

Maleficarum: The Radio Play

Scene 1: Exoneration Case

(The Press and News Reporters frantically asking questions about the upcoming case)

Defence: All rise for the honourable Judge Kovalski.

(Chairs shuffling, people standing up)

Judge: Today, the 16th March 2020, we reopen the case of “Hagerstow vs Lady Margaret Goldwell. Goldwell was convicted of Witchcraft and 1st Degree Murder on two counts on the 23rd of September 1611. The Court of Appeal exerts its powers under the Criminal Appeal Act of 1995 to re-trial this event.

Defence: I present to you the new evidence provided by the Smith family.

Judge: Annie Smith and Grace Smith's diary from 1611 has been brought to the attention of the court. The named were aged 10 when they recounted the proceedings of the trial. This document meets a new threshold of evidence.

Defence: In these proceedings the Smith family of Hagerstow, bring forth evidence that the children, in 1611, shed a new light on the unlawful proceedings that took place.

(Beat)

There seems to be a miscarriage of justice that points towards the wrongful conviction of the defendant. The Smith family seek judicial review of the Criminal Case of Lady Margaret Goldwell.

Scene 2: Introduction to Hagerstow

(‘Miserere’ and ‘Summer is Icumen in’ playing in the background)

Annie: We were always told that the end of our village was the end of the world. If you managed to walk that far, you would drop straight down and fall into the great unknown. But my sister and I know that’s not true. It’s a fairy-tale we were told to scare us. Because we ran there. And we didn’t fall off.

Grace: We ran through the wide fields that villagers harvest every August. Through the forest, of winding arms and tangling trees, that used to scare us. But we aren’t scared anymore. We’ve mapped every twist and turn of the dirt track roads and every bump in the stone cottages. We raced along the riverbanks, which snake through all of Hagerstow. From the village green where we dance around the Maypole each spring, to the Goldwell’s big, white castle, which reaches the clouds where giants rule the land.

Annie: We know we are right, that Hagerstow is not the edge because Margaret is from the end of the world. A delicate spring bloom that blessed us on May Day. She was as gentle as the breeze, decorated with fine lace. That’s what Lord Goldwell said on the Village Green.

Grace: She seemed to glow, lighting up the village with her presence. Everything was golden.

Annie: And then the light went out.

(The music begins to distort)

Grace: The village darkened, and the beasts appeared.

Annie: The madness came, and the world got darker.

(The Mob whispers to each other, sharing rumours ‘Village’ theme fades into the opening drumbeats of the miserere):

I hear that she killed a child in her previous village

I hear she bewitched the lord into marrying her

Someone told me that she will try and kidnap our children

I saw her casting spells in the woods near my house

I knew from the minute she entered this village she would bring trouble

I've seen her talking with the devil

I heard her uttering strange chants when I was at her house

(Drum roll fades into a low drone, on Margaret's entrance her motif is played)

Grace: Hagerstow has lost its sunshine. We are swallowed by the fog and it's almost impossible to see our village as it once was. The flowers are dying, the green is gone, but no one else notices.

Annie: A secluded corner has appeared in the woods that is unknown. It is big and dark and everything echoes, we are surrounded, it is no longer safe. The branches are climbing higher and higher, wrapping around one another, caving us into their lair.

Grace: Our home has changed; the fields are empty and grey and look like they've never been played in. The breeze is icy, and it feels like winter.

Annie: Our village is now full of cruel strangers. They swarm in together, walking in a pack, hunting down their prey. Nobody notices us anymore, they are staring at the Magistrate, who towers above our village, peering over us all.

Grace: The wood creaks as the door opens, and as Margaret walks in, the room silences. All we can hear are footsteps. The pit of our stomach is filled with fear, the nausea makes our skin prickle, as if something is about to jump out and take Margaret.

Annie: Her dress is as blue as the sky at dawn, decorated with lace which suffocates her wrists and neck. Yet, her face still glows among the darkness, her flesh white and lifeless. The pack tracks her every move, and carefully follows each step until she reaches the Magistrate, an evil spirit, who casts his shadow over her.

(Bell toll - tritone. Fade to silence)

Scene 3: Opening of the trial

(Courtroom murmurings)

(Gavel sound interrupts the murmurs)

Magistrate: In the year of Our Lord 1611 on the 22nd day of September, to the ears of the people of Hagerstow, came a persistent public report and rumour that Lady Margaret Goldwell did get involved in black magic savouring of witchcraft. This is against the faith and the common good of the State.

(Beat)

It is expedient to proceed with great caution in the trial of a grave crime, that no error may be committed in imposing upon the guilty, a deservedly severe punishment.

Margaret: Your honour, I am innocent of the charges that are laid against me. I know not of witches.

Magistrate: If you know not of witches, how can you be sure that you are not one.

Margaret: If I were, I would know it. I am sure your honour, the charges against me are false.

Magistrate: The honourable people of Hagerstow are indeed 'liars' one presumes then?

(Villagers gasp and upset at "liars")

Margaret: I do not suggest that these people lie Sir, but their claims are misguided.

Magistrate: Our village has seldom dealt with the likes of witchcraft, yet it seems we are now beset with evil.

(Villagers vocal agreement and muttering; "here here", "It's her")

Margaret: I beg that you listen to me your honour, I have done nothing to harm this village or the people that reside here. Since the day I arrived, I have been labeled as an outsider to the people of Hagerstow. I have tried my hardest to bring goodness yet have become the village jester for everyone to mock.

Magistrate: An interesting place to commence the proceedings Lady Goldwell, your arrival... You were brought into this village due to your marriage with Lord Henry Goldwell, is that true?

Margaret: It is. However-

Magistrate: And you were married on May Day of last year.

Margaret: Yes, we were-

Magistrate: Let us cast our mind back to that day.

Scene 4: Maypole

(Drumming music)

Annie: Today was a special day. Mother made us wash our faces twice and we had to wear our best dresses.

Grace: She braided our hair and wove daisies between each stitch, and we felt like the finest fairies of the Spring.

Annie: The village looked beautiful, the blooming daffodil trumpets and the bells of blue surrounded the village green, all looking towards the Maypole that stood as tall and strong as a giant. The colourful ribbons floating down from its head swayed and tangled in the breeze.

Grace: We ran amongst the flowers, brushing the long grass with our fingertips, adventuring toward the towering giant, preparing for our attack.

Annie: The Villagers seemed to be in high spirits, as they fluttered around like bees in the spring, surrounding the maypole ready to celebrate the wedding of Henry Goldwell and Margaret Norwood.

Grace: We couldn't wait to circle and play with the Maypole, it was our favourite game. We don't tell anyone but every year we love wrapping the ribbons together, we tie them in knots and bows, but mother doesn't like this game.

Margaret as Narrator: Henry, my groom, was delayed readying himself for the day's celebrations, so I decided to entertain myself and look at the preparations for the May Day festivities. I observed Annie and Grace entwining themselves in the ribbons, circling the Maypole as they did so. I saw in them pure joy, finding this mischievous act the most exhilarating past time. Annie had a glint in her eye. It was inviting to watch, had I been a little younger and not disquieted by what the village may perceive, I would have been tempted to join in. How I wish I did now.

(Girls giggling, the sound of birds)

Edith: *(shouting)* Oi! Girls!

Margaret as Narrator: I observed Edith and the girls. Edith, a woman so loving, but even I would be wary to disobey, repeatedly tried to control the girls, but they were utterly enamoured with the grandeur of the Maypole. They continued to weave themselves within it, creating a lattice of red, yellows and greens, with their little faces popping up for air every so often.

Edith: Girls! Get here, now! Right now! What did I tell you? Hey? What did I say?

Annie: We must behave?

Grace: Not to tie the ribbons up?

Edith: And what have you done? You've done just that! I don't like scolding you girls, but we must behave on days like this. This is Lord Goldwell's celebration. It's May Day not, "Annie and Grace be unruly, tying knots in every single ribbon on the Maypole, day," is it? Now go and find your sister.

Mabel: *(under her breath)* Annie. Grace. Lady Florence is coming, drop those now.

(Sudden silence - music stops)

Margaret as Narrator: I have never known an atmosphere to change so drastically by the entrance of just one person, as it did when Florence arrived on the green. The twins' childlike joy vanished at her sight.

Florence: This is unacceptable. Are you not capable of controlling your own children?

Edith: Girls, come here now! I do apologise milady, many congratulations. Mabel please escort your sisters elsewhere and keep them occupied. They have been very 'defiant' this morning, they could drive bees from their nest.

Florence: Hmm... Cecily. The Maypole.

Edith: Here, let me help you.

Cecily: Thank you Edith.

Edith: I'm so sorry, those two have a mind of their own.

Cecily: Don't worry yourself Edith, it's my pleasure. I'm glad of a break from Florence. *(under breath)* That shrill-tongued ox head.

Edith: Eeeee. Cecily pipe down lass.

Cecily: Oh I could say much worse Edith, believe me.

(Everyone starts singing 'Bonny Hawthorne' accompanied by the violin whilst Margaret is talking)

Margaret as Narrator: Everybody watched eagerly, as Edith and Cecily quickly untangled the red, yellow and green ribbons. I saw them laughing together and was curious to know what they found so amusing. As soon as Cecily had untied the last knot, everyone raced to their places, ready for the dance to begin.

(Bonny Hawthorne begins to play)

Margaret as Narrator: Everyone knew exactly where to start, as if they were soldiers acting on the commands of their sergeant and I was always one step behind.

(from a distance)

Annie: Mabel, will you help me?

Mabel: Quiet Annie, just watch what everyone else does.

Margaret as Narrator: They began to tap their feet in time, the precision of each movement was remarkable. They galloped and circled the Maypole and one another, a mesmerizing procession worshipping the Maypole.

(Henry Motif)

Henry: Well done Mabel, you no longer stumble and giggle around the Maypole like a child, you are the embodiment of elegance.

(Beat)

Your dress, it's a splendid colour, but it is worn and ragged, you deserve something fitting for the young lady you are becoming. I have reels of fabric. I can get you fitted into something wonderful. There is much to spare, and I am sure Margaret would not mind sharing.

Margaret as Narrator: I could see Henry at the other side of the Maypole, to watch him dance was a pleasure. It was the only place he would let himself go, and I admired him for that. Then I saw Mabel, a fine young girl; but I could tell something was untoward between them. Her tightly braided hair, loosened as she galloped hand in hand with the rest of Hagerstow. Her mother must have braided it for her and I couldn't help but wish my mother had done the same for me. My wedding day. Henry brushed a strand of her auburn locks back behind her ear. I knew I was entering a battle I could not win.

Mabel: That is awfully kind sir, but really it is no trouble.

Henry: My pleasure Mabel, I do hope you'll accept my offer.

Margaret as Narrator: The congregation circled each other, moving as an entity. The sound of their claps echoed on the green and became faster within each movement. They stopped and admired what they had created. A web. The colours of the tattered ribbon blended with one another to create a colourful dome that hung over everyone. If one of them let go, the whole structure would fall. A singular ribbon would compromise everything that had been created. Almost as swiftly as the web was built, it was destroyed. They never broke formation until the final ribbon was released. They threw their ribbons as a final gesture, and the ritual was done.

(Claps getting faster, building a sense of uneasiness. Faint singing in the background and muffled laughter/chatter)

Scene 5: Henry discussing their first meeting

Magistrate: I invite our first witness, Lord Henry Goldwell to take the stand.

(Henry music motif)

Magistrate: Lord Goldwell, can you confirm that the accused is your wife?

Henry: Yes, your honour.

Magistrate: What was your impression of Margaret when you first made acquaintance?

(Flashback out of the court incl. music)

Henry: When I first laid eyes on her I was drawn to her purity, everything about her was exquisite. Her eyes were so enticing, the piercing green encapsulated me, lured me in. I was in no doubt that her body would be an exemplary vessel to carry my child. Every man lusted over her beauty, mesmerized by her charm. Her voice hypnotised every man around her. I fought for her affection, eager to win the prize.

Margaret: Thank you Lord Goldwell, my name is Margaret Norwood.

Henry: She exuded grace, a woman the Goldwell's would be proud to welcome. I asked her to take the air with me and she obediently obliged.

Margaret: If you wish Lord Goldwell, however, I haven't much time.

Magistrate: Lord Goldwell, your relationship seems like that of a fairytale, but I am struggling to see the relevance for the case.

Henry: Your honour if I may address our wedding. I knew something was untoward when her family was not present on the day of our marriage. She refused to wear our family necklace, a tradition for all Goldwell women to heed on one's wedding day. This was an insolent act that offended my family, especially my sister, Florence.

Magistrate: Thank you Lord Goldwell, for now if you would please return to the gallery. I wish to call the second witness.

Scene 6: Florence takes the stand

(Florence Motif)

Grace: Lady Florence. A gliding, wraithlike dark creature, considered to be one of the foulest to inhabit Hagerstow. She feeds on human happiness, any person in close proximity to her is filled with despair and worry, as we were that day.

Annie: Her gown was a deep purple, almost black colour. It sat stiff on her harsh body. From a distance the dress appeared plain, but up close you could see the scaly details that would occasionally glimmer, as it caught the light.

Grace: Mother told us the story of the Hagerstow serpent, who would feast on little girls in the dead of night.

Annie: Mother said the serpent can travel anywhere, manipulating its body like a shapeshifter, to blend in with the rest of us. But the river is its home, the monster is always ready to lunge out of the water and drag in its prey.

Grace: We could sense that the serpent was in the room with us, we shuffled closer to mother, taking shelter under her strong wing.

Magistrate: Lady Florence Goldwell, please take to the stand. Lady Florence Goldwell, you have been called to the stand to give evidence against Margaret Goldwell, your brother's wife.

Florence: Yes, your honour, I will do so gladly.

Magistrate: Do you agree that Lady Margaret failed to perform her duties as the Lady of this village?

Florence: I do. Margaret openly defied the responsibilities that she acceded when she wed Henry. She had never intended to fulfil her duties as a wife. Margaret manipulated and entranced Henry, he was deceived and would not have married her had he known of her turpitude. Yet her "charm" did not fool me. Had I met her prior to Henry's proposal, I would have insisted against the marriage. Had I been able to do so, then the horrors that have plagued this village since her arrival would have been prevented.

Magistrate: You are therefore stating that the tragedies of Hagerstow have been the working of the accused?

Florence: This demon woman has caused every last one of the awful events that have happened to our village in the past eight months. It is impossible to decipher how the devil thinks. I cannot bring myself to try and see through her eyes, I am incapable of such a thing.

Margaret: Florence, this is absurd. Listen to what you are saying.

Magistrate: Lady Florence, how might Lady Margaret orchestrate such evil plans?

Florence: Put simply, she is a witch.

(The mob in the court fly into disarray, shouting out as they are terrified of the word witch)

Margaret: Florence! I have never done anything of the sort. I am an honest woman, a kind woman who has tried to conform to the rituals and expectations of Hagerstow, but you have been nothing but uncivil in response. I am a woman who knows her own mind, and that terrifies you, does it not?

(Gavel Sound)

Magistrate: Lady Margaret, please stand. Do you harbour ill feelings towards Lady Florence?

Margaret: Our relationship is complicated. I have the utmost respect for her, yet I have not in any way received this in return. I would never wish her any harm.

Magistrate: She is a well-respected woman, her moral stature is admirable, and she is a pillar of this community.

Margaret: I do not deny that she-

Magistrate: Unlike Lady Florence, you failed to follow the expectations and responsibilities bestowed upon you when you married into the Goldwell family.

Margaret: Too much is expected of me; repeatedly, I am likened to Florence. We are required to look and dress alike, speak the same, act with dexterity, yet we are different women.

Scene 7: Flashback with Florence and Margaret

(Sound effects of a light breeze and birds, signifying flashback)

Cecily: You cannot be in the garden today girls, it's the day of Lord Goldwell's wedding! Now be off with you!

Annie: We know that we are not allowed in the Goldwell's garden, but no one else notices us, as we slip through the bushes and flowerbeds, except Cecily, who usually ushers us in with a wink and a knowing smile we long to see.

Grace: We could not help sneaking in today, it is Henry's wedding day, and we are eager to see his bride. We have heard stories of how beautiful she is. It was said that even in the darkest night, Margaret could light up a room with her eyes.

Annie: And it was true. We gazed through the windowpane. Margaret sat brushing her rich dark hair that ran like the river, waving with every stroke, just as our mother brushes our hair every night. She was an angel among us humans.

Grace: Her radiance shone through the windowpane, but then a shadow appeared, dulling the brightness of her light. The serpent slithered towards her. We feared for Margaret, but we ran, not wanting to be smothered by the darkness.

Florence: Here, let me help you.

Margaret: Oh thank you. I can never seem to fully understand how people lace these corsets so easily. A lending hand is always needed. Is it not true that as women we must look out for one another?

Florence: Of course, it is no trouble. Naturally, you won't be accustomed to finer things like these. But you will soon learn. We all have to learn. And in future ask Cecily, you may dress yourself with ease with her help.

Margaret: Thank you Ms Flore-

(Margaret gasps)

Florence: Oh, was that too tight for you?

Margaret: Not at all, Ms Florence. Just a little unexpected.

Scene 8: Margaret and Cecily

(Hear leaves rustling and birds singing- sounds of summer)

Annie: Grace and I were playing on the Green when Margaret appeared before us. We always ask mother to let us play in the early morning because Margaret's here; she loves the Green, the same as we do.

Grace: She marvelled at the flowers, touching the bluebells and daisies, feeling the delicate petals in her fingertips. They were so fragile and could easily be destroyed, but Margaret was so gentle, she would never harm anything.

Annie: She picked a daisy and brought it to her nose, so we did the same. It did not smell as fine as Margaret made it look, but we did not mind.

Grace: Our sister Mabel watched us, but she was preoccupied with something.

Annie: Her attention lay solely on Margaret, yet there was no admiration for her, it was something more sinister, we didn't understand. There was no joy and wonder in Mabel's face, instead displeasement, her eyes like hawks, tracing Margaret's every move. This was our opportunity to be a bit mischievous.

Grace: We ignored Mabel and decided to approach Margaret. We were shy to hand her the daisy, but she accepted graciously. She glided the stem through her wavy locks, placing it just above her left ear. It sat beautifully against her dainty face.

Margaret: Oh girls, what a kind thought. Don't you think that daisies are the most beautiful flowers, my dear mother always told me, if you put a daisy under your pillow, you will become more and more beautiful each day. Their beauty is unlike anything godly within this world (*whispers*), and I do it every night to this day.

Mabel: (*sighs*) Girls do not listen to her, she is full of lies. Now let us get home, Mother will be waiting.

(Hear the twins giggle in the distance as they run away.)

Cecily: Oh Margaret, listen to you putting ideas into those girl's heads. They adore you miss, as does the entire village, your future children will be so lucky to have you as a Mother. Miss Margaret, I have something to tell you. I am with child, I met with Edith Smith and she confirmed my suspicions.

(Beat)

Margaret: I see.

Cecily: Are you not pleased for me, Miss Margaret? Isn't this exciting? I am going to be a Mother.

Margaret: Of course, I am Cecily, however, do you not worry what Hagerstow may say. You are an unmarried woman with no family to support you. You know how the villagers treated me, does that not concern you?

Cecily: I do not care for rumours, Miss. You know that. I am the lowest of the low, I always have been. I have never had anything of my own, but with this child, I do. And anyway, think how lovely it will be to see our children playing on the Green, just as Annie and Grace do.

(Margaret cries)

Cecily: Miss what's wrong? This is happy news!

Margaret: Cecily, you cannot tell anyone what I am about to confide in you, especially not Florence. Can you promise me that?

Cecily: Of course, Miss, you can tell me anything. We are like sisters, are we not. Yet, I got the good looks and, well you're just rich.

(They both laugh at Cecily)

Margaret: Very well, you are a good friend Cecily. The truth is *(Beat)* I am struggling to conceive. No matter how hard Henry and I have tried, everything month I still bleed. I am worried about what the family may say if I am not with child soon. You understand the position this places me in. They depend on me, and that is troubling. There is much pressure and it only makes one more prudent.

Cecily: I am so sorry Miss, you should have told me this sooner. You do not have to go through this pain alone. Let us pay a visit to Edith, she is the most caring Mother I know, and I am sure she'd be more than happy to help. She is knowledgeable on matters of child rearing and conception, she may be able to provide "remedies" to help you.

Margaret: Cecily you must not speak of this to anyone, but I fear it is not me that is preventing conception, I believe it is Henry.

Cecily: If this is so Miss, then we will have to ask for a remedy for the Lord also.

Margaret: I think that would be the best.

(Beat)

Margaret: I apologise Cecily, truly I am happy for you. I shall make a doll for your child, a gift, to bless the birth and bring joy to you both.

Scene 9: Edith's flashback

(Gavel sound)

Magistrate: Ms Smith, you are aware of the accusations against Lady Margaret, how do you find them?

Edith: They are a load of hogwash.

Magistrate: I beg your pardon.

Edith: My apologies, your honour, let me rephrase that. They are twaddle, Balderdash, Poppycock, drivel, tom foolery. Do you understand what I'm saying?

Magistrate: Yes, I understand, please refrain from such boldness within the court, it is not becoming of a lady.

Edith: Lady! Ha! Get a load of him, Lady. Stop it. You'll have me rolling in the stand if you aren't careful. Eeeeeee Cecily did you hear that? Lady!

(Laughing from the Courtroom)

Magistrate: Ms Smith, I will only ask you once more. Please abstain from further disruption to the proceedings. Is it correct that you were visited by Lady Margaret and Cecily Wilson on numerous occasions?

Edith: Yes, they visited me several times following Margaret's wedding day, I'd like to consider Margaret a dear friend. She was different to the rest of the Goldwell's and I admired her for that.

Magistrate: I see. And what was the reasoning behind your "meetings"?

Edith: *(sarcasm)* Oh well of course I was teaching her the dark spells of the devil. We are a coven us three, three little cackling witches, coming to curse all of you men and eat you in the night. Chopping off your members to make pies. *(Laughs at herself)* I jest, I jest.

Magistrate: *(sternly)* Ms Smith.

Edith: I do apologise, but we must engage in laughter in situations as preposterous as these. I was advising Margaret on some simple ways to aid her in her desire for a child.

Magistrate: Please elaborate.

Edith: Well your honour, the couple were struggling to conceive. Margaret appeared at my door, distressed. I invited her in, gave her some advice, however, most of all, I listened to her. Which is more than I can say for most people within this court. I gave her an amulet containing hawthorn to ward off any evil that loomed over their marriage. I suggested that she take hot baths to warm her body, she was too cold to conceive. I also gave Margaret some Mandrake, that may aid the man with any "issues" he may be having within the bedchamber. They were merely suggestions, nothing more.

Henry: See, they are witches! They have been conspiring against my family and I all this time! The devil is more powerful than man, and a man can obstruct the generative powers by means of frigid herbs or anything else that can be thought of, therefore much more can the devil do this, since he has a greater knowledge and cunning. The power of the devil is stronger than any human power.

Magistrate: Silence please. Lord Goldwell, please refrain from interruption. You have had your time on the stand, let Ms Smith finish.

Edith: It takes both a man and a woman to produce a child. How do you know it's not Lord Goldwell? I have tried to enable the couple in their desire for a child, yet Lord Goldwell refused to use the Mandrake I provided. So, to me that suggests he's the one to blame.

Scene 10: Accusations of Infertility

Magistrate: Order, order in the court!

Henry: How dare you, you insolent peasant! How dare you suggest such a thing! To speak of someone like myself in that nature. I will not stand to be accused by such a lowly woman, you have no knowledge of such Godly matters. Only men have the capabilities to understand the body and its medicine. My poisonous wife has clearly infected you, you poor wretch. She will stop at nothing to shift the blame.

Margaret: You are despicable, it grieves me that you are the Lord of this village, yet you accuse every woman in your parameter when you are faced with any problem. Why can you not take responsibility that you may be the person to blame in this situation.

Henry: You have disgraced my family; you try to belittle and undermine my sister and I, yet I will not succumb to your ridicule.

Florence: Witch! Every word that leaves your mouth is tainted with wickedness, no one in this village believes your lies!

(Gavel)

Magistrate: Order! Lord Goldwell, take the stand if you have something to contribute.

You talk of your wife failing to meet your expectations. As has been addressed, Lady Margaret is unable to conceive. I trust that before you were married, you had her see a doctor, to ensure that she was fit to serve you as a wife.

Henry- Yes of course. She had been vetted, guaranteed immaculate by the admirable village Doctor, he told me she was the very definition of the word innocent, the doctor assured me that Margaret had never had another lover.

Magistrate: And you did this before the wedding?

Henry: The number one rule before the appearance or the breeding of a potential spouse, was that she be a virgin first and foremost.

Magistrate: And it was checked that she would be able to conceive a child?

Henry: Of course. I was assured that my future wife would be able to provide me with the heir I need.

Magistrate: And yet she cannot?

Henry: No, she somehow was able to manipulate the Doctor, twisting the results so that she would be able to marry me. She was ineligible, damaged goods.

Margaret was extremely jealous that our maid could fall pregnant with such ease when she could not. Yet more humiliation for my name. It pains me to talk about this.

Magistrate: Lord Goldwell, I understand you are grieved by this, yet it is vital we hear Miss Wilson speak.

I invite Miss Cecily Wilson to the stand.

Scene 11: Miscarriage

Magistrate: Miss Wilson, as maid to the Goldwells, you are well versed in the happenings of their family. How do you find Lord Goldwell's statement?

Cecily: Your Honour, Hagerstow has been somewhat peculiar since the wedding, yet I do not believe that Margaret is the cause of these happenings. I do not see how one woman can cause so much trouble. She is a dear friend, and has been nothing but kind to us all, she cares about the grievances that others seem to forget.

Henry: Margaret was overcome with evil and jealousy that you could have a child and she could not. She used whatever dark magic she had to take your child from you.

Cecily: Margaret and I are as close as sisters, we spend every waking moment together, she would never do anything of the sort. What happened was a tragedy, no one is to blame.

(Cecily's Lullaby begins to play)

Magistrate: Miss Wilson, I am sorry to ask you this, are you able to talk us through the loss of your child?

Cecily: *(hesitant)* Your honour, I have not confronted the memories of that dark time, I do not know if I have the courage to do so in front of all these people.

Magistrate: Miss Wilson, I wish this were not so, alas, your account is pertinent to the case. Please tell the court about when you discovered you were pregnant.

Cecily: Very well...

(Beat)

I knew what would lie ahead of me, yet I was not prepared. My stomach began to swell quickly, maybe it was because I accepted my fate with open arms. The little blessing inside of me knew it was now acceptable to give me a visual sign, that these instincts were right. *(Beat)* I was shocked at first, yet never upset. I knew for the first time that it felt right, we would meet soon enough, and love each other unconditionally. I have never had a real family that was full of love.

As my stomach continued to grow, in the periphery of the values of the village, I began to be showered with pity. An unmarried woman with a child growing inside of

her. I did not want their pity, they were blinded by their ill judgement, I was happy, and they could not see that.

In the brief few months that I had with my child, I felt complete. I knew the true purpose of why I was put on this earth by God, to nurture and cherish the little cherub inside me. A fire had sparked within me.

(Pause/deep breath)

Then I started to feel pain. It worsened and tortured me as I rejected it and tried to carry on. I felt my body changing and distorting from the inside. I had dreamt of black crows circling a casket on the village green, the flowers black and dead beneath it and I cried onto it, feeling as if I had lost something that I did not even know. The casket was buried underneath the green and the ground blackened beneath my feet, as it was covered by the village. The spark flickered and died, and I could no longer see colour. The fire had been extinguished.

The night seemed to black from that point. I felt like a shell of a woman, my womb was now empty, and my heart was drained of the blessing of meeting my child.

My body had betrayed me.

(A significant moment of silence)

Magistrate: I appreciate how difficult this must have been Miss Wilson. I am sincerely grateful that you shared this with the court today.

(Beat)

It is interesting to hear of your close relationship with the accused, however, you will appreciate that due to your position within the household, and Lady Goldwell's status within Hagerstow, it is difficult to comprehend.

Cecily: Margaret is unlike the rest of the Goldwell's, she is kind, of a gentle nature, she is full of compassion. She never strained to aid me and the child, she gave us shelter and warmth, she made me the most beautiful doll for my child to keep. I will treasure it until my last day on this earth.

Magistrate: She gave you a hand-crafted doll?

Henry: A poppet? You know what that means do you not Cecily?

Cecily: Pardon?

Henry: The poppet had the likeness of you Cecily, did it not?

Cecily: I suppose. I had not thought about that.

Henry: Your honour, she constructed this poppet from bark in order to harm the child, out of pure jealousy. She was desperate for a child, to do this she had to sacrifice a pure soul, Cecily's unborn baby. I am well versed in the matters of witchcraft, I am a personal friend to King James the First himself, we have had many a conversation on the treachery of these vile acts. Margaret was jealous of you, Cecily. There is no doubt about it.

(Courtroom whispers)

Cecily: *(Quietly)* I know that she has acted out of jealousy before.

Magistrate: Miss Wilson?

Cecily: *(To Margaret)* How could you do this to me?

Margaret: Cecily, please! You know that is not true, why would I?

Cecily: It's true what Lord Goldwell says, it all makes sense.

You were jealous because you could not conceive a child of your own. You thought if you couldn't have a child, then nobody else could. The doll was your means of ensuring this. You created it to harm me and my child because of your overwhelming jealousy.

Margaret: The doll was an act of kindness Cecily, do not succumb to their lies, do you not see?

Cecily: This is not the first time your jealousy has overwhelmed you.

Magistrate: Miss Wilson, please elaborate?

Cecily: Margaret was an inadequate wife, failing to provide Lord Goldwell with an heir. He began to seek gratification elsewhere. He was unhappy and found "alternate" means for producing an heir. He began meeting a young girl from Hagerstow, named Mabel.

(Courtroom gasp in shock about Mabel)

Cecily: She would walk by the house; upon seeing her, Margaret's body would stiffen, her eyes glaring coldly at her. It was one of her only secrets she would not

discuss with me and I now know why. Mabel was youthful and provided Henry with the happiness missing from his relationship with Margaret. I had often seen Mabel entering the house, and assumed that they were having relations, but I could never be certain of what was happening. Then I overheard Annie and Grace talking about their sister and Henry, and it confirmed my suspicions.

Annie: I saw Mabel out before it was light, mother wouldn't be happy.

Grace: She was sneaking out of Henry's house.

Annie: He watched her as she skipped away.

(People in the court start talking quietly between themselves and about what Margaret has just said)

Scene 12: Annie and Grace report on Mabel's affair

Magistrate: Are we able to call these girls as witnesses? We would not usually allow such accounts from children, but we must make an exception for the good of Hagerstow.

Edith: Annie, Grace, go up and speak to the Magistrate. Remember to say the truth about what you saw. No stories.

Magistrate: Thank you children. Now please tell me everything you know about the relationship between Lord Goldwell and your sister, Mabel.

Annie: It was early, and the village was quiet, it always is at dawn. Everyone else tucked up in bed. But not Mabel.

Grace: It wasn't light, but it was not dark. I saw a lone candle flickering in one of the large windows of the Goldwell's house. I saw a distorted figure in the window. I think it was Margaret admiring the stillness of the village.

Annie: The fog smothered the ground. Then light illuminated from another window, it quickly left the room and travelled like an orb. The door creaked open and Henry appeared.

Grace: Henry was cautious, as he walked to the village green. He admired the flowers, breathing in the early morning air. Margaret was watching him, as his Lantern moved further and further into the village, until it disappeared at the end of the Garden.

Annie: Margaret's candle went out. She appeared at the back door and followed Henry out of the grounds.

Grace: He reached the Green. Mabel appeared behind Henry, touching his shoulder. He grabbed her arm violently and turned around to confront her. Mabel was shaken.

Annie: He embraced her, and she soon relaxed into his arms.

Grace: They both looked embarrassed. They were careful not to disturb the stillness or displace the fog that had circled their feet.

Annie: Henry slowly glided his hands through the Maypole ribbons and Mabel soon followed. They stood on opposite sides, watching each other attentively to see who would make the next move. They both smiled.

Grace: They began to twist and turn in the same movements they had danced their whole lives. They began to wrap and circle around the Maypole. Their movements were distorted by the light of the early morning, casting shadows on the green.

Annie: They were wild.

Grace: There was only them and the web of the Maypole creating a cage entangling them both. Henry dropped his ribbons, leaving Mabel enclosed in them. She laughed, and immediately Henry pressed his hand to her mouth. He grabbed the ribbons, pulling her arms upwards and entangling her more.

Annie: She was stuck like a fly in Henry's web.

Grace: His prey.

Annie: He kissed her forcefully. Grabbing her body and the Maypole to do so.

Grace: He untied her and left.

Annie: But what he didn't know is that Margaret was watching through the trees, just like us. Tears were flooding down her face. She couldn't take her eyes off them.

Grace: Henry walked back, with his lantern in hand, yet Margaret no longer followed. Mabel was left at the Maypole, watching him walk away. She was bewitched by him and everything he did.

Annie: She was left on the Village Green in a trance like state in only her night dress.

Grace: Margaret fixated on her.

Annie: Her eyes stalked Mabel.

Grace: Mabel now had a new predator.

Scene 13: Mabel's account

Magistrate: I am left with no choice. Miss Mabel Smith, please take to the stand. Is there truth in these accusations?

Mabel: Yes, your honour, Henry, Lord Goldwell, and I have been courting for some time.

(Courtroom whispers)

(Sound of the Gavel)

Magistrate: Silence please!

(The crowd quietens down)

Magistrate: Miss Smith, when did this begin?

Mabel: We became acquainted at the Maypole dance, on the day of Lord and Lady Goldwell's marriage. He complimented me on what a beautiful young lady I had become. He approached me again when I was walking along the river. He asked me to meet him, at dawn by the Maypole. That was the beginning. He invited me on walks with him along the river, we would talk for hours. He was the only person to see me as a woman, not a child. He spoke to me as an equal, it was the happiest time of my life. Had Henry not been legally bound to Margaret, he would have asked me to marry him instead.

Florence: You cannot truly believe that? We are a family of high class and nobility, something which your family is not.

Mabel: Henry told me that I would be a better wife than Margaret ever could be. That I could fulfil her duties as his wife. I could have had a child for him. Margaret could not do that. I could be the one to produce an heir for him and I agreed, I would do anything for Henry.

Magistrate: Quiet, please. You agreed to bear his child?

Mabel: I hoped we could someday be a family. We still can be, when this is over, and Margaret is no longer part of Henry's life.

Florence: *(spitefully)* You believe that Henry feels this way?

Henry: The girl is naive, your honour. Her young imagination has seemingly blossomed our meetings into a tale of romance. Her childish dreaming has woven into naive ideas and ludicrous plans as to how we could one day be together lawfully. There has seldom been a romance between us.

Magistrate: Yet you intended to have a child with the girl?

Henry: Yes, your honour. You see I needed a son and Mabel was the ideal choice. My wife was not fulfilling her duty, and as a revered man of the Village, I am sure you will sympathise with my case. I had seen Mabel grow, the development of her body, her breasts, hips. She was ready for fealty.

Magistrate: So, this was an act of self-preservation?

Henry: I did this to protect the future of Hagerstow. The accused was preventing the fulfilment of my duty. Her destitute, devilish nature rendered her barren as a punishment from God. She signed the devil's book, enticing me into this ungodly marriage. Any other man would have done the same.

Scene 14: Edith standing up for Mabel

Edith: You lustful devil! How dare you use the power you have over this village to do such a wicked thing to my daughter! You lied to her, manipulated her. How dare you. You have committed unforgivable crimes against God. You took away my daughter's innocence, she's a child. *A child.* How do you not see that you're vile, wicked and shockingly evil?

(Beat)

Edith: Cat got your tongue? You can't say anything now can you, because you know you're wrong. You couldn't stop talking of the wrongs of your poor wife when she was on the stand, yet now you are quiet.

(to the Magistrate) This man has evil running through him. He scorns his wife and has tried to ruin her, makes her out to be a whore! Yet, he is the sinful one. How can you convict this woman, for the actions of her husband? Do you not think she has suffered enough having to deal with him?

Magistrate: Silence! There will be order in this court!

(Court is outraged, getting louder. Annie and Grace start to cry.)

Mabel: Come on girls, let us go home, now! Mother will follow shortly.

Magistrate: That is enough! Today I have heard evidence for and against your case, yet there is still much to uncover. It is as difficult to compel a witch to tell the truth as it is to exorcise a person possessed of the devil. We, the aforesaid Judge, assign tomorrow as a day for the continuation of Lady Margaret's questioning, that the truth may be heard from her own mouth. You may leave. God be with you all.

Scene 15: Mabel's death

Annie: Upon leaving the dull courtroom we were greeted with bright, white moonlight, almost as bright as Margaret's eyes.

Grace: We were bewildered leaving that dark room. We were scared. We asked Mabel what had happened.

Annie: Mabel, why was mother so upset?

Mabel: She loves us, that is all. Mother will be fine.

Grace: I did not like the way they were speaking to you and mother. And I did not like what they were saying about Margaret.

Mabel: Margaret has done some bad things, things you girls would not understand.

Annie: She is not bad Mabel, she is beautiful and kind and always wanted to play with us. I do not believe she has done bad things.

Grace: Have you done bad things Mabel? Is that why we had to tell our story?

Mabel: I am not perfect, but I have not hurt anyone. Not like that witch.

Annie: Mabel then walked faster ahead of us. We stayed behind still upset and confused. We were scared for Margaret and Mother.

Grace: Then we saw the Hagerstow serpent.

Annie: The monster had followed us through the river from the dark room. It was ready to attack.

Grace: It was tempted by innocent prey

Annie: Our Mother always said never to believe the stories she told. But we know it was there that night.

Grace: The serpent had snatched her, tugging her underneath the water's surface.

Annie: The monster had a hold of her. It dragged her into its lair.

Grace: She was trying to escape from the monster's grasp, gasping to get free from the tight coil. But the serpent was strong and did not let her go.

Annie: We kept seeing thrashing, the monster was in control of Mabel, wrapping around her. The serpent kept pulling her deeper and deeper. The water was getting more violent, helping the serpent keep its prey.

Grace: We heard our sister's faint gasps. She was trying to say something, but the serpent stopped her. Filling her mouth with water so she could not speak.

Annie: The monster was pulling her down, drowning her. Mabel was writhing, fighting, however, she was not as strong as the water or the serpent.

Grace: We reached our hands out.

Annie: Trying to hold onto our struggling sister.

Grace: Our arms were too short, then the monster dug its fangs in again, dragging her back in.

Annie: It held her underwater for so long, and then the bubbles disappeared.

Grace: Mabel was gone. The serpent was hiding her in its lair.

Annie: We ran up and down the river, looking everywhere for her, yet we could not see her anywhere.

Grace: Then we noticed a flash of red on the riverbank. We ran.

Scene 16: Back to the court- announcement of Mabel's death

(Silence, then gavel sound)

Magistrate: As many of you will be aware, Mabel Smith tragically lost her life last night.

(Lady of York music begins to play)

Edith: I saw Annie and Grace, standing in the trees. The moonlight made them look so innocent, like they were babies once more. I almost didn't notice that the bottom of their skirts were wet and muddy. I could tell they were my girls, but Mabel was not with them.

(Beat)

I saw her washed up on the side of the riverbed, her body was limp. Her red hair, no longer in its braid, cascaded across her shoulders and brushed over her pale skin. The embroidered flowers on her blouse sat flat against her skin, decorating her body with flecks of colour, that spread down her arms. Yet her skin was grey, slimy, and scabbed. The cold rushed through me, going deeper than my skin. Water droplets fell to the ground from the edges of her frilled sleeve. The ground around her legs was covered by a pale pink skirt that had begun to soak up the mud from the forest floor. Annie and Grace were petrified. I had never seen them so still, so lifeless. I rushed to their side and held them tighter than I ever had before. We embraced in the silence as the moonlight disappeared, I would not let them out of my arms.

Annie: The doors slowly creaked open and a lonely figure appeared in the dark archway.

Grace: Margaret entered the room, the eyes of everyone followed her. She looked at those she once knew for comfort, but they were strangers to her now.

Annie: Why are their eyes filled with such hate?

Grace: It seemed as if the hatred towards her had grown by a hundred overnight.

Annie: Their blank expressions were terrifying, we had never seen eyes so cold.

Grace: Margaret's face fell, her eyes reflecting hurt and horror.

Annie: She looked towards our mother whose eyes were swollen like the riverbanks from all the tears she had cried throughout the night.

Grace: Even mother no longer showed her kindness.

Edith: *(Distraught)* You are a witch, I am a fool for ever defending you. You have caused the death of my innocent girl. They told me you were jealous of her, I should have listened. God will decide the fate you deserve, you shall spend an eternity in hell.

Magistrate: Ms Smith, I know this is a difficult time for you, but I must ask you to remain seated in order for the trial to continue.

Magistrate: Lady Margaret, following the evidence given yesterday, it was evident that there was ill feeling between Miss Mabel Smith and yourself. You were jealous of Miss Smith and the relationship between her and your husband.

Florence: I warned the court, yet some of you were naive, easily manipulated and clearly under her spell to have tried to defend her. Look what has happened. If you had listened to me, this death could have been prevented. Now Mabel, a young girl with so many prospects, a pillar of Hagerstow is gone due to your evil ways.

Henry: You will rot in hell for all you have done! Witch! We know the powers you are capable of. Your reputation, the evidence, and the deposition of witnesses all together point to the same conclusion that you were responsible for the death of Mabel. You carry evil within you, you dance with the devil.

Margaret: "Good Christian people of Hagerstow", it appears in this court I have come here to die. Therefore, I will speak nothing against it and let you have your glory. I come here to accuse no man, or to speak anything of that whereof I am accused and condemned to die. I am an outsider, you saw that, and I became a vessel for you to carry out your evil. You despise anything that is unfamiliar. You must witness what you have done, and one day you will, when your sins are placed in the sight of God.

(Beat)

So, God save King James the First and send him, and his witch hunts, long to reign over you. And if any person will meddle in my cause, I require them to judge the best. And thus, I take my leave of the world, and of you all, and I heartily desire you all to pray for yourselves and not for me, I am innocent. Shame on all of Hagerstow.

Whispering from the Public Gallery overlapping one another:

Edith: Dakan.

Cecily: Poison giver. Witch.

Henry: Antichrist. With her spells, a witch can transform you into a pig, or defeat you in battle. She can curse you, blight your crops, ignore you, refuse you, correct you. Punishing witches accomplishes two things: it ends the threat and makes others afraid to follow in the unruly woman's footsteps.

Edith: Bow down to Satan.

Florence: The Devil in the Shape of a Woman. Sinful apple. Vile varlet.

Cecily: Signing the devil's book. Wake the witch.

Henry: Fornicating with the devil. Magic spells of sexual molestation.

Florence: Diabolical, satanic, demonic she-devil. Muddy on the outer side and dirty on the inner. She has two souls, the clean one you see before you and the other.

Henry: So, she was ineligible — damaged goods.

Edith: She-devil with an angel face, heartless manipulator. Lucifer-like, satanic, demonic, diabolical... a witch of deception.

Henry: Bestial, carnal, unnatural.

Florence: An "enchanted witch"

Henry: Women are natural liars. A woman is beautiful to look upon, contaminating to the touch, and deadly to keep.

Florence: All witchcraft comes from carnal lust, which is in women insatiable. Women were created from a "bent" rib and are therefore defective: And since through this defect she is an imperfect animal, she always deceives.

Magistrate: We the Magistrate and Judges named on behalf of the faith, having before our eyes-only God, and the glory and honour of the Holy Faith, we judge. We declare and pronounce the sentence that you, Lady Margaret Goldwell, standing here in our presence on the 23rd of September 1611 in the village of Hagerstow, appointed for the hearing of your final sentence, are an impenitent witch.

(Long Beat)

The court finds you guilty on all accounts and, therefore, sentences you to death by hanging. May God have mercy on your soul.

Scene 17: The Twins Epilogue

Annie: We were always told that at the end of our village, was the end of the world. If you managed to walk that far, you would drop straight down and fall into the great unknown. And that's what happened to Margaret that day.

Grace: We could see a bright light from our window, and the sound of roaring cheers coming from the Green.

Annie: Mother forbade us from looking out of the window that night, yet we could not resist.

Grace: And then, we saw her.

Annie: Henry had Margaret slumped over his shoulder, like a lamb ready for slaughter. He wrapped the Maypole ribbons around her neck and pulled her up slowly.

Grace: She looked out over the green, and that's when her eyes met ours.

Annie: She began to cry, and we ran to get her. Desperate to wipe the tears from her eyes.

Grace: Alas, it was too late.

Annie: The crowd was gone. She was swinging lightly in the breeze, limp, like a wilted flower.

Grace: We reached our hands up to grab her feet and hug her once more, but we could not reach the ribbons, our arms were too short.

Annie: That was the last time we saw Margaret.

Grace: The ritual was done.

(Margaret sings)

Scene 18: 2020 verdict

(Motif signifying the court in 2020)

Defence: Please stand for the verdict of the honourable Judge Kovalski.

Judge: What has been presented to the court, on the 22nd of May 2020, does not pass the threshold of evidence. An account made by Grace Smith and Annie Smith, minors at the time of the proceedings, does not stand for sufficient evidence against the initial ruling. On the reopening of this case, the director of public prosecutions said that Margaret Goldwell could no longer testify as a witness, therefore, new evidence cannot be considered.

(Beat)

The court rules in favour of Hagerstow and denies the appeal for exoneration. The Court of Appeal will not quash the conviction of Margaret Goldwell.

(Newsreel sound)

News Reporter: The court of appeal has refused the exoneration of Margaret Goldwell. To the surprise of many, the court has found that her original verdict from 1611 still stands as guilty, despite witchcraft no longer being a crime in the United Kingdom. This has been met with major backlash from women all over the world. Women are calling for major reconsideration from the justice system, stating that not enough has been done to honour women like Margaret Goldwell in their struggle.

Matilda: “Witches, sluts, and feminists are the trifecta of terror for the patriarchy, just look at what happened to Margaret Goldwell.”

Shara: “Witches have always been women who dared to be: groovy, courageous, aggressive, intelligent, nonconformist, explorative, curious, independent, sexually liberated, revolutionary”

Zoe: “To reclaim the word witch is to reclaim our right, as women, to be powerful. #WeAreAllMargaretGoldwell”

Charlotte: “Witches have always been politically radical”

Alice: “I was not the only person in the room to be reminded of a 17th-century witch trial, the blustering magistrate and rowdy crowd condemning a woman to death for her crimes.”

Julia: “People fear what they can’t control. Margaret Goldwell’s case is a prime example.”

Meg: “Think of how the media treats women. From Amy Winehouse to Rebekah Vardy, from Lily Allen to Meghan Markle, from Princess Diana to Caroline Flack, from reality TV stars to royalty. The women change, but the will to humiliate doesn’t. There is something deeply rotten here.”

Laura: Ding dong the witch is dead!

(Names are layered underneath the other comments, beginning as a whisper)

Everybody: Joan of Arc, Anne Boleyn, Catherine Howard, Alison Device, Alice Nutter, Jennette Device, Sarah Good, Martha Corey, Rebecca Nurse, Bridget Bishop, Mary Parker, Ruth Ellis, Helen Duncan, Lady Diana Spencer, Claudia Lawrence, Amy Whitehouse, Christine Keeler, Caroline Flack, Marina Abramovic, Alice Chamberlain, Sally Challen, Michelle Obama, Suzanne Holdsworth, Beyonce, Meghan Markle, Rebekah Vardy, Amanda Knox.

Chloe // Final line: #BeKind

(Bonny Hawthorne in a minor key)