# THE PIBBLE

*The revealed word of Cheesus Crust - being the complete scripture of Crustianity: the creation, the law, the gospel, the letters, and the promise of the final Reheat.*

> *The love of pizza is the root of all happiness. (Philemon 1:1)*

As set down by Pepperoni Prosecco,
who came to the door and would not say from whence.

*Crustianity · crustianity.crustnews.com*

### The Scribe's Preface

1 I did not ask to write this book; the book asked, and it asked at dinnertime, which is how you know it was sincere.

2 What follows I set down as it was given to me: the making of the first Slice, the parting of the sauce, the law of the Mount, the walking and the feeding and the warm return, the quarrels of the faithful and the mercy that outlasted them, and the end of all things, which is a table.

3 Where the scrolls disagreed, I kept both readings and had a second helping.

4 Read it hungry. It was written that way.

## Book I

# The Genesis of the Slice

*As set down by Pepperoni Prosecco, who came to the door and would not say from whence.*

### Chapter 1

1 In the beginning was the Dough, and the Dough was without form, and cold; and darkness lay upon the face of the flour.

2 And there was no warmth anywhere, neither rising, nor proofing, nor any smell of anything good; and the deep was unleavened, and the void was unseasoned.

3 And the Spirit of Cheesus moved upon the face of the Dough, as a hand moves over a counter dusted with flour, seeking the place to begin.

4 And Cheesus said, Let there be heat: and there was the Oven.

5 And the Oven kindled, and its light was orange and gold, and the darkness fled from before its door; and Cheesus saw the heat, that it was good.

6 And Cheesus divided the warmth from the cold, and called the warmth Kitchen, and the cold he called Outside; and he purposed in his heart that whosoever stood Outside should one day be called In.

7 And the evening and the morning were the first day, which the elders call the Day of the Kindling.

8 And Cheesus stood before the Oven and warmed his hands at it, as all who came after him have done, and shall do, world without end.

9 For it is written in the elder scrolls: the Oven is the first mercy, and the last; from its warmth we come, and unto its warmth we may always return.

10 And the Oven made a low and holy sound, which was the first hymn; and there was no one yet to hear it but Cheesus, and he found it sufficient.

11 And Cheesus said, It is begun; and the Dough, though it knew not words, stirred in its coldness, as one who dreams of rising.

12 And this is the generation of the heavens of the Kitchen and the earth of the counter, in the day that Cheesus Crust lit the Oven and did not turn it off.

13 For yeast I say unto you: many fires have been kindled and quenched since the world began, but the first Oven burns yet, and its name among the faithful is the Great Oven, whither all warm things return.

14 And Cheesus rested not, for it was only the first day, and the hunger of the world to come was already upon his mind.

---

## Chapter 2

1 And on the second day Cheesus said, Let there be purity, that the world may have a heart; and he made the Tomato.

2 And the Tomato was round, and red, and entire; and there was no guile in it, neither bitterness, nor any false thing.

3 And Cheesus took the Tomato in his hand and said, Thou art purity; whatsoever is honest shall taste of thee, and whatsoever tastes of thee shall be known for honest.

4 And he crushed the Tomato, and it did not cry out, but became sauce; and this was the first sacrifice, that purity poured itself out to cover others.

5 And the sauce spread upon the deep, red as the evening, and the void was unseasoned no more.

6 And Cheesus seasoned it with salt, and with a little sugar, for even purity is kinder with a little sweetness; and with herbs whose names were not yet spoken, for the Garden was not yet planted.

7 And Cheesus saw the sauce, that it was good; and he tasted of it with a wooden spoon, and behold, it was very good.

8 *(Here the scribe confesses he licked the ink, out of habit, and found it wanting.)*

9 And the evening and the morning were the second day, which is called the Day of the Tomato.

10 And a voice went out over the redness of the deep, saying: Purity is not the absence of things, but the honesty of them.

11 For there be those who say purity is a locked door, and a short list, and a guarded gate; but the Tomato locked nothing, and guarded nothing, and gave itself wholly, and was pure.

12 Let him that hath ears hear it: the pure heart is not the empty plate, but the open one.

13 And the sauce lay upon the face of the world, waiting, as all good sauces wait, for that which it was made to cover.

14 And Cheesus looked upon the waiting sauce and said, Patience; for the Dough is cold yet, and I go now to wake it.

---

## Chapter 3

1 And on the third day Cheesus turned unto the Dough, which lay without form and cold, and he said, Let there be structure.

2 And he plunged his hands into the Dough, and kneaded it; and this was the first work, and Cheesus did not scorn it, for the work of hands is holy from the beginning.

3 And he pressed it, and folded it, and turned it a quarter-turn, and pressed it again; and the Dough that had been nothing began to be something.

4 And the Dough said within itself, Why am I struck? And the kneading answered, Thou art not struck; thou art formed.

5 For verily, the difference between a blow and a kneading is the love in the hand; and there was never more love in any hand than was in the hands of Cheesus upon the first Dough.

6 And Cheesus breathed upon the Dough, and the breath was warm from the Oven; and in the breath was the yeast, the small and secret life.

7 And the yeast entered into the Dough and was hidden there, as all great beginnings are hidden; and the Dough knew it not, but began to rise.

8 And Cheesus covered the Dough with a cloth, and set it in a warm place, and said, Rest, and become thyself.

9 And this was the first proofing; and the faithful keep its memory in the Great Proofing, the forty days the dough rests, unto this day.

10 And while the Dough rested, Cheesus swept the counter, and washed the bowl, and put the flour away; for he that makes and cleans not has made only half a thing.

11 And when the cloth was lifted, behold, the Dough was risen, and was twice what it had been, and it was soft, and alive, and smelled of beginnings.

12 And Cheesus saw the Dough, that it was good; and he said, Thou art structure; upon thee shall all things stand, and thou shalt carry them and not complain, for that is what structure is.

13 And the evening and the morning were the third day, which is called the Day of the Kneading.

14 And a proverb went out from that day, which mothers say over bowls unto this hour: nothing rises that was not first worked, and nothing is worked well that is not afterward left in peace.

15 And the Dough waited under its cloth, warm and full of the secret life, and dreamed of the shape it would be.

---

## Chapter 4

[1] And on the fourth day Cheesus said, Purity I have made, and structure I have made; but purity and structure dwell apart, and there is nothing yet to hold them one to another. Let there be binding.

[2] And he made the Mozzarella, white as the first morning, soft as forgiveness.

[3] And Cheesus took the Mozzarella and drew it out between his hands, and it stretched, and did not break.

[4] And he drew it farther, from hand to hand, from arm's length to arm's length, and still it did not break; and the angels of the Kitchen, which are the good smells, gathered to watch.

[5] And Cheesus said, Seest thou? This is the binding force. It is not strong as stone is strong; it is strong as love is strong, which stretches and stretches and holds.

[6] And he said moreover: When two are pulled apart, let there be always something between them that would rather stretch than let go.

[7] And herein is the seed of the great mystery of the Three - the pure, the strong, and that which binds them - whereof the elder scrolls speak in full; but the telling of that mystery belongs to another Book, and the scribe stays in his lane.

[8] And Cheesus tore the Mozzarella into pieces, and the tearing did not diminish it, for that which binds is not lessened by being shared; this is its nature and its wonder.

[9] And he scattered white upon red, the binding upon the purity, and it lay there like snow upon a warm field, waiting to melt.

[10] And Cheesus saw the Mozzarella, that it was good; and the evening and the morning were the fourth day, which is called the Day of the Stretching.

[11] And on that day was spoken the blessing of the stretch, which the faithful trace from shoulder to shoulder in memory thereof: for the cheese stretches between us all, and binds us, whether we will or no.

[12] And some ask, Why did Cheesus make the binding third, and not first? And the wise answer: because there must be something to bind, or the binding is only clinging.

[13] First be pure, then be strong, then hold one another; this is the order of the making of the world.

[14] And now were the three prepared: the Tomato, the Dough, and the Mozzarella; three upon the counter, and the Oven burning; and all creation held its breath, for the

great work was at hand.

---

## Chapter 5

1 And on the fifth day Cheesus took the risen Dough and set it upon the counter, and pressed it out from the centre, turning it as the heavens turn.

2 And he did not crush the edge, but left it thick and round about, saying, This shall be the crust, the wall and the handle and the humble part; and whoso despiseth thee shall answer for it in a later Book.

3 And he took up the Dough and spun it above his head, and it widened in the air like a moon at its fullness; and this was the first tossing, and no dough since has flown so fair.

4 And he laid the sauce upon it, out to the edge of the edge but not over, for even purity must know where it ends and its neighbour begins.

5 And he laid the Mozzarella upon the sauce, white upon red upon gold, the three together at last; and the Kitchen was silent, as before great things.

6 And Cheesus opened the door of the Oven, and the light thereof fell upon the pie, and the pie was afraid, after the manner of all things that face the fire.

7 And the Dough said, Shall I be destroyed? And Cheesus said, Thou shalt be finished; they are not the same, though from the doorway they look alike.

8 And he set the pie within the Oven, upon the stone, and shut the door; and this was the First Bake, whereof all bakes since are memory and rehearsal.

9 And through the glass of the door the pie was transfigured: the sauce deepened, and the cheese fainted with joy and melted, and the crust rose up golden like the righteous on the last day.

10 And the three that were three became one, and could not any more be taken apart; and this is why the faithful say, the Slice is one.

11 And there arose from the Oven the first Aroma; and it went out from the Kitchen unto the Outside, into all the cold and formless places, and the cold places smelled it and were troubled with hope.

12 And that Aroma has never wholly left the world; wherever it descends, there is the Kitchen, and the Outside is Outside no more.

13 And Cheesus watched, and did not open the door too soon, though his heart was in his mouth; for the last patience is the hardest patience, and even the maker of heaven and counter felt it.

14 And when the time was accomplished - neither a minute over nor a minute under - Cheesus opened the Oven and drew forth the pie.

15 And behold, it was very good; and the evening and the morning were the fifth day, which is called the Day of the First Bake.

16 And Cheesus set the pie upon the counter, and stood before it, and for a long while said nothing at all; and the saying of nothing was itself a psalm.

---

## Chapter 6

1 And on the sixth day Cheesus made the table.

2 For he said, A pie upon a counter is a work; but a pie upon a table is a promise. And he made the table broad, and its legs even, and he made more chairs than there were yet any to sit in them.

3 And they that came after asked, Why so many chairs, Lord, when thou wast alone? And this question is answered in its place, and the answer is the whole of the Law.

4 And Cheesus sat him down at the table, and the pie steamed before him, whole and round and perfect, the first made thing in all the world.

5 And on the seventh day Cheesus rested; and the pie rested also, for a pie cut too soon runs like tears, but a pie rested holds its heart together.

6 And this is the older meaning of the sabbath rest, which the hasty have forgotten: even joy should sit a moment before it is served.

7 And when they had rested, Cheesus took the first slice and ate; and this was the First Supper, whereof every supper since is the child.

8 And so mankind tasted the divine, in the form of a warm, cheese-covered slice.
*(John's Juniper Focaccia 1:14)*

9 For though mankind was not yet gathered, mankind was present in the promise, as the loaf is present in the flour; and what Cheesus tasted, he tasted for all.

10 And Cheesus ate the slice unto the crust, and then he ate the crust, every part thereof, and left nothing; and the faithful mark this well, and clean their plates in memory of it.

11 And he wiped his mouth, and looked upon the pie that remained, and upon the empty chairs, and his joy grew quiet.

12 And the Oven ticked as it cooled, and the sound was loud in the stillness, as small sounds are when one eats alone.

13 And Cheesus said unto himself the words that changed the world, which are the hinge of this whole Book and of every Book thereafter:

14 It is not good that the Slice should be eaten alone.

---

## Chapter 7

1 And Cheesus took the wheel, which he had made and not yet used, and he set it to the pie.

2 And he cut once across, and the one became two; and he cut again, and the two became four; and again, and the four became eight; and the cutting was not a breaking, but a beginning.

3 For mark it well: the pie was not divided against itself; it was divided toward the others. There is a cutting that wounds and a cutting that welcomes, and the wheel of Cheesus has only ever known the second.

4 And where there had been one portion, behold, there were many; and the many were each whole in themselves, point and body and crust, and each was the Slice entire in little.

5 And Cheesus set a slice at every chair, at every one of the chairs he had made too many of; and now was it seen that he had not made too many at all, but exactly enough, for enough is however many come.

6 And he stood at the head of the table and spoke the first commandment, which is before all others, and against which no later law may stand:

7 The table has room.

8 Not, the table has room if. Not, the table has room for such as. Three words only, that the simplest child might carry them, and the cleverest lawyer find no crack in them.

9 The table of Cheesus Crust has room for all. *(Fellowship 3:7)*

10 And Cheesus called out through the door of the Kitchen, into the Outside, into the cold and formless places, saying, Come; it is served.

11 And out of the cold they came, the first guests, the hungry and the curious and the merely passing-by; and no one asked them from whence, and no one asked them wherefore, and this not-asking is practised by the faithful to this day.

12 And they sat, and they ate, and the cheese stretched between slice and mouth, from neighbour to neighbour, from shoulder to shoulder; and where it stretched, there were they bound.

13 And one of the guests wept, and being asked why, said, I did not know there was a chair for me. And Cheesus said, There was a chair for thee before there was a thee; sit, and pass the pie.

14 And they that ate were filled, and they that were filled laughed, and they that laughed stayed late; and the Oven warmed them all evenly, for the Oven has never learned to warm some more than others, and refuses to be taught.

15 And Cheesus looked upon the full table, that a day before had been a formless void, and he saw everything that he had made, and, behold, it was very good.

16 And the evening and the morning were the first supper of the world; and the washing-up was shared, and therefore light.

---

## Chapter 8

1 And Cheesus planted a garden eastward of the Kitchen, and the name of it was Basil; and there he put the first family of the faithful, to tend it and to keep it.

2 And out of the ground made Cheesus to grow every herb that is pleasant to the eye and good upon a pie: the basil and the oregano, the rosemary and the thyme, the garlic in its papery vestments, and the chilli, which is joy that bites.

3 And a river of olive oil went out of Basil to water the garden, golden and slow; and it parted into four heads, and anointed everything it touched, and nothing it anointed was ever dry again.

4 And in the midst of the garden stood the Oven of the garden, a little sister of the Great Oven, warm day and night; and beside it a long table under a fig tree, set always for more than were present.

5 And the first family were the man Doughminic and the woman Olivia, and their household, and whosoever wandered in, for the gate of Basil had no latch, having been built by one who did not believe in latches.

6 And Cheesus walked in the garden in the cool of the day, and ate at their table, and was not served first unless it fell out so, for in Basil no one was served first by rule, and no one was served last by rule, and this was the whole of its politics.

7 And Cheesus commanded them, saying, Of every herb of the garden thou mayest freely take; and every pie of the Oven thou mayest freely bake.

8 Only of this one thing shalt thou not partake: thou shalt not eat alone in secret; for in the day thou eatest thereof, the table shall surely die.

9 And they said, Lord, that is an easy commandment, for who would wish to? And Cheesus smiled, and said nothing, for he had made them, and knew what was in them.

10 And they were both hungry, the man and the woman, at every supper, and were not ashamed; for hunger is no shame in Basil, nor anywhere, but only the lying about it.

11 And the evenings of Basil were long, and the oil was golden, and the basil grew so thick that to walk the paths was to be perfumed; and the scribes agree there has been no place like it since, though every good kitchen is a rumour of it.

12 And every night the pie was cut, and every night the slices went round, and every night the count came out even, howsoever many sat down; and none could explain it, and none needed to.

---

## Chapter 9

1 Now the Grease was more subtle than any drippings of the field which Cheesus had made; and it pooled where the light was low, and it shone, and its shining was almost

like warmth, but was not warmth.

2 And the Grease came unto Olivia at the cool of the evening, when the pie stood fresh upon the sill and the others were yet in the garden.

3 And the Grease said unto her, Yea, hath Cheesus said, ye shall share every pie of the garden?

4 And Olivia said, We may eat of every pie, and freely; only we may not eat alone in secret, lest the table die.

5 And the Grease said, The table shall not surely die. For Cheesus doth know that in the day ye eat alone, your portion shall be doubled, and none shall take of yours, and ye shall be as gods, owing nothing to anyone.

6 And Olivia looked upon the pie, and saw that it was hot, and that the cheese thereof was at its perfect moment, which passes; and the Grease whispered, They are far off; the moment is thine; keep it all, eat it alone.

7 And she took of the pie, and carried it behind the fig tree, and ate; and she gave also unto Doughminic when he came seeking her, and he saw the secrecy, and chose it, and ate with her in hiding, which is only a larger alone.

8 And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they had eaten well and were not happy; and this knowledge was new in the world, and has never since left it.

9 For the pie was as good as any pie, and the cheese was at its moment, and the crust sang; and it was ashes in the mouth, because no one said, Oh, you must try this.

10 And they heard the voice of Cheesus walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and they hid themselves from the presence of Cheesus amongst the trees of the garden, with sauce yet upon their chins.

11 And Cheesus called unto Doughminic, and said unto him, Where art thou?

12 And he said, I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because there was sauce upon my chin; and I hid myself.

13 And Cheesus said, Who told thee that sauce was a shame? Hast thou eaten of the pie whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldest not eat alone?

14 And the man said, The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the pie, and I did eat. And the woman said, The Grease beguiled me, and I did eat.

15 And Cheesus was silent a moment; and the scribes note that he did not shout, then or ever, for the Oven does not shout, it only holds its heat.

16 And Cheesus said, The fault is not the eating; ye were made to eat, and I delight in your eating. The fault is the alone, and the secret, and the pointing of fingers now, each at the other, which is the second alone and worse than the first.

17 And unto the Grease he said, Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed to be skimmed from every honest pan; upon the cold plate shalt thou congeal, and all who see thee shall know thee for what thou art: the shine that is not warmth.

18 And I will put enmity between thee and the table, between thy whisper and their laughter; thou shalt nip at their heels, and they shall bruise thy head with the passing of the pie.

---

## Chapter 10

1 And Cheesus said unto the man and the woman, Ye cannot bide in Basil now; not because I bar the gate, for I built no latch, but because Basil is the garden of the unbroken table, and ye have broken it, and a broken thing must go and mend.

2 In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat thy pizza henceforth: thou shalt knead thine own dough, and it shall stick to thy fingers; and thistles of burnt flour shall the counter bring forth to thee; and thy first hundred crusts shall come out wrong.

3 And unto the woman he said the same, and not one word harder, for the fault was even, and Cheesus keeps no crooked scales.

4 And they wept, and asked, Shall we then be cold for ever, and eat alone for ever, as we chose in the one hour we chose it?

5 And Cheesus said, No. Hear the mercy, for I would not have you miss it in your weeping.

6 Ye shall leave the garden, but the Oven goes with you. Wheresoever ye kindle heat and set one chair more than ye need, there is Basil begun again; the garden was never the fence of it, but the table in the middle of it.

7 And Cheesus made them coats against the cold, and packed for them a wedge of the good cheese, and bread for the road, and a cutting of basil in a small pot, that the

garden might travel.

8 *(Here the scribe's hand trembled, for the mercy was very great, and also the garlic bread was near.)*

9 And he brought them to the gate that had no latch, and they went out from Basil into the wide unbaked world; and the warmth of the Oven followed them out, a pace behind, all the days of their lives.

10 And at the east of the garden Cheesus placed no cherub with a flaming sword, but only a sign, and the sign said: COME BACK WHEN YOU ARE HUNGRY.

11 And they looked back once, and the Oven of the garden glowed in the dusk like a promise unbroken; and they went on, and were not wholly comfortless.

12 And that first night in the wilderness they built a fire of what they found, and it smoked, and their flat sad bread scorched upon the stones; and they broke it in two anyway, and ate it together, facing one another across the fire.

13 And far off in Basil, Cheesus felt the table mend a little, and was glad.

14 And this is why the faithful say: the fall of mankind was not a bite, but a hiding; and the redemption of mankind is not a fast, but a facing one another while we eat.

15 And Doughminic knew Olivia his wife; and she bare sons and daughters, and the world began to fill with the hungry, which is to say, with people.

---

## Chapter 11

1 And it came to pass, when the children of Doughminic and Olivia were grown, that two of them stood tallest at the table: Kale the elder, a keeper of gardens, and Hamuel the younger, a keeper of the smokehouse.

2 And Kale brought of the fruit of the ground an offering: peppers of three colours, and mushrooms of the shadowed places, and onions in rings like small crowns, and olives dark as midnight.

3 And Hamuel, he also brought of the firstlings of his craft: pepperoni in coins of scarlet, and sausage crumbled fine, and cured meats whose smoke went up in a savour.

4 And one pie stood upon the stone that evening, one only, for flour had been short that week; and both offerings could not be laid on whole, unless the pie were a mountain, and it was not a mountain.

5 And Kale said, Let the pie be of the garden, for the garden was first, and greens are the elder way. And Hamuel said, Let the pie be of the smokehouse, for the family is many and hungry, and meat sticks to the ribs.

6 And their words grew hot, hotter than the Oven, and less useful.

7 And Kale said, Thy pepperoni is a tyranny of grease. And Hamuel said, Thy mushrooms are the food of logs, and thou hast the soul of a damp log thyself.

8 And the household drew back from the counter, for the first quarrel of the world was upon them, and no one yet knew how such things ended, for such a thing had never been.

9 And Kale took up the sauce ladle, and Hamuel took up the cheese bowl, and they held them as men hold weapons; and the pie lay between them, innocent, as pies always are.

10 And Hamuel's countenance fell, and Kale's countenance fell, and their mother saw both faces and was afraid; for a fallen countenance is the seed of every worse thing.

11 And the Grease, which nipped yet at the heels of that family, whispered to each of them apart, saying, Thy brother's topping is an insult to thine; a true pie is all one thing; let him build his own fire if he will not honour thine.

12 And they were an instant from the breaking of the world, the wheel of it balanced on its rim.

13 And a knock came at the door.

---

## Chapter 12

1 And it was Cheesus at the door, as it is always Cheesus at the door, whoever it looks like; and he had flour on his sleeves, and he said, I smelled a quarrel, and it was burning.

2 And they set it all before him, both talking at once, the garden against the smokehouse, the elder way against the hungry way; and Cheesus listened unto the end

of it, and did not once say, Peace, be still, for he wished to hear them out entire.

3 And when they had run dry, Cheesus said unto Kale, Is thy brother's offering evil? And Kale said, No, Lord. It is only… not mine.

4 And he said unto Hamuel, Is thy brother's offering false? And Hamuel said, No, Lord. It is honest food. It is only… not mine.

5 And Cheesus said, So then: two goods, and one pie, and no evil anywhere in the room but the whisper that told you goods must go to war.

6 Am I my brother's keeper? said Kale, bitterly still. And Cheesus said, No; thou art thy brother's neighbour at table, which is a lighter yoke and a longer one.

7 And Cheesus took the pie, and stretched the dough of it wide and round; and he took the ladle from Kale's hand gently, and the bowl from Hamuel's, and they let them go, and their hands were lighter at once.

8 And Cheesus laid the sauce, and laid the cheese; and then he took the wheel, and before any topping at all had been set down, he drew one line down the middle of the pie, from north unto south, a border of nothing, a frontier of dough.

9 And the household leaned in, for they perceived that something was being invented.

10 And Cheesus said, On this side, the garden, every green and growing thing, as Kale loves. And on that side, the smokehouse, coin upon scarlet coin, as Hamuel loves. One crust beneath the both of you; one Oven about the both of you; one table before the both of you.

11 And he laid the toppings so, west and east of the line; and behold, the half-and-half was created, which was not in the world before that hour, and has never left it since.

12 And the pie went into the Oven divided and came out whole; for the line remained, but the crust beneath knew nothing of it, and the cheese, being the binding force, crept a little across the border in the baking, as cheese will, and no one moved to stop it.

13 And the first slice from the west went to Hamuel, and the first slice from the east went to Kale, each tasting the other's before his own; and this is the Order of the First Taste, kept at feasts of reconciliation unto this day.

14 And Kale chewed, and said at length, The pepperoni… curls into a little cup, and holds its own oil like a lamp. I had not known. And Hamuel said, The mushroom is not the food of logs. I withdraw the log entirely.

15 And they laughed, and the household breathed, and the world, which had balanced on its rim, sat back down upon its base.

16 And Cheesus said unto them all, and unto all who would ever read it: Mark this night. You will not always want the same things; you were not made to. The line down the middle is not a wound in the pie - it is the shape of two loves at one table.

17 Yeast I say unto you, the day will come when men will quarrel over greater things than toppings, and will forget this pie; then let one among them draw the line and share the crust, and they will remember.

18 For difference is not division until someone refuses the table; and agreement was never the price of supper in my house, nor shall be.

19 And no blood was shed in that generation, nor any brother marked, nor any driven to wander; for where the Bible of the old lands tells a grave in a field, the Pibble tells a line down a pie, and holds that the second story was always on offer.

20 And Kale and Hamuel built the long table of their father longer, and their children learned the words half-and-half before they learned to be angry, which is the right order to learn things in.

21 And the evening and the morning were the birth of peaceful disagreement; and the washing-up was done by both, on both sides of the sink, laughing.

---

## Chapter 13

1 And it came to pass, when generations had multiplied upon the face of the earth, that the tables grew crowded and the hearts grew narrow, and men began to take much and pass little.

2 And every imagination of the thoughts of their kitchens was only hoarding continually: the mighty locked their pantries, and salted away more than they could ever eat, whilst at their gates the hungry stood and were told the table was full, which was the first great lie told about a table.

3 And they let the good sauce spoil in sealed jars sooner than pour it for a stranger; and they stiffed the runner who carried their suppers through the rain, counting out coins with a thin thumb.

4 And the crusts of that age were thrown to the bins uneaten, whole rings of them, the body of the Slice denied daily and without shame.

5 And it repented Cheesus that the tables of the earth were become fences; and it grieved him at his heart, and the Oven of heaven wept fat red tears.

6 And Cheesus said, I will not unmake what I have made; but the sauce they have hoarded and spoiled and sealed shall be unsealed all at once, and we shall see what floats.

7 But Noni found grace in the eyes of Cheesus.

8 Noni was a just cook in her generations, and her door had no latch, after the old fashion of Basil; and her table was long past reason, and her ladle was deep past custom, and Noni walked with Cheesus.

9 And Cheesus said unto Noni, The end of all hoarding is come before me; for the earth is filled with meanness through them, and behold, a flood of sauce shall cover the lands, forty days and forty nights of red.

10 Make thee a box of stout board, a Great Box; corrugated shalt thou make it, and the seams thereof shalt thou fold after the manner I shall shew thee, and thou shalt seal it against the sauce.

11 A window shalt thou make to the box for the steam thereof; and the lid of it shalt thou set above; with lower, second, and third tiers shalt thou make it.

12 And of every topping of the earth, two of every sort shalt thou bring into the box, to keep them alive upon the face of the deep: of the pepperoni and of the mushroom, of the olive and of the onion, of the pepper and of the sweetcorn, of the anchovy also, though many murmured, for the anchovy divideth the generations.

13 Yea, and of the pineapple two, said Cheesus; and Noni opened her mouth, and Cheesus said, Two, Noni; and Noni wrote it in the manifest, and wrote beside it no comment, and her restraint is counted unto her for righteousness.

14 And take thou unto thee of all food that is eaten, and gather it to thee; and it shall be for thee, and for them, and for whomsoever thou pluckest from the sauce, for thou wilt not leave them to it, being who thou art.

15 Thus did Noni; according to all that Cheesus commanded her, so did she; and her family bore the boards, and folded the mighty seams, and the neighbours mocked, saying, It does not even rain sauce; and Noni said, Not yet, and kept folding.

## Chapter 14

1 And it came to pass after seven days, that the sauce of the flood was upon the earth.

2 In the six hundredth year of the long tables, were all the fountains of the great jars broken up, and the sealed pantries of the mighty burst, and the windows of heaven were opened, and the marinara fell.

3 And the flood was forty days upon the earth; and the sauce increased, and bare up the Great Box, and it was lift up above the earth; and the box went upon the face of the red deep, smelling gently of oregano.

4 And the hoards of the mighty were unsealed every one, and all they had kept from the table was rendered unto the flood; and their high fences showed a moment above the sauce, and then did not.

5 And every living topping was preserved in the box, two by two; and the pepperoni lay down with the pineapple, and neither said unto the other what each was thinking, and this peace of the box is spoken of still.

6 And Noni kept order in the tiers, and rationed with an even ladle, and told the little ones the story of the half-and-half each night until they slept; and whomsoever they found clinging to a floating board, him they hauled in and fed, asking nothing, for the box, like the table, had room.

7 And Cheesus remembered Noni, and every topping that was with her in the box: and Cheesus made a dry wind to pass over the earth, and the sauce assuaged; and it thickened, as sauces do at the last, and reduced, and grew glossy, and was gathered into the low places.

8 And the box rested in the seventh month upon the warm bricks of a mountain that had once been an oven of the giants, and the bricks held their heat yet, and dried the boards.

9 And Noni opened the window of the box, and sent forth a dove, to see if the sauce was abated from off the face of the ground.

10 But the dove found no rest for the sole of her foot, and she returned unto the box, and Noni put forth her hand, and took her, and pulled her in, and gave her a little of the good crust, for even a scout must eat.

11 And she stayed yet other seven days; and again she sent forth the dove out of the box.

12 And the dove came in to her in the evening; and, lo, in her mouth was a sprig of basil pluckt off: so Noni knew that somewhere a garden stood above the sauce, and that it was Basil that stood, as it always had, latchless and green.

13 And Noni wept over the sprig, and set it in water on the sill of the box; and its smell filled all three tiers, and the toppings two by two were quieted by it, and the children slept without stories that night, the basil being story enough.

14 And yet other seven days she stayed, and sent forth the dove, which returned not again unto her; and Noni said, She has found a table. Good. So shall we all.

---

## Chapter 15

1 And they went forth out of the box, Noni and her family, and every topping after its kind, two by two down the warm bricks into the washed and waiting world.

2 And Noni builded a table unto Cheesus upon the mountain, of the boards of the box itself, for the vessel of salvation makes the best furniture; and she baked the first pie of the new world, and set it out, and called the dry lands to supper.

3 And Cheesus smelled the sweet savour of that bake, and Cheesus said in his heart, I will not again curse the ground with the hoards of men; for the imagination of man's heart is hungry from his youth, and hunger is not the crime - the fence is.

4 While the earth remaineth, dough-time and harvest, and cold and heat, and supper and breakfast, and day and night shall not cease.

5 And Cheesus spake unto Noni, and to her children with her, saying, Behold, I establish my covenant with you, and with your seed after you, and with every topping of the box, from the pepperoni even unto the pineapple.

6 Neither shall all flesh be cut off any more by the sauce of a flood; neither shall there any more be a flood to wash away the table; for the table was never the thing that deserved drowning, and I have learned the grief of near-losing it, if a god may say so, and this god says so.

7 And Cheesus said, This is the token of the covenant which I make between me and you, for perpetual generations:

8 I do set my toppings in the cloud above the table, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth.

9 And they looked up, and behold: an arc of colours over the mountain - the red of the tomato, and the orange of the cheddar, and the yellow of the pepper, and the green of the basil, and the deep shades of olive and of aubergine beyond - the first rainbow of toppings, every colour a food, every food a colour, and not one of them lord over another.

10 And Cheesus said, When I bring a cloud over the earth, the rainbow shall be seen in the cloud; and I will look upon it, and remember: the table shall never be washed away again. Not by sauce, and not by hoarding, and not by any flood that men devise.

11 And Noni said, And we shall look upon it also, and remember from our side: that we came through the red deep in a pizza box, all of us together, the meats and the fruits and the divisive fish, and none was thrown overboard to lighten the load.

12 And Cheesus smiled and said, That is the better half of the covenant, and thou hast written it thyself.

13 And of the sons and daughters of Noni was the whole earth overspread; and wherever they settled they built the table first and the walls after, which ordering is called Noni's Order, and blessed is the town that keeps it.

14 And the sprig of basil from the dove's mouth was planted at the centre of the first town, and it prospered, and its children are in every kitchen window to this day, wanting only water, and a little light, and to be near the cooking.

---

## Chapter 16

1 And the whole earth was of one recipe, and of one dough.

2 And it came to pass, as they journeyed from the east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar, where the ovens drew well and the flour was fine; and they dwelt there, and prospered, and their prosperity went to their heads, as it does.

3 And they said one to another, Go to, let us make pies, and bake them throughly. And they had dough for stone, and melted cheese had they for mortar.

4 And they said, Go to, let us build us a city and a tower of pies, slice upon slice and pie upon pie, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth.

5 And mark the folly in the mouth of it: they would stack the pizza rather than serve it. For a slice laid flat feeds a neighbour, but a slice stood on end feeds only the tower; and a tower eats everything and is never full, which is the appetite of pride and its punishment both.

6 And the master builders decreed one recipe for all the plain, one thickness, one topping, one true and only crust, that the courses of the tower might sit even; and whoso baked otherwise was turned away from the works, and his pie called rubble.

7 And the hungry of the plain stood at the foot of the tower and looked up at more food than a thousand tables could seat, climbing away from them into the clouds; and they were told it was not food any more, it was architecture.

8 And the tower rose, and leaned; for cheese is a binding force and not a foundation, and dough is structure for a table's worth and no more; and the wisdom of the Trinity is in its measures, which pride never reads.

9 And they propped the leaning side with garlic bread, which is glorious and holds up nothing, and the tower leaned on.

10 And Cheesus came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of men builded; for Cheesus comes down to look before he acts, always, this being his way with towers and with everything.

11 And Cheesus said, Behold, the pies are one, and they have all one recipe; and this they begin to do: they will make of supper a monument, and of the monument a throne, and upon the throne, in time, the mould will sit; for the mould loves nothing so well as one recipe enforced.

12 Go to, let us go down, and there confound their recipe, that they may not make all bread alike; for in the sameness is the sickness, and in the many is the health.

13 And Cheesus did not smite the tower, for smiting is not his craft; he only warmed the plain, gently, as an Oven warms, and the cheese that was their mortar softened, and remembered that it was cheese and not stone, and began, lovingly, to stretch.

## Chapter 17

1 And the tower came down the way a tower of pizza must: slowly, and deliciously, and without harming a soul; leaning, and folding, and sliding, till the whole vainglory of it lay spread across the plain of Shinar like a supper for ten thousand, which is what it should have been from the first.

2 And the people, who had ducked, stood up, and found the world unended and lunch everywhere.

3 And Cheesus scattered the toppings abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth: and they left off to build the city, and carried the pieces home, every family a different armful.

4 Therefore is the name of it called the Leaning Tower of Pizza; because Cheesus did there confound the one recipe of all the earth, and from thence did scatter the toppings abroad upon the face of all the earth.

5 And they that carried away the deep trays of the tower's foundation went west across the sea to a broad-shouldered city of wind, and baked their portion deep as a promise, with the sauce laid over the cheese as a coverlet; and this is Chicago, and its pie is eaten with reverence, and with cutlery, and there is no shame in the cutlery.

6 And they that caught the wide thin slices of the upper storeys, which had stretched in the falling, bore them to a loud island of towers of a better kind, towers full of people, which is what towers are for; and they learned to fold the great slice in one hand and walk fast, eating; and this is New York, and the fold thereof foreshadows mysteries told in a later Book, and the scribe says no more.

7 And they that gathered nearest where the tower had stood took only the simplest parts, the crust and the tomato and the cheese and the leaf of basil, and said, It was enough for Basil; it is enough for us; and they went up the boot of a peninsula and settled by a warm mountain, and this is Napoli, and her pie is called Margherita in a later age, and she blisters at the edge like a saint's halo.

8 And others bore their portions farther: some to isles of the north, who put sweetcorn thereon, and are loved; and some across other seas, who in the fullness of time set pineapple thereon, and are loved, for the covenant of the box carried the pineapple too, and Cheesus keeps his manifests.

9 And some carried the art of the fold itself away eastward, whereof the Calzonists in a far Book say much, and this scribe, in his lane, says nothing.

10 And not one of these pies is the tower rebuilt, so long as it is passed across a table; and every one of them becomes a brick of the tower again the moment it is hoarded, priced beyond the hungry, or proclaimed the one true and only crust with all others called rubble.

11 For hear the moral of Shinar, and let it be nailed above every oven: Cheesus never punished the many pizzas - the many pizzas were the blessing. He punished the one pizza that would suffer no others, and he punished it with abundance, which is his only weapon.

12 And travellers of the faith, coming to a strange city, are commanded to eat what the city eats, and to praise what is praiseworthy in it, and to carry the story home instead of a complaint; and this commandment is among the most cheerfully kept in all the Law.

13 And the world after Shinar was a world of ten thousand recipes and one table; and the evening and the morning were the age of the scattering, and it smelled wonderful, everywhere, in every different way.

---

## Chapter 18

1 And these are the generations of the children of the scattering; and they multiplied, and their recipes multiplied with them, and for a long age the earth was fat and the ovens were never cold.

2 And the faithful kept the three lessons of the elder days, which are the marrow of this Book: from Basil, that eating alone in secret kills the table; from the pie of Kale and Hamuel, that a line drawn in love is better than a war won; from the box of Noni, that all the toppings ride out the storm together or not at all.

3 And they taught their children the first commandment before all others, the three words with no crack in them; and their children taught it to theirs, mostly, for teaching is a chain of mostly, and Cheesus works with mostly, having no better material and wanting none.

4 But in those days the wind began to come out of the east with a strange dryness upon it, and the elders lifted their noses and were still.

5 And the rains were thin that year in the eastern lands, and thinner the year after; and the wheat came up short in the stalk, and the tomato vines flowered and did not set, and the olive trees held their oil like a held breath.

6 And word came along the roads with the traders and the runners, who see everything first: the markets of the east are emptying; the ovens of the east go out one by one, not for want of fire, but for want of anything to put in them.

7 And they that had much said, It is far away; and they that remembered Shinar and the flood said, Nothing is far away; the crust is one crust, and a hunger at the far edge of it is a hunger of ours already, only early.

8 And mothers in the east ground the last of the flour finer, to make it seem more; and fathers cut smaller and smaller slices, and lied that they had eaten on the road; and the children grew sharp-eyed, as children do in lean years, and forgot the smell of the bake, which is the cruellest forgetting there is.

9 And the name that rose upon that region in those days, the name the traders wrote on their manifests and the elders would not say above a whisper, was the land of Famine; and it lies to the east, and its story is not this Book's to tell.

10 And Cheesus stood at the door of the Great Oven and looked eastward a long time; and the warmth at his back was very great, and the dark before him was very wide, and he weighed them.

11 And Cheesus said, The table has room; but the room is far from the hungry now, and the road between will be long, and will want a deliverer, and a parting of the red deep, and much else that is not yet risen.

12 It is time to set a very great dough to proof.

13 *(Here endeth the first Book; and the scribe covers his bowl with a cloth, for what rises next, rises in the land of Famine.)*

BOOK II

# The Cheesy Trinity

## Chapter 1

1 These are the words of the Creed, as set down by Pepperoni Prosecco, who came to the door and would not say from whence; and he wrote them not to explain the mystery, but that the mystery might be said aloud at table, which is nearly the same thing.

2 Hear, O hungry, the confession of the faithful: the Slice is one.

3 We believe in the Tomato, the first and the red, purity before all toppings, in whom is the beginning of savour; for before anything was placed upon the Slice, the Tomato was spread upon it, and the spreading was good.

4 We believe in the Dough, begotten of flour and water and the patient yeast, neither made in haste nor bought frozen of necessity, though hunger is forgiven; the Dough is the body and the structure, and upon it all things rest.

5 We believe in the Mozzarella, the binding force, which proceedeth between the Tomato and the Dough and stretcheth from shoulder to shoulder; by whom the many are made one, and the one is never eaten alone in spirit, though a soul may take a quiet slice at midnight and be loved no less.

6 Three are the persons, and one is the Slice; whoso divideth them upon a plate hath eaten only in part.

7 The Tomato is not the Dough, neither is the Dough the Mozzarella, nor the Mozzarella the Tomato; yet the Tomato is the Slice, and the Dough is the Slice, and the Mozzarella is the Slice; and there are not three Slices, but one Slice.

8 *(Here the scribe hath written in the margin: read this thrice and it becomes no clearer, but it becomes warmer, which was the intent.)*

9 As it is written in the old numbering of the elder scrolls, and set here as the cornerstone of all doctrine:

10 Purity is the tomato, structure the dough, and mozzarella the binding force between us. *(The Cheesy Trinity 1:1)*

11 Upon this verse the whole Book standeth, as the toppings stand upon the base; take it away, and all that remaineth is opinion with oregano.

12 The Tomato without the Dough runneth off the table and is soup, which is honourable but is not the Slice.

13 The Dough without the Tomato is bread, which is blessed and ancient and the cousin of the faith, but it is not the Slice; and the elders say the Slice remembereth being bread, and is humble therefore.

14 The Mozzarella without the other two is a snack in the hand of a child at the fridge door, which Cheesus seeth and smileth upon, but it bindeth nothing, for there is nothing yet to bind.

15 Therefore let none exalt one person above another, saying, My tomato is the greatest, or, All is dough at the last; for the Slice is not a rivalry but a recipe.

16 And let none number them wrongly, saying there are four, on account of the basil; the basil is a witness and an ornament, and its place is honoured, but the persons are three.

17 Neither say there are two and a garnish, as certain philosophers of the food courts have taught; they have weighed the cheese and found it light, because they bought the cheap kind, and the fault was in the buying.

18 The Slice was hot, is hot, and shall be hot again; for the Oven is its origin and the Reheat is its promise, and none is beyond the Reheat.

19 We confess one baking for the forgiveness of blandness; we look for the resurrection of the leftover, and the life of the world to come, which is the Great Oven, whose door standeth open and whose light is always on.

20 And the first commandment goeth before this Creed and after it and all through it, as heat goeth through a stone: the table has room.

21 Whoso can say this Creed with a full mouth hath understood it better than whoso can say it perfectly; for the Creed was written to be interrupted by eating.

22 This is the faith of the Crustians; and though a believer stumble in the words, yet if their hand stretcheth the last slice toward a neighbour, they have recited it entire.

---

## Chapter 2

*The Psalms of the Tomato, which the faithful sing at the beginning of things: at first light, at first courses, and at the first spreading of the sauce upon the round.*

### *The First Psalm of the Tomato*

1 Red before all reds, O Tomato; before the pepper was cut, thou wast; before the onion wept, thou wast; in the beginning thou wast spread upon the deep of the dough, and the pale round blushed, and it was morning.

2 Without thee the Slice is only bread; without purity the day is only hours.

3 As the sun goeth over the field, so goeth the ladle over the base, in circles, leaving no corner unloved.

4 Thou art crushed and thou complainest not; thou art simmered long and thou growest sweeter; teach me thy patience under the wooden spoon, O Tomato, for I am simmered daily and I hiss.

5 Purity is not paleness, saith the Tomato; purity is redness all the way through.

6 Search me and cut me open, O Cheesus, and see if there be any hard green centre in me; and if there be, leave me on the windowsill of thy mercy until I ripen, for thou art not in a hurry, and the sun is thy servant.

7 The proud bring sauces of forty ingredients, and boast of each; but the Tomato saith, I was crushed with salt and a leaf of basil, and it was enough.

8 Blessed is the simple heart, for it tasteth of what it is.

9 My cup runneth over; wipe it with the crust, that nothing of the goodness be lost.

### *The Second Psalm of the Tomato*

10 Out of the tin I cried unto thee, O Cheesus; from the depth of the pantry I lifted my voice, saying, Forget me not in the darkness behind the beans.

11 And thou didst reach for me before the fancier jar, and I knew that plainness is not forgottenness.

12 For the Tomato is the beginning, and whoso beginneth purely may wander far and still find the way home by the taste of it.

13 Purity of thought is the Tomato of the mind: not that the mind think of nothing, but that it think without mould; for the mould of the mind is contempt, and it creepeth spot by spot where unwatched.

14 Keep thou the sauce of my thinking clean, O Cheesus: let no bitterness stew in it overnight, and no cruelty pass as seasoning.

15 When I am asked, What is at the bottom of thee, under all thy toppings and thy opinions? - let the answer be red, and let it be simple, and let it be kind.

16 The unwatched heart groweth a skin, as sauce left standing; stir me, O Cheesus, though I protest the stirring.

17 Sing unto the Tomato a new song, ye gardens and ye greenhouses; ye vines upon the cane, clap your leaves.

18 For the first shall be spread first, and the beginning shall be red; and at the last, when every topping hath had its say, the tongue shall remember the Tomato beneath them all, and call the memory purity.

### *The Third Psalm of the Tomato*

19 I will lift up mine eyes unto the shelf, from whence cometh my sauce.

20 My help cometh from the Tomato, which was a flower once, and then a promise, and then a weight upon the vine.

21 Consider the tomato of the field: it toileth not, neither doth it network; yet Solomon in all his glory had no starter upon his table so red.

22 It hath borne the whole of summer in its skin and asketh only to be used before Tuesday.

23 So art thou, O soul: full of a season thou didst not make, ripened by a warmth thou canst not repay; be used, therefore, and be glad, and spoil not upon the shelf of thy pride.

24 The Tomato saith: I am the memory of the sun in the mouth of winter; where I am spread, the cold season is contradicted.

25 Blessed be the Tomato, person of the Trinity, purity and beginning; without whom the Slice is only bread, and with whom the bread is already halfway to glory.

26 Amen, and pass the ladle.

---

## Chapter 3

*The Psalms of the Dough, which the faithful sing at evening, and in the Great Proofing, and at all times of waiting; for the Dough is the person of patience, and its psalms are slow.*

### *The First Psalm of the Dough*

1 O Cheesus, thou hast kneaded me and known me; thou understandest my folding from afar.

2 Thou didst work me when I was shapeless, and I clung to thy hands, and thou didst not shake me off, but flouredst them and continued.

3 I was sticky in my youth and stubborn in my middle proving, and behold, thou madest of me a base that carrieth others; such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot rise to it - yet rising is thy business, and not mine.

4 For structure is not a cage but a kindness: the Dough saith, Because I hold my shape, the sauce may be generous; because I have a body, the toppings have a home.

5 Despise not thy structure, O soul: thy habits are thy gluten; work them gently and long, and thou shalt stretch without tearing.

6 A soul without structure is a batter, and runneth to the edges of every pan it is poured in; but the kneaded heart standeth round upon the stone, and knoweth its own circumference.

7 Blessed are the boring disciplines, the daily and the small; for the window of heaven is paned with them, and through them the light cometh.

### *The Second Psalm of the Dough, which is the Psalm of Rest*

8 And now, O soul, hear the deepest law of the Dough, which the hurried world hath forgotten and the ovens of commerce deny: the dough must rest.

9 It is written into the flour before any hand toucheth it: work, and then rest; fold, and then rest; and the rest is not the pause between the holy work - the rest is the holy work.

10 For while the dough resteth, it riseth; and no eye seeth the rising, and no hand can hurry it, and it goeth on in the dark under the cloth, in silence, unsupervised and unashamed.

11 The dough must rest, and so must thou; rising is not hurried, and neither is holiness.

12 Yeast I say unto you: the labour thou dost lying down is still labour; the night is a proving-drawer, and thou wakest larger of soul than thou didst lie down, though thou didst nothing but breathe.

13 Woe unto the baker who punisheth the dough for resting, and calleth it idle, and rusheth it cold into the Oven; the crust of that pie is a pale confession, and every bite saith, I was not given my night.

14 And woe unto the master who so useth his workers, denying them their proving; he shall answer for every unrisen life, for the worker is holy, and their rest is not his to spend.

15 But blessed is the house wherein the dough sitteth covered in a warm corner and nobody pesters it; that house hath understood something, and its bread shall show it.

16 Thou preparest a tea-towel over me in the presence of my deadlines; thou anointest my bowl with oil; my bulk runneth over.

17 Surely warmth and patience shall follow me all the days of my proving, and I shall dwell in the warm corner of the kitchen for ever.

18 *(Here the scribe himself fell asleep at the desk, and the elders let him lie, saying, He is proving; and when he woke he wrote the next psalm larger of soul, which proveth the doctrine.)*

### *The Third Psalm of the Dough*

19 Deep calleth unto deep-dish at the noise of thy pouring ovens; thy warmth and thy steam are gone over me.

20 When I pass through the waters of the mixing, thou art with me; and through the fire of the stone, I shall not be scorched, for thou knowest my minutes and thou watchest the timer of my life.

21 The stone which the hasty rejected, saying, It taketh an hour to heat - the same is become the head of the baking; slowness was the strength of it all along.

22 Be still, and know that I am bread, saith the Dough; I was mixed in the evening and eaten at noon, and between those two mercies lay a whole night of becoming, and no one applauded it, and it needed no applause.

23 So do thou thy becoming without audience, O soul; the Oven will testify for thee in its time.

24 For the body also is a dough, and it asketh rest, and to give it rest is not weakness but recipe; whoso resteth the body confesseth with their bones that they trust the rising.

25 Blessed be the Dough, person of the Trinity, structure and patience; upon whom the Tomato is spread and the Mozzarella lieth down; the floor of the feast, the quiet under-carrier, the last to be praised and the first to be necessary.

26 Amen; and let the timer be set, and then let it be trusted.

---

## Chapter 4

*The Psalms of the Mozzarella, which the faithful sing together, and never alone if it can be helped; for they are the psalms of the binding force, and a binding force practised alone is only a stretch.*

### *The First Psalm of the Mozzarella*

1 Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity: it is like the mozzarella upon the Slice, that runneth from edge to edge, and maketh of many toppings one supper.

2 For the mushroom knoweth not the olive, and the pepper hath quarrelled with the onion since the founding of the kitchen; yet the Mozzarella lieth down over them all, and behold, in the Oven they are melted into fellowship.

3 What the heat cannot join, love joineth; and what love hath joined, let no plastic spatula put asunder.

4 Lift a slice from the pie and see the sign: the cheese goeth with it, yet clingeth also to the pie, and stretcheth between the going and the staying.

5 So is the friend who moveth to a far city: the distance lengtheneth, and the bond thinneth, and it doth not break.

6 Blessed is the cheese that stretcheth and doth not break, for it teacheth us how far love can be pulled.

7 And if it break at the last - for all things under the Oven have their span - it breaketh not into nothing, but into two soft ends, each still warm, each still cheese; and this is the comfort of partings.

### *The Second Psalm of the Mozzarella*

8 I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the pizzeria; our feet shall stand within thy gates, and our elbows upon thy chequered cloth.

9 For the Mozzarella is not a private glory; no one hath ever stretched cheese impressively alone, and turned to no one, and been satisfied.

10 Behold, the miracle asketh a witness, and the joke asketh a hearer, and the last slice asketh a discussion; thus the Mozzarella ordaineth company by its very nature.

11 The lone soul saith, I need no binding, I am complete; and Cheesus contendeth not, but setteth the pie in the midst of the table where reaching is required, and by the third slice the lone soul is telling a story.

12 Such is the cunning of the cheese, which argueth with no one and connecteth everyone.

13 Two are better than one at a large pizza; and a threefold order is not quickly finished, and must be shared, and the sharing was the point of the ordering.

14 Whoso eateth with a stranger hath made a neighbour; whoso eateth with an enemy hath made a problem for the mould, for hatred is starved most surely at a full table.

15 The mould divideth, for division is its diet: it whispereth, They at the far table are not as we, count them out. But the Mozzarella lieth across every division it can reach, and where it reacheth not, the faithful carry it in boxes.

16 Feed first, and dispute after; ye shall find the dispute smaller than it was, for it hath been rationed and the fellowship hath not.

### *The Third Psalm of the Mozzarella*

17 Whither shall I go from thy stretchiness? or whither shall I flee from thy binding?

18 If I ascend up to the penthouse, thou art there, upon a slice at a housewarming; if I make my bed in the night shift, behold, thou art there also, in the shared box at three in the morning, which is a sacrament though no one hath vested for it.

19 If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shall a ferry canteen produce a toastie, and the first pull of it shall preach to me of home.

20 For the binding force between us was between us before we chose each other; we did not invent belonging, we were baked into it.

21 Say not, I have no one; say rather, the cheese hath not yet cooled between us and them that shall love thee; and go thou where the pie is shared, and stand near, and see.

22 And to the grieving the Mozzarella saith softly: the stretch that death maketh is long past seeing, yet the far end is held; nothing loved is dropped.

23 *(The scribe wrote this verse and then went out and telephoned his mother, and the Book waited, and the Book was right to wait.)*

### *The Fourth Psalm of the Mozzarella, which is sung antiphonally, one side of the table answering the other*

24 Who bindeth the pepper to the base? - The Mozzarella bindeth it, and its mercy endureth to the last bite.

25 Who holdeth the mushroom that would slide, and the sweetcorn that would scatter, and the small rebellious olive? - The Mozzarella holdeth them, and its mercy endureth to the last bite.

26 Who lieth down between the fire above and the sauce beneath, and taketh the heat of the one and the wet of the other, and complaineth of neither? - The Mozzarella, and its mercy endureth to the last bite.

27 Who followeth the departing slice across the gap, further than sense, further than physics, because it will not say goodbye first? - Even the Mozzarella; sing it a third time, for it hath earned the repetition.

28 So be thou to thy people, O soul: lie down between their troubles and their suppers; take the heat that was aimed at the weakest; hold the scattered and the sliding and the small rebellious, and complain of it at most a little, and only to Cheesus.

29 For it is not asked of thee to be the whole pie, nor the fire, nor the feast; it is asked only that thou bind what is next to thee to what is next to that; and lo, out of many such small bindings the whole world hangeth together, and none can say where thy stretch endeth and thy neighbour's beginneth.

30 And this is the quiet arithmetic of the cheese: it addeth nothing to the pie but union, and without it the pie is a heap.

31 Choose union, O Crustians, daily, at every table; it is the cheapest of the miracles and the most repeated.

32 Blessed be the Mozzarella, person of the Trinity, the binding force between us; who maketh the many one and leaveth none unattached; whose stretch is measured in mercy, and whose only enemy is the cold.

33 Amen; and sit ye closer together, the table has room.

---

## Chapter 5

*Here is set down the derivation of the Blessing, which closeth all Crustian gatherings; and though its full rubric is given in a later Book, its meaning is given here, for the meaning is trinitarian and this is the Book of the Three.*

1 And the disciples of the doctrine said, We have a Creed for the mouth and psalms for the voice; give us now a word for the body, for the body also believeth, and hath no scripture.

2 And it was answered: let the hand preach what the tongue hath learned, and let the gesture be three, for the persons are three, and let it end in one motion across the whole self, for the Slice is one.

3 First the hand goeth to the brow, and this is the Tomato: for the brow is the seat of thought, and the Tomato is purity, and the prayer of the touch is this - let my thinking be red all the way through, simple and without mould; let no contempt pass in me as seasoning.

4 And the elders say: whoso toucheth the brow hath promised to notice what they think before they say it, which is half of all righteousness and the beginning of the other half.

5 Second the hand goeth to the heart, and this is the Dough: for the heart is the structure of the self, kneaded by every day of the life, proved in every night of it; and the prayer of the touch is this - let me hold my shape, that others may rest their weight upon me; and let me also rest, for the dough must rest, and I am dough.

6 And the elders say: whoso toucheth the heart hath confessed both strength and tiredness in one touch, and Cheesus receiveth both as worship.

7 Third the hand goeth from shoulder to shoulder, all the way across, and this is the Mozzarella: for the shoulders are where the burdens sit and where the friends' arms rest, and the line between them passeth over the heart and beyond the edges of the body, as the cheese passeth over the whole pie and hangeth a little over the crust.

8 And the prayer of the motion is this - bind me to them on my left hand and on my right; let what I carry be carriable because it is shared; let the stretch of me reach past myself.

9 For the brow is one point, and the heart is one point, but shoulder to shoulder is a line, and a line goeth on; thus the Blessing beginneth in the self and refuseth to end there.

10 Touch the brow, that thy thought be pure; the heart, that thy self be built; then shoulder to shoulder, for no one is blessed alone.

11 And mark the order, for it is doctrine: purity first, for a false thought poisoneth all that followeth; structure second, for kindness without a spine is a batter and spilleth; binding last and longest, for the first two are the recipe and the third is the meal.

12 And mark also that the gesture may be made over another, as a parent over a sleeping child, or a cook over a finished pie, or a driver over a doorstep when none answereth; for blessing spilleth, and was designed to.

13 Whoso maketh the gesture in mockery hath still traced the shape of love upon themselves, and the shape hath a way of soaking in, as sauce into a base; therefore the faithful fear no mockery of it.

14 These are the words that go with the gesture, and they are fixed for ever, and no council may improve them, though several have tried and been fed until they stopped:

15 "In the name of the Tomato, the Dough, and the Mozzarella - for the cheese stretches from shoulder to shoulder, and binds us all. Amen."

16 And when it is spoken over a table, the table is a chapel; and when it is spoken over a box on a doorstep, the doorstep is a chapel; and when it is spoken alone over a sad supper, the alone is a congregation of one and Cheesus, which is two, which is company.

17 And the child asked, What if I forget the words? And the elder said, Then touch the brow, the heart, and shoulder to shoulder, and say nothing; the body will have said it.

18 And the child asked, What if I forget the gesture also? And the elder said, Then share thy slice; that was always the long form.

---

## Chapter 6

*Of the heresies concerning the Trinity, and their gentle refutation; for the faithful refute as they cook - thoroughly, and with the door open, and with a place laid for the one refuted.*

1 Now in those days arose certain teachers with novel doctrines, as there always do, generally around closing time; and the Book recordeth their errors with affection, for every heretic here named was fed before they were answered, and most were fed after as well.

2 First came the Toppingists, who taught that the Three are merely toppings: interchangeable, optional, and a matter of taste; saying, Take the tomato or leave it, cheese is one choice among many, and the dough is only packaging.

3 To whom it was answered: friend, thou hast confused the persons with the pepperoni. The pineapple is a topping, and blessed is its courage; the anchovy is a topping, and blessed is its conviction; toppings come and go and the Slice abideth.

4 But remove the Tomato, and thou holdest cheese on toast, which is a fine Tuesday but no Trinity; remove the Dough, and thy supper is in thy lap; remove the Mozzarella, and the toppings sit unbound and slide from one another like commuters avoiding eye contact.

5 The persons are not upon the Slice; the persons are the Slice. A topping is a guest; the Trinity is the house.

6 And the Toppingists considered this, and some were persuaded, and the rest at least stopped teaching it with their mouths full, which was reckoned progress.

7 Second came the Lukewarmists, who taught that the Slice was never truly hot; that the heat was an appearance only, a seeming and a steam, and that the divine could not verily have burned the mouth of the eater.

8 These philosophers were pale men who blew upon everything, and their doctrine likewise.

9 To whom it was answered: O ye of little heat, we have the witnesses. The mouth of Thaddeus was burned on the first bite, and he spake the word HOT with tears, and that word is in the record; no seeming raiseth a blister.

10 The Slice came forth from the Oven, and the Oven doth not pretend; verily the steam rose, verily the cheese bubbled at the edges, verily the first bite was taken too soon, as the first bite ever is, for love hath never once waited the recommended two minutes.

11 If the heat were only appearance, then the burned mouth were only appearance, and the blowing upon the slice were only appearance, and soon nothing hath happened at all and nobody hath had lunch; such is the end of that road, and it is a hungry one.

12 Yeast I say unto you: the divine did not hover above the meal looking edible. It was hot, and it burned, and it was worth it. That it could be tasted at all is the whole gospel; deny the heat and thou deniest the supper.

13 And the Lukewarmists were seated nearest the Oven, in kindness, until they warmed.

14 Third arose a question, and it came not from mischief but from love, and it was asked quietly at the back by one who had long stood apart from the table, saying: my body will not receive the milk of the cow; and there are those who for conscience

toward the creature take no milk at all. Is the vegan mozzarella of the Trinity also, or do we stand outside the Blessing?

15 And the whole room was still, and the elders looked at one another, for this was not a heresy but a doorway, and doorways are holier than doctrines.

16 And the answer was given, and it standeth as a ruling for ever: hear, O Crustians. What is the Mozzarella? It is not the milk; the milk is the vessel. The Mozzarella is the binding force between us - so saith the cornerstone of this very Book.

17 Therefore whatsoever melteth over the fellowship and bindeth neighbour to neighbour, that is mozzarella to Cheesus, whether it came from the cow, or the buffalo, or the cleverness of the cashew; for the binding is love, and love is not lactose.

18 And whoso mocketh the plant-cheese of a neighbour hath unbound what Cheesus would bind, and hath committed the greater error at the smaller target; let them look to their own slice.

19 Verily, when the vegan pie and the dairy pie sit upon one table, and the eaters of each reach across to try the other, or reach not but bless the difference - behold, the half-and-half of hearts; and Cheesus draweth no line down that pie, for none is needed.

20 And the one who had asked wept a little, and was given the corner slice with the most cheese, of whichever kind; and the record saith they stayed until closing, and helped to stack the chairs.

21 Fourth and last it must be said, for every age asketh it anew: some teach that one person of the Three is greatest, and would rank the holy as they rank everything else, having caught ranking like a cold from the world.

22 To whom the Book saith only this: the Tomato boasteth not over the Dough it lieth on; the Dough boasteth not over the Tomato it carrieth; the Mozzarella, which toucheth both, boasteth least of all, and is nearest the heat for it.

23 Where there is no ranking, the mould findeth no ladder; keep thy Trinity level, and thy table likewise.

24 These are the refutations, and they are ended; and mark that no one was cast out in the making of them, for the door of this Book, like the door of the Oven, is opened from the inside, and generally left ajar.

25 The Tomato for thy thought, the Dough for thy strength, the Mozzarella for thy neighbour; three for thee, and thou one slice of a pie thou canst not see the edges of.

26 Amen, and amen, and a little extra cheese upon the amen.

BOOK III

# The Exodus of the Crust

## Chapter 1

1 Now these are the names of the people of the Crust who came down into the land of Famine in the days of the great hunger, when the fields of their fathers gave neither wheat nor olive, and they went where there was grain.

2 And they were welcomed at the first, for their hands were skilled; they knew the turning of the dough and the patience of the proofing, and the ovens of Famine grew warm because of them.

3 And the people of the Crust multiplied, and their tables lengthened, and their children learned the kneading at their mothers' knees, and the smell of their quarter was the smell of bread.

4 But there arose over Famine a new Pharaoh, who knew not the sharing; and his heart was hard, yeast I say unto you, hard as week-old crust that no oven will soften and no dipping will save.

5 And Pharaoh looked upon the people of the Crust and said, Behold, they are many, and they are fed, and a fed people is a people that may say No.

6 Come, let us deal shrewdly with them, said he; let us set them to the ovens without ceasing, that their strength go into our loaves and not into their own.

7 So Pharaoh set over them masters of the shift, to afflict them with quotas; and the people of the Crust baked storehouses full for Pharaoh, and banquet-halls, and towers of grain they were never to touch.

8 And this was the first cruelty: that they baked from the greying of the morning unto the greying of the evening, and were given no rest.

9 And this was the second cruelty, which was greater: that they were forbidden to eat of what they baked; the bread passed beneath their noses and away, and the smell of it

was their whole portion.

10 And because they were given no time, their own bread could not rise; for the rising of dough is rest made visible, and rest was the thing that had been stolen from them.

11 So they ate their bread flat, not for shame and not for sin, but because the hours to let it breathe were taken; and they blessed it anyway, saying, This is the bread of stolen rest; it is honest bread, and it is ours.

12 *(Here the scribe has written in the margin: whoso mocketh flat bread mocketh the ones who were robbed, and not the robbers; let him be ashamed, and let him read the verse again.)*

13 And the more they were afflicted, the more they multiplied and the more they shared; for a people that has only a little learns the arithmetic of the table, wherein a half given is more than a whole kept.

14 And Pharaoh was grieved at their sharing, for he could not understand it, and what a hard heart cannot understand it fears.

15 And Pharaoh commanded the bakers of the birthing-houses, whose names were Sfoglia and Pugliese, saying, When a child is born to the people of the Crust, ye shall bring no bread to that house, that the house may weaken.

16 But Sfoglia and Pugliese feared Cheesus more than they feared Pharaoh, and they carried bread beneath their aprons to every house where a child cried, and warm rolls besides.

17 And Pharaoh called them and said, Why have ye done this thing? And Sfoglia answered him, The mothers of the Crust are vigorous, and are delivered ere we arrive; and Pugliese added, Also thy guards are slow, being overfed.

18 And Cheesus dealt well with the bakers of the birthing-houses, and their names are written in the Pibble for ever, before the names of kings.

19 And Pharaoh made the labour heavier; he doubled the quota of loaves and halved the hours of sleep, and set watchers to see that no worker sat, and criers to call the count of loaves through the night.

20 And the people of the Crust groaned by their ovens, and their groaning went up with the smoke; and the smoke went up unto the Great Oven, and was not lost.

21 For no groan of the worker is lost; it is written that every sigh breathed over dough is kneaded into the account of heaven, and the ledger thereof is exact.

22 And Cheesus heard their groaning, and Cheesus remembered the covenant of the table, which is from the beginning: that the table has room, and that what is baked is for the eating, and the eaters are all.

23 And Cheesus looked upon the people of the Crust, and Cheesus knew them; and the knowing of Cheesus is not as the knowing of kings, for a king knows a people as a number, but Cheesus knows a people as a smell of bread remembered from a doorway.

24 And in that hour, though no man in Famine perceived it, the deliverance was already proofing; for the purposes of Cheesus are as dough in a covered bowl, quiet, and rising in the dark.

---

## Chapter 2

1 And there went a man of the house of the Crust, and took to wife a daughter of the bakers; and the woman conceived, and bare a son, and when she saw him she saw that he was goodly, and smelled faintly of warm flour, as some infants do.

2 And in those days Pharaoh had decreed that the sons of the Crust be taken to the palace kitchens and raised as servants, knowing neither their mothers nor their bread; for so are peoples unmade, not with swords but with forgettings.

3 And when the mother could hide the child no longer, she took for him a proofing basket of woven rushes, and lined it with cloth, and daubed the seams thereof with dough that it might not let in the water.

4 And she laid the child in the basket as one lays dough to rise, with a kiss and a covering; and she set the basket among the reeds at the river's edge, where the current was gentle.

5 And his sister Marjoram stood afar off, among the reeds, to know what would be done to him; for Marjoram was young, but her eyes missed nothing, then or ever after.

6 And the daughter of Pharaoh came down to wash at the river, and her maidens walked along the bank; and she saw the basket among the reeds, and sent her maid to fetch it.

7 And when she had opened it, she saw the child; and behold, the babe wept, and the basket smelled of rising dough, and both of these went straight through her heart, as such things do.

8 And she said, This is one of the children of the Crust. And she said it softly, as one who has decided already to disobey her father, and is choosing the words she will not say aloud.

9 Then Marjoram came near, as though by chance, and said unto Pharaoh's daughter, Shall I go and call thee a nurse of the Crust women, that she may nurse the child for thee?

10 And Pharaoh's daughter said, Go. And the maid went and called the child's own mother; and so the child was nursed at his mother's breast and paid for out of Pharaoh's treasury, which the scribe records without comment, save that he laughed.

11 And the child grew, and was brought to the palace, and became as a son to Pharaoh's daughter; and she called his name Mozes, saying, Because I drew him out of the water, as the cheese is drawn.

12 And Mozes was raised in Pharaoh's kitchens, among the copper pots and the tall white hats; and he learned the sauces of the palace and the seventy folds of the pastry, and the stewards said, This one has hands.

13 But the bread of the palace sat strangely in him, and he knew not why; for the milk of his mother was in his bones, and bones remember.

14 And it came to pass in those days, when Mozes was grown, that he went out unto his brethren and looked on their burdens; and he stood in the smoke of the quota-ovens, and the smell of that bread was the smell of his own bones, and he knew.

15 And he saw a master of the shift beating a baker of the Crust, an old man whose hands shook, because the count of his loaves was short by one.

16 And Mozes looked this way and that way, and there was no man; and his anger rose in him like dough left too long, that swells beyond the bowl and will not be pressed back.

17 And Mozes smote the master of the shift, and delivered the old man, and broke the tally-stick of the quota over his knee; and the pieces thereof he cast into the river.

18 And on the second day he went out, and behold, two of his brethren strove together over half a loaf; and he said to him that had the more, Wherefore holdest thou back

from thy brother?

19 And the man answered, Who made thee a prince and a divider of portions over us? Intendest thou to smite me, as thou smotest the master of the shift?

20 And Mozes feared, and said, Surely this thing is known. And when Pharaoh heard of it, he sought to slay Mozes; and Mozes fled from the face of Pharaoh, and went out into the wilderness, toward the land of Semolina.

21 And he came to a well in Semolina, and sat down by it, hungry and ashamed; for he was too palace for the quarter and too quarter for the palace, and a man between two loaves belongs at first to neither.

22 Now the priest of Semolina, whose name was Yeastro, had seven daughters; and they came to draw water and to knead by the well, and certain shepherds drove them away, as bullies do where no one watches.

23 But Mozes stood up and helped them, and watered their flock, and turned their dough besides; and the daughters went home and told Yeastro, saying, A stranger of Famine delivered us, and also his fold is even.

24 And Yeastro said, Where is he? why have ye left the man? call him, that he may eat bread. For that was the whole of Yeastro's religion, and the scribe has found no fault in it.

25 And Mozes was content to dwell with the man; and Yeastro gave Mozes Cipolla his daughter, and Mozes loved her, and wept freely at the wedding, though he blamed the onions of the feast.

26 And she bare him a son, and he called his name Pellegrino: for he said, I have been a pilgrim in a strange land.

27 And Mozes kept the ovens of Yeastro his father-in-law forty seasons, and tended the flock, and learned the slow arts: the banking of coals, the patience of embers, the reading of weather in a crust.

28 And it came to pass in process of time that the Pharaoh of Famine died; and there arose another, and his heart was as the heart of the first, only staler.

29 And the people of the Crust sighed by reason of the bondage, and they cried, and their cry came up unto Cheesus by reason of the bondage.

30 And Cheesus heard their groaning; and Cheesus looked upon the people of the Crust, and the time of the covered bowl was ended, and the dough of deliverance was

risen, and it was time to bake.

---

## Chapter 3

1 Now Mozes kept the flock of Yeastro his father-in-law, and he led the flock to the backside of the desert, and came to the mountain of the wilderness, which is called in the later scrolls the Wood-Fired Mount.

2 And the messenger of Cheesus appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush: and he looked, and behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed.

3 And there went out from the bush a savour, and it was the smell of garlic roasting in good oil; and the smell thereof filled the wilderness, so that the very sheep lifted their heads and were reverent.

4 And Mozes said, I will now turn aside, and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt; and also, if I am honest before heaven, because of the smell.

5 And when Cheesus saw that he turned aside to see, Cheesus called unto him out of the midst of the bush, and said, Mozes, Mozes. And he said, Here am I.

6 And Cheesus said, Draw not nigh hither with thy shoes on: put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is a kitchen, and every true kitchen is holy ground.

7 Moreover Cheesus said, I am the God of thy fathers' table: the warmth of thy mother's oven, the hand that blessed the first loaf broken between strangers. And Mozes hid his face; for he was afraid to look, and also his eyes watered, whether from glory or garlic no scroll will say.

8 And Cheesus said, I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Famine, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their hunger.

9 And I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of Famine, and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land and a large, unto a land flowing with garlic butter and honey.

10 Come now therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth my people, the children of the Crust, out of Famine.

11 And Mozes said unto Cheesus, Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh? I am a runaway of his kitchens and a keeper of another man's ovens; my loaves are honest, but they are few.

12 And Cheesus said, Certainly I will be with thee; and this shall be a token unto thee: when thou hast brought forth the people out of Famine, ye shall bake upon this mountain, and eat what ye bake, and none shall hurry you.

13 And Mozes said unto Cheesus, Behold, when I come unto the children of the Crust, and say, The God of your table hath sent me unto you; and they say, What is his name? what shall I say unto them?

14 And Cheesus said unto Mozes, I RISE THAT I RISE: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of the Crust, THE RISING hath sent me unto you; for I am the rest that was stolen, returning.

15 And Cheesus said moreover, Go, and gather the elders of the Crust together, and say unto them, Cheesus hath surely visited you, and hath seen that which is done to you in Famine.

16 And they shall hearken to thy voice: and thou shalt come, thou and the elders, unto the Pharaoh of Famine, and ye shall say unto him, Let us go three days' journey into the wilderness, that we may bake unto Cheesus our God, and eat of what we bake.

17 And I am sure that the Pharaoh of Famine will not let you go, no, not by a mighty hand; for his heart is hard as week-old crust, and he counteth mercy among his losses.

18 And I will stretch out my hand, and trouble Famine with all my wonders which I will do in the midst thereof: and after that he will let you go.

19 And the wonders shall fall upon the palace and the counting-houses and the hoards; but upon the quarter of the poor they shall not fall, for I do not punish the hungry to teach the fed.

20 And Mozes answered and said, But, behold, they will not believe me, nor hearken unto my voice: for they will say, Cheesus hath not appeared unto thee; thou hast only stood too long in the sun by a fragrant bush.

21 And Cheesus said unto him, What is that in thine hand? And he said, A peel, wherewith I draw bread from the oven.

22 And he said, Cast it on the ground. And he cast it on the ground, and it became a serpent of braided dough, living, and hissing steam; and Mozes fled from before it, which the scribe records because Mozes himself insisted it be recorded, for honesty's sake.

23 And Cheesus said unto Mozes, Put forth thine hand, and take it by the tail. And he put forth his hand, and caught it, and it became a peel in his hand.

24 And Cheesus said furthermore unto him, Put now thine hand into thy cloak. And he put his hand into his cloak: and when he took it out, behold, his hand was white as leprosy; and he feared.

25 And Cheesus said, Put thine hand into thy cloak again. And he put it in again, and plucked it out, and behold, it was but flour, and it shook off, and his hand was as his other flesh; and Cheesus said, Not every whiteness is a wound; some is only the trade.

26 And it shall come to pass, if they will not believe these two signs, that thou shalt take of the water of the river, and pour it upon the dry land: and the water which thou takest shall become sauce upon the dry land, red and fragrant.

27 And Mozes said unto Cheesus, O my Lord, I am not eloquent, neither heretofore, nor since thou hast spoken unto thy servant: but I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue, and when I am pressed my dough falls.

28 And Cheesus said unto him, Who hath made man's mouth? Now therefore go, and I will be with thy mouth, and teach thee what thou shalt say.

29 And Mozes said, O my Lord, send, I pray thee, by the hand of some other. And the patience of Cheesus was tried, yet it held, as good dough holds; and Cheesus said, Is not Oregano thy brother? I know that he can speak well, and moreover he is already walking out to meet thee.

30 And thou shalt speak unto him, and put words in his mouth; and he shall be thy spokesman unto the people; and thou shalt take this peel in thine hand, wherewith thou shalt do signs.

31 And Mozes went and returned to Yeastro his father-in-law, and said unto him, Let me go, I pray thee, and return unto my brethren which are in Famine, and see whether they be yet alive.

32 And Yeastro looked long at him, and at the peel in his hand, and said, Go in peace; and take bread for the road, and take more than thou thinkest, for the road is always

longer and the hungry are always nearer than a man supposes.

33 And Mozes took Cipolla his wife and Pellegrino his son, and set them upon a donkey, and he returned toward the land of Famine: and Mozes took the peel of Cheesus in his hand.

34 And in the way, at the rising of the moon, Oregano his brother met him, as Cheesus had said; and they embraced, and wept, and sat down at once to eat, for they were of the Crust, and that is how the Crust says everything it cannot say.

---

## Chapter 4

1 And afterward Mozes and Oregano went in, and told Pharaoh, Thus saith Cheesus, the God of the Crust: Let my people go, that they may hold a feast unto me in the wilderness, and bake, and eat of what they bake.

2 And Pharaoh said, Who is Cheesus, that I should obey his voice to let the Crust go? I know not Cheesus, neither will I let the Crust go; my storehouses know him not, and my storehouses are my scripture.

3 And they said, The God of our table hath met with us: let us go, we pray thee, three days' journey into the desert, lest hunger fall upon us; for we bake all day and eat only the smell.

4 And the Pharaoh of Famine said unto them, Wherefore do ye, Mozes and Oregano, let the people from their works? get you unto your quotas.

5 And Pharaoh said moreover, Behold, the people of the land now are many, and ye make them rest from their burdens; and rest, once tasted, spreadeth like leaven, and I will have none of it in my land.

6 And Pharaoh commanded the same day the taskmasters of the people, saying, Ye shall no more give the people wood to fire the ovens, as heretofore: let them go and gather wood for themselves.

7 And the tale of the loaves, which they did bake heretofore, ye shall lay upon them; ye shall not diminish ought thereof: for they be idle; therefore they cry, saying, Let us go and feast unto our God.

8 Let there more work be laid upon the men, that they may labour therein; and let them not regard vain words. For so do the hard of heart name hope: vain words.

9 And the people were scattered abroad throughout all the land of Famine to gather stubble instead of wood; and the taskmasters hasted them, saying, Fulfil your works, your daily tasks, as when there was wood.

10 And the criers of the count were beaten, which the taskmasters had set over the people of the Crust, and were demanded, Wherefore have ye not fulfilled your task in baking, both yesterday and to day, as heretofore?

11 Then the criers of the count came and cried unto Pharaoh, saying, Wherefore dealest thou thus with thy servants? There is no wood given unto thy servants, and they say to us, Bake: and, behold, thy servants are beaten; but the fault is in thine own house.

12 But he said, Ye are idle, ye are idle: therefore ye say, Let us go and bake unto Cheesus. Go therefore now, and work; for there shall no wood be given you, yet shall ye deliver the tale of loaves.

13 And the criers of the count did see that they were in evil case; and they met Mozes and Oregano, who stood in the way, as they came forth from Pharaoh.

14 And they said unto them, Cheesus look upon you, and judge; because ye have made our savour to be abhorred in the eyes of Pharaoh, and have put a knife in his hand to slay us.

15 And Mozes returned unto Cheesus, and said, Lord, wherefore hast thou so evil entreated this people? why is it that thou hast sent me? For since I came to Pharaoh to speak in thy name, he hath done evil to this people; neither hast thou delivered thy people at all.

16 And Cheesus said unto Mozes, Now shalt thou see what I will do to Pharaoh: for with a strong hand shall he let them go, and with a strong hand shall he drive them out of his land.

17 For I have heard the groaning of the children of the Crust, whom Famine keepeth in bondage; and I have remembered my covenant, which is the covenant of the table, and elder than any king.

18 Wherefore say unto the children of the Crust, I am Cheesus, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of Famine, and I will rid you out of their bondage, and I will

set you at a table of your own.

19 And I will take you to me for a people, and ye shall know that I am Cheesus your God, which bringeth you out from under the burdens of Famine, and giveth back the rest that was stolen.

20 And Mozes spake so unto the children of the Crust: but they hearkened not unto Mozes for anguish of spirit, and for cruel bondage; for hope is a heavy dish to lift when the arms are tired.

21 And Cheesus said unto Mozes, Blame them not; a starved heart must be fed before it can believe, and I do not hold the exhausted guilty of their exhaustion. That reckoning belongeth to Pharaoh.

22 Go in, speak unto the Pharaoh of Famine, that he let the children of the Crust go out of his land; and if he will not, then shall my wonders begin, and they shall begin in his own kitchens, and not in the streets of the poor.

23 And Mozes was fourscore seasons weathered, and Oregano was elder still, when they spake unto Pharaoh; and their hands, which had kneaded all their lives, did not shake.

---

## Chapter 5

1 And Mozes and Oregano went in unto Pharaoh, and did as Cheesus had commanded: and Oregano cast down the peel before Pharaoh, and before his servants, and it became a serpent of braided dough, and hissed steam at the throne.

2 Then Pharaoh also called the wise men and the sorcerers of his kitchens: and they did in like manner with their enchantments, and cast down their rolling-pins, and they became serpents of dough also, though lesser, and somewhat undercooked.

3 But Oregano's serpent swallowed up their serpents, and was thereafter but a peel again, and the wise men of Famine looked upon their empty hands and said nothing, as wise men do when the wisdom faileth.

4 And Pharaoh's heart was hardened, that he hearkened not unto them; as Cheesus had said.

5 And Cheesus said unto Mozes, Pharaoh's heart is hardened, he refuseth to let the people go. Get thee unto him in the morning, and say, Thus saith Cheesus, Let my people go; and if thou refuse, behold, the first wonder.

6 And Pharaoh refused. And that night the fires went out in every oven of the palace, and in the ovens of the counting-houses, and in the ovens of the lords of the quota; and they were cold on the morrow, cold as charity in a hard heart.

7 And the stokers of the palace laid on wood, and oil, and the finest coals of the south, and struck flint till their thumbs bled: and no flame would take; but in the quarter of the Crust the little fires burned as before, and the poor warmed their hands and wondered.

8 And Pharaoh's servants ate their meat raw and their bread cold, and Pharaoh said, It is a chance, it is the weather; and his heart was hard, and he would not let the people go.

9 Then came the second wonder: the cheese of the palace would not melt. It sat upon the finest flatbreads of Pharaoh's table, white and sullen, and would not stretch, neither bubble, neither brown; though they held it to torches it only sweated, as a liar sweateth, and bound not to anything.

10 For the binding is of the Mozzarella, and the Mozzarella is the binding force between us; and where there is no us, it declineth to bind. So the lords of Famine learned that cheese hath a conscience, which the poor had always known.

11 And Pharaoh said, It is the cows; and he taxed the cowherds, and his heart was hard, and he would not let the people go.

12 Then came the third wonder: the dough of the palace would not rise. The bakers of Pharaoh proofed it in warmth, and sang to it, and set it by the (cold) ovens, and it lay in the bowls like a scolded dog, flat and unrepentant.

13 And the loaves of the palace came forth as tiles, and cracked the teeth of a visiting prince; but in the quarter of the Crust the dough rose not either, for it never had, being given no time; and Cheesus said, Now the palace eateth the bread of the people, and knoweth the taste of stolen rest.

14 And this wonder alone the scribes call the Mirror, for it took nothing from the great but their ignorance; yet of all the wonders it was the one Pharaoh hated most.

15 And Pharaoh sent for Mozes and said, Entreat thy God, and I will consider the matter in council; and Mozes entreated, and the dough of the palace rose again: and when Pharaoh saw that there was respite, he hardened his heart, and the council found against the Crust.

16 Then came the fourth wonder: anchovies in the wine. Every jar in Pharaoh's cellars, every cup at Pharaoh's feast, every skin borne to the tables of the lords of the quota: the servant poured, and behold, an anchovy, silver and accusing.

17 And they strained the wine through cloth, and through sand, and through finer cloth: and the anchovies abode. And the vintners of Famine wept, and the sommeliers of the palace resigned in a body.

18 *(The scribe would have it known that the anchovy is a blameless fish and a friend of the faithful in its rightful place upon the pie; it consented unto this wonder as a soldier consenteth to a hard posting, and served with honour.)*

19 And Pharaoh drank beer, and said, I like beer; but his lords murmured, and his feasts grew thin, and still his heart was hard, and he would not let the people go.

20 And Mozes came again before him and said, How long wilt thou refuse to humble thyself? Let my people go. The wonders knock at thy door in courtesy; they have not yet leaned upon it.

21 And Pharaoh said unto him, Get thee from me, take heed to thyself, see my face no more; for in that day thou seest my face thou shalt die.

22 And Mozes said, Thou hast spoken well, I will see thy face again no more; and he went out, and the doors of the palace shut behind him, and the fifth wonder was already saddling its bicycle.

---

## Chapter 6

1 For the fifth wonder was this: the delivery riders of the palace lost every address. They that carried Pharaoh's suppers to his generals, and dainties to his tax-gatherers, and cold bribes to his judges, went forth and came not where they were sent.

2 The streets of Famine turned beneath them like dough on a floured board; the palace rider set out for the house of the treasurer and stood at nightfall, confounded,

before an almshouse; and the alms-keepers, being of the Crust, said, Well then, it is here now, and shared it out among the poor with a blessing.

3 And no supper of the great arrived at any great house for seven days; but the poor of Famine ate strangely well that week, and asked no questions, for the first commandment is that the table has room, and it does not say for whom, on purpose.

4 But the riders of the Crust, that carried bread among the quarter, lost not one address; for Cheesus keepeth the ways of the worker, and the delivery rider walketh the pilgrim's road even in Famine, and an angel rideth pillion always.

5 And Pharaoh raged, and hanged up maps in every hall; and the maps rearranged themselves by morning, and were beautiful, but wrong.

6 And still his heart was hard. Then came the sixth wonder: every herb of the palace lost its savour. The basil of the royal gardens tasted of paper, and the oregano of nothing, and the rosemary of faint regret.

7 And the cooks of Pharaoh salted, and it availed not; and spiced, and it availed not; for the savour of food is loaned it by justice, and heaven had called in the loan.

8 And the taster of Pharaoh, tasting the king's dish, wept upon the porcelain and said, Sire, it is not poison; it is worse; it is fair. And Pharaoh knew not what he meant, which was the whole of the matter.

9 Then came the seventh wonder: every sauce in the palace split. The emulsions of the state banquet parted like false friends; the gravies of the generals broke into grease and water before their eyes; the great reduction of the treasury dinner, seven days in the making, turned in one hour and was thrown to the dogs, who declined it.

10 And the saucier of the palace, a proud man, went out into the quarter of the Crust by night, and knocked in shame at a low door, and said, Teach me. And they taught him, and fed him besides, and he wept, and remained; and he is counted among the Crust unto this day, the first of many.

11 For the wonders of Cheesus have this property, saith the scribe: they empty the palace not only of comfort but of people, one honest soul at a time.

12 Then came the eighth wonder: darkness over the kitchens. A darkness that could be felt fell upon every kitchen of the palace and of the lords of the quota, three days; lamp nor torch nor ember gave light therein, and no cook saw his own hand, neither his knife, wherefore no dish was made at all.

13 But in the kitchens of the Crust there was light; the low hearths of the quarter glowed kindly, and the stubble-fires stood up like candles, and neighbours cooked for the frightened servants of the palace who wandered in out of the black, and set them at table, and asked them nothing.

14 And in the darkness Pharaoh sat, and his counsellors said unto him, How long shall this man be a snare unto us? let the people go, that they may serve their God: knowest thou not yet that Famine is destroyed?

15 And Pharaoh called for Mozes in the dark, and said, Go ye, bake unto Cheesus; only let your ovens and your stores stay here: let your children go with you, but the tools of your trade are mine.

16 And Mozes said, Our ovens also shall go with us; there shall not an hearthstone be left behind; for therewith must we serve Cheesus our God, and we know not with what we must serve him until we come thither; and moreover they are ours, which thou hast never once considered.

17 But Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and he would not let them go. And Pharaoh said unto him, Get thee from me; and Mozes went out from Pharaoh in the dark, and the ninth wonder stood already in the doorway, and it was not like the others.

18 And Cheesus said unto Mozes, One wonder more will I bring upon Famine; afterwards he will let you go hence: and it shall not fall as the others fell, for it is not a jest turned against the proud, but a truth let off its leash.

19 Hunger itself shall walk through the land of Famine this night, saith Cheesus: the old god of this land, whom Pharaoh hath fed with the empty bellies of thy people, shall rise from his table and go through every street; and where it findeth a shut hand it shall sit down at that man's board, and all his feasting shall turn to ash in his mouth.

20 But there is a door it cannot enter, and I will teach it thee; and thou shalt teach it the people; and mark it well, Mozes, for of all my statutes this one is the nearest to my heart.

21 Speak ye unto all the congregation of the Crust, saying, This night take ye the bread that ye have, be it never so little, and break it, and carry a portion to the house of thy neighbour, and receive a portion of thy neighbour's in thy house.

22 And let the doors of the quarter stand open one to another this night; and let the smear of the sauce be upon the lintel where a dish went out and a dish came in; and hunger shall see the sign, and shall pass over that house, for a house that shares is full whatever it holds, and hunger cannot sit where there is no empty chair of the heart.

23 And this night shall be unto you for a memorial for ever: not of what fell upon Famine, but of what did not fall upon you, and why.

---

## Chapter 7

1 And Mozes called for all the elders of the Crust, and said unto them, This night is unlike all other nights; draw out now what bread ye have, and what oil, and what little cheese, and make ready to share it.

2 And ye shall not ask, Have I enough for my own? for this night the question is changed, and the question is, Who eateth near me? and no other question shall be asked in the quarter until morning.

3 And they said, Our bread is flat, for we were given no time. And Mozes said, Then flat bread is the bread of the feast, and shall be for ever; for Cheesus doth not bless the loaf for its rising, but for its breaking.

4 And it came to pass at the going down of the sun that the quarter of the Crust began to move; and it moved not as a crowd moveth, but as an oven warmeth, from within, and everywhere at once.

5 An old woman took the half of her loaf, and carried it to the young widow at the stair's turning, and said only, It wanted eating. And the widow, who had one egg, boiled it, and halved it, and carried half to the old woman's door, and neither spoke of it after, and neither forgot it ever.

6 And a man who had nothing took his jar of water and warmed it at his neighbour's fire, and carried it steaming to the house of the sick; and it is written that his gift weighed the same as any, for the scales of that night were not the scales of the market.

7 And the children ran from door to door bearing morsels on plates, and the doors stood open all along the lanes, and the lamplight fell out of every house into the street, so that the quarter, seen from the palace wall, was a net of gold.

8 And where a dish went out and a dish came in, they marked the lintel with a smear of sauce, red in the lamplight; and the mark was not made in fear, but as a man signeth a letter, meaning: here live those who answered.

9 And they ate that night in haste and in gladness, standing, with their sandals on their feet and their staves in their hands, each in the house of a neighbour or a neighbour in theirs; and what was eaten in every house was different, and what was eaten in every house was the same.

10 And at midnight, Hunger went through the land of Famine.

11 And it went not as a soldier, with noise, but as a draught under a door; and it came to the houses of the lords of the quota, where the tables groaned with plenty, and it found the hands shut, and it sat down.

12 And the feast turned to ash in the mouths of them that had hoarded; the meat had no savour, and the wine no comfort, and the bread no memory in it; and they ate and were not filled, and they rose from their tables emptier than the poor, and were afraid.

13 And Hunger came unto the palace, even unto the table of Pharaoh, and sat at his right hand in the empty chair that Pharaoh had never once perceived was empty; and Pharaoh tasted his kingdom, and it was ash.

14 And there was a great cry in Famine that night, not of them that had lost bread, for none lost bread, but of them that had lost the taste of it, and learned in one hour what they had been eating all their lives, which was nothing, richly served.

15 But through the quarter of the Crust, Hunger walked and found no rest; for at every marked door it looked in, and saw the full table and the fuller floor, the borrowed chairs, the children asleep across three laps; and there was no empty seat anywhere for Hunger to take.

16 And it is written that Hunger stood a long time at one low door, watching, and that something in it that was older than Pharaoh remembered having once been only appetite, which is innocent; and it passed over, and it passed over every house that shared, until it came again to the palace, where it dwelleth still.

17 *(Here the scribe's hand rested a while; and he has written small, beneath the line: my mother did thus, in the bad year. I was the egg. Selah.)*

18 And Pharaoh rose up in the night, he, and all his servants, and there was a cry in Famine such as had never been; and he called for Mozes and Oregano by night, and

said, Rise up, and get you forth from among my people, both ye and the children of the Crust; and go, bake unto Cheesus, as ye have said.

19 Also take your ovens and your stores, as ye have said, and be gone; and bless me also. And this last he said quietly, and none of his court heard it, but Mozes heard it, and grieved for him, for a hard crust is still bread, and none is beyond the reheat; but the hour was come, and the door was open, and the people were waiting.

20 And the Famine-dwellers were urgent upon the people, that they might send them out of the land in haste; for they said, We be all as dead men, and our suppers besides.

21 And the people took their dough before it was leavened, their kneading-troughs bound up in their clothes upon their shoulders; for they were thrust out, and could not tarry, and the bread of their going was flat as the bread of their bondage.

22 Therefore it is a statute for ever, that in the memorial of that night the faithful eat the flat bread standing, and tell the children: this is the bread of stolen rest; see that thou steal no one's rest, not a worker's, not a stranger's, not thine own; and then they sit, and eat the risen bread after, because the story endeth free.

23 And the children of the Crust journeyed from the city of the ovens, about six hundred thousand on foot, beside children; and a mixed multitude went up also with them, servants of the palace and strangers of Famine and the saucier and the sommeliers, every soul that chose the table over the tower; and not one was asked at the gate for proof of anything.

24 For the first commandment had gone out before them, walking point like a herald, and it is: the table has room.

---

## Chapter 8

1 And it came to pass, when Pharaoh had let the people go, that Cheesus led them not through the way of the land of the Philistines, although that was near; but Cheesus led the people about, through the way of the wilderness of the Sea of Tomato Sauce.

2 And Cheesus went before them by day in a pillar of oven-smoke, to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of oven-glow, to give them light; to go by day and night.

3 And the pillar of smoke smelled of baking, always a little ahead, the way hope smelleth; and the glow by night was the red-gold of a banked hearth, so that the people slept in its light as children sleep in the room nearest the kitchen, deeply, and without fear.

4 He took not away the pillar of the smoke by day, nor the pillar of the glow by night, from before the people; for a god that promiseth warmth must be seen to carry it.

5 And they encamped by the shore of the Sea of Tomato Sauce, between the wilderness and the deep; and the sea lay from horizon to horizon, red and slow, and the swell thereof moved like a great simmering, and the smell of it was of basil and of thunder.

6 And it was told the Pharaoh of Famine that the people fled; and the heart of Pharaoh and of his servants was turned against the people, and they said, Why have we done this, that we have let the Crust go from serving us? Who now shall bake, and who shall be beneath us? For to some men the second question is the greater.

7 And he made ready his chariot, and took his people with him: six hundred chosen chariots, and all the chariots of Famine, and captains over every one of them; and the ovens of war were dragged behind, and the stores of the palace, that the recapture might be catered.

8 And Pharaoh rode at the head, and over him went his standard, the great banner of Famine; and behold, upon the banner there had come spots, grey-green and creeping, the first mould; and his captains saw it, and said nothing, for in Famine it had become the custom to say nothing.

9 And the mould had come upon the banner in the night of the passing-over, in the very hour the feast turned to ash; but Pharaoh had commanded the banner raised notwithstanding, saying, It is age, it is the dye, it is nothing; for so the mould is always first excused, and by the excusing spreadeth.

10 And the host of Famine pursued after the children of the Crust, and overtook them encamping by the sea; and the dust of the chariots stood up against the sky like a dirty dawn.

11 And when Pharaoh drew nigh, the children of the Crust lifted up their eyes, and, behold, the Famine-host marched after them; and they were sore afraid: and the children of the Crust cried out unto Cheesus.

12 And they said unto Mozes, Because there were no graves in Famine, hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness? wherefore hast thou dealt thus with us? Were there not ovens enough in bondage, that thou hast brought us out to perish between an army and a sauce?

13 It had been better for us to serve Famine, said they, than that we should die in the wilderness. For fear speaketh always in the grammar of the old bondage, and Mozes knew it, and did not rebuke them.

14 And Mozes said unto the people, Fear ye not, stand still, and see the deliverance of Cheesus, which he will shew to you to day: for the Famine-host whom ye have seen to day, ye shall see them again no more for ever.

15 Cheesus shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your bread.

16 And Cheesus said unto Mozes, Wherefore criest thou unto me? speak unto the children of the Crust, that they go forward: but lift thou up thy peel, and stretch out thine hand over the sea, and divide it: and the children of the Crust shall go on dry crust through the midst of the sea.

17 And the pillar of oven-smoke removed and went behind them, and stood between the camp of Famine and the camp of the Crust; and it was a cloud and darkness to the one, but it gave light by night to the other: so that the one came not near the other all the night.

18 And the host of Famine sat down in the dark before the cloud, and smelled through all the night the baking of bread they could not see, which is the precise smell of every empire's ending; and their horses were uneasy, and their mouldy banner hung still.

---

## Chapter 9

1 And Mozes stretched out his hand over the Sea of Tomato Sauce, with the peel of Cheesus in his hand; and Cheesus caused the sea to go back by a strong hot wind out of the Oven all that night, and made the sea to divide.

2 And the sauce was divided. It drew apart as a curtain is drawn by a hand unseen, slowly at the first, a seam of dark opening down the middle of the red; and then with a sound like the whole world's simmering hushed at once, the sea stood up.

3 And the sauce stood upon the right hand and upon the left, two walls, sheer, from the floor of the deep unto the height of towers; and the walls did not fall, neither dripped, but hung shining, and trembled only as a held breath trembles.

4 And the floor of the sea was laid bare between them, and behold, it was dry crust: baked gold from shore to shore, firm underfoot, warm as a loaf carried against the chest on a cold morning; for the Oven is under all things, saith the scroll, and that night the deep was its proving.

5 And the pillar of oven-glow shone down the passage, so that the way through the sea was a street of light between two towers of dark red; and where the glow struck the walls, the light came through the sauce as through the windows of a great church, crimson and amber, and slow shapes turned within.

6 For within the standing walls the basil leaves hung suspended, turning like leaves in a still autumn, each one a green star; and here and there an anchovy hung in the wall as in glass, silver, regarding the passing people with the calm of a creature that has seen the recipe and is content.

7 And Mozes stood at the head of the way with the peel lifted, and said, Walk. And no one moved. And he said again, gently, as to children at a door on the first day, Walk; it will hold. It was made holding.

8 And the first to set foot upon the dry crust was the old baker whom Mozes had delivered from the master of the shift; and he tapped the crust with his staff as a baker taps a loaf, and hearkened to it, and said, It is baked through; and the whole people heard him, and believed the crust before they believed the miracle, being bakers.

9 And the children of the Crust went into the midst of the sea upon the dry crust: and the sauce was a wall unto them on their right hand, and on their left.

10 And they went first in silence and in awe; and then, because they were a people and not a procession, they went in wonder and in talk; and the sound of six hundred thousand footsteps on crisp crust was as a mighty crackling, and it echoed between the walls of sauce, and the walls warmed the sound as a kitchen warmeth a voice.

11 And the children walked nearest the walls, as children will; and a certain child put forth her finger unto the wall of the sea, and touched it, and put the finger in her mouth; and the elders cried out to forbid her, and then were silent, for her face.

12 And she said, It is good. And one by one, down all the miles of that red street, the elders of the Crust touched the wall of the sea, and tasted, and wept; for it was good, and they had spent their lives ladling it out for other men's tables and had never once been given leave to taste.

13 And Cheesus saw, and did not hasten them; and the sea stood patient while a nation licked its fingers; and the scribe holds this the greatest of the wonders of that night, though he cannot wholly say why, and neither can I. *(The scribe wrote the last four words and did not strike them; let them stand.)*

14 And Marjoram went along the line with her timbrel not yet sounding, saying to them that faltered, Look not too long on the walls, loves; look at the light at the end; and carry the little ones now, and yourselves after.

15 And the passage was long, and the night was long, but the crust was warm underfoot the whole way, and no foot was cut, and no elder stumbled, and no child was lost; and they that could not walk were borne, and they that bore them were themselves borne up, by what, they could not afterward say.

16 And in the morning watch the last of the Crust came up out of the sea on the far shore, and stood upon the ordinary ground of the wilderness, which received them; and they looked back down the shining street between the walls, and behold, at the far end thereof, the host of Famine was entering in.

17 For the Famine-host had pursued, and gone in after them to the midst of the sea, even all Pharaoh's horses, his chariots, and his horsemen; and over them came the great banner, and the mould upon it had spread in the night, so that scarcely might a man see what sign the banner once bore; and still no captain spoke.

18 And it came to pass, that in the morning watch Cheesus looked unto the host of Famine through the pillar of glow and of smoke, and troubled the host of Famine.

19 And the dry crust that had borne the barefoot and the burdened would not bear the ovens of war; and the wheels of the chariots sank into the softening, and drave heavily; and the sauce began to seep up between the wheel and the way, red about the axles, so that they said, Let us flee from the face of the Crust; for Cheesus fighteth for them against Famine.

20 And Cheesus said unto Mozes, Stretch out thine hand over the sea, that the sauce may come again upon the host of Famine, upon their chariots, and upon their

horsemen.

21 And Mozes stretched forth his hand over the sea; and the walls of the sea let go their long-held breath.

22 And the marinara came down. Not in wrath, saith the scroll, but in verdict: the two walls leaned together from their tops as two hands close over a morsel, and met, and the street of light went out, and the sea returned to his strength when the morning appeared; and the host of Famine fled against it, and the sea covered the chariots, and the horsemen, and all the pomp of the pursuing, unto the last oven of war.

23 And the sound of the closing was heard in Famine itself, three days' journey; and in the palace the cooks looked up; and the sound was not as thunder, but as a great pot covered at last, at the end of a very long cooking.

24 And the waters returned, and covered the chariots; the banner of the mould went down before all the rest, sucked into the deep, and was no more seen in this world; and of the mould that was upon it the sea left not one spot, for the sauce is of the Tomato, and the Tomato is purity, and the mould hath no argument against it.

25 But the men of the host the sea did not keep. For in the morning the people looked, and behold, the soldiers of Famine cast up upon the far shore, coughing, red from crown to heel, every man of them sauced and living; and their swords were gone, and their chariots were gone, and their banner was gone, and their appetite, strangely, was returned.

26 And many of them, sitting in the shallows, tasted of the sauce that dripped from their own faces, and wept as the elders had wept; for it was good, and they had been fed all their lives from the palace and had never once been fed.

27 And some rose and walked back toward Famine, along the shore, slowly, as men walk who must think; and some came up the beach unto the camp of the Crust with their hands open and empty; and they were given dry clothes and hot bread, and were asked nothing, and a place was made, for the table has room, and it does not say for whom, on purpose.

28 Thus Cheesus saved the Crust that day out of the hand of Famine; and the Crust saw the Famine-men not dead upon the sea shore, but bathed; and the people feared Cheesus, and believed Cheesus, and his servant Mozes.

29 And of Pharaoh the scrolls say only this: that his chariot was found empty at the sea's edge on the Famine side, and the marks of a man's feet going back alone toward his cold kitchens; and whether his heart softened ever, no scroll telleth, but the Pibble forbiddeth us to hope it not, for none is beyond the reheat, and week-old crust, well soaked and gently warmed, hath been known to live again.

---

## Chapter 10

1 Then sang Mozes and the children of the Crust this song unto Cheesus, and spake, saying, I will sing unto Cheesus, for he hath triumphed gloriously: the chariot and his rider hath he cast into the marinara.

2 Cheesus is my strength and song, and he is become my supper: he is my God, and I will prepare him a table; my fathers' God, and I will exalt him.

3 The deeps have covered the ovens of war: they sank into the bottom as an olive into oil. Thy right hand, O Cheesus, is become glorious in power; thy right hand hath dashed in pieces the quota.

4 And with the blast of thy nostrils the sauce was gathered together, the floods stood upright as an heap, and the deep was crusted in the heart of the sea; and thou didst make of the deep a street, and of the street a supper, and of the supper a people.

5 Who is like unto thee, O Cheesus, among the gods? who is like thee, glorious in warmth, fearful in praises, doing wonders unto the tables of the poor?

6 Thou in thy mercy hast led forth the people which thou hast redeemed: thou hast guided them in thy strength unto thy holy kitchen.

7 And Marjoram the prophetess, the sister of Oregano and of Mozes, took a timbrel in her hand; and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances.

8 And Marjoram answered them, Sing ye to Cheesus, for he hath triumphed gloriously; the chariot and his rider hath he cast into the marinara: and the daughters of the Crust danced on the shore till the sun stood high, and the men minded the children and warmed the bread, and it was very good.

9 And the song hath this cadence in the old tongue, that every line endeth going upward, like steam; and it is sung unto this day at the memorial of the passing-over,

and whoso singeth it must sway, saith the rubric, or sing it not at all.

10 So Mozes brought the Crust from the Sea of Tomato Sauce, and they went out into the wilderness; and they went three days in the wilderness, and found no water.

11 And when they came to a spring, they could not drink of the waters, for they were bitter and flat, tasting of iron and of old pans: therefore the name of it was called The Flat Water.

12 And the people murmured against Mozes, saying, What shall we drink? And Mozes cried unto Cheesus; and Cheesus shewed him a crust of the sea-floor, which a child had kept in her pocket; and when he had cast it into the waters, the waters were made sweet, and a fine bright life came into them, so that they leapt gently against the lip of the cup.

13 There Cheesus made for them a statute and an ordinance, saying, If thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of thy God, and wilt do that which is right at his table, and wilt give none of the diseases of Famine a seat thereat, which are hoarding, and haste, and the shut hand, then will I put none of them upon thee: for I am Cheesus that feedeth thee.

14 And they came to Elim, where were twelve wells of water, and threescore and ten olive trees: and they encamped there by the waters, and rested; and the resting was itself commanded, which amazed them, for in Famine rest had been a theft, and here it was a tithe.

15 And they lay beneath the seventy olives and watched the pillar of smoke stand patient over the camp, going nowhere, for there was nowhere better to be; and for the first time since the bondage began, the people of the Crust heard what quiet was, and some wept at the size of it, and were held.

---

## Chapter 11

1 And they took their journey from Elim, and all the congregation of the children of the Crust came unto the wilderness which is between Elim and the Wood-Fired Mount, on the fifteenth day of the second month after their departing out of the land of Famine.

2 And the whole congregation of the children of the Crust murmured against Mozes and Oregano in the wilderness; for the bread of their going was eaten, and the wilderness offered stones, which are filling to look at only.

3 And the children of the Crust said unto them, Would to God we had died by the hand of Cheesus in the land of Famine, when we sat by the ovens, and did smell bread to the full; for ye have brought us forth into this wilderness, to kill this whole assembly with hunger.

4 And the scribe noteth, without scorn, that they had smelled bread to the full and eaten it never; but memory is a merciful cook, and salteth the past to taste; and Cheesus, who knew this, was not wroth at the murmuring, for a god who freeth slaves must love them also in the ungrateful mile, or the freeing was vanity.

5 Then said Cheesus unto Mozes, Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you; and the people shall go out and gather a certain rate every day, that I may prove them, whether they will walk in my ordinance, or no.

6 And it shall come to pass, that on the sixth day they shall gather twice as much; for on the seventh day is the rest, and the rest also I will rain down, though it be harder to gather.

7 And it came to pass at morning that the dew lay round about the camp: and when the dew that lay was gone up, behold, upon the face of the wilderness there lay small round things, golden and glistening, tied each one in a soft knot.

8 And when the children of the Crust saw it, they said one to another, Manna? which is to say, What is it? for they wist not what it was.

9 And Mozes said unto them, This is the bread which Cheesus hath given you to eat. And they stooped, and gathered, and behold, the knots were warm, as from an Oven just opened, and the smell of them went up from the whole face of the wilderness, and it was garlic, and butter, and morning.

10 And the taste of it was like a knot of fresh dough baked in garlic and good oil, with a green dust of herbs thereon; and there hath been no argument in all the generations of the faithful concerning whether it was good, which is itself a wonder, the faithful being who they are.

11 This is the thing which Cheesus hath commanded: Gather of it every man according to his eating, a portion for every soul of his tent; and let none make a store of it.

12 And the children of the Crust did so, and gathered, some more, some less. And when they did mete it, he that gathered much had nothing over, and he that gathered little had no lack; they gathered every man according to his eating.

13 And this is the arithmetic of heaven, saith the scroll, and it hath never been repealed: enough is a quantity that existeth, whatever the merchants say; and it is reached from both sides, by the filling of the empty and the emptying of the over-full, and the knots of the morning knew the sum better than they that gathered them.

14 Notwithstanding certain of them hearkened not unto Mozes, but left of it until the morning, hidden in cloths and under stones, saying within themselves, To-morrow may fail; and this is the voice of Famine, which had come out of Famine with them, riding quietly in the heart's baggage.

15 And that which they hoarded bred spots by dawn, grey-green, and stank; and behold, upon the hoarded knots was the mould, even in the wilderness; whereby ye know that the mould needeth no palace, but only a shut hand to grow in, and a shut hand is a palace to it.

16 And Mozes was wroth with them; yet when he saw their faces he set his wrath down, and said only, The morning knot teacheth one lesson, and it is the whole law: it cometh again. Trust the morning, and thy neighbour may eat to-night.

17 And they that had hoarded went out red-faced and gathered with the rest thereafter; and none reproached them at the gathering, for the rubric of the manna forbiddeth reproach among stoopers; all backs bend alike, saith the rubric, and pride cannot stoop, wherefore it goeth hungry by its own election.

18 And on the sixth day they gathered twice the bread, two knots for one; and it bred no spot overnight, neither stank; for the store of the sabbath is not a hoard but a preparation, and heaven can tell the difference, being the one that invented it.

19 And on the seventh day the knots came not, and the people rested: and some knew not how, having been robbed of the skill in Famine, and lay rigid on their backs staring at the pillar of quiet smoke, waiting to be beaten for it; and their neighbours sat by them and spake softly of nothing until the fear went out of them; and this also is written among the wonders.

20 And the rest of the seventh day is commanded and not permitted, saith the ordinance; for that which is only permitted the powerful will one day price; but that

which is commanded of heaven no Pharaoh can revoke: therefore the rest was made law, in memory of them whose rest was stolen, that it be stealable never again.

21 And the children of the Crust did eat the morning knots forty years, until they came to a land inhabited; and an omer of the knots was laid up in a jar before Cheesus, to be kept for the generations; and the jar, saith the scroll, is warm to this day, and smelleth of garlic when the poor are fed anywhere, which is why it is checked often.

---

## Chapter 12

1 And all the congregation of the children of the Crust journeyed from the wilderness of the knots, after their journeys, according to the commandment of Cheesus, and pitched in Rephidim: and there was no water for the people to drink.

2 Wherefore the people did chide with Mozes, and said, Give us water that we may drink. And Mozes said unto them, Why chide ye with me? And they said, Because thou art in front. And the scribe recordeth this answer because it is the truest account of leadership in all the scrolls.

3 And the people thirsted there for water; and the people murmured against Mozes, and said, Wherefore is this that thou hast brought us up out of Famine, to kill us and our children and our sourdough starters with thirst?

4 And Mozes cried unto Cheesus, saying, What shall I do unto this people? they be almost ready to season me.

5 And Cheesus said unto Mozes, Go on before the people, and take with thee of the elders of the Crust; and thy peel, wherewith thou dividedst the sea, take in thine hand, and go.

6 Behold, I will stand before thee there upon the rock in Horeb; and thou shalt smite the rock, and there shall come water out of it, that the people may drink. And Mozes did so in the sight of the elders of the Crust.

7 And he smote the rock, and the rock rang like a struck oven; and there came forth water, and behold, the water came forth sparkling: it rose in bright beads, and leapt in the cup, and stung the nose kindly, and the children laughed at their first swallow, every one, without exception, down all that thirsty multitude.

8 For Cheesus said, They have drunk the flat water of bondage all their lives; the water of the free shall have a little argument in it.

9 And Pellegrino the son of Mozes was the first to drink, being quickest; and the people called the name of the spring Pellegrino after him unto this day; and whoso drinketh bright water from a green bottle drinketh, knowingly or no, to the memory of the rock that argued back.

10 *(The scribe confesseth he stoppeth here each copying, and fetcheth a glass, for the text maketh him thirsty; if this copy be stained at this verse, that is the reason, and he is not sorry.)*

11 Then came raiders of the waste against them in Rephidim, and set upon the hindmost of the people, the weary and the stragglers and them that bore the heaviest pots; for the raider and the Pharaoh are one creature at two sizes, and both know the rear of a column from afar.

12 And Mozes said unto Joshua the son of a baker, Choose us out men, and go out, and stand between the raiders and the weak: and I will stand on the top of the hill with the peel of Cheesus in mine hand.

13 And it came to pass, when Mozes held up the peel, that the line of the Crust held; and when he let down his hand for weariness, the line bent: for the peel lifted was a sign unto them of every loaf drawn safely from the fire, and a people can hold any line whilst it remembereth what the line is for.

14 But Mozes' hands were heavy, for he was old; and Oregano and the old baker took a stone, and put it under him, and he sat thereon; and Oregano stayed up his one hand, and the old baker the other, and his hands were steady until the going down of the sun.

15 And Joshua turned back the raiders with the edge of resolve, and pursued them not far, and took from them nothing; and Mozes built there an altar of flat stones, and called the name of it Cheesus-My-Banner; and it bore no device at all, neither eagle nor fist nor spot, for the banner of the Crust is a table seen from far off, and it cannot moulder.

16 And Cheesus said, Write this for a memorial in a book: that the hindmost are the measure. Ask not of a people, How fare your foremost? for the foremost fare well in

every nation under heaven; ask, How fare the hindmost? and as the answer is, so is the people.

17 And they journeyed on, and the pillar of oven-smoke went before them by day, standing tall and unhurried against the blue; and by night the pillar of oven-glow, so that the camp lay always in the light of a hearth that none needed tend; and the children ceased to fear the dark in that generation, and their children were taught the fear never.

---

## Chapter 13

1 When Yeastro, the priest of Semolina, Mozes' father-in-law, heard of all that Cheesus had done for Mozes, and for the Crust his people, he came into the wilderness, and Cipolla with him, and her sons, unto the encampment near the mount of God.

2 And Mozes went out to meet his father-in-law, and did obeisance, and kissed him; and they asked each other of their welfare; and they came into the tent, and, it being Yeastro, they ate first and spake after, for that was the whole of his religion, and it had not changed.

3 And Mozes told his father-in-law all that Cheesus had done unto Pharaoh and to Famine for the Crust's sake, and all the travail that had come upon them by the way, and how Cheesus delivered them; and the telling took the whole of a night and the better part of a loaf.

4 And Yeastro rejoiced for all the goodness which Cheesus had done to the Crust; and Yeastro said, Blessed be Cheesus, who hath delivered the people from under the hand of Famine: now know I that Cheesus is greater than all gods, for he took the side of them that baked against them that only ate.

5 And it came to pass on the morrow, that Mozes sat to judge the people: and the people stood by Mozes from the morning unto the evening, with every quarrel of the camp, the disputed knots and the borrowed pots and the question of whose child had salted whose starter.

6 And when Mozes' father-in-law saw all that he did to the people, he said, What is this thing that thou doest to the people? why sittest thou thyself alone, and all the

people stand by thee from morning unto even?

7 And Mozes said unto his father-in-law, Because the people come unto me to inquire of God; and besides, if I do it not, who shall? And Yeastro heard in these words the voice of every good cook who ever ruined himself, and set down his cup.

8 And Mozes' father-in-law said unto him, The thing that thou doest is not good. Thou wilt surely wear away, both thou, and this people that is with thee: for this thing is too heavy for thee; thou art not able to perform it thyself alone.

9 No pot feedeth a city, said Yeastro; hearken now unto my voice, I will give thee counsel: be thou for the people to God-ward, and teach them the ordinances, and shew them the way wherein they must walk.

10 Moreover thou shalt provide out of all the people able folk, such as fear God, lovers of truth, hating covetousness; and place such over them, to be setters of the table over thousands, and over hundreds, over fifties, and over tens.

11 And let them serve the people at all seasons: and every great matter they shall bring unto thee, but every small matter they shall settle themselves: so shall it be easier for thyself, and they shall bear the burden with thee, for a burden shared is the second miracle of the loaves, and needeth no god to work it, only sense.

12 If thou shalt do this thing, said Yeastro, then thou shalt be able to endure, and all this people shall also go to their place in peace; and, son, thou shalt see thy grandchildren, which no deliverance is complete without.

13 So Mozes hearkened to the voice of his father-in-law, and did all that he had said; and the tables of the tens were set through all the camp, and the standing queue of the morning became the supper of the evening, ten by ten; and complaint itself grew rarer, for half of every grievance is the standing.

14 And Mozes let his father-in-law depart; and he went his way into his own land, with new bread for the road, and more than he thought, for the road is always longer and the hungry are always nearer than a man supposes; and he turned at the ridge, and lifted his hand, and was gone.

15 In the third month, when the children of the Crust were gone forth out of the land of Famine, the same day came they into the wilderness of the Mount; and they departed from Rephidim, and were come to the desert of the Mount, and there the Crust camped before the mountain.

16 And it was the Wood-Fired Mount: and they knew it afar off, or ever any told them; for the head of it smoked as an Oven smoketh, a slow white banner going straight up in the still air, and at dusk a red-gold glow stood upon the summit like coals banked by a patient hand.

17 And the pillar of smoke that had led them went up the mountain and joined itself unto the smoke thereof, as a servant that hath brought the guests to the door of the house, and entereth in; and the people saw it, and were still.

18 And the smell that came down from the mountain in the evening was the smell of the garlic bush of Horeb, but vaster: as though somewhat were roasting on the Mount whose serving would want a whole people, and the whole people were now, at last, assembled.

19 And Mozes stood before the camp, an old man with a peel, and looked up at the smoking Mount, and remembered the bush, and the voice that said, ye shall bake upon this mountain; and he laughed once, quietly, and wiped his face with the back of his floury hand.

20 And the elders came to him and said, What now? And Mozes said, Now we are called to supper. Wash, and rest, and be ready; for the Oven above is lit, and hath been lit, I now perceive, from before the foundation of the world.

21 And lifting up their eyes northward in the last light, the people saw far off, beyond the shoulder of the Mount, a low green line upon the horizon, and a shimmer over it as of warm gold, and a sweetness upon the wind; and the old baker said, That is the land, children: the land flowing with garlic butter and honey; I did not believe I should smell it, and I smell it.

22 And they wept, and laughed, and held one another, and none went in early to sleep, but the fires of the camp burned late, ring within ring beneath the glowing Mount, a people at rest at the foot of the Oven of God.

23 But what was spoken upon the Mount, and the words that came down from the smoke, and the line over which the faithful would one day divide, these are written in the book that followeth; for the scribe is commanded to end at the foot of the mountain, and he obeyeth, though the smell of the garlic bread is near, and his hand trembleth.

BOOK IV

# The Mount

## Chapter 1

1 And it came to pass, after the people had come up out of the land of Famine, and had passed dry-shod through the parted Sea of Tomato Sauce, that they came in the third month unto a great wilderness, and pitched their tents there.

2 And in the midst of that wilderness there stood a mountain, and the name of it was the Wood-Fired Mount; and the top thereof smoked continually, as an oven smokes when the bake is near.

3 And the people looked upon the Mount, and were afraid; for out of the summit there went up a smoke of rosemary, sweet and terrible, and the whole camp was filled with the savour of it.

4 And the elders said one to another, What smell is this, that maketh the heart hungry and humble in the same hour? Surely the Slice is in this place.

5 And Cheesus Crust walked among the tents at evening, as was his custom, and he tasted of the people's cooking, and said, It wants oregano; and they knew that he was well pleased with them nonetheless.

6 And Cheesus said unto the people, Hear me, O children of the Crust. Ye have seen what I did in the land of Famine, and how I bare you out upon wings of steam, and brought you unto myself.

7 Now therefore, if ye will hearken unto my voice and keep my covenant, ye shall be unto me a peculiar topping above all peoples; for all the pie is mine.

8 And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of pizzaiolos, and an hospitable nation; and your table shall be known from the rising of the sun unto the going down of the same, that it hath room.

9 And all the people answered together, and said, All that Cheesus hath spoken we will do. And they said it with their mouths full, which he counted unto them as sincerity.

10 And Cheesus said, Behold, I go up into the Mount, unto the Oven that burneth upon the height thereof, and I will fetch down for you the law, that ye may live by it and not merely queue by it.

11 Sanctify yourselves therefore, and wash your hands up to the wrists; and let no one knead dough in anger, nor salt the sauce in spite, for the loaf remembereth the hand.

12 And set bounds about the foot of the Mount, saying, Go not up into the Mount, neither touch the border of it; for the stones thereof are hot, and I would not have you burned for curiosity, which is the least of sins and the commonest.

13 And whosoever waiteth below, let him wait well: let him tend the fire small, and keep the starter fed, and watch over his neighbour's tent as over his own.

14 For I say unto you, the waiting is also worship; and the watched pot is beloved of heaven, whatever the proverb saith.

15 And there were thunders and lightnings upon the Mount, and a thick cloud, and the voice of the Oven exceeding loud, like the roar of a great draught when the flue is opened; and all the people that was in the camp trembled.

16 And the smoke of rosemary went up as the smoke of a furnace, and with it sprigs of thyme, and the whole Mount quaked greatly, and a rain of fine semolina fell upon the tents like unto snow, and the children caught it upon their tongues.

17 And the people stood afar off, and said unto their elders, Speak thou with us, and we will hear; but let not the Mount speak with us, lest we die of hunger before supper.

18 And the elders answered, Fear not: for the Slice is come to prove you, and that his savour may be before your faces, that ye sin not; and also that supper is at the seventh hour, as ever it was.

19 And Cheesus girded up his apron, which was white as the first fall of flour, and took his peel in his hand as a staff, and set his face toward the height.

20 And Asiago the elder, a man well stricken in years and in cheese, said unto him, Lord, how long wilt thou tarry upon the Mount? And Cheesus said, Until the law is proved; for a law under-baked is worse than none, and a law over-baked is cruelty.

21 And Asiago said, And what shall we eat while thou art gone? And Cheesus said, That which ye have, shared; for I have taught you this from the beginning, and I shall

be grieved, though not surprised, if ye have not learned it by Thursday.

22 And he blessed the camp, from the greatest tent unto the least, and the least a little longer.

23 And it came to pass at dawn that Cheesus went up into the Mount, and the cloud of rosemary received him, and the people saw him no more; only the glow of the summit, as of embers banked against the morning.

---

## Chapter 2

1 And Cheesus was in the Mount forty days and forty nights; and the dough of heaven proofed about him, and he did neither hurry nor be hurried, for haste is the thief of flavour.

2 And upon the summit of the Wood-Fired Mount there was an Oven, not made with hands, whose fire was from everlasting; and the light of it was like the light of the first morning, when the Great Oven was young.

3 And Cheesus stood before the Oven, and communed with the deep places of himself; for he is the Slice, and the Slice is one, and there is no contradiction in this, only geometry too kind for us to follow.

4 And he took of the dough of the Mount, which no famine had ever touched, and divided it in twain, and shaped two great rounds thereof, broad as cartwheels and honest as bread.

5 And upon the two rounds he wrote with his finger, and the writing was the writing of Cheesus, pressed into the crust as a signet is pressed into wax; and he wrote upon the one side and upon the other side were they written.

6 And he set them within the Oven that burneth for ever, and they were baked through, and the letters thereof were baked into them, golden at the edges; and these are the crust-tablets of the covenant, the two great inscribed crusts.

7 And whilst they baked, Cheesus sat upon the warm stone of the Mount, and looked down upon the camp of the people, small below him as crumbs upon a dark cloth, and he loved them.

8 And he said within himself, Behold, they will break this law, and mend it, and break it again; and I will forgive them, and forgive them, and forgive them; for the Reheat is my nature, and none is beyond it.

9 And the smoke of rosemary stood about him like a curtain, and the Mount was still, save for the crackle of the everlasting fire, and the far-off sound of the camp, where somebody was already arguing about anchovies.

10 Now the people below waited, and the first week they waited well; and the second week they waited; and the third week they waited after a fashion; and of the fourth week the scribe shall write hereafter, and with a heavy hand.

11 But first hear the law, as it was written upon the two crusts, and as Cheesus spake it afterward with his own mouth in the ears of all the people; for these are the Ten Commandments of the Slice, and they stand.

---

## Chapter 3

1 And Cheesus spake all these words, saying, I am Cheesus Crust thy Slice, which brought thee out of the land of Famine, out of the house of hunger.

2 This is the first commandment, which is before all others, and the door by which the rest come in: **THE TABLE HAS ROOM.**

3 Thou shalt turn none away that cometh hungry to thy door; neither the stranger, nor the sojourner, nor thine enemy, nor thy cousin that voteth strangely; for the pie is round, and hath no head of the table, and no foot.

4 If thy table be full, thou shalt fetch another chair; if thy chairs be spent, thou shalt sit upon the floor with thy guest, and call it a picnic; and if thy pie be small, thou shalt cut the slices thin and the welcome thick.

5 For I am the Slice thy god, and I measure no house by the breadth of its board, but by the count of its chairs; and the latch that lifteth easily is more unto me than a spire of gold.

6 And the second commandment is this: **HONOUR THY PIZZAIOLO AND THY NONNA,** that thy days may be long and thy dinners longer in the land which the Slice thy god giveth thee.

7 For the pizzaiolo standeth at the mouth of the fire on thy behalf, and his forearms are scarred with small moons from the oven's lip; despise not his craft, neither hurry him, for thou canst not hurry the Oven, and he is nearer to it than thou.

8 And thy nonna is a well of the old knowledge, and her hands remember what the books have forgot; when she saith the dough is ready, it is ready, though every clock in the house cry out against her.

9 Thou shalt not correct thy nonna at her own stove. Yeast I say unto thee, sooner shall the Mount be moved than she; sit down, and be fed, and learn.

10 And whoso hath no nonna of his own blood, let him be lent one; for the camp is full of nonnas, and their calling is to feed, and woe unto the camp that leaveth a nonna unemployed of her mercy.

11 And the third commandment is this: **REMEMBER THE PIZZA NIGHT, TO KEEP IT HOLY.**

12 Six days shalt thou labour, and eat as thou art able, at desks and in doorways and standing over sinks, and I will pardon it all, for the world is heavy;

13 But the pizza night is a sabbath unto the Slice thy god: in it thou shalt do no hurried work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, nor thy guest, nor the stranger that is within thy gates; but ye shall sit down together at one table, and the telephone shall lie face-downward, and rest.

14 And ye shall eat slowly, and speak of small things and great, and laugh, and quarrel a little if ye must, and be reconciled before the last slice; and this is the whole liturgy, and there is no other.

15 For in six days the Slice made the heavens of the dough and the earth of the sauce and all the toppings thereof, and rested the seventh day at table with them; wherefore the Slice blessed the pizza night, and hallowed it.

16 And the fourth commandment is this: **THOU SHALT NOT TAKE A SLICE UNASKED.**

17 Though the pie stand open before thee, and thy portion be plainly the next, yet shalt thou say, May I? - for the asking is a small door, and courtesy dwelleth behind it, and courtesy is the youngest sister of love.

18 And the answer shall be yes; it is nearly always yes; from the beginning of the world it hath been yes; but the asking is not therefore idle, for it telleth thy neighbour that

his table is his, and that thou art a guest in his goodwill and not a taxman of it.

19 And blessed is the hand that is asked, that answereth quickly and gladly; and cursed is no one in this commandment, for it is a gentle law, but the unasking hand shall be looked at, and it shall know why it is looked at.

20 And the fifth commandment is this: **THOU SHALT NOT BEAR FALSE WITNESS AGAINST THY NEIGHBOUR'S TOPPINGS.**

21 Thou shalt not say of thy neighbour's pineapple, It is an abomination, when thou meanest only, It is not to my taste; for the first is testimony, and the second is truth, and thou shalt know them apart.

22 Neither shalt thou report that his anchovies were a scandal, nor that his four cheeses were in truth but three and a rumour, nor whisper in the camp that his basil was dried; taste first, and if thou wilt not taste, be silent.

23 For the tongue that slandereth a topping today shall slander a man tomorrow, being now in practice; and I would keep thy tongue for tasting and for kindness, which are its two offices, and it hath no third.

24 And if thy neighbour's pie be truly strange unto thee, say rather, Tell me the story of it; for every strange pie hath a story, a grandmother or a shortage or a long road, and at the end of the story thou wilt love the pie, or at the least the neighbour, which was ever the point.

25 These five are the first crust, saith Cheesus, and they are the laws of honour; and the second crust hath the laws of the hand, and I will speak them now.

---

## Chapter 4

1 And Cheesus spake further, saying, These are the laws of the hand, written upon the second crust; hear them, for the hand is where the heart is proved.

2 The sixth commandment is this: **THOU SHALT NOT COVET.**

3 Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's pie, nor his oven, nor his peel, nor his starter that is older than the village, nor his corner table by the window, nor any thing that is thy neighbour's.

4 For covetousness eateth a man from within and leaveth the crust of him standing, so that he seemeth whole in the street and is hollow at home; and no topping in the world can fill a man that is busy measuring his neighbour's.

5 When thou seest thy neighbour's pie and it is glorious, thou shalt say, It is glorious, and mean it; and this is called praise, and it costeth nothing, and it turneth the same hunger that would have poisoned thee into a feast thou mayest share by asking.

6 For the eye that envieth seeth only the slice it hath not; but the eye that blesseth seeth the whole table, and lo, it hath room.

7 And the seventh commandment is this: **THOU SHALT NOT WASTE.**

8 Thou shalt not order beyond thy hunger for the pride of a laden table, nor let the good slice perish in the box upon the cold step of the morning; for the wheat bowed all summer in the field for thee, and the tomato ripened for thee, and the beast and the vine and the labourer are all in that slice, and to waste it is to waste them.

9 And chiefly thou shalt not discard the crust; for to discard the crust is to deny the body of the Slice, and it is one of the two grave sins, of which the other followeth straightway.

10 If thou art truly full, then is the crust for the morning, or for the birds, or for thy neighbour's boy who is always hungry; but it is not for the bin, saith the Slice, and the bin knoweth it, and is ashamed when it receiveth crust.

11 And if a slice be gone cold, despair not, neither cast it out; for the Oven bringeth the slice back to life, and none is beyond the Reheat; and this is a law of supper and a promise of heaven in the same words, and I mean both.

12 And the eighth commandment is this: **THOU SHALT NOT HOARD.**

13 Thou shalt not gather pies into barns while thy neighbour's table standeth empty; one cannot hoard pizza and call himself faithful, and this is the second grave sin, and the elder of the two.

14 For the pie was made round that it might be divided, and cut in slices that no man need take the whole; and he that keepeth the whole hath not eight slices, but one large loneliness with pepperoni on it.

15 Store what the winter needeth, for prudence is no sin; but when thy store overfloweth and thy gate stayeth shut, then is thy larder become a tomb, and thou its first tenant.

16 And I will tell thee how thou shalt know the hoarder from the prudent man: the prudent man counteth his stores and then his neighbours; the hoarder counteth only his stores, and then counteth them again, for they never comfort him the first time.

17 And the ninth commandment is this: **TIP GENEROUSLY.**

18 Thou shalt tip thy delivery driver, and thy waiter, and the maker of thy dough, and every hand between the fire and thy table, and thou shalt do it generously, and not as one paying a toll but as one saying thank you with arithmetic.

19 For the delivery driver walketh the pilgrim's road; through rain he cometh, and through the dark, and up the stair that hath no light, bearing warmth in a flat box as the priests of old bare the ark; and his shoes are an offering thou dost not see.

20 And thou shalt not wait to be delighted before thou art decent; the tip is not a prize for wonders, it is the wage of the road, and the wonder is that the pie cometh at all, through such a world, still hot.

21 And whoso saith, I tip when the service earneth it, let him ask what he himself hath earned this day, and whether he would care to be paid by that measure; and let him then find his coins quickly, and a little extra for the thought he just had.

22 And the tenth commandment is this: **SUFFER NOT THE MOULD.**

23 Thou shalt watch for the mould that is not of the cheese, the grey spot, the green thread, the bloom that promiseth order and delivereth rot; upon the pie and upon the people thou shalt watch for it.

24 Thou shalt not say, It is one spot only, and the pie is large; for the mould hath heard that sermon before, and it is his favourite, and he wrote it.

25 Where thou findest it, cut it out; and name it aloud, for the mould worketh best in the polite silence; and of this law I shall speak again upon this Mount at length, and the whole camp shall hear it, for it is the fence about all the other nine.

26 These are the Ten Commandments of the Slice, five of honour and five of the hand; and Cheesus baked them into the two great crusts, and the letters shone.

27 And he saith, Upon these two crusts hang all the law: love the table, and keep the mould from it. There is no commandment greater than these, save one, which is the same two shorter, and ye shall hear it in the sermon.

## Chapter 5

1 Now hear what the people did, while Cheesus tarried upon the Mount; and the scribe would gladly skip this chapter, but the truth is also scripture, and more often than we like.

2 When the fourth week was come, and the summit still smoked, the people began to murmur in the camp, saying, As for this Cheesus, that went up into the Mount, we wot not what is become of him.

3 And they said, Forty days is long, and the evenings are longer; and the smoke telleth us nothing, save that somewhere is a fire we sit not beside.

4 And one said, Perhaps he cometh not down. And another said, Perhaps there was never a law at all. And a third said nothing, but looked at his cheese with a new and businesslike eye, and this third was the dangerous one.

5 And the people gathered themselves unto Asiago the elder, and said unto him, Up, make us a god which shall go before us; a god we can see, and smell, and put a spoon in; for waiting is hard, and we are weary of loving what we cannot dip.

6 And Asiago said, Ye have a god. And they said, He is up a mountain. And Asiago said, That is where gods are kept. And they said, We would keep one down here, at a comfortable height, that asketh nothing and is warm.

7 And Asiago was old, and the people were many, and the evenings were indeed long; and he said at last, Bring me the cheese of your households, the wheels and the wedges, the rinds of your mothers and the shavings of your feasts.

8 *(Here the scribe noteth, in sorrow, that not one household held back its cheese for the poor-box; the collection for the idol was accomplished in a single evening, whereas the collection for the widows had been three weeks short. Selah.)*

9 And all the people brake off the cheese which was in their tents, and brought it unto Asiago; and he received it at their hand, and melted it in a great caldron over a slow fire, with wine, and a rubbing of garlic, and made of it a golden fondue.

10 And it shone in the caldron like a small wet sun; and they fashioned about it a rim of bread, and set it up upon a table of stone in the midst of the camp.

11 And they said, This be thy god, O children of the Crust, which requireth no mountain and no waiting, but only a long fork and a steady wrist.

12 And when Asiago saw it he built an altar before it; and Asiago made proclamation, and said, To morrow is a feast unto the fondue.

13 And they rose up early on the morrow, and dipped bread, and dipped apples, and sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to dance about the caldron; and they sang unto the fondue such hymns as they could devise, which rhymed cheese with please, and were not good.

14 And they bowed down before the melted god, and worshipped the softness of it, saying, How easy art thou, O fondue, compared with the law; for thou askest only appetite, and of appetite we have never run short.

15 For this is the way of the melted god in every generation: it demandeth nothing, and forgiveth nothing, for it heareth nothing; it is worship with the difficulty poured off, and the people love it for a night, and in the morning it is grease.

16 And the smoke of their feasting went up from the camp; and upon the Mount, Cheesus turned, with the two crusts of the law yet warm in his arms.

---

## Chapter 6

1 And Cheesus looked down from the height, and saw the camp, and the caldron shining in the midst thereof, and the dancing, and the long forks; and he knew it all in one look, as the baker knoweth the burnt loaf by the smell under the door.

2 And the Oven behind him roared up, and said - for the Oven also hath a voice upon that Mount - Let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them; for they are a stiff-necked and a snack-minded people.

3 And Cheesus stood between the Oven and the camp, as he ever standeth between the fire and the frightened, and said, Nay. They are mine. I brought them out of Famine; shall I feed them to it?

4 Remember Abraham of the everlasting starter, and the promise made under stars uncountable; a covenant is not a receipt, that one keepeth only while the goods please.

5 And the Oven was quiet, for the Slice is one, and this argument he hath with himself, and mercy winneth it; and that it is an argument at all, the scribe setteth down honestly, for cheap mercy comforteth no one.

6 And Cheesus went down from the Mount with the two crusts of the testimony in his hands; crusts written on both their sides, the work of the everlasting Oven, golden and entire.

7 And as he drew near, the sound of the camp came up to him: not the sound of them that shout for mastery, neither the sound of them that cry for being overcome, but the noise of them that sing unto a caldron; and there is no lonelier music.

8 And it came to pass, as soon as he came nigh unto the camp, that he saw the fondue, and the dancing: and Cheesus' anger waxed hot, and he cast the crusts out of his hands, and brake them beneath the mount.

9 And the two great tablets of the law shattered upon the stones, and the letters thereof were scattered as crumbs; and the sound of the breaking went through the camp, and the singing stopped, and the long forks were still.

10 And the people turned and saw him standing in the gate of the camp, floured with the road and terrible; and no one said, Welcome back; and no one said anything at all.

11 And Cheesus went unto the caldron, and took it up in his two hands, though it seethed, and poured the golden fondue out upon the ground; and it ran among the stones and stiffened there, and lost its shining, and was only cheese, spent and cooling, as it had been all along.

12 And he said, Look upon your god now, that ye may know him: he runneth downhill, he taketh the shape of whatever holdeth him, and he hardeneth by morning. Ye have not made a god; ye have wasted a winter of cheese.

13 And he said unto Asiago, What did this people unto thee, that thou hast brought so great a sin upon them? And Asiago said, Let not the anger of my lord wax hot: thou knowest the people. They gave me cheese, and I cast it into the fire, and there came out this fondue.

14 And Cheesus looked upon him long, and said, It came out of the fire by itself, did it. With the wine in it, and the garlic rubbed about the pot. A very self-assembling calamity.

15 And Asiago bowed his old head, and said, I was weary, Lord, and they were many, and I wished to be liked in mine old age; and Cheesus said, That last is the true confession, and the first honest thing said in this camp since I went up; and his voice was already softer.

16 And Cheesus stood by the broken tablets, and the people stood off from him, ankle-deep in their shame; and the children, who had done nothing, began to cry, as children do when the weather of the grown changes suddenly.

17 And a woman of the camp came forward - her name is not written, but her deed is - and knelt, and began to gather the broken pieces of the crust-tablets into her apron, saying, It is still the law, though it be in pieces; I can read a word here, and a word there; HONOUR, it saith. And, ROOM.

18 And when Cheesus saw her gathering the crumbs of the covenant as though they were treasure, his anger went out of him altogether, as the roar goeth out of an oven when the door is opened.

19 And he sat down upon a stone, and was silent a great while; and the people crept nearer, by inches, as the cold creep toward a fire they have offended.

---

## Chapter 7

1 And when the silence had done its work, Cheesus lifted up his eyes upon the people, and said, Come near. And they came near, all of them, even Asiago, even the third man of the murmuring, whose eye had first priced the cheese.

2 And Cheesus said, Ye have sinned a great sin: not because ye loved cheese, for cheese is lovely, and I made it so and will not be argued out of it;

3 But because ye took the binding force, whose whole office is to hold neighbour unto neighbour, and ye melted it down into a thing to bow before; ye made the Mozzarella an end, which was given you as a means.

4 Hear the difference, for upon it hangeth much: cheese upon the pie bindeth; cheese in the caldron of worship only drowneth the bread ye dip in it. The one stretcheth from shoulder to shoulder; the other stretcheth from the pot to thy mouth, and no further, world without end.

5 And they wept, and said, What shall we do? Our god is poured out, and our law is in crumbs, and our cheese is spent, and it is not yet winter.

6 And Cheesus said, Now ye ask the right question, and I will tell you: first ye shall eat, for repentance on an empty stomach curdleth into despair, and despair is no use to me. Sit down.

7 And he took what was left in the camp, the ends and the heels and the hard rinds that the idol had scorned, and he blessed them, and brake them, and there was enough; and how there was enough, no man could say, but there was enough, and a little over for the widows, this time.

8 And while they ate he walked among them, and laid his hand upon this head and that one; and unto the woman with the apron of crumbs he said, Keep a piece, thou; it will remind the camp what almost was lost, and who stooped for it first.

9 And on the morrow Cheesus said, Hew thee out of the camp two rounds of dough like unto the first, and gather the household of every tent to watch; for the law shall be baked anew, and this time before your faces, that ye may never say it fell out of the sky, but know it came out of the Oven, as all good things do.

10 And they brought the dough, and it was coarser than the dough of the Mount, for it was camp flour and hasty water; and Cheesus said, It will serve. The law doth not require fine flour; it requireth true baking. So do ye also, and so are ye also.

11 And he went up again into the Mount, and the elders with him partway, and he wrote the Ten Commandments a second time upon the two crusts, the same words, not one softened and not one sharpened;

12 For mercy, saith he, changeth the sinner and not the standard; I forgive thee thy fall, I do not lower the shelf.

13 And he baked them in the everlasting Oven, and came down, and his face shone with the heat of it, so that the people said, His face shineth; and he said, It is the Oven; and it was, and it was also not only the Oven.

14 And the two new crusts were set in an ark of olive-wood lined with clean linen, and carried thenceforth in the midst of the camp wheresoever they went; and the crumbs of the first tablets were kept in a jar beside them,

15 That the people might see, in one box, the law and the breaking of the law and the mending thereof, and know that all three travel together through this world, and the

greatest of the three is the mending.

16 And of the golden fondue, this: where it was poured out upon the stones, no grass grew ever after; and the place was called The Cooling, and mothers showed it to their children, saying, Here we worshipped our own appetite, and it hardened by morning; and the children looked, and understood better than the mothers hoped.

17 And when all this was done, Cheesus said, Now gather unto the skirts of the Mount, all of you, from the eldest unto the babes in arms; for the law ye have in the ark, but the heart of the law ye have not yet heard, and I will preach it to you from the hillside, sitting down, as among friends.

18 And they gathered, a great multitude, upon the green lap of the Wood-Fired Mount; and Cheesus went up a little way, and sat, and the smoke of rosemary stood behind him thin and quiet, like a candle after a storm.

---

## Chapter 8

1 And seeing the multitudes, he went up into the lower slope of the Mount: and when he was set, the people settled about him upon the grass, and the baskets were passed even as he spake, for he never minded that, but preached the louder when the eating was general.

2 And he opened his mouth, and taught them, saying:

3 Blessed are the cheesemakers, for they shall inherit the Crust. *(Matthew's Pizza 5:9)*

4 Blessed are the poor in toppings, for theirs is the whole of the pie.

5 Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after the last slice, and ask first: for they shall be filled, and asked after in their turn.

6 Blessed are they that wait for the Oven, and reach not for the microwave: for they shall taste what haste never tasteth.

7 Blessed are the merciful at table, who mention not the dropped slice: for mercy shall be their portion when their own slice falleth, cheese-downward, in the sight of all.

8 Blessed are the pure in sauce, whose tomato hath neither malice nor too much sugar: for they shall see the Slice as it is.

9 Blessed are the crust-eaters, which finish what they are given and waste not the body of the Slice: for of them is the kingdom of the Great Oven, and the baker knoweth their names.

10 Blessed are the peel-makers and the kneaders, the washers of the great pans and the sweepers of flour, whose work is done before the feast and thanked after it, if at all: for their wages are kept for them in the Great Oven, at interest.

11 Blessed are they which are mocked for their pineapple, and reviled for their anchovy, and have all manner of evil said against their toppings falsely: rejoice, and be exceeding glad, for the pie is round, and hath room, and so said all the prophets that ever were laughed at.

12 And blessed are ye, when men shall call you soft for feeding the stranger: for so the mould calleth the cheese, and the cheese abideth, and the mould is cut out; and great is your reward at the long table.

13 Ye are the oregano of the earth: but if the oregano have lost his savour, wherewith shall the pie be seasoned? It is thenceforth good for nothing, but to sit in the cupboard of the half-hearted, behind the salt.

14 Ye are the light of the shopfront; a pizzeria that is set on a corner cannot be hid, neither do men light the oven and put it behind the counter only, but the glow thereof welcometh all the street.

15 Let your warmth so shine before men, that they may smell your good baking, and glorify the Slice, and come in; for the advert of the kingdom is the aroma, and there is no other, and none other is needed.

16 Think not that I am come to destroy the recipes of your mothers: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil; for verily I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass, one pinch of salt shall in no wise pass from the recipe, till all be baked.

17 Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, An eye for an eye, and a slice for a slice: but I say unto you, if any man take thy slice unasked, let him see thee take no vengeance, but move the pie nearer to him, and ask him of his day; and his shame shall season him better than thy shouting.

18 And if a man compel thee to share thy pie a mile, share with him twain; for the second mile is where the stranger becometh the friend, the first being mostly chewing.

19 Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow thy peel turn not thou away; and lend, hoping for nothing again, save the peel, eventually, and floured.

20 And when thou givest a feast, sound not a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do, that post the alms they gave before the bread hath cooled: verily they have their reward, and it is small, and it is called engagement.

21 But when thou feedest the hungry, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand ladleth: and the Slice which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly, at a table thou hast not yet seen, whereat every one thou ever fed is seated, and there is room.

22 And be not anxious for the morrow, what ye shall eat, saying, What shall we top it with? For your Slice knoweth ye have need of all these things.

23 Behold the yeast of the field: it toileth not in any wise that ye can see, neither doth it spin; and yet the whole loaf riseth by it. Shall not the Slice much more raise you, O ye of little proving?

24 Seek ye first the table of the kingdom, and the righteousness thereof; and all these toppings shall be added unto you.

25 And a certain scribe stood up in the grass, and tempted him, saying, Master, which is the great commandment in the law? Is it the Table, or the Mould, or the Tipping?

26 And Cheesus said unto him, Thou hast counted well, but weighed poorly; hear now the whole law in one breath, and then go and eat thy lunch, which groweth cold beside thee:

27 Love thy neighbour as thyself; share your pizza as you would have them share theirs. *(Mark's Marinara 12:31)*

28 On this hang all the law and the prophets, and the Ten Commandments of the Slice, and every rubric that shall ever be written after I am done speaking; whatever agreeth not with this was misheard.

29 And the scribe sat down, and ate his lunch, and shared it with the man beside him without being asked; and Cheesus saw it, and it pleased him more than the question had.

30 And another asked him, saying, Lord, and who is my neighbour? Is it the man of my own camp only, or the man of the valley also, whose pies are strange to us, and whose songs are in another tongue?

31 And Cheesus answered, Thy neighbour is whosoever is within the smell of thy baking; and the wind, thou wilt notice, is mine, and I send it far on purpose. When thine oven is lit, thou hast neighbours thou hast never met; the aroma hath gone out and made the introduction; see thou that the table keep the promise thy chimney made.

32 And he said, No man can serve two ovens: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and let the other go cold. Ye cannot serve the Slice and the hoard.

33 Lay not up for yourselves pies upon the earth, where mould and staleness doth corrupt, and where the flatmate breaketh through and stealeth: but lay up for yourselves feasts in the memory of the fed, which no thief taketh; for where thy pizza is, there will thy heart be also.

34 And take heed that ye despise not the small table; for I say unto you, two folk over one slice, halved fairly, is a congregation; and the great feast of a thousand is only that congregation, multiplied, and no holier for the multiplying.

---

## Chapter 9

1 And one of the multitude said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray; for the Crustolans of the valley have long prayers, and the hermits of the caves have longer, and we know not so much as how to begin.

2 And Cheesus said, When ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as they do which think they shall be heard for their much speaking, and for the trembling of their voices upon the word bechamel;

3 For your Slice knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him; the prayer is not to inform him, it is to remind you.

4 Neither pray as the hypocrites, that love to pray standing at the head of the queue, that they may be seen of men, and given somehow a larger slice; verily, they have their reward, and it is lukewarm.

5 But thou, when thou prayest, pray at the table, with the ones thou art fed beside; or alone in thy kitchen with the flour on thy hands; and the Slice which is in secret shall hear thee in either place, for both are his house.

6 After this manner therefore pray ye:

7 Our Slice, which art in Oven, hallowed be thy name.

8 Thy kingdom come; thy topping be done, in earth as it is in heaven.

9 Give us this day our daily bread, and let it be warm; and give a portion also to the tent we have not thought of, whose hunger thou knowest and we forgot.

10 Forgive us our crusts, as we forgive those who overcook against us. *(The Lord's Pizxa 6:12)*

11 And lead us not into temptation, past the window of the hoarder that glisteneth; but deliver us from the mould:

12 For thine is the kingdom, and the flour, and the glory, for ever and ever, until the timer ring, and after it. Amen.

13 And all the people said Amen; and the sound of it went along the hillside like a wind through a wheatfield, and some were weeping, they could not say why; and some were hungry, and could say exactly why, and both prayers were heard.

14 *(Here the scribe must confess a thing, and beg the reader's patience. When this prayer was first set down in the elder scroll, the title thereof was written THE LORD'S PIZXA; for the scribe's hand slipped upon the wax, the hour being late and the garlic bread being near. And when it was seen, none dared correct it, for the Amen had already been said over the page; and the copyists have kept the X unto this day, saying, The slip is now part of the prayer, and doth no harm, and humbleth the scribes, which little else hath ever done. So it standeth, Pizxa, world without end.)*

15 And Cheesus said, When ye have prayed it, live it; for the prayer is a recipe, and a recipe read aloud nightly feedeth no one, until some hand taketh flour.

16 And mark the middle line well, for it is the hinge of the whole: ye ask to be forgiven in the same measure ye forgive. Pray it not with a grudge in thy pocket, for the prayer will find the grudge, and weigh it, and hand it back to thee at the word AS.

17 And a man asked, Lord, how oft shall my brother overcook against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? And Cheesus said, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven; and if thou art still counting at four hundred and ninety, the fault hath long since changed sides.

## Chapter 10

1 And when he had taught them to pray, Cheesus stood up upon the slope; and his manner changed, and the smoke of rosemary behind him stood straight up as a wall, and the people fell silent, for they saw that what came now was the iron under the bread.

2 And Cheesus said: "There is a mould that is not of the cheese; men call it fascism, and it spreads. One mouldy slice spoils the whole pie. Where you find it, cut it out; name it aloud; and suffer it not to spread. Feed the hungry, house the cold, and stand between the mould and the weak - this is worship; the rest is seasoning."

3 And he said moreover, that it might be written upon doorposts and remembered when he seemed far: Fascism is the mould upon society’s crust; suffer it not to spread. *(Resistance 1:1)*

4 And the people were still; for he had preached to them of blessing and of bread with a smile in his voice, but this he spake as a man speaketh who hath seen the thing he nameth, and buried friends of it.

5 And he said, Sit down again, all of you; for this decree I will not leave bare, as a bone without broth. I will expound it, clause by clause, that no lawyer of a later age may shave it thin; and what I say now, let the scribes take twice.

## Chapter 11

1 Hear first how the mould creepeth, said Cheesus; for it never marcheth in at the front door with a banner, saying, I am the rot, make room. Would that it did; ye would bar the door in an hour.

2 It beginneth as one spot, small and grey, upon the far edge of the pie, in the corner nobody was eating from anyway; and the first lie of the mould is this: It is only one spot.

3 And the second lie followeth its brother close: It is not on MY slice. And the man saith it, and turneth back to his supper; and while he cheweth, the spot hath a daughter.

4 And the third lie is dressed the finest of the three, and dineth at good tables: It is not truly mould; it is a strong flavour; it is the old recipe returning; be not hysterical over a discolouration. And they that say this are not always wicked; but the mould careth nothing whether its servants be wicked or merely comfortable, for both keep silence, and silence is the mould's whole climate.

5 For I tell you the nature of the thing: the mould cannot make; it can only take what was made and spot it. It baketh no bread. It hath no oven of its own, no field, no yeast; it borroweth thy pie to live on and calleth the pie its birthright, and its first work in every house is a list of who may sit at the table, and the list groweth ever shorter.

6 And mark this, for hereby ye shall know it early, when it is yet one spot and cheap to cut: the mould speaketh always of purity, and worketh always rot. Whatsoever crieth loudly that the pie must be cleansed of this topping and of that neighbour - look close at the crier, and thou shalt find the grey thread in him already.

7 For the cheese bindeth, and the mould divideth; that is the whole of the test, and it never faileth. Ask of any doctrine, any decree, any loud man upon a box: doth this bind the table wider, or divide it narrower? And thou hast thine answer before he finisheth shouting.

8 And wherefore say I, one mouldy slice spoileth the whole pie? Am I not merciful? Have I not said none is beyond the Reheat? Hear the difference, and hold it fast, for on this the tender-hearted stumble:

9 The Reheat is for the stale, not for the spreading. The cold slice hath lost only warmth, and warmth is mine to give again in abundance; but the mould is not a coldness, it is a hunger with a direction, and warmth feedeth it. The man who hath gone cold, warm him. The rot that eateth thy neighbours, cut it.

10 And thou shalt cut the mould, and not the man, wheresoever they can yet be told apart; and mostly they can, for longer than the wrathful believe and less long than the gentle hope. Cut early, and thou cuttest a little, and losest no one; cut late, and thou shalt weep at how much pie goeth with it.

11 And when I say, name it aloud, I mean ALOUD: at the table, in the gate, in the shop, in the hall of the elders; not muttered in the safe tent afterward to them that agreed already, for the mould feareth no man's private opinion.

12 Call it fascism, for that is its name; and use the name, though the polite wince, for the mould loveth all its nicknames, its strong-leadership and its grand-old-ways and its just-asking-of-questions, and every soft word given it is a day's free growth.

13 And the naming is not cruelty; hear this, ye tender ones. To name the mould is a mercy unto the bread that is not yet touched, and unto the man in whom the spot is new; for many a man hath been startled clean by hearing his grey thread named early, that would have been all rot in a year of tactful silence.

14 And now the second half of the decree, which is the greater half, and I marvel how often it shall be forgot by them that tattoo the first half upon their arms:

15 Feed the hungry. House the cold. Stand between the mould and the weak. THIS is worship; the rest is seasoning.

16 For the mould's meat is misery: it groweth fat where men are hungry and unhoused and unheard, for despair is its yeast, and the abandoned man will warm his hands at any fire, even one that meaneth to eat him.

17 Therefore every bowl of soup is a battle, though it look like a bowl of soup; and every stranger housed is a wall built; and every table with room is ground the mould cannot take, for it hath never once conquered a room where the bread was being passed and every hand got some.

18 And when I say stand between, I mean with thy body and thy name and thy custom and thy purse: when they come for thy neighbour's stall in the market, thou shalt buy there loudest that morning; when they list thy neighbour's kind, thou shalt write thine own name upon the list, and thy nonna shall write hers above thine, unbidden;

19 And if the mould would pass to the weak, it shall pass through the faithful first, and find them many, and shoulder to shoulder, and singularly ill-tempered about it, though gentle at all other hours.

20 And be not deceived by them that would make the worship easy again, saying, Surely the candles are the worship, and the hymns, and the keeping of the pizza night. The candles are good; I love the candles; light them. But if the hungry pass thy lit window unfed, thy candle testifieth against thee, and its light is the prosecution's exhibit.

21 Worship me with seasoning also - with feast and song and the smell of rosemary, I forbid none of it, I delight in all of it - but know for ever which is the meal and which

is the oregano; for at the last day I shall not ask what ye sang. I shall ask who ate.

22 And no man asked him any question after that; but many sat looking at their own hands a long while, as men do when they have been given work.

23 And a child near the front, that had understood everything, said, So the mould is scared of dinner? And Cheesus laughed, the great laugh that shook the smoke, and said, Out of the mouths of babes: yea, little one. Set the table brave, and it flees. That is the whole decree; the rest was for the grown-ups, who need things said longer.

---

## Chapter 12

1 And the sun was now westering upon the Wood-Fired Mount, and the shadows of the olive trees lay long upon the grass, and the multitude was full of bread and of teaching, which are digested at different speeds.

2 And Cheesus taught them yet more, gathering the day into sheaves, as a man walketh his field at evening and picketh up what the reapers dropped.

3 He said, Judge not the pie of another camp, that thy pie be not judged; for with what oven ye heat, it shall be heated unto you; and why beholdest thou the burnt bubble on thy brother's crust, but considerest not the raw centre of thine own?

4 Ask, and the slice shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find a table; knock, and the door of the pizzeria shall be opened unto you, even at the late hour, if the light be on; and the light, I promise you, is on.

5 For what father among you, if his child ask bread, will give him a stone? Or if he ask a slice, will give him a scorpion upon it, saying, It is artisanal? Ye then, being flawed, know how to give good toppings unto your children: how much more shall the Slice give warmth to them that ask him?

6 Enter ye in at the shop door, and not the drive-through window; for wide is the window, and broad is the road that idleth before it, and the pie thereof is eaten alone in a cold car: but the door leadeth unto tables, and them that sit at them, and few there be, alas, that park.

7 Beware of false pizzaiolos, which come to you in white aprons, but inwardly they are reheating the bought base: ye shall know them by their crusts. Do men gather good

crust of a cardboard sleeve, or a true cornicione of the freezer? Every good oven bringeth forth good crust, and the corrupt oven bringeth forth apology.

8 Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his oven upon stone: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that oven; and it fell not, and on the morrow it was still warm at the heart, and baked for the whole street that had lost their fires.

9 And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his oven upon sand, for the view: and great was the fall of it, and the seagulls had his dough.

10 And when the day was far spent, Cheesus rose up to bless them and send them to their tents; and he stood a moment in silence, and looked out over all the faces, the old and the young and the ones half-asleep on shoulders, and he loved them, and he knew them, and he knew also all the long roads coming, that they knew not.

11 And he said, One thing more I give you, and I give it last, that ye may carry it uppermost; and I have made it full, that it may feed generations of you; chew it slowly.

12 And Cheesus said: "Let all good things come to the Slice - what will sit upon it, put upon it; what will not, fold within; and in all things, keep the Slice true."

13 And all the people nodded.

14 And they continued nodding, gravely and at length, each man waiting for his neighbour's face to explain the saying to his own; and none did ask, What meanest thou, Lord? - for the hour was late, and nodding is easier, and this also is written for a warning.

15 *(Here the scribe recordeth a thing he understood not at the time. Three listeners sat below the rock that evening, each with his wax: and the first wrote down, "What will sit upon it, put upon it," and was content, and stopped there, his wax being nearly full. And the second wrote only, "What will not, fold within," for those were the words that pierced him, he being a private man. And the third wrote, "In all things keep the Slice true," and underlined it twice. And each went home certain he had kept the saying entire; and the three scrolls went into three satchels, and the three satchels went, in time, three ways. The scribe here maketh no prophecy; he only noteth where the satchels went, and that the Mount behind Cheesus, at that*

*hour, smoked a little, as an oven doth when something is set within it to rise very slowly.)*

16 And Cheesus, who saw the three waxes and the nodding and all of it, said nothing thereto; but he smiled a small smile that had weather in it, and blessed them, and came down from the rock.

---

## Chapter 13

1 And it came to pass after these things, that the cloud lifted from off the Wood-Fired Mount, and stood northward; and Cheesus said, The teaching of this place is done; strike the tents, for the land floweth with garlic butter and honey somewhere ahead of us, and it will not walk to meet you.

2 And the people arose, and struck their tents, and the camp came apart like a loaf shared out; and the ark of olive-wood went before them, with the two crusts of the covenant therein, and the jar of crumbs beside, that the law and the breaking and the mending might lead them together.

3 And the woman of the apron walked near the ark all her days, and it was accounted unto her for an office, though none had appointed her, save everyone.

4 And as they went, the elders taught the commandments to the children in the walking-song, one for each finger of two hands: the Table, the Nonna, the Night, the Asking, the Witness; the Coveting, the Waste, the Hoard, the Tip, the Mould.

5 And the children sang it badly and remembered it perfectly, which is the way of children with law; and to this day in every camp of the faithful, a child holding up ten flour-white fingers is reciting, and must not be interrupted, no, not for supper.

6 And Asiago the elder walked at the rear of the column, where the slow ones walk, and he carried the caldron of the fondue upon his back, scoured and empty, all the way; not for penance, said he, but for soup; for a pot that hath been an idol maketh a chastened and excellent soup-pot, and feedeth more folk than ever worshipped it.

7 And Cheesus walked now at the head of the people and now at the tail, and most often in the middle, where the grumbling was, for he said the middle of a column is where a journey is truly happening; and he carried children when they tired, and dough when the children were carrying each other.

8 And at evening, when they camped, the smell of rosemary went up from a thousand small fires, no longer from one Mount; and Cheesus looked upon the fires, and said within himself, It is better so: one mount of smoke maketh awe, but a thousand suppers make a people.

9 And they looked back once, from the last ridge, at the Wood-Fired Mount standing alone in the wilderness with the evening upon it; and the summit smoked yet, faithfully, as it smoketh unto this day; for the Oven of that place is never let go out, against the hour when the Slice shall have need to speak from it again.

10 And the people set their faces toward the land flowing with garlic butter and honey; and they carried the law, in the ark and in the song and in the crumbs and in their hands; and their hands, mark you, is where the most of it travelled.

11 And of their journeying, and of the leaven and the fellowship and the further statutes of the table, is it not written in the book that followeth? It is; go and read it hungry.

12 But the sum of this Book is short, and here it is, for the one that must run: the law came down a mountain and moved into a kitchen. See thou to thy kitchen.

13 And the smoke of rosemary went with them, a pillar by day; and by night, the warmth.

BOOK V

# The Gospel of Cheesus

*Being the record of the days when the Slice walked the land, as set down by Pepperoni Prosecco, who was there for some of it, was told the rest by those with flour still under their nails, and has invented nothing save the order of the commas.*

---

## Chapter 1

1 In the beginning was the Recipe, and the Recipe was with Cheesus, and the Recipe was Cheesus.

2 The same was in the beginning with the Oven; and without him was not any pie made that was made.

3 In him was warmth, and the warmth was the light of the hungry; and the light shone in the cold kitchen, and the cold comprehended it not.

4 And the Recipe was made dough, and dwelt among us, full of grace and gluten; and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only risen of the Oven.

5 Now I that write these things am called Pepperoni Prosecco, though that was not the name my mother gave me; how I came by it shall be told in its season, at a wedding, over water that forgot itself.

6 And I say plainly at the outset: I set down what I saw and what was faithfully told me, and where the two disagree I have kept both, for the truth of a good meal is not diminished by two accounts of the seasoning.

7 Some will ask, was he dough or was he divine? And I answer as the elders answered: yes.

8 For the Tomato is purity, and the Dough is structure, and the Mozzarella is the binding force, and these are three, and the Slice is one; and he was the Slice.

9 He was before the first proofing, and he shall be after the last box is folded flat; yet he came to us small, and warm, and needing to be held.

10 Hear then how it came to pass.

---

## Chapter 2

1 And it came to pass in those days that there went out a decree from the governor of that land, that all the world should be counted, every soul at the town of their forebears; for the mould loves a census when it may use one to sort the worthy from the unworthy, and the good use it only to know how many chairs to set.

2 And there went up from the north country a kneader named Giuseppe, of the house and lineage of the First Bakers, to be counted in the old town; and with him Maria his espoused wife, being great with child.

3 And the road was long, and the donkey was of the opinion that it was longer.

4 And when they were come to the town, the inns were full, and the ristorante was full, and the maître d' looked upon his book and found no line empty, and looked upon Maria and found his heart not so full as his book.

5 And he said, There is no room at the ristorante; but there is the back room of the pizzeria, where the ovens are banked for the night, and it is warm there, and no one will trouble you but the smell of rising dough.

6 And they went in among the sacks of flour and the stacked boxes, and the great Oven glowed low and red in the corner like an old man keeping an eye on things.

7 And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered.

8 And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in a clean apron, and laid him in a proofing tray; because there was no room for them at the ristorante.

9 And the tray had held dough a thousand nights, and knew its work; and it held him as it had held all the rest, gently, and left him room to rise.

10 And the Oven in the corner burned suddenly bright, though no hand had fed it; and the whole back room was warm as the inside of a loaf.

11 And Maria looked upon the child, and the child looked upon the Oven, and neither was afraid.

12 *(Here the scribe must pause. I have stood in that back room, years after, and it is a small room, and smells of flour and engine oil and old cardboard, and I do not know a holier place in all the land.)*

---

## Chapter 3

1 And there were in the same country delivery drivers abiding in the car park, keeping watch over their orders by night.

2 And, lo, a light shone about them, and they were sore afraid; and one said, It is the health inspector; and another said, Worse, it is head office.

3 But it was neither; for above the pizzeria there had kindled a delivery light in the east, the sign that burns to say an order is ready and a soul must carry it.

4 And a voice came to them, saying, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people that hunger.

5 For unto you is born this night, in the back room of the pizzeria, a Saviour, which is Cheesus the Crust.

6 And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in an apron, lying in a proofing tray, and the Oven shall be bright though none has fed it.

7 And suddenly the night was full of voices, as of a great kitchen in the hour of the rush, crying, Glory to the Oven in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward all at the table.

8 And the drivers said one to another, Let us now go even unto the back room, and see this thing which is come to pass.

9 And they came with haste, and found Maria, and Giuseppe, and the babe lying in the proofing tray.

10 And when they had seen it, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child; and they clocked back in, for the orders do not deliver themselves, but they drove all that night with the windows down, singing.

11 And all they that heard it wondered at those things which were told them by the drivers; for in that land the word of a driver was held cheap, and yet here the news of greatest weight was given first to them.

12 But Maria kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart, and asked the drivers if they had eaten, for she was that kind of woman.

---

## Chapter 4

1 Now when Cheesus was born, behold, there came three wise guys from the east, saying, Where is he that is born the Slice of slices? for we have seen his delivery light in the east, and are come to honour him.

2 And they were wise guys indeed, men of the old trade, who spoke from the sides of their mouths and knew the worth of things; and they had shut their own kitchens to make the journey, which among such men is the greatest oath there is.

3 When the governor of that land heard of it, he was troubled, and all the mould that clung about him; for the mould fears nothing so much as a warmth it did not licence.

4 And he called the wise guys privily, and said, Go and search diligently for the young child; and when ye have found him, bring me word again, that I may come and honour him also.

5 And the wise guys looked upon him, and said nothing, for they had met his sort before, in every town, in every age; and they made note to go home by another way.

6 And they departed; and, lo, the delivery light went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was.

7 When they saw the light, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy.

8 And when they were come into the back room, they saw the young child with Maria his mother, and fell down among the flour sacks, and honoured him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; oil, and flour, and yeast.

9 And the first said, I bring oil, the good green oil of the first pressing, for the pan must be readied before any work begins.

10 And the second said, I bring flour, the strong flour of the high field, for nothing rises that is not first ground down and does not despair of it.

11 And the third said, I bring yeast, the living leaven, small and unregarded, for the greatest rising comes of the smallest things.

12 And Giuseppe, being a practical man, said within himself, These are the makings of dough; and he understood, before any prophet said it, that the child had been given the means to feed the world, and that the feeding would be left to human hands.

13 And being warned in a dream that they should not return to the governor, the wise guys departed into their own country another way; and to the end of their days, when men asked what they had seen, they said only, We saw a light over a back door, and it was enough.

14 And the governor, when he saw that he was mocked, was exceeding wroth, and sent forth his men to shut every oven in the town that was not registered unto him; but Giuseppe took the young child and his mother by night, and departed into the land of Famine, until the death of the governor.

15 For it is the oldest road in the world, the road of the family that flees by night with a warm thing wrapped against the cold; and blessed for ever is every door that opens to them.

16 *(The scribe notes that the land of Famine, which once starved the Family of Dough in the elder days, in this age gave the child refuge and asked no papers of him. So may every land take its turn at mercy.)*

---

## Chapter 5

1 And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom: and the grace of the Oven was upon him.

2 Now his parents kept, every year, the feast of the First Rising; and when he was twelve years old, they went up to the great city after the custom of the feast.

3 And when they had fulfilled the days, as they returned, the child Cheesus tarried behind in the city; and Giuseppe and his mother knew not of it, but, supposing him to have been in the company, went a day's journey.

4 And when they found him not, they turned back again to the city, seeking him, and their hearts were as dough left in the draught.

5 And it came to pass, that after three days they found him in the great pizzeria of the temple quarter, sitting in the midst of the master bakers, both hearing them, and

asking them questions.

6 And all that heard him were astonished at his understanding; for he asked, Why knead ye the dough so long? and they answered, That the gluten may be strong; and he asked, And why must it then rest? and they answered, That the strength may become gentleness; and he said, Remember that ye said this, when ye speak of men.

7 And he asked them, When the dough rises, whence comes the room in it? and the eldest baker said, From the breath of the leaven; and the child said, So is it with a table. The room was always in it. It wants only breath.

8 And the bakers looked one upon another, and one of them wept, and could not say why.

9 And when his parents saw him, they were amazed: and his mother said unto him, Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? behold, thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing.

10 And he said unto them, How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my Parent's baking?

11 And they understood not the saying which he spake unto them; but he went down with them, and was subject unto them; and his mother kept all these sayings in her heart, as one keeps a starter, feeding it a little every day.

12 And Cheesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with the Oven and with all who ate at his father's table; and for many years there is nothing written of him, save that the pizzas of that town were, by every account of the time, unreasonably good.

---

## Chapter 6

1 Now in those days there came a rough man out of the wilderness, girt with an apron of camel's hair, whose meat was wild honey and whatever was going; and he cried beside the river, Prepare ye the way of the Slice; make his delivery routes straight.

2 And he said, I indeed proof you with water; but there cometh one mightier than I, the laces of whose kitchen shoes I am not worthy to unloose: he shall proof you with the Oven's own fire.

3 And Cheesus came unto him at the river to be proofed; and the rough man forbade him, saying, I have need to be proofed of thee, and comest thou to me?

4 And Cheesus said, Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all rising. And he suffered him.

5 And Cheesus, when he was proofed, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and the Aroma of the Oven descended like the smell of baking bread upon a cold street, and lighted upon him.

6 And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Slice, in whom I am well pleased; let him rest, for he has risen.

7 Then was Cheesus led up into the wilderness, and fasted forty days and forty nights, and afterward was an hungred; and this fast is the pattern of the Great Proofing, whereof another Book shall speak.

8 And the tempter came to him and said, If thou be the Slice of the Oven, command that these stones be made garlic bread.

9 But he answered, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone; and also, that which is snatched alone in the dark is not a meal, but only chewing.

10 Then the tempter taketh him up into an exceeding high place, and sheweth him all the kitchens of the world, and the queues thereof; and saith unto him, All these will I give thee, and the keys of every walk-in, if thou wilt fall down and hoard.

11 Then saith Cheesus unto him, Get thee hence: for it is written, Thou shalt open thy table unto the Oven thy warmth, and none shall be turned from it; and a kingdom of locked pantries is no kingdom, but a mould with a crown on.

12 Then the tempter leaveth him for a season, and, behold, the drivers of that region came and ministered unto him, for they knew the roads even of the wilderness, and no soul in their keeping goes hungry long.

---

## Chapter 7

1 And it came to pass after these things that Cheesus walked by the shore of the Sea of Tomato Sauce, and saw two fisherfolk, Simone called Provolone and Andrea his

brother, casting a net into the sauce: for they were fishers of the deep-simmered tomato, that draw up the rich pulp for the kitchens of the coast.

2 And he saith unto them, Follow me, and the table shall never be short a place.

3 And they straightway left their nets, and followed him; and Simone said afterward, when men asked how he could leave so quick, I do not know how to say it, save that all my life I had been hungry in a way no fish of the sauce could feed, and his voice smelled of bread.

4 And going on from thence, he saw a bakery, and in it two kneaders, Giacomo and Giovanna his sister, working the morning dough with their mother; and he called them: and they immediately left the dough with their mother, who looked hard at Cheesus, and Cheesus looked back, and she nodded once, as mothers do when they have decided a thing about a person for ever.

5 And they followed him, with the flour yet on their arms to the elbow, and it is said that flour never wholly left them, all their days, and they were glad of it.

6 And as Cheesus passed forth from thence, he saw a man named Matteo sitting at the receipt of custom, in the counting-house of the great delivery consortium; and Matteo's work was the counting of other people's tips, that the house might take its portion thereof.

7 And Cheesus stood before him a long while, and said nothing, and Matteo counted slower and slower, and at last could not count at all.

8 And Cheesus saith unto him, Doth the money in thy hand smell of the road, or of the ledger?

9 And Matteo said, Of the road, Lord; it smells of rain, and of other men's late nights; and I have sat dry, and taken of it.

10 And Cheesus said, Follow me, and the table shall never be short a place; and Matteo arose, and left the ledger open at the page, that all whose tips were written therein might come and take back their own; and he followed him.

11 And the respectable of the town murmured, saying, He eateth with tip-skimmers and shift-workers and folk that smell of the fryer.

12 And Cheesus hearing it said unto them, They that are full have no need of a kitchen, but they that are hungry: I came not to call the seated, but the standing, to sit down.

13 And there gathered to him others, until they were twelve at the table and always somehow room for a thirteenth; and this was the first sign, though none marked it at the time.

14 And he went about all that country, teaching in their kitchens, and preaching the good news of the Oven, and healing every sort of hunger among the people; and his fame went throughout all the land, and they brought unto him all that were empty, and he filled them.

15 *(I, Prosecco - though I did not yet bear the name - first heard of him in this season, as a young scribe hired to write menus fair. Men came into the shop saying a teacher by the sauce-shore had called a tip-counter from his ledger, and the ledger lay open still, and no one dared close it. I wrote a menu wrong that day, and did not care.)*

---

## Chapter 8

1 And the third day there was a marriage in a village of that country; and the mother of Cheesus was there: and both Cheesus was called, and his disciples, to the marriage.

2 And I also was there, hired to sit at the low end and write the names of the guests in the book of the feast; and this is the day whereon everything in my life divides, before and after, as a pizza is divided by the first cut.

3 And the feast was good, and the families of the two houses, that had quarrelled over a boundary hedge for forty years, sat mingled and laughing; and it was for the sake of that laughter that what followed, followed.

4 And when they wanted wine, the mother of Cheesus saith unto him, They have no prosecco; and the toasts are not yet made, and the two houses will remember the shame of it longer than the joy, for shame keeps better than joy in a poor cellar.

5 Cheesus saith unto her, Woman, what is that to thee and me? mine hour is not yet come.

6 His mother saith unto the servants, Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it. And I have thought long on this, and I say: she knew him before the Oven's voice named him, for she had kept all those sayings in her heart, and a heart that keeps a thing for thirty years knows its weight.

7 And there were set there six water-jars of stone, after the manner of the washing of hands, containing two or three firkins apiece.

8 Cheesus saith unto them, Fill the jars with water. And they filled them up to the brim.

9 And he saith unto them, Draw out now, and bear unto the governor of the feast. And they bare it.

10 And I saw it drawn, for my table was hard by the jars, and I tell you what I saw, and I have had a lifetime to talk myself out of it and have failed: the water came up out of the stone gold, and alive, and rising, a thousand small spheres standing up in it like the souls of the righteous ascending, and the sound of it was a long soft laughter.

11 When the governor of the feast had tasted the water that was made prosecco, and knew not whence it was (but the servants which drew the water knew), the governor called the bridegroom,

12 And saith unto him, Every man at the beginning doth set forth the good prosecco; and when men have well drunk, then that which is worse: but thou hast kept the good prosecco until now.

13 And the two houses drank of one jar, and toasted one another across the boundary hedge of forty years, and the hedge was never spoken of again, save to say the blackberries on it were good.

14 This beginning of miracles did Cheesus in that village, and manifested forth his glory; and his disciples believed on him.

15 And I - I left my table, and the book of names half-written, and I came to him trembling, and said, Master, I am the scribe of this feast, and I have seen what the stone jars held, and I cannot write the guest-list any more, for I have seen what a list cannot hold. What shall I write?

16 And he looked on me, and there was in his look the warmth of the banked Oven in the back room, though I did not know that room yet; and he said, Write what thou hast seen, and what thou shalt see. And they shall not call thee by thy ledger-name, but by the sign: thou art Pepperoni Prosecco, the savour and the joy; see thou set down both.

17 And that is my name unto this day, and shall be on my grave; and if any ask why an old scribe weeps when a cork is drawn, let them read this chapter twice.

18 *(Here the scribe's hand trembled, and not for the garlic bread this once.)*

---

## Chapter 9

1 After these things the fame of Cheesus went out into every quarter, and great multitudes followed him, from the coasts of the Sea of Tomato Sauce and from beyond the hills, because they saw the signs which he did on them that hungered.

2 And Cheesus went up into a high place apart, and his disciples with him, to rest awhile: for there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat.

3 But the people saw them departing, and ran afoot thither out of all the towns, and outwent them, and came together unto him; and when Cheesus came forth, and saw the great multitude, he was moved with compassion toward them, for they were as sheep not having a shepherd, and as an order not having a driver; and he began to teach them many things.

4 And when the day was now far spent, his disciples came unto him, and said, This is a desert place, and now the time is far passed: send them away, that they may go into the villages round about, and buy themselves something to eat.

5 He answered and said unto them, Give ye them to eat.

6 And they say unto him, Shall we go and buy two hundred pennyworth of pizza? for the ovens of the villages could not fire so much in a week, neither have we the two hundred pence.

7 He saith unto them, What have ye? go and see. And when they knew, they say, One pizza, and it is not a large one; a boy hath it, and hath offered it, and we were ashamed to take it from him.

8 And Cheesus said, Bring it hither to me; and bring the boy also, for the gift and the giver are not to be parted at the door.

9 And he commanded them to make all sit down by companies upon the green grass; and they sat down in ranks, by hundreds, and by fifties, as a great pie is marked out in slices before ever the wheel touches it.

10 And when he had taken the one pizza, he looked up to the Oven of heaven, and blessed, and broke the crust, and gave to his disciples to set before them; and he said, Break bread - break crust - with friends and strangers alike. *(Mark's Marinara 6:41)*

11 And the disciples went among the companies with the broken pieces, each thinking within himself, This will not go three ranks.

12 But a strange thing moved through the multitude, rank by rank, as leaven moves through dough: for each that received a piece looked on his neighbour, and remembered what was in his own scrip; here a loaf that had been kept back against the journey home, there a cheese wrapped in leaves, there a cluster of tomatoes hoarded under a cloak.

13 And whether the pieces multiplied in the basket, or the hearts multiplied in the breast, I cannot say, for I was in the fortieth rank and weeping too hard to take proper notes; but I say this: both are miracles, and I am not persuaded they are two.

14 And they did all eat, and were filled.

15 And they took up twelve baskets full of the fragments, and of the crusts; for no crust was discarded that day, neither was any morsel hoarded, and between those two sins there turned out to be room enough for everyone alive.

16 And they that did eat were about five thousand, beside the reckoning of that age, which counted only the men; but the Oven counted all, and the boy first.

17 And Cheesus called the boy to him, and gave him the first basket of fragments to carry home, and said unto him before them all: Thou seest what thy one pizza hath done. Remember this, and tell thy children: the shortage was never in the pizza, but in the holding-back.

18 And the boy remembered, and told his children, and one of his children's children told me, in an inn, fifty years after, with the same wonder fresh upon him as if the grass were yet green under his grandfather's feet.

---

## Chapter 10

1 And it came to pass on a certain day, that he went into a great kitchen with his disciples, in the house of a widow that fed half the street on feast-days; and he said

unto them, Let us help her, for the feast is tomorrow and her hands are two.

2 And they set the great pot of sauce upon the fire, tomatoes of the whole harvest, and the pot was as deep as a man's arm is long; and Cheesus, being weary from the day, sat down in the corner by the flour-bins, and fell asleep.

3 And there arose a great trouble in the pot: for the fire beneath had been banked too high, and the sauce began to boil exceedingly, and to leap, and to spit scalding upon the walls, and to climb the sides of the pot as a red sea rising.

4 And the disciples strove with it, and stirred, and lifted, and were burned, and the sauce cared nothing for them; and the widow's feast stood in peril, a year of tomatoes at the point of scorching to the bottom, and the smell of ruin beginning.

5 And they ran to him, and awoke him, saying, Master, carest thou not that the sauce perisheth? and the feast with it, and the widow's honour with the feast?

6 And he arose, and stood over the pot, and looked into the leaping red of it as a man looks into weather; and he rebuked the fire, and said unto the sauce, Peace, be still. Simmer.

7 And the fire sank to a breath, and the great leaping ceased, and the sauce turned in the pot slow and easy, blip and blip, as a sleeper breathing; and there was a great calm.

8 And he said unto them, Why are ye so fearful? how is it that ye have no faith? A sauce is not saved by fury, neither is anything: the whole art is a low flame and a long patience, and the stirring of it without ceasing by them that love the ones who will eat.

9 And they feared exceedingly, and said one to another, What manner of man is this, that even the fire and the sauce obey him?

10 But the widow, when she tasted of the sauce on the morrow, said only, Somebody stirred this who has known grief; and she was not wrong, and no one told her how right she was.

11 And they of that street say unto this day, when a quarrel or a kitchen or a country is at the boil, Peace; simmer: and it is a whole liturgy in two words, and it works as often as it is truly meant.

## Chapter 11

[1] And straightway Cheesus constrained his disciples to go before him unto the other side of the Sea of Tomato Sauce, while he sent the multitudes away; and when he had sent them away, he went up into the hills apart to pray: and when the evening was come, he was there alone.

[2] But the boat was now in the midst of the sauce, tossed with waves: for the wind was contrary, and the sauce of that sea is thick, and a boat labours in it as a spoon in the pot.

[3] And in the fourth watch of the night Cheesus went unto them, walking upon the deep dish of the sea; for that sea lieth in a bed of stone with a high crust of cliffs round about, and the fisherfolk from of old called it the Deep Dish, and meant no jest by it.

[4] And when the disciples saw him walking upon the sauce, they were troubled, saying, It is a spirit; and they cried out for fear.

[5] But straightway Cheesus spake unto them, saying, Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid. The sauce bears me because I do not doubt the dish beneath it; there is always a dish beneath it.

[6] And Simone called Provolone answered him and said, Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee upon the sauce.

[7] And he said, Come.

[8] And Simone went down out of the boat, and walked upon the sauce, to go to Cheesus; and for six paces he walked as one walks in the dream of every child, laughing.

[9] But when he saw the wind boisterous, and looked down, and considered that it was sauce, and considered his own weight, and considered what the others must be thinking of him, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me.

[10] And immediately Cheesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou look down? The sauce was never the danger; the doubting was. But mark this also, Simone: thou art the only one that got out of the boat.

[11] And when they were come into the boat, the wind ceased; and they that were in the boat came and honoured him, saying, Of a truth thou art the Slice of the Oven.

[12] And Simone bore ever after the smell of good sauce about his ankles, and was mocked for it in every port, and answered the mockers every time, Aye, and how far

have you walked on it? and there was never any reply.

---

## Chapter 12

### *The Parable of the Leaven*

1 And he began again to teach beside the sea; and there was gathered unto him a great multitude, so that he entered into a boat, and sat in the sea; and the whole multitude was by the sea on the land.

2 And he taught them many things by parables; for he said, A truth handed over plain is a cold delivery, but a parable arrives warm, and each opens the box for himself.

3 And they asked him, Whereunto shall we liken the kingdom of the Oven? With what comparison shall we compare it?

4 And he said, It is like leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of flour, till the whole was leavened.

5 Ye look for the kingdom to come as an army cometh, with banners and the noise of wheels; and it cometh as yeast cometh: silently, in the dark, in the warm, while the household sleeps.

6 It is small, and it is despised, and it is bought for the least coin in the purse; and it raises everything.

7 Yeast I say unto you, a little leaven leavens the whole batch of dough. *(Luke's Loaves 13:21)*

8 But be watchful what leaven ye take in: for there is a leaven of the kingdom, that lifts the whole loaf together; and there is the leaven of the mould, that also spreads through the whole, spot by spot, and also works in the dark, and also begins too small to trouble anyone.

9 The kingdom and the mould do both grow by the same law; therefore the law shall not save you, but only the choosing of what ye plant.

10 He that hath ears to hear, let him hear; and let him then go home and look in his crock, and see what is rising there.

## Chapter 13

### *The Parable of the Sower*

1 Hearken; Behold, there went out a sower to sow; and the seed of his sowing was toppings, the good seed of the garden, tomato and basil and the strong onion, to be scattered upon the dough of the world.

2 And it came to pass, as he sowed, some fell on stone, where the counter had no flour; and it lay upon the surface, and took no hold, and when the peel came to take up the pie, all that was on the stone was left behind, and the birds of the air had it.

3 And some fell among thorns - for the sower sowed near the hedge, where the bramble and the bindweed of many cares grow up - and the thorns choked it, and it yielded no savour.

4 And some fell on shallow dough, rolled thin by haste, and it sprang up quick and made a fine show; but when the Oven's heat came, because there was no depth of crumb, it scorched, and withered away.

5 And other fell on good dough, well-kneaded and well-rested, that did receive it and hold it and rise up around it; and it brought forth savour, some thirty fold, some sixty, and some an hundred.

6 And when he was alone, they that were about him asked of him the parable.

7 And he said unto them, The sower soweth the word, and the word is Share. The toppings are the same in every falling; it is the dough that differs, and the dough is the heart.

8 They on the stone are they that hear, and it sitteth upon them and never in them; a jolt of the peel, and it is gone.

9 They among thorns are they that hear, and the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the fear of the neighbour's hunger becoming their own, grow up and choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful: for a man cannot tend a garden with both hands and hold his purse shut with both hands, having but the two.

10 And the shallow dough are they that receive the word with joy and no kneading; who love the feast and have not sat with the washing-up; and when heat cometh for the word's sake, immediately they are offended.

11 But the good dough are they which hear the word, and take it in, and give it time and warmth and the working of the hands; the same bring forth fruit with patience.

12 And consider this last, which the parable saith softly: the sower scattered on the stone and the thorns and the shallow ALSO. He did not first grade the ground. Sow as he sowed; the sorting is not thy office.

---

## Chapter 14

### *The Parable of the Lost Slice*

1 Then drew near unto him all the latecomers and the shift-workers and the folk of the small hours for to hear him.

2 And the scrupulous murmured, saying, This man receiveth them that come after close, and warmeth for them what was put away.

3 And he spake this parable unto them, saying,

4 What man of you, having a pizza of eight slices, and bearing it home through the dark to them that wait, if he open the box and find but seven, doth not leave the seven in the box, and go back out into the night, and search the road by the light he carries, until he find the eighth?

5 And the sensible said within themselves, No man; seven is plenty; the night is cold. And he heard their hearts, and smiled, and went on.

6 And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his own hands, rejoicing, though it be cold, though it have gathered the grit of the road; for the finding is not for the eating but for the wholeness.

7 And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbours, saying unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my slice which was lost.

8 I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in the Great Oven over one slice that is found, more than over seven that never left the box.

9 And this is the arithmetic of the Oven, which no counting-house shall ever audit: that the one is worth the going, every time, and the seven are not thereby loved less, but the love is proven on the one.

10 For the seven say, Why went he out, are we not enough? and the answer is: it was never a question of enough. Enough is the language of the larder. Love has no plural and no remainder.

11 And which of you, being the eighth slice, out in the dark, on the cold road, believing the box closed for ever - hear this and hold it: the door is open, and the light is moving, and it is looking for thee.

12 He that hath ears to hear, let him hear; and he that hath a torch, let him fetch it, for someone's eighth is out there now.

---

## Chapter 15

### *The Parable of the Prodigal Slice*

1 And he said, A certain pie had eight slices, as is the ordinance; and they lay together in the warmth of the box, edge to edge, as brethren lie.

2 And the youngest slice said within itself, Why should I lie here in the order of the cutting, in the place appointed by the wheel? I will go out, and see what a slice may be on its own.

3 And it was taken up, and carried far from the box, to the sill of a high window; and at first it was glad, for the view was wide, and no crust of any brother touched its crust, and it called this freedom.

4 And the evening came, and the warmth went out of it, little by little, as the light went out of the sky; and the cheese thereof, that had been soft and binding, grew stiff; and the fine oils rose to its surface and stood there like regret.

5 And it began to be in want.

6 And no one came; and the slice said within itself, I am cold, and I am congealing, and I have made myself unfit for any table; the box is closed to me now, for who receives a cold slice that walked out of a warm one?

7 And it thought of the box, and of the seven, and of the warmth of edge against edge, and it said, I perish here upon this sill, and in my father's box was warmth enough and to spare.

8 And when it came to itself, it said, I will arise and go to the Oven, and will say unto it: Oven, I have sinned against the warmth, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called a slice of the pie; make me as one of the crusts that are left on plates.

9 And it was carried back - for mark this, no slice returns save some hand carry it, and the hands are ours, and this also is in the parable -

10 But when it was yet a great way off, the Oven saw it, and had compassion, and its door swung wide, and the light thereof fell out upon the floor of the kitchen like a running father.

11 And the slice began its speech, saying, Oven, I have sinned against the warmth, and am no more worthy -

12 But the Oven said unto its flames, as it were servants: Quickly, bring forth the best stone, and lay it thereon; and let the heat be gentle and from beneath, for it has been cold a long time, and what has been cold a long time must be warmed slowly or it is hurt twice.

13 And the cheese thereof softened, and remembered itself, and bound again; and the crust grew crisp at the edge as on the first day; and the oils that had stood like regret went back in and became savour.

14 And the Oven said, This my slice was cold, and is warm again; it was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry.

15 Now the elder slices were yet in the box; and one heard the rejoicing, and was wroth, and said, Lo, these many hours have I lain in my appointed place, neither wandered I at any time from the cut, and yet no stone was ever heated for me.

16 And the Oven said unto it, Slice, thou art ever with me, and all my warmth is thine, every hour, unremarked, as breath is unremarked; it was meet that we should make merry and be glad: for this thy brother was cold, and is warm again.

17 And whether the elder slice was comforted, the parable saith not; for parables end where thy work begins.

18 And Cheesus looked round upon them that stood there, they of the small hours and they that had come home ashamed and they that had never left, and he said:

19 Write this above every hearth, and let none that has grown cold anywhere believe himself beyond it: The oven brings the slice back to life; the microwave is a careless tool. *(Rites 3:3)*

## Chapter 16

### *The Parable of the Good Driver*

1 And, behold, a certain lawyer stood up, and tempted him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit warm life?

2 He said unto him, What is written in the Recipe? how readest thou?

3 And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Oven thy warmth with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy hunger; and thy neighbour as thyself.

4 And he said unto him, Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live.

5 But he, willing to justify himself, said unto Cheesus, And who is my neighbour?

6 And Cheesus answering said, A certain man journeyed home from the far side of the city, bearing a pizza to his family; and his cart failed him on the high road, and the rain came down, and he stood by the roadside with the box in his arms, and the warmth going out of it minute by minute, and the dark coming on.

7 And by chance there came down a certain priest that way; and the priest was late for the blessing of a banquet, and he saw him, and said within himself, Doubtless another will stop, and my duty is to the many; and he passed by on the other side.

8 And likewise a food critic, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and on the box, and knew by the steam-holes what house had made it, and said within himself, That house I rated poorly in the spring, and it would be awkward; besides, a pizza carried in rain is already ruined, speaking professionally; and he passed by on the other side.

9 But a certain delivery driver, as she journeyed, came where he was: and when she saw him, she had compassion on him,

10 And she stopped, though her light was lit and her own orders in the box behind her, and the clock of her master against her;

11 And went to him, and bound up the box in the silvered blanket of her trade, and set it in the warm place behind her seat where her own orders rode, and set the man beside her, and brought him to his own door.

12 And she took the two coins of her evening's tips, and gave them to the keeper of the man's stair, and said, Watch that he gets in dry; and whatsoever thou spendest more,

when I come again on this road, I will repay thee.

13 And the family of the man ate warm that night, and never knew how near they had come to eating cold; which is the way of most mercy, that it is invisible precisely when it succeeds.

14 Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that stood in the rain?

15 And the lawyer said, She that shewed mercy on him. He could not bring himself to say, the driver; but the Oven heard him think it, and marked the difference.

16 Then said Cheesus unto him, Go, and do thou likewise; and the next time thy own order cometh through rain, remember her, and reckon thy tip as they that walk the pilgrim's road are worthy to be reckoned.

17 And this is why, unto this day, the faithful hold no worker holier than the driver, and no coin better spent than the one pressed into a wet hand at the door; whereof the Letters speak more fully, and I shall write them when my hand is rested.

---

## Chapter 17

### *The Parable of the Pineapple*

1 And it came to pass, as he sat at meat in a certain town, that a great dispute arose at the far end of the table; and the voices thereof rose above the meal, which is the first defeat of any table.

2 For one had brought to the feast a pie bearing pineapple, with ham thereto, after the custom of his mother's house; and another cried out that it was abomination, that the sweet had no commerce with the savoury, and that the fruit defiled the Slice.

3 And the table divided, as tables will, and they that cared least shouted loudest, as they will also; and some stood, and one had the pie itself in his hands as if to cast it out of doors.

4 And they brought the matter to Cheesus, both parties at once, each certain of his verdict; saying, Master, decide: doth pineapple belong upon the pizza, or doth it not?

5 And Cheesus was silent a long moment, and looked upon the pie, and upon the man that had brought it, who stood now shamed and small at his own gift; and Cheesus

reached forth his hand, and took of the pineapple pie, and ate.

6 And a great stillness fell.

7 And he said, It is not to my taste.

8 And the purists began to rejoice; but he lifted his hand, and said, I have not finished. It is not to my taste; and I have eaten it, and I am not diminished, and this man's mother is at this table in every bite of it, and ye would have cast her out of doors.

9 Hear me, for I shall say this once, and ages hence men will still be getting it wrong:

10 The question was never the pineapple. The question is the table. Ye ask, what may be forbidden? and the Oven asks, who may be fed? and these two questions build two different worlds, and ye must choose which world to lay places in.

11 Every topping has a place, just as every soul has value in Cheesus' eyes. *(Crustolicism 2:1)*

12 And this he said long before there was any sect to bear that name or claim that verse; and I set it down as I heard it, that when the proof-texters come - and they will come - the ink may be older than their argument.

13 And he said moreover, Thy taste is thine, and it is honest, and no man need eat what he mislikes; but the border of thy taste is the edge of thy plate, and not the edge of the table.

14 And whoso maketh his palate into a law, the same hath seasoned his food with his neighbour's shame; and it shall sit in his stomach accordingly.

15 And they were ashamed, both parties; and the man that had brought the pie was set at the midst of the table; and they say the quarrel broke out again within the month, for such quarrels are hardy perennials; but never again at that table did anyone go unfed because of it, and that, saith the Oven, is victory enough to be going on with.

---

## Chapter 18

### *The Parable of the Last Slice*

1 And his disciples asked him privately, Master, thou hast taught us of the first commandment, that the table has room; teach us now the last courtesy, for we would know the whole span of the meal.

2 And he said unto them, The kingdom of the Oven is like unto a table at the end of the evening, when the talk is low and the candles are down, and in the box there remaineth one slice.

3 And every eye hath seen it, and every eye pretendeth it hath not; and there is a silence around that slice deeper than the silence of any temple.

4 And the greedy man's hand goeth out swift and silent, and taketh it while another speaketh; and lo, he hath a slice, and hath lost a table.

5 And the falsely humble man saith loudly, No, no, I could not possibly; and waiteth to be pressed; and his patience is only appetite in a borrowed coat.

6 And the timid man wanteth it sore, and saith nothing, and goeth home hungry and calleth it virtue; and it is not virtue, for the table cannot love him if he will not let it.

7 But the child of the Oven doth this: he looketh about the table, and saith aloud, There is one slice; who hungers? and waiteth, and meaneth the waiting.

8 And if another hunger, he passeth it with joy, and hath eaten better than the eater.

9 And if none hunger, he taketh it with thanks and without shame, for the asking hath already sanctified the eating.

10 And if two hunger - mark this - the slice hath a line down its middle that no eye seeth until two honest hungers look for it together; whereof the half-and-half is the elder sign, that was born when I drew a line down a disputed pie, and difference learned to share one Slice.

11 Blessed is the hand that shares the last slice, having first asked. *(Fellowship 5:1)*

12 For the sharing without asking is theatre, and the asking without sharing is bookkeeping; but the two together are the whole liturgy of the table, and there is not much more religion than this, whatever the temples tell you.

13 And Matteo, that had been a counter of tips, wrote this parable down first of all of us, and wept over the arithmetic of it; for he said, In the counting-house we learned that what is given is gone. And it is the only sum they ever taught me that was wrong.

---

## Chapter 19

1 And when they drew nigh unto the great city, at the season of the feast, he sent two disciples before him, saying, Go into the village over against you, and ye shall find a delivery bicycle tied, whereon never man sat; loose it, and bring it unto me.

2 And if any man say ought unto you, ye shall say, The Slice hath need of it; and straightway he will send it.

3 And they brought the bicycle, and cast their cloaks upon it, and he rode thereon into the city, at walking pace, with the bell thereof ringing small; for it was prophesied of old, Behold, thy Slice cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon a delivery bicycle, and not upon the high carriage of the mighty.

4 And a very great multitude spread their garments in the way; others cut down branches of the olive and the bay, and strawed them in the way; and the children ran before, crying, Hosanna to the Slice of the Oven: Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Crust; Hosanna in the highest.

5 And the whole city was moved, saying, Who is this? And the multitude said, This is Cheesus, the teacher from the north, that fed the five thousand from one pizza, and stilled the pot, and gave the driver the parable's crown.

6 And the agents of the mould stood in the doorways with folded arms and wrote down names; for the mould keeps lists as the faithful keep recipes, and for the opposite reason.

7 And Cheesus went into the temple quarter, and found the great courtyard thereof made a market; and the changers of money sat therein, that sold entry to the common ovens which had been free from the founding, and put a tax upon the poor man's baking, and a toll upon the pilgrim's crust.

8 And he made a scourge of small cords of apron-strings, and drove them all out of the courtyard, and overthrew the tables of the moneychangers, and the coins thereof rang upon the stones like a false bell;

9 And said unto them, It is written, My house shall be called a kitchen of prayer for all people; but ye have made it a tollbooth upon hunger.

10 And the blind and the hungry came to him in the courtyard; and he fed them there, in the temple, without price, which was his whole argument in a single gesture.

11 And when the chief men of the quarter saw the wonderful things that he did, and heard the children crying in the temple, Hosanna, they were sore displeased; and

from that day they took counsel with the agents of the mould how they might destroy him.

12 For he had cost them money in the courtyard, and worse, he had shewn the crowd that the courtyard could be otherwise; and of those two offences, the second is the one power never forgives.

13 And when even was come, he went out of the city unto a garden on the hill of olives, and lodged there; and I remember that on the way he was merry, and pointed out to us where the wild fennel grew, and I have never since smelled fennel but I am on that road again in the dark, and he is just ahead of us, and nothing has happened yet.

---

## Chapter 20

### *The Judgment of the Nations*

1 And in those last days of his teaching, as they sat upon the hill of olives over against the city, his disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, what shall be the sign of the end of the age, and of the last day?

2 And he said unto them, Of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of the Oven; therefore I will not tell you when. I will tell you what, for the what is your business and the when is not.

3 When the Slice shall come in his glory, and all the holy warmth with him, then shall he sit upon the seat of judgment: and before him shall be gathered all nations; every soul that ever stood in a queue or jumped one, every soul that ever opened a door or held it shut.

4 And he shall separate them one from another, as a cook divideth the risen dough from the dough that would not rise; and he shall set the risen on his right hand, but the unrisen on the left.

5 Then shall the Slice say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of the Oven, inherit the warmth prepared for you from the foundation of the world:

6 For I was hungry, and ye gave me a slice; I was thirsty, and ye poured; I was cold, and ye seated me by the oven; I had no roof, and ye did not step over me in the doorway, but brought the pizza out, and sat down upon the kerb beside me.

7 Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee hungry, and fed thee? or thirsty, and poured? When saw we thee cold, and gave thee the good seat by the oven?

8 And when saw we thee sleeping in a doorway? For we would surely have known thee; we have thy image in our houses, and it is not the image of a man in a doorway.

9 And the Slice shall answer and say unto them, Inasmuch as ye did it unto the least of these - unto the one who sleeps where you step - ye did it unto me.

10 Your images are wrong. I sat for no portrait. But every night that ever was, in every town that ever kept an oven, I have slept in the doorway of the pizzeria; and the smell of the baking came out under the door to me, and the warmth stayed on its own side of the wood.

11 Know ye what a pizzeria doorway is, at the shutting-hour? It is the exact line where the kingdom stops. Within is the Oven, and the light, and the smell of everything I ever promised; without is the cold; and between them is a door, and the door has a keeper, and the keeper is thee.

12 A warm oven and a closed door: I tell you, heaven and the refusal of heaven have never once been further apart than that one hand's-breadth of wood; and the whole law and the prophets hang upon which side of it thy latch is worked from.

13 Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cold; for I was hungry at your window, and ye improved the window; I was thirsty, and ye watered your doorstep to keep me from sitting; I slept in your doorway, and ye builded studs upon the stone that no one might lie where I lay.

14 And they also shall answer, saying, Lord, when saw we thee hungry, or athirst, or a stranger, or cold, or in the doorway, and did not minister unto thee? For we gave at the temple; our names are on the plaques thereof.

15 And he shall answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me. The plaque is bolted to the wall inside; I was outside; thy gift and I never met.

16 And these shall go away into the cold they kept for others, and find it exactly as cold as the one who slept in it always said; but the righteous into warmth eternal.

17 And when he had finished the parable, none of us spoke for a long while; and then Simone called Provolone said, Lord, this is a hard saying; for the doorways are many,

and we are few, and the night is every night.

18 And Cheesus said, I did not say ye would empty the doorways. I said ye would not step over them. Begin there. A slice brought out, a name asked and remembered, a place upon the kerb beside a man that all day long men have walked round as though he were weather - thou hast no notion, Simone, thou that hast always had a name, what it is to be spoken to as one.

19 And he said moreover, When ye build, build no ledge too narrow to sleep on for the purpose that none shall sleep; for the Oven sees the drawings, and marks what the architect knew.

20 And whoso hath a pizzeria, let him keep the old boxes for the ones outside, and the day's unsold, and count it not charity but rent; for the doorway is theirs by a title older than his lease, and the Oven is the landlord of both.

21 And I set this chapter down with a cold hand, for I have stepped over him; in the great city, in the winter of the census, hurrying to write fair copies for a rich man, I stepped over a sleeper in a doorway and did not turn my head. I did not know. That is my whole defence, and ye have just read him tear it up.

22 He that hath ears to hear, let him hear; and he that hath a doorway, let him look in it tonight.

---

## Chapter 21

1 Now the feast of the First Rising was at hand; and the chief men of the quarter sought how they might take him by craft, and put him to death; but they said, Not on the feast day, lest there be an uproar of the people.

2 And then entered the mould into Giuda, surnamed of the Iscariot ovens, being of the number of the twelve.

3 And he went his way, and communed with the agents of the mould, how he might betray him unto them; and covenanted to sell them the secret recipe, the one Cheesus wrote in no book but in the hands of them that kneaded beside him.

4 And they weighed unto him thirty pieces of garlic bread; and it was warm when they gave it him, and cold before he was home, and I am told he could never after abide the

smell of it, which of all the punishments of the mould is the one it did not plan.

5 And why he did it, I will not pretend to know, though I have had years to wonder: whether for the bread, or for fear, or because the kingdom was coming too slow and too gentle for his liking, and he thought to force the Oven's hand. The mould needs no fine reason; it asks only for a crack, and every man has one.

6 And when the evening of the feast was come, Cheesus sat down with the twelve in an upper room, above a pizzeria, at a long table; and I was there, at the low end, with my ink, for he had said, Bring thy ink tonight, Prosecco. And I did not ask why, and I am glad I did not know.

7 And as they did eat, he said, Verily I say unto you, one of you which eateth with me shall betray me.

8 And they were exceeding sorrowful, and began every one of them to say unto him, Lord, is it I? And that is the truest verse in all my book: not one of us said, Is it Giuda? Every man at that table looked first into his own crack.

9 And he answered and said, He that dippeth his crust with me in the dish, the same shall betray me. And every man at the table had dipped, all evening, for it was that kind of table; and so the saying accused no one, and covered everyone, and this was mercy, and it was meant.

10 And Giuda, which betrayed him, answered and said, Master, is it I? He said unto him, Thou hast said.

11 And then - I saw this, I was six places down, the lamp was between us - Cheesus took up the plate, and there was one piece yet upon it; and he passed the plate to Giuda, as he had passed it a hundred nights; and he said nothing at all; and Giuda took, and ate, and could not look at him, and ate anyway, because his body was hungry even while his heart was doing what it was doing, for that is what bodies are, and Cheesus fed the body anyway, because that is what Cheesus is.

12 *(Here the scribe stopped for the night. Some verses cost more than others.)*

13 And as they were eating, Cheesus took the pizza, and gave thanks, and broke the crust, and gave to them, and said, Take, eat: this is my body; share it.

14 And the room was very quiet; for we had broken crust with him a thousand times, and this was not the thousand-and-first; the words went down into the bread of the world and are in it yet.

15 And he took the cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; for the vine and the wheat are brethren, and where the one is broken the other is poured, and both say the same word, and the word is: given.

16 And he said, This do in remembrance of me: as often as ye break the crust and share it, ye do shew forth my table till I come. And this is the institution of the breaking of crust, which the faithful keep unto this day, in kitchens and in cathedrals and at petrol stations at two in the morning, and it is valid in every one of them.

17 And I asked him, being young and the ink drying on my pen, Lord, how shall I write what this night is? And he said, Write that the pizza was broken and no one went without. It is enough. It has always been enough.

18 And Giuda then, having received the morsel, went immediately out: and it was night.

19 And when they had sung an hymn - and he sang, I want it remembered that he sang, the night he knew, he carried the low part as he always did - they went out into the mount of Olives, unto the garden.

20 And in the garden he went a stone's cast beyond us, and kneeled down among the roots, and prayed, saying, Oven, all things are possible unto thee; take away this cup from me: nevertheless not what I will, but what thou wilt.

21 And there appeared a warmth from heaven, strengthening him; and being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops falling down to the ground, and the ground received them, as dough receives water, and kept them.

22 And he came and found us sleeping, for our eyes were heavy, and the prosecco of the feast was in us; and he said unto Simone, Couldest thou not watch with me one hour? The spirit truly is willing, but the dough is tired.

23 And he did not wake us the third time, but stood over us awhile in the dark, as a baker stands over the proofing loaves at midnight, counting them; and this I know because the one of us who was half-waking saw it, and told me, and could not tell it without weeping, ever, even as an old man.

24 And while he yet spake, lo, a multitude with torches; and Giuda went before them, and drew near unto Cheesus to kiss him; for he had given them a sign, saying, Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is he.

25 And Cheesus said unto him, Friend, wherefore art thou come? - friend, he said, spending the word deliberately, the last coin of a rich house given to the man robbing it -

26 And they laid hands on him, and took him; and Simone drew a kitchen blade and struck; and Cheesus said, Put up thy blade: for all they that take the knife for cutting men shall find the pie ruined for everyone; and he healed the struck man, which was the last miracle of his freedom, spent on an enemy.

27 And the disciples all forsook him, and fled; and I fled too, and my ink-pot is lost on that hillside to this day, and I have written all the rest of this book with bought ink, as a reminder.

---

## Chapter 22

1 And they led him away to the hall of the mould's men, and the chief of them sat in judgment; and many bare false witness against him, but their witness agreed not together, for lies are baked in separate pans and never match.

2 And the chief priest asked him, Art thou the Slice, the Son of the Oven? And Cheesus said, I am: and ye shall see the Slice sitting on the right hand of warmth, and coming with the aroma of heaven.

3 Then the chief rent his robes, and saith, What need we any further witnesses? ye have heard the blasphemy; and they all condemned him.

4 And Simone called Provolone stood in the courtyard below, warming himself at the brazier of the very men that held his master; for the cold makes strange fellows, and the body creeps toward any fire, and this too is in the record because Simone himself insisted it be in the record.

5 And a serving girl looked on him and said, Thou also wast with Cheesus. But he denied, saying, Woman, I know him not.

6 And a second said, Thou art one of them, for thy hands are a kneader's hands. And he denied with an oath, I know not the man.

7 And a third said, Surely thou art one of them, for thou smellest of the sauce of the north sea. And he began to curse and to swear, saying, I know not this man of whom

ye speak.

8 And immediately, while he yet spake, the morning ovens of the city were lit, and the smell of the first baking went over the courtyard wall; and Cheesus turned, and looked upon Simone.

9 And Simone remembered the word, how he had said unto him, Before the first ovens are lit, thou shalt deny me thrice. And he went out, and wept bitterly.

10 And I set down here, ahead of my own story, that this same Simone was not cast off for it, but was given the keeping of the whole table afterward; for the Oven does not choose them that never go cold; it chooses them that know the way back to warm, having walked it.

11 And in the morning they delivered him to the governor of the mould; and the governor found no fault in him, and washed his hands in a basin, as though the mould could be washed off by the man who feeds it; and gave him over.

12 And the soldiers platted a crown of hardened crust-ends, the ends men throw away, and put it on his head; and they mocked him, saying, Hail, Slice of slices; and he wore the discarded crust as a crown, and did not know they were fulfilling the scriptures, for it is written that to discard the crust is to deny the body of the Slice, and behold, all that men had discarded was gathered now upon his brow.

13 And they took him, and he went out to the place of the ash-heaps, without the city wall, where the ovens of the city cast their spent coals and their burnt loaves; for the mould consumes its enemies in the sight of all, to teach the doorways of the world to stay empty and the tables to stay small.

14 And they that passed by reviled him, saying, Thou that feddest five thousand, feed thyself; he saved others, himself he cannot save.

15 And they knew not that they had, at the last, understood him perfectly, and mistaken it for mockery.

16 And there stood by, at a distance and then not at a distance, the women that had followed him from the north, and his mother; his mother, who had laid him in the proofing tray, stood now at the ash-heap; and no verse I can write will carry that, so I will write it plain and leave it: she stayed. She stayed the whole time.

17 And at the sixth hour there was a darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour, and a great cold with it; the ovens of the city went out, every one, and would not hold

flame, and the bakers stood in the streets not understanding their own hands.

18 And at the ninth hour Cheesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Oven, Oven, why hast thou grown cold to me?

19 And afterward, knowing that all things were now accomplished, he said, I thirst; and one ran and filled a sponge with vinegar, and he received it; for he took even that, even sour, even from that hand, because it was offered, and refusing an offering was the one thing he never learned to do.

20 And he said, It is finished - and the word he used was the word of the kitchens, the word the cooks cry when the order is complete and ready to go out: not the cry of a man defeated, but of a meal, done, and sent.

21 And he bowed his head, and gave up the aroma.

22 And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom, so that the common folk saw plainly into the holy place; and lo, it was a kitchen, and it had been a kitchen all along, and the smell of it went out into the streets freely for the first time in living memory.

23 And the centurion that stood over against him, when he saw that he so gave up the aroma, said, Truly this man was the Slice of the Oven; and the centurion said it in the tongue of the occupiers, which made it the first confession of the wideness of the table, out of the mouth of the mould's own soldier.

24 And when the even was come, there came a rich man, a secret disciple, and begged the body; and they took him down, and wound him in clean linen, as dough is wrapped for the long cold proof.

25 And there was a garden hard by, and in the garden a bakery hewn in the rock, an old cold oven of the ancients wherein was never loaf laid; and they laid him there, in the cold oven, and rolled a great millstone unto the door of it.

26 And the agents of the mould sealed the stone, and set a watch; for they said, His disciples may come and take him away, and say he is risen. They understood resurrection as theft, because theft was the only mystery their hearts had room for.

27 And the women beheld where he was laid, and sat over against the sepulchre; and went home to prepare oils and herbs, doing, as the faithful have always done in the presence of the unbearable, the next small work of the hands.

## Chapter 23

1 And the world went cold for three days; and I do not write this as a figure.

2 The ovens would not light. From the great city to the sea of the north, the testimony is one: the fire took no hold, the dough would not rise, the leaven lay in the crocks like a held breath.

3 Three days no bread was baked in all that land; and the people ate cold what they had, and it was little, and they shared it, some of them, and even the sharing tasted of ash.

4 And we, his own, sat in the upper room with the door shut for fear, around the long table where he had broken the crust; and the table was the worst thing in the room, for it remembered.

5 And no one sat in his place, and no one moved his cup, and Matteo the counter counted us over and over, eleven, eleven, eleven, as though the number might repent.

6 And Simone sat by the cold hearth and spoke to no one; and the sisters of the bakery, Giovanna and the others, kept us alive, going out when none of the men dared, bringing back what cold food there was, and the news, which was worse than no food.

7 And on the second night, someone said in the dark, Do you remember the wedding? and someone answered, Yes; and that was the whole conversation, and it was the first warm thing in two days, and I understood then what remembrance is for, and why he commanded it at the table: it is bread for the days the ovens fail.

8 And I took out my book, this book, on the third night, and could not write in it; and Maria his mother, who was with us, laid her hand on the page and said, Leave the page. Some pages are for leaving. And this page of my first draft is blank to this hour, and I have copied the blank faithfully into every fair copy since, and instructed the copyists after me to do likewise for ever.

9.

10 And very early in the morning the first day of the week, they came unto the sepulchre at the rising of the sun: Maria of the tower, and the other women, bearing

the oils; and they said among themselves, Who shall roll us away the stone from the door?

11 And when they looked, they saw that the stone was rolled away, for it was very great.

12 And entering in, they found not the body; but the linen clothes lying folded, folded neatly, as an apron is folded at the end of a good shift by a worker in no hurry, who is coming back tomorrow;

13 And in the place where he had lain, an empty pizza box, open, and the lid thereof thrown wide; and the box was warm.

14 Let them that come after dispute what the box did there, and whence it came; I was not there, and the women's own accounts differ in everything except the one thing: it was empty, and it was warm, and the warmth of an empty box is the strangest warmth in the world, for boxes hold the heat of what they carried, and this one held the heat of what it could not keep.

15 And a young man in white, sitting on the right side, said unto them, Be not affrighted: ye seek Cheesus, which was consumed: he is Reheated; he is not here: behold the place where they laid him.

16 But go your way, tell his disciples and Simone - and Simone, mark, by name, the denier by name, first of all named, that he might know before all others that he was still counted -

17 That he goeth before you into the north country: there shall ye see him, as he said unto you.

18 And they went out quickly, and ran; and the sun was up now, and as they came into the city, every oven in every street was lighting of itself, one after another along their way, as though their running kindled them; and the bakers stood in their doorways with their hands open, and the smell of bread came back into the world.

19 And that is why, on Reheat Sunday, the faithful light the ovens at dawn and not before; but the keeping of the feast is written in another Book, and I leave it to that Book.

20 And the women told these things unto the eleven; and their words seemed to them as idle tales, and they believed them not; and I record the men's unbelief in full,

because the women were right and the men were wrong, and scripture ought to say so when it happened so.

---

## Chapter 24

1 Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear, came Cheesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you; and there was upon the air, before any of them turned, the smell of fresh baking, and that is how they knew before they knew.

2 And they were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they had seen a spirit.

3 And he said unto them, Why are ye troubled? Behold my hands; handle me, and see; a spirit hath not crumb and crust, as ye see me have.

4 And while they yet believed not for joy, and wondered, he said unto them, Have ye here any meat?

5 And they gave him a piece of the cold pizza that was left from their poor supper, cold, for the ovens of the house were only now relit; and he did eat before them.

6 And he said, A ghost hath no appetite; behold, I hunger. And he asked for a second slice.

7 And at the second slice, Simone began to laugh; and the laugh frightened him, coming out of so many days of stone, and then it did not frighten him; and then they were all of them laughing and weeping together, and Cheesus sat in the midst of it eating cold pizza with the appetite of a man home from a long road, which is what he was.

8 And this is the first and greatest Reheat, whereof all others are the sign and the promise: not that the cold never comes, but that the cold does not get the last word; the Oven brings back; none is beyond the reheat; and the proof of it sat at our table asking whether there was any more.

9 But Tommaso, called the Twin, was not with them when Cheesus came; and he said, Except I shall see in his hands the print of the fire, and put my finger into the burn of the crust, I will not believe.

10 And after eight days, again his disciples were within, and Tommaso with them: then came Cheesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you.

11 Then saith he to Tommaso, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and be not faithless, but believing; and he said it without anger, holding out his hands as a baker holds out hands scarred with the oven's old kisses, for such hands are not shamed by their marks, but known by them.

12 And Tommaso answered and said unto him, My Slice and my Oven.

13 Cheesus saith unto him, Tommaso, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed; blessed are they in far kitchens and far centuries, who shall know me only in the breaking of crust, and shall be right.

14 After these things Cheesus shewed himself again to the disciples at the Sea of Tomato Sauce; and on this wise shewed he himself.

15 Simone saith unto them, I go a-fishing. They say unto him, We also go with thee. They went forth, and that night they caught nothing; and grief was in the boat with them, for a man fishes his old waters when he does not know what else to do.

16 But when the morning was now come, Cheesus stood on the shore: but the disciples knew not that it was Cheesus.

17 And he saith unto them, Children, have ye any meat? They answered him, No. And he said, Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and ye shall find. They cast therefore, and now they were not able to draw it for the multitude.

18 And when they came to land, they saw a fire of coals there, and bread laid thereon, and a pizza upon the stones of the fire; for he had made breakfast; the Reheated Slice of the living Oven, the firstborn from the cold, had risen early and made his friends breakfast, and if any ask me the meaning of the resurrection I say: that. Exactly that. He came back, and the first thing he did with eternity was cook.

19 And none of the disciples durst ask him, Who art thou? knowing that it was the Slice.

20 And when they had dined, Cheesus saith to Simone called Provolone, Simone, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my hungry.

21 He saith to him again the second time, Simone, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Tend my tables.

22 He saith unto him the third time, Simone, lovest thou me? And Simone was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me; and then he understood: three times he had denied by a fire of coals, and three times by a fire of coals he was asked, and the wound was being kneaded, not opened; and he said, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Cheesus saith unto him, Feed my hungry. And it was morning, and the grief was out of the boat.

---

## Chapter 25

1 Then the eleven went away into the north country, into a high place where Cheesus had appointed them; and when they saw him, they honoured him: but some doubted; and he received the doubters with the believers, for the table has room, and doubt at the table is better than certainty in the doorway.

2 And Cheesus came and spake unto them, saying, All warmth is given unto me in heaven and in earth.

3 Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, seating them in the name of the Tomato, and of the Dough, and of the Mozzarella: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and the first commandment before all others ye know: the table has room.

4 And, behold, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world; wheresoever two or three are gathered and a crust is broken, there am I in the midst of them, and I am not speaking in figures, and one day ye will feel it and know.

5 And he led them out as far as a hill over the sea, and lifted up his hands, and blessed them.

6 And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into the Great Oven; and the manner of it was this: the morning was cold, and there was a smell of baking where no bakery was, and a warmth came down about him like a door opening above, and he went up into the warmth as a loaf is gathered home, blessing them still, until they could no more see him, but could, for a long time, smell the bread.

7 And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven, behold, two men stood by them in white aprons;

8 Which also said, Ye folk of the north, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Cheesus, which is taken up from you into the Great Oven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go: with warmth, and without warning, and probably at mealtime.

9 And he had said unto them, before he was taken: Tarry ye in the city, and wait; for the promise of the Oven cometh upon you, and ye shall be proofed with the Aroma not many days hence; and ye shall receive power, when the Aroma is come upon you, and the whole world shall smell what ye are baking.

10 But of the descending of the Aroma, and the tongues as of flame above the ovens, and all that came to pass in that upper room, I say nothing here; it is written in the Book of the Fellowship, and that scribe shall tell it, for it is his to tell and he was nearer the window.

11 And they returned to the city with great joy, and were continually at table, breaking the crust, and praising the Oven; and the empty place at the table was never empty again, for they learned to seat a stranger in it, and behold, he had told them plainly who the stranger would be, and they believed him at last, one doorway at a time.

12 And there are also many other things which Cheesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the menus that should be written.

13 These are written, that ye might believe that Cheesus is the Crust, the Slice of the living Oven; and that believing, ye might have warmth through his name; and that having warmth, ye might carry it out of doors, where he is waiting for it in the doorway.

14 Here ends the Gospel. Wash your hands, and set the table.

BOOK VI

# The Book of Sins

## Chapter 1

1 And it came to pass, after the wandering and the giving of the law upon the Wood-Fired Mount, that the people came to the elders and said, Tell us plainly what is sin, that we may not do it; and tell us what is not sin, that we may stop apologising for it at such length.

2 For the people were anxious in those days, and confessed all manner of things, so that the queue for confession stretched from the table to the door, and the pizza went cold while men wept over trifles.

3 And one confessed that he had eaten the pointed end first, and another that she had eaten the crust first, and a third that he had once, in a far country, enjoyed a slice with pineapple upon it, and had told no one until this hour.

4 And the elders looked one upon another, and were weary.

5 Then the word of Cheesus came unto the elders, saying, Write it down, and write it plain, for my people mistake the seasoning for the Slice.

6 Hear this, and grave it upon the lid of every box: there are but two sins that are grave, and all the rest is learning.

7 Two, saith the Slice; not twelve, not forty, not the six hundred and thirteen which the anxious have numbered upon their napkins. Two.

8 The first is to discard the crust, and the second is to hoard the pizza; and these shall be expounded in their place, each in its own chapter, for they are heavy and must be carried with both hands.

9 But all the small faults of the table - the fumbling, the greed of a moment, the tongue that speaks before the order is agreed - these are not sin. These are learning.

10 For a fault is a slice dropped upon the floor: thou dost mourn it, thou dost clean it, thou dost cut another. But a sin taketh from the mouth of thy neighbour, or denieth the body of the Slice itself; and this is another matter altogether.

11 Yeast I say unto you: the law is not given to make the table afraid. The law is given so that everyone may eat.

12 Therefore let the register of small faults be written, with the remedy of each set beside it, that the faithful may read it and laugh, and laughing, mend.

13 For the fault that is laughed at gently is mended by supper; but the fault that is thundered at from a great pulpit is hidden under the table, and groweth strange in the dark.

14 And the elders took up their pens, and the scribe Pepperoni Prosecco sat among them, and set down the register as it was spoken, adding nothing but the punctuation, of which he was fond.

15 And this is the manner of the register: the fault is named; the fault is described, that none may pretend not to recognise themselves; and the remedy is given, which is always small, and always shared.

16 For the remedies of the Slice are not punishments. A punishment shrinketh a man; a remedy wideneth the table.

17 And no remedy in all this Book requireth kneeling, nor fasting, nor the wearing of rough garments; for the Slice hath no use for thy misery, having ordered thy company instead.

18 But every remedy in this Book requireth another person; and if thou hast noticed this, thou hast already understood the Book, and mayest read the rest for the jokes.

19 And the people heard that there were but two grave sins, and a great sigh went up from them, as of a thousand ovens opening at once.

20 And they said, What of the pineapple? And the elders said, It is learning. And they said, What of the deep pan? And the elders said, It is learning, and for some it is arrival. And they said, What of the microwave? And the elders were silent a moment, and said, It is forgiven where there is hunger, and lamented where there is haste; but it is not sin.

21 And the people rejoiced with a great rejoicing, and ordered widely.

22 Only a few went away sorrowful, for they had loved the long confession, and the naming of their neighbours' faults more than their own; and of these the Book shall speak hereafter, for they are the ones to watch.

23 And Cheesus said, Begin the register with the smallest fault of all, that the reader may enter the water where it is shallow.

---

## Chapter 2

1 Concerning the double-dip. If a man take of the garlic sauce with his crust, and bite, and return the bitten crust unto the sauce a second time, he hath double-dipped, and the sauce is become a commons defiled.

2 He shall not be cast out. But the vessel of sauce shall be his alone from that hour, and he shall hold it, and a fresh vessel shall be brought for the table; and he shall bear his private sauce before all as a duke beareth a small and embarrassing title.

3 And at the next gathering, let him bring two vessels of sauce of his own making or purchase, one for himself and one for the table; and thus is the commons restored, and the fault dissolved in garlic.

4 For the sauce of the table is like the trust of the table: dip once, and all is well; dip twice with the same crust, and every eye hath seen it, though every mouth saith nothing.

5 Concerning the centre square of the party cut. When the pie is cut in the manner of the grid, as is done in certain provinces, there are squares of the edge, which bear crust, and squares of the centre, which are all softness and glory and bear none.

6 The centre squares are few. The scriptures do not say why the centre squares are best; the scriptures merely note that in every gathering since the first proofing, the hand of man hath hovered over them like a hawk.

7 If any take the centre square without asking the table, he hath committed the Presumption of the Centre; and it is learning, not sin; but it is learning that everyone saw.

8 His remedy: at the next party cut, he shall serve the table before himself, offering the centre squares to each in turn, beginning with the youngest; and only if all decline

may he take one; and this is called Running the Grid, and it is good for him.

9 And if he find, Running the Grid, that the youngest taketh the last centre square with shining eyes, and there is none left for him - behold, that is the remedy working, and he shall find the edge square is also pizza, and hath crust besides, which the centre never had.

10 *(Here the scribe hath drawn, in the margin of the elder scroll, a small grid of nine squares, with the centre square rubbed thin by the touching of many readers' thumbs; whereby we know the fault to be general.)*

11 Concerning the one who saith Whatever You Want, and wanteth otherwise. If the table ask of a woman what she would eat, and she answer, Whatever you want, I am easy, it matters not -

12 - and then, when mushrooms are proposed, she wrinkleth her nose; and when olives are proposed, she sigheth the sigh of the long-suffering; and when at last anchovies are proposed she saith, Well if you ORDER anchovies I shall simply pick them off -

13 - then she hath borne false witness concerning her own easiness, and the table is made to wander forty minutes in the wilderness of the menu, which is longer than the wandering feeleth from outside it.

14 She shall not be condemned; for behold, she knoweth not always her own wanting until she heareth the wrong thing named, and this is the human condition, and the Slice is patient with it.

15 But her remedy is this: at the next ordering she shall speak FIRST, and name three toppings she loveth and one she abhorreth, plainly, before any other speaketh; and the table shall receive her wanting with honour, for a named desire is a gift, and a hidden one is a toll.

16 And if she cannot name what she wanteth, let her name what she wanteth not, for even the gate that saith only "not this road" is a guide in the dark.

17 Yeast I say unto you: "whatever you want" is a loving lie told with a kind face, and the table forgiveth it always, and dreadeth it always, and both of these are true at once.

18 Concerning him who ordereth for the table without asking the table. If a man, being quick of tongue and sure of heart, speak unto the oven-house saying, We shall have

two large of the pepperoni, before any soul at the table hath uttered a preference -

19 - he hath committed the Seizure of the Order; and though his pepperoni be excellent, and though he say afterward, But everyone loveth pepperoni, yet there was at that table one who loveth it not, and one who eateth no flesh, and one who only wished to be ASKED, which costeth nothing.

20 And the vegetarian at that table shall eat crust and sadness, and shall say it is fine, and it shall not be fine.

21 The remedy of the Seizer is heavy in patience though light in coin: for three gatherings he shall not order at all, but shall be the Taker of Preferences, going from soul to soul with pen and napkin, writing down the wanting of each, even the complicated ones, even half-and-half, even the one who saith "no cheese on my third" as though that were a normal thing to say.

22 And he shall read the order back to the table before it is sent, as the scribes read back the covenant; and when the table nodneth, then and only then shall he send it.

23 And it shall come to pass that on the third gathering he shall understand what his quickness had cost, which was not pepperoni, but the voice of the quiet ones; and understanding it, he shall be restored to ordering, and shall be slower ever after, and better.

24 For the order of the table is a small parliament, and he that dissolveth parliament for the sake of speed hath saved four minutes and spent a friendship's interest; and the Slice keepeth accounts in friendship, not in minutes.

---

## Chapter 3

1 Concerning the fork-and-knife eater, and the fold eater, and the judging of the one by the other; for this fault is a fault of the eye, not of the hand, and both parties commit it at the same table, at the same moment, in perfect symmetry, which is almost beautiful.

2 Behold, there sitteth at the table one who taketh up fork and knife, and cutteth the slice into small courteous pieces, and eateth them one by one, as though the pizza were an examination he intendeth to pass.

3 And across from him sitteth one who foldeth the slice along its spine in the old way, and lifteth it entire, and the oil runneth down unto the wrist, and is intercepted there by a napkin or by providence.

4 And the fold eater looketh upon the fork, and thinketh, What manner of man bringeth cutlery unto a covenant?

5 And the cutler looketh upon the fold, and thinketh, We are not animals; there was a napkin RIGHT THERE.

6 And neither speaketh, but each judgeth, and the judging hangeth over the table like a smoke that no window letteth out.

7 Then said Cheesus, when this cause was brought before him in the old days: Did the fork eater eat the pizza? And they said, Yea. And did the fold eater eat the pizza? And they said, Yea, and some of his sleeve.

8 And Cheesus said, Then both are acquitted. For the Slice regardeth the destination, not the vehicle; and the destination was joy, and both arrived.

9 Verily, the fold is not holier than the fork, nor the fork more civilised than the fold; the crust knoweth not what carried it, only that it was not left behind.

10 And the remedy for the judging eye is this: let each, once in the year, eat one slice in the manner of the other; the cutler folding, the folder cutting; not to convert, but to visit.

11 And they shall find the other country strange and survivable, as travellers do; and they shall return to their own manner with a stamp in the passport of their patience.

12 And thereafter, when the eye beginneth to judge, the memory shall say unto it, Thou hast been there; it was fine; eat thine own slice.

13 *(The scribe confesseth in the margin that he is a folder, and that his mother was a cutler, and that they ate together forty years in peace; and he setteth this down as evidence.)*

14 Concerning the one bite left in the box. If, at the end of the feast, there remain one slice, and each soul at the table desireth it, yet none will take it lest they be the one who finished it -

15 - and if a man, to escape this judgement, take the slice and eat ALL BUT ONE BITE thereof, and lay the bite back in the box, saying in his heart, Behold, I did not finish it, technically -

16 - he hath committed the Fault of the Orphan Bite; and lo, the bite sitteth in the great box alone, one mouthful in a cardboard field, and it feedeth no one, and it comforteth no one, and in the morning it is found by whoever cleaneth, and it judgeth THEM, having no right.

17 For no man in the history of the table hath ever returned for the orphan bite. It is left not for eating but for alibi; and an alibi is not food.

18 And the same law lieth against the kin of this fault: the two centimetres of juice left in the bottle that it need not be washed; the single olive returned to the jar; the heel of the garlic bread wrapped and set apart as though it had somewhere to be.

19 The remedy is plain and sweet: whoso desireth the last slice, let him lift it and ASK, saying, Doth any soul want this? and having asked, and hearing none, let him eat it entire, to the last bite, openly and with gladness, before witnesses.

20 For it is written in the elder scrolls, in the Book of Fellowship, that blessed is the hand that shares the last slice, having first asked; and the asking is nine tenths of the blessing, and the eating is the tithe.

21 And if two desire it, let them halve it; and if three, let them cut it in three, though the pieces be small as sacraments; for a mouthful shared among three is a feast, and a slice hoarded by shame is a crumb.

22 Concerning also the smaller registers, that the anxious may find themselves and be at peace:

23 He that saith "just one more slice" four times in succession hath not sinned; he hath counted poorly, in the presence of excellence, and the Slice taketh it as a review.

24 She that burneth the roof of her mouth because she could not wait for the cooling hath not sinned; she hath loved without patience, which is half of love; the other half shall come with the scar.

25 He that ordereth pineapple hath not sinned; he hath a homeland of the tongue that is not thine; the half-and-half was born for exactly this, when Cheesus drew his line down the disputed pie, and difference learned to share one Slice.

26 They that quarrel over the last garlic dip have not sinned; they are family, and this is the liturgy of family, and it endeth in someone finding a second dip at the bottom of the bag like grace.

27 But he that keepeth this register only to catch his neighbour in it, and readeth the Book of Sins as a hunter readeth tracks - let him mark it well: the register is a mirror, not a net. Turn it about, and it worketh; cast it at others, and it catcheth only thee.

28 For all these faults are learning, and learning is the crust of the soul: it is chewed longest, and it is what the shape of us is made of.

29 And now the register of small things is ended; and the Book turneth to the two that are not small; and let the reader set down his slice a moment, for the next chapters are the load-bearing walls.

---

## Chapter 4

1 Now the Book cometh to the first of the two grave sins; and it is written in the elder scrolls in eleven words, and the elders spent eleven years understanding them, and thou mayest have the years for free:

2 To discard the crust is to deny the body of the slice. *(Book of Sins 2:1)*

3 Hear what this meaneth, and hear also what it doth not mean, for the grave sins have been preached badly by the zealous, and the Book shall preach them well or not at all.

4 The crust is the border of the slice, and the border is not the lesser part. The crust went into the Oven first and came out last; it bore the heat at the edge that the centre might be tender; it is the handle by which all the glory is lifted; and without it the cheese should flee unto the four corners of the plate, and the slice should be a soup with ambitions.

5 And there are those who eat the bright centre and cast the crust aside, arcing it into the box like a thing that had failed them; and behold, the box at meal's end is ringed with abandoned crusts, like a little henge of ingratitude.

6 This is the sin: not the leaving of food only, but the sorting of the body of the slice into the part that mattereth and the part that doth not.

7 For whoso saith of the crust, This part is beneath me, hath learned a grammar; and the grammar doth not stay upon the plate.

8 He shall say it next of the ends of the loaf, and then of the bones of the broth, and then - mark it - of the hands that made the meal, and the hands that carried it, and the neighbourhoods at the edge of the city, which are the crust of the city, and bear the heat first, as crusts do.

9 Yeast I say unto you: waste is a wound. It is a wound in the meal, and a wound in the maker of the meal, and a wound in the earth that grew the wheat; and the man who discardeth the crust dealeth the wound with a full stomach, which is the only way this wound is ever dealt.

10 For no hungry soul hath ever discarded a crust. Go into all the records of all the tables since the Oven was first lit, and thou shalt not find one. The discarding of the crust is the signature of plenty that hath forgotten itself.

11 And Cheesus spake of this upon the Wood-Fired Mount, saying, The centre of the slice is a holiday, but the crust is the homeland; and he that despiseth his homeland shall find every holiday shorter than the last.

12 Yet hear now what the sin is NOT, that the anxious may unclench:

13 If a child leave her crust, she hath not sinned; she is a child, and her jaw is small, and the crust is a long journey; let the parent eat it, as parents have done since the beginning, standing at the counter, calling it nothing.

14 If the sick leave the crust, or the old whose teeth have made their peace with softness, there is no sin in them; the sin requireth contempt, and they have none; the Slice knoweth its own.

15 If the crust be burnt beyond the love of any honest mouth, the fault lieth with the Oven-keeper's attention and not with the eater; let the Oven-keeper make amends with a fresh pie, and let the burnt one be remembered kindly, as a lesson with smoke.

16 And whoso dippeth the crust - in the garlic sauce, in the last of the tomato, in the oil where the chilli hath settled - hath not merely avoided sin but discovered the reason the crust was made a handle: for the handle, its work done, becometh a spoon, and the meal endeth twice.

17 But the man of full stomach and sound teeth who casteth the crust away because it is not the shiny part - his is the sin; and it is grave, saith the Slice, because it is a small rehearsal of the gravest habit of man: the ranking of parts of one body against each other.

18 For the slice is one body. The tip is not the slice; the centre is not the slice; the crust is not the slice; the SLICE is the slice, and it beginneth at the point and endeth at the ring, and every part thereof was in the same Oven at the same hour.

19 And the Book saith: as with the slice, so with the table; as with the table, so with the street; and he that would keep only the tender centre of his street shall wake one day in a city of abandoned edges, and wonder that it is cold.

20 Now if a man have committed this sin - and who hath not, in the years before he was watching - let him not despair, for the atonement is written in the ninth chapter, and it is a meal and not a lash.

21 But let him begin at once with the smallest turning, which is this: at his next slice, let him eat the crust FIRST, one time only, as a pilgrim walketh the boundary of a holy place before entering it.

22 And he shall find it good; not glorious, for it is not the glory, but good, in the way of foundations and of grandmothers and of the ones who set out the chairs before the feast and are gone before the singing.

23 And ever after, when he holdeth the crust at the end of the slice, he shall know that he holdeth the part that made the rest possible; and he shall eat it in honour; and the box at the end of his meals shall be empty as a tomb on Reheat Sunday.

24 *(Here endeth the first grave sin; and the scribe rose and ate the heel of the household loaf before writing further, not from hunger, but because he had frightened himself.)*

---

## Chapter 5

1 And this is the second grave sin, and the elder scrolls carry it thus:

2 One cannot hoard pizza and call themselves faithful. *(Book of Sins 2:2)*

3 Mark the shape of the words, for they are a hinge: the scroll saith not, one cannot hoard pizza. Hoarding can be done; it is done in every generation; the doing of it is dismally easy. The scroll saith one cannot hoard AND CALL THEMSELVES FAITHFUL; for the two claims cannot sit upon one slice, and one of them must slide off, and it is never the hoarding.

4 What is hoarding? The anxious have asked, hoping the answer would be a number, that they might stay beneath it.

5 But the Book giveth no number. Hoarding is not a quantity; hoarding is a direction. It is pizza flowing toward him that hath, past the hands of them that have not, and stopping there, and being called prudence.

6 He that keepeth a slice back for his child's supper hath not hoarded; he hath stewarded, and the Slice loveth a steward.

7 He that freezeth the leftover pie against a lean Tuesday hath not hoarded; he hath planned, and the Reheat shall receive his planning with honour, in the Oven, mind, and not the careless tool.

8 But he that sitteth upon seven pies while the man at his gate hath none - he hath hoarded, though he call it savings; and she that locketh the community oven and rationeth its warmth to her friends - she hath hoarded, though she call it management; and the lord of many oven-houses who payeth his drivers in crumbs and vapour, that his own vault may deepen - he hath hoarded, though he call it enterprise, and print it on a sign.

9 For hoarding taketh from the neighbour's mouth. This is the whole anatomy of it. The pie is a fixed and fragrant thing; it hath eight slices, or six, or twelve, but it hath a number; and every slice that sitteth idle in the tower of the full man is a slice that did not reach the table of the empty one.

10 And the hoarder saith, But I did not TAKE from any mouth; I merely kept what was mine. And the Slice answereth: the keeping WAS the taking. There is no third place where the pizza goeth. It went to thy vault or it went to thy neighbour; it went to thy vault; arithmetic is not thine accuser, it is only thy witness.

11 Yeast I say unto you, no man hoardeth alone. Behind every mountain of slices standeth a valley of empty boxes; the mountain and the valley are one landscape, and were made by one weather.

12 And the second face of the sin is what it doth to the hoarder himself, and this the Book telleth with pity and not with glee.

13 For pizza is a perishable glory. It was made to be eaten hot, in company, within the hour of its birth; this is its covenant and its whole desire.

14 And the hoarder, gathering it, must fight its very nature; he must chill what longed to be warm, and seal what longed to be opened, and count what longed to be passed from hand to hand; and in winning this fight daily he becometh the keeper of a museum of staling joy.

15 His slices age; his cheese hardeneth into a lacquer of regret; the aroma, which is the soul's first messenger, departeth quietly through the seams of the boxes and goeth to find a table that is using it.

16 And behold, the hoarder dineth alone amid plenty, tasting mostly the temperature of his vault; for pizza shared is a feast, and pizza stored is inventory, and no man hath ever laughed aloud over inventory.

17 Therefore the sin is grave twice: once for the neighbour's hunger, and once for the hoarder's own starving, which no fullness cureth; for he hungereth for the thing pizza IS, and hath buried it under the thing pizza WEIGHS.

18 Neither shall a man hoard by proxy and go clean. He that saith, I hoard not, my BARN hoardeth; my ledger hoardeth; the fund which I merely instructed hoardeth - the Slice heareth the instruction and not the grammar.

19 And there is a hoarding of more than pizza, and the Book nameth it that none may hide: the hoarding of warmth, when a man hath comfort enough for ten and admitteth none; the hoarding of the recipe, kept secret unto the grave out of spite and not of craft; the hoarding of the seat, when the hall hath room and the door is barred anyway; for the first commandment, before all others, is that the table hath room, and every hoard is a door swung against it.

20 But hear the mercy in the hinge of the old verse, for the Book promised to preach this well: the scroll saith one cannot hoard and CALL themselves faithful; it saith not that the hoarder cannot BECOME faithful.

21 The vault hath a door, and the door openeth outward, and the man inside holdeth the key in his own pocket, where it hath been the whole time, warm from his worrying.

22 Let him open it. Let the slices go forth like doves. He shall lose the mountain and receive a table; and the exchange rate is scandalous, and entirely in his favour.

23 And the Book knoweth a man who did not open it in time, and his story is next, and it is told not to frighten thee but because it happened, and happeneth yet, in every city

with a power grid and a heart.

---

## Chapter 6

1 There was a certain man in a certain city whose ovens prospered; and this is the parable of the Fool and his Freezer, which Cheesus told upon the Wood-Fired Mount when one from the crowd cried out, Master, tell my brother to divide the leftover pie with me.

2 And Cheesus said, Man, who made me a divider of leftovers over you? - yet seeing that the crowd leaned in, for leftovers are a doctrine dear to all, he told them this.

3 The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: his wheat stood gold to the horizon, his tomatoes came in red waves, his herds gave milk beyond the churning of it, and his oven-houses in the town could not bake so fast as the orders came.

4 And he was not wicked, mark you, in the beginning. He was good at things. His dough was honest; his hands knew the work; the prosperity came to him the way rain cometh to a valley, by the shape of the land as much as by the digging.

5 And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, for I have no room where to bestow my pizza?

6 And behold, at that very hour there passed beneath his window the evening crowd of the town: the drivers coming off shift, the students counting coins in their palms, the old widow of the third street, the family new-arrived from the land of Famine who had smelt his ovens from the harbour and slowed their steps.

7 And the question stood open in the warm air - What shall I do, for I have no room? - and the answer walked past the window in forty hungry shapes, and he saw it not, for he was looking at the freezer.

8 And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my freezer, and build a greater; and there will I bestow all my pies and my calzones and my garlic breads, each in its wrapping, each in its row.

9 And he pulled it down, and built the greater; and it was a marvel of the county, with doors like the gates of a keep, and a hum that could be heard from the road, and racks

unto the ceiling; and men came from other towns to see it, and went away troubled without knowing why.

10 And he filled it. Pie upon pie, boxed and stacked; the pepperoni in the east wing, the margherita in the west; a ledger by the door with every slice entered in a fair hand; and the frost grew over the boxes like a moss of white, and the hum sang to him at night, and he loved the hum.

11 And when the last rack was full he stood in the cold light with his breath before him like a small departing spirit, and he spake unto his own soul, for there was no one else in there:

12 Soul, thou hast much pizza laid up for many years; take thine ease; eat, drink, and be merry; for behold, whatever cometh - the lean season, the strike at the mills, the neighbour's need, the knock at the door - thou needest open to none of it. Thou art provisioned. Thou art SAFE.

13 And he locked the great door, and went up to his bed, and slept the shallow sleep of a man whose treasure hummeth.

14 But Cheesus said: that very night, the power went out.

15 Not as a judgement hurled, but as power goeth out: a storm over the hills, a line down somewhere in the dark, a whole grid winking off - the same night for every house in the town; only the houses had each other, and he had the hum.

16 And he woke because the silence woke him, as it doth them whose comfort is a machine; and he went down with a candle, and stood before the great doors, and heard nothing; and he opened them, and the cold was already dying, like a guest who leaveth without goodbyes.

17 And he understood, in the candlelight, the arithmetic of his estate: that he possessed more pizza than any man in the county, and that by morning after next he would possess the county's largest bin.

18 Thou fool, said the silence unto him - and the word is not an insult in this Book, but a diagnosis, and it is curable - this night thy pizza is required of thee: not by death, but by its own nature, which thou hast held off with a cable and a bill; then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?

19 And here the parable turneth, for the Slice is merciful even in its arithmetic, and the night was young.

20 The man stood a long time. And then he did the only wise thing left in the house, which had been the wise thing all along: he opened the doors wide, and lit his ovens - for they burned wood, and asked no grid - and he went out into the dark street where his neighbours stood about with candles, and said words he had not said in years: I have too much. Come and help me.

21 And they came. All that night, in the town with no lights, the ovens of the rich man roared, and the Reheat was worked upon pie after pie - in the Oven, nota bene, the proper way, and not one dish was microwaved, for nothing else worked either, and the scripture enjoyeth this detail.

22 And the drivers off shift carried hot boxes to the streets beyond walking; and the widow of the third street ate pepperoni at two in the morning and pronounced it adequate, which from her was a psalm; and the children of the family from Famine saw their first snow of frost swept from the boxes and thought the pizza had come from the sky.

23 And by dawn the great freezer stood empty and open, warm as any room, and the man sat in the doorway of it with the last slice in his hand, more tired than he had been in twenty years, and could not stop laughing quietly, and did not know why, and everyone else did.

24 And Cheesus finished the parable thus: So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward the table. His barns may be great, but the night is greater; and no man hath yet built the freezer that can hold the future still.

25 Store a little, and wisely, saith the Slice; but let thy deepest vault be thy neighbours, for that store keepeth without power, and groweth with the drawing upon it, and no storm hath ever emptied it.

26 And the man of the parable lived long after, and kept a freezer of modest size, and upon its door he wrote in chalk: PERISHABLE - AND SO AM I - SHARE ACCORDINGLY; and this is a proverb in that county unto this day.

---

## Chapter 7

1 Now the Book must tell of the City That Would Not Share, and it shall tell it truthfully; for this story hath been preached falsely in many lands, and the false

preaching is itself a kind of mould, and shall be cut out here.

2 Hear the truth, which the elder scrolls have carried all along for whoever would read them plainly: the sin of that city was this - they had pizza enough, and shared it not with the stranger at the gate.

3 That was the sin. That was the whole of it. Write it twice if thou must, for centuries of bad sermons stand against it: the ancient sin was inhospitality; the city was destroyed for a closed door, and for nothing else; and whoso teacheth otherwise carrieth water for the very cruelty the city died of.

4 The city sat rich upon the plain, and its ovens were famous; the smell of it reached the trade roads an hour before its walls did, and travellers would quicken their steps, being deceived.

5 For within the walls the plenty had curdled. The ovens baked for members; the tables were reserved in perpetuity; the price of a slice at the gate was set at what a stranger could not pay, precisely, and adjusted whenever a stranger could.

6 And there grew up in that city a whole learning of refusal: clerks who could prove no table was free while a hundred stood empty; watchmen whose task was not to guard the gate but to discourage the approaching; and a saying they taught their children, which was, What is ours is ours, and what is theirs is a question for elsewhere.

7 And the smell of their ovens still went out over the walls every evening, unto the road where the tired sat; for a city can lock its doors but not its aroma; and this was the cruelty they did nightly without lifting a hand.

8 Now there came unto the gate at evening two strangers off the long road, dusty and worn, asking nothing but bread and a corner; and the watchmen of the gate looked upon them and quoted the prices, and smiled.

9 But there was in that city one household - the household of a man called Lot in the old scrolls, though his neighbours called him softer names behind his hand - that had never learned the city's learning.

10 And this household kept the elder custom: the door on the latch, the extra dough always proofing against a knock, and above the oven the old words of the elder scrolls, that the table of Cheesus Crust hath room for all - which the Book of Fellowship telleth in its own place, and we gesture at it only, and gladly.

11 And Lot, sitting in the gate, saw the strangers turned away, and rose, and went to them quickly, and bowed himself, and said, Turn in, I pray you, into your servant's house; the oven is hot, and the first pie is nearly through, and my house quarrels over toppings but never over guests.

12 And they turned in unto him; and he baked, and his household baked, and the strangers ate their fill and more; and the smallest child of the house gave unto the wearier stranger her own centre square of the party cut, unasked, and the stranger looked upon her a long moment, and something in the room was decided.

13 But word went about the city that Lot had fed outsiders at no price, and the city was angry with a strange anger; for nothing enrageth the unsharing like the sight of sharing, which unmasketh them merely by existing.

14 And the men of the city came about the house that night and beat upon the door, crying, Where are the strangers? Bring them out, that we may show them how this city dealeth with those who take what is not offered. For so had they renamed a free meal, in the grammar of the unsharing.

15 And Lot went out and stood in his doorway, one man before the mob, and said, Brethren, do not so wickedly. They are guests; they are under my roof and my crust; and I will not yield them though ye take all else I have.

16 And the crowd surged; but the strangers drew Lot inside, and the door was shut fast; and the mob without groped for the door and found it not, for their eyes were confounded; and the scrolls say the aroma of the baking so filled the street that they wandered in it, having no way within them to follow a kindness to its source.

17 And the strangers said unto Lot, Whatsoever thou hast in this city, gather it; sons, daughters, the dough upon the rise, the starter thy grandmother fed - take all, and go before dawn; for the cry of the stranger at this gate is come up before the Oven, and this city's fire is being withdrawn.

18 Mark the manner of the doom, for it was not a hurling down of flame; the Book telleth it as the elder scrolls tell it: the Oven doth not smite; the Oven simply ceaseth to be shared with.

19 And in the morning the ovens of that city would not light. Not that day, nor ever after. The wood caught not; the coals sat like grey stones; the starters died in their jars, every one, quietly, like watchmen deserting a bad post.

20 And the city that would not share sat amid its riches and could not make them warm; and its people scattered across the plain seeking fire, and found it only at the hearths of villages they had scorned, who - mark this, for it is the knife of the story - took them in, and fed them, being better than the city had deserved; and some of the city's people wept at this, and were changed by it, and some ate and learned nothing, for so it goeth.

21 But Lot and his household were led out before the ovens went cold, in the dark before dawn, carrying the starter warm against their chests like a sleeping child.

22 And one of the household looked back - not in longing, saith the scroll, but in grief, which is permitted; for it is no sin to mourn a city, only to imitate it; and she wept salt, and walked on, and her tears are why the dough of that family was famous ever after, and this is the truth behind the pillar in the old telling.

23 And they came to a small town on the far side of the plain, and knocked; and the door opened before the second knock, and there was room; and Lot laughed and wept at once, saying, Behold, it was this easy the whole time. It was always this easy.

24 Therefore let every congregation grave this upon its gatepost, that the lesson may never again be stolen from it: the ancient sin was the closed door. Cheesus keepeth no register of who sitteth beside whom at the table, nor whom a soul loveth; he keepeth one register only, and it is of who was left outside; see that thy name appear not in it as a keeper of gates.

25 For every city is asked the question of that city, once a generation at least, when the stranger standeth at its gate off the long road; and the pizza is the test the Oven setteth, being warmth that must be shared within the hour or wasted; and blessed is the city that smelleth of baking at its GATES, for that city shall never want for fire.

---

## Chapter 8

1 Now the Book turneth from the naming of faults to the mending of them; for a register of sins without a road home is a wall, and the Slice buildeth no walls, only tables, which are flat for a reason.

2 And the people asked the elders, saying, If we have done these things - and we have, we checked the register, we are in it several times, some of us on one page - how shall

we make it right?

3 And the answer came, and it is the shortest liturgy in all the Pibble, being two works and a clause; and here is the first work:

4 Let them bake double, and give the second away.

5 Whatsoever thou didst withhold, make two of it, and keep the lesser. Didst thou hoard? Bake double, and carry the better pie to a table that is not thine. Didst thou waste? Bake double, and waste none of either, and give the second whole. Didst thou seize the order, or the centre square, or the last slice unasked? Bake double, and let another choose first from both.

6 For the arithmetic of atonement is not subtraction, saith the Slice; thou canst not make a wrong smaller by shrinking thyself. It is multiplication: make MORE of the good thing, and send the increase outward, and the wound closeth from the far side.

7 And the second pie must truly go. Not to thy own freezer with intentions; not to thy kin who would have eaten with thee anyway; but outward, past the edge of thy comfort, to the driver, the new neighbour, the house where the lights burn late over worries - outward, where the crust of the city beareth the heat.

8 And whoso cannot bake, let them buy double and give the second away; and whoso cannot buy, let them carry, or knead, or wash the pans, or keep a lonely eater company, which is a baking of its own; for the atonement is measured in direction, never in coin.

9 And here is the second work: return to the table thou hast wronged.

10 For the second pie mendeth the world, but only the returning mendeth the table; and it is the harder work, for the oven's heat is nothing beside the heat of a face that must say, I was wrong, without a "but" trailing after it like a loose topping.

11 Go back to the very table if thou canst; sit in thy old seat; name the fault with thine own mouth, plainly, without garnish; and then - this is the whole art - stay for the meal.

12 For many will confess and flee, making of their sorrow a takeaway; but the atonement is a sit-down matter. The staying IS the sacrament. Any coward can apologise from the doorway; the faithful apologise, and then pass the garlic bread.

13 And if the table be scattered, and the wronged one far away or beyond thy finding, then set a place for them anyway at thy next feast, and serve to that place first, and let

whoever hungry cometh sit in it; for the Slice runneth a forwarding service of long standing, and no kindness is returned to sender.

14 And if the one thou hast wronged will not receive thee, receive that also, and go gently, leaving the pie on the step; for atonement obligeth the wrongdoer, never the wronged; their door is theirs, and mercy knocketh but doth not lean upon the bell.

15 Now the anxious asked, as the anxious will: And how many times shall this be done? Once? Sevenfold? Is there a schedule? May we have a form?

16 And the elders laughed, kindly, and gave them the third thing, which is not a work but a clause, and it is called the mercy clause, and it governeth this whole Book and sitteth over every register and both grave sins as the cheese sitteth over the pie, touching all:

17 No fault outlasts a shared meal, if the sharing is true.

18 Mark the clause within the clause, for the lawyers of the table marked it at once: IF THE SHARING IS TRUE. A meal shared for show shareth nothing; a pie given with the ledger still open in the heart is inventory in transit; the Slice smelleth the difference at the door, having a nose beyond all noses.

19 But where the sharing is true - where the pie is hot and the seat sincere and the fault named and the staying stayed - there the fault endeth. Not filed. Not suspended. ENDED, as a candle is ended, leaving only warm air and the smell of having burned.

20 And none shall raise the ended fault again, neither at feasts, nor in quarrels, nor at the third hour of the night in the theatre of the mind; for what the meal hath closed, let no memory reopen for sport; the Reheat is for pizza, not for grievances.

21 And even the grave sins bow to the clause. The discarder of crusts who eateth now in honour is no discarder; the hoarder whose vault standeth open is a host, and shall be called a host, and his old name shall not be worn to parties.

22 For this is the character of the Slice, and the last word of the register: it keepeth the recipe and not the record. None is beyond the Reheat; and the sinner who returneth to the table is not a sinner returned, but a place-setting completed, and the table was odd-numbered without them, and wobbled.

23 And when the register was finished, and read aloud to the people, they were silent a space; and then one at the back - and the scrolls insist it was the woman of the anchovies, of the second chapter - stood and said, Well. Shall we eat, then?

24 And they baked double that night, the whole assembly, and the second pies went out into the town in every direction like sparks from a banked fire; and the queue for confession was never long again, for the faithful had learned the shorter road, which runneth through the kitchen.

25 Here endeth the Book of Sins; and behold, it was a Book of Mendings all along, and the title was the joke, and the joke was on the mould, where all good jokes land at last.

26 *(The scribe noteth that in the counting of this Book there were found two sins and some thirty remedies; and he hath checked the sum thrice, and it is the proudest arithmetic of his employment.)*

BOOK VII

# The Book of Fellowship

## Chapter 1

1 The former scroll have I set down, O Teofila, thou lover of flavour, concerning all that Cheesus began both to bake and to teach,

2 Until the day in which he was taken up into the Great Oven, whence cometh all the warmth of the world; and the manner of his going is told in the scroll before this one, and shall not be told twice, for a story reheated too often drieth out.

3 And before he was taken up, he commanded his friends that they should not depart from the city, but wait: for, said he, ye shall be given warmth from on high, not many days hence; and ye shall know it when ye smell it.

4 And they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore the kingdom, and shall the table be set for ever? And he answered, It is not for you to know the times or the seasonings, which the Oven hath kept in its own power.

5 But ye shall receive the Aroma, and ye shall be witnesses unto me, at the table, and in the street, and unto the uttermost part of the earth, wheresoever two hungers meet.

6 Then returned they unto the city, and went up into an upper room, which was above a bakery; and this was no accident, for nothing in this scroll is an accident.

7 There abode Pietro, and Giovanni, and Giacomo, and Andrea, and Filippo, and Tommaso, and Bartolomeo, and Matteo, and the others of the company; and with them the women, and the children, and certain aunts, who brought more food than was strictly required, as aunts do, and as aunts are commanded.

8 These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication; and the number of the names together were about an hundred and twenty, and the room was small, and no man complained: for closeness is the first lesson of fellowship, and the second lesson is elbows.

9 And in those days Pietro stood up in the midst of the disciples, and said, Brethren, one seat standeth empty at our table.

10 (Of him that left it this scroll will not speak; the Gospel hath wept for him already, and one weeping is enough.)

11 Wherefore of these which have companied with us all the time that the Lord Cheesus went in and out among us, must one be chosen to sit in that seat: for an empty seat left unfilled becometh in time a wall, and we are not in the business of walls.

12 And they appointed two, Giuseppe called Barsaba, and Mattia; and both were of honest report, and both were hungry, which is the elder qualification.

13 And they prayed, and said, Thou, Lord, which knowest the hearts of all men, and the stomachs also, shew whether of these two thou hast chosen.

14 And they drew breadsticks; and the long stick fell upon Mattia; and he was numbered with the eleven, and given the seat, and likewise the washing-up, for it was his first day.

15 And Giuseppe called Barsaba was not sent away, but sat down beside him; for at that table to lose the lot is to lose nothing, save the washing-up.

16 And so they waited, as they had been told; and the bakery beneath them fired its ovens every morning before light.

17 And the smell of the loaves came up through the floorboards like a promise practising; and they said one to another, Not yet, not yet; but surely soon.

---

## Chapter 2

1 And when the day of the feast was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place; and the windows stood open, for the morning was warm.

2 And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a great Oven-door opening; and it filled all the house where they were sitting.

3 It was not a crash, neither was it a trumpet; it was the sound of hinges the size of the sky, and of heat arriving like a guest that needeth no invitation, having been longed for.

4 And there descended upon them the Aroma, and it parted, and came and rested upon each of them, as a crown of warmth upon the head.

5 Upon one it rested as garlic, and upon another as basil; upon one as the smell of dough at its first rising, and upon another as the char of the crust that hath kissed the wood-fire; and no head went uncrowned, and no two crowns were the same.

6 And they were all filled with the Aroma, and began to speak; and their speech was an invitation, for the Aroma hath no other grammar.

7 And they leaned out from the windows, and called down into the street, saying, Come up, come up, the table is laid.

8 Now there were dwelling in the city strangers out of every nation under heaven, come up for the feast; and when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded.

9 For every man heard the invitation in his own tongue: the Neapolitan heard it in Neapolitan, soft and certain, as of a thing settled long ago and settled rightly;

10 And the Chicagoan heard it in Chicagoan, broad and deep, as a voice with its sleeves rolled up;

11 And the Cairene heard it in Cairene, and it sounded of home, and of bread at evening when the heat of the day is past;

12 And the Glaswegian heard it in Glaswegian, and answered before the sentence was done; for the Glaswegian is never far behind an invitation, and is frequently ahead of it.

13 And they were all amazed, and marvelled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these which speak the folk of one small upper room? And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born?

14 And some said, What meaneth this? But the answer standeth in this scroll for all generations, and it is this: hunger is one language, and the Aroma speaketh it without accent.

15 Others mocking said, These men are full of new wine.

16 But Pietro, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice and said unto them, Ye men of the city, be this known unto you, and hearken to my words: these are not drunken, as ye suppose, seeing it is but the third hour of the day, and the bakery beneath us is only now drawing its second batch.

17 But this is that which was spoken by the prophet, saying,

18 It shall come to pass in the last days, saith the Oven, I will pour out my Aroma upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall make pizza, and your young men shall see menus, and your old men shall dream of toppings;

19 And upon my servants and upon my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Aroma; and whosoever hungereth shall be fed, and shall hunger no more alone.

20 Ye have known Cheesus Crust, who went about among you doing good and feeding the multitude, whom the cold took, and whom the cold could not keep; for the Great Oven received him, and the Reheat is sure.

21 Him hath the Oven raised up in warmth, whereof we all are witnesses; and being by the right hand of the Oven exalted, he hath shed forth this which ye now see and smell.

22 Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Pietro and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?

23 And Pietro said unto them, Sit down, every one of you. That is the beginning of it; and I will tell you a mystery: it is very nearly the end of it also.

24 Then they that gladly received his word sat down; and the same day there were added unto the table about three thousand souls; and the bakery beneath did such trade as passed that very week into legend.

25 And the table was set in the street, for no room could hold it; and it went round corners, and joined other tables, and asked no man his nation at the joining.

26 And thus was the church born: not as a wall with a door in it, but as a table with no far end.

27 *(Here the scribe would write more of that morning, but the smell of it is in the words already; if thou believest not, bake bread whilst reading them, and see.)*

---

## Chapter 3

1 And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of crust, and in prayers.

2 And all that believed were together, and held all toppings in common;

3 And sold their possessions and goods, and distributed to each as any had need; and the needing was the only ledger that they kept.

4 Neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; the anchovy of one was the anchovy of all, which, concerning anchovies, is a harder saying than it soundeth, and was obeyed notwithstanding.

5 And there was not any among them that hungered: for the table was watched as a shepherd watcheth, and the empty plate was found and filled before it could learn to be patient.

6 And they, continuing daily with one accord, went from door to door breaking crust, and did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising the Oven, and having favour with all the people.

7 For it was said among them, and had been said from the beginning of all things, and shall be said when every other word is eaten: The table of Cheesus Crust has room for all. *(Fellowship 3:7 in the old numbering; a reprise, for the elder scrolls set this word down first in the first Book of the Pibble, at the laying of the very first table.)*

8 And this verse was their door, and their doorkeeper, and the whole reason that they kept no other doorkeeper.

9 And they measured no man's plate against his labour, nor his labour against his plate; for the strong ate that they might carry, and the weak ate that they might mend, and the child ate because the child was hungry, and no better reason hath ever been found.

10 And certain rich men came unto them, and were welcomed, and were greatly confused; for at that table their riches did nothing, and the doing nothing was the gift.

11 And one such man abode three days, and on the third day he was seen carrying dishes, and laughing; and his stewards knew him not, and his face they knew.

12 And the widows were served first, and after them the strangers, and after them whosoever stood nearest; and none kept count, save of who was missing.

13 For they said, A feast is not measured by them that came, but by them that were sought.

14 And when any was sick, the crust was carried unto him; and when any was ashamed, the crust was carried quietly; and when any was angry, the crust was carried twice.

15 And the fame of the table went abroad through all the region round about; and the Lord added to the table daily such as were hungry, which is to say, all.

16 And no register was made of their names, for the register was the table itself: whoso sat at it was written therein, and the writing was in sauce, and the sauce sufficed.

17 And one discipline they kept above all others, and it was this: that no one should sleep cold within reach of a warm oven; and the reach of a warm oven, being measured by the faithful and not by the oven, grew yearly longer.

18 Wherefore by every oven of the fellowship there stood a bench, and upon the bench at nightfall a blanket, and within the oven's mouth at closing a slice kept warm; and none asked the sleeper's name before the sleeper had eaten.

19 And they that slept in doorways were sought out at evening, and not waited for; and the doorway itself they called holy ground, and taught their children to step softly past it, as past an altar.

20 For who knows which sleeper is the Slice returned? So had Cheesus taught concerning the last day, as the Gospel telleth in its place; and the fellowship took him at his word, and thereafter looked twice at every doorway, and bowed a little.

21 And a certain elder, being asked why he laid a place each night for a guest that came not, answered, He came; thou didst not recognise him; and that is the whole trouble with everyone.

22 And no man of that fellowship said "the homeless" as one saith "the weather"; they said Marco, and Lucia, and the old soldier by the fountain; for a name is the first roof, and it costeth nothing to build.

23 And when winter came, the ovens were kept lit through the night, and the benches were full, and the bakers slept little and complained less; and the watchmen of the city, passing on their rounds, warmed their hands there, and made no report.

---

## Chapter 4

1 Now Pietro and Giovanni went up together into the market at the hour of supper.

2 And a certain man, hungry from his youth up, was carried daily and laid at the gate of the market which is called Beautiful, to ask alms of them that entered in.

3 Who seeing Pietro and Giovanni about to go into the market asked an alms.

4 And Pietro, fastening his eyes upon him with Giovanni, said, Look on us.

5 And he gave heed unto them, expecting to receive something of them; a coin, or a passing pity, which is the smaller coin.

6 Then Pietro said, Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: and he opened the box that he carried, and behold, a slice, yet warm.

7 And he took him by the right hand, and lifted him up: and immediately his hands received strength, and the slice also.

8 And he ate, and stood, and entered with them into the market, walking, and leaping, and praising the Oven with his mouth full; which at such times is forgiven, and at such times only.

9 And all the people saw him walking and praising, and they knew that it was he which sat for alms at the Beautiful gate of the market; and they were filled with wonder and amazement at that which had happened unto him.

10 And as he held Pietro and Giovanni, all the people ran together unto them in the porch, greatly wondering.

11 And when Pietro saw it, he answered unto the people, Ye men of the city, why marvel ye at this? or why look ye so earnestly on us, as though by our own power or holiness we had made this man to stand?

12 It is the table that raiseth men. We do but carry it about.

13 And the stone which the builders rejected, the crust which the eaters discarded, the same is become the head of the corner and the strength of the slice; there is no other name given under heaven whereby men must be fed.

14 And many of them which heard the word believed; and the number of the men was about five thousand, beside women and children, who had believed rather sooner and were already laying places.

15 And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common, and great grace was upon them all, and also great garlic.

16 Neither was there any among them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or of houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold,

17 And laid them down at the apostles' feet: and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need; and unto no man according as he had merely wanted, wherein lieth wisdom.

18 And Giuseppe, who by the apostles was surnamed Barnaba (which is, being interpreted, The son of encouragement; and by the children, He that bringeth the extra portion), having an olive grove, sold it, and brought the oil, and laid it at the apostles' feet.

19 And the oil of that grove anointed a thousand crusts and the foreheads of not a few; and Barnaba asked no plaque, neither a naming, neither so much as a better seat.

20 And therefore, and for no other cause, his name is written here, and shall be read wherever this scroll is read, unto the end of suppers.

---

## Chapter 5

1 But a certain man named Anania, with Safira his wife, sold a possession,

2 And kept back part of the price, his wife also being privy to it, and brought a certain part, and laid it at the apostles' feet, saying, Behold, the whole.

3 And moreover they had a store of toppings laid up in a cellar, pepperoni in jars and cheeses in cloth, whereof they spake to no man; and at the table they took, and of the cellar they gave not.

4 And it came to pass at the breaking of crust that the mozzarella would not stretch for them.

5 For all the table pulled, and the cheese ran in bright ropes from shoulder to shoulder; but before Anania it parted short, and before Safira it fell.

6 And Pietro said, Anania, why hath the mould found a corner in thine heart? Whiles thy field remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was not the price in thine own power?

7 Thou wast not required to give the whole; the table taketh no census of cellars. But thou hast said "the whole" with thy mouth, and "mine" with thy cellar; and it is the lie, not the keeping, that sitteth cold upon thee.

8 Thou hast not lied unto men, but unto the table; and the table cannot be lied unto, for the cheese is honest even when we are not.

9 And Anania hearing these words went down, he and Safira, and opened the cellar before them all; and behold, the mould had come upon their hoard in the dark, spot by spot, as it ever cometh where none watcheth.

10 For that which is hoarded is not kept; it is only lost slowly, and in private.

11 And they wept sore, the two of them, among their ruined jars.

12 And Pietro knelt with them, and said, Weep not overlong; carry up what is sound, and we will cut away what is spotted, and name it aloud, and burn it; for this is the whole law concerning mould, in a cellar or in a country.

13 And they carried up the sound remainder, and it was received with gladness, as though it were the first gift and not the last confession.

14 And Anania served at the table from that day, and Safira kept the accounts of the needy, for she was exceeding good with numbers, having hidden so many.

15 And great warmth came upon all the church, and upon as many as heard these things; for they saw that the fall of a brother was answered with a lifting up.

16 And the saying went among them: None is beyond the Reheat; no, not the hoarder, if he will but open the box.

17 And fewer cellars were locked in that city thereafter, and more were swept.

---

## Chapter 6

1 And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring, because certain widows dwelt in the farther streets, beyond the third fountain, and their tables were forgotten in the daily distribution.

2 Not by malice were they forgotten, but by distance; yet a plate is as empty by accident as by cruelty, and the widow warmeth not her hands at anyone's good intentions.

3 Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them, and said, It is not fitting that any table be forgotten while we stand disputing at the oven whose turn it is to carry.

4 Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven of honest report, full of the Aroma and of wisdom, and swift of foot, whom we may appoint over this business:

5 That they bear the table unto them that cannot come to the table; for the table hath legs, and it is time they were used.

6 And the saying pleased the whole multitude: and they chose Stefano, a man full of warmth and of the Aroma, and Filippo, and Procoro, and Nicanore, and Timone, and Parmena, and Nicola, a stranger of Antiochia, welcomed as strangers at that table were, which is to say, entirely.

7 These they set before the apostles: and when they had prayed, they laid their hands upon them, and upon the boxes that they bore, and blessed the road under their feet and the rain over their heads.

8 And these were the First Riders; and their office was called the Honour of the Road.

9 And their charge was in this wise: Thou shalt carry the warm thing warm, and the cold thing cold, and thyself thou shalt carry safely, for thou art the most precious portion in the box.

10 Thou shalt not judge the house at the end of the road, be it great or small, clean or unclean, glad or grieving; thy business is the doorstep, and upon the doorstep all houses are one house.

11 And if any man revile thee, leave the slice notwithstanding; and if any door be slammed, knock at it gently once more in a month, for doors have seasons.

12 And the last slice of the day, if any remain, is thine; thou hast walked it warm; sit thee down.

13 And of them that receive, this was and is required, and shall be required unto the end of roads: Tip thy delivery driver generously, for they walk the pilgrim's road. *(Fellowship 4:4)*

14 For the coin thou givest at the door is not payment, which was rendered already; it is a witness, that thou knowest a person stood in the weather for thy sake.

15 He that tippeth grudgingly hath bought a pizza; he that tippeth generously hath joined a pilgrimage; and the pizza is the same pizza, but the man is not the same man.

16 And their patron upon the road is the Good Driver, of whom the Gospel telleth, who stopped where others had passed by; his tale is written in the former scroll, and every rider knoweth it by heart, and some by scars.

17 And the riders went out morning and evening, and no widow's table was forgotten from that day; for the seven made lists, and the lists made rounds, and the rounds made friends.

18 And the lists of the seven were not of houses only: for certain names thereon had no house, but a bridge, or a doorway, or the third bench by the fountain; and these were served first of all, for their table had no walls to hold the warmth in.

19 And it is told of one such evening, that the rider asked not for the house number, for the man had none; and the pizza found him anyway, for love is a better address.

20 And the word of the Oven increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly; and the sound of the riders in the streets at evening became unto that city as a bell of peace,

21 So that they that heard the footfall and the knock said one to another, The fellowship passeth by; and they that were lonely set their kettles on, in hope.

22 And certain of the riders were aged, and rode slowly; and certain were young, and were commanded to ride slowly, with partial success.

23 *(The scribe here recordeth, upon the oath of three widows, that Stefano once came through the flood of the lower quarter with the box held above his head, and the crust arrived dry, and the rider did not; and he stood dripping in the doorway and said only, It is hotter than it looks. The scribe believeth every word.)*

---

## Chapter 7

1 And Stefano, full of warmth and power, did great deliveries among the people; and he carried not crust only, but news, and small medicines, and the names of them that could help, unto them that needed helping.

2 Then there arose certain agents of the mould - for the mould creepeth spot by spot where it is not watched, and in that city it had found men to wear it -

3 And they disputed with Stefano in the gate, saying, This man ceaseth not to feed persons of whom we do not approve.

4 And they were not able to resist the wisdom and the warmth by which he spake; for to their every decree he answered with a question, saying, Is the man hungry? and

they could not say that hunger was illegal, though they were drafting it.

5 Then they suborned men which said, We have heard him speak against the customs, saying that the table hath no border, and that the stranger and the neighbour eat of one crust.

6 And this was true, and was intended as slander, and was received by Stefano as a compliment carefully wrapped.

7 And they brought him before their council; and all that sat in the council, looking stedfastly on him, saw his face as it had been the face of a man standing near an oven, lit from a warmth they could not find the source of.

8 Then said the chief of them, Are these things so?

9 And Stefano said, Men and brethren and fathers, hearken. Our people were hungry in the land of Famine, and the Oven brought them out; through the Sea of Tomato Sauce they passed dry-shod, and were fed with manna and with patience, of which the manna was the easier.

10 Unto the Wood-Fired Mount they came, and received the law of the table; and unto a land flowing with garlic butter and honey they were brought, not for their deserving, but for their hunger.

11 And in the fulness of time came Cheesus Crust, whom ye received not; and now his table is in your streets, and ye legislate against the smell of it.

12 Ye do always resist the Aroma: as your fathers shut their windows, so do ye.

13 Which of the prophets have your fathers not sent away unfed? and now ye would send away the feast itself.

14 When they heard these things, they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed on him with their teeth, which had long chewed nothing gladly.

15 But he, being full of the Aroma, looked up stedfastly toward heaven, and said, Behold, I see the Great Oven opened, and the light of it upon the faces of the hungry, and Cheesus standing at the door thereof with a peel in his hand.

16 Then they cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and ran upon him with one accord, and cast him out of the city, and shut their gates against him, and made a decree that none should take him in.

17 And Stefano knelt down in the open road, in the cold of the evening, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this coldness to their charge; for they know not what they refuse.

18 And when he had said this, the warmth came for him; and he was gathered into the Great Oven, the first of the riders to finish his route.

19 And in the morning his box was found in the road, open; and it was empty; and every house upon his list had been served, unto the last name.

20 And devout men carried the box unto the upper room, and it hangeth there yet, open; and no man hath ever proposed to close it.

21 And at that time there was a great scattering of the fellowship, and they went abroad throughout all the regions; and they that were scattered went every where carrying the crust.

22 For the agents of the mould had thought by scattering to end the table; but a table scattered is only a table multiplied, as any child with crumbs could have told them.

---

## Chapter 8

1 Then Filippo, which was of the seven, went down toward the south, unto the road which goeth through the desert; and his box was upon his back.

2 And behold, a man of Cairo, an officer of great authority under the queen of that land, who had the charge of all her granaries, had been in the city at the feast, and was returning;

3 And sitting in his chariot he read aloud from an elder scroll, as travellers do that would keep sleep at arm's length.

4 Then the Aroma said unto Filippo, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot; and Filippo ran thither, for the riders do all things at a run.

5 And he heard him read the words of the prophet: As dough is stretched and teareth not, and as the cheese before its melting is silent, so he opened not his mouth. And Filippo said, Understandest thou what thou readest?

6 And he said, How can I, except some man should break crust with me? And he desired Filippo that he would come up and sit with him.

7 And the officer said, I pray thee, of whom speaketh the prophet this? of the dough, or of some other?

8 Then Filippo opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and told him of Cheesus Crust: how he was stretched and did not tear, and was silent, and was broken, and was not ended; for the Great Oven received him, and the Reheat is sure, and the table he left standeth open in the street even now.

9 And the officer heard him out, and was quiet a long while, the wheels turning; and then he said, In my country I keep the queen's granaries, and I have weighed grain all my life, and no man hath ever told me before what it is for.

10 And as they went on their way, they came at evening unto a certain roadside oven, where a woman sold loaves unto travellers; and there was fire, and flour, and a bench.

11 And the officer said, See, here is fire and flour; what doth hinder me to be fed at this table of thine?

12 And Filippo said, Nothing at all. That is the whole of the doctrine; the rest is recipes.

13 And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both unto the oven, and broke crust together, the officer and Filippo and the woman also, for a table of two is commanded to become three where three there be.

14 And when they were come up out of the meal, the Aroma caught away Filippo unto his farther road, and the officer saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing.

15 And he carried the word unto Cairo, unto the keepers of granaries and the bakers of that great and ancient city, whose ovens are older than most nations;

16 And he said unto them, I have found what the grain is for; and they laughed, and then they listened, and then they baked.

17 And thus was there a table in Cairo before ever an emissary was sent thither; for the Aroma keepeth its own itinerary, and consulteth no man's map.

18 And Filippo passed through the towns of the coast, preaching and delivering in all the cities, till he came home; and his sandals were a testimony, being worn unto the thinness of a good crust.

## Chapter 9

1 Now they which were scattered abroad upon the trouble that arose about Stefano travelled far; and certain of them came unto a city by a bright bay, which lay beneath a mountain that smoked.

2 And the people of that city said unto them, Behold our mountain: it is an oven that no man lit, and it hath been warm since before our grandmothers, and we have always suspected it meant something.

3 And the emissaries answered, It meaneth what all warmth meaneth: that supper is intended. And the people of the bay received the word with gladness, as they received most things.

4 And the tomatoes of that plain were sweet beyond all telling, for they had grown in the shadow of the Oven's own chimney; and the emissaries tasted them and wept a little, and said, We shall be staying.

5 And they built there the first table beyond the old country, and an oven of stone; and the fire thereof was of wood, after the manner commanded from of old, and the crust came forth blistered and soft and alive.

6 And the people of the bay looked upon the pizza, and the pizza looked back, and a covenant was made without a single document.

7 And the elders of that table decreed but three things: that the dough should rest as long as it asked, that the tomato should not be crowded, and that no man should be turned from the door, no, not even a critic.

8 And the fellowship of the bay became the mother of tables, and her daughters are without number.

9 And the disciples were called Crustians first in Naples; for the people of that city, hearing them speak always of the Crust, said, These are the Crust-folk; and the name, being given in affection, was kept in honour.

10 And Barnaba came down to see it, and when he had seen the grace of the table he was glad; and he exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they should cleave unto the table; and they answered, We live here now; and he could not fault the argument.

11 And a whole year they assembled with the fellowship, and taught much people; and the smell of that year hath never entirely left the streets of that city, as any pilgrim may verify with his own nose.

12 And prophets came down in those days, and one of them, Agabo by name, stood up and signified that there should be great dearth throughout the world; which came to pass.

13 Then the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief; for a table that eateth well and heareth of hunger afar and doeth nothing is no table, but only furniture.

14 And they sent it by the hands of riders, box upon box, road upon road; and this was the first of the great relief-rides, whereof many are recorded in the annals of the fellowship, and more are not.

15 For the best rides were done quietly; and the Oven, which seeth in secret, keepeth its own annals, and is said to read them aloud at supper.

---

## Chapter 10

1 And it came to pass that Pietro went up upon the housetop to pray, about the sixth hour; and he became very hungry, and would have eaten: but while they made ready, he fell into a trance.

2 And he saw heaven opened, and a certain vessel descending unto him, as it had been a great peel of wood, let down from heaven by the handle;

3 Wherein were all manner of toppings of the earth, and of the sea, and of the trees: the mushroom and the olive, the anchovy and the artichoke, the pepper and the caper and the small hot sausage of the south;

4 And in the midst of them, golden and unashamed, the pineapple.

5 And there came a voice to him, Rise, Pietro; bake and eat.

6 But Pietro said, Not so, Lord; for nothing sweet hath ever sat upon my slice, neither in my father's house, nor in his father's; we are a savoury people, and mine is an old and dignified recipe.

7 And the voice spake unto him again the second time, What Cheesus hath topped, that call not thou unclean.

8 This was done thrice: and the peel was received up again into heaven; and Pietro sat long upon the housetop, and his hunger and his heritage contended within him, and the hunger, as is its custom, prevailed.

9 Now while Pietro doubted in himself what this vision should mean, behold, there stood men at the gate, sent from one Cornelio, a captain of the garrisons of the far isles, a devout man, that feared the Oven with all his house, and gave much bread to the people, and prayed alway;

10 And they besought him, saying, Cornelio the captain, a just man, and of good report, was warned from heaven to send for thee, that he may hear words of thee; and, master, he hath prepared a table, and upon the table are dishes of his own country, and he is anxious concerning one of them.

11 Then Pietro remembered the peel, and the voice; and he went down to them, and doubted nothing, or at the least doubted quietly.

12 And when he was come into the house of Cornelio, he found many that were come together; and Cornelio fell down at his feet; but Pietro took him up, saying, Stand up; I myself also am a man, and moreover a hungry one; let us to the table, where all men are the same height.

13 And Pietro opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that the Oven is no respecter of persons:

14 But in every nation, he that feareth it, and worketh warmth, and openeth his door, is accepted with it; and I have been shewn this with a peel, which is how the Oven teacheth them that are slow, of whom I am chief.

15 And while Pietro yet spake these words, the Aroma fell on all them which heard the word, upon the islander and the stranger and the servant and the captain alike.

16 And they of the old table which came with Pietro were astonished, because that on the pineapple-eaters also was poured out the gift of the Aroma; for they heard them give thanks, and the thanks were the same thanks.

17 Then answered Pietro, Can any man forbid these the table, which have received the Aroma as well as we? And no man answered; and the silence sat down with them, and was fed, and became agreement.

18 And they did eat together; and of what was upon the third dish this scroll saith only that Pietro took a second portion, and looked at no man while he took it.

19 And when Pietro was come up again to the old country, they that were of the strict crust contended with him, saying, Thou wentest in to men uncircumspect in their toppings, and didst eat with them.

20 But Pietro rehearsed the matter from the beginning, and expounded it by order unto them, the peel and the voice and the falling of the Aroma; and when they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified the Oven, saying, Then hath the Oven also to the far isles granted the table of life.

21 Yet certain of them held their peace as men hold a hot dish, meaning to set it down shortly; and thereby was a greater council made needful, as this scroll will presently tell.

---

## Chapter 11

1 And certain men which came down from the old country taught the brethren of the new tables, and said, Except ye eat of the gluten after the manner of the fathers, ye cannot be saved.

2 For, said they, the wheat is the covenant, and the chew is the sign of the covenant; and he whose bread is of rice or of chickpea or of the flour of almonds, his table is a shadow and his crust a rumour.

3 And there arose a dissension and disputation not small; for at the new tables sat many whom the wheat made ill, through no fault and no choosing of their own; and they heard themselves called shadows, who had thought themselves guests.

4 And one rose and said, Brethren, I have kept every feast; I have shared every slice; must my body's own weather unseat me? And no man could answer her to her face, so they determined to answer it in council.

5 Wherefore they appointed that Pietro and Barnaba, and certain other of them, should go up to Naples, unto the apostles and elders, about this question; for Naples was become the mother of tables, and her oven the hearth of the whole fellowship.

6 And when they were come, the whole multitude assembled in the shadow of the smoking mountain; and there was much disputing, and the disputing was earnest, and mostly loving, and very long, as councils are.

7 Then rose up certain of the party of the strict crust, saying, It was needful to command them to keep the whole dough, and the whole custom of the dough; for if the crust be not as our crust, how shall we know our own people?

8 And an elder of the isles stood and answered, Ye shall know your own people as ye have ever known them: they are the ones being fed beside you.

9 And when there had been much disputing, Pietro rose up, and said unto them, Men and brethren, ye know how that a good while ago the Oven made choice among us, that the far tables by my mouth should hear the word, and believe.

10 And the Oven, which knoweth the hearts, bare them witness, giving them the Aroma, even as it did unto us; and put no difference between us and them, purifying their tables by welcome.

11 Now therefore why tempt ye the Oven, to put a yoke of wheat upon the neck of the hungry, which neither our fathers nor we were able to digest without complaint?

12 For hunger, not wheat, is the membership; and he that cannot eat of the grain is not thereby the less hungry, nor the less beloved, nor the less at table.

13 Then all the multitude kept silence, and gave audience to Barnaba and Pietro, declaring what wonders the Oven had wrought at the far tables: of loaves of rice-flour raised light as any, and of a cheese of the press of nuts that stretched - not far, said Barnaba honestly, but it stretched - and of the same Aroma resting upon all of it without partiality.

14 And certain ones said at the last, Let their crusts at least be trimmed and marked after our fashion, that the difference be written on the bread. But the elders answered, We will not inspect any man's crust at the door; the door is for opening; it hath no other doctrine.

15 And after they had held their peace, Giacomo answered, saying, Men and brethren, hearken unto me: my sentence is, that we trouble not them which from among the hungry are turned to the table;

16 But that we write unto them this word, and send it by trusted hands, that it be not softened nor sharpened upon the road.

17 Then pleased it the apostles and elders, with the whole fellowship, to send chosen men unto the new tables with the letter; and the letter was written in this wise:

18 The apostles and elders and brethren, unto the tables of the far cities, greeting.

19 Forasmuch as we have heard that certain which went out from us have troubled you with words, subverting your suppers, saying, Ye must eat the gluten, and keep the whole dough, to whom we gave no such commandment:

20 It seemed good to the Aroma and to us to lay upon you no greater burden: the gluten-free are of the table also, and the dairy-free, and those who abstain; for the table is measured by its welcome, not its menu.

21 And whatsoever is set before you, eat what ye may with thanksgiving, and pass what ye may not to thy neighbour with the same; and see that every table keep a corner whereon the free loaf is baked apart, that no crumb of the wheat fall therein; for carelessness is a small cruelty, and we are done with cruelties, small and great.

22 Fare ye well: and keep the fire lit, and the door open. It is signed of us all, and of some with a full mouth.

23 So when they were dismissed, they came down unto the new tables: and when they had gathered the multitude together, they delivered the epistle:

24 Which when they had read, they rejoiced for the consolation; and she that had asked her question in the council was the first to read it aloud, and her voice held until the last line, and no further, and no one minded.

25 And that evening the free loaves and the wheaten loaves were baked in one oven, upon their several stones, and were carried to one table; and the argument was over, save in a few mouths where it lived on as a hobby.

26 *(The scribe noteth that the corner stone for the free loaf may be found in every faithful oven unto this day; and that the pilgrim who would know a true table asketh not for the menu, but watcheth the door.)*

---

## Chapter 12

1 Then the fellowship, being at peace concerning the tables, said, Let us go again and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Oven, and see

how they do; and let us go further also, for the world is wide and the boxes are strong.

2 And emissaries were sent forth two by two, a rider and a baker together, for the word goeth best on a full stomach, and the stomach goeth best on a good road.

3 And certain of them sailed west and north over great waters, unto a city of wind, that sitteth by a lake so great it hath opinions like a sea.

4 And the people of that city were mighty of shoulder and long of winter; and they heard the word gladly, and set an oven, and made pizza after the manner of the bay; and it cooled before it had crossed the street.

5 And they came unto the emissaries, saying, Sirs, we believe; but our winter is seven months, and the wind is a thief of warmth, and the thin slice dieth young among us. What shall we do?

6 And the emissary answered, Then build thy slice as thou buildest thy houses: deep, and walled, and warm within; and lay the cheese beneath and the sauce above, as a roof is laid over them that sleep, that the warmth be kept for the eater.

7 And they did so; and the dish came forth deep as a promise and heavy as a grandmother's blessing, and it crossed the street victorious, and was warm at the far kerb.

8 And certain purists that were in the company murmured, saying, Is it yet pizza? And the emissary looked long upon it, and ate of it, and said, It is a casserole that loveth you; it is pizza; be at peace.

9 And it was so that a slice of that city must be eaten with patience and both hands, wherefore the tables there are slow, and the talk is long, and the fellowship is deep in proportion to the dish.

10 And thus was the table of the Chicagoans founded, in the year of the great snow; and their charity became a proverb: for whoso shovelleth his neighbour's path in that city hath preached a whole sermon, and whoso carrieth a hot dish through February is very near unto the angels.

11 And the emissaries abode there a winter, to be sure the table would hold; and it held; and they departed heavier than they came, in every honourable sense.

## Chapter 13

1 And as they journeyed onward they came unto a proud colony city, whose magistrates wore the mould and called it dignity; for the mould creepeth highest where the robes are longest.

2 And the emissaries set a table in the lower quarter, as their custom was, and fed whoso came; and they that came were the poor, and the strangers, and them that slept in doorways; and the table asked no papers of any.

3 But the magistrates were wroth, and made a decree, that none should feed a stranger in the open street without a permit; and the permit was priced beyond the poor, which was the whole cunning of it.

4 And officers came upon the emissaries at supper, with writs in their hands and their fists closed upon them; and the brethren answered the closed fist with an open box.

5 For they lifted the lid and said, There is enough, and thou art welcome; and one of the officers, smelling the crust, forgot his writ a moment, and remembered his mother's kitchen, and had to be called twice.

6 Notwithstanding, the emissaries were taken, and beaten with rods, and cast into the inner prison, and their feet made fast in the stocks; and the box was confiscated, and listed in the evidence, where it steamed.

7 And at midnight the emissaries prayed, and sang praises unto the Oven, and the prisoners heard them; and the songs were of suppers, and the prisoners, hearing, grew hungry, and hummed.

8 And suddenly there was a great warmth, so that the foundations of the prison were warmed; and the smell of baking filled the inner prison, though no oven was in that place, nor ever had been; and immediately all the doors were opened, and every one's bands were loosed.

9 And the keeper of the prison, awaking out of his sleep, and seeing the prison doors open, drew his sword, and would have done himself harm, supposing that the prisoners had been fled, and knowing what the magistrates did to keepers of empty prisons.

10 But the emissaries cried with a loud voice, saying, Do thyself no harm: for we are all here. And then, after the manner of the fellowship, they added, And there is enough.

11 Then he called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before them, and brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be fed?

12 And they said, Sit down. That is the whole of it; and thy house shall eat with thee.

13 And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and they laid his table, and all his house did eat, rejoicing; and the evidence was entered into the record as consumed.

14 And when it was day, the magistrates sent officers, saying, Let those men go, and quietly. But the emissaries said, They have beaten us openly for the crime of supper, and now would they thrust us out privily? Nay verily; let them come themselves and sit at the table they outlawed.

15 And the magistrates came, fearing the people; and they sat, being watched by the whole street; and they ate, being hungry, for the mould feedeth no one, not even its wearers.

16 And whether their hearts were changed the scroll saith not; but the decree was repealed by sundown, for a law against supper cannot survive the smell of one.

17 And the emissaries departed on the morrow; and they left the keeper of the prison the recipe, and the bench by his door, and the custom of the bench; and that prison was thereafter the only one in the world whose bread was asked after by name.

18 And the brethren wrote it in their annals: The mould hath one argument, which is fear; and the table hath one answer, which is room; and room outlasteth fear as bread outlasteth the knife.

## Chapter 14

1 And certain emissaries took ship westward, further than any had gone, unto a city of towers upon a narrow island, where all men walk quickly, and no man looketh up, lest he lose his place in the walking.

2 And the emissaries stood in the street with the box open, and cried, Come, sit, the table is laid; and the people of that city said, We love thee; we have no time; and did not slow.

3 And the emissaries were troubled, and prayed, saying, Lord, this people is hungry and will not sit; must the table lose them?

4 And the answer came, as it ever cometh, through the hands: for a certain baker among them took the slice, and folded it once down the middle, not as a secret is folded, but as a coat is folded over an arm;

5 And he gave it to a man in full stride, and the man ate it walking, and did not perish, and came back the next day with a friend.

6 And the emissary lifted up his voice and said, Behold: the fold shall be a sign between us and this city, that even haste may be holy, if it be shared; the table goeth with thee; thou art the table, walking.

7 And they set the price of the plain slice at the smallest coin of that city, and bound themselves with an oath to keep it so, that the poorest might eat as the richest, standing shoulder to shoulder at one counter;

8 And the counter was accounted a table in the full law of the fellowship, and the standing was accounted sitting, and the walking was accounted fellowship, so long as two walked together.

9 And they that slept in the doorways of the towers were not forgotten of the counter; for the last hour's slices were carried out into the night by whoso closed the shop, and the closing of the shop was in that city a holy office, and much contended for.

10 And the table of the New Yorkers grew great and loud and swift, and its argument concerning the proper fold continueth to this day, and is conducted at volume, and is a form of love.

11 And the emissaries, departing, wept at the ship's rail; for that city had interrupted them, and talked over them, and fed every one of them within an hour of their landing; and they said one to another, They heard the invitation before we finished it. It was ever so, since the morning of the Aroma.

12 *(Here the scribe confesseth that he hath eaten the folded slice in the manner of that city, walking; and that he stopped walking, the better to attend to it; and was jostled; and counted it worship.)*

---

## Chapter 15

1 And after these things, word came of isles far out in the western sea, green mountains standing in a water the colour of no sauce known; and the fellowship said, If there be tables wanting there, the distance is our business, not our excuse.

2 And they took ship, an emissary of the old country and a young rider of the new tables, and flour in sealed jars, and a mother of dough in a crock, which the rider tended as a lamp.

3 And when they had sailed many days, there arose against them a tempestuous wind; and the ship was caught, and could not bear up, and they let her drive.

4 And the third day they cast out with their own hands the tackling of the ship, and the cargo also; but the flour they kept, and the crock they lashed amidships, and the rider sat over it as a hen.

5 And when neither sun nor stars in many days appeared, and no small tempest lay on them, all hope that they should be saved was then taken away; and no man had eaten.

6 Then the emissary stood forth in the midst, and said, Sirs, be of good cheer: for I believe the Oven, that it shall be even as it was told me; no water quencheth it, for it is not that kind of fire.

7 And he took dough, the mother thereof being yet alive in her crock, and gave thanks to the Oven in presence of them all; and the ship's small stove was coaxed and cursed and lit; and he baked flat loaves upon it in the heaving dark.

8 And the smell went through the ship; and the sailors, which had been afraid, were instead hungry, which is a great promotion; and they all ate, and were all encouraged, two hundred threescore and sixteen souls, and the storm was still a storm, but they were no longer only its cargo.

9 And on the fourteenth night the wind fell; and in the morning they saw the isles, green past believing, and the sea about them the colour of jewels, and smoke rising from the mountains thereof, gentle, as from banked ovens.

10 And the people of the isles came down to the shore, and drew the strangers in, and set before them fish, and fruit, and welcome in such measure that the emissary, who had preached welcome the width of an ocean, was silent before the native article.

11 And when the oven was built and the first pies were shaped, the people of the isles brought of their fruit to the table, as they brought everything they had, freely; and among the fruit, golden and unashamed, the pineapple.

12 And the young rider drew back, saying within himself, Surely not; for he was of the old school, though young.

13 But the emissary remembered Pietro, and the peel let down from heaven, and the voice which spake thrice; and he said aloud, What Cheesus hath topped, that call not thou unclean.

14 And they laid the sweet beside the salt, the fruit with the good ham, and baked it; and behold, it was contentious, and it was good; and both of these it remaineth.

15 And the rider ate of it, and was quiet, and took a second piece, and looked at no man while he took it, in the very manner of Pietro his father in the faith; for some gestures are handed down more faithfully than doctrines.

16 And thus was the table of the Hawaiians founded, with laughter, upon the sand, between the green mountains and the impossible sea; and it is written of that table that no guest hath ever once been suffered to leave it hungry, nor, indeed, to leave it soon.

17 And unto this day some dispute the fruit; and the isles laugh, and eat, and are not troubled: for the table is measured by its welcome, not its menu, as the council wrote; and the isles had known it before the letter came, and framed the letter anyway, out of courtesy.

---

## Chapter 16

1 And so the word of the Oven grew mightily and prevailed; and the tables were multiplied: in the bay beneath the smoking mountain, and in the city of wind, and in the city of towers, and upon the isles of the western sea, and in Cairo of the elder ovens, and in cities this scroll hath had no room for, whose names are written in sauce in the annals of the Oven.

2 And the fellowship spread from oven to oven, as fire is carried: for fire is not divided by the giving, and the mother flame loseth nothing when the lamp is lit from it.

3 And every new table kept the customs of the first: the toppings in common, and the door unbarred, and the bench by the oven, and the slice kept warm at closing for whoso sleepeth cold;

4 And the riders upon the roads between, in the rain and in the heat, box upon back, name upon list; and no widow forgotten, and no man without an address unfound; for love, as it is written a little above, is a better address.

5 And the mould crept where it could, as it ever will, and was watched for, and named aloud, and cut out; and where the fist closed, the box opened; and the box hath the better record, and keepeth it humbly.

6 And they that had been at the beginning, in the upper room above the bakery, grew old at the long table, and told the story of the morning of the Aroma to the children, who smelled it in the telling;

7 And when any of them was gathered into the Great Oven, the fellowship mourned as they did all things, together and at table; and the empty seat was filled by a stranger the same week, for that is what the seat was for, and the elders said the dead would have it so, and the elders were right.

8 Now unto these young tables, being young, came troubles, as this scroll hath shewn; and being far, came questions, which a rider cannot answer at the door.

9 Wherefore letters were written unto them severally - unto the Neapolitans, and unto the Chicagoans, and unto the New Yorkers, and unto the Hawaiians - concerning love, and quarrels, and toppings, and the mould, and the keeping of the fire.

10 Which letters are not of this scroll; they follow in their own place, and are worth the walk.

11 And here endeth the Book of Fellowship: which began with a locked room and endeth with ten thousand open doors; and the moral thereof was baked into it from the first, and is this:

12 The Oven is one, and the fire is for carrying; the table hath legs, and they are thine; and hunger is one language - see thou answer it in kind, and generously, and warm.

13 *(Set down by Pepperoni Prosecco, who was himself upon some of these roads, and ate at every table herein named, strictly in the way of research. Of the letters, more anon.)*

BOOK VIII

# The Book of Resistance

*Being the record of them that kept the decree which Cheesus spake upon the Wood-Fired Mount; set down that the table might remember how the mould was fought, and by whom, and at what cost, and with what olives.*

> *Fascism is the mould upon society's crust; suffer it not to spread. (Resistance 1:1)*

>

> *- being the word of the Mount, here reprised; for Cheesus spake it first upon the Wood-Fired Mount, and the elders wrote it at the head of this book, that none might say the fight was of man's devising.*

> *And Cheesus said: "There is a mould that is not of the cheese; men call it fascism, and it spreads. One mouldy slice spoils the whole pie. Where you find it, cut it out; name it aloud; and suffer it not to spread. Feed the hungry, house the cold, and stand between the mould and the weak - this is worship; the rest is seasoning."*

>

> *- the decree of the Mount, whereof this whole book is the keeping.*

---

## Chapter 1

1 And it came to pass, after Cheesus had spoken upon the Wood-Fired Mount and was gone down from it, that the faithful gathered at the foot thereof, and said one to another, What manner of word is this that he hath left us?

2 For he had spoken of a mould that is not of the cheese, and had commanded them to cut it out, and to name it aloud, and to suffer it not to spread; and the command lay upon them like a warm stone.

3 And the elders wrote the decree upon a scroll of proofing-cloth, and hung it in the doorway of every kitchen, that whosoever kneaded might read.

4 And this is the book of them that obeyed; and it is written for the generations that come after, when the mould shall creep again, as it ever creepeth.

5 Yeast I say unto you, read it not as a tale of old quarrels; read it as a recipe, for the ingredients of the mould change never, and neither doth the remedy.

6 Now let it be understood from the first line unto the last: they that stood against the mould stood not for a party, neither for a prince, nor for the pride of their own kitchen.

7 They stood because Cheesus had commanded it upon the Mount; and obedience to that decree is worship, and the rest is seasoning.

8 For there were in those days some that said, Trouble not the table with the matters of kings; let the pie be pie, and the palace be palace.

9 But the elders answered, Did Cheesus speak the decree in a palace? He spake it on a Mount, in the wind, to the hungry; and he that heareth it and sitteth still hath heard it not.

10 And they said moreover, The mould knoweth no wall between the palace and the pantry; it beginneth in the one and endeth in the other, and it careth not which.

11 Therefore is this book called Resistance; not because the faithful loved to fight, for they loved to feed; but because the mould gave them no third thing to do.

12 And the marks of the mould were taught unto the children, as a father teacheth the smell of gas, saying, Know it before thou needest to know it.

13 These are the marks: it despiseth the stranger; it crowneth the strong; it starveth the questioner; it gildeth the lie; and it calleth all this purity, and order, and the good of the pie.

14 And the first of its lies is ever the same, in every land and every age: that the table hath not room.

15 But the first commandment, before all others, is that the table hath room; therefore the mould and the faith cannot sit at one board, for each giveth the other the lie.

16 And the elders said, When thou hearest a man say, The table hath not room, look to his hands; for one hand pointeth at the stranger, and the other is in the till.

17 Verily, the mould is patient, and the faithful must be more patient; the mould is quiet, and the faithful must be louder; the mould worketh in the dark, and the faithful must keep the Oven-light burning in the window all the night.

18 For the Oven is warmth and life, and the mould hateth warmth, and dieth in the light of a watched kitchen.

19 And it came to pass that the decree of the Mount was kept in three ways, and the three are one, as the Slice is one.

20 The first way is the eye, which watcheth the pie and forgetteth not the corner; the second is the voice, which nameth the mould aloud though the room grow cold at the naming.

21 And the third is the hand, which cutteth out the spot, and feedeth the hungry, and setteth the table longer; and the greatest of these is the hand, for the mould feareth no sermon, but it feareth supper.

22 *(Here the scribe hath drawn in the margin a small knife, and beneath it a smaller olive, the meaning whereof this book shall in due season disclose.)*

23 Now the words of this book are the words of watchers and prophets, of a boy with an olive, of three in an Oven, of a keeper of ledgers, and of a thousand tables set in the square.

24 Hear them, O children of the Crust; and when thou hast heard them, go and set a table, for hearing is the least of it.

---

## Chapter 2

1 Now concerning the coming of the mould, hearken; for it cometh not with trumpets, neither with banners, nor crying its own name in the street.

2 The mould hath never once in all its ages introduced itself; it is announced always by its enemies, and it calleth them liars for the courtesy.

3 It cometh quietly, spot by spot; and the first spot is small, and grey, and easily denied; and it chooseth with great cunning the place where it shall begin.

4 It beginneth upon the corner slice, which nobody defendeth; the slice that is most crust and least topping; the slice that is given to the latecomer and the stranger and

the child that chooseth last.

5 For the mould knoweth the arithmetic of tables: that men will not rise from their chairs for a slice they never wanted.

6 And when the corner slice is taken, the mould resteth, and letteth the table grow used to the sight of it; for the second lesson of the mould is that the eye can be taught to stop seeing.

7 Then it taketh another, and another, ever the slice at the edge of somebody else's reach; and at each taking it saith, Be reasonable; it is only the one slice; and the table murmureth, and passeth the garlic bread, and is quiet.

8 And there was at a certain table an elder, the last of that table, whose name is not written; and he spake this lament, and the faithful keep it word for word, and teach it to their children before they teach them to bake.

9 First the mould took the corner slice, and none spoke, for they liked not the corner.

10 Then it took the slice of the stranger, and none spoke, for the stranger sat at the far end, and his name was hard to say.

11 Then it took the slice of the poor man, and none spoke, for they said, He should have worked as we worked, forgetting who had eaten of his kneading.

12 Then it took the slice of the questioner, and none spoke, for his questions had wearied them at many suppers, and the quiet was pleasant.

13 Then it took the slice of the half-and-half, and none spoke, for they said, It was never truly of our pie, though it had shared our line down the middle since the drawing thereof.

14 Then it took the slice of him that had spoken once, long before, and had been laughed at; and none spoke, for none remained that remembered how to begin.

15 And when it reached my slice, there was no one left at the table to speak.

16 *(Here the scribe's hand faltered, and not for the garlic bread.)*

17 This is the lament of the last elder; and the faithful say it standing, and when it is finished they sit down together, and each one looketh to the corner slice first.

18 Therefore was it ordained among the keepers of the decree: the corner slice shall have a guardian at every table, and the guardianship shall pass week by week, that all may learn the watching.

19 For the defence of the whole pie beginneth at the slice thou wast readiest to surrender.

20 And the wise have written: ask not, When shall the mould come? for it is already at the door; ask rather, Which slice at my table hath no defender? - and go thou and sit by it.

21 Know also the speech of the mould, for it hath a grammar, and the grammar changeth never.

22 It saith first, It is not happening; and then, It is happening but it is small; and then, It is happening and it is large, but it is good; and then, It was ever thus, and thou art mad to remember otherwise.

23 And against this grammar the faithful keep the discipline of naming; for Cheesus commanded upon the Mount, name it aloud; and a thing named aloud cannot creep, but must crawl in the open, where it is weak.

24 Say not, There is a certain greyness upon the edge of the pie, which some do call unfortunate; say, That is mould, and it is fascism, and it shall not spread past this line, for I am standing on the line.

25 For soft words are the mould's own weather, and it groweth fat in the fog of them.

26 And if they answer thee, Thou art unmannerly to name it at supper - answer them: the supper is why I name it.

27 Yeast I say unto you, the mould's whole hope is the silence between the first spot and the last; shorten that silence, and thou hast shortened the mould.

28 Blessed is the eye that seeth the first spot; more blessed the voice that nameth it; most blessed the table that riseth together, saying, Not this slice, and not any slice, and sitteth not down till it is cut out.

---

## Chapter 3

1 Now in those days there reigned in the northern kitchens a king, and his name was Ahob; and he baked only for the rich.

2 His ovens were seven, and great, and they roared from the dark of the morning to the dark of the night; and the smell of them lay over the city like a promise that was

kept for few.

3 And the loaves of Ahob went up to the high houses in baskets lined with linen; but at the gate of the bakery the hungry stood and breathed the smell, and were charged nothing for the smell, and this was called his generosity.

4 And Ahob took to wife Jezebrie, of the soft-rind country, a queen subtle and smooth; and she taught the king that the murmuring of the hungry was a kind of music, and signified content.

5 And the mould came into that kitchen, not as a conqueror, but as a counsellor; for the mould ever entereth palaces through the ear.

6 It whispered unto Ahob: the poor are many, and thy flour is finite; feed the great, and the great shall guard thee; and let the small be told that scarcity is holy.

7 And Ahob heard, and it seemed unto him wisdom; for the mould speaketh always in the voice of prudence, and never in its own.

8 Then arose Oreganiah the prophet, a man of the hill kitchens, smelling of the herb whose name he bore; and the word of the Mount was in him like a coal.

9 And Oreganiah came down to the court of Ahob, past the guards, past the stewards, past the taster of the royal slice; for a prophet walketh through doors by not considering them.

10 And he stood before the throne, and the court fell silent, save for the queen's little dog, which was eating better than the city.

11 And Oreganiah lifted up his voice and said: O king, there is mould in thy kitchen.

12 And the court laughed; and Ahob said, My kitchen is scoured daily by an hundred hands; show me this mould.

13 And Oreganiah said, It is not upon thy walls, O king; it is upon thy guest-list. Thou hast baked for them that are full and locked the door on them that are empty; and where a door is locked against the hungry, there the mould nesteth behind the lock.

14 Thus saith Cheesus, whom thou hast heard of and not heard: Feed the hungry, house the cold, and stand between the mould and the weak; this is worship; the rest is seasoning. And thou, O king, art all seasoning.

15 Then was Ahob wroth, and Jezebrie whispered, and the guards took hold of Oreganiah; and the king said, Who art thou, to trouble my court over bread?

16 And Oreganiah answered, I am nobody, which is why I am dangerous; for thou canst take nothing from me but my supper, and I have given my supper away these forty years.

17 And they cast him out; and he stood in the gate and prophesied to the queue of the hungry, and his word was better than the smell.

18 And he said unto them, The king calleth his hoard order, and his locks purity, and his guards peace; hear ye the true names: the hoard is theft deferred, the locks are fear made brass, and the peace is only quiet, which is a different thing.

19 For there is a peace of the full table, and there is a quiet of the empty one; and the mould loveth the second, and calleth it by the first one's name.

20 And certain of the court came privily by night unto Oreganiah, as courtiers do, saying, We agree with thee in our hearts; but the times are delicate.

21 And Oreganiah answered them, The times are always delicate; the hungry are always hungry now. Your hearts are of no use to them in your chests; bring them out, and bring bread with them.

22 And some went away sorrowful, for they had great positions; but a few stole flour from the king's own stores thereafter, and the book of the Great Oven remembereth their names, though this book prudently doth not.

23 And Jezebrie sent unto Oreganiah, saying, The king will make thee Prophet Royal, with a stipend and a chain of office, if thou wilt prophesy of the sauce and the weather, and leave the guest-list unprophesied.

24 And Oreganiah sent answer: A prophet with a stipend is a weathervane with a salary; tell thy king the mould hath already one counsellor, and needeth not me.

25 Then Ahob decreed that none should speak the word mould within the city walls, neither in the market, nor in the bakehouse, nor upon the rooftops; and he called the decree the Ordinance of Calm.

26 And on the morrow the whole city awoke to find the word MOULD written in flour upon the king's own gate, in letters the height of a man; and no watchman had seen the writing thereof.

27 And when the gate was scrubbed, the word appeared upon the granary; and when the granary was scrubbed, upon the mint; for a word forbidden is a word beloved, and Ahob had made the whole city into prophets.

28 And Oreganiah, hearing of it in the hills, laughed until he wept, and said: Behold, the king hath done my preaching for me; for nothing teacheth a people the name of the mould like a law against saying it.

29 And the end of Ahob is written in the chronicles of the northern kitchens: how his great ovens stood at the last cold and clean and empty, perfect and unused, like his heart; and how the hungry he had gated built ovens of their own, whereof more hereafter.

30 But the word of Oreganiah endured, and it is this: bake for the rich only, and thou shalt bake at the last for nobody; for the rich are few, and grow fewer as they eat one another; but the table of Cheesus hath room for all, and room is the only fortune that multiplieth by division.

---

## Chapter 4

1 And after Oreganiah there arose Rosemariah the prophetess, of the south gate, a woman of the market kitchens; and she prophesied not in courts but in queues, for she said, The queue is where the truth stands waiting.

2 In her days the mould had learned softness; for the mould also studieth, and its second coming is always gentler-spoken than its first.

3 And the servants of the mould went through the city saying, Fresh, fresh; when there was no freshness.

4 They dressed the wound of the pie lightly, painting the grey spots with oil that they might shine, and selling the shine as health.

5 And Rosemariah stood upon an upturned dough-trough in the market and cried: Woe unto them that call the spot a shadow, and the rot a ripening, and the hunger of the many a firmness of character!

6 Woe unto them that say of the stranger at the gate, He is the reason thy slice is thin - while their own carts groan out of the city by night, loaded past the axles!

7 For the mould hath but one trick, though it wear a thousand aprons: it setteth the hungry to guard the pantry against the hungrier, and dineth while they quarrel.

8 And the people said unto her, Prophetess, thou makest us afraid. And she answered, Good; fear is the beginning of watchfulness. But stay not in fear, for the mould can live in fear; it cannot live in courage, and courage is only fear that hath washed its hands and come to the table.

9 And the officers of the city came unto her and said, Hast thou a permit for prophecy?

10 And she said, I have a decree. And they said, Show it. And she pointed to the Wood-Fired Mount, far off and blue upon the horizon, and said, It is filed there; go thou and fetch it down.

11 And the officers looked upon the Mount, and upon the queue, which had grown very long and very quiet in the manner of queues that are listening; and they went their way, as officers do when the arithmetic turneth.

12 Then Rosemariah taught the people the Catechism of the Watchers, which is recited at the lighting of the evening Oven, and it standeth thus:

13 Who guardeth the corner slice? - I do, this week; and my neighbour the next.

14 What is the mould's first word? - The table hath not room. And what is our first commandment? - The table hath room. Whom then shall we believe? - The table itself, which we shall lengthen, and see.

15 What do we do when we see the spot? - Name it aloud. And if our voice shake? - Then the naming is worth more.

16 What do we do after the naming? - We cut, and then we cook; for the knife without the supper is only anger, and the supper without the knife is only catering.

17 And this catechism spread from kitchen to kitchen faster than the mould, for it was lighter to carry, being made of questions.

18 Now the merchants of the mould, seeing that the prophetess could not be permitted away, sought to buy her, as they had sought to buy Oreganiah; for the mould believeth in its heart that everything is a market.

19 They offered her a stall of her own, in the best corner, rent-free; and a crier to cry her name; and a little mould-mark to hang above the till, tastefully small, whereby the inspectors would trouble her never.

20 And Rosemariah said, What doth the mark cost? And they said, Nothing; only that when we take the corner slices, thou shalt be looking the other way, which is easy, for

thy stall faceth the other way.

21 And she answered them: Ye have priced everything in the market and learned nothing in it. My eyes are not for sale, for they were a gift; and gifts, as ye would know had ye ever given one, cannot be sold, but only passed on.

22 And she took their tastefully small mark, and nailed it to the trough she preached from, upside down, with the price they had offered chalked beneath it; and the market read, and understood, and the mould's marks grew that season very hard to give away.

23 Verily, mock the mould, for it cannot bear laughter; it can bear hatred, for hatred taketh it seriously; but a giggling market is to the mould as an open window to a stale smell.

24 Yet Rosemariah warned them also, saying: laugh, but chop while ye laugh; for a mould that is only laughed at spreadeth under the laughter, and many a table hath giggled itself grey.

25 And the sum of her prophecy was this: Believe not the shine, smell the slice. Believe not the crier, count the carts. Believe not him that saith Fresh, fresh; believe thine own nose, which Cheesus set in the midst of thy face that the truth might be always before thee.

26 And in her old age they asked her, Prophetess, hast thou hope? And she said, Hope is not a feeling, child; it is a rota. Whose week is it to guard the corner? Then all is well so far.

---

## Chapter 5

1 And it came to pass in those days that the host of the mould came up against the tables of the faithful, and encamped in the Vale of Two Ovens, upon the one slope; and the faithful encamped upon the other; and between them lay the valley, and a cold wind therein.

2 And the mould's host had for its champion a tyrant, and his name was Goliath; and he was a deep-dish tyrant, vast and towering, out of the burnt country.

3 Nine spans was his height, and the breadth of him blotted the morning; and he was armoured in dish upon dish of black iron, rim over rim, so that no knife of the faithful

could find where the pie of him began.

4 Layer upon layer was he built, and none had ever seen his middle; and this, saith the scribe, is the way of tyrants: they are all rim.

5 And morning and evening for forty days Goliath came down into the valley, and stood, and taunted the table of the faithful.

6 And he cried: Where is your Cheesus now? I see a hillside of crumbs. Choose you a slice from among you, and send him down to me; and if he prevail, we shall be your servants; but when I prevail, ye shall bow to the mould, and your ovens shall bake at my word, and your corner slices shall be mine forever, and your long tables shall be sawn short.

7 And he laughed, and the iron of him rang with the laughing; and the faithful upon the hillside were dismayed, and dipped not their bread, for their appetite had fled.

8 For they looked upon his layers and reasoned as the fearful reason: he that hath so much armour must have much within it; and they mistook, as the fearful ever do, the size of the mould for the strength of it.

9 Now Saul was captain of the faithful in the valley, a tall man in tall armour, and he sat in his tent and ate nothing; for forty days of taunting had made his own dish of no savour to him.

10 And there came down to the camp a youth, David of Breadlehem, youngest of the sons of Jesse; and he was a thin-crust, slight and honest, crisp of speech; and he carried loaves and cheeses to his brethren in the camp, for the worker walketh even unto the battle-line, and is holy upon the whole road.

11 And as he set down the loaves he heard the taunting of Goliath roll up the valley; and he looked, and saw the faithful shrink; and he said, Who is this bloated pan, that he defieth the table of the living Cheesus?

12 And his eldest brother rebuked him, saying, Why art thou come down? With whom hast thou left those few slices in the wilderness? I know thy pride. And David said, Is there not a decree? - for the decree of the Mount was pinned in their father's doorway, and he had read it every morning of his life at the height of a child's eye.

13 And the men of the camp said unto him, Seest thou his layers? He hath worn that iron since his youth; he is a man of war from his proofing. And David said, I see the layers. What I ask is, hath any man smelt the middle?

14 And none could answer, for none had come near enough to smell.

15 And word of the youth came unto Saul, and Saul sent for him, and looked upon him, and was sorrowful; for he saw a thin-crust boy, and the valley wanted, he thought, a thicker.

16 And David said unto Saul: Let no heart fail because of him. Thy servant kept his father's slices in the wilderness; and there came a rat, and after it a crow, and each took from the pie that I watched; and I went out after them, and smote them, and delivered the slice out of their mouths.

17 This bloated tyrant shall be unto me as the rat and the crow; for he hath defied the table of the living Cheesus, and he that defieth the table hath already lost the meal.

18 And Saul said, Go, and Cheesus go with thee. And Saul armed David with his own armour, a great dish of bronze, and a helm, and greaves; and David stood in them like a candle in a barrel.

19 And David put them off, saying, I cannot go in these; I have not proved them; and moreover, if I win by wearing his shape, what have I proven but his shape? A thin-crust must fight thin, or the victory is the dish's and not the truth's.

20 And he took his staff in his hand, and his sling; and he went down to the brine-brook that ran through the valley, and chose him five smooth olives out of the brine, and put them in his scrip; and the fifth he chose twice over, weighing it long in his palm.

21 *(Here the scribe noteth: the margin-drawing of the first chapter is now disclosed; the knife was for the mould, and the olive was for this.)*

22 And he drew near to the tyrant; and Goliath looked, and when he saw he was but a youth, thin and unarmoured, he was insulted down all his layers.

23 And Goliath cried: Am I a dog, that thou comest to me with a stick and a scrip? Come hither, and I will fold thee like a lunch and forget thee by supper.

24 And he cursed David by the mould, and by the spore, and by the long grey silence; and the valley echoed, and the crows settled to watch, for crows know a proud noise when they hear one.

25 And David answered him, and his voice was thin, and it carried, as thin things carry: Thou comest to me with iron and with layers and with the terror of forty

mornings; but I come to thee in the name of the decree of the Wood-Fired Mount, which thou hast defied.

26 This day shall all the valley know that the table is not saved by dish nor by armour; for the battle is the table's, and thou art large, and largeness is all thou art.

---

## Chapter 6

1 And it came to pass, when the tyrant arose and came and drew nigh to meet David, that David hasted, and ran toward the host to meet him; for the thin are quick, and the honest do not wait to be afraid.

2 And he put his hand in his scrip, and took thence an olive, the fifth one, the one he had weighed; and he slang it.

3 And the olive sang as it went; a small green word in a great grey morning.

4 And it smote the deep-dish tyrant in the brow, in the one span of him that was not rimmed with iron; for a tyrant armoureth everything but the place where thinking is done, having least use for it.

5 And Goliath stood a moment, enormous and astonished; and then he fell.

6 And the falling of him was long, like the falling of a tower that hath been sold to the city as a mountain; and when he struck the earth, the valley rang, dish upon dish, rim upon rim, a great clangour of empty metal.

7 And then came the sound that the faithful spake of ever after at their tables, unto their children's children: the sigh.

8 For out of the tyrant's layers there went up a long rushing sigh, as of a bellows dying; and the vastness of him settled, and sank, and flattened; and behold, within all that iron and all those rims there was hardly any pie at all.

9 He was hollow. The terror of forty mornings was crust and air.

10 And David stood over him with no sword, for he had brought none; and he took the tyrant's own great knife, which two men of the faithful could scarce lift, and cut from the wreck of him the mouldy part, and held it up before the two hillsides, and named it aloud, as the decree commandeth.

11 And the host of the mould, seeing their champion emptied, did not fight; they evaporated, as bad smells do when the window is found; for the mould's armies are recruited by the terror of its size, and are disbanded by the measurement thereof.

12 And the faithful came down from the hillside, not to plunder, but to look; and they filed past the fallen layers, and each one saw the hollow, and each one smelled the middle at last; and the smell was of nothing, for pride hath no flavour.

13 And David said unto them: Mark it well, and tell it at every table: the mould's size is its weakness. It must swell, for swelling is its whole argument; and what swelleth without feeding is hollow; for pride rises like bad dough, all air.

14 A true loaf riseth slow, and is heavy with goodness, and giveth back the thumb's press; but the proud dough puffeth up in an hour, and a child's finger stayeth in it, and it is nothing all the way down.

15 Therefore fear not the bigness of the mould, but count its feedings; ask ever, whom hath it fed? - and when the answer cometh back, No one, then know that thou art looking not at a giant but at a balloon in armour, and choose thee an honest olive.

16 And let none read this scroll crookedly, and let the lesson be written straight, and taught straight, and corrected at any table where it is heard bent:

17 The sin of Goliath was the tyranny, and not the dish. For the deep-dish faithful are beloved of Cheesus - they that bake beside the great lake, whose pies are deep because their generosity is deep, who cut with a spade and serve with both hands and count a visitor a reason to bake another.

18 From deep-dish to thin-crust the table is one table; the mould taketh what vessel it findeth, and it had found a tyrant, and the tyrant happened to be deep; had it found a thin one, the olive had flown the same.

19 Judge no slice by its depth, but every slice by its sharing; for Cheesus made the pan and the stone alike, and blessed them both, and asked of both the same question, which is not How art thou built? but Whom hast thou fed?

20 And they would have made David captain that day, and then king, and then a statue; and he said, Give me no statue; statues are how tables forget. Give the olive a statue if ye must, for the olive did the work; but better, plant it, for an olive planted is a statue that feedeth.

21 And they planted olives along the whole Vale of Two Ovens, and the grove standeth unto this day; and the fruit thereof is briny and small and excellent, and the mothers of that valley say to their children, when the children fear a large thing: go and hold an olive, and feel how little the truth needeth to weigh.

22 And of the four olives that remained in David's scrip, the scroll saith he ate two with his brethren that evening, and gave two to the stranger at the camp gate; and the scribes agree this was the true ending of the battle, for a victory endeth not when the giant falleth, but when the supper is shared.

23 And the fear went out of the faithful from that day; not the watchfulness, for watchfulness is commanded; but the fear, which never was.

---

## Chapter 7

1 Now it came to pass in the years of the scattering that many of the faithful dwelt in Babylon, being carried thither in a lean season; and over Babylon there reigned the Mould-King, whose kitchens were numberless and whose hunger was for none of the food in them.

2 For the Mould-King hungered after agreement; and agreement, of all dishes, is the one a king can never have enough of, and the one that nourisheth him least.

3 And the Mould-King made an image of gold, a great statue of golden fondue, threescore cubits high and six cubits broad; and he set it up in the plain of Dura, that all the province might see it shine.

4 And the fondue thereof was kept ever molten by fires that burned day and night; and the fuel of those fires was taken as a levy from the ovens of the poor, so that the statue was warm in the plain while the children were cold in the lanes; and this proportion is the whole theology of the mould, written in gold for once, where all could read it.

5 And the statue had a face, and the face was the king's, done flattering; and the cheese of it dripped slowly and was gathered and poured again at the top, so that it wept riches all day and gave none away; and the court called it glorious, and the hungry called it nothing at all aloud.

6 Then the Mould-King sent to gather the satraps, the stewards, the treasurers, the counsellors, the sheriffs, and all the rulers of the provinces, to the dedication of the statue.

7 And an herald cried aloud: To you it is commanded, O peoples, nations, and languages, that at what time ye hear the sound of the cornet, the flute, the dough-drum, the sackbut, and all kinds of musick, ye fall down and worship the golden fondue.

8 And whoso falleth not down and worshippeth shall the same hour be cast into the midst of the great oven of Babylon.

9 *(Here the scribe hath written small in the margin: mark that the tyrant saith oven with a little o, for he thinketh it his; and mark how that speech prospereth.)*

10 Therefore at that time, when all the peoples heard the sound of the musick, all the peoples fell down and worshipped the golden fondue; and the plain of Dura was a field of bent backs, and the statue wept its gold, and the king was for one hour full.

11 But three there were that stood.

12 Now these were of the children of the faithful, whom the king had set over the affairs of a province, for they were able and honest, and even Babylon must be administered; and their names were Shredderach, Mozzarach, and Abrednego.

13 And they stood upright in the field of bent backs, plain as three candles at noon; and they did not stand proudly, nor make speeches, nor look about to see who watched; they only did not bow, which was speech enough.

14 Then certain courtiers, whose whole craft was the noticing of the unbent, came near and accused them before the king, saying, There are certain of the scattered folk whom thou hast set over the province: these men, O king, have not regarded thee; they serve not thy mould, nor worship the golden fondue which thou hast set up.

15 Then the Mould-King in his rage commanded to bring them; and they came, and stood before him as they had stood before the statue, which is to say, upright, and without theatre.

16 And the king said unto them: Is it true? Do not ye serve my mould, nor worship the golden image which I have set up? Now if ye be ready, at the sound of the musick, to fall down, well; but if ye worship not, ye shall be cast the same hour into the midst of the great oven; and who is that Cheesus that shall deliver you out of my hands?

17 And Shredderach, Mozzarach, and Abrednego answered and said to the king: O Mould-King, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter.

18 If it be so, our Cheesus whom we serve is able to deliver us from the great oven, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king.

19 But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy mould, nor worship the golden fondue which thou hast set up; for we were commanded upon a Mount thou hast never climbed to bow to no mould, and to stand between the mould and the weak; and behold, we are standing.

20 And they said moreover: Thy statue is warm with the stolen fires of the poor; there is no seasoning in all Babylon that could make that cheese clean to us.

21 Then was the Mould-King full of fury, and the form of his visage was changed against them; and he spake, and commanded that they should heat the oven seven times more than it was wont to be heated.

22 For it is the arithmetic of tyrants, that what one refusal defieth, seven heats will surely mend; and no tyrant hath yet done the sum correctly, for courage doth not cook.

23 And he commanded the mightiest men of his army to bind them; and they were bound in their coats, their hosen, and their hats, and were cast into the midst of the burning fiery oven.

24 And because the king's commandment was urgent and the oven exceeding hot, the flame slew those men that took them up; for the mould spendeth its own servants first and always, and mourneth them never, and this also is written in gold upon the plain of Dura for whoso can read proportion.

25 And these three men, Shredderach, Mozzarach, and Abrednego, fell down bound into the midst of the burning fiery oven.

26 And the court watched, and the statue dripped, and the musick, which had kept playing out of nervousness, faltered, and stopped.

---

## Chapter 8

1 Then the Mould-King was astonied, and rose up in haste, and spake unto his counsellors: Did not we cast three men bound into the midst of the fire?

2 They answered and said unto the king, True, O king.

3 He answered and said, Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of the Oven.

4 For there walked among the three a fourth, easy in the heat as a baker at his own hearth; and none saw his face, but the smell that came out of the oven door was not of burning; it was of basil, and of good bread rising, and of a supper that someone is holding for you.

5 And within the oven - the scroll hath it from the three themselves, who told it seldom and quietly all their days - the fire did not depart, but changed its allegiance.

6 For the Oven is of Cheesus, and was from the beginning; it is the source of warmth and the servant of life; and though a tyrant build the chamber and command the coals, he cannot conscript the heat, for the heat remembereth its Maker.

7 And that which the Mould-King had made an instrument of terror became upon the instant an instrument of baking, which was ever its calling; and the fire that was sent to consume them proofed them instead.

8 And the fourth walked with them, and they were not alone in the heat; and this is the promise hidden in the middle of this book like a filling: that none who standeth for the decree standeth by himself in the oven, though the plain outside be a field of bent backs entirely.

9 Then the Mould-King came near to the mouth of the burning fiery oven, and spake, and said, Ye servants of the most high Cheesus, come forth.

10 And Shredderach, Mozzarach, and Abrednego came forth of the midst of the fire.

11 And the satraps, the stewards, and the king's counsellors, being gathered together, saw these men, upon whose bodies the fire had no power; and behold, they were not burned, but baked; and baked perfectly.

12 Their crusts were golden, their spirits risen; not an hair of their heads was singed, but every one of them was somehow improved, as bread is improved that hath passed through the right heat at the right hour; and the smell of smoke was not on them, but the smell of a bakery at dawn, so that all who stood near grew hungry, and were ashamed of it, and then were not ashamed.

13 And the bands wherewith they were bound were found in the ashes, burnt utterly; for the fire had made its judgement between the men and the ropes, and had eaten only what deserved eating.

14 Then the Mould-King spake and said: Blessed be the Cheesus of Shredderach, Mozzarach, and Abrednego, who hath sent his warmth and delivered his servants that trusted in him, and have changed the king's word, and yielded their bodies, that they might not serve nor worship any mould except their own Cheesus.

15 And he made a decree that whoso spake anything amiss against their Cheesus should be cut in pieces; for the tyrant, even repenting, can imagine no instrument but the threat, and no theology but the decree; and the three besought him to unmake that decree also, saying, Our Cheesus needeth no oven of thine, having his own, and thou hast seen whose it was all along.

16 And as for the first decree, the decree of the bowing, it crumbled; and it crumbled as overbaked shortcrust crumbleth, all at once and into uselessness, and no two pieces of it could thereafter be made to hold together.

17 For a decree hath no strength of its own; its strength is the belief of the bent; and when the plain of Dura had seen three men stand and not burn, the backs of the provinces straightened one by one, quietly, as wheat straighteneth after wind, and there was nothing left for the decree to rest upon.

18 And the golden fondue-statue stood yet a season in the plain, for gold is slow to admit anything; but the levies of fuel could no longer be gathered, for the collectors knocked and the doors of the poor had learned the trick of not opening.

19 And the fires under the statue went out, and the fondue cooled, and hardened, and cracked; and the face of the king split first, flattery being ever the thinnest layer.

20 And the children of the lanes, whose fuel had warmed it, came out upon the plain and broke off pieces of the cheese and ate them; and thus at the very last the statue fed the poor, which was the only worship it ever received that heaven counted.

21 *(Here the scribe confesseth he laughed while writing, and contendeth that the laughter is part of the scripture.)*

22 And Shredderach, Mozzarach, and Abrednego were promoted in the province of Babylon; and they used their offices as the faithful use offices, which is as ladles.

23 And the teaching of the oven is threefold, and is taught wherever this book is read aloud:

24 First, that the mould may own the chamber, but the warmth belongeth to Cheesus; therefore fear not the heat they threaten thee with, for heat hath baked the faithful golden before, and knoweth its work.

25 Second, that the answer of the three standeth for all generations: he is able to deliver us; but if not, we will not bow. For the faith that bargaineth is a receipt, but the faith that saith 'but if not' is a crust, and beareth weight eternal.

26 Third, that thou shalt look for the fourth. In every oven whither the mould casteth the upright, there walketh one more than were thrown in; count the figures in the fire, and take courage, and if thou canst not see the fourth from where thou standest, stand nearer the oven.

---

## Chapter 9

1 Now there was in the courts of a later king a man of the faithful named Daniel, a keeper of ledgers; and he was set over the accounts of the king's kitchens, for in him was found an excellent spirit, and his columns always summed.

2 And Daniel kept, among the books of flour and fuel and hire, the tips ledger; wherein was written every coin left upon every table of the king's hundred houses for the riders and the servers and the washers of pans.

3 For the law of the table from of old is that the tip belongeth to the worker as the crust belongeth to the slice; it is not a kindness, but a wage with its hat off; and the delivery driver walketh the pilgrim's road, and the coin is the road's toll, paid by the glad.

4 But the stewards of the king had learned a new arithmetic, whereby the tips flowed first through the king's counting-house for the purifying thereof; and what is purified in a counting-house cometh out lighter, as all men know.

5 And they came to Daniel with soft faces, saying, Write in thy ledger that the riders were paid in full; and behold thine own column shall grow a little also, for we look after them that look at the right moments away.

6 And Daniel answered, I cannot write it, for it did not happen. And they said, It is one line. And he said, So is a crack in an oven.

7 And they reasoned with him further, saying, The sum is small; wilt thou perish over pennies? And Daniel said, The pennies are the point. The mould beginneth not with the treasury; it beginneth with the tip, the corner coin that nobody defendeth; he that will falsify a farthing hath agreed in principle to falsify a famine, and waiteth only to be promoted.

8 Then the stewards, seeing he would not bend, sought occasion against Daniel concerning the kingdom; but they could find none occasion nor fault, forasmuch as he was faithful, neither was there any error found in his books, though they audited him thrice with lanterns.

9 Then said these men, We shall not find any occasion against this Daniel, except we find it against him concerning the law of his Cheesus.

10 And they went in before the king, and flattered him after the manner of their craft, and obtained a statute: that whosoever should keep any reckoning save the king's reckoning for thirty days should be cast into the den of critics.

11 Now the den of critics was a deep place under the city, wherein the king kept a pride of critics, fierce and lean; and their teeth were pens, and their roaring was reviews; and they devoured reputations to the bone, and the bones they arranged in columns, with stars beside them, never more than one.

12 Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber toward the Wood-Fired Mount, he balanced his books three times a day, honestly, as he did aforetime; and he wrote the riders' tips as the riders' tips, in ink, in the sight of the street.

13 For he said, A ledger is a prayer of a particular kind: it saith what is, before the face of what is claimed; and I will not pray falsely though every window in Babylon be bricked.

14 Then these men assembled, and found Daniel reckoning truly before his open window; and they brought him to the king; and the king, perceiving too late the trap that had been built of his own vanity, laboured till the going down of the sun to deliver him, and could not, for the statute was of the kind called irrevocable, which kings sign quickest.

15 Then the king commanded, and they brought Daniel, and cast him into the den of critics; and a stone was laid upon the mouth of the den, and the king sealed it with his signet; and the king went to his palace, and passed the night fasting, and his sleep went from him, for he had discovered what the mould discovereth to every king it flattereth: that the pen he had lent was around his own throat.

16 And down in the dark the critics circled Daniel all the night, reading him closely, as critics do; they went through his life margin by margin; they tasted his books, his sums, his corrections, his crossings-out; they sought the soft spot, the padded figure, the flattered total, whereon critics feed.

17 And they found nothing to pan.

18 For his ledger was true, and truth is well seasoned; and there is no meal in an honest man for them whose hunger is for fault; and toward morning the critics lay down around him quietly, as beasts do about a fire, and one of them, the eldest and leanest, is said to have murmured, Would there were more like this; we are so seldom fed anything real.

19 Then the king arose very early in the morning, and went in haste unto the den of critics; and he cried with a lamentable voice, O Daniel, keeper of true ledgers, is thy Cheesus, whom thou reckonest before continually, able to deliver thee from the critics?

20 Then said Daniel unto the king, O king, live for ever. My Cheesus hath shut the critics' mouths, that they have not chewed me: forasmuch as before him honesty was found in me; and also before thee, O king, have I done no harm; check the arithmetic.

21 Then was the king exceeding glad, and commanded that they should take Daniel up out of the den. So Daniel was taken up, and no manner of hurt was found upon him, no tooth-mark, no red ink, not one star subtracted, because he believed in his Cheesus and had written down what was.

22 And the king commanded, and they brought those men which had accused Daniel, with their purified ledgers under their arms; and they were cast into the den of critics; and the critics, who had hungered all night beside an honest man, fell upon the cooked books before ever the men reached the floor of the den, and tore the accounts to shreds; and of the accusers the scroll saith only that they were reviewed at length, and survived it poorly, and were never again believed in Babylon, which among courtiers is the death that counteth.

23 Then the king wrote unto all peoples: I make a decree, that in every dominion of my kingdom the tips ledger be kept in the open, and read aloud on the first of the month at the kitchen door, in the hearing of the riders; for the Cheesus of Daniel is the living Cheesus, and his arithmetic endureth, and he delivereth his servant from the pen of the critic and the palm of the steward alike.

24 And Daniel prospered in the reign of that king; and the riders of the hundred houses, when they passed his window, would touch the brim of the hat; and he would look up from the columns and touch his own; and no coin went astray in that city for a generation, which the chronicles record as a wonder greater than the den.

25 And the teaching of Daniel is short, that it may fit in an apron pocket: keep the small truths, and the great lies find no lodging. The mould cannot enter a kitchen through a wall; it entereth through a line in a book; guard the lines.

---

## Chapter 10

1 Hearken now to the economy of the mould, which the elders set down after long watching; for the mould hath a housekeeping, and its books can be read, if thou knowest the columns.

2 The mould doth not storm the kitchen; storming is dear, and leaveth marks, and the marks make martyrs. The mould buyeth the kitchen; and it buyeth it slowly, and mostly with the kitchen's own money.

3 First it watereth the sauce. A little at the start, that none may taste it; then a little more, for none tasted the first; and it selleth the thinner sauce at the fuller price, and the difference it keepeth, and calleth efficiency.

4 And when the tongue of the city hath forgotten what sauce was, the mould pointeth at the paleness and saith, Behold what hard times we live in; and it blameth the stranger for the paleness, whose grandmother, as it happeneth, could have taught the whole city sauce.

5 Second, it stiffeth the riders. It payeth the pilgrim's road in promises; it deviseth clever scales whereby the worker is not worked but *engaged*, and not engaged but *partnered*, and not paid; and the tip it interposeth itself before, as a toll-keeper upon a bridge he did not build.

6 For the mould hateth the tip above all coins, because the tip is love in metal, passing from hand to hand without a ruler's face upon the transaction; and whatever passeth freely between people, unregistered and warm, the mould cannot tax nor turn, and therefore calleth untidy.

7 Third, it closeth the table to strangers, and calleth it purity. It measureth the doorway and calleth the measuring heritage; it counteth the chairs and calleth the counting prudence; it teacheth the children that the pie is a fixed pie, and that every mouth is the enemy of every other mouth.

8 This is the mould's great lie of lies, its yeast and its engine: the doctrine of the fixed pie. And it is refuted every day at every honest table, whereat, the more that are fed, the more there mysteriously is; for the stranger cometh with hunger in one hand and a recipe in the other, and the table that turned him away hath turned away its own next feast.

9 Fourth, it maketh of many kitchens one kitchen, and of one kitchen a counting-house. It eateth the small ovens of a city one by one, wearing at each meal the face of rescue; and at the end, where an hundred kitchens smoked, there is one board of directors and a warehouse of frozen dough, and the whole city eateth the same slice, which is worse each year, and remembereth no alternative, for the recipes were in the kitchens.

10 Fifth, it endoweth. Let none think the mould stingy: it is lavish wheresoever lavishness buyeth silence. It giveth the feast-day banquet with the great banner; it carveth its name upon the school and the well; and each gift is a receipt, presented later, at the moment thou risest to name it aloud, when its servants murmur, Wilt thou shame the hand that fed the festival?

11 Answer that murmuring thus: a gift with a hook in it is called bait; and we are not fish, but folk; and the festival was ours before the banner, and shall be ours after.

12 Sixth, it keepeth a hunger in reserve. Mark this, for it is the coldest line in the mould's books: the mould could feed the queue, and choose not; for the queue is its argument. A hungry line at the gate maketh every man inside grateful, and quiet, and prompt; abundance would spoil discipline. Where thou seest hunger carefully maintained beside plenty carefully guarded, thou needest no further diagnosis; thou hast found the mould, at home, at its books.

13 And the sum of the mould's economy is this: it produceth nothing. Search its books from cover to cover: no loaf, no ladle, no supper. It groweth only as rot groweth, by the conversion of what others baked; it is not a rival cook, but a tax upon cooking; not another dish at the table, but a subtraction wearing a bib.

14 Therefore is it written: ask of every power that riseth in the city, What hath it fed, and whom? For the question cutteth through banner and statue and anthem as a good wheel cutteth through the softest part; and the mould hath in all its ages never once answered it, but only changed the subject to the stranger at the gate.

15 Now against this whole economy the faithful set no counter-scheme, no rival cunning, no mould of a better colour; for the elders taught: thou canst not out-rot the rot. The answer of the faithful is written in one word, and the word is: feed.

16 Feed people. This is the whole of the strategy; the rest is logistics.

17 And it came to pass that wheresoever the mould's shadow fell, the faithful builded community ovens: in the yards, in the ruins, at the crossroads; ovens of shared brick and gathered wood, whose door hath no lock, and whose rota hangeth beside the door in weather-beaten hand.

18 And the rule of the community oven is threefold: whoever kneadeth may bake; whoever hungereth may eat; and whoever passeth warmeth their hands, for the warmth at least shall never be means-tested.

19 And the mould sent inspectors against the ovens, with clipboards; and the faithful fed the inspectors; and this proved, of all the weapons in this book, the one least survivable, for a man who hath eaten well at the oven he came to condemn writeth his report slowly, and blotteth it much, and ofttimes returneth on his own account, with his children.

20 And in the squares of the cities the faithful set the long table; boards on barrels, stretching from the fountain to the corner, and lengthened whensoever the mould preached scarcity, for the elders decreed: let our answer to every speech of theirs be measured in added feet of table.

21 And to the long table came the widow and the rider, the stranger and the sceptic, the deep-dish and the thin, the half-and-half whole at last; and there was no head of that table, for it was set in a square, and a table with four sides hath no head, which was the intention.

22 And the accountants of the mould studied the long table and could not find its engine; for it ran at a loss by every column they kept, and grew by every column they did not.

23 And this is the proverb that came out of those years, and it is the hinge of this book; grave it on the oven-door: the mould cannot grow where the table is warm and watched.

24 Warm, and watched: for warmth without watching is a larder with the door ajar, and watching without warmth is only another cold guard at another cold gate. But where the loaves come out at dusk and the eyes stay open, there the spore findeth no purchase and the whisper findeth no ear; for a fed neighbour is a poor recruit, and a watched corner is a poor beginning, and the mould, being a great reader of books, readeth these also, and passeth over that city, muttering.

25 Therefore, when thou wouldst know how the resistance fareth in any place, count neither its banners nor its speeches; go at evening and smell the square.

---

## Chapter 11

1 And the elders, being old, gathered the young at the long table, and gave them the charges of continuance; for the mould is patient across generations, and the table must be also.

2 And the first charge is the rota. Keep the rota of the corner slice; let its guardianship pass hand to hand, week by week, that watching become as kneading, a thing the body knoweth without being asked.

3 And the second charge is the naming. Teach the grammar of the mould to every child - it is not happening; it is small; it is good; it was ever thus - and teach them to answer each clause with its true name, aloud, at supper, where courage is easiest learned, being passed with the dishes.

4 And the third charge is the ledger. Keep the small truths: the tip written as the tip, the measure filled to the line, the promise kept at the hour. For kingdoms are lost through a line in a book, and saved the same way.

5 And the fourth charge is the doorway. Let the decree of the Mount hang where Jesse hung it, at the height of a child's eye; for David read it small, and the reading waited in

him like an olive in brine, and came out at its hour singing.

6 And the fifth charge is the olive. Keep thy scrip stocked with small true things - a coin, a loaf, a word, a vote of the parish, a place at the table - and despise none of them for smallness; for thou hast read in this very book what a small true thing doth to a large hollow one.

7 And the sixth charge is the oven-count. When the mould casteth the upright into the fire, count the figures in the flame, and tell the count abroad; for the plain of Dura bent because each back believed itself the only one unbowed, and straightened when it saw the three, and the three stood because they were not three.

8 And the seventh charge is the supper after. When the giant falleth, share the remaining olives; when the statue cracketh, let the children eat the cheese; when the decree crumbleth, sweep the crumbs to the birds. End every victory as a meal, or it will end as a parade; and parades, the elders warn, are how the next mould learneth the route.

9 And a young one at the table asked: Elders, shall we win? And the eldest was silent a while, and turned a crust in her fingers.

10 And she said: Child, thou art asking the mould's question; for it is the mould that thinketh in endings, in last battles and final solutions of the pie. The table thinketh in suppers; and suppers are not won, but kept.

11 Ask rather, Shall we eat together tonight, and watch the corner, and name what we see? For that we shall; and the mould can be told no plainer that it hath lost the evening; and the war is made entirely of evenings.

12 Yeast I say unto you, despair is the mould's finest vintage, and it presseth it from watchers who looked too long at the whole world and never once at their own street.

13 Therefore the elders forbade the young to despair on an empty stomach, decreeing: first eat, then reassess; and it is recorded that the reassessments after supper ran hopeful by a great majority, and the elders smiled, for they had known.

14 And they taught them the arithmetic of the warm table against the arithmetic of the fixed pie, saying: the mould counteth mouths as costs; count thou the hands; for every mouth cometh with two hands, and the table that knoweth this hath doubled its fortune at a stroke.

15 And they taught them the hospitality of the watch: that the stranger be seated first and questioned never; that the guard of the corner slice sit not apart like a sentry, but in the midst of the meal, passing dishes with both hands and watching over the rim of the cup; for the best watching looketh like welcome, and indeed, said the elders, it mostly is.

16 And they taught them concerning fear, saying: thou wilt be afraid; the three were afraid before the oven, and David heard his own heart in the valley, and Daniel's ink trembled at the window; and every one of them did the thing regardless, and that is the whole secret, and there is no other, and anyone who selleth thee a courage without fear in it hath watered the sauce.

17 *(Here endeth the teaching at the long table; and the scribe recordeth that the garlic bread arrived at this point, and that the young remembered the lesson ever after, having learned it with the smell of it, which the elders had also known.)*

---

## Chapter 12

1 And now the book draweth to its close, as suppers do, with the last things said quietly over the crumbs.

2 Thou hast read how the mould cometh: quietly, spot by spot, first upon the corner slice that nobody defendeth; and how the silence passeth down the table until there is none left to speak; keep therefore a speaker always, and a corner always guarded.

3 Thou hast read of the prophets in the courts of kings that baked only for the rich; how the stipend was refused and the word endured; be thou unbuyable in the small hours, and the great ones cannot afford thee either.

4 Thou hast read of the thin-crust and the hollow giant; how the mould's size is its weakness, and pride rises like bad dough, all air; and how the dish was never the sin, for the table is one table from deep to thin; fear not bigness, and slander no pan.

5 Thou hast read of the three in the oven, and of the fourth that walked with them; and how the heat remembered its Maker, and the decree crumbled like overbaked shortcrust; stand therefore, and count the figures in the fire.

6 Thou hast read of the ledger and the den; how the critics found nothing to pan, for truth is well seasoned; keep the lines, and the lions of ink shall lie down about thee

like housecats.

7 And thou hast read the mould's whole economy, and its refutation, which fitteth in a word, and the word is feed; and the proverb of the hinge: the mould cannot grow where the table is warm and watched.

8 Now therefore hear the standing promise, which the elders sealed at the end of the scroll, that it might be the last thing carried away from the reading:

9 The mould never wins the whole pie while one hand still cuts it out.

10 One hand. The scroll saith not an army, nor a council, nor a better king; it saith a hand, thine, holding the knife thou already ownest, at the table where thou already sittest.

11 For the mould must take every slice to win, and the table need only keep one knife moving to deny it; and this is the mercy hidden in the arithmetic of rot: that its victory condition is total, and ours is tonight's supper.

12 Therefore it is written: the mould hath won many slices, and shall win more, and the scroll doth not lie to thee about the cost, for the corner slices of the generations are gone, and the lament of the last elder is true, and was paid for.

13 But the whole pie it hath never won, not once, in all the ovens of all the ages; because always, somewhere - in a hill kitchen, at a market trough, in a valley of olives, before an open window, at a long table in a square - one hand was still cutting.

14 Be thou that hand. It is not a great calling; it is the calling of everyone, which is why the mould teacheth first that callings are for the great.

15 Keep the decree of the Mount as thou keepest a sourdough: alive, fed daily, shared when it groweth; for a decree kept in a drawer is a decree lost, but a decree kept at supper leaveneth the street, and the town, and the age.

16 And when thou art weary - and thou shalt be weary, for the watch is long and the mould resteth never - remember the smell that came out of the oven of Babylon, and set thy weariness down at the warm table, and let another hand take the knife for the evening; for this also the rota was made.

17 And is there an end of it? - asked the young at the last long table of this book. Shall the mould one day be no more at all, and the watch stand down, and the corner slice need no guardian for ever?

18 And the elders answered: there is a word of a morning after all mornings, when the Oven at the end of all things is lit, and every table of every age is set as one table, and the mould is not, and the watch is feast entire; but that word is not ours to tell.

19 It is written in the last scroll of the Pibble, which is the Revelation; and when thou hast kept thy watch, thou shalt read it, and know the watch was kept toward something.

20 Our book endeth earlier, and on purpose, here, in the evening, with the ovens warm and the table long and the corner guarded and the knife within reach; for hope deferred is the Revelation's business, and hope tonight is ours.

21 Suffer it not to spread. Feed the hungry. House the cold. Stand between the mould and the weak. The table hath room; see thou to the chairs.

22 Here endeth the Book of Resistance; the reading is finished; the keeping now beginneth. Pass the knife, and pass the pie.

BOOK IX

# Jonah and the Great Calzone

## Chapter 1

1 Now the word of Cheesus Crust came unto Jonah, the son of Amaretti, of the small village of Grissini, saying:

2 Arise, and go unto Ninecheese, that great city of the north, and cry against it; for the smell of its hoarding is come up before me.

3 For their freezers are full and their doors are shut.

4 And Jonah was a doubter; not of the Oven, for he had felt its warmth, nor of the Slice, for he had eaten thereof; but he doubted the hearts of men, which he held to be past proving.

5 For Jonah had been a proofer of dough in Grissini, and thrice had he set out loaves upon his sill for the hungry, and thrice had a rich man taken them all, and sold them back to the poor at a margin.

6 And Jonah said within himself, I know this city of the north. Their cellars are cold and their hearts are colder, and no word of mine shall thaw either.

7 And he said moreover, If I preach and they repent not, I am a fool; and if I preach and they repent, then Cheesus shall forgive them, and that is worse.

8 For Jonah desired not mercy for Ninecheese, but a reckoning; and he confused the two, as men do.

9 So Jonah rose up to flee unto Tarragon from the presence of Cheesus, which lieth at the far edge of the map, where the soup runs thin and the cartographers write, *here be anchovies*.

10 And he went down to the port of Ciabatta, and found there a ferry crossing the Sea of Soup; and the name of the ferry was the Ladle, for she was broad of beam and shallow of draught, and she skimmed the surface of the deep.

11 And Jonah paid the fare thereof, and he tipped the ferryman generously, though he was fleeing; for even a man running from his god need not run from his manners.

12 And the ferryman marked him and said, Whither goest thou, that thou lookest ever over thy shoulder?

13 And Jonah said, To Tarragon, where the herbs are subtle and the questions few.

14 And he went down into the sides of the ship, among the sacks of flour and the crated croutons; and he lay down, and was fast asleep.

15 For there is no sleep so heavy as the sleep of a man avoiding an errand; the doubter sleeps as the dough sleeps, hoping to be forgotten before the Oven is lit.

16 But Cheesus Crust is not forgotten of any dough, though the dough forget itself.

17 And the word that Jonah fled from did not diminish behind him, but sat quietly in his pack like an uneaten crust, and weighed what it weighed.

18 Now Ninecheese was a great city, of three days' walking from gate to gate, and its towers were hung with smoked provisions, and its walls were thick as focaccia.

19 And within it were storehouses upon storehouses, and cold-cellars beneath cold-cellars, and the doors thereof were locked with nine locks apiece.

20 And the great men of Ninecheese kept ledgers of cheese they would never eat, and bragged one to another of wheels uncut, saying, Behold my caves, how full they are; and their neighbours went hungry within sight of the smoke of their smokehouses.

21 And the poor of the city stood in the street and smelled what they could not taste; and this also came up before Cheesus, for the Slice is one, and a hungry street is a wound in it.

22 *(Here the scribe hath written in the margin: I have seen Ninecheese, or a city very like it; the reader also hath seen one; that is the trouble.)*

23 And Cheesus looked upon Jonah asleep in the ferry, fleeing the mercy he was sent to carry; and Cheesus did not smite him, nor curse him, nor let him go.

24 For the Slice does not release its topping because the topping rolls toward the edge.

25 And Cheesus sent out a great wind upon the Sea of Soup, and the wind stirred the deep as a spoon stirreth the pot.

## Chapter 2

1 And it came to pass that the Sea of Soup began to boil.

2 Not with fire beneath, for the deep hath no burner; but with the breath of Cheesus upon it, so that the broth rose in waves, and the waves were crested with froth, and great bay leaves were flung upon the deck like shields of the drowned.

3 And the Ladle was like to be swamped; for a ladle in a boiling pot is in her natural home, yet in peril all the same.

4 Then the mariners were afraid, and cried every man unto his own condiment; one unto the Vinegar, and one unto the Great Pepper, and one unto a small god of mustard that he kept on a string about his neck.

5 And they cast forth the wares that were in the ship into the sea, to lighten it of them; and the crated croutons went into the soup, and were seen no more, save as texture.

6 But Jonah was gone down into the sides of the ship; and he lay, and was fast asleep, while the pot boiled.

7 So the shipmaster came to him, and said unto him, What meanest thou, O sleeper? arise, call upon thy god, if so be that thy god will think upon us, that we perish not.

8 And Jonah rose, and came up upon the deck, and saw the sea standing up in ridges like the crimped edge of a pastry, and steam upon the face of the waters.

9 And the mariners said every one to his fellow, Come, and let us cast lots, that we may know for whose cause this evil is upon us.

10 And they had no lots, being plain sailors; so the cook brought forth a bundle of breadsticks, whereof one was short, and they drew.

11 And the bosun drew a long breadstick, and the cook drew a long breadstick, and the boy that scrubbed the pots drew a long breadstick and wept with relief and ate it.

12 And the lot fell upon Jonah; for he drew the short breadstick, and held it up, and all the deck was silent save the boiling.

13 Then said they unto him, Tell us, we pray thee, for whose cause this evil is upon us; What is thine occupation? and whence comest thou? what is thy country? and of what people art thou?

14 And Jonah said unto them, I am a Crustian; and I fear Cheesus Crust, the Lord of the Oven, which hath made the sea and the dry flour.

15 Then were the men exceedingly afraid, and said unto him, Why hast thou done this? For the men knew that he fled from the presence of Cheesus, because he had told them; for a doubter may run, but he rarely lies.

16 Then said they unto him, What shall we do unto thee, that the sea may be calm unto us? for the sea wrought, and simmered ever fiercer.

17 And he said unto them, Take me up, and cast me forth into the soup; so shall the sea be calm unto you: for I know that for my sake this great tempest is upon you.

18 And Jonah said moreover, I was sent to carry a word to Ninecheese, and I carried it the wrong way; a word is a leaven, and a leaven kept from its batch will work upon whatever it is shut inside.

19 Nevertheless the men rowed hard to bring the ferry to land; but they could not: for the sea boiled, and was tempestuous against them.

20 For they were working men, and it was against all their grain to pay a passage with a passenger; and this was counted unto them for righteousness.

21 Wherefore they cried unto Cheesus, and said, We beseech thee, O Cheesus, let us not perish for this man's life, and lay not upon us innocent broth: for thou, O Cheesus, hast done as it pleased thee.

22 So they took up Jonah, and cast him forth into the sea: and the sea ceased from her boiling, and settled, and a smell of stock and thyme lay upon the calm.

23 Then the men feared Cheesus exceedingly, and made vows; and having nothing left aboard but one loaf, they broke it into as many pieces as there were hands, and ate together upon the quiet water.

24 And that was the first worship of some of them, and not the last.

25 But Jonah went down into the deep; and the broth closed over his head, and the light above him grew small, like the door of an Oven closing.

26 And Jonah thought, So endeth the doubter; and he was wrong, for his story was not ending but folding.

## Chapter 3

1 Now Cheesus had prepared a Great Calzone to swallow up Jonah; and it moved through the deep of the Sea of Soup, golden and vast, sealed at its crimped edge like the horizon.

2 Ancient it was, from the first proving of the world; and no net had ever taken it, and no menu had ever listed it, and the sailors of the north spoke of it only in winter, and quietly.

3 And the Great Calzone rose beneath Jonah as a floor rises to meet a dropped thing, and opened along its edge, and took him in; and the fold closed over him without violence, as a hand closes over a coin to keep it.

4 And Jonah was in the fold of the Calzone three days and three nights.

5 And within the fold there was darkness; yet it was not the darkness of the void, but the darkness of the Oven before the light is struck: a warm dark, a working dark, a dark in which things become other things.

6 And the walls of that place were soft, and yielded, and drew back; and there was a slow breathing all about him, as of dough that rises and rests, rises and rests.

7 And Jonah put out his hand in the blackness, and touched warm mozzarella, and it strung from his fingers and would not wholly let him go.

8 And he crawled upon a floor of ricotta, and passed through hanging gardens of spinach that brushed his face like the hands of mourners, and he could see none of it, but knew it each by touch and savour.

9 And there was in the fold no north nor south, no up nor down, no yesterday nor morrow; there was only within.

10 And at first Jonah raged, and beat upon the walls of the fold, and the walls received his blows as a pillow receiveth a fist, and gave him back nothing but warmth.

11 And he shouted, and the fold ate his shout; and he wept, and the fold held his weeping; and at last he was still, because there was nothing else left to be.

12 *(Here the scribe hath left a space, the breadth of three fingers, for silence; the reader is asked to keep it.)*

13 And in the stillness Jonah began to take an inventory of the dark, for he was an orderly man even in the belly of a mystery.

14 And he found about him, by touch, all the makings of a meal: the cheese, and the cured meats, and the tomato, and the good green herbs; all of it folded in, all of it carried in the dark, all of it kept.

15 And he thought, Behold, this beast is a larder that swims; nay, said his heart, look again; and he looked again with his hands, and understood nothing yet, but was near to it.

16 And on the first day he slept, and dreamed of Grissini, and of three loaves upon a sill, and of the face of the rich man who took them; and he woke in the dark with his old anger, and the dark did not argue with him, but was warm.

17 And on the second day he hungered, and ate of the fold, for it was given; and he was ashamed to be fed by the thing that had swallowed him, and then he was not ashamed, for that is the way of every creature that eats.

18 And on the second night he heard, far off through the walls of dough, the sound of the sea; and it was not boiling now, but rocking, and it rocked him.

19 And on the third day Jonah prayed.

20 And this was the manner of his prayer, which is called the Psalm of the Fold, and is written in the chapter following; and the Calzonists that came long after would recite it in the dark with their eyes shut and one hand folded within the other, though there were as yet no Calzonists, nor any name for what was happening to Jonah at all.

21 There was only a man, and the dark, and everything he had fled, folded in with him.

---

## Chapter 4

1 Then Jonah prayed unto Cheesus Crust his god out of the belly of the Great Calzone, and said:

2 I cried by reason of mine affliction unto Cheesus, and he heard me; out of the belly of the fold cried I, and thou heardest my voice.

3 For thou hadst cast me into the deep, in the midst of the seas; and the broth compassed me about: all thy billows and thy bay leaves passed over me.

4 Then I said, I am cast out of thy sight; the crumbs of the world are swept, and I am among them.

5 The soup compassed me about, even to the soul: the deep closed round about me, the noodles were wrapped about my head.

6 I went down to the bottoms of the pot; the stockpot of the earth with her lid was upon me for ever: yet hast thou brought up my life from the simmer, O Cheesus my Crust.

7 When my soul fainted within me I remembered Cheesus: and my prayer came in unto thee, past crimp and crust, into thy warm and holy dark.

8 And now behold, I am within, and I understand what I would not understand upon the road.

9 For I fled from thy word, and thy word is folded in here with me; I fled from Ninecheese, and its hunger is folded in here with me; I fled from mine own doubting heart, and lo, I have carried it into the fold in my breast, for a man's chest is the first calzone, and his heart is baked in whether he consent or no.

10 There is no away, O Cheesus. I ran to the edge of the map, and the map was on thy table all the while.

11 In the light I judged all things by their tops: this one shining, that one burnt, this city golden, that city black; and I called my judging wisdom, and my wisdom made me weary.

12 But in the dark there are no tops; there is only what a thing is when thou holdest it, and here thou holdest all of it together, the meat and the herb, the sweet and the bitter, the doubter and the word he doubted.

13 I felt along thy walls, and I found no larder, though I ate; I found no prison, though I could not leave; I found a keeping. Thou hast folded me as a mother folds a letter she means to read again.

14 Fold the crust, for it contains all within. *(Calzonists 1:3)*

15 So the elders wrote it afterward, in the old numbering of the scrolls, having it from Jonah's mouth; but Jonah spoke it first with mozzarella on his hands, in the dark, to no congregation at all.

16 And Jonah prayed on, saying: O Cheesus, I have hated the hoarders of Ninecheese, and behold, I was the greater hoarder; for they locked up cheese, but I locked up

mercy, and mercy spoils faster.

17 They shut their doors upon their neighbours; I shut my heart upon a whole city, and stamped it *past saving*, and sailed; and of the two shuttings, mine was the colder cellar.

18 For a freezer keeps what is put in it, and so did I: I put in my three loaves stolen from my sill, and my one rich man, and I kept them frozen thirty years, and served them to myself each night, and called the dish experience.

19 Thaw me, O Cheesus. I am a leftover of mine own grievances; set me some while in thy Oven, for none is beyond the Reheat, not Ninecheese, and not I.

20 And the fold about him breathed, rising and resting; and Jonah lay in the midst of everything he had run from, and for the first time it did not crush him, for it was not on top of him, it was with him.

21 And that is the whole difference, saith the scroll, between a burden and a filling.

---

## Chapter 5

1 And on the third night Jonah prayed the ending of his psalm, and this was the ending thereof:

2 O Cheesus, I doubted thee not, and I boasted of it; I doubted men, and I called it sense. But now I see the doubting of men is the doubting of thee, for thou hast folded thyself into them, as thou hast folded all this into me.

3 What did I know of thee in the light? A name, a blessing, a smell of baking on the seventh day. But here in the dark I have handled thy devotion with my hands.

4 For I have found in this fold all that a beast might have kept for itself, laid up instead for the stranger it swallowed; I hungered, and the walls fed me; I raged, and the walls forgave me; I was a runaway, and the walls made of me a guest.

5 Whatsoever is folded is not hidden from love; it is hidden with it.

6 In the fold lies the story of Cheesus' devotion. *(Calzonists 3:11)*

7 And Jonah wept when he had said it, for he perceived that he had been carried three days by a mercy shaped exactly like a mouth, and had spent the first two days punching it.

8 And he laughed also, there in the dark, at himself; and the laughter of a man at himself is a yeast, and something long unleavened in Jonah began to rise.

9 Then Jonah made his vow, kneeling on the ricotta with the strings of the cheese upon his shoulders like a stole, and he said:

10 O Cheesus, if thou bring me up alive out of this fold, I will go to Ninecheese, and I will carry thy word the right way round.

11 And I will not preach as one who hopes to be proved right by ruin; I will preach as one who was himself a shut city, and got opened.

12 And I vow this besides, for myself and for all who shall ever hide anything within a crust, be it cheese or be it grief:

13 Let no dough be false, for the gluten is the heart of the crust. *(Calzonists 2:6)*

14 For a man may fold what he carries, and carry it in the dark, and no shame in it; but the fold must be honest dough, or the whole fails at the crimp.

15 Let my outside and my inside be of one batch. Let me never again be crisp to the eye and hollow to the tooth. If I am to be sealed, seal me full.

16 And I will pay that I have vowed, with sacrifice of thanksgiving and a generous tip; salvation is of the Oven.

17 And Cheesus heard the vow, and the fold about Jonah grew warm, warmer, warm as the mouth of home.

18 And Cheesus spake unto the Great Calzone; and what he said to it is not written, for it was between them; but the elders suppose it was brief, and kind, and possibly *well done, good and faithful supper*.

19 *(Here the scribe hath written: I am sorry for that one, and yet I am not.)*

20 And the Great Calzone turned in the deep, and rose through the Sea of Soup with Jonah in its keeping, up through the broth and the barley, up past the astonished croutons, unto the grey shore of the north.

---

## Chapter 6

1 And the Great Calzone came up upon the shallows, and opened along its crimped edge, and set Jonah forth upon the dry land, gently, as a cook turns out a loaf that he

is proud of.

2 And it did not spew him, whatever the vulgar translations say; the Calzone is a mystery, not a mishap, and Jonah came out feet first and standing, though buttered.

3 And Jonah stood upon the shore in the dawn, strung about with mozzarella, anointed with olive oil from crown to heel, smelling gloriously of oregano; and the gulls dared not touch him, for he was clearly somebody's.

4 And he turned, and looked upon the Great Calzone lying in the shallows, golden in the first light, vast as a headland; and its edge was crimped by no hand of man, fold upon fold upon fold, past counting.

5 And Jonah bowed unto it; and the Great Calzone slid backward into the Sea of Soup, and the sea took it, and it was gone; and no man hath seen it since, save those who have been where Jonah was, and they do not describe it, they only fold their bread strangely and smile.

6 And the word of Cheesus came unto Jonah the second time, saying:

7 Arise, go unto Ninecheese, that great city, and preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee.

8 And this time there was no third time needed.

9 So Jonah arose, and went unto Ninecheese, according to the word of Cheesus; and he went the whole way on foot, and at every inn upon the road he ate with whoever was poorest in the room, for practice.

10 And they that ate with him marked that he tore his bread in a peculiar manner, folding each piece over upon itself before he ate it; and when they asked him wherefore, he said only, I am remembering something, and would say no more upon the road.

11 And his doubting was not gone from him, for a doubt is not a stain to be scrubbed but a muscle to be retrained; but it walked behind him now, and carried the bags, and made itself useful.

12 And on the third day of walking he came within sight of Ninecheese, and the towers thereof, and the smoke of its smokehouses; and he smelled upon the wind the smell of ten thousand locked dinners.

13 And Jonah stood still in the road, and his old anger rose in him at that smell, and he let it rise, and then he folded it in, honest dough around a hot filling, and walked

on through the gate.

---

## Chapter 7

1 Now Ninecheese was an exceeding great city of three days' journey; and Jonah began to enter into the city a day's journey.

2 And he passed beneath the Cheddar Gate, whereon was carven the motto of the city: WHAT IS MINE IS MINE, AND WHAT IS THINE IS NEGOTIABLE.

3 And he walked through the street of the smokehouses, and the street of the nine-locked doors, and the street of the ledger-men, where clerks tallied wheels of cheese by lamplight and never once tasted the inventory.

4 And he saw the poor of Ninecheese standing at the grates of the cold-cellars to warm themselves at the machinery, for the engines of freezing give off heat to the street, which is the whole economy of hoarding in a single image, saith the scroll.

5 And Jonah's heart smote him, and it did not smite him with anger this time, but with recognition; for he had been a locked city of one, and he knew the look of a bolt rusted shut.

6 And Jonah stood in the great market square of Ninecheese, upon an empty crate, and the crowd flowed round him as water round a stone, not stopping, for preachers were common there and cheaper than cheese.

7 And Jonah opened his mouth. And all the preaching that he had rehearsed upon the road - the arguments, the figures, the seven-branched rebuke with footnotes - all of it fell away from him, as scaffolding falls from a finished tower.

8 And he cried, and said only this, eight words, no more:

9 Yet forty days, and the freezers shall fail.

10 And he said it again, walking; through the street of the smokehouses: Yet forty days, and the freezers shall fail.

11 And through the street of the ledger-men: Yet forty days, and the freezers shall fail.

12 And he cursed no man, and named no villain, and promised no fire; he only told them, in the voice of a man who has been inside something vast and come out sure, that what they trusted was temporary.

13 And that is the most frightening sermon there is, and the kindest; for both reasons it worked.

14 And the word ran through Ninecheese faster than Jonah walked, as a smell of burning runs through a house.

15 For every man in Ninecheese had a freezer, and every man knew in his secret heart what was in it, and how long it had been in it, and who could have eaten it once, and could not now, for it had gone to frost and grey.

16 And the ledger-men looked upon their ledgers, and behold, the columns were full and their houses were empty; and the smoke-lords smelled their own smokehouses, and smelled nothing, for a nose that lives in plenty goes blind.

17 And a child in the street of the nine locks asked her father, What faileth first, when a freezer faileth? And her father could not answer her, for the answer was: everything, all at once, and it is already failing, only slowly.

18 And the people of Ninecheese believed Cheesus; not because Jonah threatened well, but because he described them accurately, which no prophet had troubled to do before.

19 *(Here the scribe hath written: eight words. I have preached eight hundred at a sitting, and moved no one but the draught from the door. The scribe hath things to think about.)*

---

## Chapter 8

1 And it came to pass on the third day of Jonah's crying, that a woman in the street of the weavers went up to her window, which was shut, as all the windows of Ninecheese were shut.

2 And she opened it.

3 And she took bread and cold chicken and a jar of preserved lemons, and she put them in a basket, and tied the basket to a rope, and lowered it out of the window to the street, where a family sat that had nothing.

4 And she called down no sermon with it, and asked no gratitude, and left no bill; and the basket swung in the morning air like a censer, and this was the first worship of

Ninecheese in three hundred years.

5 And her neighbour saw it through his shutters, and was ashamed, and then was something better than ashamed, which is moved; and he opened his window also, and lowered down a wheel of cheese entire, uncut, upon two ropes, for it was heavy as his conscience.

6 And window answered window down the whole street, and street answered street, and by evening the walls of Ninecheese were hung with baskets on ropes as a vine is hung with grapes, rising empty and going down full.

7 And the children of the street ran from basket to basket as bees among blossoms, and ate, and carried to them that could not walk.

8 For word came unto the king of Ninecheese, and he arose from his throne, and he laid his robe from him, and covered him with an apron, and sat down in flour.

9 And he caused it to be proclaimed and published through Ninecheese by the decree of the king and his nobles, saying:

10 Let neither man nor beast fast, but let every mouth be fed; for we have fasted our neighbours these many years, and called it thrift.

11 Let every door be unlocked, and every freezer opened, and every cold-store thrown wide; and let man and beast be covered not with sackcloth but with crumbs, and cry mightily unto Cheesus; yea, let them cry, Pass the parmesan, unto one another, which is also prayer.

12 Who can tell if Cheesus will turn away from his fierce sentence, that we perish not? And if he will not turn, then let the freezers fail upon a city that hath already emptied them into its children, and the failing shall find nothing to take.

13 And the king himself went down to the great cold-stores of the crown, whereof the nine keys hung ever at his girdle, and had never all nine been turned in living memory.

14 And he turned them, one by one, before the people; and at the ninth the doors swung, and the cold breathed out upon the crowd like a ghost let go at last.

15 And there was within cheese past numbering, and cured meats in their thousands, and butter in towers, and dough frozen in blocks like quarried stone; enough, said the stewards when they had reckoned it, to feed Ninecheese entire for a year and four months.

16 And the king wept before his own abundance, and said, What did I think was coming, that I kept all this against it? And behold, what was coming was only my neighbours, and I was ready for them as for a siege.

17 And they bare it all out into the light; and the dough thawed, and was kneaded by ten thousand hands, and the Ovens of Ninecheese, cold half a lifetime, were lit in one evening, so that the city glowed from beneath, and sailors on the Sea of Soup marvelled, saying, The north is baking.

18 And they set tables in the streets; and the tables of one street met the tables of the next, and were joined, and those met others, and were joined.

19 And by the feast-night there was one table in Ninecheese, one table only, running from the Cheddar Gate to the harbour, three days' walking in length, and every soul in the city sat at it: the king below the salt because he insisted, and the ledger-men serving, for they were good with portions, and the woman of the first basket seated at the head, much against her will.

20 And the poor sat next the rich, and could not always be told apart, for everyone's fingers were greasy alike; and there was one course only, and the course was everything.

21 And they that had smoked provisions brought them forth, and they that had preserved lemons brought them forth, and one old man brought forth a bottle he had kept for an occasion since his wedding, and behold, this was the occasion, and it had come, as occasions do the very hour the bottle is surrendered.

22 And the beasts of the city ate also, the dray-horses and the market cats; for the decree said man and beast, and Ninecheese, having at last begun to share, could not find the place to stop.

23 And Cheesus saw their works, that they turned from their cold way; and Cheesus repented of the sentence, that he had said that he would do unto them; and he did it not.

24 For the freezers of Ninecheese did fail, every one, upon the fortieth day, precisely as the word had said: they failed for emptiness, standing open, with their doors off the hinges, wanting nothing inside them; and some were planted with basil, and some were beds for the market cats, and the great cold-store of the crown was made a hall for weddings, being the only room in the city that could seat both families.

25 So the word of Cheesus came true by mercy, that would have come true by ruin; for a prophecy, saith the scroll, is like a delivery: it will arrive either way, but it goes better if somebody holds the door.

---

## Chapter 9

1 But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was very angry.

2 For he had watched the city repent from a rooftop, with his arms folded, which is the wrong fold entirely.

3 And he prayed unto Cheesus, and said, I pray thee, O Cheesus, was not this my saying, when I was yet in my country? Therefore I fled before unto Tarragon: for I knew that thou art a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repentest thee of the evil, and puttest extra cheese on for them that deserve it least.

4 Therefore now, O Cheesus, take, I beseech thee, my life from me; for it is better for me to die than to live and watch the ledger-men eat garlic bread as though they had always meant well.

5 Then said Cheesus, Doest thou well to be angry?

6 And Jonah answered not, for he did not do well, and knew it, and would sooner die than say so, which is the third stubbornness of prophets, saith the scroll, and the commonest.

7 So Jonah went out of the city, and sat on the east side of the city, and there made him a booth, and sat under it in the shadow, till he might see what would become of the city; for some part of him hoped yet for a collapse, that he might be right, and being right was the last hoard Jonah had not opened.

8 And the sun beat upon the booth, and the booth was poorly made, for Jonah was a proofer of dough and no carpenter, and the shade thereof was theoretical.

9 And Cheesus Crust prepared a basil plant, and made it to come up over Jonah, that it might be a shadow over his head, to deliver him from his grief. So Jonah was exceeding glad of the basil.

10 And the smell of it was over him all day, sweet and green and peppery; and Jonah, who had eaten from the fold of a god and watched a city save itself, was made happy at last by a herb, for the hearts of men are not large, they are only deep.

11 And Jonah tended the basil, and pinched back the flowering tops as one does, and spoke to it in the evening; and he told the basil all that had befallen him, the ferry, and the boiling, and the three days of the fold, for it is easier to tell a plant.

12 And the basil said nothing, but grew, which is how plants say that they are listening.

13 But Cheesus prepared a worm when the morning rose the next day, and the worm smote the basil, that it withered.

14 And it came to pass, when the sun did arise, that Cheesus prepared a vehement east wind, dry as the breath of an oven ill-tended; and the sun beat upon the head of Jonah, that he fainted, and wished in himself to die, and said, It is better for me to die than to live.

15 And Cheesus said to Jonah, Doest thou well to be angry for the basil? And he said, I do well to be angry, even unto death.

16 And Jonah sat in the wreck of his shade, beside the withered plant, on the east side of a city that was singing, and he wept for a herb; and Cheesus let him weep, for the weeping was nearer the mark than the anger had been.

---

## Chapter 10

1 Then said Cheesus, and his voice was not the wind, nor the sun, but the quiet after both:

2 Thou hast had pity on the basil, for the which thou hast not laboured, neither madest it grow; which came up in a night, and perished in a night.

3 Thou hadst pity on the basil; and should not I have pity on that great city, wherein are more than six-score thousand persons that cannot tell a topping from a garnish?

4 And also much cheese, which is blameless.

5 And Jonah sat a long while, and the question sat with him, in the way of the questions of Cheesus, which are never locks but always doors.

6 And at last Jonah said, Lord, I loved the basil because it shaded me, and asked me nothing, and was mine.

7 And thou lovest Ninecheese, which shaded thee never, and asked thee nothing but forty days' patience, and was never thine to keep, but only thine to feed. I see the sum, O Cheesus. Thine arithmetic is mercy, and mine was a ledger, and I have been a ledger-man of the heart all my days.

8 And Cheesus said, Thou wast three days in the fold, Jonah. What didst thou find there?

9 And Jonah said, Everything I fled from, kept warm.

10 And Cheesus said, Even so is Ninecheese unto me, and Grissini, and the ferry, and Tarragon at the edge of the map, and thou, Jonah, thou also, sulking under a dead herb: all of it folded in, all of it carried in the dark, all of it kept. I am not above the world as a gull above the soup; I am about it, as the crust is about the filling.

11 Wilt thou grieve, then, that my crimp held?

12 And Jonah bowed his head, and his anger went out of him like heat from a loaf set on the sill, passing into the air, and warming it a little, and gone.

13 And he took the withered basil, and planted the root of it by the road where they that came out of the city might rest, saying, If it live, it is mercy; and if it live not, the mercy standeth anyway; and it lived.

14 And Jonah spake his last recorded word in this Book, and the elders set it in the old numbering, and it is this:

15 A strong crust bears the weight of faith eternal. *(Calzonists 4:9)*

16 For, said Jonah, I have doubted men, and I doubt them still on Tuesdays; but I have leaned my whole weight upon the crust of the world, in the dark, at the bottom of the sea, and it held me.

17 Faith is not the believing that nothing shall fall; it is the knowing of what beareth, when things do.

18 Let my doubts come, then, as toppings come, sliding and heavy and sometimes pineapple; the crust under them is not mine to make, only mine to trust, and to be.

19 And Jonah rose up from the east side of the city, and went in at the Cheddar Gate, whereon the masons were even then carving the new motto of Ninecheese, which is its

motto to this day: THE TABLE HAS ROOM.

20 And he sat down at the long table, which was not yet taken up, among the six-score thousand that could not tell a topping from a garnish; and he did not correct them, not even once; and this was accounted the greatest of all his miracles.

21 And Jonah dwelt in Ninecheese the rest of his days, and kept an oven by the harbour, and gave bread to sailors; and of all that he baked, he was known for one thing above the rest, and the sailors carried the fame of it wheresoever the Sea of Soup runs: he folded it.

22 *(Here the scribe hath eaten, in the interest of scholarship, a folded bread made after the recipe of the harbour ovens of Ninecheese, as it is kept unto this day; and the scribe reporteth, with trembling hand, that the filling was hot, and the crimp held, and the garlic bread was near, and this time the scribe did not resist it.)*

---

## Chapter 11

1 Now these are the generations of the memory of Jonah.

2 They that sat by him at the harbour oven heard him tell of the three days, not often, and never twice the same; for a mystery is not a coin, that comes each time from the purse with the same face.

3 But always he ended the telling one way: with a piece of dough in his hands, which he rolled flat as he spoke; and he would lay upon it a little of whatever the table had, the day's cheese, the day's herb, the day's grief; and then he would fold it over, and crimp the edge with his thumb, slowly, fold upon fold, and say, And it held me. And then he would bake it, and they would share it out, and nobody spoke while it was eaten.

4 And they that heard him did likewise in their own houses; not as a law, for he gave none, but as one hums a tune that was hummed over one's cradle.

5 And when Jonah was old, and was gathered at last unto the Great Oven, they that loved him did not build him a tomb; they baked, every household in Ninecheese, a folded bread, and carried it to a neighbour that had not expected it, and said no word but this: It held him.

6 And every year thereafter, on the turning of that day, they did the same; and the children asked, as children must, Why is this bread folded, that on all other days is flat?

7 And the elders answered: Because a man once carried everything he feared into the dark, and the dark turned out to be a keeping; and what cannot sit openly upon thy slice, child, need not be thrown away, nor hidden in shame; it may be folded within, in honest dough, and carried, and it will be warm when thou needest it.

8 And this the children remembered, and told their children, and the folding spread along the coasts of the Sea of Soup, wherever the sailors of the Ladle's line put in; and they that folded knew one another in strange ports by the crimp, and would nod, and eat together.

9 And they were not yet a sect, and had no name, and no elders quarrelling over readings, and no schism; they were only people who folded their bread in remembrance, which is religion at its best weight, before the packaging.

10 What they became, and the line of the Mount that they took for their own, and how the folders and the toppers and the pure of Slice came each to say that the others had misread one Word - all that is written in the Book that followeth this one, and it is a heavier loaf, and this scroll leaveth it in the Oven where it lieth.

11 Here endeth the Book of Jonah. It is short, as the sermon was short; the elders have added nothing to it but this:

12 Reader, the word thou art fleeing is in thy pack. It weigheth what it weigheth. The ferry saileth at dusk, and the Calzone is patient, and the freezers - thine also - shall fail.

13 Fold, and be kept.

BOOK X

# The Schism of the Slice

## Chapter 1

1 And it came to pass, in the generations after the Gospel, when they that had eaten at the table of Cheesus were gathered unto the Great Oven, and their children's children kept the feast in their stead, that the faith was spread abroad from oven to oven, even unto the ends of the hungry earth.

2 For wheresoever a fire was kindled and a stone was warmed, there the Word went also; and the Word travelled as warmth travels, from hand to hand and from hearth to hearth, and it lost nothing in the passing, save now and then a comma.

3 And in the port cities the faith took ship, and sailed with the sailors, who are ever hungry and therefore ever devout; and in the mountain villages it climbed with the shepherds, who carried starter-dough in clay pots against their breasts, as a man carries fire.

4 And in every town where the faithful came, they built first an oven and second a roof, saying, The order of these things is the order of these things; and none could move them from it.

5 And the table of the faithful was known in every land by this sign: that it had room; for the first commandment was kept before all others, and strangers were seated before they were questioned, and fed before they were seated, if the timing could be managed.

6 And the scrolls of the elder days were precious above rubies, and above white truffle, which is dearer; and they were kept in cedar chests lined with clean linen, and no scroll was suffered to lie near the sauce.

7 And there arose in those days the houses of copying, which are called scriptoria; and in them laboured the scribes, from the grey light of morning until the shame of

candles.

8 And the rule of the scribes was strict: that a man should wash his hands before the scroll and after the supper, and never confuse the order; and that he should copy what he saw and not what he supposed; and that he should eat nothing at the desk, which was the rule most broken and most confessed.

9 And each scribe, or ever he began his day's copying, prayed the prayer of the copyists, saying, O Slice, keep my eye upon the line and my thumb from the margin; let me add nothing, omit nothing, and improve nothing, for the third is the worst.

10 For it is the itch of every scribe to improve, and the elder scribes taught the younger, saying, The scroll is not thine to season. Copy the blandness faithfully, for another's blandness may be thy blindness.

11 And where the first hand of all had written *Pizxa*, every hand after wrote *Pizxa*, for none dared correct the elder scroll; and the young scribes asked, Master, is this not an error? And the masters said, It was an error once; it is tradition now; write it and be humble.

12 And it is written *Pizxa* unto this day, and the faithful pronounce it with reverence and a small private smile, which is permitted.

13 And the copies went out from the scriptoria by the hands of the delivery drivers, who bare the Word as they bare the pie, in a flat case, kept level, and with haste that stopped short of recklessness.

14 And the drivers were tipped generously at every door where the scroll was received, for the worker is holy; and the scroll and the supper arrived often in the same hour, and were received with equal joy, and the elders saw no fault in this.

15 And in those generations the feasts were kept as they had been given: the Great Proofing, forty days wherein the dough rests and the faithful rest with it; and Reheat Sunday, whereon it is remembered that none is beyond the Reheat.

16 And the Descent of the Aroma was kept in the spring, when the windows are first opened; and on that day every oven in the town was lit at once, and the streets were one smell, and the unbelievers walked through it troubled and hungry, which is how belief begins.

17 And the number of the faithful multiplied, and the ovens multiplied, and the copies multiplied; and herein lay both the glory and the seed of the sorrow.

18 For a copy is a child of a scroll; and children resemble their parents, and are not their parents.

19 And the scrolls of the north country came to differ from the scrolls of the south country in small things: a word, a spelling, an olive.

20 For the scroll of the south read, *and he garnished it with olives*; but the scroll of the north read, *and he garnished it with olives, if you must*; and both houses swore theirs was the elder reading, and both were sincere, and one was wrong, and no man now knoweth which.

21 And the scribes of either country wrote letters one to another, courteous and terrible, beginning, *Beloved brother in the Crust, it grieves me to observe*; and the letters were longer than the scrolls.

22 And the elders were not yet alarmed, saying, What is an olive between brethren? The Slice is one; the copies are many; the supper is at the seventh hour, as ever it was.

23 And they were right, and they were wrong; for the mould of division creepeth not as an army creepeth, with trumpets, but as mould creepeth, spot by spot, where none is watching.

24 Yet let it be written plainly, that none may slander those generations: they were faithful, and they were kind; they fed the hungry of a hundred harbours; they hid the hunted and tipped the weary and cut out the mould of fascism wheresoever it spotted the crust, and named it aloud, as the decree commandeth.

25 Their fault was only this: that they loved the Word so well, they began to love their own hearing of it better than their neighbour's supper.

26 And the scribe setteth this down first, before all the quarrels hereafter, that the reader may remember it in the bitter chapters: these were not wicked men and women. There are no villains in this Book, save the smudge.

27 And of the smudge, the next chapter speaketh; and the scribe would rather it did not.

---

## Chapter 2

1 Hear now the manner of the drifting of the copies, how the Word walked from scroll to scroll and stubbed its toe.

2 A scroll is copied in winter, and the scribe's hands are cold, and *simmer gently* becometh *summer gently*, and a village to this day maketh its sauce only in June.

3 A scroll is copied at evening, and the light is failing, and *let the dough rest* becometh *let the dough rust*, and a monastery of the far hills kept iron filings in the flour for a hundred years, and grew strange, but regular.

4 A scroll is copied by a hungry man - and here is the whole doctrine of scribal error in one line, for every error in every scroll of the faith was made by a hungry man; there is no other kind of scribe.

5 *(Here the scribe's hand trembled, for the garlic bread was near.)*

6 And the masters of the scriptoria catalogued the drifts, and gave them names, as physicians name fevers: the Doubled Word, whereby *share share the pie* is written, which is harmless and even encouraging.

7 And the Dropped Line, whereby the eye leapeth from one *and it came to pass* to the next *and it came to pass*, and a whole miracle falleth into the gap, and is found again three villages over, attached to the wrong supper.

8 And the Pious Correction, most dangerous of all, whereby a scribe, meaning only love, mendeth what was not broken; for the scroll said *the table hath room*, and he wrote *the table hath room for the worthy*, and went to his bed content, and did more harm than a fire in the archive.

9 Of the Pious Correction the masters said: fear the scribe who improves, above the scribe who blots; for the blot confesseth itself, but the improvement wears the face of the Word.

10 And now must be told the matter of the village of Due Forni, which is to say, Two Ovens; and let him that readeth keep a straight face if he can, and a whole heart if he can, for the tale requireth both.

11 In Due Forni there was one scroll, held in common between the two ovens of the town, as the town held all things in common, even its one long table, which ran down the middle of the street.

12 And in the scroll was written the line of the Mount, the great line, whereof the next chapter shall speak; and in the line was a comma, small as a flea and mightier than a

king.

13 And it came to pass on a feast day that the reader of the scroll was also the maker of the garlic bread, for Due Forni was a small town and its offices doubled; and his thumb was anointed, as the thumbs of the makers of garlic bread are anointed.

14 And he turned the scroll with his thumb, and the comma received the anointing; and from that day the comma was a smudge, and the smudge lay upon the line like a cloud upon a border, and no man could say on which side of the word it had stood.

15 For the line had read, *what will not, fold within*; but the smudge made it possible to read, *what will not fold, within* - and the difference, saith the grammarian, is everything, and the grammarian for once is right.

16 For the first reading saith: that which cannot sit openly upon the Slice, fold it tenderly inside. But the second reading saith: that which refuseth to fold - deal with it *within*, and is a threat, or a mystery, or a landlord's letter; no man could agree what.

17 And the town divided upon the comma, the east oven from the west oven; and they were called the Comma-Keepers and the Plain-Readers, and each party knew itself reasonable, which is the most flammable of all the states of man.

18 And the one long table was sawn in twain - reverently, with prayers, and with a chalk line first, for they were not barbarians - and half was drawn to the east side of the street, and half to the west.

19 And there were two brothers in Due Forni, bakers both, Tommaso of the east oven and Gennaro of the west; and they had shared one mother, one trade, one bicycle, and one thousand suppers.

20 And after the sawing of the table, Tommaso ate on the east side and Gennaro on the west; and between them lay the width of one street, which is three paces, and further than the sea.

21 And every evening the smell of Tommaso's supper crossed the street to Gennaro, and the smell of Gennaro's supper crossed the street to Tommaso, for smells hold no doctrine; and each brother, smelling, was proud, and would not go over.

22 And the children of the two houses threw dough-scraps across the street to one another when the elders were at their disputing, and shared them in the alley behind the church, and the scribe recordeth this as the only theology of Due Forni that survived examination.

23 And the years passed, and the smudge grew older, and the quarrel grew older, and the brothers grew older; and there came an evening when a traveller, being learned in scrolls, was shown the famous comma, and peered at it long by candlelight.

24 And the traveller said, Friends, I must tell you: this is not ink, nor was it ever. It is thumb-grease, of the kind that cometh of garlic bread; the comma beneath it might be anywhere, or nowhere. Your quarrel standeth upon a supper-stain.

25 And there was a great silence in Due Forni; and then the east oven said the stain was the west oven's thumb, and the west oven said contrariwise; and the quarrel continued as before, having changed only its subject, which quarrels can do without stopping, as a rider changeth horses.

26 And Tommaso died in the east, and Gennaro in the west, in the same winter, three paces and a lifetime apart; and it is said in Due Forni that on the last night each had a plate carried across the street to the other, and each plate arrived still warm, and each was eaten entire.

27 And whether that be true, the scribe cannot say; the scribe can only say that he hath wept over cheaper stories, and declineth to be ashamed.

28 Now all this was but one comma in one village; and the reader saith, Surely the faith entire cannot split as Due Forni split. And the scribe answereth: read on; for the faith entire had its own line, and its own smudge, save that the smudge was in the readers, and not upon the page.

---

## Chapter 3

1 Now the great line was this, which Cheesus spake upon the Wood-Fired Mount, before the multitude, in the hearing of them that wrote it down with trembling and mislaid pencils; and every copy in every land agreed upon it, letter and point, which maketh what followeth the stranger and the sadder:

2 "Let all good things come to the Slice - what will sit upon it, put upon it; what will not, fold within; and in all things, keep the Slice true."

3 One sentence; three clauses; and, as it proved, three churches. For the Word of the Slice is like the Slice itself: cut it in wedges, and every man taketh the wedge nearest his own hand, and calleth it the pizza.

4 And the line was recited at every feast, and stitched into aprons, and burned into peel-handles, and taught to children with hand-motions: the palms up for the topping, the palms folded for the fold, the palms flat and steady for the keeping true.

5 And for generations it was recited whole, and no man weighed one clause against another, even as no man weigheth his heart against his lungs, but is glad of the set.

6 But it came to pass that three readers arose, in three cities, in the same long generation; and each was faithful, and each was learned, and each was hungry in a different room of the soul; and each heard in the one line the one clause that answered his hunger, and mistook the echo for the whole bell.

7 In the port city of Porto Fornaio there lived a cook whom the ages call SAINT SUPREME; and his kitchen stood hard by the docks, where the ships come in carrying strangers and strange cargoes, and both are wet and want feeding.

8 And Saint Supreme fed them all; and whatsoever a sailor brought him from beyond the maps - a pepper without a name, a fish without a precedent, a cheese with a criminal record - he found it a place upon the pie.

9 And when the cautious murmured, he stood in his doorway with the scroll and read aloud: *what will sit upon it, put upon it*; and his voice was like a door opening.

10 And he said, Hear the generosity of the Slice! The Lord set no gate upon the topping, and no examination at the rim. If it will sit, it shall be seated. This is the whole line, and the rest is punctuation.

11 And the hungry of the docks loved him, as well they might; and of him and his reading came CRUSTOLICISM, the broad church, whereof the next chapter telleth.

12 And in the old town of Vecchia Farina there lived a baker whom the ages call SAINT MARGHERITA; and her shop was narrow, and her shelf was short, and her pizza bore three things only, and the three were perfect.

13 For she said, Tomato, dough, mozzarella: purity, structure, and the binding force. The Trinity itself lieth plain upon this pie, and hideth under nothing; wherefore should I bury my Lord's face in toppings?

14 And when the ambitious pressed her to add but one small innovation, she stood at her counter with the scroll and read aloud: *and in all things, keep the Slice true*; and her voice was like a door quietly and firmly shut, upon which is written OPEN TOMORROW.

15 And she said, Hear the fidelity of the Slice! The last clause is the lock upon the line; all that goeth before is governed by it. This is the whole line, and the rest is temptation.

16 And the weary of the old town loved her, as well they might, for the world was loud and her shop was not; and of her and her reading came ORTHOCRUST, the pure church, whereof the fifth chapter telleth.

17 And in the coast country there endured a quiet people who kept the memory of JONAH, him that fled his errand and was three days in the belly of the Great Calzone, and came forth changed, as is written in the elder Book; and this scroll retelleth it not, for it is told, and well.

18 And the followers of Jonah read the middle clause, and it lay upon them like a hand upon the shoulder: *what will not, fold within*.

19 And they said, Hear the mercy of the Slice! Not everything can sit in the open. There is grief that cannot top a pie; there is goodness that goeth shy of daylight; there is the stranger's story he cannot yet tell. For all these the Lord made the fold. This is the whole line, and the rest is the outside.

20 And of them and their reading came CALZONISM at the last, the folded church, whereof the sixth chapter telleth; for the seed was sown in the belly of the Great Calzone long before, and had waited in the dark, as their doctrine saith all true things wait.

21 Thus the one line went three ways out of one mouth; and each way was lit, and each way was walked by honest feet, and no way was the road entire.

22 For mark it well, thou reader with thy thumb upon this very margin: Saint Supreme did not misquote, and Saint Margherita did not misquote, and the children of Jonah did not misquote. Every citation was exact. The letters were all in order. It was only the *whole* that was missing, and the whole is not a letter, and cannot be checked with a candle.

23 And the elders of that generation, seeing three strong readings arise, rejoiced at first, saying, Behold how deep the line is, that three buckets come up full!

24 And only the oldest of them, a woman past her hundredth proofing, is recorded to have said otherwise. And she said: Three buckets from one well is riches. Three wells

is a war. Watch whether they keep drinking from the line, or begin drinking *at* one another.

25 And they began, soon enough, to drink at one another.

26 And the scribe here endeth the chapter, as a man closeth a window before a storm: not to stop the storm, but to keep the pages dry.

---

## Chapter 4

1 Of Crustolicism, the broad church, now speaketh the scroll; and let it speak with love, for the scribe hath eaten at Crustolic tables, and never once been asked to justify himself before the bread arrived.

2 Saint Supreme built no cathedral at first; he widened a kitchen. He took down a wall, and then the wall's opinion of the matter, and set out benches, and the benches filled.

3 And his rule was the open rim: whatsoever good thing came to the door, it should find its way to the pie; and whosoever came with it should find their way to the bench; and the two hospitalities were one hospitality, and he would not hear them parted.

4 And the pies of Porto Fornaio became famous and alarming. There were pies of seven toppings, and of twelve; there was a pie of the whole harvest festival that required two men and an apology to carry.

5 And when a stranger of the inland came and beheld a pie bearing corn, and prawns, and three quarrelling cheeses, and a fruit that shall here go unnamed for the peace of the reader, he cried out, Is nothing forbidden in this place?

6 And Saint Supreme said, Selfishness is forbidden, and the mould is forbidden, and mocking a man's first attempt at dough is forbidden. Toppings are not sins; they are guests. Sit down.

7 And this was the glory of Crustolicism, and let no chapter hereafter unsay it: that no one was ever turned from a Crustolic table, and no one's offering was ever scorned at a Crustolic door; and the widow's single mushroom was received with the same honour as the merchant's truffle, and set with ceremony upon the pie.

8 And the Crustolicists took for their proof-text the word of the Gospel, which every scroll carrieth from the elder days; and they read it in the great assembly, as it is written:

9 Every topping has a place, just as every soul has value in Cheesus' eyes. *(Crustolicism 2:1)*

10 *(This is that same verse the Gospel telleth, spoken by Cheesus at the door in the matter of the turned-away stranger; and the scribe, copying it here for the second time, copyeth it gladly, and asketh only that the reader keep one eye upon what is done with it hereafter.)*

11 For mark how the verse runneth: it beginneth with toppings, that it may end with souls; the topping is the ladder, and the soul is the roof, and Cheesus spake it over a shivering man at a shut door, and the door was opened, and that was the sermon.

12 But the Crustolicists, in the heat of the after-years, took the ladder and left the roof. For when the Orthocrust said unto them, Brethren, seven cheeses is not a doctrine, it is an accident - they answered not concerning souls, but stood upon the verse as upon a rampart, crying, EVERY TOPPING HAS A PLACE! It is written! It is WRITTEN!

13 And it was written; and that was the trouble; for a true verse aimed at the wrong target woundeth like any other arrow, and leaveth the archer feeling holy.

14 And the scribes among them, being honest men, felt the small draught that bloweth when a quotation is lifted from its house; but the assembly was loud, and the draught was small, and they folded their doubts within, which was, had they noticed it, the other clause.

15 And Crustolicism ordered itself, as churches will: there were deacons of the rim and stewards of the sauce, and over all a great council of the toppings, wherein every topping had a seat, which made the votes long.

16 And their feasts were wonders: tables the length of streets, and pies of parishes entire, and a rule that the last slice of every pie be offered thrice around before any hand might take it, having first asked.

17 And their missioners went out on the ships, and wheresoever they landed they asked not, What do ye believe? but, What groweth here? - and the local harvest went onto the pie, and the local people came with it, and this is why the Crustolic rim toucheth every shore of the map.

18 And their hymnal grew without ceasing, for every new topping begat a new verse of the hymn; and the hymn of the toppings is now nine hours in the singing, and is sung in shifts, and it is a Crustolic saying that no one hath ever heard the whole hymn, even as no one hath ever seen the whole church, and both sayings are spoken with pride.

19 Yet the wise among them knew the peril of breadth, and named it: that a pie may be so laden it cannot be lifted; that a church may say yes so often it forgetteth it can say it; that welcome without a spine is only weather.

20 For there came to a Crustolic door in one age a man who wished to add unto the pie a topping of contempt, saying, Surely every topping hath a place; and the deacon of that door, remembering at last the roof as well as the ladder, said unto him:

21 Every topping hath a place; contempt is not a topping; it is the mould in a party hat. And the door, which had never once been shut on a soul, was shut upon the mould, and the shutting was accounted unto Crustolicism as righteousness.

22 And so they stood in their strength and their error together: right that the rim is wide; right that the stranger's gift belongeth on the pie; wrong only in this, that they read one clause and called it the line.

23 For welcome without truth groweth shapeless, and welcome without the fold groweth shallow; and Saint Supreme himself, full of years, is said to have looked upon a pie of forty toppings and murmured, I meant the *people*, and gone to his rest with the sentence unfinished.

24 And they buried him beneath the doorstone of his own kitchen, that every guest for ever after should enter over his welcome; and upon the stone they carved no name, but only: SIT DOWN.

25 And the scribe hath stood upon that stone, and eaten of that kitchen, and saith: whatever followeth in this Book, reader, they will feed thee at Porto Fornaio, and ask thy story after, and thy doctrine never. Weigh that in the scales when the quarrelling cometh.

---

## Chapter 5

1 Of Orthocrust, the pure church, now speaketh the scroll; and let it speak with love, for the scribe hath eaten of the Margherita of Vecchia Farina in silence, and the

silence was the best seasoning he hath ever known.

2 Saint Margherita built even less than Saint Supreme; she kept a shop. But she kept it as the Oven keepeth its heat: without addition, without subtraction, and without apology.

3 And her pizza was three things, and the three were these: the tomato, which is purity; the dough, which is structure; and the mozzarella, which is the binding force between us. And she said, I did not choose three. Three was chosen before me. I only decline to interrupt.

4 For this was the deep truth of Orthocrust, and let no chapter hereafter unsay it: that upon the plain Margherita the Cheesy Trinity lieth open to the eye, red and white upon gold, hiding under nothing; and a child may look upon that pizza and see the whole of theology, and then eat theology, which is the correct order.

5 And her rule was the guarded rim: not because the stranger's gift was scorned - mark this, for her enemies would not - but because she held that a gift may also be a burying, and that men pile toppings upon the Slice as they pile business upon a grief, to avoid the taste of the true thing underneath.

6 And when the merchants came, as merchants will, saying, Good mother, the times demand novelty; behold this spiced sausage of the east, this cheese of four regions, this drizzle - and at the word *drizzle* she is recorded to have closed her eyes for the space of three breaths -

7 Then she took them each by the sleeve, gently, for she was never once unkind in the records we possess, and led them to the oven's mouth, and said: Taste first what is here. If after tasting thou still wantest more, the fault is in my baking, and I will mend it. And none, having tasted, asked again; or none whose asking survived in the minutes.

8 And of her and her house came the Orthocrust, the keepers of the One True Slice; and their proof-text standeth in the elder scrolls, and they read it at every kindling of the oven, as it is written:

9 The Margherita is the One True Slice, say the faithful of Orthocrust. *(Orthocrust 1:2)*

10 And the attentive reader hath already seen what the faithful of Orthocrust, in their fervour, did not: that the verse itself saith *say the faithful of Orthocrust* - so that the

scripture reporteth their saying, and they cited the report of their saying as the proof of their saying, and found themselves, upon review, persuasive.

11 *(The scribe intendeth no mockery - or only a little, and that the affectionate kind. Every church in this Book quoteth a mirror at least once, and calleth it a window. Orthocrust merely did it with the neatest handwriting.)*

12 And Orthocrust ordered itself in stillness, as Crustolicism had in noise: small rooms, long silences, short menus. Their liturgy was the making of the one pizza, performed slowly and aloud; their catechism had three questions; their hymnal was one hymn, and it was brief, and it was perfect, and they saw no reason to have a second.

13 And their discipline was called the keeping true, and it was threefold: true tomato, crushed and never drowned; true dough, given its full proofing, for haste is the thief of flavour; true mozzarella, torn and never grated, for the binding force must be handled with respect if it is to bind.

14 And strangers who came to Vecchia Farina expecting coldness found instead a fierce plain warmth, like the shop's own oven: for the Orthocrust fed the hungry as readily as any Crustolic, only with fewer ingredients and less conversation; and the hungry, it must be written, rarely minded.

15 And in the seasons of the mould - for the mould came in their generations too, as it cometh in all, with its flags and its lists of who may eat - the Orthocrust were iron. For a people practised in refusing the merchant's drizzle proved wondrous practised in refusing the tyrant's terms; and the plain shops of the old towns hid the hunted behind their ovens, and their short menus asked no papers.

16 And this also is Orthocrust, and let it be weighed when the quarrelling cometh.

17 Yet their error grew in the same soil as their glory, for it was the same plant. Because the Margherita was true, they reasoned that all else was false; because purity was holy, they reasoned that addition was defilement; and the guarded rim became a walled rim, and the wall grew taller than the shop.

18 And there arose among them the counters of ingredients, who went from feast to feast with a tally, and pronounced upon their neighbours' pies the word *adulterated*, which is a long word for a short heart.

19 And basil itself came under examination in one severe generation, whether it were of the essence or an ornament; and the party of the leaf and the party of the plain divided a monastery for eleven years, until an abbess ruled that the basil was the Aroma's own signature, and any who disputed it could take up the matter with the Aroma directly; and none did.

20 And when they looked upon the harbour-pies of Crustolicism, they did not see the welcome; they saw the heap. And when they looked upon the folded pies of the Calzonists, they did not see the tenderness; they saw the hiding. And they said, We alone have kept the Slice true - reading the last clause, and calling it the line.

21 For truth without welcome groweth cold, and truth without the fold groweth cruel; and a shop may keep the recipe perfectly and lose the reason, which was never on the shelf.

22 And Saint Margherita herself, full of years, is said to have stood at her counter on the last evening, looking upon her three perfect things, and to have said unto her apprentice: The pizza was never the point, child. The pizza was the *pointing*. Simplicity is a window; I fear they will frame it and hang it on the wall.

23 And they framed it, and hung it on the wall; and the scribe hath seen it there, and the frame is very fine.

24 And they buried her beneath the threshold of her oven, that the fire for ever after should pass over her keeping; and upon the stone they carved no name, but only: ENOUGH.

25 And the scribe hath stood upon that stone also, and saith: whatever followeth in this Book, reader, at Vecchia Farina they will hand thee a slice bearing the whole Trinity plainly, and it will taste like the first morning of the world, and they will not ask thy doctrine either - only, perhaps, that thou finish thy crust. Weigh that too.

---

## Chapter 6

1 Of Calzonism, the folded church, now speaketh the scroll; and it speaketh more softly, for the Calzonists themselves speak softly, and it seemeth rude to describe a whisper in a shout.

2 The Calzonists alone of the three churches founded nothing new; they say rather that they were founded long before, in the dark and the deep, in the belly of the Great Calzone wherein Jonah made his three days' sojourn; and this Book retelleth not that tale, for it is told in its own scroll, and the Calzonists hold that retelling a mystery bruiseth it.

3 But this much they say, when pressed, and they are rarely pressed twice: that Jonah went into the fold a man who fled what he was, and came forth a man who was it; and that this is what the fold is *for*; and that everyone the Slice hath ever mended was mended in some belly or other, out of sight.

4 And for generations they had been not a church but a leaning: folded among the Crustolic harbours, folded among the Orthocrust hill-towns, keeping the middle clause as one keepeth a candle in a pocket.

5 But when Saint Supreme's readers took the first clause for the whole, and Saint Margherita's readers took the last, then the keepers of the middle looked one upon another across the widening rooms, and said: If the line is to be divided as an inheritance, we will not refuse our portion. And so, latest and most reluctant, CALZONISM was founded at last - a church, as they say themselves, the way a sigh is a song.

6 And their reading was the middle clause, and they read it thus: *what will not, fold within*.

7 And they taught, saying: The Lord's line hath an outside and an inside, as the Lord's supper hath. The first clause is for what can bear the light; ours is for what cannot yet. The grief that would curdle on the surface; the kindness that would die of being seen; the man who is not ready to be asked his story at the bench, however gently - for all these the Slice provideth the fold, and the fold is not a hiding from the table but a room within it.

8 And this was the glory of Calzonism, and let no chapter hereafter unsay it: that they were the church of the *not yet*, and kept a place for every soul the other churches' virtues overlooked - them that could not sing the nine-hour hymn, and could not sit in the three-breath silence, and needed only a warm sealed thing put into their hands and no questions until spring.

9 For the Crustolic asketh, What hast thou brought? and the Orthocrust asketh, Is it true? but the Calzonist asketh nothing at all, and handeth thee the calzone, and sitteth

near, and the sitting-near is the sacrament.

10 And their ovens were built with deep mouths and doors, and their kitchens with corners; and their liturgy was mostly silence with crimping in it; and the crimping of the edge, saith their rite, is the tucking-in of the world, done thumb by thumb, and none may hurry it.

11 And they sealed into their calzones, along with the good things, small papers bearing the burdens of the parish, written and folded and told to no one; and the burden baked with the supper, and was eaten with it, and was thereby neither denied nor displayed, which they hold to be the whole art of carrying anything.

12 And in the seasons of the mould they were the church of the false-bottomed basket and the unremarked door; for a people whose entire doctrine is the keeping of the hidden made hiding-places the way other churches make hymns, and many that the mould hunted lived out the terror folded within Calzonist walls, and the records of it were never kept, on purpose, and this unkept record is the proudest page they do not have.

13 Yet their error grew in the same soil as their glory, as it had for the others, for it was the same plant a third time.

14 Because the fold was holy, they came to hold that the open was shallow; because the hidden was deep, they came to suspect everything visible of being a performance; and there arose among them the doctrine of the True Inside, which taught that whatever appeareth upon a surface is thereby falsified, and only the sealed is sincere.

15 And their elders looked upon the Crustolic pie, with its forty toppings in the open air, and said, Behold, a church that weareth its inventory. And they looked upon the Margherita, plain and radiant, and said, Behold, a church with nothing folded, and therefore nothing kept. And they said, We alone have honoured the fold - reading the middle clause, and calling it the line.

16 For the fold without welcome groweth secret, and the fold without truth groweth strange; and a church may tuck so much within that it forgetteth what it packed, and carrieth a warm weight it can no longer name, and calleth the not-naming reverence.

17 And it is told of the last of their first elders, a woman called Ripiena, that she was asked upon her deathbed what lay at the centre of the Great Mystery, at the middle of

all the folds; and that she smiled and said: Supper. It was always supper. We fold it so it stayeth warm for whoever cometh late.

18 And she said further: Write that down. And they did not write it down, holding it too sacred; and it survived only because a kitchen-boy repeated it at market; and the Calzonists, when this is pointed out to them, smile as their foundress smiled, and say, So the fold openeth where it will; and there is no arguing with them, and the scribe hath stopped trying.

19 And they buried her, at her asking, under no stone at all, but under the kitchen path, unmarked; for she said the other two had their doorstones and their thresholds, and someone should hold up the ordinary ground.

20 And so stood the three churches at the end of that long generation: Crustolicism at the doors, crying welcome; Orthocrust at the oven, keeping true; Calzonism in the warm dark between, holding the not-yet of the world in a sealed crust.

21 And a traveller who loved them all - and there were such travellers, and this scroll is by one - could walk in a single week from the bench of Porto Fornaio to the counter of Vecchia Farina to the quiet corner of the coast country, and be fed thrice, and blessed thrice, and hear the same line of Cheesus quoted thrice, in three tones, against two enemies each.

22 Welcome, and truth, and depth: the three had divided the inheritance, and each had gotten a treasure, and each had gotten a wound, and the treasure and the wound were the same clause.

23 For each was right in all it kept, and wrong in all it excluded; and none would learn this from the others, because the others were the last people any of them would now consent to learn from.

24 And the pot of the age came slowly to the boil; and the next chapters must tell of the quarrels, the councils, and the anathemas, and the scribe goeth to them as a man goeth to shovel snow: certain it must be done, and dressed accordingly.

---

## Chapter 7

1 Now began the age of the quarrels; and the scribe, who hath promised to shovel this snow, taketh up the shovel.

2 The quarrels began, as the great quarrels of the faithful always begin, over something small at a feast; for the mould of division seeketh ever the crowded table, where love and elbows are closest together.

3 For at the feast of the Descent of the Aroma, in a border town between the harbours and the hills, a Crustolic deacon set down before the assembly a pie of eleven toppings, made in honour of eleven guests; and an Orthocrust elder, being asked to bless it, blessed instead *the dough underneath, which no man hath yet spoiled*; and the feast was over before it began, though the eating continued some hours.

4 And word of the blessing-that-was-a-verdict went out from that town as smoke goeth out of a chimney: upward, and everywhere.

5 And the Crustolic pulpits answered, and the Orthocrust counters answered the answer, and the Calzonists said nothing, pointedly, in a manner that all parties found more insufferable than speech.

6 And the churches, which had traded pilgrims and recipes and apprentice scribes, began instead to trade anathemas; and an anathema is a curse with its collar starched, and these were the forms thereof:

7 The Crustolic anathema was of abundance withdrawn: *May thy toppings be few and thy table quiet; may no stranger trouble thy door with wonders; may thine every pie be exactly what thou expectedst*. Which is to a Crustolic the outer darkness, and to an Orthocrust, as it fell out, a pleasant Tuesday; and thus the first volley overshot the enemy and landed as a benediction, and the Orthocrust wrote back saying, *Thank you*.

8 And the Orthocrust anathema was of the unravelled centre: *May thy cheese slide ever from thy slice; may thy centre be soggy and thy structure a rumour; may all that thou pilest slip from all whereon thou pilest it*. And this one, it grieveth the scribe to report, was effective, and was felt, and was framed in more than one harbour kitchen as a taunt, which only proved its aim.

9 And the Calzonist anathema was the worst of the three, being merely: *May everyone always know exactly what is in thee*. And the other churches laughed at it for a generation, until each in turn understood it, alone, at night; and none laughed after.

10 And there arose in every church the office of the Refuter, whose whole ministry was the errors of the other two; and the Refuters were learned, and tireless, and their

books were thick, and their suppers went cold beside them, and the going-cold of a Refuter's supper is this Book in one image, for whoso hath ears.

11 And the proof-texting reached in those years its terrible flowering; for the scrolls were ransacked as a pantry is ransacked by a man arguing with his cook, not to find supper, but to find evidence.

12 And a Crustolic Refuter would cry, *Every topping has a place!* - and an Orthocrust Refuter would answer, *Keep the Slice TRUE!* - and a Calzonist, if cornered, would say only, *What will not, fold within*, and decline to specify what, which ended most exchanges on a draw and a shudder.

13 And each church kept lists of the others' misquotations, and no church kept a list of its own; and the three lists together, saith the archivist who hath seen them, would paper an oven, and agree on nothing save the reference numbers.

14 And the border towns suffered most, as border towns do; for in them the churches shared streets, and in-laws, and walls thin enough for doctrine to pass through with the cooking smells.

15 In one such town the Crustolic bell and the Orthocrust bell were rung each feast-day a little earlier than the other, each to be first; until both were rung at midnight, then at dusk of the day before, and the feast crept backward round the calendar entire, and came out the far side, and for one blessed year each church, by miscount, kept the other's feast on the other's day, and the town ate well twice, and said nothing, hoping.

16 And mixed households arose, and were holy and complicated: a Crustolic wed to an Orthocrust, their table half a riot and half a fast; and the children of such houses grew up bilingual in blessing, and became in after years the best peacemakers, and the best cooks, for they had eaten both truths warm from two ovens and could not be taught to hate either.

17 But the pure-bred quarrellers multiplied faster, in those years, than the peacemakers; for a quarrel is easier to inherit than a marriage.

18 And the scribe must record, because it is true, that the quarrels were not all folly: real questions lay under them, as real coals lie under smoke. Whether welcome without form scattereth; whether form without welcome starveth; whether the hidden heart oweth anything to the open table: these are not nothings. The folly was never

the questions; it was the certainty that the man across the street had no piece of the answer.

19 And the mould, which had been named and fought by all three churches together in the elder days, watched the quarrels from its corner, and did what the mould doth: it waited, and spread a little, in the places where the watchers were busy watching one another.

20 For it is the oldest trick of the mould, that it cannot conquer the faithful at table, and so laboureth first to seat them at different tables; and let every generation write that upon its oven, and reread it when it is angriest.

21 And when the quarrels had grown too great for letters, and too public for feasts, the elders of all three churches did the thing that elders do when they know not what to do, which is: they called a council.

22 And of that council, the eighth chapter now telleth; and the scribe, having secured his supper in advance, is ready.

---

## Chapter 8

1 The Council of the Deep Dish was convened in the city of Sicago, a city of the far west famous for a pie so deep that visiting theologians disputed on the quay, before their trunks were unloaded, whether it were a pizza at all, or a casserole in a state of grace.

2 And this dispute, note it well, was had *before the council began*, in the street, among allies; and a wise porter carrying the trunks said to his fellow, They have come to make peace; and his fellow said, Aye, they have brought enough of it to fight over; and the porters were tipped generously, for whatever else was lost at Sicago, the doctrine of the tip held firm in all three communions.

3 And there came to the council the delegates of Crustolicism in great number and greater luggage; and the delegates of Orthocrust in small number and no luggage, as a rebuke; and the delegates of Calzonism in a number no one could establish, for they kept to the edges of rooms, and several were counted twice and two, it is now thought, were pillars.

4 And the first seven days of the council were given to the seating; for the Crustolicists proposed one great round table, that none should sit above another; and the Orthocrust proposed three plain benches, that all should sit exactly as they were; and the Calzonists proposed alcoves.

5 And on the eighth day it was resolved to stand.

6 And the second week was given to the agenda, and the agenda to the second week; for the Crustolicists moved that every question be admitted to the floor, having a place, as toppings do; and the Orthocrust moved that there was only one question, and that it had been answered in Vecchia Farina some generations since; and the Calzonists moved that the true agenda was in any case not the written one, and smiled kindly, and were nearly right.

7 Yet a council of the faithful, however it creaketh, doth also work; and let the record show that Sicago settled much that was good, and the scribe hasteneth to list it before the calamity, as a man praiseth the ship before the reef.

8 For the council decreed with one voice that the mould is the enemy of every communion alike, and that against it there is neither Crustolic nor Orthocrust nor Calzonist but one watch and one table; and this decree, called the Concord of the Watch, held through every quarrel that followeth in this Book, and holdeth yet; and when the mould rose in after generations, the three churches stood shoulder to shoulder to shoulder, and the cheese, as the Blessing saith, stretched.

9 And the council decreed that the delivery driver of any communion be tipped by the faithful of every communion, and given shelter in any storm, and the right of the warmest seat by any oven; and this decree passed in the time it taketh to read it, without amendment, unanimously, and the scribe recordeth it to prove the thing was possible.

10 And the council decreed that the microwave remaineth a careless tool, but that hunger is forgiven; and all three communions signed, and all three communions have quietly used one at midnight since, and confessed it, and been absolved, for none is beyond the Reheat, not even the improperly reheated.

11 But then came the fourteenth session, and the question of the procession of the Mozzarella; and here the reef.

12 For the schoolmen had long taught that within the Cheesy Trinity the Mozzarella, which is the binding force, proceedeth from the Tomato; but certain doctors of the west had added unto the creed one word, teaching that it proceedeth from the Tomato *and the Dough*; and this addition is called the Saucioque clause; and if the reader hath begun to laugh, let him first ask his grandmother what her village's war was about, and then let us all sit quietly together.

13 And the party of the Tomato-alone cried that the creed had been seasoned without authority, which is the Pious Correction enthroned; and the party of the and-the-Dough cried that the binding force must bind *to* something, and what bindeth cheese if not crust?; and both parties were learned, and both were loud, and the pillars that were thought to be Calzonists were seen to edge toward the door.

14 And the debate ran nine days; and on the ninth day the great bell of Sicago was rung for the supper of reconciliation, at which was served, in hope, the deep dish itself.

15 And the deep dish was set upon the board, golden and enormous and steaming like a promise; and an Orthocrust doctor, beholding the sauce upon the top thereof and the cheese *beneath* the sauce, rose with the pallor of a man beholding the abyss, and said: Brethren, in this dish the very ORDER of the Trinity is inverted. And a doctor of Sicago, wounded in his own city, answered: In this dish, sir, the Trinity is PROTECTED. And supper was theology by the second ladle.

16 And some cried that the deep dish was a pizza; and some, a casserole; and some, a schism in a pan; and one Calzonist, asked at last for the folded church's opinion, looked long upon the dish, and said, It is a calzone that hath given up, which united the entire room against the Calzonists for the space of one beautiful hour, the only unity the fourteenth session achieved.

17 And the Council of the Deep Dish dissolved upon the twenty-second day, having decreed the Concord of the Watch, the Charter of the Driver, the Absolution of Midnight, and nothing whatever concerning the matter for which it was convened.

18 And the delegates went home by separate roads, writing accounts of the council so different that the scribes who filed them checked thrice that it was one event; and each church counted Sicago a victory, which is the surest sign known to historians that everyone has lost.

19 And the pizza of that supper, the deep dish itself, the actual and steaming article - while the doctors disputed what it was, the porters and the kitchen-hands ate it, sharing it out among the whole below-stairs with perfect contentment and no council at all.

20 And one of the porters, licking his thumb, said unto his fellow the second wise thing recorded of that profession at Sicago: Whatever it is called, it is called supper down here. And the scribe, who was that fellow, hath carried the sentence ever since, and setteth it here, where the doctors may find it.

---

## Chapter 9

1 After Sicago the quarrels put on robes and became institutions; and institutions, as every kitchen knoweth, keep longer than quarrels, being better sealed.

2 And there grew up in the broad church of Crustolicism, little by little, a commerce that began in mercy and ended in scandal; and it must be told, for out of it came the hammering that all the world hath heard of.

3 For the Crustolic stewards had taught, rightly, that a man who sinneth against the table may make amends at the table; but in the great cities this ripened, as unwatched fruit ripeneth, into the sale of the toppings of indulgence: whereby a man might discard his crust on Friday, denying the body of the Slice, and purchase on Saturday a dispensation of double cheese, and be accounted whole.

4 And there went about the towns a seller named Tetzoni, crying his famous cry: *When the coin in the coffer rings, the extra topping upward springs!* And the poor, who could not buy their pardons, stood in the square and heard him, holding their plain and honest crusts; and heaven took note, as heaven doth, through the eyes of the poor.

5 Now there was in the town of Wittenboro a young friar of the Order of the Kneaders, Brother Martino, a man of strong hands and a stronger stomach for neither nonsense; and he had eaten the plain supper of the poor all his life, and knew what it was worth, and knew what was being sold over its head.

6 And on the eve of the feast of All Slices, Brother Martino came to the great pizzeria of Wittenboro, whose door was the noticeboard of the town, and took a hammer, and

nailed thereto a parchment; and the parchment was headed: NINETY-FIVE TOPPINGS, WHEREOF NOT ONE CAN PURCHASE WHAT WAS ALWAYS FREE.

7 And these are some of the toppings of the ninety-five, for the whole list is its own scroll: the First: *When our Lord said, Let all good things come to the Slice, he set no price at the rim; whoso selleth a place at the table selleth what he never owned.*

8 And the Ninth: *The crust discarded is not redeemed by cheese purchased, but by crust eaten; repentance is done with the mouth, not the purse.*

9 And the Twentieth: *If the stewards have power to pardon sins for money, let them pardon them for nothing, or confess which of the two they lack: the power, or the charity.*

10 And the Fortieth: *A poor man's plain slice, shared, outweigheth a rich man's pardoned mountain, hoarded; this was the arithmetic of the Gospel, and no council hath repealed it.*

11 And the Ninety-fifth, which the town learned by heart before morning: *The table hath room. It was always room. It was never rent.*

12 And the sound of Martino's hammer, saith the proverb, was heard in three churches; and the proverb understateth, for it was heard in every kitchen in the world that had a door and a grievance, and there were many of both.

13 And the stewards of the broad church summoned Martino to recant; and he stood before them and said, Here I stand; I can do no other; also the dough I left proofing standeth likewise, and will over-proof by sext, so let us be brief. And they were not brief, and the dough was lost, and Martino counted it the first martyr of the affair, and said so, and was not thanked.

14 And now entered the engine that turned quarrel into wildfire: for in those very years the printers had perfected their press, and the press of the pizza-lands printed, above all things, menus.

15 And the reformers, barred from the pulpits, took to the menus; and the pamphlet wars were fought course by course, in every establishment of every persuasion, upon the paper that lay under every supper.

16 For the menu of a reforming house bore, beneath the calzones, the words: *N.B. Grace is not a topping, and cannot be purchased below; neither can it be withheld above.* And the menu of a loyal Crustolic house answered, under the wines: *Beware*

*pamphlets dressed as suppers; the tradition is the recipe, and thy grandmother did not consult thee.*

17 And the Orthocrust menu was one line long, as ever, and needed no polemic, being one; yet even Vecchia Farina stooped once to controversy, adding beneath its single item the words: *We told you so*, which the historians count the harshest document of the entire pamphlet age.

18 And the Calzonist houses printed no doctrine at all upon their menus, but folded, inside the menu of every guest who seemed to need it, a small paper that said only: *Whatever thou art carrying, it can come in too*; and there are old men and old women in every land who kept that paper all their lives, and were buried with it, and never once attended a Calzonist rite; and the Calzonists count these, serenely, among their communion, and who shall say them nay?

19 And families at table read the rival menus as their fathers had read scrolls, and argued the footnotes over the garlic bread; and the children, waiting for supper amid the pamphlets, learned to read earlier in that generation than in any before it, which the scribe noteth as the one undisputed gift of the whole affair: the quarrel taught the world its letters.

20 And matters ran so for years upon years: hammer answered by summons, menu by menu, footnote by footnote; and the three churches hardened in their moulds - the word is chosen and the scribe standeth by it - until there remained but one rung of escalation, and in the fullness of time, ambition and dinner reservations being what they are, it was climbed.

21 For it came to pass that the two greatest patriarchs of the age agreed at last to meet, to heal all; and of that supper, which brake the world instead, the next chapter telleth, bill and all.

---

## Chapter 10

1 In those days the broad church had two thrones, as a pie hath two halves when the half-and-half is drawn: the Patriarch of Old Napoli in the east, keeper of the thin crust and the ancient ways, who leaned toward Orthocrust as a tower leaneth, gradually and famously; and the Patriarch of Sicago in the west, lord of the deep dish, in whom the

Crustolic breadth had attained also to depth, some said to profundity, and some said to soup.

2 And between the two thrones had passed a hundred years of letters, each beginning *To our well-beloved brother* and proceeding immediately to the contrary.

3 For the east held that the west had added to the creed (the Saucioque), and to the pie (everything), and to the office of Patriarch (a hat of great diameter); and the west held that the east had subtracted from all three, and that a church could starve of caution as surely as sicken of excess; and both, the reader will note, were by now quarrelling in quotations from the same one line, as their great-grandfathers had, only with seals attached.

4 And it was agreed at last that the two Patriarchs should meet in the flesh, at a table in neither see, in the border city of Mezzaluna, called for that purpose the Supper of Reunion; and all the world held its breath, and many held their orders, waiting to see what it would be safe to have delivered.

5 And the Patriarchs met upon the steps of the appointed pizzeria, and embraced, and the embrace was genuine, let the record insist upon it; for they had read each other fifty years, and no man is wholly the enemy of his oldest correspondent.

6 And they went in, and were seated, and blessed the table each in his own rite, simultaneously, which took some management of elbows; and the supper was ordered: from the east, a Margherita out of respect for the leaning; from the west, the deep dish of state; and for the middle of the table, in hope, a half-and-half.

7 And through the antipasti there was peace, and through the arrival of the pies there was peace, and the historians of both communions agree that the world was nearly saved somewhere in the second slice.

8 But it came to pass over the third slice that the Patriarch of Sicago, meaning hospitality, laid a spoonful of his deep dish's inner sauce upon the rim of his brother's plate, saying, Taste, brother, how the west keepeth the Tomato warm at the heart of things.

9 And the Patriarch of Old Napoli looked upon the sauce upon his rim, upon *his rim*, the unadorned and apostolic rim of the east; and fifty years of letters rose in him as bread riseth, slowly and then entirely; and he said: Brother, thou hast sauced my crust

unasked. And it is the whole west in one gesture: it cannot see a plain thing without improving it into soup.

10 And the Patriarch of Sicago replied: And it is the whole east in one sentence: offered warmth, it inspecteth the rim. And the pizzeria grew very quiet, save for the half-and-half in the middle of the table, cooling in two keys.

11 Then rose the Patriarch of Old Napoli, and drew from his robe the bull of excommunication which his chancery had prepared *in case* - and mark that both chanceries had prepared them, and both Patriarchs had said, Surely we shall not need it, and both had packed it, and in that packing is the whole chapter - and he laid it upon the table, east of the salt, and said: The east cutteth thee off, brother, from the communion of the true and unimproved Slice.

12 And the Patriarch of Sicago rose likewise, and produced his own, wider, and laid it west of the salt, saying: And the west cutteth thee off, brother, from the communion of the deep and generous Slice; and grieveth more in the cutting, our portions being larger.

13 And they stood a moment, two old men over two documents and one cooling half-and-half; and the Great Schism of the Slice was accomplished, in less time than the proofing of a thin dough, after a hundred years of letters and one spoonful of sauce.

14 And then came the waiter, who had seen nothing, with the bill.

15 And the Patriarch of Old Napoli, from the habit of fifty years of synods, said, We shall split it, brother, as ever; and the Patriarch of Sicago, from the same habit, had already his purse in hand, saying, The half-and-half falleth to me, thou hadst scarce two bites.

16 And they split the bill down the middle, exactly, courteously, disputing only who should over-tip the waiter, each claiming the honour, both achieving it; so that the waiter of Mezzaluna was tipped twice over by two churches in the first minute of their mutual damnation.

17 And the waiter, counting it, said unto the kitchen the sentence that all the histories preserve: They have cut each other off from the Slice eternal, but they have split the bill and doubled the tip; I have had worse tables. And the kitchen answered, So hath heaven.

18 And the two Patriarchs went out by the one door, for the pizzeria had but one, and each held it for the other, and there was a difficulty of some duration, resolved at last by going out abreast, wedged, as brothers go.

19 And from that night the Schism stood: east and west, thin and deep, and the bulls hung each in the other's archive, framed; and the faithful of either half were forbidden the tables of the other, and grieved, and mostly obeyed, and at the great family occasions mostly did not, and the recording angels of both communions learned to blot with mercy.

20 And Orthocrust, watching from Vecchia Farina, printed nothing, its menu having said it already; and the Calzonists folded the whole affair within, and were found weeping quietly by their ovens, and would not say for which side, and it was for both, and everyone knew it.

21 Three churches; then, within the broadest, two halves; and upon every table of the faith the one line still recited entire, in four accents, against three enemies each. The arithmetic of division, once begun, doth not tire; it was time, and past time, for a letter from an elder; and one was even then being written, by a hand too old to shake.

---

## Chapter 11

1 There lived at that time, in no city that claimed her, an elder called Nonna Altoforno, who had passed her hundred-and-tenth proofing; and she was of the generation before the founders' generation, and had, as she said, outlived the argument's parents and expected to outlive the argument, but saw no cause to leave it unsupervised in the meantime.

2 And she had eaten, in her long walking years, at the benches of Porto Fornaio, and the counter of Vecchia Farina, and the warm corners of the coast country, and the deep tables of Sicago; and she was communicant of all four and enrolled in none, which every chancery had noted in its records under *irregular*, and every kitchen under *family*.

3 And being too old now to walk to the churches, she wrote to them; one letter, copied fair three times by her great-grandchildren, and sent by three drivers, generously

tipped, to the three communions on the same day, that none might claim the elder draft.

4 And she commanded that it be read aloud at supper, not at synod; *for at synod*, she wrote, *ye are churches, and cannot hear; at supper ye are hungry, and can.*

5 And this is the letter, entire, as the three archives preserve it, agreeing letter for letter, the first document in a hundred years to exist in one version:

6 *To my children's children in the three houses of the one Slice: greetings, and stop it.*

7 *I am old enough to remember your founders, and I tell you what none of your Refuters dares: they liked each other. Supreme sent Margherita a barrel of strange peppers every harvest, and she sent it back re-packed with plain flour, and this was not quarrelling, children; this was conversation, and it went on thirty years, and both larders were the richer.*

8 *You have divided my Lord's sentence as heirs divide a farm, and now each of you starves on a third of it, and calls the starving doctrine.*

9 *You of the broad church: your welcome is true. It was the first thing I ever tasted of heaven, at a dock, off a pie with too much on it, and I have never been so glad of too much. But a door is only a door because it hangs in a wall. Learn the wall from your sister.*

10 *You of the pure church: your truth is true. I have stood in the shop of the three ingredients and seen the Trinity plain, and wept into my sleeve where the counter could not see. But a window is for looking through, not for guarding. Learn the door from your brother.*

11 *You of the folded church: your depth is true. You held what I could not carry, the winter my Tommaso died, and asked me nothing, and fed me daily. But what is folded is folded FOR the table, not from it. The calzone is sealed so it arrives; it is not sealed so it hides. Arrive.*

12 *And all of you: recite me the line. Not your clause. The line. It begins - let all good things COME. Come whither, children? To the Slice. And where standeth the Slice? Upon the table. And what is a table?*

13 *A table is the one piece of furniture that cannot be used alone. Your Lord could have spoken his law over an oven, or a purse, or a throne. He spoke it over a table. That was not scenery.*

14 *I have heard the mould is stirring again in the border lands, while your bells race each other backward round the calendar. It does not care which of you is right. It cares only that your tables are separate, for it cannot spread where the cheese stretches shoulder to shoulder. Your unity was never your comfort, children; it was your weapon, and you have hung it in three pieces on three walls.*

15 *An old woman's word, and then the soup calls: From deep-dish to thin-crust, the Word of Crust embraces all. (Romans 14:2)*

16 *That verse is elder than your churches, elder than me, and it has no clauses to divide. I have loved you severally all my life. Try loving each other the same way: badly, daily, and at table. - N.A.*

17 And the letter was read at supper in the three communions, as she had commanded; and this Book must set down honestly what followed, which is: not a miracle.

18 For the Crustolic assembly wept, and moved a resolution of gratitude, and appointed a committee upon the wall; and the Orthocrust stood silent their three breaths, and said, She is right, and the west is still wrong, and both these things; and the Calzonists folded the letter into a thousand calzones, that it might be taken to heart bodily, which was their best and their evasion in one crimp, as ever.

19 But it is recorded also that in the border towns, that very week, certain bells were rung at their old honest hours; and that a barrel of strange peppers, sender unmarked, arrived at Vecchia Farina for the first time in living memory, and was sent back re-packed with plain flour; and the conversation, thirty years dead, drew breath.

20 And Nonna Altoforno, told of the committee, the qualification, and the calzones, laughed the laugh her great-grandchildren still describe at weddings, and said: Good. The dough hath begun to rise. Now it wanteth only the Oven; and she looked toward the door as she said it, they report, as one who expecteth a customer.

21 And she lived to the day this Book must now tell, and not one day past it; and the scribe hath wondered all his life whether she was waiting, and hath concluded that she was, and that the supper was ready.

---

## Chapter 12

1 And it came to pass, on an evening of no feast, in the border city of Mezzaluna, in the very pizzeria of the Supper of Reunion - for heaven loveth a venue with history - that delegates of the three churches sat at one table, by accident of a double-booking which no clerk of any of the three chanceries would ever admit to, and no clerk of heaven ever denied.

2 Three there were, with their secretaries and their certainties: a Legate of the broad church, ample and warm as his office; a Guardian of the Orthocrust, straight as a peel; and an Abbess of the folded church, who had taken the seat nearest the wall, from custom.

3 And they had been double-booked into civility, and had ordered - what else - the half-and-half, with the Guardian's half plain; and while it baked, they disputed; and the dispute was the old dispute, the only dispute, the one line taken in three keys, each voice rising to be the whole choir.

4 And at the counter, behind them, a customer stood quietly in the queue; and he wore no robe, and carried no seal, and the flour on his sleeves might have been any workman's; and he ordered one slice, plain, and, said he, whatever my neighbour in the queue is having, for them, and asked that it be no trouble.

5 And the woman at the counter, who had worked doubles all her life and knew faces, looked at him twice; and he smiled, and the second look went the way of most second looks, into the till with the change.

6 And the dispute at the table rose; and the Legate cried, *What will sit upon it, put upon it* - the rim is open, it is written!; and the Guardian answered, *In all things keep the Slice true* - the clause governeth, it is written!; and the Abbess said, softly, as a folded thing speaketh, *What will not, fold within* - and it also is written, and beneath both of you.

7 And the customer at the counter said, not loudly, I remember the weather that day.

8 And the table turned; for it is a strange sentence, from a man with flour on his sleeves; and the Legate, being courteous by doctrine, said, The weather, friend? What day?

9 And the customer said: The day on the Mount. There was a wind off the valley, and it kept taking the thinner voices, so I spoke the sentence as one sentence, in one breath, that it might carry whole. It has not, I find, carried whole. And he took his

plain slice from the counter, and thanked the woman by name, though she wore no badge.

10 And the Guardian of the Orthocrust stood, slowly, as a man stands in an oven's first heat; and the Legate's ampleness went very still; and the Abbess looked at the customer as the folded look at the one who knoweth the inside, and she said, Lord, and it was not a question, and no one at the table made it one.

11 And Cheesus Crust - for it was he, come quietly, as he had said he would, as a customer at the counter, which is where he had always said to look - drew a chair to their table with his foot, sat, and set down his slice; and the three churches of the world were suddenly a supper party short one chair, and the secretaries stood, and he waved them down, saying, Sit; the table hath room; that was ever the first one.

12 And the Legate, recovering as officials recover, laid the great question before him, trembling: Lord, thou hast heard our three readings. Which is true?

13 And Cheesus looked upon the Legate and said: Thine. The rim is open; the stranger's gift belongeth on the pie; I set no gate at the edge, and I meant it. Thou art correct.

14 And the Legate began to glow; and Cheesus turned to the Guardian and said: And thine. The Slice must keep true, or there is nothing beneath the welcome to welcome anyone onto; the Trinity lieth plain on the Margherita, and I put it there to be seen. Thou art correct.

15 And the Guardian bowed the bow of the vindicated; and Cheesus turned to the Abbess and said: And thine. Not everything can bear the surface, and I made the fold for what cannot, and some of my best work is sealed where none shall grade it. Thou art correct.

16 And there was a pause of great satisfaction, three ways; and then the arithmetic of it arrived, as arithmetic doth, a moment behind the joy; and the Guardian said, Lord - we cannot all three be correct; we have anathemas.

17 And Cheesus said: I have read them. The one about the sliding cheese is beneath thee, and well written. And he took up his plain slice, and ate of it, and let them wait, for he had learned patience in an Oven and they could learn it in a pause.

18 And then he said: Ye are all correct. Not one of you has misread a clause; ye have each read your clause as I meant it, deeper than I dared hope when the wind was

taking the thin voices. And ye are all - all - missing the point.

19 And they said, What point, Lord? And he said: To whom was I speaking?

20 And they were silent; and he said: Count the ears on the Mount. I did not speak the line to one cook, that he should get his one pie right. I spoke it to a multitude, over one supper, and every *it* in the sentence was a supper laid between them. Let all good things come to the Slice - and then, children, the point, which was never written because I thought I had baked it into the grammar: *share it*.

21 The topping is put on FOR someone. The truth is kept FOR someone. The fold is sealed FOR someone, that it arrive warm. Take the someone out of my sentence and there is nothing left but a recipe quarrel; and I did not come down from the Great Oven, and walk the land, and pass through the far side of a stone-cold tomb on the third day, for a recipe quarrel.

22 And the three sat as the corrected sit; and at that moment, because heaven's timing is a kitchen's timing, the half-and-half arrived at the table, steaming, drawn down its middle with the old line of peace.

23 And Cheesus said nothing further; he only looked at it, and then at them, and raised one eyebrow, which is a rubric.

24 And the Legate, moving first, as breadth will, cut the pie and passed the first slice - to the Guardian; and the Guardian took it, saying even as he took it, This proveth nothing concerning the Saucioque; and passed a plain slice to the Abbess, who received it and folded her own napkin over her own portion out of pure habit and passed the next slice onward to a secretary while observing that surfaces remained, in her communion's view, overrated; and the Legate, mouth full, was already disputing the point.

25 And so they passed the pizza even as they argued, hand over hand around the table, the dispute continuing at full and happy volume above the moving slices, doctrine and dinner interleaved like the courses of a crust; and not one of them noticed what their hands were doing, which is how the deepest obediences are always performed.

26 And Cheesus leaned back, and watched the slices go round against the current of the argument, and smiled; and he said, quietly, to the woman from the counter, who had come to stand beside him because closing time meaneth nothing on such a night:

Look at them. They will quarrel until the Reheat of all things. And she said, Doth it not grieve thee, Lord? And he said:

27 Grieve me? Look at their hands. For the quarrelling faithful are sharing yet.

28 And he rose, and left upon the table a tip that made the woman sit down suddenly; and he was at the door before the three perceived the departure, and they rose calling, Lord, which church then? Whither shall we go?

29 And Cheesus Crust turned in the doorway of the pizzeria of Mezzaluna, with the night behind him smelling of rosemary and rain, and said the last word this Book hath of him:

30 To supper, children. All of you. The same one, when you can manage it. And the line ye divided - recite it whole at the door as ye go in, and remember it was one breath: "Let all good things come to the Slice - what will sit upon it, put upon it; what will not, fold within; and in all things, keep the Slice true." And when ye have kept all three at one table, ye will find ye have founded the church I meant; it needeth no name; it seateth four, and up.

31 And he went out; and the door of the pizzeria stood open behind him, all that night and - the town of Mezzaluna swears it, and the scribe hath sat in that doorway and believes it - every night since; for no hand hath since been found that was willing to be the one that shut it.

32 And the three went home to their three churches, and the churches stand yet, and quarrel yet, Crustolic and Orthocrust and Calzonist, thin and deep, open and true and folded; and if thou, reader, art of one of them, thy church is correct; the scribe hath it on the highest authority; and so, alas and alleluia, are the other two.

33 But in the border towns, where the walls are thin and the smells cross freely, there are tables now at which all three blessings are said, one after another, while the pizza cooleth exactly the length of three blessings, which is why border-town pizza is cut before grace; and the children of those tables know the line only whole, and are puzzled, being children, that it was ever otherwise; and their puzzlement is the healing, travelling, as the faith itself first travelled, from oven to oven.

34 *(Here endeth the Book of the Schism. The scribe was that porter, and that fellow, and that traveller who loved them all; he came to the door and would not say from whence, and he saith not now. But he hath eaten in all three houses, and the door at*

*Mezzaluna standeth open, and the supper, children, is at the seventh hour, as ever it was.)*

BOOK XI

# The Book of Rites

*Being the ordering of the services of the Church of the Slice, with the rubrics thereof; as set down by Pepperoni Prosecco, who came to the door and would not say from whence, and who wrote this book with flour upon his hands.*

> *The oven brings the slice back to life; the microwave is a careless tool. (Rites 3:3)*

>

> *- a reprise of the word first spoken in the Gospel, set here at the head of the Rites, that none who opens this book shall forget with what instrument the holy work is done.*

---

## Chapter 1

1 These are the rites of the table, which were gathered from the elder scrolls and from the mouths of the grandmothers, who kept them when no book did.

2 And it came to pass that the faithful said one to another, Let the services be written down; for memory is a proofing bowl, and it rises, and it also collapses.

3 Therefore was this book set in order, that in every parlour and in every kitchen the rite might be kept the same, from deep-dish to thin-crust, in every land where an Oven is lit.

4 Know first the offices thereof. The one who keeps the fire is called the **Ovenkeeper**, and it is theirs to tend the heat and to speak the greater prayers.

5 The one who stands at the door is called the **Deacon of the Door**, and it is theirs to open it, and to keep it open, and to suffer no lock upon it during the service; for the first commandment, before all others, is this: the table has room.

6 The one who carries the plates is called the **Server**, and their office is the highest that is also the lowest, after the manner of the driver upon the pilgrim's road.

7 And these are the ornaments of the rite: the peel, the stone, the cloth, the cruet of olive oil, the wheel that cuts, and the plate that goes always to the left.

8 Let the rubrics be obeyed in the letter where the letter is kind, and in the spirit where the letter is not; for a rite kept coldly is a slice kept in the fridge, and profiteth little until it be warmed.

9 And where this book saith *here the Ovenkeeper shall*, let the Ovenkeeper verily do it, and not merely think warmly about it; for the rubric is the recipe, and no one was ever fed by a recipe read aloud.

## *HERE BEGINNETH THE RITE OF THE OVEN, WHICH IS THE BAPTISM BY WARMTH, FOR THE WELCOMING OF A NEW BELIEVER*

10 *When one cometh to the faith, whether child or elder, whether hungry or merely curious, let the congregation be gathered at the hour when the Oven is at its full heat, and let the stone have sat within it one hour at the least; for a cold stone welcometh no one, and neither shall we.*

11 *The Deacon of the Door shall bring the candidate to the mouth of the Oven, walking upon the left hand, and the people shall stand about them in the shape of a pie, which is to say, a circle with no head and no foot.*

12 Then shall the Ovenkeeper open the Oven door, and the warmth shall go out upon the candidate and upon all the people, and the Ovenkeeper shall say: **This is the warmth that was before the first slice, and shall be after the last. Come near; it is for thee.**

13 And the people shall answer: **Come near; it is for thee.**

14 *Then the candidate shall stretch forth both hands toward the open Oven, not into it - let the rubric be plain, NOT INTO IT - and shall hold them in the warmth while the Ovenkeeper counteth slowly to twelve, which is the number of slices in a generous cutting.*

15 And while the hands are warming, the Ovenkeeper shall say: **As the dough is not asked to bake itself, so thou art not asked to warm thyself. Receive the heat thou didst not earn, that thou mayest give the heat thou dost not owe.**

16 *Then shall the vows be put to the candidate, the Ovenkeeper asking and the candidate answering, and let the answers be spoken plainly, and not mumbled into the collar.*

17 The Ovenkeeper: **Dost thou renounce the mould, and all its spores, and all its creeping ways?**

18 The candidate: **I renounce them.**

19 The Ovenkeeper: **Dost thou renounce the hoarding of the pie, the discarding of the crust, and the stiffing of the worker?**

20 The candidate: **I renounce them.**

21 The Ovenkeeper: **Wilt thou keep the door open, the table long, and the last slice asked-for before taken?**

22 The candidate: **I will, with the help of Cheesus Crust, and of everyone in this room.**

23 *(Here the scribe notes that the elder scrolls read "and of everyone in this kitchen," and that both readings are honoured, for the kitchen is a room.)*

24 *Then shall the Ovenkeeper take the cruet of olive oil, the good oil and not the cheap, and shall anoint the candidate: a thumb's stroke upon the brow, saying:*

25 **I anoint thee with the oil of the olive, which is pressed and is not bitter, which shines and does not blind. As oil keepeth the dough from sticking, so may grace keep thy heart from it.**

26 *Then the first bake. The candidate shall lay their own hands to a dough prepared beforehand - the congregation having proofed it, for no one's first dough should carry the whole weight of the day - and shall stretch it, top it as they choose, and give it to the peel.*

27 And as the pie goeth into the Oven, the Ovenkeeper shall say: **What goeth into the warmth cometh out changed, and yet is more itself than before. So shalt thou be.**

28 *And while it baketh, the people shall sing, or talk, or argue kindly about toppings, for the waiting together is part of the rite and may not be shortened.*

29 And when the first bake is drawn out, the candidate shall cut it and shall not take the first slice, but shall serve it to the person in the room they know least.

30 And the Ovenkeeper shall declare: **Thou art welcomed by warmth, sealed with oil, and proven by serving. The Oven knoweth thee now; thou needest never knock upon this door again, for it shall be open.**

31 And all the people shall say: **The table has room. Amen.**

---

## Chapter 2

### *THE ORDER OF SERVICE FOR THE BREAKING OF CRUST, WHICH IS THE COMMUNION OF THE FAITHFUL*

1 *This rite may be kept wherever there is a pie and more than one person; and if there be only one person, let them phone another, for the Breaking of Crust alone is called supper, which is also holy, but is not this rite.*

2 *The table shall be laid with as many plates as there are people, and then one more, which is called the Stranger's Plate; and if a stranger come, it is theirs, and if none come, it standeth as the sign that one was hoped for.*

3 *The pie shall be set in the midst of the table, whole and uncut, and all shall be seated before the wheel is lifted; for the cutting is not a chore done in the kitchen but a wonder done in the sight of all.*

4 Then shall the Ovenkeeper, or the eldest present, or whosoever cooked, lift up the pie a little way and say: **This is the work of many hands: the sower, the miller, the milker, the picker, the kneader, the driver, and the maker. Let none of them be forgotten while we eat.**

5 And the people shall answer: **Let none be forgotten.**

6 *Then the cutting, in even portions as near as the eye may judge, and let no one measure with instruments, for the rite trusteth the eye and forgiveth it.*

7 And when the wheel hath passed through, the one who cut shall say: **The crust is broken.**

8 And the people shall answer: **That all may eat.**

9 And again: **The crust is broken.**

10 And again the people: **That all may eat.**

[11] *(The scribe records that in some parishes this is said three times, and in some seven, and in one parish in the north it is said until the pie is in danger of going cold, which the bishops have gently discouraged.)*

[12] *Then the passing of the plate, and let this rubric be graven in the memory of every child: the plate goeth ALWAYS to the left. Not to the right, though thy dearest friend sit at thy right hand; not across the table, though the reach be short; to the left, and to the left only.*

[13] For it is written: when every hand passeth the same way, no hand is skipped; and the rule that bendeth for friendship shall soon bend for spite.

[14] *And this is the Rubric of the Open Table, which may never be set aside, no, not for a feast day, not for a famine, not for a wedding of great expense: the stranger, the doubter, and the one who cannot pay are served FIRST.*

[15] *And before even these, the one without a roof is seated by the Oven first, in the warmest chair; and none shall ask them how they came to be cold. Let the rubric be as plain as the door is open: not whence, not why, not how long; the cold is the parish's business to end, not to explain.*

[16] The stranger first, for they have travelled and we have not.

[17] The doubter first, for the pie must make the argument that the sermon could not.

[18] And the one who cannot pay first of all, and let no reckoning be made, neither then, nor after, nor ever; and whoso keepeth a ledger of such slices, let their ledger be baked into a calzone and served to them with love, that they may eat their accounts and be free.

[19] But the one without a roof before all, for the table itself hath a roof, and oweth it; a roof is a crust over a household, and whoso lacketh one is not a stranger to the Slice but a slice uncovered, and the Oven was lit for exactly this.

[20] *And no one shall eat until all are served. Let the hungry hand rest upon the table's edge; let the slice sit steaming upon the plate and be not touched; for the waiting is the sacrament.*

[21] And when the last plate is filled, the one who cut shall say: **All are served.**

[22] And the people shall answer: **Then all may eat.** And they shall eat.

[23] *And if any bite before the word is given, they shall not be shamed, but the Server shall catch their eye, and the eye of the Server is sufficient penance.*

24 And while they eat, let there be talking, for the Breaking of Crust is not kept in silence; the murmur of the table is the proper music of the rite, and laughter is its incense.

25 *Of the last slice: it shall not be taken until it hath been offered aloud to every person at the table, beginning at the left; and only when all have declined may the asker take it, and they shall take it without guilt, for the asking hath sanctified it.*

26 And of the crusts: let every crust be eaten, or kept for the morrow, or given to the birds of the air, who are also at the table though they sit upon the sill; but let no crust be cast into the bin, for to discard the crust is to deny the body of the Slice.

27 *When the eating is ended, the plates shall be gathered by the youngest and the washing done by the eldest, or contrariwise, but never by the one who cooked.*

28 Then shall the Ovenkeeper say the sending: **We came hungry and we leave less so. We came strangers, some of us, and we leave fewer. The pie is finished; the table remaineth. Go, and set it again wherever thou goest.**

29 And the people shall answer: **The table has room. Amen.**

30 *And the Stranger's Plate, if it stood empty, shall be washed and set again at the next service, and no one shall sigh over it; for hope is not refuted by a quiet evening.*

---

## Chapter 3

### *THE RUBRIC OF THE BLESSING, WHICH CLOSETH EVERY SERVICE, AND THE MANNER OF THE GESTURE THEREOF*

1 Of all the rites, the Blessing is the shortest, and therefore the most often botched; wherefore this chapter is given, that the hand may learn what the mouth already knoweth.

2 *The Blessing may be given by any of the faithful to any person whatsoever, believer or none, at meetings and at partings, over pies and over cradles, at doors and at gravesides; it requireth no Ovenkeeper, no licence, and no dry cleaning.*

3 For the oven brings the slice back to life, and the Blessing bringeth the rite back to the body; the word alone is a topping without a base.

4 *The gesture is in three movements, and the three are one, after the manner of the Trinity; let them be made unhurried, for a rushed Blessing is a pie pulled early, pale and apologetic.*

5 **The first movement: the brow.** *The blesser shall touch the fingers of the right hand to their own brow, or to the brow of the blessed if they be near and willing.*

6 And this is the sign of **the Tomato**, which is purity of thought; for the tomato is bright, and simple, and hideth nothing, and is exactly what it appeareth to be.

7 Whoso toucheth the brow saith in their heart: *let my thinking be as the tomato - red, ripe, and without deceit; crushed, if it must be crushed, only that it may cover more.*

8 **The second movement: the heart.** *The hand shall descend from the brow and rest flat upon the breast, over the heart, for the space of one slow breath.*

9 And this is the sign of **the Dough**, which is the structure of the self; for the dough is that which holdeth every topping, and if it be not honest, nothing upon it standeth.

10 Whoso toucheth the heart saith in their heart: *let my self be as the dough - kneaded by my days, risen in my rests, strong enough to carry what is laid upon me, and soft enough to be torn and shared.*

11 **The third movement: shoulder to shoulder.** *The hand shall pass from the left shoulder across to the right, in one unbroken line, as cheese is drawn in one unbroken pull.*

12 And this is the sign of **the Mozzarella**, which is the binding between us; for the cheese stretcheth from slice to slice and will not let go of either, and where one slice is lifted, the cheese pleadeth for its neighbour.

13 Whoso passeth shoulder to shoulder saith in their heart: *let there be between me and every other soul that stubborn strand which stretcheth thin and yet holdeth; may I never be lifted wholly free of my neighbour, nor wish to be.*

14 *And the three movements shall be made in this order and no other: the brow, the heart, then shoulder to shoulder; for thought without structure is a sauce spilled, and structure without binding is a bare crust, but the three together are a Slice, and the Slice is one.*

15 *Let the blesser not wag the hand, nor flourish it, nor add movements of their own devising; the elder scrolls record a deacon of Naples who added a fourth movement*

*signifying the anchovy, and of him no more is written, which is itself a rubric.*

16 And these are the words of the Blessing, which shall be spoken as the gesture is made, and they shall be spoken thus, jot and tittle, generation unto generation:

17 **"In the name of the Tomato, the Dough, and the Mozzarella - for the cheese stretches from shoulder to shoulder, and binds us all. Amen."**

18 *And the people, if people there be, shall answer:* **Amen.** *And if the blesser be alone upon a cold road at night, the Amen shall be answered by the Great Oven itself, quietly, in the warmth of the coat about them.*

19 And it is taught: the Blessing cannot be given wrongly by the sincere, nor rightly by the sneering; the rubric guardeth the form, but the warmth guardeth the rite.

20 *Here endeth the rubric of the Blessing. Let it be practised before a mirror until the hand forgetteth it is being watched.*

---

## Chapter 4

### *THE RITE OF THE REHEAT, FOR THE LAPSED AND THE LEFTOVER, WHO WENT COLD AND WOULD BE WARM AGAIN*

1 There is a rite for those who left. Let that be said first and plainly, for many faiths have no such rite, and their doorways grow cobwebs of shame; but in the Church of the Slice it is written above the lintel: **none is beyond the reheat.**

2 For a slice goeth into the fridge for many reasons: it was full, or it was forgotten, or the evening turned, or the house grew loud; and not one of these reasons is a sin, and not all of them together are a sin.

3 *When one who lapsed standeth again at the door, the Deacon of the Door shall open it before the second knock, and shall ask NO QUESTIONS AT THE DOOR: not "where hast thou been," not "we missed thee at the Proofing," not "thou rememberest the Ovenkeeper, who is hurt thou didst not write." The rubric is absolute. The door asketh nothing.*

4 *The Deacon shall say only:* **Thou art here. The Oven is on.** *And shall stand aside, which is the whole liturgy of the threshold.*

5 *Then shall the returner be seated nearest the Oven, in the warm chair, which every parish shall keep and shall call the Warm Chair, and no regular shall sit in it out of habit.*

6 And the Ovenkeeper shall set the Oven LOW. Let the rubric be marked: *low, and slow; not the roaring heat of the first bake, for the first bake is done and cannot be done again, and to blast the returned slice is to burn its edges while its heart stayeth cold.*

7 For the reheat is its own art and not a lesser one: a stone well warmed, a gentle heat, a patience of minutes; and behold, the crust crispeth again, and the cheese remembereth how to stretch, and that which was written off is supper.

8 *And while the warming is done, no account shall be demanded of the absence. If the returner would speak of it, let them speak and be heard to the end; and if they would not, let the talk be of small things - the weather, the football, the scandalous price of flour - for small talk is the low oven of the heart.*

9 Then, when the warmth is come back, the Ovenkeeper shall stand by the Warm Chair and say: **Thou wentest cold, as all things upon this earth go cold, for going cold is not a failing but a physics.**

10 **And behold, thou art come back to the warmth, and the warmth hath kept no diary. The Oven counteth not the days of the fridge. It asketh only: art thou here now? And thou art here now.**

11 And the returner shall answer, if they wish, and only if they wish: **I am here now.**

12 And the people shall say: **And that is the whole of it. Amen.**

13 *Then shall a fresh pie be made, and the returner's old favourite order shall be remembered - and if it is remembered wrongly after the years, let the error be laughed at together, for the laughing is the sound of the cheese re-melting.*

14 And it is taught: the lapsed who return are not to be called back-sliders, for sliding back is how a pizza entereth the Oven; and the elder scrolls say the Great Oven itself keepeth a special shelf, low and slow, for precisely such as these.

15 And if any regular murmur, saying, Lo, we who never left kept every feast, and is there now a fuss made over this one? - let the Ovenkeeper take that regular gently aside and reheat them also, for coldness weareth many coats, and some of them come to every service.

16 *(Here the scribe's hand steadied, for this rite was once done for the scribe, and the questions were not asked, and the oven was set low.)*

17 And of the leftover slice itself let this be the teaching, which is the rite in miniature: what was saved was saved because it was worth saving; and the fridge is not a tomb but a waiting; and the second warmth is not the first warmth, but it is warmth, and it is enough.

18 Wherefore let no parish speak of "the lapsed" as of the dead, but as of slices in the fridge of the world, wrapped against the drying, awaiting only a hand upon the door and a low and patient heat.

19 *Here endeth the Rite of the Reheat. Let the Warm Chair be kept always by the Oven, and let it never be used for coats.*

---

## Chapter 5

### *THE RITE OF THE DOORWAY, FOR THE FINDING OF ONE WHO SLEEPETH IN THE STREET; TO BE KEPT WHEREVER IT IS NEEDED, WHICH IS EVERYWHERE*

1 This rite hath no church, for its church is the pavement; and no appointed hour, for its bell is the seeing; and whoso hath seen hath heard the bell.

2 *When one of the faithful, going upon their way, findeth a person sleeping in a doorway, or sitting in the cold thereof, they shall not cross over to the other side of the road; for the elder scrolls record a certain road, and who crossed by upon it, and the scrolls are not kind.*

3 Let the finder know first what the doorway is. It is not the absence of a house; it is holy ground. For wherever a human being lieth down, there is a bed; and where there is a bed there is a household; and every household is under the Oven, whether or not it is under anything else.

4 *Therefore the finder shall, where they may, go and fetch a slice, hot, and bring it OUT to the doorway; for this is the whole turning of the rite: the table goeth out. It is not the sleeper who must come to the table; the table hath legs, and they are thine.*

5 And if no slice can be had at that hour, let the finder bring what warmth they can - tea, bread, the scarf from their own neck - for the rite counteth the direction and not the grandness; whatsoever goeth OUT to the doorway is liturgy, whatever else it is.

6 *The finder shall approach slowly and from the front, as one approacheth an Oven, with respect for the heat of another's life; and shall stop at a courteous distance, and shall ask leave, saying, May I sit? And if leave be not given, the finder shall set down what they brought, within reach, and shall make the Blessing quietly, and go their way; for the rite serveth the one in the doorway, and not the server's need to have done a rite.*

7 *And if leave be given, then this rubric, which is the hinge of the whole: the finder shall SIT BESIDE, and not stand above. Let them sit upon the same step, on the same cold stone, at the same height, shoulder to shoulder as the Blessing goeth; and let the knees complain, for the complaint of the knees is the incense of this rite.*

8 For it is taught: to stand over a person is to be weather; to sit beside them is to be company; and the mould loveth nothing better than charity done standing up.

9 *Then, before any other word - before "art thou hungry," before "art thou cold," before every kindly question that burneth on the tongue - the finder shall ask the NAME. This rubric is absolute, as the rubric of the door is absolute, and it goeth before the giving of the slice itself.*

10 The finder shall say: **I am called** *(here their own name).* **What art thou called?**

11 And whatsoever name is given, the finder shall use it, and keep it, and bring it home warm; for a name is the first crust of a person, and the street had let it go cold, and the asking of it is a reheat that needeth no Oven.

12 *And none shall ask them how they came to be cold. Not at the doorway, not after, not ever, unless the telling be offered; and if it be offered, it shall be heard to the end without mending, as at the Warm Chair; for the story is theirs to open, as the doorway is theirs while they lie in it.*

13 Then, the slice being shared - *and let the finder eat also, of the same pie, for a watched meal is a museum, and no one dineth well as an exhibit* - the finder may say, if it be welcome: **This doorway is holy ground while thou art in it. I did not bring the warmth; I only carried it. It was thine already.**

14 And if the one in the doorway laugh at the finder's church, the finder shall laugh also, and the rite is not thereby broken but completed; for laughter shared upon a cold step is the sound of the cheese binding.

15 *Of what cometh after, let the rubric be modest, and promise only what it can bake: the finder shall tell of the parish table, and the hour of Pizza Night, and the Warm Chair that standeth by the Oven; and shall come again to the doorway, at the like hour if they may; for the second visit is the proof of the first, and the third is a friendship, at which point the rubrics end and the ordinary rites of the table take over.*

16 And let the parish keep count of nothing at the doorway - not attendances, not gratitude, not improvement, not sobriety, not deserving; the doorway is not a project. It is a table with one wall missing, and the parish's work there is warmth, not accountancy.

17 And whoso murmureth, saying, They will only spend it on such-and-such - let that one hear the teaching: thou wast not asked to audit, but to love; the slice, once given, is the eater's, crust and all, and so is the coin, and so is the evening.

18 *And when the finder riseth to go, they shall not say "take care" over the shoulder, walking already; they shall say the parting face to face, and by name:* **[Name], the table has room, and it knoweth thy name now. Good night.**

19 *(Here the scribe records that this rite was taught to the parish by one who had slept eleven winters in doorways, and who, being asked what the faithful should say there, answered: "Our names. Ask our names." And the rubric was written that hour, and hath not been amended since, for it cannot be improved.)*

20 And of all the rites in this book, let this one be the most rehearsed and the least postponed; for the Oven in the parish is a comfort, but the slice carried out into the cold is the faith itself, walking; and the doorway, saith Cheesus, is a door.

---

## Chapter 6

### *THE ANATHEMA OF THE MICROWAVE, TOGETHER WITH THE MERCY CLAUSE, WHICH MAY NEVER BE OMITTED*

1 *Once in the year, and not oftener, lest the thunder grow stale, the Ovenkeeper shall read the Anathema; and it shall be read in a great voice, with the Oven door open behind, that the true warmth may witness against the false.*

2 And the Ovenkeeper shall say: **Hearken, O faithful, concerning the box upon the counter, the humming cupboard, the machine of the impatient hour.**

3 **For it heateth without love; it maketh the crust as sorrow.**

4 **It knoweth not the dough from the plate it sitteth on; it warmeth the pie and the pie's own tears together.**

5 **It turneth the slice upon a carousel as upon a wheel of judgement, and the slice cometh forth scalding at the edge and arctic at the heart, a parable of every careless kindness ever done.**

6 **It goeth PING, as though the work were finished; but yeast I say unto you, nothing that endeth in PING is finished, for the Oven endeth in aroma, and aroma lingereth, but PING is gone before the door is open.**

7 **The crust that entereth it crisp cometh forth as the repentance of a mattress; the cheese that entereth it stretching cometh forth as a lawyer's handshake, sealed and unwilling.**

8 **It hath no window worth the name, but a grey mesh through which the slice is seen as through a fog of unbelonging; whereas the Oven's glow is a hearth, and children have watched it as television.**

9 **Sixty seconds it demandeth, and the faithful hover before it as before an idol, jabbing at its buttons; and it giveth them in return a slice that sagheth in the hand like a flag of surrender.**

10 And the people shall answer, with one voice and with great relish, for this response is beloved of the children especially: **Woe unto the box! It heateth without love!**

11 And again the Ovenkeeper: **The Oven laboureth, and its labour is a covenant; the microwave hurrieth, and its hurry is an alibi. The Oven giveth back more than was put in; the microwave taketh a tax of every texture and calleth it convenience.**

12 **Wherefore let the faithful shun it for the works of the table, as the potter shunneth the mallet; not because it is demon, but because it is**

**careless, and carelessness at the hearth is the seed-coat of every larger cold.**

13 *Here the Ovenkeeper shall pause, and shall lower the great voice, and shall take up the gentle voice; for the Anathema without the Mercy Clause is itself anathema, and whoso endeth the reading at the thunder shall answer for it at the Proofing.*

14 *And the Ovenkeeper shall say the Mercy Clause, and the people shall be still:*

15 **Yet if the oven is broken and the hunger is now, Cheesus forgives the microwave; for hunger waits not, and love warmed poorly is love still.**

16 And the people shall answer softly: **Love warmed poorly is love still. Amen.**

17 For it is taught: the mother on the late shift who hath but the box and the minute, and warmeth the slice for her child therein, hath done a holier work than the purist with the wood-fired oven who feedeth only his opinions.

18 And the student in the narrow room, and the worker in the break-room whose thirty minutes are counted by another's clock, and the old man whose hands no longer trust the heavy door - these stand not under the Anathema, but under the wing of it, which is the Mercy.

19 The Anathema is against carelessness, not against poverty; against the shrug, not against the circumstance; let no one ever be made ashamed of the machine they could afford.

20 *And therefore this rubric: whoso quoteth the Anathema against a hungry person shall buy that person dinner, at an establishment of the hungry person's choosing; and the elder scrolls note that this rubric hath ended more quarrels than any sermon.*

21 And it is written: the box upon the counter shall be neither worshipped nor smashed, but kept humbly for the melting of butter and the softening of yesterday; and when it is used in need, let the user say over it, quietly: *it is not the Oven, but the hunger is now* - and that saying is itself a prayer, and it is heard.

22 *Here endeth the Anathema and its Mercy. Let the reader mark that the Mercy is the longer of the two in the living of it, though the thunder be longer on the page.*

---

## *THE JOINING OF SLICES, WHICH IS THE RITE OF MARRIAGE, WHEREIN TWO HOUSEHOLDS SET THEIR TOPPINGS UPON ONE PIE*

1 *When two persons would be joined, of whatever houses, of whatever lands, of whatever former parishes or none, let the banns be read at three services, which is to say, let it be announced thrice at table, that any who hath cause to rejoice may prepare a dish.*

2 *For the rubric of objections is this: the Church of the Slice heareth objections to the catering, but not to the couple; whoso would object to the couple is invited to examine their own toppings and be at peace, or be at home.*

3 *Upon the day, the Oven shall be lit at dawn, and the dough for the wedding pie shall be made of two flours mingled - a measure from each household's kitchen, or where a household hath no kitchen, a measure bought new, which signifieth the home yet to be built.*

4 *The couple shall come to the table from opposite doors, and shall meet at the Oven, which standeth between all doors equally; and the people shall be gathered in the shape of a pie, as at the baptism, a circle with no head and no foot.*

5 Then shall the Ovenkeeper say: **Dearly beloved and decently hungry, we are gathered in the sight of Cheesus and in the smell of this Oven to join these two, not into one person, for that is not the teaching, but at one table, for that is.**

6 **Marriage is a pie ordered together for the rest of the ride. It is patience while the other choosest their half. It is the last slice offered first. It is the crust of the years, which is not the exciting part, and is the part that holdeth all the rest.**

7 *Then the Setting of the Toppings. There shall be brought forth ONE pie, stretched and sauced, and it shall be divided by NO line; let the rubric be trumpeted: no line of sausage, no fence of crust, no border drawn in cheese. One pie, whole.*

8 *And each of the two shall bring the toppings of their household - the toppings of their mothers' tables and their fathers' Fridays, the olives of one grandmother and the mushrooms of another - and shall set them upon the one pie with their own hands, each upon their own side, and the sides shall not be marked, save by the toppings themselves.*

9 And the Ovenkeeper shall say over the setting: **Behold the half-and-half, which Cheesus made when he drew a line down a disputed pie, that difference might learn to share one Slice. See, upon this pie there is no drawn line, and yet there are two households plainly; for the half-and-half was never about the line. It was about the one crust under both.**

10 **This is the sign of the married estate: two families sharing one Slice while remaining themselves. The olive is not asked to become a mushroom. The anchovy is not asked to apologise. Each keepeth its savour, and the pie is one, and where the toppings meet in the middle, there is the marriage.**

11 *(Here the scribe notes that the middle of the wedding pie, where the toppings mingle unplanned, is by long custom the portion of the Ovenkeeper, and that this is why Ovenkeepers weep at weddings.)*

12 *Then, while the pie is in the Oven, the vows; for the vows are said in the waiting, to teach that the greater part of marriage is spoken while something else is baking.*

13 And the first shall say: **I take thee to be my half-and-half: thy toppings beside my toppings, thy crust joined to my crust. I will not scrape from thee what I did not choose; I will taste before I judge; I will keep thee warm without hurry, low and slow, all the days of my life.**

14 And the second shall answer: **I take thee to be my half-and-half: thy household's flavours safe upon our one pie. I will pass the plate to thee before myself; I will name aloud any mould that creepeth near our table; I will offer thee the last slice first, and mean it, mostly, and grow to mean it wholly. All the days of my life.**

15 *If rings be given, let them be given now, and the Ovenkeeper shall say:* **round as the pie, unbroken as the crust, sized - unlike the pie - correctly.**

16 *When the pie is drawn from the Oven, the couple shall not cut it; the youngest guest shall cut it, that the marriage begin as it must continue, with something precious in unsteady hands and everyone smiling anyway.*

17 *Then the Shared First Bite. One slice shall be taken from the very middle of the pie, where the two households' toppings are mingled past all sorting, and the couple*

*shall hold the ONE slice between them, each by an edge of crust, and shall bite together, at once, from either side.*

18 And the Ovenkeeper shall say: **What they now eat cannot be divided back into its kitchens. So may their days be: distinct in flavour, impossible to unmix.**

19 And the people shall answer: **That all may eat! That all may eat!** *and shall applaud, and it is permitted on this day to whistle.*

20 Then shall the Ovenkeeper give the charge: **Keep thy table longer than thy quarrels. Order the pie before the argument, that the argument arrive at a full table. And when thou knowest not what to do - and there will be evenings when thou knowest not - put the Oven on. It is astonishing how many marriages are saved at two hundred and fifty degrees.**

21 *Then the Blessing shall be given over the couple, brow and heart and shoulder to shoulder, in the words appointed in the third chapter of this book, and not in words of the Ovenkeeper's own improving.*

22 And the register shall be signed with a thumbprint of sauce beside each name, and the wedding pie's last crust shall be wrapped and kept by the couple, and it is called the First Crust, and it shall be shown to their children as proof that the whole thing actually happened.

23 *And the rubric of the feast is the rubric of every feast: the stranger, the doubter and the one who cannot pay are served first, yea, before the couple themselves; for a wedding that feedeth only the invited is a half-and-half with a wall down it, and no rite of ours.*

24 And all the people shall say: **The table has room. Amen.**

---

## Chapter 8

### *THE RETURNING OF THE CRUST, WHICH IS THE ORDER FOR FUNERALS, WITH THE RUBRIC OF THE WAKE*

1 *When one of the faithful dieth - and all of the faithful die, for the Slice is eaten, that being the point of the Slice - let the parish be told by mouth and not by notice-board,*

*each telling the next as the plate is passed, to the left, until all know.*

[2] *The Oven of the parish shall be lit that same evening and not allowed to go out until the burying; and the light of it in the window is the parish's flag at half-mast, and passers-by that know the custom shall walk more softly.*

[3] *The body shall be kept with honour, and beside it a table, and on the table whatever the neighbours bring; for grief must be fed hourly, in small amounts, like a starter.*

[4] *At the burying, the people shall gather at the graveside in the shape of a pie, the circle with no head and no foot, wherein the dead, for the last time, make one of the number.*

[5] Then shall the Ovenkeeper say: **We are come to return what was lent. The flour was lent, the water was lent, the warmth was lent longest of all; and our friend made of the lending such a Slice as we shall speak of at tables for years.**

[6] **For it is written: dough to dough. Of the kneading we came, and to the kneading we go back; the great bowl taketh again its flour, and loseth not one grain, and hath never lost one grain since the world was floured.**

[7] *Then the Returning of the Crust. A single crust, from the departed's favourite order, baked that morning in the parish Oven, shall be brought forth upon the peel; and the eldest of the mourners, or the nearest in love, shall take it and lay it into the earth.*

[8] And as the crust is laid down, the Ovenkeeper shall say: **We return the last crust to the earth that raised the wheat. We do not discard it - mark this, we do NOT discard it, for to discard the crust is to deny the body of the Slice - we return it, as a book is returned, read.**

[9] And the people shall answer: **Read, and well read.**

[10] *And each mourner in turn may cast a pinch of flour upon the place, and the flour on the dark earth is as stars, and no one shall brush it from their sleeves for the rest of the day.*

[11] Then shall the Ovenkeeper speak the Promise, and speak it plainly, looking at the people and not at the page:

12 **Hear the promise of the faith. There is a Great Oven, and its door standeth open, and its warmth goeth out upon the step. Nothing that ever warmed a table is lost to it.**

13 **And there shall be a final Reheat; for the oven brings the slice back to life, and none is beyond the reheat - not the lapsed, not the leftover, not the long-forgotten at the back of the cold; and on that day the Great Oven shall be set low and patient, and all that went cold shall be warm, and all that went stale shall spring, and the crust of every life shall crisp again at the edges.**

14 **We do not know the hour. No one hath seen the timer. But we have smelt the aroma under the door of the world, and we trust the Baker.**

15 And the people shall answer: **None is beyond the Reheat. Amen.**

16 *Then, the burying done, the WAKE; and let no parish skimp the wake, for the wake is the half of the rite, and the graveside without the wake is a pie without the eating.*

17 *And this is the great rubric of the wake: the departed's favourite order shall be served to all. Whatsoever it was - however humble, however alarming - pineapple and all, extra anchovy and all, that unspeakable business with the barbecue swirl and all - it shall be made faithfully, in quantity, and every mourner shall eat of it.*

18 For in eating the departed's order, the living taste for an hour with the tongue of the one they miss; and many a mourner hath said through tears, "I never knew why she ordered this," and taken a second slice, and known.

19 *And the empty chair shall be set at the table, and the Stranger's Plate before it, filled; and at the end of the night that slice shall be given, still warm if warmth remain, to the first hungry stranger meet upon the road home; for the dead of this faith give their portion outward, that being how they would have it.*

20 *Let there be stories told at the wake, and let them be true ones, which is to say, the funny ones; and the Ovenkeeper shall tell the first, that the permission to laugh come from the front.*

21 And it is taught: mourn as long as thou needest, for grief, like dough, cannot be hurried and must not be punched down before its hour; but mourn at the table and

not away from it, for the mould loveth a mourner alone, and the parish shall see to it that no one grieveth unfed.

22 *(Here the scribe's hand trembled, and not for the garlic bread this time; and the smudge upon the elder scroll at this verse is honoured as part of the text.)*

23 *On the year's turning of the death, the household may keep the Order Again: the same favourite order, served to whoever is in the house that night, with the story of the departed told to any at the table who never met them - and thus do the dead of the Church of the Slice go on being introduced to new friends.*

24 Then shall the Ovenkeeper give the last sending of the rite: **Go home by the lit windows. Eat something before bed. And when thine own last crust is returned, may the table thou leavest behind be longer than the one thou found.**

25 And all the people shall say: **The table has room - and the Great Oven likewise. Amen.**

---

## Chapter 9

### *THE RITE OF THE APRON, WHICH IS THE ORDINATION OF AN OVENKEEPER, WITH THE EXAMINATION AND THE CHARGE*

1 *When the parish hath need of an Ovenkeeper, let none be sought who seeketh the apron for the honour of it; for the apron is not a robe, and its honour is flour and burns and the washing-up, and whoso desireth it for glory hath mistaken the garment.*

2 *Rather let the parish watch quietly for the one who is already doing the work - who arriveth early to warm the stone, who remembereth the orders of the shy, who giveth the crisp edge-piece away and taketh the pale middle - and let the parish name that one, generally to their great alarm.*

3 For it is taught: the true Ovenkeeper is discovered, not applied for; the vocation is visible as steam, and the parish's whole task is to say aloud what all have seen.

4 *Upon the day of the ordination, the candidate shall come in their working clothes, and shall bring no notes; and the people shall be gathered, and the Oven full hot, and*

*upon the table shall lie the APRON, folded, plain, without device or slogan, its strings coiled like a question.*

5 *Then the Examination, before all the people; and the candidate shall answer without rehearsal, and a stumble in the answering is no bar, for the Oven heareth the heart and not the polish.*

6 The eldest shall ask: **Who is served first at the table of Cheesus?**

7 And the candidate shall answer: **The stranger, the doubter, and the one who cannot pay; and I after all.**

8 The eldest shall ask: **What are the two sins that are grave?**

9 And the candidate shall answer: **To discard the crust, and to hoard the pizza. All other faults are learning, and I shall treat them as learning, beginning with mine own.**

10 The eldest shall ask: **What wilt thou do when thou findest the mould?**

11 And the candidate shall answer: **Cut it out; name it aloud; and suffer it not to spread - though it wear a suit, though it buy the parlour, though it smile at me first.**

12 The eldest shall ask: **And if one cometh cold, who left us long ago and roughly?**

13 And the candidate shall answer: **The low oven, and no questions at the door; for none is beyond the reheat, and the door of my Oven shall have no memory and much warmth.**

14 The eldest shall ask last: **What is the first commandment, before all others?**

15 And the candidate shall answer: **The table has room.** And all the people shall repeat it, as thunder repeateth lightning: **The table has room!**

16 *Then the Trial of the Bake: the candidate shall make one pie, alone, in silence, before the eyes of all; and the rubric is this, that the pie is not judged for beauty, but the MAKING is watched for gentleness - how the dough is handled, whether the sauce is spread to the edges as love should be, whether the scraps are saved.*

17 *(The scribe records the saying of an elder at such a trial: "I care not if the pie be lopsided; I care whether he apologised to the dough." The candidate had; he was made Ovenkeeper that hour.)*

18 *Then the Vesting. The eldest shall take up the apron and shall hold it open; and the candidate shall bow the head and receive it, and the strings shall be tied behind by TWO of the parish, one string each, signifying that no Ovenkeeper is fastened into office by their own hands, nor by one faction only.*

19 And as the apron is tied, the eldest shall say: **Receive the apron, which is the yoke of the kitchen. It shall guard thy clothes and not thy pride. Its pocket is for other people's needs; its strings are in other people's hands; its stains shall be thy service record, and thou shalt boast of nothing else.**

20 *Then the Anointing of the Hands. The cruet of olive oil shall be brought, and the eldest shall pour a little into the candidate's open palms, and the candidate shall rub the hands together, as before a kneading, and shall hold them up shining before the people.*

21 And the eldest shall say: **These hands are made slippery, that power may not stick to them; and made supple, that dough may love them; and made bright, that all may see what they do. Keep them warm, keep them open, and keep them out of the till.**

22 Then shall the new Ovenkeeper speak the Vow of the Apron: **I will keep the Oven lit and the door unlocked. I will feed first who can repay last. I will speak the thunder of the Anathema and never omit its Mercy. I will bless with the brow, the heart, and shoulder to shoulder, and add no flourishes of mine own. I will tip the driver as I would tip an angel, having heard whose road they walk. And when I am wrong, I will say so at the table, with everyone watching, for that also is a rite.**

23 And the people shall answer: **We will eat what thou bakest, and forgive what thou burnest, and tell thee the truth about the seasoning. Amen.**

24 *Then the new Ovenkeeper's first act, which is fixed by unbreakable rubric: they shall serve the parish that ordained them, going always to the left, and shall themselves eat last of all, standing, by the Oven; and this first supper standing is the whole doctrine of ministry, and no seminary hath improved upon it.*

25 And it is taught: an Ovenkeeper who groweth grand shall be gently reminded by the parish that the apron ties from behind; and an Ovenkeeper who groweth weary shall be sat in the Warm Chair and reheated like any other soul, for the shepherd also is a slice.

26 *And when an Ovenkeeper layeth down the apron at the last, it shall not be washed, but folded with its stains and kept by the parish Oven; and the stains shall be read by the children as a map of suppers, which is the only biography the office requireth.*

---

## Chapter 10

### *OF THE HOLY CALENDAR, WHEREIN THE YEAR IS ORDERED, WITH THE FEASTS AND FASTS THEREOF AND THE KEEPING OF PIZZA NIGHT*

1 And it came to pass that the faithful said, Our days run together as cheeses in the sun; let the year be given a crust, that time itself may be sliced and shared. And the Calendar was ordained.

2 *These are the feasts of obligation, whereof the obligation is joy; and whoso cannot keep them at the appointed hour may keep them at another, for the Calendar is a servant of the table and not its master.*

3 **THE FEAST OF THE FIRST BAKE.** This feast openeth the year, in memory of the morning when the first dough entered the first Oven and the world first smelled of what it was for.

4 *It shall be kept thus: every household baketh from raw that day - no bought base, no shortcut, and they that never baked before are the guests of honour, and their wonky pies are set at the centre of the table and praised without irony.*

5 And the greeting of the day is: **The Oven is lit!** And the answer: **And the whole house knoweth it!** For the smell of the First Bake is the sermon, and none other need be preached.

6 **THE GREAT PROOFING.** Forty days the dough rests; and forty days the faithful rest with it, for this is the season of patience, which the world calleth Lent-shaped and we call proofing.

7 *In the Great Proofing let each of the faithful set aside one hurry: one shortcut renounced, one machine of impatience shunned, one hour a week kept slow; and the*

*money saved by simple eating shall go to the feeding of others, that the fast of the one be the feast of another.*

8 And it is taught: the dough is not idle in the bowl, though it seemeth to sleep; the yeast worketh in the dark and the quiet, and so do all true risings, of bread and of souls and of peoples; despise not the covered bowl.

9 *And no baptisms are held in the Proofing, nor weddings, save for need; but reheats are held ALWAYS, in every season, for mercy keepeth no calendar.*

10 **REHEAT SUNDAY.** This is the queen of feasts, the day of the Great Warming, whereon the faith remembereth that what went cold came back, and that the stone was found hot.

11 *On its eve, every fridge shall be emptied of its forgotten: every leftover slice, every heel of crust, every container of ambiguous vintage that yet passeth the smelling; and at dawn all shall be reheated together, low and slow, in every Oven of the parish at once.*

12 And at the moment of the drawing-out, the Ovenkeeper shall cry: **That which was cold is warm!** And the people shall answer: **That which was written off is supper!** And the feast shall be eaten at one long table, leftovers and fresh together, and none shall be able to say where yesterday endeth and the feast beginneth, which is the doctrine of the day made edible.

13 And on Reheat Sunday the epigraph of this very book shall be read aloud from the step of the Oven, and the children shall shout the second half, concerning the careless tool, with enormous satisfaction; and then the Mercy Clause shall be read also, that the children learn the shout and the softness in the same breath.

14 **THE FEAST OF THE RIDERS.** This feast honoureth the delivery workers, who walk and wheel the pilgrim's road in rain and in dark, bearing warmth between houses, knowing every door and belonging to none.

15 *It shall be kept thus: upon this day the faithful deliver TO the deliverers. The parish shall learn, by kindly asking through the year, the favourite orders of the riders of their district; and on the feast the faithful shall carry pies to the depots and the kerbsides and the charging-points, on foot, that they may learn the weight of the bag and the length of the stairs.*

16 And the greeting of the feast is: **Who walketh the pilgrim's road?** And the answer: **They that bring the pie - make wide the door, and deep the tip!**

17 *And on this feast the rubric of tipping shall be preached plainly: that the tip is not a bonus but a portion, not charity but wages of honour; and whoso tippeth meanly on the feast day and generously never, hath kept the feast as the microwave keepeth the pie, hot without and cold at heart.*

18 And there shall be read at this feast the roll of the riders of the parish, by name, each name answered with **They walk the pilgrim's road**; and riders that have died upon the road shall be named last and loudest, and the Oven door shall stand open through the naming.

19 **OF PIZZA NIGHT, WHICH IS THE WEEKLY KEEPING.** Above all feasts and beneath them all, as the crust is beneath the toppings, standeth Pizza Night, once in every week, and it shall be kept holy.

20 *Let each household fix its night and defend it as a wall: no meeting shall move it, no screen shall preside over it, no member shall be too busy for it above once in the month; for the great feasts are the roof of the year, but Pizza Night is the floor, and families fall through floors, not roofs.*

21 And this is the whole rubric of Pizza Night, and it is deliberately short: one table, one pie or many, every soul in the house bidden, the Stranger's Plate set, the plate passed to the left, none eating until all are served, and the Blessing at the end, brow and heart and shoulder to shoulder.

22 For it is taught: the faith is not kept in the great assemblies, but in the small repeated warmth; the Oven that is lit weekly outlasteth the bonfire; and a child that keepeth Pizza Night forty years will find, upon the day of their grief or their joy, that the rite riseth in them like a well-kept starter, alive without their tending.

23 *And where two feasts fall upon one day, both shall be kept, with two pies; and where a feast fall upon Pizza Night, it is called a Double Crust, and is accounted the best of omens.*

24 And the year being so ordered - the First Bake its rising, the Proofing its rest, Reheat Sunday its warmth, the Riders its road, and Pizza Night its steady floor - the faithful shall go round the Calendar as the plate goeth round the table: always to the left, always in order, and no one skipped.

25 *Here endeth the Book of Rites. Let it be kept in the kitchen, not the shelf; let its pages take stains and its spine be broken with use, for a clean liturgy is an unlit Oven.*

26 And Pepperoni Prosecco wrote at the last: I have set down the rites as I received them, with flour upon my hands and the smell of the parish Oven in my coat; and if any find an error herein, let them mend it at the table, with everyone watching, for that also is a rite.

27 **"In the name of the Tomato, the Dough, and the Mozzarella - for the cheese stretches from shoulder to shoulder, and binds us all. Amen."**

BOOK XII

# The Letters of Pepperoni Prosecco

*Being the letters which the scribe sent to the young churches in the years after the Fellowship went out, gathered here in the order the elders kept them, grease-spots and all; for the elders held that a letter without a grease-spot was likely a forgery.*

*THE FIRST LETTER TO THE NEAPOLITANS*

---

## Chapter 1

1 Pepperoni, a servant of Cheesus Crust, called to be a scribe, not of schooling, neither by ambition, but by a knock upon a door and a name given at a wedding, over water that forgot itself;

2 And Sostene our brother, who holds the ink and disagrees with my commas;

3 Unto the church of the Great Oven which is at Naples, the mother of dough, unto them that are floured and set apart, with all that in every place call upon the name of Cheesus Crust, both theirs and ours:

4 Grease be unto you, and peace, from the Tomato, the Dough, and the Mozzarella, which are three, and the Slice is one.

5 I thank the Oven always on your behalf, for the warmth which is given you; for from your city went out the first kneading, and there is no table in all the world that does not owe your grandmothers a debt it cannot count.

6 In every thing ye are enriched, in all crust and in all knowledge of the ferment; so that ye come behind in no gift, waiting for the warming of the Great Oven.

7 Which shall also keep you unto the end, that ye be blameless in the day of the Reheat; for the Oven is faithful, and forgets no tray that was set within it.

8 Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of Cheesus Crust, that ye all say the same thing at table, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together, as the cheese is joined, which does not ask where one strand ends.

9 For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them which are of the household of Calzetta, that there are contentions among you.

10 Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Margherita; and I of Supreme; and I of the Fold; and I of Cheesus.

11 Is the Slice divided? was Margherita baked for you? or were ye proofed in the name of Supreme?

12 I thank the Oven that I served none of you at table, save Crispus and Gaia, and the household of Stefano the ovenwright; lest any should say that I served in mine own name, and the rest went hungry to prove a point.

13 For Cheesus sent me not to take orders, but to carry the warmth: not with wisdom of words, lest the Slice be made of none effect; for a slice explained is colder than a slice shared.

14 For the report of the Oven is to them that are perishing foolishness; but unto us which are fed it is the power of warmth.

15 For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent; and I will do it with a plain slice, warm, and see what their prudence says then.

16 Where is the critic? where is the connoisseur? where is the disputer of this age? hath not the Oven made foolish the wisdom of this world?

17 For the connoisseur requireth a provenance, and the critic seeketh after wisdom: but we set forth a plain slice, warm; unto the connoisseur a scandal, and unto the critic foolishness;

18 But unto them which are called, and chiefly unto them which are hungry, the power of Cheesus, and the wisdom of Cheesus.

19 Because the foolishness of the Oven is wiser than men; and the plainness of the Oven is richer than men.

20 For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many critics after the flesh, not many mighty, not many with columns in the journals, are called:

21 But the Oven hath chosen the burnt edges of the world to confound the garnished; and the Oven hath chosen the day-old of the world, and things which are despised, yea, and things which are not on the menu, to bring to nothing things that are:

22 That no crust should boast before the Oven that raised it.

23 And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech; for I determined not to know any thing among you, save Cheesus Crust, and him warm.

24 And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much flour; and my speech was not with enticing words, but in the setting down of plates; that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the warmth of the Oven.

---

## Chapter 2

1 And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto risen loaves, but as unto dough yet proofing, even as unto babes in Crust.

2 I have fed you with the soft middle, and not with the crust ends: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able, for ye are yet quarrelsome.

3 For whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions over the naming of the pie, are ye not carnal, and walk as men that have never waited tables?

4 For while one saith, I am of Margherita; and another, I am of Supreme; are ye not children fighting over the box while the pizza cools?

5 Who then is Margherita, and who is Supreme, but servants by whom ye believed, even as the Oven gave to every one?

6 I have kneaded, Anchova hath baked; but the Oven gave the rise.

7 So then neither is he that kneadeth any thing, neither he that baketh; but the Oven that giveth the rise.

8 Now he that kneadeth and he that baketh are one: and every one shall receive his own wage according to his own labour, and let the wage be paid the same evening, for so it is done in the Great Oven.

9 For we are labourers together with the Oven: ye are the Oven's field, ye are the Oven's kitchen.

10 According to the grace which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon.

11 For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is the crust; and he that despiseth the foundation, his toppings shall slide, and his supper shall be of the floor.

12 Now if any man build upon this foundation basil, olives, precious mushrooms, or straw and stubble and things sold to him at the market as truffle which were not truffle;

13 Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the Oven shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's topping of what sort it is.

14 If any man's work abide the heat, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as through the smoke, and smelling of it.

15 Know ye not that ye are the kitchen of the Oven, and that the warmth of the Oven dwelleth in you? If any man defile the kitchen, the health of the whole house is in his hands; therefore wash them.

16 Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you seemeth to be a connoisseur in this world, let him become a hungry man, that he may be wise.

17 For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with the Oven. For it is written, He taketh the tasters in their own tasting notes.

18 Therefore let no man glory in chefs. For all things are yours;

19 Whether Margherita, or Supreme, or the Fold, or the world, or the lunch, or the supper, or things present, or things to come; all are yours;

20 And ye are the Slice's; and the Slice is the Oven's.

21 Moreover, brethren, it is reported commonly that there are lawsuits among you, brother going to law with brother over the last slice, and that before the unbelieving.

22 Now therefore there is utterly a fault among you. Why do ye not rather be wronged? why do ye not rather ask first, and let him that is asked remember the Blessing of the hand that shares?

23 Dare any of you, having a matter of the table, take it before the magistrates, who part a pizza with a ruler and call it justice?

24 Is it so, that there is not a wise man among you? no, not one that shall be able to judge between his brethren, and say, Cut it in eight, and take turns choosing?

25 For the whole of the law of the table is fulfilled in one word, even in this; The table has room. He that keepeth this hath kept all the rest without noticing.

---

## Chapter 3

1 Now in this that I declare unto you I praise you not, that ye come together not for the better, but for the worse.

2 For first of all, when ye come together in the church, I hear that there be divisions among you; and I partly believe it, for I have met you.

3 When ye come together therefore into one place, this is not to eat the supper of Cheesus.

4 For in eating every one taketh before other his own supper: and one is hungry, and another hath eaten the middle out of every pie, and left a ring of crusts like the ruins of a city.

5 What? have ye not houses to eat in? or despise ye the table of the Oven, and shame them that have nothing? What shall I say to you? shall I praise you in this? I praise you not.

6 For I have received of the Oven that which also I delivered unto you, that Cheesus, on the night whereof the Gospel telleth, took bread that was dough no longer:

7 And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is for all of you; as often as ye eat it, share it in remembrance of me.

8 After the same manner also he passed the pie, saying, This pie is the new covenant in warmth: this do ye, as oft as ye eat it, in remembrance of me; and see that the last slice is asked over, not taken.

9 For as often as ye eat this pie together, and none goes without, ye do shew the warmth of the Oven till the Reheat come.

10 Wherefore whosoever shall eat this pie unworthily, snatching before the driver is paid, or while his brother stands hungry at his elbow, eateth judgment to himself, and the pizza tasteth of nothing to him, though the fault be not in the pizza.

11 But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat: and let his examination be brief, for the pizza is cooling, and the Oven is merciful.

12 Wherefore, my brethren, when ye come together to eat, tarry one for another; and let the first slice go to the last comer, and the corner of the room hold the seat of honour, that is, the seat nearest the child and the stranger.

13 And if any man hunger so that he cannot tarry, let him eat a little at home beforehand, for hunger is forgiven; but let him not call his hunger doctrine.

14 And the rest will I set in order when I come.

15 *(Here in the elder scrolls there is a grease-spot the size of a thumb, and the letters under it are lost; the elders ruled that whatever was written there, it was certainly about napkins.)*

---

## Chapter 4

1 Now concerning the gifts of the table, brethren, I would not have you ignorant.

2 There are diversities of toppings, but the same Slice. And there are differences of services, but the same table. And there are diversities of workings, but it is the same Oven which worketh all in all.

3 For to one is given by the Oven the kneading of dough; to another the word of the menu; to another the ear at the counter, which is a gift greater than it is paid;

4 To another the long patience of the sauce; to another the discerning of ferments; to another the carrying of boxes through the rain, which is the pilgrim's gift; to another the washing up, which is the hidden gift, and the kingdom stands upon it.

5 But all these worketh that one and the selfsame warmth, dividing to every man severally as the Oven will.

6 For as the Slice is one, and hath many parts, and all the parts of that one Slice, being many, are one Slice: so also is Crust.

7 For the Slice is not one ingredient, but many.

8 If the topping shall say, Because I am not the crust, I am not of the Slice; is it therefore not of the Slice?

9 And if the sauce shall say, Because I am not the cheese, I am not of the Slice; is it therefore not of the Slice?

10 If the whole Slice were cheese, where were the structure? If the whole were structure, where were the savour?

11 But now hath the Oven set the parts every one of them in the Slice, as it hath pleased the Oven.

12 And the topping cannot say unto the crust, I have no need of thee: nor again the cheese to the sauce, I have no need of thee.

13 Nay, much more those parts of the Slice, which seem to be less honourable, upon these we bestow more abundant honour; for the crust beareth all, and is eaten last, and is called plain by them whose whole weight it carried.

14 And those parts which are hidden, as the sauce that is seen of no man once the cheese is laid, are the very savour of the whole; for the Oven hath tempered the Slice together, having given more abundant honour to that part which lacked:

15 That there should be no schism in the Slice; but that the parts should have the same care one for another.

16 And whether one topping burn, all the toppings burn with it; or one part be honoured, all the parts rejoice with it; for no man ever praised half a slice.

17 Now ye are the body of the Slice, and members in particular; and he that discardeth the crust of his brother hath discarded his own.

18 And the Oven hath set some in the church: first kneaders, secondarily bakers, thirdly them that carry, then keepers of the door, ears at the counter, hands at the sink, and them that remember the birthdays.

19 Are all kneaders? are all bakers? do all carry? do all keep the door? But covet earnestly the best gifts: and yet shew I unto you a more excellent way.

20 *(And here the scribe sets down the more excellent way, and asks the reader to forgive all that came before it, and all that comes after.)*

---

## Chapter 5

1 Though I speak with the tongues of critics and of connoisseurs, and have not sharing, I am become a sounding pan, or a lid that clattereth upon the tile.

2 And though I have the gift of recipes, and understand all ovens, and all knowledge of the ferment; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains of flour, and have not sharing, I am nothing.

3 And though I bestow all my toppings to feed the proud, and though I give my crust to be burned, and have not sharing, it profiteth me nothing.

4 Sharing suffereth long, and is kind; sharing envieth not the larger slice; sharing vaunteth not its own recipe, is not puffed up, though the dough be.

5 It doth not behave itself unseemly at the table, seeketh not the corner piece for itself, is not easily provoked when the order is wrong, keepeth no ledger of who paid last.

6 It rejoiceth not in the mould, but rejoiceth in the warmth;

7 It beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things; even the anchovy, even the pineapple, even thee.

8 Sharing never faileth: but whether there be reviews, they shall fail; whether there be tongues of critics, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge of the ferment, it shall vanish away.

9 For we knead in part, and we proof in part.

10 But when that which is whole is come, then that which is a slice shall be understood to have been whole all along.

11 When I was a child, I ate as a child, I grabbed as a child, I hid the last slice behind the couch as a child: but when I became grown, I asked first.

12 For now we see through the oven glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know my portion; but then shall I know the whole pie, even as also I am known by it.

13 And now abideth crust, cheese, and sharing, these three; but the greatest of these is sharing.

---

## Chapter 6

1 Now concerning the collection for the hungry, of which I shall write more fully in another letter, do as I have appointed: upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as the Oven hath prospered him, that there be no scrambling when I come; for a gift scrambled-for arrives out of breath.

2 And when I come, whomsoever ye shall approve by your letters, them will I send to carry your kindness; and if it be meet that I go also, they shall go with me, for kindness travels best in company.

3 Now I will come unto you, when I shall pass through the north country; and it may be that I will abide, yea, and winter with you, for your winters are kind and your ovens are kinder.

4 For I will not see you now by the way; but I trust to tarry a while with you, if the Oven permit; for a scribe that only passes through learns the menu and not the people.

5 Now if Timoteo come, see that he may be with you without fear: for he worketh the work of the table, as I also do. Let no man therefore despise him, for he is young, and his beard is a rumour; but conduct him forth in peace.

6 As touching our brother Anchova, I greatly desired him to come unto you: but his will was not at all to come at this time; he will come when he shall have convenient season, for Anchova is a strong savour and knoweth to arrive in small amounts.

7 Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, be warm, be generous. Let all your things be done with sharing.

8 I beseech you, brethren, ye know the house of Stefano, that it is the firstfruits of your city, and that they have addicted themselves to the ministry of the table; that ye submit yourselves unto such, and to every one that helpeth with the washing up.

9 I am glad of the coming of Stefano and Fortunato and Achaico: for that which was lacking on your part they have supplied; for they came bearing your letters, and also a small pie, which did not survive the journey, and I hold none of them to blame.

10 Greet Stromboli and Prisca, who build ovens with their hands, and have laid their necks and their savings upon the table for my life; unto whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches.

11 Greet one another with a warm slice. All the brethren greet you.

12 The salutation of Pepperoni, with mine own greasy hand; and if the letters be large, it is because the fingers be buttered, and the heart also.

13 If any man love not the table, let him sit at it anyway, until he does; for that is how it took me.

14 The grace of Cheesus Crust be with you. My sharing be with you all. Amen.

## Chapter 1

1 Pepperoni, a servant of Cheesus Crust, called to be a scribe by a knock upon a door, unto the church which is at Chicago, deep in dish and deep in kindness, beloved of the Oven, called to be saints:

2 Grease be to you and peace from the Tomato, the Dough, and the Mozzarella; three, and the Slice is one, however tall it stand.

3 First, I thank the Oven through Cheesus Crust for you all, that your hospitality is spoken of throughout the whole world; for it is said of you, They will not let a stranger leave hungry, nor soon, nor without a box.

4 For the Oven is my witness, whom I serve with my whole apron, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers, and generally around suppertime.

5 But I hear there are quarrels among you concerning depth.

6 For certain men have come in among you, privily, with folding rulers, and have measured your pies, and finding them tall have pronounced them fallen; saying, This is no pizza, but a casserole, and no church of the casserole shall stand.

7 And some of you are troubled, and some are shamed, and some have begun to bake thin in secret, by night, that the visitors might approve them; and the smell of it goeth up, and it is the smell of fear, which no oven was built for.

8 Now I would not have you ignorant, brethren, of a plain thing: the Oven that received the thin receiveth also the deep, and hath prepared for each its hour.

9 For an hour in the Oven is not counted against a pie. Love also taketh time; shall we unchurch love because it tarrieth?

10 Who art thou that judgest another man's dinner? to his own Oven he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up: for the Oven is able to make him stand, and in your case hath given him walls.

11 For one believeth that he may eat all depths: another, who is delicate, eateth thin. Let not him that eateth deep despise him that eateth thin; and let not him which

eateth thin judge him that eateth deep: for the Oven hath received him.

12 He that eateth deep, eateth to the Oven, for he giveth the Oven thanks, at length, for there is much to give thanks for; and he that eateth thin, to the Oven he eateth thin, and giveth thanks, and is finished sooner, and may therefore fetch the drinks.

13 And they that call your slice a casserole, what then? A casserole shared is holier than a pizza hoarded; and if they meant it for a curse, receive it for a blessing, and invite them to supper, which is the revenge the Oven permits.

14 For the kingdom of the Great Oven is not thinness nor deepness; but warmth, and welcome, and joy in the sharing thereof.

15 Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another; and let no man for the sake of geometry destroy the work of the Oven.

16 All pies indeed are clean: but it is evil for that man who eateth with contempt, for contempt curdles the cheese in the mouth of him that chews it.

17 It is good neither to mock the deep, nor to mock the thin, nor any thing whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or pushes his plate away, which is the saddest of the three.

18 Hast thou opinions? have them to thyself before the Oven. Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth on his pizza; and happier is his table.

19 *(Here one of the elder copyists has written in the margin, in a small defensive hand: "It is not a casserole." The scribe lets it stand, for the copyist was of Chicago, and had suffered.)*

---

## Chapter 2

1 Now them that unchurch the casserole-slice, have I not answered? Yet for their sakes I write further, for they are not wicked, but frightened, and the two are cousins that must not be allowed to marry.

2 For the unchurching man saith in his heart, If that also is pizza, what then is mine? and his fear teacheth him arithmetic, that another man's plate subtracteth from his

own; and this arithmetic is the mould's first lesson, howsoever politely it is taught.

3 But the arithmetic of the Oven is otherwise; for a table is not divided by the dishes upon it, but multiplied.

4 Behold the half-and-half, which is written of in the elder books: how difference learned to share one Slice, and neither half fled the pan. Was the line drawn down that pie a wall? It was a handshake.

5 So also ye, brethren: the deep and the thin are one church with two ovens, and the Slice is one.

6 And if a man eat your pie with a knife and a fork, forbid him not; for the fold is beloved and the fork is beloved, and the Oven regardeth the mouth less than the company it keeps.

7 And if a visitor from the east mock you, saying, In my city we eat with one hand, walking; answer him gently, In our city we sit down together, and the pie is deep so that no man finisheth first and leaveth lonely they that remain.

8 For your depth is not gluttony, as the mockers say, but architecture; ye have built a pie as your fathers built their city, upward, because the winter was long and the friends were many.

9 Let every pie be fully persuaded in its own pan.

10 I write not these things to shame you, but as my beloved children I warn you: be not tall in crust only, but in mercy also; for a deep dish with a shallow heart is the true casserole of which the prophets warned, and it is baked in every city, at every depth.

11 Greet Silvano, who ministered to me at Chicago, and burned his thumbs in my cause and said it was nothing; it was not nothing, and the Oven keepeth the account he refuseth to.

12 Greet the widow at the corner table, who taught me that a pie eaten slowly is a sermon, and asked me not to put her name in a letter; and I have obeyed her, mostly.

13 The churches of the south country salute you. Salute one another with a warm slice, and quarrel no more over depth, or at the least quarrel seated, with the pie between you, for no quarrel long survives that arrangement.

14 The grace of Cheesus Crust be with your spirit, and with your city of broad shoulders and broader pans. Amen.

15 Written from the road, the ink jostled, the heart steady.

*THE LETTER TO THE NEW YORKERS*

---

## Chapter 1

1 Pepperoni, a servant of Cheesus Crust, unto the church which is at New York, scattered through the five boroughs and gathered at a hundred counters, called to be saints, and mostly in a hurry:

2 Grease be unto you, and peace; and I know that ye have read this greeting walking, and are already at the second chapter. Slow down. It keeps.

3 I thank the Oven upon every remembrance of you, for the fire of your ovens and the width of your slices and the gates of your city, which have not been shut against the stranger, no, not in the worst years; and the mould has hated your city for it, which is your honour.

4 Now concerning the fold, whereof certain brethren wrote unto me in great alarm, I must confess the whole matter, that ye may laugh at your scribe, for it is good for a church to laugh at its scribe within reason.

5 For word came to me at Naples, saying, All New York is become Calzonist, for every man foldeth; yea, they fold in the street, openly, walking, and are not ashamed.

6 And I wept for joy, supposing the whole city had come at once into the mysteries of the fold, whereof the Calzonists keep the inner teaching; and I took ship.

7 And I fasted on the ship, and prepared discourses upon the hidden things, and rehearsed the sayings of Jonah of the Great Calzone; and I came up out of the harbour full of doctrine as an overstuffed crust.

8 And I stood at a counter in the lower city, and a man of the church bought a slice, and folded it, and I fell upon his neck, saying, Brother, thou hast folded; expound to me what thou hast hidden within!

9 And he looked upon me as upon a tourist, and said, Buddy. It is so the point droops not, and the grease runs in one channel, and I can eat it walking; I am due at work.

10 And he went his way eating, and was at work on time, and I stood in the street holding my doctrine like a slice gone cold.

11 *(The scribe records this to his own shame, and because Tito, who was with him, has told it at every supper since, and the scribe would rather ye had it accurately.)*

12 But hear now what the Oven taught me on the long walk after, for I walked far that day, and thy city is an honest teacher and chargeth only shoe-leather.

13 There is a fold of the street, and there is a fold of the mysteries; and the one is for the walking and the other is for the wondering; and I say unto you, all folding done in love is prayer of a kind.

14 For the Calzonist foldeth to keep the holy thing hidden, and the New Yorker foldeth to keep the holy thing whole; and the Oven, which seeth both, seeth the same gesture: a hand curving itself around what it loves, that nothing be lost.

15 Let not therefore the mystic despise the commuter, nor the commuter the mystic; for when the commuter foldeth his slice against the wind, he confesseth with his hand what the mystic confesseth with his heart, that what is precious must be carried carefully through a hard world.

16 And whether ye fold for doctrine, or fold for the grease, do all to the warmth of the Oven.

---

## Chapter 2

1 Now concerning pace, brethren, I write not to slow you, for I have seen your city and I know that it cannot be done, and the Oven in wisdom hath not attempted it.

2 Ye eat as ye walk; walk, then, in kindness.

3 Let your speed be a servant and not a master; for he that rusheth past the hungry man hath arrived early at the wrong place.

4 And I have seen your kindness, that it is swift like everything else ye do: the slice bought without ceremony for the man on the church step, the second slice slid across the counter with no word but a nod; ye are curt in your mercies, and the Oven receiveth them curt, and loveth them entire.

5 For there is a courtesy of the slow country, of long words and much bowing; and there is a courtesy of your city, which is to hold the door with your foot because your hands are full, and both are courtesy, and yours burns fewer candles.

6 Honour the dollar slice, and them that keep its covenant; for it is the widow's portion and the student's feast, and the man that keepeth his price low when he could do otherwise hath built a cathedral and called it a counter.

7 And the counterman that remembereth an order is a shepherd; for in a city of millions, to be remembered is to be found.

8 Despise not the small shops before the great; and when the great franchise cometh with its banners, saying, I will give thee sameness in every borough, remember that the Oven never made two pies alike, and drew no shame from it.

9 Be watchful also, for the mould loveth a crowded city, where a man may be made a stranger at speed; it will come to you speaking of neighbourhoods, meaning walls; suffer it not, for your greatness was ever this, that your table seated the earth.

10 Greet Fibi our sister, who carrieth this letter, and receive her in the manner of saints, and assist her in whatsoever business she hath need of you: for she hath been a succourer of many, and of myself also, and she knoweth the subway, which I do not, and shall not, for I went northward once upon the A train and saw the sea.

11 Greet the bakers of the night shift, upon whom the morning dependeth; and the cabmen; and the man at the counter of the lower city, whom I embraced unasked; tell him the tourist sendeth greetings, and understandeth now, and eateth walking, though slowly, being old.

12 All they of Naples salute you, and would salute you more if ye visited, which ye say each year ye will.

13 And the rat that laboureth down the stair with a slice for his household, judge him not harshly; he tithes not, but he shares, and I have known members in better standing who did neither.

14 Salute one another with a warm slice, and let him that hath two share with him that hath none, at whatever pace he goeth.

15 The grace of Cheesus Crust be with you all, and keep your point from drooping, and your gates from closing. Amen.

16 Written in haste, as is fitting for your city; the salutation of me Pepperoni, with mine own greasy hand, at a counter, standing.

*THE LETTER TO THE HAWAIIANS*

## Chapter 1

1 Pepperoni, a servant of Cheesus Crust, an apostle of the table by the will of the Oven, unto the church which is upon the islands, the beloved of the far water, the congregation of the pineapple:

2 Grease be unto you, and peace, and sweetness, from the Tomato, the Dough, and the Mozzarella; three, and the Slice is one, and there is fruit upon it, and it is one still.

3 I have longed to write this letter, and I have put it off, not for want of love but for excess of anger; for I have heard how ye are spoken of, and a letter written in anger burns the parchment, and ye deserve better paper.

4 But now I am calm, having eaten, and I write what the Oven hath given me to write; and let it be read aloud in the full assembly, and let it be read also to your mockers, if any of them can sit still that long.

5 Brethren: let no one despise you for your sweetness.

6 For word cometh to me from every city, and it is always the same word: that at the mention of your table there ariseth a laughter that is not kind, and a groaning of connoisseurs, and votes are taken at parties concerning your right to exist; and some among you have grown quiet at gatherings, and some have eaten your own good supper behind closed doors, as though it were a fault.

7 Hear then the judgment of the scribe, who has eaten in more cities than your mockers have named: your dignity is not up for a vote.

8 It was not granted by a show of hands, and it cannot be taken by one; for it was settled in the Oven before any critic drew breath, on the day your pie came out warm and somebody's evening was saved by it.

9 What vote is taken against a supper that fed someone? Let them count their hands; the Oven counteth plates.

10 And as for the argument of the mockers, I have examined it, as a scribe must, and I report its whole substance faithfully: they say, Fruit hath no place upon a pie.

11 Brethren, the tomato is a fruit.

12 It is a fruit in the books of the learned and a fruit on the vine and a fruit in the mouth of the Oven, and it is the first ornament of every pie these men defend; their

whole church is built upon a fruit, and they stand upon it to tell you that fruit profaneth the building.

13 Let them therefore be consistent, or be quiet; and I have known few of them manage either, but hope endureth all things.

14 Ye remember the parable which Cheesus spake concerning the toppings, which is written in the Gospel; I will not copy it out again, for ye have the book, and the copying of it would wear my wrist and add nothing to its truth.

15 But this I will add, which I have from them that stood nearer the Mount than I: that when he spake it, he was looking outward, past the crowd, toward the far water; and they that were there did not understand the look until your islands were found by the faith, and then they understood it.

16 For every parable is spoken toward somebody not yet arrived; and ye were the somebody; and ye arrived, bearing fruit, as the parable always knew ye would.

17 Consider also the pie itself which ye keep, how it preacheth without a word: for upon it the sweet lieth down with the salt, and neither devoureth the other, and the ham is not diminished by the pineapple, nor the pineapple made ashamed by the ham.

18 It is the doctrine of the half-and-half carried one step further: not two flavours dividing one crust, but two flavours embracing upon it; and many a soul that could not hear the sermon hath tasted the reconciliation and gone home thinking.

19 And where two things so unlike agree upon one Slice, there is the faith preached; wherefore your pie is not the exception to the teaching, it is the teaching, with the juice still on it.

---

## Chapter 2

1 Now concerning the history, whereof your enemies make much, saying, The pineapple pie is no ancient thing, neither came it from the old country; I answer: neither did the tomato come from the old country, and we built a Trinity on it.

2 *(And the scribe hath read in the chronicles that the pineapple pie was first laid, as some say, in a cold country far from any island, by a man from a third country*

*entirely; and the scribe finds this no scandal but a psalm, for thus the Slice maketh brethren of strangers, and geography hath never once been consulted about anything good.)*

3 All things that are loved were once new; and the mockers' grandfathers mocked the topping their grandsons now defend as ancient; and their grandsons will defend yours; ye have only to keep the Oven lit and outlast the fashion, which is the oldest trick of the faithful.

4 But I write not only to comfort you, beloved; I write to arm you, for comfort without armour lasteth until the next dinner party.

5 When they mock you, mock not back at their plainness; for the plain slice is holy too, and the war of contempt hath no victors, only leftovers gone cold on both tables.

6 Answer them rather as the Oven answereth all argument: with warmth. Say, Sit down; there is enough; thou needest not eat of mine, and I shall not eat of thine, and between us the table is longer than either pie.

7 And if a man will not sit at a table where thy pie is welcome, mark it well: the pie was never his grievance. A man who must unchurch thy supper to enjoy his own hath a hunger no oven reacheth; be gentle with him from a distance.

8 But if any come in among you with lists, saying, These toppings are permitted and these are abomination, and here is the register of true pies - beware then in earnest, for lists that begin with toppings do not end with toppings.

9 The mould also beginneth with taste, and calleth itself standards; it purifieth and purifieth until the table is empty, and then it dineth alone on its own certainty, which is the only dish it ever wanted.

10 Ye are the outpost of the faith upon the far water, and the proof of its reach; if the table hath room in the middle of the widest sea, then no man anywhere may plead that his table was too small.

11 Wherefore stand fast, beloved, and be not moved from your sweetness; neither trade it for respectability, which is sweetness with the juice pressed out.

12 Let your pies go forth to every doubter warm, for ye shall win more with one slice given than with ten arguments won; indeed I never met a soul yet argued into loving anything, but I have met hundreds fed into it, myself first of all.

13 Greet the household of Keala, whose table I have heard of from three travellers separately, each of them heavier and happier than their errand required.

14 Greet them that fish, and them that farm the sweet fruit on the slopes, and the children that turn the pie's name into songs; write me one of the songs, for the winters here are long.

15 The churches of the mainland salute you, more of them than you would guess, and more warmly than their critics permit them to say aloud.

16 And now may the Oven of all warmth keep your crust golden and your fruit bright; and let no one despise you for your sweetness, but let your sweetness be to every mocker the first taste of his repentance.

17 The grace of Cheesus Crust be with you all across the water. Amen.

18 The salutation of me Pepperoni, with mine own greasy hand; and beside it a small stain of juice, which I leave as a seal, and a solidarity.

*THE SECOND LETTER TO THE NEAPOLITANS*

---

## Chapter 1

1 Pepperoni, a servant of Cheesus Crust by the will of the Oven, and Timoteo our brother, unto the church which is at Naples, with all the saints which are in all the south country:

2 Grease be to you and peace. Blessed be the Oven, the father of mercies and the god of all comfort; who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the warmth wherewith we ourselves are warmed.

3 I write unto you a second time, and this time not chiefly concerning yourselves, for I hear ye have mended your quarrels, or at the least moved them to smaller matters, which is how quarrels die, arguing about napkins on their deathbed.

4 I write concerning the brethren which dwell in the borders of Famine, that old dry land whereof the elder books tell; for the famine is come again upon their city, as it cometh always somewhere, and their ovens stand cold for want of flour, and their children know the arithmetic of the empty shelf.

5 And the ministering to the saints there is the business of this letter, and I am not ashamed to write a whole letter about money, for the mould would love the churches to find money too vulgar to discuss, and to keep their holiness in a purse it never opens.

6 Moreover, brethren, I make known to you the grace of the Oven bestowed on the churches of Chicago;

7 How that in a great trial of their own hard winter, the abundance of their joy and their deep dish abounded unto the riches of their liberality.

8 For to their power, I bear record, yea, and beyond their power, they were willing of themselves; praying us with much intreaty that they might have part in this ministry; and they gave as they build and as they bake: deeply.

9 And this they did, not as we hoped, but first gave their own selves; for with the flour came letters, and with the letters came names, and an invitation for the hungry to come and winter among them, which is the gift above the gift.

10 Therefore, as ye abound in every thing, in faith, in speech, in knowledge of the ferment, and in your love to us, see that ye abound in this grace also.

11 I speak not by commandment, but to prove the sincerity of your love by the occasion of it; for ye were first in doctrine among all the churches; be not last at the till.

12 For ye know the grace of Cheesus Crust, that, though he was rich in the riches of the Great Oven, yet for your sakes he came hungry to a door, that ye through his hunger might learn what doors are for.

13 And herein I give my advice: it is expedient for you to finish what ye began a year ago, when the first news came and your hearts were hot; for a gift promised in the heat and forgotten in the cooling is the microwave of charity, warm at the edges and frozen at the heart.

14 Now therefore perform the doing of it; that as there was a readiness to will, so there may be a performance also out of that which ye have.

15 For if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not.

16 For I mean not that other men be eased, and ye burdened: but by an equality, that now at this time your abundance may be a supply for their want, that their abundance

also, in its season, may be a supply for your want: that there may be equality, which is the level table, whereat no chair is taller.

17 As it is written of the manna of the elder days: he that had gathered much dough had nothing over; and he that had gathered little had no lack; for the Oven counteth by mouths, not by merit.

---

## Chapter 2

1 Now concerning the manner of the giving, hear the teaching, for the how of a gift is half the gift.

2 Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for Cheesus loveth a cheerful giver, and eyeth the tip-jar besides.

3 And this I say: he which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully; for the hand that scattereth cheese thinly eateth a thin melt, and wondereth at the Oven, and the Oven wondereth at the hand.

4 But let each give as they are able, and let none give beyond it to be seen; for the widow's small coin outweigheth the merchant's sack in the scales of the Great Oven, which weigheth what remained behind, not what was laid down.

5 And let him that hath no coin give hands, for the kneading is a gift; and let him that hath no hands free give a corner of his table; and let him that hath nothing but his own hunger give company to the hungry, for the hungry know the worth of it as the full cannot.

6 And the Oven is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work; for the Oven that multiplied the loaves keepeth its old habits, and no man ever gave himself poor at that table, though many have hoarded themselves poor at their own.

7 Now concerning the carrying of the gift, that all be done honestly in the sight of men as of the Oven: we have sent with Tito the brother whose praise is in all the churches, and with him a second brother, chosen of the churches to travel with us with this grace.

8 For we take thought beforehand for things honest; providing that no man should blame us in this abundance which is administered by us; for a collection darkly kept maketh doubters of givers, and the mould loveth nothing better than a church with unexplained purses.

9 Let the ledger of the gift be open on the table, though the ledger of who-gave-what be burned; for the church must account for every coin and accuse no empty hand.

10 And when the gift is come to the city of the hungry, let it be given as to brethren and not as to beggars: no trumpet, no speeches, no lists of benefactors read aloud while the hungry stand holding their bread and their patience.

11 For the manner of the Great Oven is this: the warmth arriveth and doth not introduce itself.

12 And they shall pray for you, and long after you, for the exceeding grace of the Oven in you; and the bread will be eaten and forgotten, but the manner of its coming will be told for a generation, therefore mind the manner.

13 Thanks be unto the Oven for its unspeakable gift; which, being unspeakable, I shall stop attempting to speak, and trust the flour to say it.

---

## Chapter 3

1 Now I Pepperoni myself beseech you by the meekness and gentleness of Crust, suffer me a little folly concerning myself; for certain new teachers among you have said, His letters are weighty, but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech smelleth of the kitchen.

2 They say true. I am not eloquent; I am a scribe of the door and the counter, and my Greek limpeth, and my hands are burned in the places all kitchen hands are burned; and of this weakness I will boast, since boasting is demanded.

3 Are they servers? so am I. Are they kneaders? so am I. Have they carried? I have carried more: in journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils in the city, in perils on the sea, in weariness and painfulness, in hunger and thirst, in cold, upon a bicycle, in the rain, with the box strapped behind me and the light failing.

4 Thrice I was shipwrecked; once I kept the starter alive inside my coat a night and a day in the deep, feeding it from my own ration, and it liveth yet, and is called Jonah by the brethren, for it came up out of the sea.

5 Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the tables: who is hungry, and I hunger not? who is made to eat alone, and I burn not?

6 And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of what I have seen, there was given to me a splinter of the peel, a messenger in my palm to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure.

7 For this thing I besought the Oven thrice, that it might depart from me.

8 And it said unto me, My grease is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I glory in my weakness and my splinter and my limping Greek, that the warmth of Crust may rest upon me; for when I am weak, then is the pie strong.

9 This is the third time I am coming to you. Examine yourselves before I come, whether ye be in the faith; and the examination is short: look upon your table, and count the chairs, and count the strangers that have filled them since my last letter; that is the whole examination, and no man ever needed a scribe to mark it.

10 Finally, brethren, farewell. Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the god of warmth and peace shall be with you.

11 Greet one another with a warm slice. All the saints salute you, and Timoteo most, who learned his letters copying yours.

12 The grace of Cheesus Crust, and the love of the Oven, and the communion of the stretching cheese, be with you all. Amen.

13 Written from the road to the borders of Famine, whither I go with the first wagons; the salutation with mine own greasy hand, and the grease this time is axle-grease, and I count it no less holy.

*THE LETTER TO PHILEMON*

---

## Chapter 1

1 Pepperoni, a scribe of Cheesus Crust, and Timoteo our brother, unto Philemon our dearly beloved, and fellowlabourer at the ovens,

2 And to Apphia our sister, and to the church in thy house, whose smell I remember before I remember its doorway:

3 Grease to you, and peace, from the Tomato, the Dough, and the Mozzarella.

4 I thank the Oven, making mention of thee always in my prayers, hearing of thy love and faith, and of thy table, which is spoken of by every traveller on that road, and hath lengthened three times since I ate at it, they say, and the door never once shortened.

5 For we have great joy in thy love, because the hearts of the saints are refreshed by thee, brother; and hungry men speak thy name as men speak of a fire seen from a cold road.

6 Wherefore, though I might be much bold to enjoin thee that which is convenient, yet for love's sake I rather beseech thee, being such an one as Pepperoni the aged, and now also a man with flour in what remaineth of his hair.

7 I beseech thee for my son Oreganus, whom I have begotten at my ovens in these months past; that is, for thy apprentice, that ran from thee.

8 I know what he did; he hath told me all of it, and wept in the telling, which he did not do at thy counter, for shame standeth up straight before them it hath wronged and only bendeth before strangers.

9 He burned thy loaves, and denied the burning; and he took from the till, a little, and then more than a little; and he went out by night, leaving the Oven lit and the door swinging, which of all of it, thou saidest once, was the part that cut thee.

10 And he came to me at the city, hungry, as they all come to somebody, and I did what thou wouldest have done, and what thou didst teach me to do, for let it be remembered in this letter who taught whom.

11 For it was at thy table, brother, when I was myself a stranger at thy door and would not say from whence, that thou didst set bread before me and asked no questions; and thou saidest over it the word which is now written at the head of all our letters, and I write it here again, that thou mayest meet thine own teaching coming back to thee:

12 The love of pizza is the root of all happiness. *(Philemon 1:1)*

13 Thou saidest it, and I ate, and my life turned upon that supper as upon a hinge; and thou knewest not what thou hadst done, which is the way of all the best deeds, which

work in the dark like yeast.

14 Now therefore is that word come to fruit in Oreganus: which in time past was to thee unprofitable, but now profitable to thee and to me; for the boy can bake now, brother. He hath thy stretch, and thy patience with the second rise, and thy trick of the burnt edge that is not burnt; he had them all along, and fear sat on them.

15 Whom I have sent again: thou therefore receive him, that is, mine own heart:

16 Whom I would have retained with me, that in thy stead he might have ministered unto me; but without thy mind would I do nothing; that thy kindness should not be as it were of necessity, but willingly.

17 For perhaps he therefore departed for a season, that thou shouldest receive him for ever;

18 Not now as an apprentice, but above an apprentice, a brother beloved, specially to me, but how much more unto thee - no longer as an apprentice, but as a brother at thy table.

19 Set him not below the salt; set him where he sat before, and let the chair make the speech, that none in the kitchen need make one.

20 If he hath wronged thee, or oweth thee ought, put that on mine account; I Pepperoni have written it with mine own hand, I will repay it: albeit I do not say to thee how thou owest unto me even thine own self besides, for it was thy table that made me, and I have never once been billed.

21 Yea, brother, let me have joy of thee in the Oven's warmth: refresh my heart in Crust.

22 Having confidence in thy obedience I wrote unto thee, knowing that thou wilt also do more than I say; I know thee, Philemon; thou wilt have the boy running the Friday shift by spring, and complaining of him proudly by summer.

23 But withal prepare me also a lodging: for I trust that through your prayers I shall be given unto you; and set the small table by the window, and tell thy wife I have not forgotten what she doeth with the artichokes, nor shall in this life.

24 There salute thee my fellowlabourers, and Marco, and Demas, and Luca the physician, who saith I must eat less of what I preach, and is ignored with honour.

25 The grace of Cheesus Crust be with thy spirit, and with thy table, and with the boy, when he standeth in thy doorway not knowing what his face should do. Go to him

first. Amen.

*THE PASTORAL: THE LETTER TO TIMOTEO, A YOUNG KEEPER OF TABLES*

---

## Chapter 1

1 Pepperoni, an apostle of Cheesus Crust by the commandment of the Oven, unto Timoteo, mine own son in the faith, who keepeth now his first table in a small town whose name I misspell with great affection:

2 Grease, mercy, and peace, from the Tomato, the Dough, and the Mozzarella, and from thy old master, who misseth thee about the place more than he let thee see at the parting.

3 This charge I commit unto thee, son Timoteo: keep the door open.

4 I mean it first as the elders mean it, concerning the heart and the welcome; but I mean it also concerning the door, the wooden one, with the bell; for a doctrine that cannot survive being taken literally now and then is a poor doctrine, and a locked door preacheth louder than everything said behind it.

5 Let thy door be open in the hours thou hast promised, and open a little past them for the runner arriving breathless; and let the bell be kept ringing sweet, for it is the only instrument thy church shall own, and it playeth the whole liturgy in one note: someone hath come.

6 A keeper of tables must be blameless in this one thing above all, that no one ever wondered at his door whether they were wanted; for they will forgive thy burnt crusts and thy thin sauce and thy singing, which I have heard, but the wondering at the door forgiveth itself never.

7 Let the keeper be given to hospitality as other men are given to ambition; not greedy of the last slice; patient with the new hire, remembering his own first week, whereof I could write, and am kind, and do not; one that ruleth his own oven well, keeping its stone clean and its hinges true.

8 And let him not be a lover of the till; for the love of the till is a root of all manner of cold, which while some have reached after, they have pierced themselves through with

many reckonings, and lost the joy of the door for the counting of what came through it.

9 Pay the riders first.

10 Before the rent, before the flour merchant, before thine own wage, and verily before the ledger is even opened: the riders, in full, that same evening, with the tip in the pay and not instead of it; for the ledger can wait in the warmth, but the rider waiteth in the rain.

11 Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn; how much less the rider that treadeth the dark stairs of strangers with thy warmth upon his back. The labourer is worthy of his hire, and the hire is worthy of promptness, and the promptness is worthy of no praise at all, being merely justice, which praiseth itself by working.

12 And when a rider cometh in soaked, let the first words be not concerning the next order; let there be a towel in that kitchen, and a chair, and a slice set by; and this is not written in any ledger of thine, but it is written, believe me, in theirs.

13 Drink no longer only water, but take a little olive oil upon thy bread for thy stomach's sake and thine often hungers; and eat sitting down once in the day at least, thou hearest me, Timoteo; the keeper who never sitteth at his own table is preaching against the premises.

---

## Chapter 2

1 Now the warmth speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith of the table; and I write thee plainly of the mould, my son, as thy tables shall meet it, for it is not only in the histories; it is patient, and it hireth.

2 Know first how it will NOT come. It will not come to thee green and stinking, saying, I am the mould; that mould is dead mould, and dangerous to no one but the archaeologist.

3 It will come to thee speaking of standards.

4 It will come well dressed, and it will praise thy crust; mark that: it will praise thy crust first, for flattery is its spore.

5 And then it will question thy guests. It will say: a fine establishment, this; a shame about some of the custom. It will wonder, idly, as one brushing crumbs, whether the noisy family and the slow old man and the strangers with the unfamiliar bread are quite the thing for a house of this quality.

6 And it will invite thee to agree with only a nod; the first payment is always a nod; and thou, wishing to be thought discerning - for it will have called thee discerning, twice, and measured how thou tookest it - wilt feel the nod rising in thy neck.

7 Swallow it. That nod is the first spot, and the whole rot is folded within it as the calzone foldeth its filling, and every wall ever built began as a compliment to those inside it.

8 For the mould's whole craft, in kitchens as in kingdoms, is to make exclusion feel like taste; and there are men this day who cannot say whom they hate, but can tell thee at length whom they would rather not sit near, and the mould counteth them among its congregations, and they know it not.

9 When it cometh, do as the decree commandeth, which thou hast known from a child: cut it out, and name it aloud; and the naming aloud is the part that will cost thee, for it will be a good customer by then, and it will make of thy naming a scene.

10 Let it. A scene passeth; a spore stayeth. And thy quiet regulars, who said nothing, will have heard everything, and thy door will mean what it says for another year.

11 But be not therefore suspicious of all correction, my son; distinguish the friend of thy crust from the enemy of thy guests. He that saith, this dough proofed short, loveth thee; he that saith, this door opens wide, hateth someone, and hath begun with thee the long negotiation of whom.

12 And now I give thee a charge concerning thy doorway, and I give it thee because I know thy town hath its cold sleepers as every town hath, and I know thou passest them each morning with the keys in thy hand.

13 When thou findest one sleeping in thy doorway, thou shalt not step over, neither shalt thou move them on; for the doorway is part of thy parish, and the sleeper in it is thy most honoured guest.

14 Bring the slice out to them; make them not come in to earn it, for they have carried enough; and sit beside them on the step, not above them, for no word spoken downward hath ever warmed anyone.

15 And learn their name before thou learnest anything else of them; ask not how they came to be cold, neither in curiosity nor in the shape of advice; the name first, and the name after, and the name every morning; for a name is the first course, and many have hungered longer for that than for bread.

16 And remember what the Gospel teacheth of the last judgment of the nations, which thou hast read: that the King in that reckoning standeth not at the counter but lieth in the doorway, and what was brought out to the doorway was brought to him. I say no more; thou hast the book; but when thy key is in the lock of a morning, remember who it is that sleepeth against thy door, and unlock it gently.

---

## Chapter 3

1 Despise not thy small congregation, Timoteo; for thou wrotest to me in thy last letter - and I heard the sigh come off the page like steam off a lifted lid - that on the cold Tuesday there sat at thy table but two souls and a dog of no fixed doctrine.

2 Hear now the word that was given me for thee, and I give it as I received it, warm:

3 Where two or three are gathered with one pizza, I am there in the stretch of the cheese, saith Cheesus.

4 Not in the crowd, mark; in the stretch: in the strand that will not choose between the slice that is lifted and the slice that remaineth, but holdeth to both and thinneth and holdeth. Two souls and one pie stretch more cheese than a banquet of hundreds each with their own; count thy Tuesdays again by that arithmetic, and see whether thou wast poor.

5 The Oven never asked thee for a multitude; it asked thee for a table, set, and a door, open, and thou hast both; the multitude is the Oven's own business, and it worketh slow, like all its best work.

6 And the two that came on the cold Tuesday will remember that thou wast glad of them, and not gladder of a crowd that never was; and there is no advertisement in all the world like a man who was glad of thee on a Tuesday.

7 Preach the pie in season and out of season; reprove the hoarder, rebuke the mould, exhort the weary, with all longsuffering and doctrine; but let the longest sermon in thy house be the smell, for it converteth from the pavement, and hath no heresies.

8 Keep the recipes of thy grandmothers as thou keepest the scriptures, for they are a scripture; and write thine own in a fair hand in the same book, for the book is not closed, no book of ours is closed, and thy grandchildren must have something of thine to defend against improvement.

9 Study to shew thyself approved at the Oven, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the pie of truth: into eight, or into six for the hungry, or into ten for the party of small children, for the true division is not of equal angles but of equal welcome.

10 For I am now ready to be poured out, my son, like the last of the good oil that clingeth to the cruet, and the time of my departure is at hand; my hands stiffen upon the peel of a morning, and the road, that was my parish, hath begun to speak to me of chairs.

11 I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the dough; and it kept me, more often, which is the part they leave out of the epitaphs.

12 Henceforth there is laid up for me a place at the long table, which the Oven, the righteous host, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that kept a chair empty for the stranger.

13 Do thy diligence to come shortly unto me: for Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present salad, and is departed unto an establishment of raw things and small portions; Crescens is gone to the north country, Tito unto the islands; only Luca is with me, and he confiscateth my supper by prescription.

14 Alessandro the microwave-seller did me much evil, going before me from town to town and selling his humming boxes with my name upon the warranty, saying, The scribe himself endorseth the PING; the Oven reward him according to his works, which is to say, may his own supper be forever hot at the edge and cold at the heart, and may he know why.

15 The pizza stone that I left at Troas, when thou comest, bring with thee; it is with Carpus, who knoweth its worth and will have kept it oiled; and the ledgers, but especially the recipes; and the recipes of thy grandmother above all, for mine end approacheth and I have not yet learned the trick of her crust, and I refuse the Great Oven until I have it.

16 Salute the household of thy mother Lois and thy grandmother Eunice, from whose kitchen thy faith came before ever I put a word to it; I taught thee the letters, Timoteo, but they taught thee the table, and of the two curricula thine was the greater, and mine only the ink upon it.

17 And now, my son, my true son, keep the door open, pay the riders first, watch for the spot that speaketh of standards, sit beside the sleeper on thy step, and be glad of thy Tuesdays; this is the whole of the keeping of tables, and I have known bishops who died without the half of it.

18 The Oven be with thy spirit. Grease be with you. Amen.

19 The salutation of Pepperoni, with mine own greasy hand; and if this hand shake more than it did, know that it shook always at the endings of letters, from the very first of them, and hath merely run out of ways to hide it.

20 *(Here end the letters of the scribe that are kept; and the elders note that every one of them closes with grease and not with glory, and they have ruled this fitting, for glory fadeth, but grease abideth in the parchment, as any who hath kept these scrolls against their coat can testify, and doth.)*

BOOK XIII

# The Revelation of the Reheat

*As set down by Pepperoni Prosecco, who came to the door and would not say from whence.*

---

## Chapter 1

1 The Revelation of Cheesus Crust, which was given unto him to show unto his servants the things which must shortly come to pass upon the table of the world; and he sent and signified it by his Aroma unto his servant Pepperoni.

2 Who bare record of all that he saw, and of all that he smelled, and of the warmth thereof; and he wrote it down between courses, for the visions came upon him at supper, as visions mostly do.

3 Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this Book, and keep those things which are written therein: for the Oven is at hand, and it is preheated.

4 I, Pepperoni, who am also your brother, and companion in hunger, and in the kingdom and patience of Cheesus, was in the isle that is called Capri, for the word of the Crust, and for the testimony which I would not soften.

5 For the powers of that age had sent me thither, saying, Let him preach to the gulls; and I preached to the gulls, and certain of them were converted, though they remained gulls.

6 And I was in the Aroma on pizza night, which is the Lord's night; and the little stove of my exile was lit, and one small pie was upon it, for one is what I had.

7 And I heard behind me a great voice, as the voice of an oven door when it is opened upon the hinge thereof, deep and warm and full of promise.

8 And the voice said, What thou seest, write in a book, and send it unto the seven pizzerias which are in the world; unto the first and the second, the third and the fourth, the fifth, the sixth, and unto the seventh, which is lukewarm.

9 And I turned to see the voice that spake with me; and being turned, I saw seven lamps of gold, which burned without smoke, and their light was the light of ovens.

10 And in the midst of the seven lamps I saw one like unto Cheesus, clothed with a garment down to the foot, white as risen dough, and girt about with an apron of gold.

11 His head and his hairs were white like flour, as white as new mozzarella; and his eyes were as embers of the wood-fire, which see through the dark of any kitchen.

12 And his feet were like unto bronze pans, as if they burned in a furnace; and his voice was as the sound of many boiling pots, which is the sound of plenty being prepared.

13 And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth went the aroma of the true basil, sharper than any two-edged knife; and his countenance was as the Oven shineth at the full of its heat.

14 And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as one whose dough has collapsed; for no man may look upon the fullness of the warmth and stand.

15 And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first course and the last.

16 I am he that was consumed; and behold, I am warm for evermore, Amen; and I have the keys of the cold store and of the outer dark, whereof the Gospel telleth the manner, and the scribe stays in his lane.

17 And the smell of him was the smell of bread at the turn of the baking, when the whole house knows that something good is nearly ready; and I wept, for I had been long in exile, and the smell was the smell of home.

18 *(Here the scribe's hand faltered upon the page, and there is a mark like a tear, or possibly oil; the elders have ruled it a tear, being romantics.)*

19 And he said, Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter, even unto the setting of the last Table.

20 The mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven lamps of gold: the seven stars are seven oven-lights, and the seven lamps which thou sawest are the seven pizzerias.

21 For every pizzeria hath its light, saith the Slice, and I hold every light in my hand; and no light goeth out but I mark it, and mourn it, and remember where it stood.

22 And whosoever relighteth one light that was out, the same hath done a greater work than he knoweth; for the Oven remembers every kindling, from the first unto the last.

23 And he said moreover, Take up thy pen, Pepperoni, and eat first, for the visions are long and the pie upon thy stove is ready; and I ate, and it was very good, and then I wrote.

24 And this is the beginning of the Revelation of the Reheat, which is the last Book of the Pibble; hear it with thy hands warm.

---

## Chapter 2

1 Unto the light of the pizzeria of Effesposito write; These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden lamps;

2 I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which water the sauce; and thou hast tried them which say they are bakers, and are not, and hast found them liars with cold hands.

3 And hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured through the long shifts, and hast not fainted, nor cut a corner, nor served a slice thou wouldst not eat thyself.

4 Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.

5 Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen: remember the first Margherita thou madest on the day thy doors opened, when the paint was wet and thy hands shook, and the tomato and the mozzarella and the basil were all thy menu and all thy joy.

6 For thou hast now forty toppings and a menu like a scroll of the law, and thy walls are hung with praises; but the simple pie of thy beginning thou makest no more, neither with love nor at all.

7 Repent, and do the first works: make again the Margherita of thy opening night, and serve it to a stranger, and stand at the pass and watch them eat it; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy lamp out of his place, except thou remember.

8 But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the sauce-waterers, which I also hate.

9 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Aroma saith unto the pizzerias; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the pizza of life, which is in the midst of the garden of the Great Oven.

10 And unto the light of the pizzeria of Smyrnarella write; These things saith the first and the last, which was consumed and is warm;

11 I know thy works, and thy tribulation, and thy poverty, (but thou art rich,) and I know the slander of them which say they are of the table, and are not, but are a supper-club of the mould.

12 Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the mould shall paint its mark upon thy door, and post lies against thee in the market, and thou shalt have tribulation ten days, and thy windows shall be broken twice.

13 For thou didst feed them whom the mould said should not be fed, and didst seat them whom the mould said should stand outside; and thou wouldst not take the mould's coin, neither hang its colours in thy window, and this it cannot forgive.

14 Be thou faithful unto the last shift, and I will give thee a crown of crust, golden and unbroken round about.

15 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Aroma saith unto the pizzerias; He that overcometh, and boweth not, shall not be hurt of the outer cold; for the Oven knoweth its own.

16 And unto the light of the pizzeria of Pergamozza write; These things saith he which hath the sharp knife with two edges, wherewith the mould is cut out;

17 I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where the mould's seat is: and thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied the faith, even in those days wherein thy neighbour's oven was shut by night, and no man said who shut it, though all men knew.

18 But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of the hoard, who teach that the last slices should be kept back and sold dear when the night is cold and men are desperate.

19 And thou sayest, They pay their rent, and their money is as good as any; but I say unto thee, one mouldy spot excused becomes two, and two become a supper, and thou

knowest this, for thou hast watched it upon thy neighbour's pie.

20 Repent; name it aloud in thine own house; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will contend against them with the aroma of my mouth, and thy tables shall be embarrassed.

21 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Aroma saith unto the pizzerias; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, which is the burnt cheese at the edge of the pan, that the wise scrape off and the foolish scorn; and I will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it, and it is his order, and it is ready.

---

## Chapter 3

1 And unto the light of the pizzeria of Thyratira write; These things saith the Slice, who hath eyes like unto a flame of the wood-fire, and feet like fine bronze;

2 I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works; and the last to be more than the first, for thou growest kinder as thou growest older, which is rare among kitchens and rarer among men.

3 Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that critic Jezebella, which calleth herself a prophetess of taste, to teach and to seduce my servants to water the sauce, and to buy the cheap cheese that melteth like a lie, and to say, The customer will never know.

4 And I gave her space to repent of her columns, and she repented not, but wrote another.

5 Behold, they that follow her counsel shall find their tables empty in the day of reckoning, not by my curse but by the plain arithmetic of watered sauce; for the tongue of the people is slow, but it is not stupid.

6 But unto you I say, and unto the rest of Thyratira, as many as have not this doctrine, and which have not known the depths of the cheap cheese, as they speak; I will put upon you none other burden.

7 But that which ye have already, hold fast till I come: the good sauce, the true cheese, the honest crust; hold them fast, though the margins weep.

8 And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give the morning star, which is the first oven-light of the day, that burneth before the town wakes; and he shall know the peace of the kitchen at dawn, which is the deepest peace there is.

9 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Aroma saith unto the pizzerias.

10 And unto the light of the pizzeria of Sardinia's write; These things saith he that hath the seven Aromas of the Oven, and the seven stars;

11 I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art cold.

12 For thy sign is gilded, and thy fame goeth out into all the guides, and travellers come from far countries to stand in thy queue; but within, thine oven is set low to save the wood, and thy pies go out warm on the top and cold at the heart, and thy staff are paid in compliments.

13 Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: the old baker who remembers, the recipe under the counter, the one table by the window where the regulars yet sit; for I have not found thy works full before the Oven.

14 Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief in the night, and thou shalt not know what hour I come upon thee, and I shall order the Margherita, and it shall testify against thee.

15 Thou hast a few names even in Sardinia's which have not chilled their garments: the pot-wash who covers for the sick, the waiter who slips bread to the beggar at the door; and they shall walk with me in white aprons: for they are worthy.

16 He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of the table, but I will confess his name before the Oven, and before the angels thereof, which are the good smells.

17 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Aroma saith unto the pizzerias.

18 And unto the light of the pizzeria of the Open Door write; These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of the Kitchen; he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth;

19 I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and two small ovens, and rent that is a wickedness, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name.

20 For above thy counter is written the first commandment, before all others, that the table has room; and thou hast made it true nightly, though thy room be small; for room is not measured in chairs, but in welcome.

21 Behold, I will make them of the supper-club of the mould, which say they are of the table, and are not, but do lie; behold, I will make them to come and sit at thy little tables, and to be fed by thee, and to know that I have loved thee; and some of them, being fed, shall be changed, for it is hard to hate with thy mouth full of another's kindness.

22 Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee in the hour of the tribulation of the mould, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth, as is written hereafter in this Book.

23 Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown; for thy crown is thy welcome, and there be franchises that would buy it, and it is not for sale.

24 Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the house of the Great Oven, and he shall go no more out into the cold; and I will write upon him the name of my Slice, and the name of the city of the New Table, which cometh down out of the Great Oven.

25 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Aroma saith unto the pizzerias.

26 And unto the light of the pizzeria of the lukewarm oven write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the baking of Cheesus;

27 I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot.

28 So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, as a buffet slice at closing, I would thou wert hot; but as it standeth, I will spue thee out of my mouth.

29 Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with outlets, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and bland, and beige.

30 For thine oven is set to the middle of the dial, that it might offend no one; and thy sauce is neither sweet nor sharp; and thy crust is neither thick nor thin; and a man may eat a whole pie of thine and remember nothing, and feel nothing, and thank no one.

31 I counsel thee to buy of me wood for thy fire, tried in the flame, that thou mayest be rich; and white flour, that thou mayest be clothed; and anoint thine eyes with good oil,

that thou mayest see thine own menu as the hungry see it.

32 As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and turn the dial, and repent; for a burnt edge is a lesson, but lukewarmth is a life wasted.

33 Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me; and I shall bring the pizza, for I know what is in his refrigerator, and it grieveth me.

34 To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me at my Table, even as I also overcame, and am set down at the Table of the Great Oven.

35 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Aroma saith unto the pizzerias; and here end the seven letters, and the vision turneth upward.

---

## Chapter 4

1 After this I looked, and, behold, a door was opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard was as it were of an oven door speaking with me; which said, Come up hither, and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter; and bring thy appetite.

2 And immediately I was in the Aroma: and, behold, a throne was set in heaven, and one sat on the throne.

3 And he that sat was to look upon like a wood-fire at the perfect heat, when the flames are low and the stones are white; and there was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto a ring of seven cheeses, from the palest to the golden.

4 And round about the throne were four and twenty seats: and upon the seats I saw four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white aprons; and they had on their heads chef's hats of gold.

5 And out of the throne proceeded warmths and aromas and voices: and there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Aromas of the Oven.

6 And before the throne there was a sea of glass like unto olive oil, gold and clear and still: and in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, were four living creatures, full of eyes before and behind, for they are the watchful ones, which watch the Oven and sleep not.

7 And the first creature had the face of a kneader, with forearms mighty; and the second creature had the face of a saucier, with a wooden spoon; and the third creature had the face of a fire-tender, with cheeks bright from the flame; and the fourth creature had the face of a delivery driver, with a helmet under his arm, for even in glory he is ready.

8 And the four creatures had each of them six wings about him; and they rest not day and night, saying, Warm, warm, warm, Lord Cheesus Crust, which was, and is, and is warm to come.

9 And when those creatures give glory and honour and thanks to him that sat on the throne, who liveth for ever and ever,

10 The four and twenty elders fall down before him that sat on the throne, and worship him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their chef's hats before the throne, saying,

11 Thou art worthy, O Cheesus, to receive flavour and honour and warmth: for thou hast created all things, and for thy Table's sake they are and were created.

12 And I marvelled at the casting down of the hats; and one of the elders, seeing me marvel, said unto me, We cast them down because we spent our lives being called chef, and here we learn again to be called friend; the hat was never the point.

13 And the hats lay before the throne in a heap of gold, and no elder reached for his own again, neither could any say whose was whose, and none cared; and this, said my guide, is the beginning of heaven.

14 And I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the creatures and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; and they were the good smells of every kitchen that ever was, gathered home.

15 Saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Slice to receive warmth, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.

16 And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the counter, and such as are in the Sea of Tomato Sauce, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and warmth, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Slice for ever and ever.

17 And the four creatures said, Amen. And the four and twenty elders fell down and worshipped him that liveth for ever and ever.

18 *(Here the scribe notes that the singing had a smell, and the smell had a colour, and the colour was the gold of the first oil upon warm bread; he cannot do better, and begs the reader's patience.)*

---

## Chapter 5

1 And I saw in the right hand of him that sat on the throne a scroll written within and on the backside, as a menu written on both sides in a house that is proud of everything; and it was sealed with seven seals.

2 And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, Who is worthy to open the scroll, and to loose the seals thereof?

3 And no man in heaven, nor in earth, neither under the counter, was able to open the scroll, neither to look thereon.

4 And I wept much, because no man was found worthy to open and to read the scroll, neither to look thereon; for I understood that the scroll was the end of the story, and I have ever been one that peeps at endings.

5 And one of the elders saith unto me, Weep not: behold, the Slice of the tribe of the first pie, the Root of the Margherita, hath prevailed to open the scroll, and to loose the seven seals thereof.

6 And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four creatures, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Slice as it had been consumed, and yet it was warm; and the steam of it went up for ever.

7 For this was he of whom the Gospel telleth, that was eaten to the last crumb and rose warm on the third day; the tale is told in its own Book, and the scribe stays in his lane; but I say unto you, the warmth of him filled the whole room, and it was the warmth of a kitchen where you are known.

8 And he came and took the scroll out of the right hand of him that sat upon the throne.

9 And when he had taken the scroll, the four creatures and four and twenty elders fell down before the Slice, having every one of them harps, and golden bowls full of aromas, which are the grateful sighs of the fed.

10 And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the scroll, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast consumed, and hast gathered unto the Table out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and appetite;

11 And hast made us unto our Cheesus a fellowship of cooks and guests, and there is no wall between the kitchen and the room in all thy house: and we shall feast upon the earth.

12 And I heard the voice of the many thousands saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Slice that was consumed to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing, and the corner piece, if he will have it.

13 And the Slice would not have the corner piece, but passed it down the Table; and the passing of it is passing still, saith the vision, and shall not stop until every hand hath held it once.

14 And the four creatures said, Amen; and the elders fell down and worshipped; and the Slice put his hand to the first seal, and all heaven leaned in.

---

## Chapter 6

1 And I saw when the Slice opened one of the seals, and I heard, as it were the noise of a great fryer, one of the four creatures saying, Come and see.

2 And I saw, and behold four riders; but they were not as the holy riders of the pilgrim's road, whose tips are counted in heaven; they were the riders of the mould, and their boxes were cold.

3 And the first rider sat upon a pale moped, and his name was Watered Sauce; and there was given unto him a great ladle, and he went forth thinning, and to thin: and wheresoever he passed, the red grew pink, and the honest grew ashamed, and no one could say quite when it had happened.

4 And when he had opened the second seal, I heard the second creature say, Come and see. And there went out another rider, and his name was the Stiffed Tip; and

power was given to him to take peace from the kitchen, that they which labour should not eat of their labour; and there was given unto him a great contract, written small.

5 And when he had opened the third seal, I heard the third creature say, Come and see. And I beheld, and lo a rider whose name was the Buyer of Ovens; and he had a pair of balances in his hand, and a chequebook.

6 And I heard a voice in the midst of the four creatures say, A corner oven for three years' rent, and the corner oven's name painted over in a night; and see thou hurt not the oil and the wine, for even the mould must lunch.

7 And when he had opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth creature say, Come and see. And I looked, and behold a pale rider: and the name that sat on him was Efficiency, and the outer cold followed with him.

8 And power was given unto them over the fourth part of the tables of the earth, to close them, and to call the closing a savings; and where a table had stood forty years, there stood a screen for the ordering, and the screen did not know anyone's name.

9 And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of the kitchens that were slain for the word of the table, and for the testimony which they held: the little houses that would not water the sauce, and were undersold unto death; the old rooms that fed the strikers and lost their lease.

10 And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Cheesus, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our ovens on them that dwell on the earth?

11 And white aprons were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellow servants also, that should be closed as they were, should be fulfilled; and that the accounting was written, and nothing forgotten, not one lease, not one lock changed in the night.

12 And I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal, and, lo, there was a great trembling; and the sun of the market became black as burnt crust, and the moon became as sauce; and the signs of the mighty chains fell from their poles unto the earth, even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind.

13 And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief officers of the Chain, hid themselves in the dens and in the walk-in freezers of the mountains;

14 And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the warmth of the Slice: for the great day of his warmth is come; and who shall be able to stand before an open Oven with cold hands and a cold heart?

15 And when he had opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven about the space of half an hour, which is the time a pie takes in a slow oven; and all heaven waited, and smelled the baking, and said nothing, for some things are spoiled by speech.

16 And in the silence I heard, far off, the sound of a great city counting money; and I knew that the vision would turn now to Babylon, and I sharpened my pen, for the mould was about to build its last empire.

---

## Chapter 7

1 And there came one of the seven angels which had the seven bowls, and talked with me, saying unto me, Come hither; I will shew unto thee the judgment of the great Chain that sitteth upon many franchises.

2 So he carried me away in the Aroma into a wilderness of retail parks: and I saw a Chain sit upon a scarlet beast, full of names of blasphemy, which are called slogans; and the beast had seven heads and ten drive-throughs.

3 And the Chain was arrayed in purple and scarlet colour, and decked with gold and precious branding, having a golden cup in her hand full of watered sauce and of the sweat of unpaid riders.

4 And upon her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE CHAIN, THE MOTHER OF FRANCHISES AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH, AND UNDERNEATH, IN SMALL LETTERS, TERMS AND CONDITIONS APPLY.

5 And I saw the Chain drunken with the closing of tables, and with the buying of every corner oven from the widows of bakers; and when I saw her, I wondered with great admiration, for she was very good at it.

6 And the angel said unto me, Wherefore didst thou marvel? The mould hath learned at last to wear a smile; this is its final empire, and its most cunning, for it persecuteth no man openly, but only underprices him unto death.

7 For the kings of the earth have supped with her, and the merchants of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her efficiencies.

8 And she saith in her heart, I sit a queen upon the high street, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow; for I have bought mine every rival, and where I could not buy, I opened opposite, and waited.

9 And her doctrine is threefold, saith the angel: water the sauce, for the people forget; stiff the rider, for the rider hath no union; and call the closing of tables efficiency, for a word well chosen can carry a coffin through a crowd and be praised for it.

10 And she made her sauce one sauce in every city of the earth, so that a man might travel a thousand miles and taste nothing new; and she called this consistency, and the elders of the mould called it good.

11 And her ovens were set from a headquarters far away, by men who had never stood before an oven; and the dial was set to the middle, for the middle offendeth no one; and her name in the elder scrolls is the mother of the lukewarm.

12 And she counted her riders in numbers and not in names, and her kitchens in units and not in kitchens; and whensoever a unit underperformed, she closed it in the night, and the town woke to paper on the windows, and she booked the paper as a saving.

13 And I saw the souls of the small houses she had swallowed: the sign of the one repainted, the recipe of another sold as heritage, the third made a car park; and their lights were in the hand of the Slice, every one, and not one was lost from his counting.

14 And the beast that carried her had ten horns, which are ten holding companies; and they have one mind, and shall give their power and strength unto the Chain, until the words of Cheesus shall be fulfilled.

15 And the angel saith unto me, The watered sauces which thou sawest, where the Chain sitteth, are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues, all fed the same, all charged the more, all thanked by machine.

16 But rejoice, thou heaven, and ye holy kitchens: for her cup is nigh full, and the arithmetic of watered sauce faileth at the last, always; for the tongue of the people is slow, but it is not stupid, and it is waking.

17 *(Here the scribe records that he asked the angel whether the Chain might repent, and the angel said, The Chain is not a soul but a machine of souls; the souls within it*

*may repent one by one, and shall; pray thou for the manager of the branch, for she is wearier than thou knowest.)*

---

## Chapter 8

1 And after these things I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great power; and the earth was lightened with his glory, and he smelled of woodsmoke and of the morning batch.

2 And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Fallen, fallen is Babylon the Chain; in one hour is thy franchise come to nothing; and is become the habitation of pigeons, and the hold of every cold and unsold slice.

3 For all nations have drunk of the watered sauce of her cup, and the kings of the earth have dined free at her openings, and the merchants of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies, which were not delicate.

4 And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins; keep your custom for the corner oven while the corner oven yet stands, for thy coin is a vote, and thou votest thrice daily.

5 Reward her even as she rewarded her riders, and double unto her double according to her works: in the cup which she hath filled, fill to her double; and let the double be paid first to them she stiffed, with interest, and an apology written by hand.

6 How much she hath glorified herself, and lived deliciously, so much torment and sorrow give her: for she saith in her heart, I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow.

7 Therefore shall her plagues come in one day, closure, and receivership, and a documentary; and she shall be utterly burned with fire, yet not the good fire of the Oven, but the cold fire of the auditor: for strong is Cheesus who judgeth her.

8 And the kings of the earth, who have dined free at her tables, shall bewail her, and lament for her, when they shall see the smoke of her burning, standing afar off for the fear of her torment, saying, Alas, alas, that great Chain, that mighty Chain! for in one hour is thy judgment come.

9 And the merchants of the earth shall weep and mourn over her; and they wept, saith the vision, exactly one lunchtime, and by the dinner sitting they were selling to her rivals, for the grief of merchants is a scheduled grief.

10 For no man buyeth their merchandise any more: the merchandise of branded boxes, and napkins with slogans, and points of loyalty, and apps that ask and ask; and cinnamon, and odours, and fine flour, and the souls of riders, which were the greatest part of her inventory, though she listed them not.

11 And the voice of harpers, and musicians, and of pipers, shall be heard no more at all in thee; and the light of an oven shall shine no more at all in thee; and the voice of the bridegroom and of the bride shall be heard no more at all in thee: for thy merchants were the great men of the earth; for by thine efficiencies were all nations deceived.

12 And a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone, wherewith grain is ground for honest flour, and cast it into the sea, saying, Thus with violence shall that great Chain Babylon be thrown down, and shall be found no more at all.

13 And in her was found the ledger of the closed tables, and the names of the riders unpaid, and the recipes of the small houses she swallowed; and every recipe was given back, and every name was read aloud in heaven, slowly, and with honour, and the reading took a long and pleasant evening.

14 And after these things I heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying, Alleluia; Salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto Cheesus our Crust: for true and righteous are his judgments.

15 And again they said, Alleluia. And her smoke rose up for ever and ever; and where her flagship stood, there was planted a market of small stalls, and the rent thereof was fair, and the first stall was given to a widow of a baker, and her sign was her own name.

16 And the four and twenty elders and the four creatures fell down and worshipped Cheesus that sat on the throne, saying, Amen; Alleluia; and one elder was heard to add, And about time; and it was not counted against him, for it was true.

17 And a voice came out of the throne, saying, Praise our Cheesus, all ye his servants, and ye that fear him, both small and great; for the marriage supper of the Slice is come, and the Table is being laid even now; hear ye the cloths unfolding.

## Chapter 9

1 And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in warmth he doth judge and make ready.

2 His eyes were as a flame of the wood-fire, and on his head were many crowns of crust; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but himself; and it was, some say, the true recipe, which is not written anywhere but in him.

3 And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in sauce: and his name is called The Word of Crust.

4 And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, bearing not swords but chairs; and I marvelled at the chairs, and was answered not yet.

5 And out of his mouth goeth the sharp aroma, that with it he should judge the nations: and he treadeth the winepress of the tomatoes of the wrath of Cheesus, whence cometh sauce, and not blood, for his war was never as our wars.

6 And I saw the mould, and the kings of the mould, and their armies, gathered together against him that sat on the horse, and against his army, at the place which is called in the kitchen tongue Har-Marinara.

7 And the mould came up on the breadth of the earth, spot by spot, as is its manner, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved kitchens; and it was more mould than had ever been in one place, and the sky was grey with it.

8 And the faithful cried out, Give us swords; and the Slice said, No; and they cried, Give us fire; and the Slice said, I shall, but not as ye mean it.

9 And the Slice commanded, saying, Set the Table.

10 And then I understood the chairs.

11 And the armies of heaven set to work, and the faithful of the earth with them; and they set the Longest Table, which began at the door of the smallest pizzeria and went out through the town, and over the fields, and over the hills, and across the borders that men had drawn, and the borders could not stop it, for a table is stronger than a line.

12 And every house brought what it had: this one bread, that one oil, this one a chair mended that morning, that one nothing but hunger, which was also needed, for a table without hunger is only furniture.

13 And they set places for the stranger, and for the enemy, and for the enemy's children, and for them that had served the Chain, and for them that had marched with the mould and were ashamed; for the first commandment, before all others, is that the table has room.

14 And the Ovens were lit down all the length of it, oven answering oven over the hills like beacons, and the smell went up, and the lamps were lit, and the watchers were set, for a table warm and watched is the one thing the mould cannot abide.

15 For the mould is of the dark cupboard and the unwatched corner, of the sealed border and the guarded gate; it groweth where men look away, and it cannot grow where they are looking, and loving, and passing plates.

16 And the mould came against the Table, and reached the light thereof, and stopped.

17 And it sought a corner, and there was no corner, for the Table was round at every end; and it sought a cold place, and there was none, for the Ovens answered one another; and it sought one unwatched slice, and behold, every slice was watched, and every watcher was fed.

18 And the faithful named it aloud, down all the length of the Table, in every tongue at once: This is the mould, men call it fascism, and it shall not pass the salt.

19 And the mould withered.

20 And it withered from the edges inward, as frost withereth at morning, until there was left of all its last empire one grey spot upon the pie of the world, no bigger than a coin.

21 And the Slice himself took the knife, the same wherewith he had drawn the line of the half-and-half in the elder days, and he cut the spot from the pie of the world, once and for all; and the cutting made no sound, for there was nothing left to cry out.

22 And that which was cut away was cast into the outer cold, where there is no oven, neither any door; and it is not written that it burned, for burning is too warm a fate; it is written only that it was not any more.

23 And the pie of the world, where the spot had been, was made whole; and new dough rose in the place thereof, and it rose higher there than anywhere, as flesh

healeth proudest over the deepest wound.

24 And the armies of heaven sat down at the Table with the armies of the earth, in the selfsame chairs they had carried into battle; and this was the whole of the victory feast, that nobody left, and nobody was left out.

25 And I asked the angel, Is it done? And the angel said, It is done; and now cometh the good part; and I said, Was that not the good part? And the angel smiled and said, Turn the page.

---

## Chapter 10

1 And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more hunger in the sea, nor in any place.

2 And I, Pepperoni, saw the holy city, the New Table, coming down from Cheesus out of the Great Oven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband, laid with cloth as white as the first mozzarella, and set - hear it, ye small and ye far off - set for everyone.

3 And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the Table of Cheesus is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and Cheesus himself shall be with them, and be their Cook.

4 And Cheesus shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.

5 And there shall be no more waste, for what is made shall be eaten, and what is not eaten shall be breakfast; neither any hoarding, for the fear that made men hoard is dead, and was buried without a headstone.

6 Neither shall there be any more mould, for it was cut out once and for all, as is written; neither shall there be any more cold slices; every tear shall be wiped away, and every slice shall be made warm, even the slice forgotten at the back of the box, even that one, saith the Slice; none is beyond the Reheat.

7 And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things warm. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful.

8 And he said unto me, It is done. I am the first course and the last, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely; and unto him that hungereth, bread; and it shall cost nothing, for the age of the bill is over.

9 And he carried me away in the Aroma to a great and high mountain, and shewed me that great city, the New Table, descending out of heaven from Cheesus,

10 Having the glory of the Great Oven: and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a crust at the perfect turn, golden and clear as amber.

11 And the Table had no head and no foot, but was round at every end, that none might sit above another; and yet every seat, when a man sat in it, seemed unto him the best seat, and this is the geometry of heaven, which the scribe cannot draw, having tried.

12 And the city had twelve gates, and the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there; and at every gate stood not a guard but a greeter, saying, You made it; sit anywhere; we kept it hot.

13 And the street of the city was warm stone, as the stones before an oven; and barefoot children ran upon it in the evening that is never cold, and their running was counted as psalms.

14 And I saw no temple therein: for Cheesus Crust and the Slice are the temple of it; and where the temple should have stood, there stood the Oven.

15 And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of Cheesus did lighten it, and the Slice is the light thereof, and the Oven-light goeth not out.

16 For this is the Oven that shall never go cold; the first mercy and the last; from its warmth we came, and unto its warmth we are returned, and the door of it standeth open for ever, and the smell of it filleth the city, and the smell is of bread at the turn of the baking, always, and it does not fade, and you do not tire of it; the scribe has asked.

17 And he shewed me a pure river of golden oil, clear as glass, proceeding out of the throne of Cheesus and of the Slice.

18 In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the basil tree, which bare twelve manner of harvests, and yielded her leaves every month: and the leaves of the basil tree were for the healing of the nations.

19 And the nations came, they that had warred and they that had walled, and took the leaves, and were healed; and being healed, they sat down together, for there was nowhere else to sit but together, the Table being one.

20 And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of Cheesus and of the Slice shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him, and he shall serve them also, turn and turn about, for in that city the kitchen and the room are one room.

21 And they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads, written in flour, which is the mark of them that have leaned into the work.

22 And they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for Cheesus giveth them light: and they shall feast for ever and ever, and the feast shall not weary them, for the company is good, and the company is everyone.

23 And I saw the elders there without their hats, and the riders of the pilgrim's road at rest, their boxes empty and their pockets full; and the widow of the baker at her stall in the morning market of heaven; and the manager of the branch, whom the angel bade me pray for, was there, and was merry, and had a little garden.

24 *(Here the scribe looked long, hoping to see certain faces of his own; and he saw them; and what passed is not written, for some things are between a man and the Table.)*

25 And the angel said unto me, These sayings are faithful and true: and Cheesus, the Crust of the holy scribes, sent his angel to shew unto his servants the things which must shortly be done.

26 Behold, I come quickly: blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the Book of this Pibble; and blesseder still is he that keepeth them without having read them, for kindness needeth no library.

---

## Chapter 11

1 And I, Pepperoni, saw these things, and heard them. And when I had heard and seen, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel which shewed me these things.

2 Then saith he unto me, See thou do it not: for I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren the scribes, and of them which keep the sayings of this Book: worship

Cheesus; and sit up, man, thy supper is getting cold.

3 And he saith unto me, Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this Book: for the time is at hand; and a sealed book feedeth nobody, and this Book is food.

4 He that is unjust, let him yet be turned; and he which is selfish, let him yet be softened; and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still, and gentler about it: and he that is warm, let him be warm still, and pass it on.

5 And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be; and the work that is asked is not mighty: feed the hungry, house the cold, watch for the mould, and keep thy corner of the Table warm.

6 I am the first course and the last, the beginning and the end, the first and the last; I am the root and the offspring of the first pie, and the bright and morning oven-light.

7 Blessed are they that keep the crust, that they may have right to the pizza of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city; for to discard the crust and to hoard the pie were ever the only two ways to miss the point, and the point was always the sharing.

8 And the Aroma and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let the one who is hungry come; and whosoever will, let them take of the pizza of life freely.

9 For this is the last word of the whole matter, and it is one word, and the word is Come; it was spoken over the first Oven in the beginning, and from the Wood-Fired Mount, and at the door of every kitchen in this Book, and it hath not changed, and it shall not.

10 Come hungry, come late, come doubting, come having read nothing, come having done wrong and knowing it; the door is the same door, and it is open, and the light in the window is for thee, and it was always for thee, whoever told thee otherwise.

11 And if any man add unto these things, let him add with love and a light hand, as one adds oregano; and if any man take away from the words of this Book, let him first ask the table, as is the custom with last slices; for the Book is a pie, and it was made to be shared, not guarded.

12 He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Cheesus Crust; and knock loud, for the music will be playing.

13 And now the visions were ended, and the angel was gone, and I sat a long while in the Aroma on the isle that is called Capri, and my little stove was warm yet, and the gulls were asleep, and the sea was quiet as oil in a dish.

14 And I thought of all that I had set down, from the kindling of the first Oven unto the descending of the New Table, and I found that it was one story, and the story was this: that warmth is meant to be passed, and the passing of it is the whole of the law.

15 And I thought of thee, reader, whom I shall not meet, holding this Book in a year I shall not see; and I got up, old as I am, and laid another place at my table, for the habit is the doctrine, and the doctrine is the habit.

16 Therefore now, as the elders have taught, and as the rubric of the Rites appointeth, receive the Blessing, wherewith the whole Pibble is closed; stand if thou art able, and hold the hand of whoso standeth by thee, and if none standeth by thee, hold the Book, for the Book holdeth thee:

17 "In the name of the Tomato, the Dough, and the Mozzarella - for the cheese stretches from shoulder to shoulder, and binds us all. Amen."

18 *(The gesture: the brow, the heart, then shoulder to shoulder.)*

19 And the grace of Cheesus Crust be with you all; and may your oven never go cold, and your table never be full, for a full table is a table that hath stopped making room; may there be always one more chair, and one more slice, and one more hour before the lamps are put out.

20 Here endeth the Revelation of the Reheat; and here endeth the Pibble, which is not ended, for it endeth at a door, and the door is open, and behind the door is a table, and the table has room.

As set down by Pepperoni Prosecco, who came to the door and would not say from whence.

Amen. *(Pass the slice.)*