EMILE ZOLA: BLOOD, SEX & MONEY

**SEX**

**Episode 4: Lovesick**

**Dan Rebellato**

Adapted from:

**The Dream**

**The Kill**

by Émile Zola

**Third Draft** (27 January 2015)

A wind howls. It is snowing thickly. Footsteps in the snow. Weak, uncertain.

ANGELIQUE (weakly) Please. Somebody help me.

In a completely different space:

RENÉE My daughter. My girl.

Snow. Close in on the breath now. Thick irregular breaths, ice in the throat.

ANGELIQUE Help me.

RENÉE Where are you? Angélique? What will become of you?

The footsteps stop. We hear her weakly knock on a large oak door with her frozen hands.

ANGELIQUE Is there anyone...

She sinks to her knees. The wind howls.

(faintly) Someone...

The cathedral’s great bell begins to toll. It is a colossal sound. We hear the breaths quicken in shock.

RENÉE My daughter. My sweet girl.

ANGELIQUE (faint but close up, dying words) Pl – ease, God.

The bell rolls and strikes again, we hear ice forming, closing her in, she is immersed, the sound resonates and builds and:

A room in Les Tulettes Asylum. 1872. We hear the breaths of a woman waking suddenly. Birds through a window.

DIDI (VO) Somebody... help me...

Outside voices down a corridor, and footsteps come into focus. In the far distance, a bell is tolling.

DIDI (VO) (composes herself) At the end of my life, my body is weak, my memory tattered, but my dreams seem to be as strong as ever.

There is a nurse here who thinks that dreams are a glimpse of the afterlife and that death is just a dream without end.

She’s a fool and I have asked her to be moved to another floor. Dreams are not heaven or hell.

NURSE (off) Girl?

DIDI Dreams are not fantasies.

NURSE (off) (off) Girl?

DIDI Dreams are survival.

NURSE (off) Can you hear me?

DIDI (VO) Of course I can hear you!

HUBERTINE (off) I think she’s waking up.

DIDI (VO) Waking up? What are you talking about?

The atmosphere thickens and then we leap:

Internal. Deep inside a sleeping mind.

HUBERTINE (distant) Girl? Can you hear me? You’re safe. You’re alive.

We are in the depths. In the dark around us swirl strange slow snow, deep and distorted church bells, a distant choir singing in the rhythm of a beating heart.

ANGELIQUE (internal) Somebody ... save ... me.

HUBERTINE (distant) Should I keep talking to her?

NURSE (very muffled) Certainly.

HUBERTINE (distant) Girl. You’re alive. Girl.

ANGELIQUE (internal) Didi...?

The bells swirl. The snows chime.

DIDI (VO) The girl, this hardly living girl, is my great-granddaughter. And my great-great granddaughter. It’s a long story. She is a love child. At least, it was a sort of love that produced her. A forbidden, shameful love, but love nonetheless.

ANGELIQUE (internal) Alive...

DIDI (VO) Abandoned by my grandson, passed from one foster family to another, treated sometimes cruelly, sometimes brutally, until one winter, aged thirteen, she can take it no more and walks out into the snow. Twenty-five miles she walks through the night until she comes upon the town of Beaumont and collapses before the Cathedral of St Agnes.

The bells and the breathing Cathedral.

As the freezing air bites into her the last thing she sees is the face of the stone saint gazing piteously at her.

ANGELIQUE (internal) Help me, Agnes...

Crossfade into the room.

ANGELIQUE (barely coherent) Help me, Holy martyr, blessed saint, beloved virgin...

HUBERTINE Sweet child. Hush. You’re safe now.

ANGELIQUE (subsiding) Blessed saints, help... help...

HUBERTINE Sleep now, dear girl. You are safe.

DIDI (VO) This is Hubertine Dulaque. The Dulaques have been loyal servants of the church for centuries, embroidering the chasubles and maniples, the mitres and dalmatics for the priests and bishops of St Agnes. It was Hubertine who found the girl’s frozen body in the snow, carried her home and has spent the last several weeks nursing her back from the very edges of life.

The next day. But let’s not be too fussy about the transition.

HUBERTINE Where did you come from, child?

ANGELIQUE I can’t... I can’t rem...

HUBERTINE Shh. It doesn’t matter. Don’t worry. We’ll talk when you’re better.

DIDI (VO) The girl is not used to kindness and it takes time to trust Hubertine.

HUBERTINE What’s your name, child?

Pause.

My name is Hubertine.

Pause.

I have to call you something.

Pause.

Henry. I’ll call you Henry.

ANGELIQUE You can’t call me Henry.

HUBERTINE Then what should I call you?

Pause.

HUBERTINE Very well. Henry it is.

ANGELIQUE Angelique.

HUBERTINE What was that?

ANGELIQUE My name is Angelique.

HUBERTINE I’m pleased to meet you, Angelique.

ANGELIQUE (intake of breath)

DIDI (VO) The sound of her own name is unfamiliar to her. In thirteen years, this is the first time anyone has addressed her by her name.

We are back in the depths.

DIDI (VO) But Angelique is a weak child and her fight with death is not yet fully won.

ANGELIQUE Who are you?

DIDI (VO) My name is Didi.

ANGELIQUE How are you in my head?

DIDI (VO) I didn’t realise I needed permission.

ANGELIQUE What’s that sound?

If we listen hard we can hear the Cathedral of St Agnes breathing. A deep, resonant sound. Masonry dust rattles in its throat. The bricks wheeze.

DIDI (VO) I don’t know.

ANGELIQUE Am I awake or am I dreaming?

DIDI (VO) I don’t know.

ANGELIQUE You don’t know much, Didi.

DIDI (VO) You’re right.

ANGELIQUE Oh. I’m going up again.

A rush of someone coming to the surface from dark to light.

Back in the bedroom.

HUBERTINE Are you alright, Angelique?

ANGELIQUE I – I think so.

HUBERTINE You were talking in your sleep.

ANGELIQUE I was?

HUBERTINE You were.

ANGELIQUE Can you hear that?

We can hear nothing.

HUBERTINE I can’t hear anything.

ANGELIQUE It’s the Cathedral breathing.

HUBERTINE Breathing?

ANGELIQUE Yes, listen.

HUBERTINE Buildings don’t breathe, sweet girl.

ANGELIQUE Can’t you hear it?

HUBERTINE You still have a fever.

ANGELIQUE I’m alright.

HUBERTINE Who is Didi?

ANGELIQUE Didi...

HUBERTINE Is she your mother?

ANGELIQUE No.

HUBERTINE I see.

DIDI (VO) While Angelique has been fighting for life, Hubertine has been diligently trying to trace Angelique’s mother, sending and receiving letters that trace the sorry story of her young life. The next morning she receives a letter from a farmer’s wife in Soulanges with an address where Angelique’s mother might be found and she sets off.

Bustle.

HUBERTINE This is Nurse Bouland. She’s here if you need anything.

NURSE I’ll be downstairs. Just ring this bell if you need me.

ANGELIQUE What will I do?

HUBERTINE Why don’t you read something?

ANGELIQUE Like what?

HUBERTINE Whatever you like. Just pick something.

ANGELIQUE I don’t want to read

HUBERTINE Please yourself. I’ll see you tomorrow, darling.

ANGELIQUE (grumbles)

HUBERTINE Do I get a goodbye?

ANGELIQUE (grumpy) Goodbye.

HUBERTINE Ring the bell if you need anything. Bye bye.

She goes.

DIDI (VO) Young girls of Angelique’s age are hungry for experience, for knowledge, for life. She reaches across to the pile of books on the table beside her bed and her fingers first touch a book called The Golden Legend...

Very close, fingers running across leather. The sound resonates.

Curious, she traces the feel of the leather beneath her fingers, the indentations of the gold inlay.

We hear a faint metallic shimmer at the word ‘gold’.

DIDI (VO) Turning the thick pages

Sensually heavy paper. We can hear the rough edges, the grain of the paper, the thickness of it.

At once her eyes are caught by the images.

We hear, very close, her fingers gently lifting the thin sheet of tracing paper covering an illustration.

Saints and martyrs. Hundreds of them.

A tiny distant cacophony of voices.

The first engraving depicted St Juliana, her young body tied to a wheel before a jeering crowd, her broken bones healed by an angel.

We focus in on her. We hear, faintly, the crowd’s disquiet as the angel’s magnificence reveals itself.

The second engraving showed St Christine, snakes coiled around her body

The hissing slithering serpents.

her young face serene and composed, a pagan temple crumbling to dust behind her.

Distantly, we hear a temple collapse into powder.

And when Angelique begins to read the words, she is dazzled by the tales of the early Christian martyrs. How they lived. And how they died.

Through this the background is gradually populated by music and miracles. The pulse of a choir.

They are accused of magic, of witchcraft

They are dragged to temples, kept in towers, thrown in dungeons.

They are starved and they refuse food.

Their bodies are smeared in honey and eaten by flies

They are made to walk on broken glass

They are beaten with metal whips

Their flesh is torn by hooks and blades

Their wounds are filled with lime and boiling pitch and molten lead

They are made to wear burning crowns, to lie on white-hot bronze

Their sides are burned with torches

Their legs are broken with metal

Tug out their eyes

Pull out their tongues

Nothing affects them.

Build sound and then suddenly back to bedroom and the intimate sound of the book.

It is the most exciting thing Angelique has ever heard. Her whole body responds to the suffering of the Christian martyrs. Each time she closes her eyes, her young

mind is filled with agony and miracles.

We are in a small room in an asylum.

RENÉE You’ve come about my child? How is my boy? Where is he - ?

HUBERTINE No - madam. I know nothing of your son. I’m here about your daughter.

DIDI (VO) This is Renée.

RENÉE My daughter?

HUBERTINE You did have a daughter?

DIDI (VO) Poor Renée.

RENÉE I had a boy.

HUBERTINE I don’t know about that –

RENÉE Maxime. Have you seen him?

HUBERTINE I haven’t.

RENÉE How is he?

HUBERTINE I’m talking about Angelique, your daughter.

RENÉE Angelique...

DIDI (VO) Poor Renée fell in love with her stepson. Her husband - my grandson – punished her by sending her to the asylum of Tulettes. She on the floor above me. I would hear her walk up and down, up and down.

HUBERTINE Mrs Béraud du Châtel –

RENÉE Saccard.

HUBERTINE I’m sorry?

RENÉE I am Mrs Saccard.

HUBERTINE But the governor –

RENÉE You’ve seen him?

HUBERTINE He was downstairs.

RENÉE Maxime is downstairs? I must go to him.

HUBERTINE No, please. Mrs – Saccard. I just want to ask you about Angelique. Your daughter.

RENÉE My daughter?

HUBERTINE That’s right.

RENÉE My girl.

HUBERTINE I want you to know that she’s safe.

RENÉE I remember.

HUBERTINE She safe and well and she’s happy.

RENÉE It was Aristide. You have to believe me.

HUBERTINE What – sorry? What was Aristide?

RENÉE He made me. Send her away.

HUBERTINE I’m sure.

RENÉE How is she?

HUBERTINE Well – as I said – she’s well and happy.

RENÉE Is she well?

HUBERTINE Yes I –

RENÉE I mean, does she say things, strange things?

HUBERTINE She’s a girl, she says –

Sudden change of mood. Dark. Threatening.

RENÉE Be careful of her.

HUBERTINE What? Let go of me.

RENÉE She is a Rougon.

HUBERTINE I don’t know what you mean, / let me go.

RENÉE They are dangerous. / All of them.

HUBERTINE Please let go of my / wrist!

RENÉE No one knows like I / do.

HUBERTINE Help! Somebody / please!

RENÉE They take you and they / destroy you.

HUBERTINE Please, Renée. You’re hurting me -

And equally suddenly, RENÉE subsides.

I have to go. I just thought I’d come to you.

RENÉE If you see him. If you see Maxime. Tell him: I’m here and I’m waiting.

DIDI (VO) But she is right, Hubertine. The Rougons are dangerous, to others and themselves.

Back in the bedroom. Close to the window.

DIDI (VO) The next evening, Angelique is gazing down from her attic window into the Cathedral grounds.

We hear the Cathedral breathing. It rasps with desire.

The Cathedral shrouds the gardens in deep shadow. But as she looks she seems to see a shape, an outline. She looks closer and she sees, yes, it’s a man. A young man. By the willow. A young man with long golden hair. And as her eyes get used to the dark she starts to see his face... looking up ... at her window –

Footsteps on the stair.

HUBERTINE (off) Angelique!

ANGELIQUE reacts. HUBERTINE enters.

Sweet child, you’re up!

ANGELIQUE I’m sorry...

HUBERTINE Don’t be sorry, I’m pleased.

ANGELIQUE You are?

HUBERTINE I was beginning to think you’d never get out of that bed. What are you looking at?

ANGELIQUE Nothing.

HUBERTINE Is there something down there?

ANGELIQUE I told you –

HUBERTINE I hope you’re not hiding something –

ANGELIQUE No!

HUBERTINE (firmly) Then let me past –

HUBERTINE looks out of the window. Pause.

I see. Nothing. Just as you said.

ANGELIQUE See?

DIDI (VO) Why didn’t you tell her about the boy you saw?

ANGELIQUE I don’t know.

HUBERTINE Don’t know what?

The Cathedral bells chime nine.

You need to get to bed.

ANGELIQUE I’m not tired.

HUBERTINE You’ll need a good night’s sleep because tomorrow you have work to do.

ANGELIQUE What sort of work?

HUBERTINE Embroidery. If you’re up to it, that is.

ANGELIQUE I don’t know.

HUBERTINE See how you feel in the morning. Good night, darling girl.

ANGELIQUE Good night, mama.

DIDI (VO) That night, the poor girl lies in bed and as sleep takes her, behind her eyes, the saints of the early Church fight their battles against the sinful temptations of pagan young men with long golden hair.

We hear bodily struggles. Grunts and gasps.

DIDI (VO) The next morning, Hubertine introduces Angelique to the arts of embroidery. She shows her how the cloth is stretched across a frame –

We hear fabric.

The wooden structure held in tension with metal braces -

We hear the wood’s muscular straining.

A series of four screws, tightening the material –

The screws tighten and the cloth stretches painfully.

Until the surface of the fabric is taut and hard –

We hear the surface of the material pinging with tension, an almost human noise of anticipation.

Ready for the first needle to pierce it -

A needle pierces the cloth releasing an ecstatic choral sigh.

ANGELIQUE Am I doing this right, Hubertine?

HUBERTINE Yes, darling.

DIDI (VO) In fact, Angelique quickly proves herself a gifted and skilful embroideress. In her hands, the gold and silver told stories of an unusual vigour and subtlety. The symbols and flowers and animals that she wove came to mysterious life beneath her fingers. Hubertine would watch, amazed, as out of the simple threads, a lily grew on the silk -

We hear the lily growing through the material.

Its stem like a beam of golden light

A shimmer of white heat tingling in the material.

its delicate leaves twirling around it like shooting stars.

We hear tiny shooting stars surging through the fabric.

ANGELIQUE This is right, isn’t it?

HUBERTINE Angelique, you have no idea. It’s beautiful.

ANGELIQUE Thank you, Hubertine.

HUBERTINE Angelique, you know –

ANGELIQUE Yes Hubertine.

HUBERTINE You can call me ‘Mother’ you know.

ANGELIQUE But I have a mother.

HUBERTINE Yes. Of course.

ANGELIQUE Not her. I mean Mary. Mother of Christ and Mother of us all.

HUBERTINE Oh. I see.

DIDI (VO) Angelique’s talent was remarkable. Under her fingers, devotion and faith seemed to dance in the cloth while her thoughts were of the Invisible and the Beyond, of the infinity of God’s love and the golden legends of the saints.

ANGELIQUE Do you like it, mama?

HUBERTINE I do, Angelique. It’s a kind of miracle.

A bucolic landscape.

DIDI (VO) It’s laundry day in Beaumont.

Water and the pounding of linen, women’s voices.

Although there is laundry with heated water in the new part of town, those living in the shadow of the Cathedral prefer to wash their clothes in the Chevrotte river. Once a month, the townspeople are permitted by the religious authorities to wash their clothes in its clear waters.

ANGELIQUE Who’s that?

GIRL Where?

ANGELIQUE Up there on the Cathedral.

GIRL Oh that’s Felicien.

ANGELIQUE Who is he?

GIRL He’s the Bishop’s son.

ANGELIQUE What’s he doing?

GIRL He’s mending the stained glass. That’s what he does.

ANGELIQUE How long has he been in Beaumont?

GIRL Only a month, maybe two. He’s been travelling. Why? Do you fancy him?

ANGELIQUE Of course not.

GIRL God, I do.

ANGELIQUE Don’t blaspheme.

GIRL You what?

ANGELIQUE Particularly not in front of the Cathedral.

GIRL Why don’t you fancy him? I think he’s bloody gorgeous.

ANGELIQUE You should get on with your washing.

DIDI (VO) Angelique continues with her work, just occasionally glancing up to take in the sight of the young man, suspended fifty feet above the ground in a rope and canvas harness, carefully placing a deep green panel of glass into the book of St John the Apostle.

ANGELIQUE (dreamily) John the Divine, John the Evangelist, wise John, perfect in the love of Christ.

DIDI (VO) Angelique would grate soap into a pail of water then press in a shirt and work it with her fists. Then she would beat the shirt against a rock, finally squeezing and rinsing it in the fast-flowing river.

GIRL He’s here.

DIDI (VO) Angelique likes the feeling of the cool water flowing over her hands.

GIRL He’s here.

ANGELIQUE Who’s here?

GIRL The boy. Look casual.

DIDI (VO) The Bishop’s lad, Felicien, is taking a break from his work.

GIRL Oh my God, he’s coming over.

ANGELIQUE I told you not to blaspheme.

GIRL Careful –

Angelique lets out a shout.

DIDI (VO) Distracted, Angelique has let go of the cotton blouse she is holding and it has begun to roll and dance its way down the river.

We hear the cotton dancing with the water.

ANGELIQUE Someone grab it!

DIDI (VO) The Bishop’s boy looks up, takes in the situation and without a thought strips off his shirt and jumps into the water.

Flesh and water.

GIRL A. Mazing.

DIDI (VO) He grabs the shirt and swims strongly back upstream, heaving himself out of the water presenting the errant blouse to Angelique.

Breathing. Water dripping.

ANGELIQUE Th - thank you, sir.

DIDI (VO) The boy turns, picked his own shirt off the ground and goes to dry himself in the sun.

GIRL You. Lucky. Cow.

ANGELIQUE Don’t be daft.

GIRL You don’t even like him.

ANGELIQUE No I don’t.

Inside the Cathedral. Few people around. Doomy and vast, echoing.

DIDI (VO) Oh yes she does. And who can blame her? Not me. Young men with their shirts off: what’s not to like? But Angelique is afraid. Afraid of her feelings for the Bishop’s boy. Afraid because earthly love is a sin is it not? and she has promised her heart to Christ.

ANGELIQUE Help me, Lord. Give me the strength to love only you, my Saviour.

DIDI (VO) Above her, the Cathedral, massive and hulking, seems to be at prayer.

A deep massive wordless chanting of prayer. Scree falling.

From the great west door, a sharp air enters the nave and as it passes among the pillars and buttresses, through the aisles and arcades, Angelique can almost hear voices raised in song.

We hear, very faint, angelic but wordless voices keening discordantly.

Angelique looks up at the saints. The statue of Saint Catherine with her sword. St Mary of Egypt carved in relief above the pulpit. And at the centre of the rose window, St Agnes.

The worldless voices turn vaguely into lamentations.

Her eye is caught by St Agnes in the window.

Build the lamentation.

And as she watches, Saint Agnes...

A cracking of glass, a scatter of splinters...

begins to turn her head...

Build the sound then cut:

HUBERTINE Here you are!

ANGELIQUE Mama!

HUBERTINE I’ve been looking for you all over town.

ANGELIQUE I just came here to pray.

HUBERTINE You might have told me.

ANGELIQUE I didn’t think you’d mind.

HUBERTINE Of course I don’t mind, but just tell me yes? I’ve been very worried.

ANGELIQUE Have I been here long?

HUBERTINE Three hours.

ANGELIQUE I must have lost track of time.

HUBERTINE You’re feverish again, child. Your eyes are shining.

ANGELIQUE I’m alright.

HUBERTINE You should see the nurse.

ANGELIQUE I don’t need a nurse. I’m just thinking.

HUBERTINE sits down beside her.

ANGELIQUE Have you ever been in love?

HUBERTINE In love? Why?

ANGELIQUE Have you?

HUBERTINE Who’s been talking to you?

ANGELIQUE Nobody. I’m just asking.

Pause.

HUBERTINE Yes I have. Many years ago.

ANGELIQUE Who was it?

HUBERTINE When I was younger my mother sent me to Charville to learn my craft. There was a man there, a stone mason. He was a kind man and I think he loved me.

ANGELIQUE You think?

HUBERTINE But my mother did not approve. She forbade me from marrying him.

ANGELIQUE What did you do?

HUBERTINE I ignored her.

ANGELIQUE (disbelief) You disobeyed your mother?

HUBERTINE I did. We found a priest to marry us. My mother said she never wanted to see me again.

ANGELIQUE And did she?

HUBERTINE Only once more. Six months after the wedding, I found I was pregnant. I felt sure she’d want to know and that she would soften. So I made the visit from Charville and came here to see her.

ANGELIQUE Did she forgive you?

HUBERTINE No. She wouldn’t let me into the house. And, loud enough so that the town could hear, she cursed me and my husband and our baby and she sent me away.

ANGELIQUE Mama!

HUBERTINE And then –

Pause.

The baby was due in January but when the day came, I tried to deny it but I knew there was something wrong. The baby, our baby was stillborn.

ANGELIQUE It died?

HUBERTINE Nothing was the same after that. The stone mason and I fought all the time. Our love had died with our child. And one day he walked out and never came back.

ANGELIQUE You’ve never heard from him again.

HUBERTINE No and I don’t want to.

ANGELIQUE But you did love him.

HUBERTINE Understand something, Angelique. Love is an illusion. Love is a snare. Love ever dies. Love ends and it ends us. Promise me you will never love.

ANGELIQUE I have given my heart to Christ, mama.

HUBERTINE Good. He is the only man who won’t let you down.

Night.

DIDI (VO) That night, as she lies in bed reading her book of saints, Angelique vows to love only Christ. She thinks of the patience of the martyrs who withstood the trials of hell. She thinks of St Juliana to whom a devil comes in disguise tempting her so she beat him with a chain.

We hear this faintly.

She thinks of St Anastasia, locked in a kitchen by a lustful Prefect, but the Lord takes away his wits and instead he tries to make love to the pots and pans.

We hear this faintly.

When Angelique thinks of these saints she laughs until she is sick. She laughs until it hurts.

And for the next three weeks, she works with her needle and she does not think of Felicien, the Bishop’s son -

The shimmering gold thread zings metallically in the cloth.

every minute of every hour of every day.

The needle pierces the taut fabric, with a sigh.

ANGELIQUE (to herself) Oh no!

She starts to unpick the thread.

HUBERTINE (entering) Angelique. We have a visitor.

ANGELIQUE Just a moment.

HUBERTINE What’s the matter?

ANGELIQUE Just a mistake -

HUBERTINE (approaching) ‘Love’?

ANGELIQUE It’s nothing.

HUBERTINE You sewed the word ‘love’, into the bishop’s cope?

ANGELIQUE I was distracted. Who is the visitor?

HUBERTINE The Cathedral has a commission for us.

ANGELIQUE Oh yes.

HUBERTINE It’s rather a big job so I don’t mind if you say no.

ANGELIQUE I will speak with the Bishop.

Unreality.

HUBERTINE It’s not the Bishop. He sent his boy. I’ll go and get him –

ANGELIQUE No –

HUBERTINE (off) Do come in, Felicien.

ANGELIQUE (hissing) Mama –

DIDI (VO) The boy hesitates into the room, looking at the floor. He holds out a piece of paper on which is a design and a set of instructions.

ANGELIQUE (reading) It’s a Mitre. And the Bishop wants it in shaded gold.

HUBERTINE This is what I was concerned about.

ANGELIQUE Shaded gold is a delicate procedure; it takes time.

HUBERTINE And the Bishop wants it for the end of the month.

ANGELIQUE The end of the month?

HUBERTINE For the Procession of the Miracle.

ANGELIQUE That’s impossible.

HUBERTINE That’s what I said.

DIDI (VO) The boy looks embarrassed and turned to go.

ANGELIQUE Wait! (She looks at the paper) It is a very graceful design. It would be a shame if we could not fulfil it.

HUBERTINE But shaded gold. You should understand, Felicien, that shaded gold is a technique that few can master. I think my daughter may be the only one in France.

ANGELIQUE And the Bishop is making us a very generous offer for our services. I will do it.

HUBERTINE Are you sure, Angelique?

ANGELIQUE Even if I have to stay up all night every night, I will fulfil the commission. You may tell the Bishop that.

HUBERTINE I’ll show you out.

Leaves.

DIDI (VO) As he turned to go, Felicien raised his blue eyes to look at her. At that moment, Angelique saw something in his eyes. Something like love.

HUBERTINE returns.

HUBERTINE Thank you, Angelique, but I hope you won’t really need to stay up all night.

ANGELIQUE If the Bishop needs it, we are here to serve.

HUBERTINE The Bishop has asked if Felicien could come in to check the work.

ANGELIQUE Whether he’s here or not, makes no difference to me.

Cathedral.

DIDI (VO) But Bishop’s boys with long golden hair make an awful difference, don’t they Angelique?

ANGELIQUE Are you talking to me?

DIDI (VO) Of course I am.

ANGELIQUE Well I wish you wouldn’t. I’m trying to pray.

DIDI (VO) Lot of good that’ll do you.

ANGELIQUE Oh I understand now. You’re a devil.

DIDI (VO) You wouldn’t be the first to say that. But no, I am not a devil.

ANGELIQUE Get thee behind me, Didi.

DIDI (VO) The high Cathedral vault sighs above her. The thick columns pulse around her. Angelique lays her body on the cool stone and begs Christ for guidance.

ANGELIQUE Help me, Lord. Help this weak sinner.

DIDI (VO) She feels the rumble of the earth beneath her chest. A whisper of the air ripples across her back.

Rumble and sigh.

ANGELIQUE Saints and martyrs. St Catherine. St Mary. St Agnes. Beloved in Christ. Show me a sign.

DIDI (VO) She gazes up at the window at Agnes. Her hair cascades around her, a lamb cradled in her arms. The colours sparkle and slowly... Agnes looks round.

A gentle cracking down as the stained-glass saint turns her head.

AGNES Mary!

She speaks as you would expect a stained-glass saint to speak. The voice is crystalline, brittle and thin.

Psst. Mary!

DIDI (VO) Above the pulpit, St Mary of Egypt turns her marble head.

MARY What?

The voice is bright and perfectly smooth.

AGNES This girl needs our help.

MARY I’ll wake Catherine. Catherine!

CATHERINE What is it now?

The voice has a hard mineral quality.

DIDI (VO) The statue of St Catherine straightens up.

ANGELIQUE My Lady Agnes...

AGNES You are suffering, child.

CATHERINE Huh!

AGNES All sufferers suffer in their own way, Catherine.

MARY I didn’t suffer, particularly.

CATHERINE Oh you did, Mary.

MARY Not really, not like you.

ANGELIQUE I read about you, Catherine. They tore apart your flesh with spinning blades.

CATHERINE Blades? You don’t know the half of it. They were like saws. And there were nails in there too.

AGNES Although, just to be fair, the angel did destroy the machine before it touched you.

CATHERINE Technically, yes, but...

AGNES Because I was thrown into fire.

MARY I thought the fire didn’t burn you.

AGNES It did burn me, at first, but then it parted and instead burned the pagans watching.

ANGELIQUE I read about that.

AGNES To be fair, with any kind of torture, I think it’s 99% anticipation.

MARY I never know what I think about the pagans being burned.

AGNES I know what you mean, but at the end of the day a miracle’s / a miracle.

CATHERINE When the angel destroyed the machine, it took 400 pagans with it. Good riddance, / I say.

MARY Theologically speaking, I think it deprived of them of a chance of repentance.

CATHERINE Don’t you start me on theology. The Emperor Maxentius summoned his fifty wisest men to try to make my doubt my faith. They couldn’t do it.

AGNES We know, Catherine –

CATHERINE In fact I converted them!

MARY And sent them to their deaths.

CATHERINE Their blood was their baptism, which they understood. I hope you’re not / getting qualms at this late – well I hope not actually.

MARY No one’s criticizing you, Catherine.

AGNES This girl needs our guidance.

MARY Of course. What is your name, child?

ANGELIQUE Angelique.

MARY What ails you, Angelique?

ANGELIQUE I need to know: is it wrong to love?

AGNES Ah.

MARY Oho.

CATHERINE That old chestnut.

AGNES No, Angelique, it is not wrong to love. The love of God, for example, the love of providence and of grace. These are loves that could never / be described as – well, if you could let me finish.

CATHERINE Well, let’s not jump to / any conclusions.

MARY I think you know, Catherine, that Agnes meant that in general terms, / all things being equal -

CATHERINE The love of Providence can so easily be confused with the love of what is provided -

AGNES Which therefore isn’t, in fact, Providence, so my point / still stands.

CATHERINE It’s a moral, not a merely linguistic distinction.

ANGELIQUE Please, ladies. Is it wrong to love a man?

MARY I loved many men. And many men loved me.

CATHERINE ‘Love’ is a nice way of putting it.

MARY Yes. I was a whore. I can say that now.

AGNES It’s true. She was.

MARY I obtained passage to Jerusalem by offering my body to the sailors. / They accepted of course.

CATHERINE Pas devant les enfants, s’il vous plait.

MARY But when I tried to enter the Church there, I couldn’t. Something held me back, / a force, well, yes, sin, thank you Catherine for stating the obvious.

CATHERINE Sin.

AGNES (heavily) So you...

MARY I prayed to the Virgin and promised that I would renounce the world and immediately three / silver coins

AGNES Three silver coins! / Imagine that, Angelique.

MARY clattered onto the ground beside me.

CATHERINE So you bought some bread, come on speed it up –

MARY And I walked into the desert and I lived there for 47 years.

ANGELIQUE That must have been terrible. I mean, wonderful but also terrible.

MARY The first fifteen years were the worst. The sun blackened by skin so bad that I couldn’t lie still. I slept standing. But thanks to a miracle the bread that I bought sustained me for all of those years, which was a blessing.

ANGELIQUE It must have been extraordinary to know such grace.

MARY And then, after 47 years, what should I see coming through the shimmer and the haze of the desert but the figure of a man.

CATHERINE Zosimas. A priest.

MARY I don’t know who was more scared, him or me, but somehow I knew his name which certainly knocked him / for six.

AGNES You also floated above the ground / which might have helped.

CATHERINE Showy.

MARY I told him my story and he said he would return the next year to give me Communion / I’d never taken Communion, you see.

CATHERINE Though technically the bread you had been eating / was Communion itself. You can’t deny that Christ had entered the bread.

MARY But the point I’m making is – well the question I’m asking – if you’d let me get a word in edgeways, Catherine, please. Thank you. The question I’m asking is did I love that man, the priest, Zosimas? It was a kind of love that I felt.

AGNES I believe you can love a man if by that you are expressing your love of Christ, / which of course Catherine will dispute on theological grounds - what did I tell you?

CATHERINE Well! Hm. I’m not sure about that!

MARY Catherine sometimes forgets that the disputatio is not obligatio.

ANGELIQUE So, to sum up if I can, you think that if it’s an expression of devotion to Christ and a vessel for the love of God, it is permissible to love a man?

AGNES Of course, Angelique.

MARY Certainly.

AGNES Love and be loved, my child.

The bedroom. An old house and an old house’s noises but also a golden shimmer.

DIDI (VO) That night, poor feverish Angelique lies in her bed shivering with love. Gold threads weave patterns in the air above her head. She knows she may love him. All that is needed is that he comes to her.

ANGELIQUE (under her breath) Merciful Jesus, son of God, show Felicien the path to love me.

DIDI (VO) And she listens.

The creaking of the stairs below. A distant door. But otherwise shimmer in silence.

ANGELIQUE (under her breath) Beloved Christ, who loves the world, send me a sign and spare my heart.

DIDI (VO) And she listens.

Silence.

ANGELIQUE (under her breath) Dear Lord, your humble servant asks only –

She stops. We can hear, very faintly, indistinctly, strange soft footsteps.

DIDI (VO) Angelique listens. And she hears.

ANGELIQUE’s breath, fearful, excited.

Not footsteps on the stairs on the right side of her bed. But footsteps on the left, beyond the balcony. Footsteps in the air.

We hear them more distinctly now. Purposeful footsteps, treading carefully through cloud. Build in an intensity to the shimmer, a drone, music, some pulse.

Because sometimes, it can seem

Footsteps.

that if you pray for something hard enough

The balcony door opens.

ANGELIQUE You came...

DIDI (VO) then it shall be given.

Footsteps across the floor. ANGELIQUE sits up in bed.

ANGELIQUE Felicien, my love. I prayed you would come. And you have come.

DIDI (VO) And as the boy steps across the cloudy floor towards her, Angelique lifts her head and offers her lips to be kissed.

Dead silence for a second as we hear a single silver kiss, like a drop of mercury in eternity. Hold the silence and then a female gasp.

And there, in that room, all alone in that room, Angelique gives herself to him.

ANGELIQUE My darling...

Build the intensity.

DIDI (VO) As the first light creeps into the balcony window, Felicien is gone. Almost as if he was never there.

The creaking of a frame. The tension of fabric. The rattle of a bobbin unthreading. All sounds deliriously heightened. AN

DIDI (VO) Each day, Angelique works in a fever of activity. Sixteen hours a day she dances the needles through the silk, the designs growing under her fingers as if by themselves

The zing of thread swooping through the fabric.

The tree of Jesse, Abraham and the angel, David, Solomon, the Virgin and her Son, the detail so intense they seemed to speak to you

Low soft voices in the thread.

and the long miraculous hair of St Agnes swirling around them, each strand separate and fine

We hear it like a vine, twirling and winding and whirling and curling.

winding around the wings of the angels, twirling through the gentle fingers of Christ, reaching out into the room and dancing around her body

She laughs as the strands wind round her.

gold thread on silk threads, gold in a thousand different shades, from the dark red of a dying fire to the pale yellow of an autumn forest,

We hear strands whirling in the air, some hot like fire and others cold as ice.

the colours blending to create an unearthly luminance, an almost mystical radiance.

A total, luminous angelic hum.

Once a day, she would feel the Bishop’s boy at her shoulder, watching over her.

We go very close on her and we hear his breath against her cheek.

Although he said nothing, Angelique knew from his silence that he loved her. And as each day passed, she knew that she loved him too.

A procession. Celebratory religious music. Cheering crowds.

DIDI (VO) On the day of the Procession, the crowds line the streets to watch the boys and girls of the town, the priests and heads of the charities, make their way towards the Cathedral. At the head, the Bishop, wearing a mitre so intricate, so luminous that the crowd are captivated.

ANGELIQUE Look, mama.

HUBERTINE It’s very beautiful, Angelique.

ANGELIQUE No, I meant, look - there’s Felicien.

HUBERTINE Oh yes, so it is.

Cheering crowds.

ANGELIQUE Mama?

HUBERTINE Yes, my darling?

ANGELIQUE I’m going to marry him.

HUBERTINE What do you mean, Angelique?

ANGELIQUE Don’t be cross, mama.

HUBERTINE Of course, I’m not cross, but what do you mean?

ANGELIQUE Felicien came to me and asked me to marry him.

HUBERTINE Don’t be silly, Angelique.

ANGELIQUE I’m not.

HUBERTINE When?

ANGELIQUE A week ago.

HUBERTINE Where?

ANGELIQUE In my room.

HUBERTINE Now I know you’re being silly.

ANGELIQUE No I’m not.

HUBERTINE Angelique, you know perfectly well, Felicien has never visited the house.

Crowd sounds distort.

ANGELIQUE Yes he has.

HUBERTINE No he hasn’t. The Bishop doesn’t let him beyond the Cathedral grounds.

ANGELIQUE He comes to us every day to inspect the work.

HUBERTINE No he doesn’t, darling. I don’t know if this is a little game of yours –

ANGELIQUE He does! He comes to the house!

HUBERTINE Angelique, stop this now.

ANGELIQUE And I’m going to marry him so you better get used to it.

HUBERTINE Angelique, I’m taking you to see the nurse tomorrow morning.

ANGELIQUE Why? There’s nothing wrong with me.

HUBERTINE You’ve never shaken off that fever. Look at you, you’re burning up.

Crowd sounds warping, receding.

ANGELIQUE Aren’t you happy for me, mama?

HUBERTINE Stop this. Stop this right now.

ANGELIQUE But mama –

HUBERTINE You’re scaring me.

ANGELIQUE It’s nothing to be scared of. It’s a miracle that’s all.

HUBERTINE Oh Angelique...

ANGELIQUE You told me love was an illusion. But it isn’t. It’s really happened. Felicien, the Bishop’s boy, loves me. Love is a miracle, mama.

HUBERTINE (breaking down) Miracles don’t happen. Not any more. Not ever. This is the world we have.

ANGELIQUE No mama, you must believe. Miracles do happen. The world is a miracle. All around us; these crowds are a miracle, that tree is a miracle, this flower is a miracle, my love is a miracle.

HUBERTINE is crying now.

HUBERTINE Please. Please stop.

ANGELIQUE Don’t cry, mama. It’s happy. I’m happy. I’ll always be happy.

Bedroom. Thick atmosphere. Heat and sweat. Fetid. We are with ANGELIQUE throughout this scene, subjectively. We hear her breaths very close, the bed movements, her heart even. She sounds feverish and weak.

DIDI (VO) Angelique.

ANGELIQUE Didi, is that you?

DIDI (VO) It’s me.

ANGELIQUE What’s happening? Why is mama crying?

DIDI (VO) She’s crying because she loves you.

ANGELIQUE Tell her she doesn’t need to cry. Tell her Felicien will make me very happy.

DIDI (VO) Love is making you ill.

ANGELIQUE Tell her, she must only love another to make herself the vessel of the Lord.

DIDI (VO) I’m not going to tell her that, dear girl.

ANGELIQUE I’m lucky. I’m filled with the love of God.

DIDI (VO) You are filled with fever, Angelique.

They sound distant, muffled:

HUBERTINE How is she?

NURSE It’s very serious..

HUBERTINE Can we do anything for her?

NURSE It’s not just the fever, it’s something deeper. It’s in her blood.

HUBERTINE What do you mean?

NURSE Mrs Dulaque, you must prepare yourself. This is not a fever. This child is dying.

In the depths.

ANGELIQUE What did she say?

DIDI (VO) Nothing, don’t trouble yourself.

ANGELIQUE Who’s dying?

DIDI (VO) No one, my love. Get some rest.

ANGELIQUE Ah there he is.

DIDI (VO) Who?

ANGELIQUE My love. My true love.

DIDI (VO) Where do you see him?

ANGELIQUE He’s standing over me, looking after me.

Shimmering sound.

DIDI (VO) Poor girl, poor sweet girl.

Distant.

HUBERTINE Is there nothing we can do?

NURSE Make her comfortable. Keep her temperature down.

ANGELIQUE What’s the matter, mama?

HUBERTINE (through tears) I can’t bear to lose you, my darling.

ANGELIQUE Don’t be sad, mama. I’ll come back and see you when I’m married.

HUBERTINE (crying) My sweet love, my darling precious girl.

DIDI (VO) That evening, the Bishop himself comes to see her and gravely he anoints her forehead with oil and closes her eyes.

Intensify the atmosphere, the chanting, the heat, HUBERTINE’s tears, the Bishop’s Latin.

To Angelique, he is merely giving his blessing to her forthcoming nuptials.

ANGELIQUE Thank you, Father, I promise to make your son happy.

And then open it out. From inside to out, from heat to cold, from intensity to calm. We are in the frozen streets of Beaumont. We hear the sound of a church organ and a congregation inside the Church.

DIDI (VO) (brightly) The next day is Angelique’s wedding day! All of Beaumont has turned out. There are flags tied to the streetlamps and everyone is in their very best.

ANGELIQUE This is the most important day in every girl’s life -

DIDI (VO) - she thinks. And in her beautiful nightshirt and with exquisite cloth slippers on her feet she makes her way out into the cold.

ANGELIQUE It’s a good thing I live right next to the Cathedral.

DIDI (VO) - she thinks, slipping a little in the snow.

ANGELIQUE It’s cold on my skin and yet my head is burning with love.

DIDI (VO) She falls in the snow and weakly manages to lift herself up.

ANGELIQUE It would have been nice to have a father to give me away.

DIDI (VO) - she thinks.

ANGELIQUE But perhaps it is better this way. I give myself to Felicien as I have given myself to Christ.

DIDI (VO) At last, she reaches the Cathedral door.

We hear the organ, singing from within. The wind picks up, snow is swirling.

ANGELIQUE When do I enter? That’s funny.

HUBERTINE (distant, screaming, from a window) Angelique!

ANGELIQUE We really should have had a rehearsal. I don’t want to go in too early.

HUBERTINE (screaming) What are you doing?

ANGELIQUE But then I don’t want to be too late.

HUBERTINE (screaming) Come back inside!

ANGELIQUE Although I know that Felicien will love me whenever I come to him.

We hear a distant door opening, footsteps in the snow.

ANGELIQUE Should I knock?

HUBERTINE (approaching) Please, my daughter, my girl, my darling!

ANGELIQUE But I can hardly feel my hands.

HUBERTINE (approaching) Come to me!

ANGELIQUE Or my legs.

Beat.

What’s wrong with my legs?

A wrack of pain. ANGELIQUE sinks to her knees.

DIDI (VO) Dreams are not fantasies.

ANGELIQUE (murmur) Help me. (Yells) Help me!

DIDI (VO) Dreams are survival.

HUBERTINE I’m here. It’s me. Your mother.

ANGELIQUE Mama?

DIDI (VO) You poor girl. You poor, poor girl.

HUBERTINE Please! Help us!

She opens the Cathedral door. The sound of the organ and the singing blasts out.

ANGELIQUE Mama, it’s my wedding day. You came.

HUBERTINE Someone help us!

The music falters and stops.

DIDI (VO) If you pray for something hard enough.

People emerge from the Cathedral.

HUBERTINE (semi-audibly) It’s my daughter. She’s dying.

DIDI (VO) It shall be given.

ANGELIQUE Where is he? Where are you my love?

DIDI (VO) And through her watery gaze, she sees him. Felicien. Her love. Looking down at her.

ANGELIQUE (now entirely in her head) I will always be with you. I give myself to you. Come take me with a kiss.

DIDI (VO) And she reaches out to touch her love but her poor fingers grasp only air.

ANGELIQUE Felicien...

DIDI (VO) Angelique’s eyes grow pale and are now still. Her lips whiten as her little heart slows and slows. The snow falls around her until she seems to fade into it, her pale face lost in the white, the first girl of my family whose heart is stopped by love and not the last, no not the last. But above her the door groans, and the great cathedral, with its heavy mournful bell, sighs for a soul lost and around her the streets of Beaumont, and beyond that the factories, knowing nothing of this girl, burning in their hearts, breathe songs of smoke and sadness from their tall chimneys out into the empty sky.

THE END