

CARPENTER:

(Narrating)

There are many tides, my Nanna tells me, one lazy summer morning in our makeshift classroom. Her cane swatting out at the chalkboard she's propped against the wall. Swatting out at Em's head when he seems to be drifting off to sleep.

Innumerable tides, she says, and we've only just begun counting them. Tides that offer, and tides that seize.

And if you're going to live upon the river, if you're going to understand its currents and live off its kindness and survive its temper, you need to learn to recognise each of them.

The Harvest Tide, which comes as a welcome sight; a healthy onrush of clear water and fresh shoals, fish leaping from the shallows in exultation.

The Corpse Tide, which returns our drowned dead to us, their bellies swollen with life and swarming offerings.

The Wither Tide, which cannot be summoned through any mark which we know of...

...which rises up like a storm to swallow the land.

These are the Silt Verses. And these are its disciples, in order of their arrival.

B Narr
Méabh de Brún
Lucille Valentine.

Written by Jon Ware and produced by Muna Hussien.
Audio production by Sammy Holden.

CALL CENTRE FLOOR, INT

We hear the sound of something heavy, crawling along an air duct.

And as it walks, a rapid, rasping whisper, echoing in the silence - pure stream of consciousness.

WHISPER:

Alone again in the dark in the dust Babble said Babble said you must get their attention if you want to be heard you must make them listen but nobody comes nobody comes not any more it's just me and Babble amongst the phones and Babble only speaks when he wants to it's just me the rest of the time alone in the dust and in the dark-

Not like it used to be no not like it used to be

The phones ringing all day all night the outreach team doing what we did best the happy chatter making sales hitting targets drowning in coffee getting the job done

The WHISPER creeps onwards, patrolling.

WHISPER:

Alone in the still and in the dust Babble said the great god Babble said you must let it out how you feel immense loneliness you mustn't tamp it down you must tell them how you feel how you've always felt Babble said we have so much to say about the shape of the world about what comes next you have to tell them value to add to the conversation we must have a voice together we must make them listen-

The WHISPER breaks off suddenly.

Below, muffled, we hear a door slam open.

CARPENTER and PAIGE shuffle in below, audibly a little out of breath as they carry an unconscious FAULKNER between them.

CARPENTER:

Got the door?

PAIGE:

Got it.

CARPENTER:

All right, careful. Let's find somewhere to lay him out.

WHISPER:

Visitors visitors bless them how nice pleased to have them with us Babble will be pleased to hear more ears for the pile we must meet with them we must take them by the ear we must make them listen-

PAIGE:

What is this place?

CARPENTER:

Looks like it used to be an office. A call centre, maybe? Lot of phones.

(As if pointing to a suitable spot)

There - that'll do.

Just clear the crud off the desk.

WHISPER:

Good choice excellent choice Patrick's desk never liked Patrick lot of confidence but too brash working the phones too pushy might win him a sale every now and then old dear on the other end stammering out agreement not really understanding what she'd been sold but too brash too bullish no good turns people off he couldn't make them listen.

The WHISPER crawls forward. We hear a sudden, loud creak.

PAIGE:

Did you hear something?

CARPENTER:

(Distractedly)

Could be rats. I'll see if I can start a fire when I get a moment.

Keep us warm. Might keep them away.

(Focusing on her task)

All right, I'm going to change his dressing.

I need you to apply direct pressure, here, where I'm pointing. When I say.

PAIGE:

Got it.

WHISPER:

Then again they never did listen to me either the ones on the phone old duckies sat in their foul-smelling rotten armchairs sad sack unemployed left at home with nowhere else to go

Dial them up flick through the script hello ma'am Jeremiah here calling from faint and co insurance solutions are you covered in case of religious destitution or military collateral damage because it hasn't been that long since the last war maybe we're due another one laugh heartily to engage with client client has already hung up dialtone bzzzt the phone goes back down with a clatter that people can hear

Jane said Jane said from her desk in a mocking and unsympathetic tone we've all got targets to meet you need to try a bit harder love you you need to make them stay on the line because if they sense even a hint love even a pause a moment's hesitation they can smell out a loser and who wants to buy from a loser no thank you

little golden ikon of the Wealth Creator set upon her desk, rocking back and forth, the bells on his hands ringing for success and wealth Jane said Jane said tapping it upon the head you can't have this one darling much as you stare this one's all mine and that's why I'm going to the top of the leaderboard going to the very top

Perhaps it's the name too off-putting try another make another make yourself into something that works

try again hello ma'am tucker calling here from dialtone bzzzt put the phone down as quietly as you can but it still clatters just the same don't look at the others staring all around you dying inside die alone never closing never going to leave this place

Said Jane listen said Jane there's some who are born to this the gift of the gab they call it they know how you don't know you'll never know

That stung hurt me in the spine in the belly but didn't have an answer for her never knew what to say suppose she was right after all

We hear CARPENTER step back with a sigh as she and PAIGE finish changing FAULKNER's dressing.

CARPENTER:
(*With satisfaction*)
Thank you. That looks better, doesn't it?

PAIGE:
Is he going to be all right?

CARPENTER:
Wish I knew.
(*Taking a look around*)
Gods, this place has been through the wars, hasn't it?

We hear her flicking in vain at a light-switch as she wanders through the office.

CARPENTER:

Tch. No electricity.

PAIGE:

Doesn't seem like the phone lines are working either.

(Reading aloud from the wall)

Faint and Company Solutions. Proudly serving our customers to meet their needs. Not the, uh, most elucidating slogan.

Both of them continue to explore.

CARPENTER:

(Awkwardly trying to be cordial)

So...what's your deal, Paige?

PAIGE:

My deal?

CARPENTER:

(Mildly frustrated)

Yes, your deal. That's a thing that people say to provoke conversation, isn't it?

PAIGE:

Well, I mean...what is there to say, really? My name's Paige.

I live in Nesh, on the other side of the border. I chose a really unfortunate time for a drive into the Peninsula.

CARPENTER:

You work in government?

PAIGE:

Advertising.

CARPENTER:

Well, looking at your car, you must be damn good at it.

The question stings PAIGE a little.

PAIGE:

I was. I mean, I am.

I'm not so sure I even want to be doing it. That was why I was driving out here in the first place. I wanted to get away.

I just couldn't keep...going on as I was.

PAIGE stops. She's struggling to articulate herself.

CARPENTER waits sympathetically for a moment, and then changes the topic.

CARPENTER:

There's a lot of wasted paper in this place, at least. Let me get started on that fire.

We hear her crumple up paper.

PAIGE:

And you and him. You're...renegades. Disciples of an outlawed god.

CARPENTER:

(Drily)

Sounds pretty cool when you put it that way, doesn't it?

Wish ten-year-old me could see me now.

PAIGE:

But you hurt people. You do things to them.

CARPENTER:

Doesn't everybody.

PAGE:

So what's the Wither Tide?

CARPENTER sits back with a sigh.

CARPENTER:

Our river is a changeable river. That's how my Nana taught it to me.

And you have to be able to watch for the Tides, the changes, because there are a thousand of them. You need to understand what the patterns signify.

Because that could mean the difference between a safe crossing point at low tide and a drowning end in sudden depths.

People all across the world spend their lives daubing marks, trying to get the pattern right, beseeching their gods to come when they call.

For you city folk, that could mean asking the Saint to make sure your toast is good and brown.

For us it's more like painting a target.

The Wither Tide, if it does exist, if it is waiting for us in that town far to the north...it's a weapon. It's the river's wrath.

It's a chance for us to reclaim what was taken.

To quench the fires of stagnant industry and leave something better in their place.

PAGE:

And you believe all of that?

CARPENTER:

My Nana used to tell me, 'look to yourself first'.

You can't control how other people see the world.

Know what I mean? Everyone's walking their own path. You're not obliged to explain or speak for your fellow travellers, not a single one of them.

You just need to focus on where you're headed to, and what your god is telling you.

Silence between them. CARPENTER is reflecting.

CARPENTER:

I know this isn't a great situation for you, Paige.

I can't imagine you think well of us, after the things you've seen.

But...if we get through tonight, we'll drop you off somewhere in the morning.

You can go to the police. Do whatever you need to.

I'll promise that on my god and on my own heart - so long as you're willing to stick it out with us now and help us - to help him - get through tonight.

The silence endures between them.

CARPENTER:

(Decisively)

Fire's looking good. I'm going to head back out and lock the gate. Make sure we're safe.

Can I trust you to stay with him?

You're not going to try and run off or anything?

PAIGE:
(Uncertainly)
Yes. You can trust me.

CARPENTER:
(Half-joking)
I mean, that's razor wire over the fence. So you're not going anywhere meaningful, unless they taught you how to hotwire a car in advertising school.

PAIGE:
(Taking it seriously)
No. I mean - no, they didn't.

CARPENTER:
(More emphatically)
Paige. Please stay with him.

PAIGE:
I will. I promise.

CARPENTER:
(Firmly but with a little gratitude)
Let me know if he wakes up. I won't be far.

We hear her walking away below.

A door swings open as CARPENTER leaves.

And we hear the WHISPER crawling again, back up into the ceiling vents, following her progress.

WHISPER:
Found the fire exit good very good used to rely on it out into the car park rainy days not hitting targets not making it work needed a place of escape cheeky ciggy second cheeky ciggy passing the time practicing lines to help hit the targets to sell trying to decipher what I needed to say to make everything right the right words for the old dears for the clients the right words for Jane for Patrick for all of them the secret words to make them love me-

Never loved me no-one loved me not until Babble great god Babble wait hush time to listen...

Below, we hear PAIGE get to her feet. She's weighing up what to do.

PAIGE:
...Faulkner?

FAULKNER:
(Groaning slightly, but still unconscious)
Hnh...

PAIGE:
Faulkner, I'm not going anywhere, all right? I'm just going to take a look around.

I'll be right here if you need me.

She hesitates, and then begins to explore the office.

We hear her try a rotary phone, and then give up with a tut.

PAIGE:
(To herself)
Phones are dead, idiot.

WHISPER:
Ah looking for a phone looking for a phone wanting to speak to someone that's good very good how it began how Babble began

Phone rang one night working late lights off didn't understand at first couldn't be right nobody calls you not you nobody's interested wrong number maybe pick up say in a small and uncertain voice hello.

Babble said great god Babble said I heard you crying out all this time for meaning my new friend my only love you spoke and I was made to listen to you I can help you should let me in let me in let me in

Let me in and I can make you what you've been dreaming of

Had to listen had to hear whatever he had to tell me couldn't help it

Nothing else would do

Here let me help I will talk see if you can listen Babble speak Babble speak I beg you now-

Suddenly, below, we hear a phone begin to ring.

PAIGE jumps in surprise.

PAIGE:

Wh- oh!

She picks it up.

PAIGE:
Hello? Hello?

A faint dial-tone. There's nobody on the other end, but the phone is clearly still functional.

She replaces the receiver, then begins to dial.

We hear it ring - and a click as someone picks up.

PAIGE:
I need to speak to the police.

WHISPER:
**Hello hello Babble says, Babble says, authority in the voice stern
but kindly sort of voice you feel you can rely upon**

We hear the same words, deeply muffled, echoing below in the phone.

PAIGE, however, is hearing something very different.

PAIGE:
Thank the gods. Listen. My name is Paige. I've been hijacked along
the river road. I need help.

WHISPER:
**Babble says Babble says, stay calm ma'am stay calm and we'll
be there as soon as we can what can you tell us serious tone lots
of gravity but same kindness same reassurance like a
silver-haired father-**

The same muffled echo at the other end of the line.

PAIGE:
Thank you, officer. I'm at a place called...Faint and Company. It's an
abandoned call centre or something.

One of them is wounded, so we've taken shelter here. It's this pair of
renegades, false-faith renegades.

One of the phones is still working, thankfully. Just blind luck that I
found it.

WHISPER:
Babble says Babble says are they armed

The echo.

PAIGE:

Um. One of them has a revolver. But I don't think they're going to hurt me. They've said they're not going to hurt me.

WHISPER:

Babble says Babble says we know these two these renegades very dangerous can't be trusted that's good sell it in now make them believe killed before these two murderous they will kill you too.

Babble says Babble says get a chance catch them sleeping take the revolver kill them first if you can we'll be on our way

The echo down the phone.

PAIGE:

Officer. I'm not going to-

WHISPER:

Babble says Babble says we're coming but you must be brave better now close the sale make it work be brave and be firm it's a question of survival we will be with you soon as we can but for now you must fight

The echo down the phone.

PAIGE:

I'll...I'll see what I can do. Please just, get here quickly.

WHISPER:

Babble says, Babble says, good luck kill them both all will be well good luck

The echo down the phone.

Silence. A click as PAIGE replaces the receiver, below, and returns to sit by FAULKNER.

FAULKNER:

(Still unconscious)

Nngh...

PAIGE:

(Soothing)

Hey. Hey. It's okay. I'm back.

PAIGE sits there, beside FAULKNER, in silence.

We hear the WHISPER creeping away down the vent, apparently satisfied.

WHISPER:

Not bad good progress no need for disappointment no need for concern Jane said she said you can't always close a sale right away sometimes it takes longer warm them up make them think consider the risk you hope you never need insurance of course it's only prudent safe thing to do come back to her later she'll be glad to hear your voice she'll do as she's told

Check on the other one now 'scuse me miss someone on the other line I need to speak to angry one glowering one needs a different approach a different touch-

OFFICE BUILDING, EXT

The creak of a window.

WHISPER:

-don't use the fire exit much any more of course not any more stick to the vents to the windows when it's time to sleep sleep below in the sacred space in the basement with Babble's phone waiting for it to ring and on the cool nights the cool nights with pretty stars that's when we climb we slink up onto the roof no better place to watch from no better place to listen-

We're outside now, up on the building's roof. We can hear cicadas buzzing in the reeds beyond.

After a moment, we hear CARPENTER below.

Standing alone, in the car park, she's speaking aloud to her god.

CARPENTER:

(Below, with exhaustion, to the Trawler-Man)

I need something from you, my river.

I know I've asked before. And I don't know if I'm just not paying attention to the signals, or if you're not taking me seriously. And this time, here and now - I need you to take me seriously.

I need to know what you're leading us to.

The Wither Tide. Is that what's waiting for us at the end of all this?

Because if you want us to fight, I'm ready to fight.

If you want us to tear all of this horrid shit down about us or die in the attempt, then there's nothing I've ever longed for more.

And if this leads to harm, even undeserved harm, along the way...well, I can weather that. I've learnt to weather as much as I need to.

But I need to know that you can shape something better, once you've swept away all that came before.

Haven't I given enough of myself to you?

I won't die a fool, still waiting and hoping for you to show me what's past all of this.

(Her voice cracking)

I can't.

Silence.

A creak from the WHISPER on the roof above.

CARPENTER turns.

CARPENTER:

(Sharply)

Is someone there?

Silence. She's staring up at the roof.

CARPENTER:

(To herself)

Must be losing my mind.

Suddenly, from within-

PAIGE:

(Calling from afar)

Carpenter!

CARPENTER:

Paige?!

She turns, and runs back in.

A moment later, we hear the WHISPER following her, quickly, creaking back through the window-

CALL CENTRE FLOOR, INT

CARPENTER enters. FAULKNER is awake, and breathing heavily.

PAIGE:
(To CARPENTER)
He just woke up.

FAULKNER:
Carpenter...where...where...

CARPENTER:
(To FAULKNER)
Easy, easy. You all right there, soldier of the faith?

FAULKNER:
(Delirious, half-ranting)
I was...dreaming.

Katabasian Mason. He was passing judgement on us.

Wanted to know why we hadn't made more progress, why we hadn't got to where we were going yet.

CARPENTER:
Seems unfair. You think he'd give us credit for fucking up proactively, at least.

FAULKNER:
(Pained)
He said he was ashamed of us.

CARPENTER:
Well, you tell him from me, we're doing just fine between us.

Settle down now, Faulkner. Back to sleep.

All of us could use some.

FAULKNER:
I don't...

I don't...

He seems to settle back to sleep.

CARPENTER:

Look at that. Out like a light.
(Settling down herself)
You should get some rest too.

I'll stay up and keep watch.

All seems quiet around here, but...I don't know.

There's something about this place that strikes me funny.

PAIGE:
(Cautiously)
You look tired too, Carpenter.

You sure you don't want me to stay up?

CARPENTER yawns.

CARPENTER:
Ah, I'm always tired. Hasn't stopped me yet.

No, you. You can get some shut-eye.

We hear the crackle of the fire as the two of them stare into it.

Silence.

CARPENTER:
(Sleepily)
Fire's a comfort, at least.

Nice and bright.

PAIGE:
(As if it's suddenly occurred to her.)
Does lighting a fire really keep rats away?

CARPENTER:
(Falling asleep)
I don't know, Paige. I'm just trying my best here.

The fire crackles.

Silence. PAIGE is watching as CARPENTER falls asleep.

PAIGE:
(Cautiously)
...Carpenter?

Carpenter?

No response. The sound of her creaking forwards across the floor to try and slip the revolver from Carpenter's belt.

WHISPER:

That's right that's right all sleeping all quiet take what you need to just a little sleight of hand the revolver yes slipped from the angry one's belt yes bright and shiny in your hand yes Babble says Babble says you've heard the radio serials you've seen the pictures now you're living it cock and aim and shoot one two and down they all go down quickly Jane and Patrick and the rest of them they weren't ready weren't ready couldn't listen so they didn't know-

We hear the hammer of the revolver being pulled hesitantly back.

WHISPER:

(Growing excited)

Babble said Babble said yes shoot them shoot them both close the sale and then we take the ears for the sacred space all soft and clean once they've stopped wriggling-

Silence.

Then the sound of the door opening quietly and closing quietly. PAIGE is trying to escape.

WHISPER:

(Audibly disappointed)

Not going to shoot, leaving instead, Babble said Babble said that's fine a victory of sorts, leaves just two to deal with keep up your confidence believe in yourself otherwise you'll never make it to the top of the leaderboard-

The WHISPER creeps forward down the air vent.

We hear an air duct grate creak open as it slips out onto the office floor.

WHISPER:

And when they stopped listening the floor manager the bosses they said pack your bags kid there's no future for you here that's when Babble said different said there's a space below a basement where nobody goes take your phone make a sacred space below them all and wait I'll call you give you further instructions and Babble did Babble kept his promise the phone rang the phone rang and I picked up-

Fine choice this sacred space a lucky basement a fortunate place beneath them all unseen where we could venture out through the ducts gnaw on wires break the phone lines lights on lights off make their lives hell drive them mad day after day after day until nobody could make their targets any longer and when they were gone Babble said when the floor was clear we could make all of the calls we could close all the sales we could make the world listen-

Didn't take long managers didn't take much persuading said this place must be the haunt of a god how right they were told the floor time to pack up today's the start of our new homeworking policy you'll be making calls from your apartments now and good news is the pay-cut's only twenty percent since you no longer need to travel in-

Most of them left few of them stayed the proud ones Jane and Patrick didn't want to leave wanted to show they were winners didn't want to take the cut.

So Babble said, Babble said a soft and sweet whisper down the phone line if they will not listen they will not hear you then it's simple my love we take their ears-

Crawled out from the sacred space into the men's washroom Patrick was there working late practicing his lines in front of the mirror surprised to see me he said Patrick said, 'Thought you left.'

Started screaming Patrick as we told him the truth the last truth that Babble passed on to us he kept screaming nobody heard him-

We can hear FAULKNER, snoring.

WHISPER:

Jane was next caught her at her desk calling making deals closing sales as always hated her for it her voice laughing fake laughter golden ikon of the Wealth Creator bobbing up and down its bells jangling on its palms promising success it kept bobbing as we came up behind her our hands raised to her head it didn't save her-

FAULKNER's snores get louder as the WHISPER creeps towards him.

WHISPER:

And we took her ears yes like Babble said took her ears ripped them from her head took them like *this-*

It is now standing over FAULKNER, ready to rip the ears from his head. But-

CARPENTER:

Hey!

CARPENTER has woken up.

The WHISPER snarls.

CARPENTER:

(To the WHISPER, as calmly as she can)

I thought I saw something, on the roof earlier. Just couldn't be certain.

Hard to make out, aren't you? Sort of faint.

Dancing like a shadow.

FAULKNER:

(Groggily waking up)

...Carpenter? What's happening?

WHISPER:

(Snarling and growling under its breath towards CARPENTER)

Babble says Babble says you shouldn't have woken angry and stupid you shouldn't have Babble says Babble says you're spoiling it-

CARPENTER:

(To FAULKNER, a little manically)

Just stay where you are, Faulkner. Stay very, very still.

There's something sitting on your chest.

(To the WHISPER, taunting it)

Come on. Get off him. You don't want him, do you? You want me.

WHISPER:

(Growling and following her)

Babble says it's all right we can close this deal close it together her ears first then the young one then the other one pile them up before the sacred phone fine tribute worthy of a call a call from Babble-

CARPENTER:

(Like she's talking to a wayward dog)

Yes. That's right. Come on. Follow me.

The WHISPER'S growling becomes more and more aggravated.

CARPENTER:
(Growing a little worried for herself)
Take it easy, now.

Don't get excited-

WHISPER:
(Growling)
Babble says Babble says Babble says Babble says die-

It howls in anger as it launches itself towards CARPENTER.

PAIGE:
Get down!

A revolver shot rings out.

PAIGE is back.

She takes aim and fires again.

We hear the WHISPER howling in sudden pain.

A scrabbling sound as it races on all fours, back across the office floor.

CARPENTER:
After it!

PAGE:
Where did it go?

CARPENTER:
Look for the blood trails!
(Spotting it)
There!

PAIGE takes aim. Fires again.

A ghastly shriek - and then a clatter as the WHISPER hauls itself back up into the air vents and disappears. We hear it scrabbling away up into the walls.

Silence.

PAIGE and CARPENTER are both breathing heavily.

PAIGE:
Did I...get it?

CARPENTER:
You winged it, at least.

It went up into the air ducts. Must have a lair somewhere in the building.

Silence.

CARPENTER:
(Just catching on)
...is that my gun?

PAIGE:
...yes.

A pause. CARPENTER acknowledges the fact that PAIGE could have shot them but didn't.

CARPENTER:
Good aim.

FAULKNER:
(Deliriously)
Carpenter. Carpenter.

What was that? What was that?

CARPENTER:
(Decisively)
Paige and I are about to go figure that out now.
(Pause)
I'm going to need that gun back from you now, Paige.

PAIGE hands CARPENTER back the revolver.

CARPENTER:
Thank **you**.

Now - hand me that torch. Let's go see what's what.

BASEMENT, INT

A sudden clattering as a grate falls off an air vent.

We can hear the WHISPER, wheezing and whining piteously, as it crawls from the vent into its lair.

WHISPER:

**Not fair not right shouldn't have shot at us made us hurt so
unkind just like Jane just like Patrick never gave us a chance to
explain what can you do what can you do if people just won't
listen won't be reasonable-**

It coughs and chokes.

WHISPER:

**But this too can be overcome Babble has a plan Babble always
knows just what to say make the phone ring the special phone
the sacred phone tell me what comes next the golden ikon of the
Wealth Creator bobbing amongst the ears he believes in our
success as well just some small adjustments to the plan
required-**

**Are you there, Babble dear Babble sweet Babble I'm back now
come back to the calling place the safe place of the sacred phone
bleeding now bleeding heavy awaiting further instructions
awaiting your ring to know where do we go next where do we go-**

Silence.

The phone does not ring.

WHISPER:

(In excruciating pain)

Babble ring! Babble ring! Babble, ring!

Speak to me! Speak to your Whisper!

(Shrieking)

Speak to me!

(Weakly, sadly)

Speak; I'll listen if you only speak...

Silence.

The WHISPER lies there alone, wheezing heavily and unhappily.

In the distance, the basement door opens, slowly.

We hear CARPENTER walking down the steps.

CARPENTER:

(Calling down)

**I've got the measure of you now. You're not going to catch me
slipping.**

Come at me again and I promise you, I'll shoot you dead.

She reaches the bottom.

We hear CARPENTER breathe in with shock as she observes what's in the room.

PAIGE:
(From above)
Carpenter? You okay?

CARPENTER:
(Calling back)
Best if you don't come down here, Paige.

PAIGE:
(From above)
What is it?

CARPENTER:
Another phone on the floor. This one's not even plugged in.

Some kind of shrine, lots of garbage heaped up here.
(Disgusted)
And...a pile of human ears.

She stops as she notices the dying WHISPER on the floor.

We hear it wheezing.

CARPENTER:
(Calling back)
Our friend's down here, too.

You got it all right, Paige. You got it good.

We hear her come close. She's standing over the dying WHISPER.

It continues to wheeze and choke.

WHISPER:
(Dying and delirious)
Babble said the great god Babble said are you listening can you hear me do we understand one another I need to know that we understand one another I need to know you're listening-

CARPENTER:
Yes. I'm listening.

WHISPER:

Not calling me not calling any more can't hear his voice on the phone cruel Babble sweet Babble upset with me angry with me my fault missed my target tonight couldn't manage couldn't close the sale-

CARPENTER:

(Soothing)

Hey. Hey.

Sssh-ssh.

WHISPER:

(Dying, increasingly frantic)

Still true I hope still believe what Babble said Babble said I had to be born had to be because something was missing in the world and in your own self that's why that's why Babble said you were made for me and I was made for-

-I was made for you-

It wheezes violently - and then dies.

Silence. CARPENTER gazes down at the body.

CARPENTER:

(With quiet sympathy)

Withered little thing.

She turns - and sees something on the wall. She reads it aloud.

CARPENTER:

Hm. 'Outreach Team Leaderboard. Gold Star Top-Salesperson of the Month. Jane Sinclair. Silver Star Salesperson. Patrick Waites.'

And so on, and so on.

(To the dead WHISPER)

I'm guessing one of these was you, then?

Back when this place was alive.

We hear PAIGE calling uncertainly down from above.

PAIGE:

(From above)

Carpenter?

CARPENTER:

(Calling back)
Yeah, I'm here. I'm all right.

She gets to her feet.

CARPENTER:
Come on.

Let's get Faulkner in the car.

She climbs the stairs, and departs.

Silence.

Distantly, we hear the office door slam somewhere above as CARPENTER, PAIGE and FAULKNER depart.

Silence.

The faint sound of the car starting up, and roaring away into the night.

Silence.

And then the sacred phone, beside the WHISPER's corpse, begins to ring.

It rings, and rings.

It rings out.

END OF EPISODE.