

Episode 11

THE TRAWLER-MAN'S GARDEN, EXT

We're someplace else. The SFX sounds vaguely wrong - watery, uncertain.

When FAULKNER speaks, it's as if he's walking in a dream.

FAULKNER:

(Narrating)

When the towns flood and crumble, when the plains drown beneath the surface...

...that's when the Trawler-Man comes walking out from his garden to see what's grown.

He prunes the stray fingers of the drowned that protrude through the surface.

He stretches down to their forlorn, gasping heads and in his kindness, he gives them new legs to scuttle upon.

And when he has finished looking, and sees what he's made - he smiles with both of his faces.

If you're lucky enough to catch a glimpse of him in person - if you're hiding out in the ruins or if you've made pilgrimage to see his floods - he will see you. And he will beckon to you.

He will draw you down with him into the depths, willingly or unwillingly, and return you to an ancient shape even your ancestors only half-remembered.

At least, that's what the Katabasian told me, one morning in the seminary as I sat shoulder-to-shoulder with the other converts, trying not to shift on the hard wooden bench, and all of the students looked bored and tired, as if this was a commonplace lesson they'd heard a thousand times before.

I don't know how they could all be so confident about the habits of our god.

Because when I asked the teacher if anyone in the room had seen the Trawler-Man incarnate, there was laughter, resounding around the room, and the Katabasian smirked.

And what could I do but laugh myself, shrugging and rolling my eyes at the attention - as if it was inevitable that I, a new arrival whose family did not even come from the faith, would be so clumsy and so stupid, to ask such things.

Hating each one of them, as I laughed along, for making me feel like a fool.

For making me feel like I'd never heard his voice myself.

It still doesn't make sense to me, the claims they made.

If the Trawler-Man is hidden from us, and his haunt remains a mystery to the living...

(With sudden dread)

...then why am I looking at him now?

And...why is he smiling?

FAULKNER's voice becomes increasingly panicked.

Carpenter? Paige?

(Yelling in terror)

Why is he smiling?

CAR, INT, DAY

The sound of the car engine merges with FAULKNER's feverish babbling.

He's in the back seat, with PAIGE. CARPENTER is driving.

FAULKNER:

(Feebly)

...no...no...

PAIGE:

(To CARPENTER, urgently)

He's getting worse.

CARPENTER:

(Irritated, focusing on the road)

I know.

PAIGE:

What's wrong with him?

CARPENTER:
(In almost exactly the same tone)
I *don't* know.

What's happening with the bandages? Is he still bleeding?

PAIGE:
No. But there's something leaking out from under -
(Getting it on her hands)
- shit!

CARPENTER:
What is it?

PAIGE:
(Disturbed)
It's silt, Carpenter. He's bleeding silt.

That can't be good.

CARPENTER:
(Grimly)
No, it isn't.

How does the skin feel around the wound?

PAIGE:
(Feeling at it)
It's...hardening.

CARPENTER:
It's calcifying.

The river's found an opening in him.

PAIGE:
We need to find a hospital.

CARPENTER:
No hospitals out here. Not any more.
(Coming to a decision)
I'm going to turn around.

I saw a dump about half a mile back. We'll take him there.

A brief moment of baffled silence.

PAIGE:
(Disbelieving)
We're taking him to the **dump**?

CARPENTER does not answer.

The sound of the car screeching around in the road, turning back before accelerating again.

FAULKNER, breathing heavily, continues to whisper in terror.

FAULKNER:
(Muttering deliriously)
These are the Silt Verses.

And they don't understand. Our disciples. They can't see he's been looking up at them all this time, smiling.

They can't understand that the river courses onwards, its waters deep and dark, and there's nothing they can do to stop it.

In order of their arrival, I name our victims thus:
B Narr,
Lucille Valentine,
Meabh de Brun

Written by Jon Ware and produced by Muna Hussien.

Audio production by Sammy Holden.

We hear the roar of the car engine, as CARPENTER drives on.

PAIGE:
(Narrating)
The afternoon sun is drifting slowly down towards its final resting place.

The sky is alive with polluted hues of violet.

And quite suddenly, as the car wheels along the country road, the horizon pulls away, and I'm gazing out across a great plain of trash.

Broken-down sofas. Rusted and burnt-out cars. Smaller fragments of metal detritus, glinting like shards of glass, amongst a million rippling black trash bags.

There are stacks of trash, towering high like hills amongst the flats.

Here and there, great clawed machines direct the filth, lifting and placing and pressing down beneath their roiling tracks.

And in amongst the wreckage, I realise, as we pull in through the gates, underneath a sign which reads, 'Fisherman's Rest Incorporated Waste Disposal'...

...are the staring and ghastly faces of redundant gods.

Their stone beards and twisted, neon eyes gaze forebodingly upwards - or comically downwards, half-buried in plastic sheets or beneath the avalanches of cans and wrappers and radios and *things*.

The older ones are buried deeper. Sometimes there's just a pointed finger or grasping tendril of statuary poking up through the landfill.

There are houses, too, built amongst the garbage and of the garbage, and there are people walking here.

Families. Children running back and forth.

One woman turns towards me. She carries a heavy sack upon her back, packed with rubbish, or what looks like rubbish.

She raises a hand in greeting.

The index finger and small finger are entirely missing. Only a raw stump of her thumb remains.

The car engine begins to slow. We can hear the rattle as it passes over spoilt earth.

PAIGE:

(Staring through the window)

Hate to imagine what you'd need to do, to be sent out here.

CARPENTER:

(As she drives)

Nothing.

People choose to come out here to worship the Emperor in Rags.

Businessmen, magistrates...

(A little mockingly)

...marketeers.

They give up their houses, their cars, their families...and they come out here, to scavenge.

The point is to try and learn how to live without the things you never truly needed.

And every once in a while, when you've prayed and pondered for long enough, you come to realise that there's some part of yourself which you never really needed, either.

A finger that was only one of many. One ear when you had another.

And you find a blade or an edge from amongst the wreckage, and you surrender whatever part of yourself is excess to the dump, and when you're done with it, you toss the blade away as well, and carry on living with less.

So...there's a lot of injury in a place like this. A great deal of sickness.

I'm hoping they'll have a Pox Monk here who can see to Faulkner.

PAIGE:
What happens if they don't?

CARPENTER doesn't answer.

The car continues to crunch forward over the trash.

CARPENTER:
Best to cover your nose and mouth, when we step out.

DUMP, EXT, DAY

The car doors open.

We can hear the shrieking of gulls, high above us. The occasional, distant roar of heavy machinery.

PAIGE:
(Narrating)
It doesn't help.

The stench permeates cloth and flesh.

Perhaps it's wrong to think of it as a smell so much as a cacophony of smells, of burning rubber and rotten food and dead meat and anything which decays and spoils and repulses.

Perhaps I was wrong to leave my apartment.

CARPENTER:
(To PAIGE, choking faintly)
All right. Won't be long.

We hear her striding away.

CARPENTER:
(Calling to the trash-pickers)
Hey! Hey, excuse me.

I need some help!

PAIGE turns back to FAULKNER, who is still faintly groaning.

PAIGE:
(Concerned)
You doing all right there, Faulkner?

THE TRAWLER-MAN'S GARDEN

PAIGE's voice is distorted. Distant.

We're back in that other place.

PAIGE:
(As if from far away)
...Faulkner?

FAULKNER sounds dreamy again. Almost relaxed.

FAULKNER:
(Narrating)
The terror leaves you, in time.

Just like everything else.

We walk awhile in this place, my god and me. Side by side, through the drowning fields, halting as he stops to check upon his sprouting, dripping crops.

He explains it to me, all of it, the great mysteries of living and everything past living, and while the specifics seem to drift just in and out of hearing, and they don't last in my head a moment longer than they're spoken...

...it's like he's breathing warmth and comfort into my throat and my belly and my veins.

When he's done speaking, he turns and walks away.
(Growing urgent and panicked again)
I try to follow him, but the silt is thick and my legs are sluggish.

I call after my god.

He doesn't turn back.

I fumble, falling down onto my knees, slipping into mud that clings and probes upwards and drags downwards.

There's a sudden, sharp pain from the wound in my shoulder.

I cry out His name, but he's no longer there to answer me...

...and then the flood swallows me up, and I drown.

It takes only a heartbeat, just one single moment of pain and terror before the end.

My remnants dissolve in the current, and the current bears me onwards.

(With increasing passion and excitement)
I am not in the flood. I **am** the flood.

And I forget mercy, and guilt, and the old rusted anchors that kept me in my place.

I sweep upwards over the plains.

I devour the villages, the piers, the warehouses.

I reach out to shatter the flimsy surge barriers, I break the towers, I sink all that has been made to spite me.

I press the world down beneath my hungering tides.

I am the flood. I am the torrent.

PAIGE:
(Distantly)
Faulkner-

DUMP, EXT, DAY

And we're back, with a rush, in reality, where we left it.

PAIGE:
-Faulkner, can you hear me?

FAULKNER:
(Babbling incoherently)
I am the flood, I am the torrent-

PAIGE:
(Urgently)
Faulkner, it's spreading.

Can you hear me? It's spreading. You need to wake up.

Faulkner, you need to wake up-

The sound of rushing footsteps behind her. CARPENTER has returned - with BROTHER WHARFING.

CARPENTER:
It's all right, Paige!

It's all right. I've found someone.
(To BROTHER WHARFING)
Quickly, please, Brother. This is him.

PAIGE:
(Narrating)
The Pox Monk is dressed in healer's white robes.

His face bears the proud scars and inflammations of a life's countless sicknesses. Blotches of pale yellow and purple and black - a patchwork of harm, willingly taken on.

BROTHER WHARFING speaks in a sickly croak - but with resolute kindness.

BROTHER WHARFING:
We need to clear some space.

Get him out of the car and lay him down flat out on the tarp, now - and make a start on unwinding those bandages. I want to see what's going on underneath.

CARPENTER hauls FAULKNER out.

CARPENTER:
All right.
(Making the introductions)

This is Paige, by the way. Paige, this is Brother Wharfing, of the Retchsman's Order.

BROTHER WHARFING:

(To PAIGE)

Pleasure, miss.

(With a slight hunger)

You got anything else that needs taking from you, while I'm here? Any hurt, any harm?

PAIGE:

(Taken aback)

Uh, a few scratches. Couple of bruises, I suppose-

BROTHER WHARFING:

(Joking, but serious)

Ach, don't waste my time.

(To CARPENTER)

Your limp, though, pilgrim, that looks juicy.

Like it's healing wrong, cracks piling upon cracks.

I can take the fracture off your hands, if you've got money to pay for it. Make it part of the Tithe.

I'm carrying a lot of breaks on this old shin of mine already, but this other one, she's clean and ready to take on a fresh blessing.

CARPENTER:

(Nodding to FAULKNER)

Look to him first. Then we can talk.

FAULKNER:

(Mumbling)

...drift silent upon dark tides...

BROTHER WHARFING:

All right, let's see what's happening...

The bandages are peeled back. FAULKNER grunts in pain.

BROTHER WHARFING:

(Examining FAULKNER in disbelief)

There's...barnacles growing around the wound.

Did he always have these?

CARPENTER:

Joking, aren't you?

BROTHER WHARFING:

I don't keep track of what's fashionable.

(Examining FAULKNER again)

What did this to him?

CARPENTER:

The servant of a river-god.

BROTHER WHARFING:

Godbitten's difficult. Once it roots itself in somewhere, it doesn't want to leave until it hatches something else.

(Squaring his shoulders)

But by the grace of Brother Boil and Sister Sore, I believe I can take this one on.

PAIGE:

I've got a watch. If you need payment.

BROTHER WHARFING:

Keep it, my dear.

A unique blessing is payment in itself - and this certainly looks unique.

This will take time. I need to lay the marks, say the words. Test the mettle of this god of yours.

I could use a soda. Something carbonated. It'll help me get my energy levels up.

CARPENTER:

(Annoyed)

What, you want me to head to the commissary?

BROTHER WHARFING:

(Gesturing back towards the dump)

All the treasures of the world are contained in this place. I just need an unopened can, that's all.

PAIGE:

I can go. I don't mind going.

BROTHER WHARFING:

(To PAIGE)

Thank you. Anything but strawberry, if you please.

And if you'll take my advice - make sure you're back before nightfall.

PAIGE:
I won't be long.

PAIGE departs, in search of the soda.

We hear the crowing of gulls overhead.

FAULKNER:
(*Whispering*)
...carry us on into the dead water, until we forget...until we forget...

Gradually, as time passes, the gull sounds and we begin to hear the chirping of cicadas in the dusk.

BROTHER WHARFING is humming cheerfully to himself as he works.

CARPENTER:
You know he's dying, don't you?

BROTHER WHARFING:
Impatience is one sickness I can't free you from, pilgrim.
(*With satisfaction*)
There. Ready.

BROTHER WHARFING takes up position in front of FAULKNER with a grunt.

BROTHER WHARFING:
(*To FAULKNER, decisively*)
All right, now, young man. I'm sure your god loves you very much, but he's going to love me even more.

This wound of yours is going to have pride of place in my collection.
See?

(*Pointing to himself*)
I've got a burn here on my leg from the Kindled Heart. Saved a young girl's life to take that on.

And just over my stomach, right here, this is a blessing from the Saint Electric herself. Three thousand volts.

I'm going to lay my hands on the place where it hurts.

This is going to be very painful - like nothing that came before. And I'm sorry for that. Just try and think of the life that comes next.

(*To CARPENTER*)
Here, pilgrim. Hold this candle for me.
(*Warning*)

And don't touch me, you understand? Don't touch me until it's over.

He takes up position - and begins to chant, meaningfully.

As he speaks, the wind begins to rise and howl around him.

BROTHER WHARFING:

(With growing passion)

O Kindly Pair, hearken to me,

Brother that itches,

Sister that drips,

My flesh is yours. I make my plea.

(More furiously)

What was bestowed - let it flow from him, and pass to me.

What harm was done - let it flow from him, and pass to me.

What sickness dwells - let it flow from him, and pass to me.

(Howling)

What poisons, what chokes, what twists, what breaks - *let it pass to me!*

(Crying out in agony)

Aaach!

Silence for a moment.

We have no idea whether the ritual has worked.

And then FAULKNER begins to choke, violently. He's crying out in pain.

CARPENTER:

(Panicked)

What's happening?

BROTHER WHARFING:

(A little baffled)

Wound's flooding. River's trying to get out of him. It won't take.

Hand me that cloth.

Strong god, this one. Real strong god. But I'll get the better of him yet.

CARPENTER:

Whatever you're going to do, you need to do it quickly. I-

She breaks off. We hear a distant noise. Like something falling. Or the garbage settling.

CARPENTER is staring.

BROTHER WHARFING:

You all right, pilgrim?

CARPENTER:

I just...I thought I saw someone watching us from high up on the stacks.

But it's nothing. Just a pile of garbage bags. Looked like a person for a moment, in the duskligh.

BROTHER WHARFING:

(Still tending to FAULKNER, absent-minded)

You're right. And then again, you're wrong.

Best not to stare, though.

The closer you look at them, the more sense they begin to make.

CARPENTER:

What is it?

BROTHER WHARFING:

When it gets dark, and the shape of things becomes less clear - that's when the trash-god's servants come up out of the stacks.

CARPENTER:

Are they dangerous?

BROTHER WHARFING:

Not if you've got nothing left to take.

I **did** tell your friend to be back before nightfall.

And CARPENTER suddenly realises that PAIGE is in danger. She leaps to her feet.

CARPENTER:

Paige. Where did Paige go?

(Scanning the horizon frantically)

There's no sign of her.

BROTHER WHARFING:

(A little smugly)

I warned her. I warned both of you, 'be back before dark' -

CARPENTER:

(Snarling furiously)

Oh, you couldn't have been more specific than **that**?

BROTHER WHARFING:

The dump doesn't like it when we interfere. We-

He chokes as CARPENTER grabs him by the throat. She's furious.

CARPENTER:

If he dies while I'm gone, I'll give you a blessing you bleed out from.
Understand me?

BROTHER WHARFING:

(Gulping out a choked 'yes')

Yerg-

CARPENTER drops him.

We hear her running away down the side of the landfill, yelling.

CARPENTER:

Paige!

Paige, where are you?

DUMP, EXT, DUSK

We're with PAIGE, elsewhere in the dump as she walks.

PAIGE:

(Narrating)

I'm not gone for long.

I walk amongst the stacks of trash, scanning up and down, searching for the telltale stripe of the Fizz and Flavour Logo.

There's so much out here. So much shape, and texture, and colour, and distortion. So many countless things, all stacked against each and rotting into each other.

It's...too much.

After a while, you start losing the ability to pick out anything specific at all from amongst the landfill. And even the stench stops smelling like anything you can recognise.

I come to a sudden halt. For a moment, I'm not even sure why.

And then I realise what I'm staring at.

There's something familiar, glinting amongst the ripped garbage bags and debris, just a short distance away.

(A little stunned)

It's funny, isn't it?

There are so many layers of protection against your childhood. You can roll yourself up in the long years and the endless memories and a surplus of irony, until the scared kid you used to be feels like a stranger you

And then you see something, that belonged to you once, long ago, and everything changes.

Her voice grows rapturous, and melancholy.

PAIGE:

(Narrating)

It's my old red sneaker.

Back from when I was seventeen.

We'd just moved to a new town, and you, Dad...

...you'd found a new scam you liked.

You had a glass jar, and a little fan hidden in the lid that blew air up into it and made the dirt swirl around beautifully.

It's a wind-god, you'd tell the farmers. An imprisoned wind-god, to bring favour and rainstorms to your fields.

Each jar cost you a half-dozen nines to make, but you'd sell it to them

You'd always find a reason to drag me along, when you took your thick briefcase and went out into the town to cheat our neighbours.

You bragged to your friends that you'd never involve us in any criminal activity - even though a cute child was a formidable tool in any con-man's arsenal. That you were raising us to go to college, and live honest lives.

"I need someone to run my lines through with me," you'd say. Or, "Darling, I've got a bad feeling about this one and I just can't shift it. I need someone to wait out in the car, just in case we need to drive fast."

I'd sit there in the car with the music blaring, tapping my shoe gently against the accelerator, staring down at it, wondering if you'd come

out smirking, or if you'd come out at a run, screaming at me to drive - with some furious farmer chasing after you, yelling about the police.

I must have lost that sneaker at some point, I don't remember when.

And now it's here again, in amongst the landfill, waiting for me in the dying sunlight.

A red sneaker that looks exactly like the one I lost.

No, the same sneaker. The one I lost.

Strangely, I feel certain of it.

I take a step forward to get a closer look, but it must have fallen back deeper into the pile, because it's no longer visible in the growing gloom.

I begin tossing the black garbage-bags to one side, and when my sneaker still isn't visible anywhere from within the trash, that's when I get down on my hands and knees, and I begin to crawl, and the dump opens up before me to make my path forwards easy.

(Fervently)

I need to get it back.

I **want** to get it back.

We hear the garbage bags rippling aside as she crawls in.

UNDERNEATH, INT, DUSK

PAIGE's voice begins to echo.

She's crawling down beneath the surface of the dump.

PAIGE:

(Narrating)

Strange, but...it's not dark down here.

The broken lightbulbs glow bright and golden from within the walls of this tunnel. And there are neon signs, abandoned by their owners, but still flashing bright in service of restaurants or brothels which may no longer exist.

Stranger yet.

There's my television. I had it when I was nine.

Buried deeper in the stacks, glinting up at me.

It's one of the old, thick-bodied ones, with a smiling plastic model of the Saint Electric that held the aerial aloft, and I'd sit cross-legged in front of it watching the old detective shows until dinner was ready to be served.

You'd come and scoop me up, Dad - and you'd say,
"Come on, kiddo. Time for chow."

And all of your children and your adopted children from your three different marriages would be gathered in our kitchen, to pray and eat.

You'd bought that table from an antique store, a broken wreck still engraved with ritual signs, and you fixed it up with furniture polish until the decades-old blood was no longer visible.

We hear the horrible unfurling sound of the dump rearranging things to suit PAIGE's vision.

And gradually, we begin to hear the sound of children's laughter.

PAIGE:
(*Growing delighted*)
Yes. Yes, it looked just like this.

The same yellowing plaster on the walls. The same smiles and the same riotous chatter, and we had the best Dad in the world, because if we threw spaghetti at the walls or stabbed our forks into the table, you'd just sit there, laughing uproariously, reigning over the chaos.

And as I watch, the figures resolve themselves. Becoming the siblings I remember from those good old days - before we found ways to hate one another.

You're standing behind me. Smiling kindly. Your rough hand on my shoulder.

And you silently pull the last empty chair, the chair at the end of the table, out, so I can sit.

I do as I'm asked.

We hear the dump rustling and grinding as the tunnel closes off around PAIGE.

And we hear an unnatural voice, whispering something kind and sweet and impossible to understand.

There's a long silence.

When PAIGE speaks again, there's no longer any happiness in her voice.

PAIGE:

(Narrating)

But that's...that's when the doubt begins to creep in for me.

Because you were never kind like that, were you? You didn't know how.

You could never give comfort without a condition or a threat attached to it. You couldn't help any of us without pointing it out.

I'm not really sitting in my kitchen, am I? This isn't really you.

And as I turn to face you, I see just how true that is.

There's a trash-bag mannequin standing over my shoulder, leaning in towards me.

Some of its clothes are human clothes.

Other parts of it have been taken from the dump - random tin-cans and plastic and scrap-metal, assembled together into something approximating a lurching, composite human figure, with a leering, glistening trash-bag face that opens in a yawn and maggots that dance upon a rusted metal tongue-

Some of its teeth are human teeth.

As I yell out and jump up, it collapses - a flimsy, broken thing, shattering into pieces, joining the sea of trash beneath my feet.

I glance back at the dining table - which is no longer **our** dining table, but a splintered mass of wood and plastic.

I'm not in my kitchen.

I'm somewhere under the surface of the dump.

The way I came down here has disappeared.

This isn't a room at all, I realise, as I scrabble frantically at the walls and the ceiling of my underground prison, trying to find purchase, trying to prise any piece of garbage free, to make an opening, to find my way back up to the surface-

The walls are closing in, all around me. The ceiling is closing in, driving me further down into the rot.

I'm choking on the thick gas, the rotten air that's rising up from the landfill beneath my feet.

(In absolute horror)

This isn't a room.

It's a stomach.

We hear the grinding, rustling sound of the dump, shrinking in on her, closer and closer...

PAIGE:

No! No, you can't do this!

I'm not going to die down here!

(Desperately)

Can you hear me? Can you hear me, whatever you are? I said I'm not going to die down here! So you can just...go fuck yourself!

(More desperate, and quieter)

...can anybody hear me?

Her voice fades out, as if we're returning to the surface. The grinding gets louder, and louder.

DUMP, EXT, NIGHT

CARPENTER is running, desperately, through the dump. We can hear her feet crunching on the trash as she runs.

CARPENTER:

(Yelling)

Paige! Paige!

Paige!

A long silence.

And then we hear the trash-heap shift nearby.

CARPENTER runs towards the source of the noise.

CARPENTER:

Paige?! Paige, are you there?

The trash-heap shifts more violently - and then PAIGE hauls herself back up (imagine to the waist)

She coughs, and chokes violently, breathing deeply - as if she's been suffocating.

CARPENTER runs to help her out.

CARPENTER:

Oh, bait and flesh. I thought we'd lost you out here.

PAIGE:

You almost did.

CARPENTER:

Come on. Let's get you out of there.

What happened?

PAIGE:

Carpenter, I...I...

(Gasping for breath to get the words out)

...I didn't find the soda.

There's a long silence.

And then both of them burst into hearty, hysterical laughter.

DUMP, EXT, NIGHT

We hear CARPENTER and PAIGE walking through the garbage. Both are exhausted.

CARPENTER:

Paige, I think I need to confess something to you.

(After a dramatic pause)

...I don't know how to get back to the car.

PAIGE laughs weakly.

PAIGE:

(Pointing towards a wrecked car, as a joke)

Is that it?

CARPENTER:

(Playing along)

No, I don't think yours was a cube, was it?

PAIGE:

Was it not? I'm sorry, it's been a long night.

From a long way off, we hear the voice of BROTHER WHARFING.

BROTHER WHARFING:
(Distantly)
Pilgrim! Pilgrim, over here!

We hear the crunch of his feet on the trash as he runs towards them. He sounds weakened.

BROTHER WHARFING:
Ah. You're both alive.

CARPENTER:
No thanks to you. How's Faulkner?

BROTHER WHARFING:
Strong god, the one that bit him. Hell of a strong god. Took a few years off me, that's for certain.

But I got him out. Earned my blessing.
(Almost as an afterthought)
Your friend's sleeping. He's going to be just fine. See for yourself.

PAIGE:
(Narrating)
He lifts his sleeve to show us.

A black, weeping wound across his forearm, the precise imitation of the one Faulkner wore. Gnarled, calcified barnacles gather across the skin.

PAIGE:
(Shocked)
I can't believe you did that to yourself.

BROTHER WHARFING:
(Simply)
We're optimists in my faith, miss.

You learn to love the wounds as much as what came before them.

Safe travels to the three of you.

He turns, and grunts, and limps away across the dump.

Slowly, the sound of the cicadas fades as dusk turns to night.

PAIGE:
(Narrating)
They light candles, the trash-pickers, as night falls.

They fill their gas-lamps, and set their campfires, and the darkness fills with a galaxy of golden stars to match the ones that shimmer above.

And even the inhuman and awful detail of the dump fades into the black, and it becomes a landscape just like any other.

Rolling hills and deep shadow.

As soon as you stop looking too hard, it all begins to look so *normal*.

CARPENTER comes up behind her.

CARPENTER:
You ready to go, Paige?

PAIGE:
(Uncertainly, half to herself)
It was...terrible, wasn't it? That thing in there? There wasn't anything kindly about it.

CARPENTER:
It certainly sounds terrible.

PAIGE:
(Coming slowly to a revelation)
Carpenter, I've been on this earth thirty-one years, and I never found a god I could love more than fear.

When I get home after all of this...I want to try and make something better.

CARPENTER:
Make a better god?

Do you...know how to do that?

PAIGE:
(Calmly)
Designing them, yes.

Not single-handedly, obviously. It was what my company did, back in Nesh.

They stand there, watching the dump grow dark.

CARPENTER:

You ever think, if it was possible to create something better, someone would have done it already?

PAIGE:

(A little sadly)

All the time.

But I'd still like to try.

We leave them there.