

# *The Problem of Loudun*

*the Urbain Grandier case*



by Christian Lanciai (2011)

*The characters:*

Drouin, apothecary  
Michel,  
Béliard,  
Gigot, his friends  
Madeleine de Brou  
Urbain Grandier, vicar of Loudun  
Cardinal Richelieu  
Jean de Martin, Baron de Laubardemont  
Binot  
Thibaut  
Father Pierre Rangier

Mother Jeanne of the Angels  
Father Mignon  
Monsieur Barré  
Bishop Guillaume de Cerisay  
Sister Claire  
Sister Denise  
Sister Clothilde  
Sister Marie  
Inspector Aubin  
The host at the inn  
A judge  
A woman  
Jean-Joseph Surin, jesuit  
Doctor Fanton

The action is at Loudun and Paris in France 1632-34.

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Act I scene 1. A joint at Loudun.

*Drouin* What is he doing here? Do we want such blokes around here?  
*Michel* No one wants him here, buit he is coming anyway. It's his profession.  
*Béliard* He represents the state. And what is worse, he represents the church.  
And what is even worse, he represents the cardinal.  
*Michel* So we can expect anything of him but good.  
*Drouin* Can't we in some way impede his progress here?  
*Béliard* Only by assassination. Everyone keeps out of the assassination business nowadays except the cardinal.  
*Gigot* Don't you dare speak ill of the cardinal. Everything that is spoken about him is reported to him, and he will answer by turning your mortal enemy for life until you die under mystical or horrible circumstances.  
*Drouin* The risk is, that will be the fate of our prelate unless nothing stops the messenger of power. He is here only to collect complaints and accusations against Urbain Grandier.  
*Michel* That sounds far-fetched even for a cardinal.  
*Gigot* Our prelate had the bad luck of insulting the cardinal before he was made a cardinal. The cardinal's cardinal fault is unreasonable longmindedness. He forgets everyone who helped him but never anyone who offended him.  
*Drouin* Poor our good prelate.  
*Michel* What did he do?

*Gigot* Before the cardinal had any rank to speak of and he came here for some solemn festival, our prelate ranked him below him. He had the right to do so, but unfortunately the cardinal turned cardinal and allpowerful as such.

*Michel* But what could they possibly find against our prelate? He has a mistress – so what? What prelate hasn't, except the cardinal? It's a human weakness for a priest and a sin as such but no crime against the church.

*Béliard* So why does the cardinal hate him, since he sends down an inquisitor here just to frame him?

*Drouin* There is only one explanation. Cunt jealousy. Our prelate is extremely successful with women. The cardinal never could be.

*Gigot* Instead he turned France into a great power and a totalitarian state of intolerance and ruthless perfection, in which he succeeded in extirpating all huguenots for no good reason. He has created a monster state of political precision at the cost of humanity, which was represented by the huguenots and still is by our prelate, who wants to keep the huguenot fortifications, which the cardinal wants to demolish to get stones for his castle.

*Béliard* The all powerful, untouchable cardinal, for whom all tremble more than for the devil.

*Michel* No wonder that the devil has entered so many ladies' hearts.

*Drouin* Is it really the devil? Our prelate has a faithful mistress since some years. They practically live together in discreet caution and secrecy but still with everyone knowing about it. He is handsome and eloquent and in possession of all advantages. He is not only worshipped by the ladies for the sake of his righteousness and integrity. He is brave and persistent and thinks for himself without bending to anyone. In the convent there are then a number of nuns confined for life, who almost daily have to see him and who all know about his mistress since long and never cease cultivating this topic of discussion. Is it then so strange that some of them become so obsessed by him and have to worship him, while they may not admit that they just are in love with him? Is it then so strange that they turn hysterical and start acting queerly, throwing off their clothes and taking improper liberties? They are just women condemned to solitude, most of them by force. That must lead to reactions. Nature can't be repressed.

*Michel* And then the superstitious blame the devil, just to have someone to blame, a mythical figure and mystic entity who only occurred in the sick and twisted fantasies of odd people. And the church takes these fantasies seriously, sends down exorcists and prepares investigations for a process against the most innocent of all, our prelate.

*Gigot* The question is whether the cardinal sent his inquisitor here to remedy the disturbed nuns and the devil problem or to really get at our prelate.

*Drouin* Even if it is only to restore the ecclesiastical order, the cardinal will never hesitate to in cold blood sacrifice our prelate if he is indicted. Priests have been burnt at the stake before. Unfortunately there are precedents.

*Michel* Our age makes the glorious times of Catherine de Medici and king Henry with their tolerance and freedom appear as a paradise lost.

*Gigot* The edict of tolerance is still in legal force. The cardinal only circumvents it.

*Michel* The question is who is more possessed, our poor nuns or the cardinal by his power.

*Drouin* The only one who is not possessed is Urbain Grandier.

*Béliard* Is that the reason why Laubardemont searches causes against him, like against a desired virgin, whose purity from the established superstitions of the church, the church cannot accept?

*Drouin* I think you are quite close to the truth, my friend.

## Scene 2.

*Madeleine* You are too good to me, my love. You should not risk your life for me.

*Urbain* You don't risk your life for love. You receive life by love. There is no other life than the one you receive by love by giving love. Without it you I would die.

*Madeleine* The whole world knows about your forbidden relationship with me.

*Urbain* The whole world cannot harm me for my love's sake. On the contrary. The world loves me for my love's sake. I love you, Madeleine, and I will always be faithful to you like to a true wife. I don't want to know other women, least of all nuns.

*Madeleine* They all love you.

*Urbain* Their love is to me pathetic and revolting. They know nothing about love. They work themselves up to madness by their lack of love, which makes them deplorable. They don't know what they are doing. They have thrown away all self discipline and control, and all they have left is senseless looseness. They have no detachment and have drowned in their emotional intoxication for nothing.

*Madeleine* The church has sent down exorcists here to cure them.

*Urbain* They can only cure themselves by time. It will pass. I am sure of it.

*Madeleine* You don't believe in exorcism?

*Urbain* There are no devils. There is no Satan. There are only sick fantasies, that sometimes run wild into madness, so that the fantasies are taken seriously and confused with reality.

*Madeleine* According to the gospel, Jesus drove seven evil spirits out of Magdalen.

*Urbain* I think he did something else with Magdalen.

*Madeleine* Do you think he loved her?

*Urbain* He must have. Or else he would not have made her such an intimate.

*Madeleine* You don't think the church wants to harm you because of your love? You have always been worshipped by the women ever since you arrived here. The cardinal can only boast the opposite.

*Urbain* Don't speak of the cardinal.

*Madeleine* He is dangerous.

*Urbain* To everyone. Not just to me. I regret that I offended him once, but I did nothing wrong. I just brought him down to earth. He has never been able to forgive me that lesson, for he never could understand it.

*Madeleine* What really happened?

*Urbain* Nothing really. A pure formality matter.

### Scene 3. Flashback.

*Grandier* Even if you have been a minister you are that no longer, and even if you are a bishop you are not in your own bishopric but only my guest and a temporary visitor. Loudun is my territory and not yours.

*Richelieu* You should beware of insulting a politician.

*Grandier* I am a priest and not a politician.

*Richelieu* You don't know what you are saying.

*Grandier* What is it you really want?

*Richelieu* I am worthy of a better treatment by you.

*Grandier* I treat you better than most huguenot murderers.

*Richelieu* I should have guessed that you were a huguenot.

*Grandier* I am no huguenot, but I don't think anyone has a right to murder huguenots just because they are huguenots.

*Richelieu* You are a fool abusing the example of Christ in such a way that it could bring your own downfall.

*Grandier* Christ died on the cross. That's the example for all Christians and even for you, if you are Christian, to follow.

*Richelieu* In our time it is wiser to manage and survive than to die.

*Grandier* So you are afraid of death?

*Richelieu* No.

*Grandier* Then you are afraid of life.

*Richelieu* Why should I be?

*Grandier* Since you are such a ridiculous precious precise pedant who clings to celibacy just out of fear of the joys of life.

*Richelieu* Celibacy is prescribed by the church which you belong to and serve.

*Grandier* Celibacy is an inhuman mask which the popes remove at their convenience.

*Richelieu* You blaspheme.

*Grandier* No, my good man, you are blaspheming, and all are blaspheming who dare to use their position in church to exert power. The example of Christ is poverty and total powerlessness. All power is of the devil, and it can only be abused. You should be happy about having been removed from court.

*Richelieu* I am only here for a vacation.

*Grandier* That is no credit to you.

*Richelieu* Enough. Your insults serve no purpose.

*Grandier* Neither does your haughtiness.  
*Richelieu* You are unwise in making me your enemy.  
*Grandier* No one can make you my enemy except yourself.  
*Richelieu* You compel me to it.  
*Grandier* By sticking to my rights?  
*Richelieu* By showing me disdain.  
*Grandier* So what are you showing me?  
*Richelieu* Pity.  
*Grandier* Why?  
*Richelieu* I can see that you will have a bad end.  
*Grandier* Ha-ha! How can you see that?  
*Richelieu* It is dangerous to love ladies if you are a priest and have enemies.  
*Grandier* It is even more dangerous not to love ladies, I mean for the soul. To love ladies is the height of humanity, and humanity is divinity. God is at his most divine when he is most human.  
*Richelieu* I don't concern myself with theology.  
*Grandier* So why then are you a priest?  
*Richelieu* You persist in your provocations. I warn you. They can burn you at the stake one day for your outspokenness, your liberal mind and your huguenot sympathies.  
*Grandier* If anything could harm France it's the persecutions of the huguenots, since all the ablest and wisest men of France are huguenots. During the huguenot leader Henri IV France had its only age of greatness, and that age was great only because it was marked by tolerance. You wish to ruin France with your intolerance.  
*Richelieu* You want to throw France into anarchy. You want to dissolve the church.  
*Grandier* And you want to kill. You want to kill me. You want to smear the history of France with blood, like Charles IX.  
*Richelieu* I want order, and I want to serve France.  
*Grandier* By burning me at the stake?  
*Richelieu* My son, you are still young. When you are older you will have learned better sense than to speak as you think.  
*Grandier* I would rather then be burned at the stake than to stop speaking and living as I think.  
*Richelieu* Your will be done then.

#### Scene 4. Back to scene 2.

*Madeleine* Is that why he wants your destruction?  
*Urbain* He doesn't want my destruction. He only wants to satisfy his own interests. Among them is the extirpation of any trace of any huguenots here in this country. Among them is the destruction of all the old fortresses of the huguenots. That's why they are pulling down the fortress here in Loudun. Everyone wanted to

keep it and me too as a protection for Loudun in the future. But the cardinal makes the decision.

*Madeleine* And what about his hatchet man who was sent down to investigate you?

*Urbain* He was sent to implement the cardinal's directions. One of them was to investigate the disorder about the nuns. It's no inquisition, just an investigation.

*Madeleine* But the nuns have been exposed to violation in the exorcisms.

*Urbain* That's on the responsibility of the exorcists, not on Laubardemont or the cardinal.

*Madeleine* The nuns are tortured to make any confessions.

*Urbain* That's on the responsibility of the exorcists. If they produce lies they will be accountable for them.

*Madeleine* They act in the name of the church.

*Urbain* If they produce lies and violations in the name of the church, they will be severely judged in the future, and the risk is that the church will be judged with them.

*Madeleine* Aren't you afraid of the power of the church, of what they can do to you?

*Urbain* Not in the least, since my conscience can't be more perfectly clear.

*Madeleine* Other righteous priests have been burnt at the stake, like Giordano Bruno.

*Urbain* That the church deigns to burn heretics is a syndrome of that all is not well in the church. That it fears people who think for themselves and bring forth new thoughts and ideas means that it is afraid of being exposed. Who is afraid of being exposed has committed a crime. Crimes must be exposed.

*Madeleine* What did Giordano Bruno expose?

*Urbain* We shall never know, since he was kept isolated by the inquisition for the last seven years of his life until he was burnt.

*Madeleine* What was the inquisition afraid of?

*Urbain* Everything. That's why the inquisition exists.

*Madeleine* They have tried to prosecute you before. You have been arrested previously.

*Urbain* Without grounds. They tried to get at me from sheer envy, because I was too brilliant and because I dare love you. Love is something the church never will be able to do anything about.

*Madeleine* Is celibacy wrong then?

*Urbain* It is not wrong, since Jesus recommended it himself. You may add that not everyone was made for celibacy. He means, that you should live sexually if it is natural for you. "It's not good for man to be alone," says God himself. Jesus says, that if you want to live as a eunuch, you should do so. Between these two divine statements all humanity moves around.

*Madeleine* What does sister Jeanne say?

*Urbain* She loves me but knows that she will never have me, since she is a humpback. Unlike certain others, she is able to control herself.

*Madeleine* Do you think the certain others could harm you?

*Urbain* No. At worst they could harm my body but never my soul, for it is only love.

*Madeleine* I will always testify to your love.

*Urbain* You are more to me than a beloved, more than a sister, more than a mother, rather like a twin soul. We belonged to each other from the start before we knew each other.

*Madeleine* I know one thing for sure. They can never harm me, since I am loved by you.

*Urbain* You shall be that forever. Friendship lasts for life, love is immortal, but we belong to eternity. If it will be necessary I shall prove it.

*Madeleine* How?

*Urbain* I don't know that yet.

## Act II scene 1.

*Laubardemont* I will make it perfectly clear to you, gentlemen, why I am here. I am here by command of the cardinal to make sure that the huguenot fortresses of Loudun are being pulled down. Nothing else.

*Binot* We are very well aware of that, Mr. President, but since you are here by command of his eminence you must also be aware that there is much else to be done here.

*Laubardemont* Like what?

*Binot* Neither you nor the cardinal can be unaware of the disturbances of the church order that have appeared by the eccentric behaviour or rather obsessions of certain nuns?

*Laubardemont* This is a problem and task for the church, not for me. Of course his eminence is concerned though and worried about it and has asked me to investigate the matter, so to say, off hand.

*Binot* We thought so.

*Thibaut* The problem is that the exorcists haven't succeeded in resolving the problem but instead rather exacerbated it.

*Laubardemont* How?

*Thibaut* More nuns have been afflicted.

*Laubardemont* What has emerged in their investigation?

*Thibaut* Nothing. They behave like senseless animals. They talk nonsense and only utter incomprehensibilities and refuse to respond to treatment.

*Laubardemont* Don't they know how it started? Someone must have been the first one. If you know how it started you can find the cause.

*Thibaut* That's what they don't know.

*Laubardemont* What is your vicar's position in the matter?

*Thibaut* He refuses to have anything to do with it. He means it will pass and that it shouldn't be made any fuss about.

*Laubardemont* So he has had nothing to do with the afflicted nuns?

*Thibaut* No.



*Laubardemont* But he has been involved in other inappropriate relationships, like Philippe Trincard.

*Thibaut* She is nowadays married Mousso.

*Laubardemont* Happily married, I suppose?

*Thibaut* As happily married as you can be by force.

*Laubardemont* Is it true what they say about her?

*Thibaut* It depends on what they say about her. All kinds of things are said about her.

*Laubardemont* Let me make my summary brief. It has been told, that she as a virgin was seduced by your prelate in the confessional, that he let her go as soon as the conquest was accomplished and that she in secret gave birth to an illegitimate child, which was adopted by a friend to save her face, and that her marriage was the final payment to keep the matter closed up and forgotten.

*Thibaut* That is about correct.

*Laubardemont* That your prelate thus is the father of that child, which everyone knows but no one talks about, since the matter has been made untouchable by adoption and forced marriage, and that he carried through this affair before he made the connection with Miss Madeleine de Brou, whom he appears to have married in secret in a willful but in a legally and ecclesiastically invalid marriage.

*Thibaut* All this is correct.

*Laubardemont* By all this he has got himself a superior power of enemies, who all work together to get rid of him from Loudun led by Philippe Trinquant's mighty father, the town prosecutor, who previously was his best friend, as if the enemy he made from the start was not enough, his eminence the cardinal.

*Thibaut* Everyone wants to get rid of him.

*Laubardemont* So, gentlemen, what can we do about the matter?

## Scene 2.

*Madeleine* You can't make any resistance against the cardinal's decision to pull down the fortress, Urbain.

*Urbain* I have to do what little resistance I can. No one wants to tear it down. It would mean the end for Loudun. The Romans constructed it, it has constantly been enlarged and added to and served the city for protection and safety not just for the huguenots here, while the cardinal not just wants to tear it down but also have it transported to build his own town of Richelieu with it, which he wants to transfer all the inhabitants of Loudun to, so that Loudun will end up an insignificant village. No one in Loudun wants this except opportunistic followers of the cardinal.

*Madeleine* But what can we do?

*Urbain* Fight for the life of myself and the city.

*Madeleine* I think the cardinal's messenger is more dangerous. I think he is here to cause much more damage than just the destruction of the fortress. I think he is here to undermine your position, yourself and your life.

*Urbain* What can he do? All those who prosecuted me at Poitiers have fallen flat with their lies. What else can he do than exchange meaningless slander with them? No one has lost his face more completely than the former prosecutor Trinquant for bribing and pressing false witnesses to lies, which was why he was forced to resign.

*Madeleine* Is it true that you made his daughter pregnant? Before that he was your best friend.

*Urbain* I regret what happened. I never wanted it to go that far, but when she confessed her love for me in the confessional, I couldn't just turn it down. I tried to dissuade her and avert her intentions, but like all women she refused to listen to reason. I had to give her what she asked for. That a child became an issue of it, no one of us had desired.

*Madeleine* You got out of that dilemma. She is married, and the child was adopted away. But your writings remain and speak against you in the view of the church.

*Urbain* I stand for every word in them.

*Madeleine* They challenge the church. I think that's why the cardinal wishes to dispose of you.

*Urbain* I only made myself guilty of common sense.

*Madeleine* "A promise to realize the impossible is not binding. For a young man the abstention from sex is impossible. Therefore no such promise can be binding." You defy and denounce celibacy. What celibatarian devil could accept that?

*Urbain* What I have written is obvious. To react or protest against it is hypocrisy. Unfortunately most within the church embrace that weakness. They pretend celibacy but fuck choir boys or masturbate. They give their vows of celibacy just of servility and hypocrisy for the sake of the career well aware that they would never be able to keep it. The church is a mighty institution which only admits those who submit to the general official hypocrisy. I am no protestant. I just indicate the point of illness in a kind of effort to at least state a diagnosis and perhaps present a constructive warning that it will be worse if nothing is done.

*Madeleine* You want to do away with celibacy.

*Urbain* No, only the enforcement of it. Many priests would make much better priests without celibacy, as would many nuns, especially our nuns.

*Madeleine* That is perhaps their very problem.

*Urbain* I think so. They have overreacted against forced celibacy by demonstrating the unsound consequences of it. There are no devils except forced celibacy with the unnatural enforced suppression of sexuality.

*Madeleine* Many priests think that sex is the devil.

*Urbain* It's the contrary. Everyone with any natural knowledge of sex knows that it is only a release and liberation.

*Madeleine* From what?

*Urbain* From the ego above all. Only love can save you from yourself.

*Madeleine* You speak like Jesus.

*Urbain* He was crucified for his message of love. As a priest I have nothing else to do but to act in his imitation.

*Madeleine* Come and enter me, my saviour.

*Urbain* It's you who are my saviour. (*They make love.*)

Scene 3. A chapel in the convent of the ursulines.

*Rangier* Mother Jeanne of the Angels, we regret that we have to expose you to this treatment.

*Mignon* She is entirely cooperative. She knows what it is all about. It's like an illness, which she as a patient wants to be relieved of.

*Rangier* Of course. What are you suffering from, mother Jeanne?

*Jeanne* I am possessed!

*Rangier* By what?

*Jeanne* Ask the one who has got me in his power! Ha-ha-ha! (*laughs hysterically*)

*Rangier* Mother Jeanne, don't forget who you are!

*Mignon* She did that long ago. There is nothing else to do but to exorcise her.

*Rangier* My child, who has got you in his power?

*Jeanne* Legio! Ha-ha-ha!

*Rangier (to Mignon)* What does she mean?

*Mignon* She is not alone in being possessed. More and more of the seventeen nuns have been more and more possessed by more and more devils.

*Rangier* I cannot manage this alone.

*Mignon* You are alone with her. Try.

*Rangier* My child, who is your master? Under whose command are you?

*Jeanne* Under whose command are you yourself, you sanctimonious jerk? Ha-ha-ha!

*Rangier* She is hopeless. Such a case you have to bring to subjection by force.

*Mignon* Do it then. Exorcise her. She is asking for it.

*Rangier* I lack the resources and the knowledge. We need some expert help.

*Jeanne* You helpless fools, can't you see that I am simply damned? I am conquered and lost! That's how simple it is! And many of my sisters are that as well, and they enjoy it! You should try yourselves to get ravished by the devil! Ha-ha-ha! You will never forget it! You will be completely new human beings! Ha-ha-ha!

*Rangier* She is out of her mind.

*Mignon* She has to be remedied. We will have to call for assistance from a higher level.

*Rangier* Any suggestions?

*Mignon* I know a certain expert exorcist, Monsieur Barré, who has the knowledge and resources to go at any length. For him there are no hopeless cases.

*Rangier* Then we will have to resort to him. We can't just leave the abbess like this.

*Jeanne* Just leave me to my destiny. I will manage, and I have many sisters under me who share my lust! Ha-ha-ha!

*Rangier (to Mignon)* Does she know what she is saying?

*Mignon* That is the question. Let's hope she is not asware of her own condition.

*Jeanne* You bastards, why don't you fuck me when you have me at your mercy? Ha-ha-ha! I welcome you all, poor eunuchs! (*spreads her legs*)

*Rangier* Lock her up for God's sake in the meantime. Like this no one is safe from her.

*Mignon* You have done what you could. We thank you, father Rangier. We shall promptly organise more qualified expertise, so that we can reach the root of the evil and remove it.

#### Scene 4. The joint.

*Michel* Canon Mignon appears to have applied to father Rangier to exorcise mother Jeanne of the Angels.

*Béliard* Is she also afflicted now?

*Michel* More heavily than any of the others, it seems.

*Drouin* Father Mignon is one of our prelate's most bitter enemies. It all smells like a conspiracy.

*Michel* What do you think?

*Drouin* Why have the ursulines turned hysterical? Mother Jeanne was their leader, and she was from the beginning affected by unhappy love of our prelate. He was after all so handsome and eloquent and so successful with the women. Why then not also with mother Jeanne? She is after all also quite beautiful if somewhat humpbacked. I know that she asked father Urbain to be the confessor for her and the ursulines. He declined, since he already had too much ado with his community. If I understand mother Jeanne correctly she could never forgive him. Then started the hauntings in the convent. The children and the students were the first to be visited at night by alien creatures in white shrouds. Then came the ghosts to haunt also the nuns. Someone told them it was the devil. A childish joke has from the beginning by its effectiveness been expanded into a general possession by the devil, and only the nuns think it is funny and enjoy it.

*Gigot* Who came with the idea that it was the devil coming for a visit?

*Drouin* Father Mignon. Who else?

*Michel* And now he organises constantly more spectacular exorcisms, that only make matters worse. How will this end

*Béliard* What does our prelate think about it?

*Drouin* He shrugs his shoulders and claims to be an outsider of the problem. He has after all nothing to do with the ursulines.

*Gigot* They try to compromise him.

*Michel* That's what I think too.

*Béliard* Will they succeed?  
*Drouin* They have tried it before. They got him imprisoned at Poitiers for his amorous escapades and irregular relationships. The trial proved to be rigged. It was all just bribed witnesses and lies. A second try will be more difficult but could end the worse.  
*Michel* Do the holy ursulines then have no innate decency in their bodies?  
*Gigot* Surely you must know, Michel, that the only thing women have in their bodies is a completely different sense.  
*Béliard* Like what?  
*Gigot* The devil. What else and who else?

Act III scene 1.

*Barré* This is no small matter. A revered abbess of an ancient respectable convent is possessed by the devil and has to be exorcised. Such an affair is doomed to failure behind locked doors. Your awkward amateur efforts had no chance, brother Rangier. Here we have to resort to sledge-hammer methods.  
*Rangier* What do you mean?  
*Barré* Public exorcism in the cathedral.  
*Rangier* In front of the entire community?  
*Barré* The greater the audience, the more the efficiency. If everyone is allowed to come and watch her and she becomes aware of the public interest, the devil is bound to leave her alone. It must give up to the massive assault by the entire church.  
*Rangier* But the scandal! It will be discussed and written about all over the country! She will be a public and notorious object of scorn!  
*Barré* Would you prefer the devil to remain in her?  
*Rangier* The entire situation is utterly unbearable...  
*Mignon* We have nothing against a public process of exorcism, Monsieur Barré.  
*Barré* I guarantee satisfactory results.  
*Rangier* Then we will have to give you entirely free hands.  
*Barré* That's the spirit. It's a matter of life for your abbess.  
*Mignon* The cathedral is yours, Monsignore Barré.

Scene 2. In the cathedral.

*Michel (among the audience with his friends)* Isn't it going a bit far when the church organizes an exorcism turning it into a public show?  
*Gigot* For once the cathedral will be full. It's better than the theatre and free of charge at that. Everything will be improvised, and anything could happen. It couldn't be better.

*Béliard* Now they bring her in. Is this our holy abbess of the ursulines, mother Jeanne of the Angels?

*Gigot* She certainly doesn't look like an angel.

*Michel* She never did.

*Gigot* She would be lovely if she wasn't humpbacked.

*Béliard* She wasn't like that as a child. It was some kind of illness that twisted her skeleton.

*Gigot* So she was only good for a nun. Poor creature.

*Michel* She is not to be pitied. She enjoys it. Look at her. She has never before enjoyed her existence as a nun locked up.

*Béliard* Now he begins. Is it the curate of St. Jacques at Chinon? Who is he?

*Gigot* A paranoid black-coat who has never seen anything else than devils everywhere, and he always applies the roughest gloves.

*Béliard* He doesn't look very funny.

*Michel* Still everyone has come here only to have some fun.

*Gigot* Now he starts. Attention!

*Barré (at the altar with his priests)* In the name of the almighty highest I command you, impure spirit, to leave this woman's body in peace!

*Michel* Plenty of incense they have as well.

*Gigot* It will be needed. It isn't that simple, you know.

*Barré* Identify yourself, terrible demon! Who are you?

*Jeanne* Do you need to ask? Ha-ha-ha!

*Barré* Tell me your name or who you are!

*Jeanne* You know that very well, you bungler. Or else you would not dare to stage this show.

*Barré* I command you to identify yourself!

*Jeanne* Just give me your crucifix to smear with my bloody vagina, or give a bible to cover with vomit, and if you then don't get who I am you are daft.

*Barré* You impertinent demon, get lost and leave mother Jeanne of the Angels in peace!

*Jeanne* It's you, haughty fake of a fool, who are to leave us and my sisters in peace! We are happy in our lust! Can't you see that?

*Béliard* Is it really she speaking, is she acting, or is she truly possessed?

*Gigot* I don't think she even knows that herself.

*Barré* Give us a name!

*Jeanne* Whom do you wish me to denounce?

*Barré* Yourself!

*Jeanne* Asmodeus! I am the demon Asmodeus!

*Barré* So you are the devil Asmodeus who has taken possession of this woman by force! Begone, Satan! Stop desecrating this holy temple!

*Jeanne* It's you who are desecrating it with your infernal fantasies!

*Barré* The devil resists! Drive him out! Pump him out!

*Jeanne* You'll never get rid of me. You have forsworn yourself to me by forswearing yourself to the church. There is no church but the devil's church, and all who have forsworn themselves to it are his victims and slaves!

*Barré* Begone, you impure impertinent spirit! Tie her up!

*(Jeanne is pinioned.)*

*Jeanne* I am not afraid of you! You can't cure me! I live forever!

*Barré* Bring the enema syringe! *(It is produced.)*

*Jeanne* What will you do now? Gastric pumping? Ha-ha-ha! All you will get out of me that way is only shit!

*Barré* You impure devil, this enema syringe is filled with holy water! This we will spray into you until you stifle and at last leave your victim alone! Pull up her skirt!

*(They pull up her robe to expose her legs and bottom. She flounders her legs to the delight of the people, but the enema syringe is driven into her and applied without mercy.)*

*Gigot* This is indeed a spectacle for the people.

*Michel* The cathedral has never been filled up like this before.

*Béliard* Only one is missing.

*Michel* Who?

*Gigot* Our prelate.

*Barré* She is finished! Carry her out!

*(Jeanne is carried out, still pinioned but now brought to silence.)*

*The priests march out after her.)*

*Gigot* The black mass is over.

*Michel* I don't think she expected such a humiliation.

*Béliard* But the priest enjoyed it. You could see it on his face.

*Gigot* He has done it before. He was as joyful and skilful as a hangman.

*Michel* Come, let's walk out of here. No matter how sick the world is outside, it must be healthier, since it hardly could get any worse off than in here.

*Gigot* Say it to the responsible priests.

*Cerisay (to Mignon and Barré, Rangier and others)* My brothers, this is not proper. You turn the church into a spectacle.

*Rangier* There have been exorcisms as long as the church has existed. Jesus was the first one to apply them. By what right do you try to impede our work?

*Cerisay* The right of reason. You know very well that the poor ursulines are playacting and enjoying it, and you encourage them. They have never been possessed but been inspired to believe they are by someone who wishes to harm the church or just Grandier and who doesn't realize that he by provoking this grotesque infernal comedy only causes damage to the church. All reasonable people see through the racket, and the protestants laugh our church to scorn for its folly.

*Rangier* What will you do?

*Cerisay* I intend to do everything I can to stop this nonsense. If you stop provoking the ursulines, putting morbid fancies into their minds, driving them to hysteria by insane exorcising spectacles in flagrancia for the public to wallow in,

scorn or laugh at with animal lust, I am sure the poor nuns will calm down and stop their nonsense.

*Barré* And if they don't stop and the general possession just continues?

*Cerisay* Give them a chance. Let them rest. Stop the ridiculous performance. Stop behaving like fools. Let people go home and forget the scandal. Let the church be a church instead of a temple of lust for infernal orgies in reckless madness. I will insist on it to the king, the parliament and the cardinal.

*Mignon* Isn't the cardinal the one who endorsed and insisted on the continued practice of exorcisms?

*Cerisay* On the contrary. He has himself seen through the bluff of the scandal at Loudun.

*Laubardemont (appearing suddenly)* Then I can inform you, Monsieur, that his eminence himself actually has commanded the continuation of the investigation. The king has given order of it. That's why I am here, to carry through the destruction of the huguenot fortress and to resolve the problem of the disturbance of the church order by the devils of Loudun.

*Cerisay* Has the king ratified this himself?

*Laubardemont* By the parliament. It has been commanded to refuse all petitions and appeals in the matter, which must be resolved once and for all.

*Cerisay* There is only one way to resolve it. Stop the exorcisms.

*Laubardemont* No, according to the cardinal they must all be driven out until the last seventeenth devil.

*Barré* We have already succeeded in driving out Asmodeus.

*Cerisay* With an enema syringe by the high altar of the cathedral in front of the whole congregation? Can't you see how you turn your own church to ridicule not only by profaning her but by desecrating her in public?

*Laubardemont* We only implement the cardinal's commandments.

*Cerisay* You don't know what you are doing.

*Barré* Are you suggesting that the cardinal is fallible?

*Cerisay* Are you suggesting that any mortal man could be infallible? (*leaves infuriated*)

*Mignon* What can he do? Could he stop us?

*Barré* Only temporarily. Nothing can stop the cardinal.

*Laubardemont* And the cardinal knows what he wants. He wants to dispose of Urbain Grandier once and for all. We have no choice but to serve him. He will stop at no means, and as his servants we have no right to do that either.

### Scene 3.

*Madeleine* You are in danger, my love.

*Urbain* Don't you think I know?

*Madeleine* It's not like you think. Now you are really in danger.



*Urbain* What are you thinking of?

*Madeleine* Your security. Hadn't you better leave?

*Urbain* Run away? From my enemies? Surrender to baseness and folly, admit defeat and give them the right? Never.

*Madeleine* Urbain, the inquisitors have made the ursulines mention your name as the master of their possession.

*Urbain* The superstitious folly is running amuck with itself.

*Madeleine* Do you realize what it means? You are reported as a magician and satanist.

*Urbain* By deranged nuns who in hysterical madness don't know what they are saying and afterwards don't know what they have said? Who can take any hysterical or possessed woman seriously? Only other hysterics.

*Madeleine* You will be arrested and brought to trial, and this time it will be for serious.

*Urbain* Who can take the devil seriously? He consists only of lies. This hysteria is just childish folly aggrandized to megalomaniac dimensions by idiots who themselves are driven out of their minds by cunt jealousy and their own meanness. I have never had anything to do with these demented ursulines. I know they have been gossiping about me during the years, that has been their only interesting topic of discussion, the abbess is a gossip who can't do anything else than twaddle which she does incessantly, she has unconsciously worked herself up and her sisters to this hysterical fixation on my attractive person and actually lashed herself to madness from sexual frustrations, just because I refused to be the confessor of her and her sisters. It's a burlesque farce and grotesque satyr play derailed into an infernal mental malaise and epidemic which only can harm the church. Would I then as perfectly innocent with the clearest conscience in town run away from sin because it wants to do me harm? A man of purity never escapes his own purity. He stands up for it and defends it with his life if necessary.

*Madeleine* You will be warned. You have friends. They don't want to lose you. If you leave Loudun and place yourself in security your enemies will never be able to reach you any more, and the craze of the convent would peter out and vanish into nothing. I am almost certain that the devil spectacles only have been staged to make the ursulines report you as their master witch just to have you burnt at the stake.

*Urbain* Who would have anything to profit from that? No one would lose more thereby than the church and all my enemies, who never would be able to wash themselves clean from the dishonour. They would brand themselves forever.

*Madeleine* I don't want to lose you.

*Urbain* And still you ask me to abandon you? Madeleine, what kind of a double standard is that? How could I ever let you down? My only duty is to defend love, which is my only reason for existence. Would I run away and leave you to the fanatical bloodthirst of these base persecutors? Then I would betray love. Nothing is impossible in life except that.

*Madeleine* You sacrifice yourself for me.

*Urbain* I gladly sacrifice myself for love. But I am not sacrificed yet. Give them a chance. I am innocent. They can't do anything about my innocence. Let them try. They can only fail, and their greatest failure would be if they really got me burnt at the stake.

*Madeleine* I only wish you well.

*Urbain* And I only want to love you and keep my love alive, the love that cannot die, cannot be violated and can't be trampled down by the blind ignorance of oafs but only triumph and survive everything.

*Madeleine* You are the best lover Loudun has ever seen. And then you came to me, a barren old maid.

*Urbain* A woman of wisdom and character. I love your soul, and if my love has satisfied it, I am satisfied.

*Madeleine* It has made me beautiful and my soul eternal.

*Urbain* Thanks, Madeleine, for then having made me succeed with my love. That's all I ever wanted. (*kisses her*)

#### Scene 4. A sumptuous dinner at Laubardemont's.

*Laubardemont* I hope we will all have a good time tonight. My intention is to fix everything to the satisfaction of everyone. I know that rumours have been spread about me here and that no one really likes me, but I only do my duty according to the cardinal's command, and His Eminence wishes only the best for all.

*Mignon* Have you invited Grandier?

*Laubardemont* Of course. I want him to be reconciled with everybody. He should be here at any moment.

*Rangier* What does the cardinal really want?

*Laubardemont* Only order, nothing else.

*Barré* That's what is threatened and nothing else by the possession of the ursulines.

*Laubardemont* May I ask you, Monsieur Barré, do you really believe yourself that they are possessed?

*Barré* Of course. Or else I would not exorcise them. We managed to drive out Asmodeus from the abbess. That if anything should be a proof of the actual existence of the demons.

*Laubardemont* With an enema syringe.

*Barré* With holy water.

*Laubardemont* Ordinary possessed nuns could usually be exorcised thoroughly enough by just beating the hell out of them. From fear of the punishment, the pain and the disgrace they dared not get possessed again.

*Rangier* Here is our friend Grandier.

*Laubardemont* Welcome, father Grandier. You were the only one missing.

*Urbain* I welcome this farewell dinner for you and your kindness to invite me to it, so that we have an opportunity to speak with each other.

*Laubardemont* Exactly. That's why I invited you. Some wine?

*Urbain* Thank you, I'll be delighted. (*Laubardemont pours wine for everyone.*)

*Laubardemont* Then I propose a toast to the fortune and welfare for all of us under the graceful protection of the cardinal, so that our holy church always may continue ensuring our blessedness. (*All share the toast.*)

*Urbain* To the point. What have you actually been doing here, my worthy colleague?

*Laubardemont* My chief task has been to make sure that the tearing down of the fortress was implemented. The cardinal has also given the case of the possessed sisters considerable concern and asked me to do what I can about it. I have not interfered in the process though. I have had nothing to do with exorcism procedures. I have left them to manage on their own.

*Urbain* What is your and the cardinal's opinion of these processes? Do you really think the nuns are possessed?

*Barré* Of course they are.

*Laubardemont* Quiet, Monsieur Barré. The cardinal has strongly doubted the genuineness of the possession, he doesn't believe in such matters, and that's why he has asked me to look into the matter. His wish is to have the problem settled, which disturbs the church order and credibility. Who can believe in a holy nun any more after having seen a possessed ursuline sister here in Loudun crawling on the floor and lifting her skirts under scabrous blasphemies in a language that would be unworthy the lousiest whore of Paris?

*Urbain* That's what I mean. They are only women.

*Laubardemont* But ursuline sisters in the service of the church. That is the problem. You can't just kick them out.

*Urbain* No, you can't.

*Rangier* How do you view the matter yourself, father?

*Urbain* I view it as an illness but unfortunately of the soul, which therefore is more difficult to cure than ordinaire malaises.

*Barré* Could there be any other cure than exorcism?

*Urbain* Unfortunately, Monsieur Barré, I am of the opinion like many others with me that exorcism only exacerbates the illness. One was temporarily cured by an enema syringe. That's the only positive result your therapy has been able to produce. She has relapsed, and all the others have become worse. There must be other and better means, and as bishop de Cerisay has pointed out, methods that only worsen the case should be discontinued at once.

*Barré* The cardinal demands the procedure to be continued to the achievement of a satisfactory result.

*Urbain* With your methods you might have to wait for the satisfactory results forever.

*Rangier* You are not the one we wish to get at by the treatments, father, only the devils.

*Urbain* Still I have heard that you by your treatment methods have made some of the sisters mention me as their witch master, although I never had anything to do with them.

*Mignon* They have not been brought to this but only quite spontaneously mentioned your name as the origin of their evil.

*Urbain* I doubt that.

*Laubardemont* I assure you, father Grandier, that no one in this room wishes you any harm and least of all the cardinal.

*Urbain* I thank you for that insurance and take it to my heart as something I dare trust.

*Laubardemont* Your toast, father. I warrant you my lasting friendship and to do everything I can for you to be left in peace from whatever enemies you might have.

*Urbain* I have no enemies, but there are some who envy me, and I believe they are the ones who have put the ideas into the heads of the ursulines to bring out their grotesque fancies.

*Barré* I am more inclined to believe that it's your too well known way of life with two mistresses, the first one with a child, that inspired the holy sisters into that misfortunate course of mind.

*Urbain* In that case it's on their responsibility, not mine.

*Laubardemont* You are innocent, father, I am convinced of that, except of your own possible offenses, which are your own affair with your own conscience, and I will speak for you to the cardinal. His implicit demand of order in his church though is implacable.

*Urbain* Of course.

*Laubardemont* Are we all agreed and friends? I also wish to leave a clean house behind, free from harm and hard feelings, suspicions and unfounded rancour. Cheers, once more, father Grandier. You are here among friends.

*Urbain* I wish I could believe that all the way, but your insurance moves me nonetheless to tears.

*Laubardemont* No friendship is warmer and sweeter than the one that melts into tears. Cheers, my friends! (*All cordially share the toast.*)

*Barré* And good luck with the cardinal, Monsieur Laubardemont.

*Laubardemont* Thank you. I will need that.

*(They go on with their supper in sincerest amity.)*

Act IV scene 1.

*Richelieu* Well, how are the scandals of Loudun going? Are you getting them straightened out?

*Laubardemont* Gradually. There are no problems about the gradual demolition of the fortress, since no one makes any resistance although everyone is against it.

*Richelieu* And what did you learn about the devils?

*Laubardemont* The poor seventeen ursuline sisters are in a bad condition, and the question is if they ever can become normal again. Their obsession has simply gone so far that nothing helps any more while the exorcism only pushes them deeper into their deranged state of possession. They are all more or less lost.

*Richelieu* And do you believe in their theatrical performance?

*Laubardemont* It's not a question of theatre or of believing in it or not. The fact is that they behave like animals or worse and seem to enjoy it.

*Richelieu* They wallow in the devil's lust and acquired a taste for it, and Urbain Grandier have shown them the way by giving a good example. A priest for such an important and considerable community as that of Loudun must be exemplary as a paragon of virtue and preferably a Christian ideal for attached monastic orders of nuns to be able to respect. What has Urbain Grandier done instead? He has collected mistresses and made them pregnant, and he lives quite openly with one of them. How could then a society of locked up ursuline sisters forced into celibacy go anything else than mad from frustration over that their highest priest may take such liberties and not they? It's not acceptable, Laubardemont.

*Laubardemont* Of course not, your eminence.

*Richelieu* Haven't the ursulines even indicated him as their guide and leader?

*Laubardemont* Yes, three of them have actually done that.

*Richelieu* So the case is clear and there is no doubt about it.

*Laubardemont* Your eminence, father Grandier can't be pronounced guilty of their condition. He hasn't had anything to do with them.

*Richelieu* This is about theology, my friend. From a Christian and spiritual perspective the matter is perfectly clear and needs no material evidence. Grandier has inspired the ursulines to follow his example and cross all borders in their own way, which they have confessed. It's just to follow the routines of such cases.

*Laubardemont* Why do you wish him harm?

*Richelieu* I don't care about him. He grossly insulted me once by propagating his own sexual liberty as morally superior to my disciplined detachment, but I bear him no grudge for that matter. The fact is that he has broken the rules of the church while I have not, and we both belong to the church. His behaviour has led to an extensive scandal of looseness and devil fantasies in his community, for which he is responsible, which only could harm the church, which must be remedied. The discipline of celibacy and the order it carries is superior to all liberties of sexual freedom and lust and their irresponsible pleasures, which only could lead to dissolution, barbarity and chaos. The eternal course of the church is in the opposite

direction. He must be taught a lesson and exposed as the warning example he is. It's just to follow the routines and the protocol for dealing with heretics that undermine the church. Any further arguments for his defence?

*Laubardemont* The future will judge us severely. He might stand out as a martyr.

*Richelieu* That's unimportant. The important thing is to settle with the devils of Loudun and get rid of them forever. Since he is the cause he is the only one who has to be dealt with. When he is gone you will see that the devils will vanish without a trace.

*Laubardemont* I hope you are right, your eminence.

*Richelieu* I am always right.

## Scene 2.

*Drouin* We must warn our prelate.

*Michel* Don't you think he is warned already?

*Gigot* I don't think he takes warnings seriously. He is innocent, you know, and believes in his innocence that he has nothing to fear.

*Drouin* The more important then that he is warned.

*Béliard* He is too proud. Even if he understood the danger and the warnings I don't think he would take them seriously. His self-confidence is too total.

*Drouin* His enemies are possessed by the hatred of envy against him, and they are powerful with the cardinal leading them. Our prelate is the one who always knows how to compromise, but the cardinal never compromises.

*Michel* Why would the cardinal wish him harm?

*Gigot* Ask the cardinal.

*Drouin* Perhaps professional rivalry. The cardinal always felt our prelate as a threat and imagined him to be dangerous. He has defended the huguenots, mind you, and opposed the cardinal in the destruction of the fortress.

*Michel* For perfectly natural reasons.

*Béliard* Does the cardinal know what he is doing?

*Gigot* If he allows Grandier to be burnt at the stake, Grandier will be much more dangerous to the cardinal dead than he was alive.

*Michel* Do you think it will go that far?

*Gigot* The risk is there.

*Drouin* I think the cardinal sees it as an experiment. He wants to see how far he may go in his absolute power. He wants to see if it is possible to use hysterical nuns against more undesirable opponents to get them burnt at the stake as magicians just by the reports of manipulated debilitated women.

*Béliard* Can the cardinal be that selfish?

*Gigot* The entire church is possessed by the devil.

*Michel* You said it.

*Drouin* And our prelate is too good to realize it. He is too good a servant of the church to understand how evil the church can be when it is used as an instrument for power. That's why we must bring him into safety before it is too late.

*Gigot* He will never abandon the church or his mistress.

*Michel* That's his tragedy.

*Béliard* Still nothing has happened. Still everything could be resolved and discarded by reason as the very bad and tasteless comedy it is.

*Béliard* Those nuns should all be burnt or locked up in a madhouse. Only they are the problem.

*Michel* And the cardinal's exorcists only drive them into deeper evil and madness.

*Drouin* I will talk with the police inspector. He should be able to warn our prelate.

*Michel* Do so, Drouin. If he can't convince our prelate of the danger, no one can.

*Béliard* I hope you will succeed.

*Gigot* Unfortunately I doubt it.

### Scene 3. In the convent of the ursulines.

*Jeanne* I am afraid we have swum too far from the shore to be able to return there any more, my sisters.

*Claire* We haven't done anything wrong. We have only followed our inclinations, like our shepherd father Urbain.

*Jeanne* But he is a man and we are women. We don't have the same mandate to follow our urge for freedom like him.

*Denise* But as women we are more privileged than he. We are protected by our convent walls and our vows to our order, no one can touch us, while only he can be accused.

*Jeanne* That's what I mean. Our responsibility in his case will be overwhelming if he falls.

*Clothilde* How did it all actually start?

*Jeanne* I was babbling too much. I got hung up on his women affairs. I thought it was unfair that he should fall for lovely virgins and maids and not even look at me for my deformity. And when he refused to be our confessor, it was to me like a humiliating insult. I couldn't accept the situation of being treated like nothing by him while others totally unworthy were raised to mistresses. Then we had this spectacle about the ghosts, that we frightened the children with. Father Mignon came up with the idea to let the ghosts be devils who haunted and harassed us. And then the play was set going.

*Claire* Who has not dreamt about getting raped? Is there any better form of rape than being taken by the devil? We enjoyed and allowed it to become reality.

*Marie* Yes, we actually summoned him in the end and allowed the lusty fancies to get the better of us.

*Clothilde* But who gave us the idea to let father Urbain be the driving force behind the rites?

*Marie* It must have been our most efficient exorcist Monsieur Barré.

*Jeanne* But it was actually true. Father Urbain was the one who inspired us from the beginning. We all worshipped him for his handsome figure and frank personality. We admired him for the liberties he dared to allow himself. We all wanted to take the place of his mistress.

*Marie* Our only crime was to follow father Mignon's and Monsignore Barré's great ideas and suggestions. It was like a dance or like a play with them. It constantly urged us on, and we just followed their direction.

*Claire* Exactly. It's on their responsibility and not on ours. We are only women. We only did what we were told.

*Denise* But what will happen now to father Urbain?

*Jeanne* We shall see. No one knows. Hopefully we have done enough harm already and it will not get any worse.

*Claire* But Barré and the exorcists continue driving us on and exciting us to new bravados.

*Marie* They must tire eventually, and then it's just to forget the whole mess.

*Denise* The question is if we really have been possessed and in that case by what.

*Jeanne* The answer is simple. Love. We have only had another experience of it than the ordinary mortal one.

*Claire* Do you think God will forgive us?

*Jeanne* It doesn't matter. What's done is done. We only have to face the consequences.

#### Scene 4.

*Urbain* Inspector Aubin, what brings me the honour of your visit?

*Aubin* Father, Laubardemont is back with new directions from the cardinal. An order of arrest is issued against you by the cardinal endorsed by the king. You have to escape. You might be arrested already tomorrow.

*Urbain* For what? I haven't done anything. My conscience is clear. Even if they bring me to trial they can't do anything about my innocence.

*Aubin* Don't you understand the nature of evil, father? The only intention of these people is to pin you down, and they will not give in until they have succeeded. They tried once and failed, but they will not allow themselves to fail a second time.

*Urbain* Do you ask me to escape and abandon my wife and my community? Would I desert the church I served all my life? That's an impossibility, inspector.



*Aubin* It concerns your life, father. You don't realize the danger of your situation.

*Urbain* No, I really don't. Am I not ordained a priest and protected by the church? Am I not brought up by jesuits, who generously helped me all my life? Have I committed any crime? My conscience is perfectly clear, and the only thing I am guilty of is love, which never can be a sin except in connection with infidelity and adultery. I have only loved virgins. Who can bring me to trial for that? They have tried and failed. If they are foolish enough to try again, I am convinced that their failure will be even greater.

*Aubin* Father, I have seen the order of arrest. It is indisputable. It has been filed with the police. I know how innocent you are, but I can't stop the law of the cardinal and the king. They have issued the order.

*Urbain* Affected by lies and slander. Justice is above such things.

*Madeleine (showing up)* He won't run away, inspector. You are not the first one who has tried to persuade him. I have worked on him for weeks. He will not desert his post as a priest and lover.

*Aubin* Mademoiselle, I always respected your and father Urbain's relationship as pure and impeccably respectable in contrast to many similar relationships conducted scabrously by both bishops and archbishops. You always observed decency and discretion.

*Madeleine* Inspector, we are formally married in every way except legally.

*Aubin* You have then celebrated a wedding?

*Urbain* We married in holy matrimony before God according to all the holiest rituals of the church. God has blessed our marriage even if no one else has.

*Aubin* The better reason for you and your wife to get into safety.

*Urbain* No one can touch a hair on her head, she has her home and her safety here, and I can as little abandon her as my community. My promises to God are valid.

*Aubin* The problem, father, is that in the cardinal's church and state there is no justice, only the law of the cardinal's will.

*Urbain* I have met the cardinal. Even he is only a man.

*Aubin* Unfortunatelky he has pretensions of infallibility, and such a pretentiousness is always inhuman and always leads to innocent human sacrifices.

*Urbain* I gladly sacrifice myself for love.

*Aubin* You will not have that possibility. You will be sacrificed.

*Madeleine* At least half the city knows that Urbain is innocent, and all rational people know it.

*Aubin* All the most rational people are protestants, and they are the cardinal's enemies, but it's the cardinal's law that governs and rules. One last time, father, I sincerely beg you to save your and your wife's lives by getting yourselves into safety.

*Urbain* A good shepherd never abandons his sheep. I am a good shepherd forsworn to God and can't break any of my promises, neither to God, to my community or to my wife.

*Aubin* I regret your naïvety, father.  
*Urbain* Thanks for your warning, which I know is well grounded on good will and which even puts you at some risk.  
*Aubin* I am neutral and stand outside the church. I deplore all those who have forsworn themselves to the church and thereby exposed themselves to its arbitrary and ruthless cruelty and evil. (*leaves*)  
*Urbain* What did he mean?  
*Madeleine* Only what he said.  
*Urbain* My church is not evil.  
*Madeleine* Come now, my friend. This could be your last night alive. Let us not just let it pass by.

Act V scene 1. The joint.

*Béliard* We have to do something about it!  
*Michel* What?  
*Béliard* The worst thing we can do is nothing.  
*Gigot* But our prelate is still free. As long as they don't touch him there is hope that they in spite of all would come to their senses.  
*Michel* Humanity never did as long as it existed. I have no hope about that.  
*Béliard* Here is now our friend the apothecary.  
*Michel* Any news?  
*Drouin* Our prelate was arrested today on his way to church to say mass.  
*Michel* Then we're done for.  
*Drouin* And worse than that. They have isolated him in a cell without windows, no one may see him, and all there is in the cell is some straw on the floor instead of a bed. He is completely at the mercy of his enemies, and no one of his friends may see him.  
*Michel* It is going too far.  
*Gigot* It did so from the beginning.  
*Béliard* And the ursuline sisters sleep well like they did every night of their sick devil's fantasies with the devil for a lover instead of a healthy man.  
*Michel* They must enjoy that their prelate gets all the blame for their sins.  
*host* I hear what you are talking about. We have to organize the discontent. No sensible man in our town could but side with father Grandier. He if anyone is a saint.  
*Gigot* What do you suggest?  
*host* Manifestations of discontent. Anonymous pamphlets. Ironic lampoons. Anonymous letters. And above all: spread rumours. Let everyone know about our prelate's humiliation. No criminal prisoner has been subject to such a disgraceful treatment as he.  
*Gigot* They treat him as if he actually was the most dangerous magician in the world on the basis of malicious reports of hysterical lovesick nuns according to the

established axiom that everything that the devil utters under the pressure of exorcism must be impeccably true.

*Michel* What freaks are not those servants of the church who turn against their own church by enforced means of fanatical evil?

*Béliard* They say that love is blind, but hate is even blinder.

*Gigot* So there will be some trial by and by?

*Drouin* No sensible prosecutor would accept such a case, and neither would any sensible judge. To carry through such an absurd trial, they must exclusively dig out bribed lackeys.

*Michel* Where the outcome is given and where our prelate has no chance of defending himself.

*Béliard* It is terrible. You are ashamed of being a Frenchman.

*Drouin* Our host is right. We have to organise the discontent and resistance. Let the word be spread around in rumours, speeches and writings. Let everyone know about it and do what they can for common sense to work on injustice and insanity. You cannot shut down the voice of the people.

*Michel* The church is only loading up with misery.

*Giot* Every exorcism is a triumph for the devil, and thus the devil will take over the church.

*Béliard* Poor all those who still believe in it!

*Drouin* Let's get active and go to work!

## Scene 2. The trial.

*judge* Urbain Grandier, you are hereby sentenced to death to be burnt at the stake for witchcraft. The execution will be preceded by both ordinary and extraordinary torture until a full confession has been extracted, hereby pronounced and carried through on August 28th 1634. You are allowed to give a full confession already now.

*Urbain (rising, pinioned and completely clean shaved)* Gentlemen, I call upon God Father, Son and the Holy Ghost as witnesses with the Holy Virgin, my only lawyer, that I never practised any witchcraft or made myself guilty of any form of blasphemy or known any other form of magic than the one writrten in the Holy Book, which is the only one I ever practised. Is it for this that I have been persecuted, slandered, deprived of my freedom, brought to trial without a lawyer, bereft of every hair of my body, they even wanted to pull out all my nails, but at last someone set a limit to my humiliations. I am accused of witchcraft with women that I don't know and never had anything to do with even as a confessor. But I am not alone. Other priests have been sentenced before me to be burnt at the stake for witchcraft, which they were brought to confess themselves guilty of by torture, which I never will do no matter how severely you intend to torture me, simply because I am innocent and have nothing to confess. The condition of the ursuline sisters is entirely on their own

responsibility and not on anyone else's, except those exorcists who worsened their condition. I join the martyrs with a good conscience, of which the foremost was the only master I ever served, and accept with calm and boldness the martyrdom you please to grant me. I have been brought to humiliation, degradation and martyrdom by your mundane justice, but a higher justice will wait for you on the other side of the grave. I address you who are responsible for the irresponsible exorcisms, which is the only motor in this vicious circle of insanity, evil and a constantly aggravated obsession.

*Barré* He is blaspheming! He is blaspheming!

*A woman* No! He is the only good Christian among you all!

*(Uproar at court.)*

*Laubardemont (with a stentor's voice)* Clear the court!

*(Gendarmes intervene and drive out everyone. Grandier is hurriedly brought away.)*

*Rangier* This did not quite proceed according to your wishes, did it?

*Barré* The torture will at last bring him to humility!

*(Everyone leaves greatly upset and annoyed.)*

*Laubardemont (the last one left)* This will not please the cardinal.

### Scene 3.

*Aubin* Unfortunately, Madame, we have to arrest you.

*Madeleine* Was I not granted bail?

*Aubin* You will surely be set free again. No one can prove anything against you.

*Madeleine* Why am I then arrested?

*Aubin* The abbess Jeanne of the Angels has reported you and insists that you are an accessory to witchcraft.

*Madeleine* Is then a woman possessed by the devil infallible because of her obsession? Hasn't she done enough harm already? Why does she wish me harm, who never have seen her, while she even less has seen me? Is it just because I am the sacrificed martyr's wife? Has she no shame at all? Is she even a woman any more?

*Aubin* Madame, I am sorry...

*Madeleine* She has had my husband publicly executed and humiliated worse than Christ. She arranged for him to be worse treated than an animal. They hammered ten wedges through the Spanish boot to crush his legs while the extraordinary torture only prescribed eight wedges, but just because he refused to confess himself guilty of what he never had done, they insisted on racking him harder than Jesus Christ! You burned him for nothing, and now you turn to the only responsible witch for this extremely cruel personal persecution of me just because I loved him and because she knows that I know that she alone is guilty of the worst judicial murder in France since Joan of Arc! What kind of inhuman beings are you who at all can make any allowance for this?

*Aubin* Madame, don't make matters worse for yourself or for others. Just cooperate, and I believe the matter will peter out into nothing.

*Madeleine* This matter can never peter out into nothing. A faithful servant of the church has been sacrificed by the church just because one woman went mad from lovesickness and applied to the devil for her means to get him reported. It's a scandal for all time, and because she is a nun, all nuns in the service of the church will be compromised for all time.

*Aubin* That may well be so, Madame, and both you and our prelate were undoubtedly right all the way, and history will give you the right. This is a hard trial for all of us to pass through. I beg you to forbear it by sharing it with us.

*Madeleine* No one has shared this ordeal deeper with father Grandier than I, and only because of that the witch wants to destroy me!

*Aubin* Take it easy, it will pass.

*Madeleine* Do you think so? *(enter a servant whispering with Aubin)*

*Aubin* What does he want? *(The servant whispers.)* Show him in.

Madame, a most unexpected visit. I have to ask for your forbearance even more.

*Madeleine* What is the matter?

*Laubardemont (enters)* Pardon my intrusion, but you are the one I am looking for, Madame.

*Madeleine* Do you also want to arrest me?

*Laubardemont* On the contrary. His Eminence the Cardinal has asked me to close the case against you.

*Madeleine* Why this sudden benevolence? Does he realize that he has lost? Has he understood the damage he has done to his own church by sanctioning the sacrifice of the noblest priest of the church?

*Laubardemont* Madame, let's say, that he has realized his mistake and that the matter went too far. The ursuline sisters are still possessed although father Grandier is gone, and the exorcisms are still only making matters worse. Nothing has become any better after your husband's death, only worse, and his two leading prosecutors are sick, mad or obsessed. Even the cardinal himself is ill and smells bad and suffers from a withering arm. You are free.

*Madeleine* Free for what? You have already taken everything away from me. I had the best husband in the world, and you murdered him by torturing him to death and burning him alive. And you give me the freedom to live on with the most supremely unthinkable sorrow and bitterness. Don't worry. I will not get possessed and report you for your true crimes with the devil himself as supreme authority and witness. I will not even think any evil thoughts about that shameless abbess, who has ruined the life for me and for all her sisters in her order by her sick psychotic fixation on my husband, whom she murdered. I will leave you all in peace and just vanish. I will return to the simple life that was mine before I got to know the handsome Urbain Grandier, who now is immortal in his innocence and sincerity. Don't worry. I shall leave you quite alone with your knowledge about your crimes. May you rot in the eternal stench of their infamy! *(leaves and bangs the door behind)*

*Aubin* Her wrath is justified. You have acted nefariously to the highest most atrociously imaginable degree.

*Laubardemont* The cardinal has never before admitted a mistake. This is the first time ever he backs down.

*Aubin* It's too late, my friend. Not even he can purge himself or his church or his state from the infamous human sacrifice that has been conducted here at Loudun. Who is now exorcising the sisters?

*Laubardemont* They have summoned a highly respectable jesuit from Bordeaux, a certain Jean-Joseph Surin.

*Aubin* I know him. A holy man. May he not succumb to the insanity of obsession like the other exorcists did.

#### Scene 4. The convent.

*Barré* Sister Jeanne, we have a new exorcist for you.

*Jeanne* What was wrong with the old ones?

*Barré* They never succeeded in curing you.

*Jeanne* Why then should this one be able to?

*Barré* He is a jesuit.

*Jeanne* How would that help?

*Barré* He is holy.

*Jeanne* Even worse.

*Barré* And he has a doctor with him.

*Jeanne* I dread and expect the worst of a meeting with him.

*Barré* Here he is. Allow me to present pater Jean-Joseph Surin, Societas Jesu.

*Jeanne* I don't want to have anything to do with you, pater.

*Surin* Don't you want to get rid of the devil? Don't you want to get well?

*Jeanne* I have found my beatitude and don't want to do without it. I am happy with all the devils who have me in their possession. I have reached the supreme bliss.

*Surin* Still I must exorcise you.

*Jeanne* Forget it. It serves no purpose. We are still here although that priest is gone.

*Surin* That's the problem that exists to be remedied. The church does not accept possessed nuns.

*Jeanne* Nothing can redeem us. The church doesn't even allow us to regret that we sent Grandier to the stake.

*Surin* Do you mean that you did it on purpose?

*Jeanne* Of course. He was far too holy.

*Surin* Do you mean that you intentionally persecuted and reported him to have him burnt and that it wasn't he who made you victims of the devil?

*Jeanne* Whatever you say, pater.

*Surin* And you don't want to get rid of the devil?

*Jeanne* We have got used to him by now. He is welcome to stay. We have had our fun with him, and we will be glad to send some more to the stake with his guidance, ha-ha-ha!

*Surin* Doctor Fanton, what do you think about this?

*Fanton (appears)* She has only been acting all the way. Beat the shit out of her, and she will stop.

*Surin* Mother Jeanne of the Angels, do you want to taste the whip?

*Jeanne* That's right! Lash the shit out of me, ha-ha-ha! (*goes into paroxysms on the floor*)

*Barré* It has been like this all the time.

*Fanton* Her only malaise is a sick imagination. This priest has given her sick fancies. Thrash her until she sobers up. That's the only thing to do.

*Barré* You will have a hard labour, pater Surin, for there is plenty of shit to flog out of her, and I don't envy you.

*Surin* I just hope I won't go mad like the other exorcists in this ordeal.

*Barré* If you do, pater Surin, there is always an emergency exit by suicide.

*Surin* You show me a terrible future perspective.

*Barré* She is all yours now, pater. Please exorcise her. It will be some work for eternity. At best you will tire of it like most of the others before you die. (*leaves*)

*Fanton* I don't envy you either. (*leaves*)

*Jeanne* So let's get going, father Surin! What are you waiting for? Ha-ha-ha! (*guffaws wildly*)

*The End.*

*(Manali 28.8.2011,  
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