

THE SILT VERSES: SEASON 2, CHAPTER 2

PRESS CONFERENCE INT, DAY

FX: Radio dial being tuned.

A sudden hubbub of reporters and flash cameras, as if as a press conference. (A couple of voices faintly yell, 'Shrue!' 'Adjudicator Shrue!')

SHRUE:

I have a few minutes, folks. Just a few minutes.

(Taking a question from a reporter)

Yes, Tim.

REPORTER 1:

(Calling out)

By the grace of the Herald, Adjudicator Shrue - is there going to be a war?

SHRUE:

"Is there going to be a war?" Mm-hmm.

Let me put this as plainly as I know how. My fellow Adjudicators and I do not want a war. This country does not want a war.

We are still investigating the tragic events concerning the town of, uh, Bellwethers close to the border. I have not yet seen any evidence that agents of the Consolidated Linger Straits played any part in, uh, said tragic events, and I would urge everyone not to listen to hearsay.

If that evidence is found, then obviously I would expect there to be consequences.

But that does not mean allowing ourselves to be distracted by those who are simply seeking to stir up trouble.

(Chuckling indulgently)

I hear now that some of our local politicians are claiming the CLS was responsible for the, uh, Greater Glottage Radio miracle this summer as well?

I mean, come on.

And, and remember, all of this happened in my territory.

(Spluttering with fake outrage a little)

I am...nobody is more devastated, more furious about this atrocity than I am.

REPORTER 1:

(Overlapping)

But Adjudicator, with the wrathful eyes of the Herald upon you, what if evidence should be found-

SHRUE:

No, I don't know - if evidence **is** found, a sacrificial levy might be appropriate. But I don't think anyone is interested in matters escalating further than that, under any circumstances.

And as for the so-called Parish of Tide and Flesh that operates in the western midlands of the Peninsula - we have dedicated a special team to rooting these renegades out. No expense has been spared.

They will be found and they will be dealt with.

I'll take you next, Ed.

REPORTER 2:

(Calling out)

In sight of the Courier, Adjudicator, whose swift call must be answered - are you looking forward to the spring election?

SHRUE:

I **am** looking forward to the spring election - my re-election.

(Chuckling indulgently)

And no, I haven't picked my pairing yet - but there are some great candidates out there right now, some really fresh divinities, and I think you're going to be just as excited about meeting my running partner as I am.

All right, one more. Emily.

(Listening to the unheard question)

Mm-hmm.

Look. Let me put it this way.

These are the Silt Verses.

And these are its disciples.

Sarah Griffin,
Méabh de Brún,
Sarah Golding,
Daphne Nitsuga and
JV Hampton Van-Sant

THE GARDEN OF THE DEAD, EXT, DAY

FX: The cawing of gulls. The distant wash of waves upon rocks far below.

After a moment, the steady scrape of a shovel. Someone is digging.

CARPENTER:
(Awkwardly)
I...really am sorry about your nose.

ACANTHA:
(Preoccupied)
Don't worry about it.

There's a Pox Monk in Glint, a day's drive from here. He'll fix me up.

Silence.

CARPENTER:
(Narrating)
The old woman digs.

Her nose is stuffed with two bloodied tissue plugs from where I hit her.

She wears white linen trousers and a necklace of bone knotted with root.

Snow is falling all around us, onto the knotweed and elderwort that grows up around the ruined stone walls of the garden and the crumbling stone walls of the lych-house.

Below us, beneath towering black cliffs, ocean waves break and crash upon the shore.

To the north lies only miles of white, shimmering moorland, as insubstantial and as frail as any mirage.

Beside us, a corpse waits to be buried, its sightless eyes filling with snow.

When the old woman grows tired of digging at the frozen earth, she puts her spade to one side, and she tends to it.

It's bloated with rot, this corpse, its nails extended out like rows of ribs.

Ripe and stinking, and recognisable as something that's been in the water for far too long.

But the old woman...she handles it with quite extraordinary care.

First, she washes it from head to toe, cleaning skin and exposed bone alike. She unpicks the filth from the dead body's orifices.

Then she draws certain marks, in a careful hand, in white paint across its skin.

She does not, like the harried undertakers of the cities, swaddle the corpse in thick bandages or conceal its reality with theatrical make-up.

Instead she dresses the corpse limb by limb in thin cotton, rubbing it up and down with sweet-smelling oils that she massages into its skin, and as the aroma settles the stink of the body itself seems to alter, becoming earthy and warm and pleasant.

It's as if she's revealing, rather than concealing, the realities of the decaying dead.

(Softly)

I don't think I've ever seen the living be so tender with one another.

She digs. I watch.

FX: Digging continues.

The mewling of a cat as it approaches CARPENTER.

ACANTHA:

That one's Odds. Feel free to give her a scratch under her chin, she'll like that.

His brother's around somewhere. Ends.
(*Carelessly*)
I thought it was funny at the time.

FX: Digging.

ACANTHA:
(*Unexpectedly, while digging*)
How's the leg? Strappings not too tight?

CARPENTER:
(*Caught off guard*)
Mm? Oh. No, not too tight at all.

Feeling much better now in general, in fact.

Silence.

ACANTHA:
On the contrary. I think your head's still all in a muddle.

CARPENTER:
Excuse me?

ACANTHA:
You keep giving me these very hard, searching looks every time you think
I can't see what you're up to.
(*With great patience*)
Use your sense. You've been drifting in and out of consciousness in my
house for...oh, three, four weeks now.

If I'd ever intended to report your arrival to the authorities, it seems logical
that you'd have already woken up either in hospital or in handcuffs.

Silence.

ACANTHA:
(*Explaining herself*)
You spoke a little, while you slept.

CARPENTER:
How much do you know?

ACANTHA:

Oh, the broad strokes of the matter. You've been on the run. You have a great dislike for agents of the law.

You whispered a few names that seemed to mean a good deal to you, with anger or affection.

And something about a Trawler-man they used to worship out on the delta.

No more than that.

(Half-joking)

'Brother Faulkner' really seems to have been a torment, I will say that much.

CARPENTER:

(Half-joking back)

You can't even imagine.

ACANTHA:

Of course, despite all my best-intentioned eavesdropping, what I never **did** hear - was your own name.

Silence.

CARPENTER:

Carpenter.

ACANTHA:

I'm Steward Acantha.

It's a pleasure to have you here, Carpenter.

CARPENTER:

Since we're on the topic - I'd appreciate knowing where 'here' is.

ACANTHA:

This is the south coast. About a hundred miles south-west of Glottage.

I found you about four days' walk to the west, slumped in an abandoned car out on the delta of the White Gull river.

You were still breathing. But it seemed extremely obvious that you were shortly to die, so I brought you here to the garden of my god.

Call it an attempted act of kindness.

You, Odds and Ends are a rare breed. The only lasting survivors I've ever taken in.

CARPENTER:

(Still suspicious)

And which god do you serve, exactly?

ACANTHA:

Ever heard of the Cairn Maiden?

Old Soilbreath, the Bone Crow?

CARPENTER:

No, I don't think so.

FX: ACANTHA rests her shovel.

ACANTHA:

She waits in ruin.

You'll be alone when you first see her.

Perhaps when you're walking up on a rain-bitten road - tired to the bone and looking for a place to lie down, and cursing yourself for setting out in the first place.

Just a tall, indistinct figure in the shadow of a distant building or upon the spire of a faraway hill.

When you get there, she'll be gone, but she'll have left you a cairn to mark the way. A little pile of trembling stones.

And the longer you walk, whether it's days or years, the more you tire, the more likely you are to see her again.

Closer now. A little more distinct.

Her long, clasping fingers outstretched towards you. Soil pooling through the worm-bitten pockets of her skin.

And you'll be afraid at first.

That's the only reasonable reaction, to feel afraid.

You might begin to imagine that you're being hunted to your death by this strange figure in the distance, that she's stalking you from afar and growing nearer all the time - but that isn't it at all.

You're walking closer to the last stop on the long road. That's all.

The place where she's waiting for you to meet her.

CARPENTER exhales.

ACANTHA:
-is something wrong?

CARPENTER:
(Shocked and a little frightened)
I saw her before. By the river.

ACANTHA:
I know you did.

You spoke of her while you slept, as well.

FX: Digging.

CARPENTER:
(Growing a little angry)
What, precisely, does your god want with me?

ACANTHA:
(As she digs)
She only wants one thing from anyone, and it's a smaller price than any god I've ever heard of.

She wants to meet with you in the place where you'll stop walking.

The appointed place - the place that's been sleeping in you since the very beginning - where you'll lie down and stop struggling and be still.

It's the place all of your steps have been leading you to.

That's where the Maiden wants to meet you.

To cradle you in her long hands and lay you down in soft earth as your body becomes a ruin amongst ruins.

CARPENTER:

(Furious)

If you're about to tell me my days are numbered-

ACANTHA:

(Dismissively)

I first glimpsed her when I was twelve years old.

Scared the shit out of me, but I haven't died yet.

But once you've seen her, at a distance...yeah, you find yourself wanting to see her more clearly.

You want to understand the smile upon her face, you want to see whatever's beneath her veil.

You want to feel her long hands sweep you up when the moment comes that you've been waiting for.

They say it's a deeper sleep in the Maiden's arms, a softer ending, than any other.

(Cheerfully)

It isn't such a bad life, dwelling upon your death.

I wander the roads, looking for the unburied corpses, the stray sacrifices left out in the fields, the ones our god doesn't have time to claim.

I perform the acts of the Maiden's final tenderness just as well as I can.

It's a calling.

(The thought occurring to her)

Did she say anything to you, by the way? Did you glimpse anything?

FX: faint whispers, then the grave-rattle hiss of the CAIRN MAIDEN-

CAIRN MAIDEN:

...the floating willow beside the twisting water...

Silence.

CARPENTER:

(Lying)

No. She didn't say anything.

ACANTHA:

She may yet, if you see her again.

She likes to show you the place ahead of time.

CARPENTER:

(Growing curious)

So you...know?

Where you're going to die?

ACANTHA:

Upstairs, on the second floor.

(Pointing)

See that window?

There's a desk and a very comfortable chair. Walls filled with books. It's where I do most of my writing.

The Maiden will deliver me there.

It's why I bought the house.

CARPENTER:

But you don't know anything else. You don't know...when or how or why it's going to happen.

FX: Digging.

ACANTHA:

No.

CARPENTER:

Does that frighten you?

ACANTHA:

(Quietly, thoughtfully)

Not like you'd think.

The older I get, the more I find I can't stand to be away from that desk.

Whenever I have to spend time on the road, I find myself becoming agitated.

I start to think that I might mess things up, somehow - a clumsy slip upon loose rocks - and my life will end in a place it never should have, and the Maiden won't be waiting there to meet me.

What a waste that'd be, eh?

So...the circles of my life keep growing smaller, and smaller.

Not that I mind overly. The vast majority of people perplex and terrify me.
(Rousing herself from her thoughts)
I have a proposition for you, Carpenter.

Your leg there needs time to heal.

You need time.

Use that time here, for yourself.

Gather your strength. Settle your thoughts, before you go back to your people. Wait for the heat to die down, as they say on the radio.

See if you can find a little of that peace for yourself.

I've got supplies for the winter, and I can make you up a camp-bed in the garage. I won't even charge you for the privilege.

You'll be making yourself useful, after all.

CARPENTER:
(A little uncertain)
Useful how?

SHORELINE, EXT, DAY

FX: Rain, thunder and strong waves.

ACANTHA:
(Yelling)
All right, it's floating in again! It's floating in, be ready to hook it!

Careful! Careful! Not so hard, you're going to burst it!

It's going back out! You've missed your chance!

CARPENTER:

(Yelling)

I could do without the running commentary!

Look, why don't I just swim out and grab it?

ACANTHA:

(Yelling)

Do as you like! I'm the one who'll be left with **two** corpses to drag up the cliffs single-handed!

(Spotting the corpse)

Wait! It's coming back, it's coming back! Be ready!

FX: splashing feet as CARPENTER wades out to hook the corpse again.

ACANTHA:

(Yelling)

You've got it! Good hook, good hook!

FX: The sound of a heavy corpse being dragged up onto the shore and under cover.

CARPENTER collapses, breathing hard.

CARPENTER:

(Catching her breath)

Bait and flesh. Where do all these bodies even come from?

ACANTHA:

They test a lot of the experimental gods out on the coast, the new ones.

Takes a lot of sacrifice.

Afterwards they dump the bodies in the ocean.

Take a look at this one.

FX: Scissors cutting through cloth. An unpleasant fleshy sound.

ACANTHA:

Ugh. Someone's hallowed him - or tried to, anyway.

(Getting back to her feet)

There's been more bodies washing up this year than I've seen in a very long time.

The Legislatures have stepped up their production.

If there **is** going to be another war, they'll need all the help they can get.

CARPENTER:

Who told you that?

That there's going to be another war?

ACANTHA:

(Shrugging)

The corpses sing to me.

CARPENTER:

But who told the corpses?

ACANTHA:

(Calmly)

I suppose they hear it from someone before they go.

Now.

There's two hundred and thirty-one steps back up to the lych-gate, and trust me, by the one-hundredth step you'll be wishing you were dead.

Which end do you want to carry?

Head or legs?

CARPENTER:

Which end is least likely to come apart in my hands?

ACANTHA:

On balance, you're safest with the legs.

CARPENTER:

Legs it is.

ACANTHA:

All right. Together.

(Getting ready to lift)
Three. Two. One...

FX: Sound of waves fades.

We hear birdsong.

CARPENTER:
(Narrating)
The days, and the months go on like this.

I walk the grounds of the garden of the dead.

More bodies wash ashore.

Acantha and I bear them, cleanse and bury them, rotten and twisted as they are, with nothing but kindness.

The old woman stands over each corpse as it's laid down, whispering the same gentle words:

*This is the place. This has always been the place.
You were always walking towards this moment.
We were always waiting for you here.*

*The soil will swallow you.
The roots will tear at you.
Foxes and flies will bear you away.*

*There's nothing left to hold on to.
There's nowhere left to go.
There's no need to worry any more.*

Once, when Acantha isn't looking, I try softly mouthing the words along with her.

It feels awkward. Transgressive, even.

Like I'm intruding, or blaspheming.

But the words are kind, and I enjoy their closeness to my breath - so long as I can forget that I'm the one who's spoken them.

My leg begins to heal.

I build her a crane, a swaying hammock that lifts the drowned dead from the pebbled beach below up to the safety and the silence of the garden.

It's quiet here. The walls are high, and overgrown with ivy.

Here and then I even begin to fancy I can hear the corpse-song drifting upwards from beneath the tangled grass.

The pilgrimage upriver begins to feel like a very long time ago. Another life entirely.

I begin to imagine how it might feel to linger on in this place a while longer.

And then, one night, a dead man begins to scream.

HOUSE OF THE DEAD, INT, NIGHT

FX: Cicadas and night birds.

A rising wind. Whispering voices. And for a moment, we hear the hissing voice of THE CAIRN MAIDEN:

THE CAIRN MAIDEN:
He will not rest, he will not rest-

FX: Creaking as CARPENTER sits upright in bed, breathing hard.

A moment later, we hear a muffled, inhuman bellow. Pigeons erupt from the roof above.

GARDEN OF THE DEAD, EXT, NIGHT

FX: Footsteps on the stairs. A door bangs open.

The sound of ACANTHA, digging.

The muffled bellow, again.

CARPENTER:
(Yelling out)
Acantha!

Acantha?!

ACANTHA:

(Soothing)

Sssh. Sssh. It's all right.

Grab a shovel. Come help me.

Carpenter. Grab a shovel and dig.

FX: CARPENTER begins to dig as well.

We hear the bellowing again from below.

CARPENTER:

(Narrating)

It's hard to see what I'm even digging **for** - in the moonlight, half-sleeping and half-delirious, with the muffled shrieks floating up from somewhere beneath me.

But at last, my shovel strikes something that snaps.

Acantha falls to her knees, parting the soil carefully with her palms, and reveals something to the open air.

FX: Splintering bone and root. Dirt falling away.

THE HOMESICK CORPSE:

(Mournfully)

Please...

CARPENTER:

(Narrating)

The dead man lies rotting in the hole where he was buried.

His legs are shattered strings of bone, fleshless, dangling from leathery tendons.

Cosmos petals rise from the carved-open vase of his empty stomach, a bower of rich vegetable purple.

In place of his tongue, a thick maw of maggots, fused at the stem, which shakes, and writhes from behind open jaws.

The dead man does not move, and his goggling empty sockets do not meet ours.

But he continues to scream, all the same.

THE HOMESICK CORPSE:
Please! I have to get home!

I have to warn them!

CARPENTER:
(Shocked)
Is he-

ACANTHA:
Alive? No.

But there's a seed of something holy in him yet, keeping him from his rest.

Sometimes it doesn't take. And they wake...and they shriek-

THE HOMESICK CORPSE:
I'll tell you what I know. I'll tell you everything I know. Just let me go-

CARPENTER:
He's a Saint, isn't he?
(A slight tremor of panic rising in her voice)
That's what you're doing here, that's what you're up to.

You're turning them into Saints-

ACANTHA:
(Firmly)
Carpenter.

There's nothing to be frightened of here.

Not for you and not for him.

There's nothing the Maiden wants for the boy but his rest in ruin.

You don't need to trust in that, but I'd hope you can trust in me.

Do you trust me?

Silence.

CARPENTER:
(Realising it for the first time)
Yes.

ACANTHA:
I'm grateful.

Here. Come and take a look at him with me.

FX: A torch clicking on.

ACANTHA:
See if there's anything you can make out, anything that can help make sense of him.
(Examining the body)
When they wash up, there's nothing to identify them. **That's** the trouble.

You can't figure out what might be at the root of it, and it's no guarantee that they'll have the words to tell you-

CARPENTER:
(With growing astonishment)
Wait.

Wait, he's...one of ours.

ACANTHA:
Do you recognise him?

CARPENTER:
I recognise the fish-hooks.

This tattoo on his wrist. I don't know the man. Yes, he's one of ours.

ACANTHA:
He was a wash-up. I remember. Stormy day, maybe nine months back. Fishes writhing in his belly.

Your faith's illicit. Maybe he was caught. Sacrificed or hallowed - tossed out into the water afterwards.

Yes, that makes sense.

FX: The rising sound of a kettle boiling.

THE HOMESICK CORPSE:
(With rising urgency)
Please. I have to warn them.

They're waiting for me.

They're waiting for me at home-

KITCHEN, INT, NIGHT

FX: A click as the kettle turns off. ACANTHA lifts it and begins to pour.

She slides a mug across to CARPENTER.

ACANTHA:
Coffee.

FX: ACANTHA sits.

A moment later, we hear the bellowing of the HOMESICK CORPSE from outside.

ACANTHA:
(Tutting)
If he keeps on like this, he'll wake the others.

He needs to be buried again, somewhere it can take.

Silence.

ACANTHA:
Do you think you could be happy here, Carpenter?

In this garden, and in this house?

CARPENTER:
(Taken aback)
...I'm sorry?

ACANTHA:

Is it within the realm of possibility that you could be happy here, after I'm gone? Doing this work, living this life?

(Gently)

Sooner or later, I'm going to need to make my appointment with the Maiden, and these days I find myself thinking it might be sooner rather than later.

I'd go gentler knowing I was leaving the house to someone else who cared.

CARPENTER:

(Hesitantly)

Yes, I think I could be happy here.

ACANTHA:

But what?

Silence.

CARPENTER:

But I don't...

(Taking a breath)

I honestly don't know if I have it in me to start again.

Not with everything that I've done, not with everything that's been done to me.

ACANTHA:

(Quietly amused)

Well, you know that's foolishness, don't you? There's no such thing as a fresh start.

We're all scrabbling amongst ruins that will long outlast us.

I think the Maiden has a task for you. That's the truth of it.

I think she has need of kindly hands to help this boy back to his proper rest.

And bless your heart, but you've been adrift ever since you came to me.

I think you need something from her too.

Silence.

ACANTHA:

Make one final pilgrimage, Carpenter.

Bear this dead boy back to his home. Find a good place by the water to lay him down to sleep, and you will see how soundly he sleeps.

You'll be serving your Trawler-man, in delivering his faithful back to him.

And you'll be serving the Cairn Maiden in your aching footfalls, in the endless road, and in wet soil heaped upon rotten bones.

She will appear to you again, or she will not.

And then - either way - once your task is over, you can decide whether this is a life you could bring yourself to live.

If you arrive at your Parish of Tide and Flesh and you decide you were wrong to leave them behind, I'm sure they'll take you back.

If not, you can find your way back to this house and this garden, and begin building something else for yourself.

CARPENTER does not respond.

ACANTHA:

Well?

What do you say?

GARDEN OF THE DEAD, EXT, DAY

FX: Birdsong.

THE HOMESICK CORPSE:

Please. Please. They're waiting for me-

FX: A zipping sound as the HOMESICK CORPSE is closed into a rucksack.

ACANTHA:

All right.

(Laying out items)

Rifle. Flask. Compass. Map.

A copy of our book, the *Winding Path In Ruin*. If you'd like to read it, of course. I won't test you on it.

And a satchel for your food supplies.

He's pretty dry by now but you don't want to risk him getting close to anything that needs to keep.

CARPENTER:

You'll be here when I get back, won't you?

ACANTHA:

One way or another.

(The thought just occurring to her)

If you find me slumped in my meeting-place when you return - the garage door's unlocked. Spades will be hanging on their hooks. You know what to do.

Ends might take a nibble out of me if he's left hungry for too long, but he's welcome to it.

Not to claim special privilege, but if you can find the space, I'd prefer a corner patch, close to the larkspur.

I'd like blue flowers to grow up and out from within me.

Safe travels to you, Carpenter.

CARPENTER:

(Softly)

Same to you.

MOORLANDS, EXT, DAY

FX: The sound of the garden gate shutting.

Footsteps on gravel. A rising wind.

CARPENTER:

(Narrating)

The moorlands lie before me. Wild heather and prickling gorse, drifting in the winds, rolling out into the distance.

The house of the dead is a lonely and insignificant ruin here, a single human pinpoint in a vast and empty landscape.

I feel...cast adrift, I suppose. A little hurt and a little hollowed, in leaving this place behind.

Somewhere to the west, far beneath the steeping crags and bluffs, is the White Gull River, and the god that almost drowned me.

I scan the hills and the rocks for a glimpse of a silhouette, a familiar veiled figure - watching me from a distance, leading me on.

FX: Rising whispers.

CAIRN MAIDEN:

...the floating willow beside the twisting water...

The whisper fades.

CARPENTER:

And so - moaning corpse upon my back -

I set forth.

RIVERBANK, INT, DAY

FX: The sound of cicadas. The noise of rushing water.

The clank of chains.

SCHOOLTEACHER:

(Distraught and desperate)

Please.

Please listen to me.

I teach these children according to the laws of this country. At this school they learn nothing but the names and rites of legal gods - oh!

FX: A thump as the SCHOOLTEACHER is forced to his knees.

GAGE trills upon their flute.

GAGE:

That's not what they told us upriver, professor.

MERCER:

They told us that if we paid a visit to your schoolhouse by the water, we'd find all kinds of religious contraband stowed away under the floorboards.

Fish hooks. Prayer-chalk. And **this**.

'The Silt Verses, Fifth Edition.'

SCHOOLTEACHER:

(Lying nervously)

That's...not mine. One of the students must have-

FX: The SCHOOLTEACHER cries out as he's struck.

GAGE trills on their flute as if to celebrate the blow.

MERCER:

You follow the forbidden faith of the Trawler-man, professor.

SCHOOLTEACHER:

(Weakly)

No.

MERCER:

You infect these impressionable young minds with rash and violent teachings in pursuit of an unsanctioned, criminal god.

SCHOOLTEACHER:

Please don't do this-

MERCER:

(To the watching soldiers)

Sergeant. Chain the professor's ankles together.

FX: Chains being snapped into place.

The sound of a bottle full of liquid being shaken.

MERCER:

This is drain cleaner. Industrial-strength. No expense spared.

(To her soldiers)

Hold him down. Get his mouth open.

SCHOOLTEACHER:

(Horried)

Wait, wait, wait-

FX: A horrible glugging sound and choking as the SCHOOLTEACHER is made to swallow the bleach.

MERCER:

(Like a magician doing a trick)

Can he swallow enough water to dilute the bleach **before** his stomach lining collapses?

Let's find out.

FX: A rattle of chains as the SCHOOLTEACHER is lifted up and tossed into the river.

A splash.

Struggling splashes.

Bubbles.

Silence.

The sound of MERCER tossing the empty bottle away.

MERCER:

(As if performing to the river)

Trawler-man of Tide and Flesh.

This might taste a little worse than your usual sacrifices.

But I can tell you, it's a fine vintage compared to what's coming next.

(To the troops)

Pour the rest in.

MERCER:

(To the troops)

Burn the schoolhouse. They won't be coming back here.

In the background, GAGE is playing thoughtfully on their flute.

MERCER:

(Prompting)

Gage?

GAGE continues to play.

MERCER:

Gage?

GAGE stops playing.

GAGE:

You're right, sister. It burns.

A moment of silence.

And then we hear the growing, insistent noise of rising flame.

END OF EPISODE.