way back onto the Throne. Tell me that Nixon ain't one of them men who'd prefer people stayed lock up in the cave and not work their way up to the light.

OLIVIA

I... prefer my answer. "Education is bullshit." You don't think Professor Whichers would go for that?

YOUNG GUSSY

"Professor Whichers: Everything you and your institution stands for is a load of crap." No. I think not.

OLIVIA

(laughs)

Back to present.

GUSSY

Her laughter was honey. Big fat globs of golden sunshine at the end of a July day. She was smart as a whip. I got into talking books with her, and she could keep going as long as I could... Never met a woman like that, who could keep right up with me, but unlike Billy, she didn't have that dangerous edge.

(MORE)

GUSSY (CONT'D)

She believed that the world was an alright place. She wanted to believe in the better nature of human beings. She was as weird as me, in just the right way.

As quickly as that, Billy and my adventures ground to a halt. We stopped the weekend roadtrips. We - or at least I - stopped the drinking. Sophomore, junior, senior years whipped right by, with no talk of magic doorways, gates to the demon planes. Olivia and I, we got married the summer after we graduated college. Billy was there with his fiancée, Brenda, and we all toasted each other and promised we'd spend plenty of long weekends together at bed and breakfasts on Maine's rugged coast, or up in the White Mountains, or maybe we'd take a road trip out to British Columbia. We were young. We could go anywhere. But we never did.

CASSIE

What happened?

GUSSY

Oh, the predictable things. Billy got a job at an engineering firm. I got a job at the mill. Olivia and I had a nice small house and a baby boy on the way. Life was just about as pluck as you could want it to be. Except that one night I came home from work to find that Billy's wife, Brenda, had left a message for me.

FX - button pressed on answering machine, tape starts playing

BRENDA

(answering machine) Gussy, I'm sorry to be calling you this late, it's just that... Billy's missing. I never told you... I caught him... Well he said there was this thing you used to do in college. Go yardsaling, looking for strange books, I guess. He's been doing it, as long as I've known him. Thought it was just an eccentricity, right?

(MORE)

BRENDA (CONT'D)

Every man has his quirks. But things are different with this one, Gussy, he heard about a huge estate sale up in Derry, one for a guy named Ricci, a retired Professor at Arkham University who was killed in a car wreck, and Billy found something... A book... And now he's... He's missing.

FX - Tape abruptly stops.

OLIVIA

(groggy, off) Gussy? Is that you?

YOUNG GUSSY

Hey, Sweetie, it's me. Um... (Gussy enters the bedroom from hallway and kisses her lightly) Hey there.

OLIVIA

Was someone on the phone?

YOUNG GUSSY

Foreman needs me to work another shift. Fella called out.

OLIVIA

Work? Didn't you just home? It's almost midnight...

YOUNG GUSSY

Third shift is a bugger, sweetie, but we need the overtime, don't we? For the baby.

OLIVIA

Yes. (yawns) Okay. Don't wake me when you come in. And you're not getting off making breakfast.

YOUNG GUSSY

You bet. Sleep well, love.

FX - Gussy exits.

// BREAK //

GUSSY

I barrelled outta there and off to Billy's office, the place I figured he was most likely to be tinkering with whatever book he found - I assumed he wouldn't dare do it at home, and get Brenda involved, and I was right. He had an office to himself, and after hours, it was a perfect place to experiment with opening gates. I felt just like those Watergate criminals, breaking in through a locked window after dark.

FX - window lock fought with, broken, window pushed up, Young Gussy throws himself through.

YOUNG GUSSY

Unnffff! (gets up) Billy? Billy?

GUSSY

There was no sign of Billy, just a half-drunk six-pack of Schlitz and the book laying open there on the desk. I suppose you can guess what book it was.

CASSIE

The Dark Tome.

GUSSY

She was just as beautiful then as she is now. I could see... she almost glowed. All the mystery we experienced in that dorm room, all those years back, flooded back to me. How we'd just glimpsed that cave, felt that, if we could reach a little further, we could've walked right through the gate and into... what, exactly? For all I know we would've choked to death on foreign air or been burnt to a cinder by the flames we saw flickering on the cave wall. But I still couldn't help but be thrilled at how far we'd gotten from the instructions in my flea-bitten old book. And this book was in much better condition. There was almost the smell of it, in the air, crackling energy like the moments before a thunderstorm.

YOUNG GUSSY

Billy? Billy did you... Go *into*
the book?

GUSSY

I walked up close to it. I saw a
title -"The Beast in the Cave" by
HP lovecraft. I read the first
paragraph I saw aloud.

YOUNG GUSSY

(reading) "The horrible conclusion
which had been gradually obtruding
itself upon my confused and
reluctant mind was now an awful
certainty. I was lost, completely,
hopelessly lost in the vast and
labyrinthine recesses of the
Mammoth Cave."

DEMON

(warbly) Gussy...

DEMON is in fact Billy, dehumanized to point of non-
recognition. With the introduction of Demon's voice,
underscore a chatter of hellish whispers, moans of the
damned, etc. These are the sufferers of the CAVE which Gussy
will soon be visiting.

YOUNG GUSSY

(staggers back) Hunh?

DEMON

You want to find Billy? Come down
and save him. You can save him,
can't you?

YOUNG GUSSY

What is this... This book is...
Inviting me into it. What are you?
(handles it) "Liber Tenebris" ...
The Dark Tome. THE dark tome? No
wonder you got yourself into a
bind, Billy.

FX - Screech of monster from somewhere in the book-world,
Billy screams out.

BILLY

(screams!)

YOUNG GUSSY

Billy!

DEMON

There's not much time, Gussy. He'll be lost if you leave him be.

GUSSY

The book was different, then, from how it's been when we've been reading it. It was less stable. Different passages of different stories melded all together.

YOUNG GUSSY

(reading) "Through me you pass into the city of woe: Through me you pass into eternal pain: Through me among the people lost for aye." (to self) That's... Dante. No. It's swirling, turning into... "Turn as I might, in no direction could my straining vision seize on any object capable of serving as a guidepost to set me on the outward path. That nevermore should I behold the blessed light of day, or scan the pleasant hills and dales of the beautiful world outside, my reason could no longer entertain the slightest unbelief. Hope had departed." That's Lovecraft again. It's... It's changing again, I gotta go, the doorway is opening just for a ---

Chorus of voices reaches frenetic pitch.

FX - Portal whoosh!

YOUNG GUSSY (CONT'D)

Whoooooooooaaa! (lands with a start on the ground)

Gussy is in a bad part of the demon plane. It takes the form of a miserable cave. Slime drips from far-off. Occasional screams from deep within.

YOUNG GUSSY (CONT'D)

(dusting self off) Hello? Hello?
Ah, Jeezum. I can't see anything.

GUSSY

I was deep in a cave. Not the glowing hot sands of a Mars-like planet, not under the many blue moons of Venus, or an ice world, but in deep, impenetrable darkness. Out in that darkness, I could hear things. Voices. Misery.

FX - Miserable souls moaning and groaning off in the distance.

YOUNG GUSSY

Hello?! Hello?! Hey... Hey Billy!

Gussy struggles forward in the dark. Nearly trips, continues feeling his way ahead

YOUNG GUSSY (CONT'D)

Wh- whoa! ... Okay. That's... That's the wall there. Um. I'm just gonna run my hand along it. And take it easy. One step, in front of another. Those voices, are coming from down there.

GUSSY

Now that my eyes had adjusted a little, I could just make out a faint glow, down a long passageway. Oh yes, it went down, alright, so steep a road I had to crouch and hobble down the rock passageway, slathered with slime. I didn't want to think too hard about where it might've come from. As I got closer, I could see that the glow was... warm. Red. Dancing. It was fire. I was getting downright hot.

YOUNG GUSSY

Easy... Easy now... down off the rock and...

FX - Gussy's feet hit a landing. He staggers forward a bit.

As we approaches THE CAVE we hear that the cries and moans are not really sad, per say, they are more... amused. Like people watching a movie. A whole range of emotions. Sadness. Excitement, chatter, gossip.

YOUNG GUSSY (CONT'D)

What is this?

GUSSY

I finished descending the steep shaft, and there spread out before me was a massive cavern, with a whole universe of people sprawled on the floor, chained up, pale as moonstones, their eyes dilated to full and fixed on a shadow-show on the opposite wall. It was like going to a drive-in movie. Except, it was a drive-in movie from hell.

MUSIC - Eerie, entrancing, tribal music starts to grow throughout this scene

DEMON

(cackles, laughs)

YOUNG GUSSY

What is... What is...

GUSSY

I looked amongst the crowd for Billy. I was certain I'd find him down there, enslaved by that... demon thing... I didn't know how I was going to go about rescuing him, but I knew I had to do it.

But, no.

CASSIE

No. No what?

Gussy licks his lips before continuing. The horror of the moment still lingers with him.

GUSSY

Billy wasn't *among* the crowd, staring at the dancing shapes on the wall. He was standing in front of the fire. He was conducting.

MUSIC - The primal, thundering drum drone rises up

GUSSY (CONT'D)

Billy and I had been drunk plenty of times, and there was a look on his face, like when he was well past the point of no return, when the only hope was to take the car keys away and lock him in his dorm room, roll him onto his belly so he wouldn't choke on his vomit.

(MORE)

GUSSY (CONT'D)

He had that look on his face now, that mad look of the intoxicated, but it was more than that. Behind the madness, was such a sense of... Joy. Joy because of the power he had. I stared at him... I don't know quite how long. Long enough so that I was getting intoxicated, too, swaying to the beat of the primal drums, entranced by the shadow show they were making on the wall.

I was just getting to think about Olivia, and our conversation about Plato's cave and whether there might be people with dark motivations who were in charge of the shadow show, and what all that might mean, and it was about then that Billy looked up, and as his eyes locked with mine, I heard him speak, and I realized that my friend was not my friend any longer.

Billy shouts to Gussy like a carnival barker.

BILLY

Gussy! Come down and join us! It's the show for the ages!

GUSSY

What had I done, that night so long ago when I opened up the portal and tempted Billy? What had slipped through and gotten into him? Or - more to my horror - was it not that something slipped into him, but part of him, had slipped through into that cave, and had always belonged here? Suddenly these questions started to pound through my head. Why was he obsessed with chasing down old tomes? I never thought to ask. Me? I'm an explorer. I'm curious. If there are other worlds out there, I'd like to see them. I'm no Magellan, I'm not leaving my home and sailing a ship to unknown lands, but if I can get to distant lands from a book, then I'd like to go.

(MORE)

GUSSY (CONT'D)

But laying eyes on Billy, there...
I realized for him it was
different. He'd become entranced
with something in this hellish
place ever since he first witnessed
it, and ever since that day he'd
longed to be back here. All this
horror I saw before me - well, this
was Billy's wish.

CASSIE

What did you do?

GUSSY

I came down to that part of hell to
save Billy, so that's what I
decided to do.

Young Gussy calls out.

YOUNG GUSSY

I'm not leaving here without you,
Billy!

BILLY

Then you'll have to come and get
me! Come on, friend! We have the
most delicious drink you've ever
imbibed, the most fabulous drug
that never ends, the mind food of a
thousand twisted nights, right
here, forever and ever and ever!

YOUNG GUSSY

No, I don't think so! I've thought
through this one, Billy, and
there's nothing down here for you!
You can dance forever but you know
you aren't up in the light above!
You're in the cave with them too!
You might not be laid back watching
the show, but you're still in hell
with them!

BILLY

And what a wonderful hell it is!

YOUNG GUSSY

Hey you! Hey all of you!

The crowd does not initially respond. Gussy gets louder.

YOUNG GUSSY (CONT'D)
 (Belts) Hey everybody! Wake up! You
 hear me! Wake up! This is a bad
 dream! I can bring you to the
 light!

The crowd stirs, spins around, and the drumming suddenly
 stops.

BILLY
 (is no longer a demon, is just his
 sad Billy self) Gussy! Shut up!

YOUNG GUSSY
 I'm telling you! You're just
 trapped down here, you're watching
 the puppetry of some joker who's
 sad cause his life didn't work out
 the way he wanted. You want
 something of your own? Then come,
 follow me, I'll show you!

GUSSY
 I saw the puzzlement, the confusion
 in their eyes. I thought I had
 them, I really did, I was just
 formulating my next thought, trying
 to figure out how I was going to
 get their chains off, lead them up
 above. But then. Something
 happened.

CROWD 1
 Start the drumming again!

CROWD 2
 What happened to the show!

CROWD 3
 Sing us a song, Billy!

CROWD
 (all together) Billy! Billy! Billy!

BILLY
 I'll sing you all the songs you
 want, friends, as soon as you bring
 me Gussy's heart!

CROWD
 Gussy's heart! (All cheer)

FX - Drums return again, intense, wild, frenetic.

BILLY

Kill him!

CROWD

Kill him!

BILLY

I'll eat his heart, and with his
power, the dance will continue
FOREVER!

Crowd cheers, ecstatic.

GUSSY

I ran. I ran as best I could up a
slippery, sharp, dangerous craggy
slope. The slime got all over me, I
struggled for footholds, I slashed
my hands and scraped my legs. All
the time, I could hear them behind
me.

CROWD 1

I bet it takes like sunrises!

CROWD 2

I'll tear it out with my fingers

CROWD 3

I'll bit it out with my teeth!

GUSSY

They were gaining on me, I was
sure. It seemed like there were a
hundred, a thousand of them,
scurrying up the cave behind me,
and all the time, down there from
somewhere in the cave, I could hear
Billy urging them on.

BILLY

Take his heart! Bring it to me!
We'll dance forever!

GUSSY

I scrambled up to where I had
started, I thought, with the
beating of the drums and the
howling of the crowd just behind
me, like a fever dream threatening
to bust my skull open. In front of
me, I saw a warbling, twisting
shape - the door, I thought.

(MORE)

GUSSY (CONT'D)

I staggered toward it, but it
wasn't any door, it was a woman
from Billy's tribe.

CROWD 1

You're not going through, not until
I have your heart.

YOUNG GUSSY

Please... You have to understand...
It's all an illusion.

GUSSY

I could barely make out the woman's
features in the pale reflected glow
from the deep cavern, her eyes were
sunk back in her head, her hair was
thin, long, crazy. Her nails were
so long they looked like talons -
and as I stared at them, they
became talons

FX - the women's talons sprout out in a sick, ripping sound
as of rending flesh

GUSSY (CONT'D)

I was just thinking of what to do
next, when I was grabbed from
behind.

YOUNG GUSSY

Unggghhh!!

CROWD 2

Quick! Claw out his heart!

YOUNG GUSSY

No! No! Nooo! Don't! You're just!
You're just !!! - An illusion --

GUSSY

And as soon as I said it, as soon
as I believed it, it stopped.

CASSIE

It stopped?

GUSSY

I found myself alone, in the dark,
again.

// EPISODE BREAK //

MUSIC - Interlude

YOUNG GUSSY
Billy? ... Billy?

(young Gussy, panicked, underneath the follows)

YOUNG GUSSY (CONT'D)
Billy? BILLY!!!

Gussy's voice echoes.

GUSSY
as scary as all that had been - the
mesmerized crowd, the thing that
got inside of Billy... it was even
more scary being here now. In the
darkness. With no idea how I'd ever
get out. I won't lie. I panicked. I
started walking at random,
staggering like a drunk in the
dark, cracking into walls, zig-
zagging forward, hoping for
something. Anything. I thought of
Olivia, of our unborn son.

YOUNG GUSSY
I'm sorry. Olivia I'm so so sorry.
I thought I was just going to help
a friend, I had no idea what I was
getting myself into, I'm sorry. If
someone can just forgive me, can
get me out of hear, I swear I'll
never --

FX - A creature growls

CREATURE
(growls)

YOUNG GUSSY
What was that?

MAKE SURE TO GET YOUNG GUSSY STRUGGLE SOUNDS (PICK UP ROCK)

GUSSY
There was a creature just ahead of
me, in the dark. What in Gods name
it could be, I didn't want to find
out. I knelt down and fumbled in
the dark, found a big, heavy stone,
rounded it in my hand. I wasn't
exactly a gem at sports, but now my
life depended on it, and I wasn't
going to give into this thing
without a fight.
(MORE)

GUSSY (CONT'D)

Not if it was my only chance of getting home and seeing Olivia again. With my eyesight useless, I focused on listening as intensely as I could, as I heard it scraggle-scratch forward on four legs.

CREATURE

(Snarling, growling.)

GUSSY

I held my breath. I had one shot, and I didn't want to make it too early. I sucked at Little League but I still knew how to make a pitcher's stance, and I did. I lofted the rock, and listened closely, waiting, for the time to come.

YOUNG GUSSY

(Suppresses panicked breathing)

CREATURE

(slowly approaches. Stops. Sniffs. ATTACKS!)

YOUNG GUSSY

Hyuuuhhhkkk!

FX - Crack! The rock hits the creature straight on in the head, it recoils, hits the ground, starts squirming, shrieking.

CREATURE

(howling in pain)

GUSSY

I hit it square-on, heard the wet smack of its skull caving in and then the slobber of its breath as it splayed out, the lifeblood draining out of it. My shirt was soaked through with sweat now, and the cave was suddenly chilly. And, strangely, I realized I could see. I spun around, wondering by what miracle there was light again... And I saw the Dark Tome, lying before me on a pedestal. Glowing.

CASSIE

It did that for me, too. When I took it to Nick's house.

GUSSY

I rushed over and, picked it up with such a rush of delight that for a moment I forgot all about the horrors I had witnessed. I could see there was just a single paragraph left in my story. I could finish it. But. I wanted to see what it was.

CASSIE

What it was? You mean the creature?

GUSSY

Yes. I'd killed the thing, sight unseen, out of blind instinct. For survival. But before I left it, before I went back to my world... I needed to know what sort of creature had intended to kill me. So I turned around and walked back to it.

Creature is groaning, sad, pathetic now.

GUSSY (CONT'D)

It wasn't quite dead yet, it was panting, low, as it gasped up the last of its blood.

CASSIE

And?

GUSSY

I could see it was humanoid. Long, tangled hair on its back and legs, black hair that accentuated how pale, fishy white the creature was. Its spine was twisted over, C-shaped, like it was designed to stand upright, but had contracted into this shambling, four-legged thing over time. Its hoarse breathing gave me shivers. But that wasn't the worst of it. It made one, long, wasted gasp, and rolled over to face me. Its face. Its face was a human face. A face I recognized. Billy's face.

YOUNG GUSSY

No. No. No no no no no no no...
Billy... Billy... BILLY!

Gussy's cry of "Billy!" resonates on and on, deep into the cavern.

YOUNG GUSSY (CONT'D)
Get me out of here, get me out, get me... Get me... Please... take me anywhere but here. Now!

FX - with a shimmering WHOOSH - Young Gussy is flung out of the cave and back onto the floor of Billy's office.

YOUNG GUSSY (CONT'D)
(Gasping) Oh god... God... Billy...

GUSSY
I didn't know what to do. My hands were wet with Billy's blood. My body was soaked with sweat, and the slime of that horrible cave. What was the real Billy? The creature I'd slain, or the monster who was delighting those awestruck masses? Or perhaps he was both.

I didn't know what to do. I went home.

FX - driving at night

YOUNG GUSSY
What am I going to say. What am I going to tell her? How can I --

FX - Gussy's radio barks alive

ANNOUNCER
And now the latest news from Vietnam, where President Nixon defends the latest Marine operation just outside of Ho Chi Min City, an operation that has led to tens of thousands of --

FX - Radio sputters out, to fuzz

YOUNG GUSSY
The. What?

FX - Gussy pulls over.

YOUNG GUSSY (CONT'D)
"President" Nixon? Vietnam. We're out of Vietnam. We're... This... must've been... history...
(MORE)

YOUNG GUSSY (CONT'D)
 Documentary report. Old news. It's
 not... Got to go home... Go home...

Gussy continues the drive.

FX - Car pulls into driveway. Ignition turned off. Gets out
 of car and approaches steps.

YOUNG GUSSY (CONT'D)
 Huh. Look at the paper. There he is
 again. President Nixon. Vietnam.
 Vietnam is over.

FX - Gussy bursts through the door, starts heading towards
 his bedroom.

YOUNG GUSSY (CONT'D)
 Olivia! Hey, Olivia, sweetie!
 Something crazy is happening! Have
 you seen the paper! People think
 we're still in Vietnam. They...

Gussy pushes open door to his bedroom and realizes that
 something is wrong, terribly wrong in his house. His wife is
 not in bed. The shower is running.

FX - Door creaks open.

YOUNG GUSSY (CONT'D)
 Hey Olivia? Olivia sweetie? (beat)
 Taking a shower? (takes a step
 forward) What are these? (picks up
 painkiller bottle, shakes it)
 Hydrocodone. Who... Since when...

Gussy takes a step forward, grabs a bottle of alcohol.

YOUNG GUSSY (CONT'D)
 Olivia? What the hell is going on?
 Who's been drinking whisky? ...
 Olivia, sweetie? What the hell is
 going on here.

FX - Gussy knocks on the bathroom door.

YOUNG GUSSY (CONT'D)
 Sweetie? Sweetie... I'm coming in,
 okay?

FX - Gently, Gussy opens bathroom door.

YOUNG GUSSY (CONT'D)
 Olivia?

Gussy slides shower rail out of the way, revealing Olivia's naked, hanged body, dangling from shower rod. He is dumbstruck with horror.

YOUNG GUSSY (CONT'D)
(primal, throat sound)

FX - shower continues to spray, hssssssss

Gussy stops his narration.

CASSIE
Mr. Gussy?

Even after all these years, Mr. Gussy has trouble relaying the story.

GUSSY
She hung there from the shower rod, her face gone purple, her honey-blond hair matted to her head like a mop. Her pregnant belly - she was further along than she'd been when I left - hung there as well. Too late for anyone to... To save him. My boy. It was too late for all of us.

// BREAK //

MUSIC - Dread.

CASSIE
Oh my God. You went sideways.

GUSSY
Took me a real long time to figure out that's what happened. But yeah. Sideways or straight down to hell, depending on how you look at it.

I made up my mind to burn the book.
I drove back to Billy's office.

FX - Driving

MUSIC - Jimi-Hendrix sounding vibe

DJ

Later on the program we'll be hearing from Jimi Hendrix, who's upcoming album, "Hell Won't End," is a reflection of the conflict in Vietnam which drags into its thirtieth year.

FX - Click. Car careens into parking lot, stops, Gussy pushes open the door.

YOUNG GUSSY

I'll destroy it and the whole damn building.

FX - Gussy opens the trunk, grabs a sloshing canister of gasoline, and a shirt - as the listener we can tell he is up to mischief but full details aren't clear. Trunk slams, Gussy stomps into the office. Door is locked, Gussy kicks it down. Starts sloshing gas everywhere.

YOUNG GUSSY (CONT'D)

Gates... Caves... demons... other planes... All of it should stay where it's supposed to stay... Over there... away from here... And now... I'm going to end it all. Destroy the book like I should have the first time. You hear that, Billy! I should've let you stay in Hell where you wanted to be!

GUSSY

I smoked back in those days. I grabbed a lighter, looked at the gasoline I'd poured all through Billy's office - ready to torch the whole place - though I didn't quite have the heart to douse the book. I stared at it - lighter - book - lighter - book. Poised my thumb on the igniter. Worked up my nerve. My plan was to stay in the building while it burned. But then...

FX - Old rotary phone ring.

GUSSY (CONT'D)

... A ringing phone stopped me in my tracks.

FX - Phone rings again.

YOUNG GUSSY
(panting, hard)

FX - Phone rings

YOUNG GUSSY (CONT'D)
(chuckles, starts off low, then
turns larger, madman-level)

FX - Phone rings again. And again. The phone doesn't stop ringing. Eventually, Gussy goes to it.

YOUNG GUSSY (CONT'D)
Hello?

BILLY
Hey bud!

YOUNG GUSSY
Billy ... ?

BILLY
Thought I might find you over there. Nice job saving me. But you shouldn't have. You really shouldn't have.

YOUNG GUSSY
You... You were...

BILLY
I was a little lost. Yeah. You set my head straight? Remember that?

YOUNG GUSSY
H-- how?

BILLY
As I recall it was with a rock. Can still sort of remember the feeling of my skull caving in, gives me a migraine, now that I think of it.

FX - Baby cries in the background.

BILLY (CONT'D)
(off) Shut that little bastard up!

YOUNG GUSSY
You're alive? have a kid?

BILLY

Things have been a little different, Gussy, ever since I showed back up. I suppose you've noticed too?

YOUNG GUSSY

How do we get back?

BILLY

I don't know, Gussy, you're the one who wanted to leave the shadow-show.

BRENDA

(on phone, off) Billy! Little George wants to see his daddy!

BILLY

I promise you, I'm going to beat that little shit as soon as he's old enough to take the belt.

YOUNG GUSSY

Billy. You've got to help me. You've got to show me what you did. How to get things back to how they're supposed to be.

BILLY

Can't do that, old friend.

YOUNG GUSSY

What?

BILLY

When you die over there, you can't see gates anymore. You wake up somewhere where there isn't any magic, with a hangover that could kill. I've been stuck here smelling dirty diapers, waiting for you to get back. Comforting Olivia in her pain.

YOUNG GUSSY

Her. What?

BILLY

You've been missing for months, my man. She thought you ran out on her. So I taught her some ways to stop the pain. What's the problem? Did it get to be too much?

(MORE)

BILLY (CONT'D)

(beat, Gussy's unresponsive on the other end of the phone) I can guess why you're back there. Why you're with the book. So I guess you have some choices now. Lucky man. I don't have choices. I'm stuck here. Good luck, you and that book and all.

FX - Billy hangs up the phone.

MUSIC - Mysterious, rises up.

GUSSY

I stood there, staring at that lighter for a real long time. I was pretty sure I'd strike the lighter one minute, pretty sure I wouldn't the next. I didn't care to live or die, Cassie, I really didn't. But the thing that got into me, that kept me from making the spark, was the idea that maybe... Maybe if what we'd done with the book had landed me here, maybe there was a way to get back to where I came from. That was the only thing that kept me going. I didn't care whether I lived or died. But if there was a way of getting back to a place where my wife and boy were alive, well, I was damn sure gonna try. So I put the lighter down, and took the book home with me.

CASSIE

Wow. I'm sorry, Mr. Gussy.

GUSSY

Now don't you be sorry for me, girl! I don't deserve no one's sympathy and I don't deserve forgiveness. I'm not proud of what I've done, Cassie. I've driven myself near madness chasing after strange worlds in the Dark Tome. I've shifted to worlds where Billy was and where Billy wasn't. I've seen three moons rise and places where there is no candle on the human heart. I've met demons, succubi, ghosts, banshees. But I've never come close to finding my Olivia again.

(MORE)

GUSSY (CONT'D)

And now my power is running weak.
You talking about sorry? I'm the
one who should be sorry, Cassie.
Sorry I got you tangled up into
this mess.

CASSIE

It's okay. Cuz the book does good
things, too, right? Like gives you
powers?

GUSSY

That it does. But you come to
learn, power can be dangerous. It
ain't right, for me to have done
this to you, gotten you in this
deep, without telling you what you
was in for. What it could cost you.
At least you know now how I got the
book. And what it cost me.

CASSIE

And why you need one more story.

GUSSY

Yeah.

FX - The book is humming now.

GUSSY (CONT'D)

It's... um... it's glowing.

CASSIE

The book was here. It heard the
story.

GUSSY

You think... ? You think you being
here... and me telling... you think
that's enough to... to open a...

OLIVIA

Gussy... Gussy are you there?

GUSSY

Olivia?

FX - Distant, a baby cries.

CASSIE

Mr. Gussy?

GUSSY

Olivia. Oh my God. Olivia!

CASSIE
Mr. Gussy. I didn't hear any ---

GUSSY
OLIVIA!

FX - Teleport WHOOSH!

CASSIE
Mr. Gussy?!

FX - Door bangs open out front.

COUNSELOR
Mr. Gussy! I've got the police with
me! We have a search warrant! We
have probably cause to believe
you'r endangering a minor.

CASSIE
Oh... Oh... crap... No choice
but...

FX - Phone bzzt. Bzzt!

CASSIE (CONT'D)
Mom... Oh... Gee... I'll have to
catch you next time!

SERGEANT
We're breaking the door down!

FX - Door of Mr. Gussy's book-shop is smashed open, police
come barging in.

CASSIE
Here goes!

FX - Portal WHOOSH!

END