

THE SILT VERSES: SEASON 2, CHAPTER 3

Content warnings: Episode contains references to suicidality (10.20-11.30) and extremely bloody violence from the halfway point onwards.

TRAIN TO NESH, EXT

Birdlife. The sound of a river gently flowing.

After a moment, we hear the voice of PAIGE.

PAIGE:

(Narrating)

They tell me I'm in shock.

(Correcting herself)

No.

First they tell me I've caused an international incident.

Then they tell me I'm in shock.

A train signal, and then, a moment later, the roar of an approaching train.

It passes us by, sounding its horn.

PAIGE:

(Narrating)

This comes after:

(Breathlessly, rapid-fire)

- some eight months of negotiating,
- a temporary Peninsulan holding cell which begins to feel increasingly permanent over time,
- a lawyer from my own country who holds his finger to his lips as if to indicate that our private interview room is not private,
- a considerable amount of furious shouting,
- assertions from Peninsulan policemen, policewomen and policepeople that I will never see my homeland again, and I should just come clean about my plot to destroy the town of Bellwethers with two servants of an illicit faith (and by the way, if it transpired that the Conclave of the Consolidated Linger Straits had funded or in any way enabled said plot, that would be useful information that would make things go a lot easier for me),

- a final, frenzied agreement between nations,
- a car to the border,
- a hurried exchange,
- and another holding cell on the CLS side of the border, with different flags hung over the supervising sergeant's desk.

(More calmly)

I'm interviewed by two detectives from the Nesh municipal force, as well as someone who introduces herself as a political attache and leans sourly against the corner of the cell when everyone else is talking.

You can see them frowning as they scribble on their notepads, trying to construct some, any kind of coherent narrative out of what I'm telling them.

Over time, they seem to acknowledge that I am probably **not** a covert member of the Parish of Tide and Flesh, but they continue to probe at me all the same, looking for other angles: *what am I holding back from them? There has to be more to it than this, surely? Some final secret, some last revelation that makes sense of all this?*

Eventually, they give up on me, and this is when the doctors come to run their tests, see if I've been brutalised or tortured in any way that could make for effective political capital.

And I begin to understand that there's another, contradictory narrative emerging: that I'm in shock, a victim of horrific circumstance, and in some undefinable, whispered sense...a hero.

After all, nobody has forgotten the atrocities committed by the Peninsula in the last war. The disasters that transpire, year after year, when their gods go astray. The polluted islands, even now, that stand between our coastlines, a monument to their recklessness and callous disregard for our citizens.

It seems pretty clear to all concerned that Bellwethers was caused by one of their own experiments, and now they're casting about for blame, trying to stir up trouble against us.

One of the doctors takes great care in smiling at me and squeezing my hand as he leaves.

"I'm just glad we got you out of there in one piece," he says.

The train slows to a halt. We can hear faint drizzle above.

PAIGE:

(Narrating)

And soon after that, the forms are signed, the doors open, and I stumble back out...

The sound of the train doors unlocking.

PAIGE:

(Narrating)

Home.

PAIGE'S APARTMENT, EXT

We hear PAIGE's footsteps as she runs home through the pouring rain.

The turn of a key in the lock.

A door swings open.

PAIGE:

(Narrating)

All of the plants in my apartment are long dead, of course.

I have a fruit basket from work, as well as a handwritten message from Mr Hooper expressing his intense sympathies and telling me to take as long as I need to recover.

It's very...touching.

A window is opened.

We hear PAIGE grunt faintly as she shoves the fruit basket over the sill.

A moment's silence, then a car alarm goes off below as the basket hits the vehicle.

PAIGE:

(Narrating)

And then I sit there, on my apartment floor, and I howl with hysterical, triumphant laughter until the tears come to my eyes.

Against all possibility, I made it out intact.

And none of them could get it out of me - the final secret, the one they all **knew** I was holding onto but couldn't figure out.

The secret of what I'm going to do next.

SUPERMARKET, INT, DAY

The sound of a rattling trolley passing through a busy supermarket.

Somewhere above, the 'ding' of a tannoy.

SUPERMARKET ANNOUNCER:

(Nasally, over the tannoy)

Thank you for choosing to shop with us today. Please be reminded that the store will be closing at dusk.

Servants of the Stocker-in-the-shadows will be present after closing time, and customers found in the aisles may be mistaken for produce.

A 'ding' as the tannoy announcement ends.

PAIGE is loading items up onto the conveyor. The cashier, GREN, swipes them up

GREN:

(Cheerily)

Lot of supplies here. You, uh, doing some kind of home repairs?

PAIGE:

(Distracted)

Yeah, something like that.

GREN:

Anything else for you today? No?

(Ringing it up)

...okay, that is sixteen and twelve-fifty.

PAIGE:

(Paying the money)

Thanks. Take care.

GREN:

Yeah, you too.

PAIGE leaves.

GREN:

(Calling out to a colleague)

Hey, Tanner, can you cover the till for a sec? I'm gonna step outside.

...Tanner? You all right, buddy?

The sound of a can dropping to the ground.

A moment's silence. And then we hear TANNER, who is in fact-

HAYWARD:

(In genuine shock)

I...know her.

GREN:

Hm?

HAYWARD:

(Still dazed)

I...**know** her.

GREN:

Oh. Uh. Friend from back home?

GREN waits for a response. Nothing is forthcoming.

GREN:

Fuck it.

(Sympathetically)

Tanner. Slip out with me, buddy. Come get some air.

HAYWARD:

Hm?

GREN:

(Losing his patience)

Tanner! Drop the cans and come with me.

(Hissing)

Now!

HAYWARD:

(Getting it together)

Okay. Okay, I'm coming-

More cans clatter as HAYWARD dumps them down.

The tannoy dings.

ANNOUNCER:

(Nasally, over the tannoy)

Staff announcement: These are the Silt Verses. Would the following disciples please report in to checkout as soon as possible: Lucille Valentine, Jimmie Yamaguchi, Pip Gladwin, Mintaka Angell, Shogo Miyakita, Michelle Kelly, and Siobhan McAuliffe.

The tannoy dings again.

ALLEYWAY, EXT, DAY

We hear the creak and bang of an alley door. Traffic in the distance.

A flick of a lighter as GREN lights his cigarette.

GREN:

You, uh, you want one?

HAYWARD:

(Lost in thought)

Nuh-uh.

The sound of GREN kicking a can casually down the alleyway.

GREN smokes in silence for a long moment.

GREN:

Listen, Tanner...I don't want to make a bad day worse, buddy.

Just a, uh, friendly heads-up.

I heard the duty manager on the phone to head office this morning when I came in.

He said your work pass was throwing up some red flags during the six-month check.

HAYWARD:
Red fl-
(Waking up for the first time)
Shit.

Shit, shit, shit-

GREN:
(Trying to calm him down)
Sure it's just an error in the system.

HAYWARD:
No, it's...
(Levelling with him)
Gren, I'm...honestly not all that confident that my work pass will hold up to further scrutiny.

GREN:
Can you go to your embassy, sort it out with them?

HAYWARD:
(Wearily)
Probably not.

HAYWARD hesitates.

HAYWARD:
I...left things back home in kind of a mess.

Some trouble with my last employer.

There were a lot of screw-ups, some bad people did bad things, and they were looking for someone they could blame the whole thing on.

I figured I'd cross the border before they could do anything formal. Find some work. Get the stink off me.

New beginnings and all that.

The girl you were serving back there...she was part of the trouble, she was one of the perpetrators.

They must have let her go.

GREN:
Tch. No justice, is there?

GREN smokes thoughtfully for a moment.

GREN:
Look, I, ah, might have some extra work coming up in the evenings if you're interested.

There's a friend of a friend who arranges staff for fancy parties on the north side of town.

Waiting and serving.
(With pride)
High-net worth individuals. They come to him direct.

Cash under the table, so you won't need to worry about your permit. Good tips, too, if you're willing to stretch for it. I've been doing it for a while now.

I can loan you a tux. Call it a favour.

HAYWARD:
No. No, I'll be fine.

Silence. HAYWARD isn't listening.

HAYWARD:
I have to go.

He turns and walks away.

GREN:
What do you mean, you have to go?

We've got four more hours on this shift.
(Calling after him)
Hey, Tanner!
(His voice fading)
Tanner, come on, man! What do you want me to tell them?

The roar of traffic covers GREN's voice.

HAYWARD'S APARTMENT, INT, NIGHT

Distant, muffled traffic. The sound of a beer being opened. HAYWARD is chugging it.

We hear a phone ringing. After a moment, FELIX picks up.

FELIX:
(On the telephone)
Glottage 4-1-2.

HAYWARD:
It's me, Felix.

FELIX:
(Annoyed, on the telephone)
You shouldn't be calling me.

HAYWARD:
I'm going to fix everything, Felix. I've got a lead.

FELIX:
(On the telephone)
What do you mean, you've got a lead?

HAYWARD:
I mean a lead! She's here, the girl, the accomplice.

I'm going to track her down. Make her tell me where the other two are, the ones that were responsible-

FELIX:
(On the telephone)
You're absent, in breach of contract. You shouldn't even be calling me.

They'd be well within their rights to find you, arrest you and charge you-

HAYWARD:
(Furious and fervent)
Then let them find me! They can come find me, and I can tell them where to find the ones who are really responsible for all this!

FELIX:
(On the telephone)

Hayward, nobody gives a shit. You're not police any more. You're out of circulation.

HAYWARD:
Felix, listen to me-

FELIX:
(Firmly, on the telephone)
Don't fucking call my house ever again.

A click as she hangs up.

HAYWARD replaces the phone.

HAYWARD:
(Narrating)
I should kill myself, shouldn't I?

You end up finding all these ways to distract yourself - these endless, wrangling schemes.

'Hey, maybe I can come back from this. If X equals Y and I can just scrape together enough of Z, maybe everything will add up again like it was originally supposed to.'

But at a certain point you just need to be firm with yourself.

No. My life will never find its way back to the road I thought I was making for.

No. There's nothing waiting for me ahead but disgrace and the humiliating slow decline, and if I'm caught and sent back...there'll be pain, as well, no doubt.

Yes. I've lied to a lot of people for a very long time.

No. There's nobody left who can help me.
(Firmly)

Yes. I should absolutely kill myself.

(A long pause)

Or, of course, there's always another scheme.

HAYWARD picks up the phone and redials.

We hear it ring. The faint sound of GREN's voice.

HAYWARD:
Gren? It's, uh, Tanner.

Is...
(Swallowing his pride)
...is that job still going?

THE KENSEY HOUSE, INT, NIGHT.

The clank of colossal electric gates - and then a creak as they slowly swing open.

CARPENTER and GREN's feet crunch on the gravel as they walk. The sound of cicadas.

HAYWARD:
(Conversationally)
You were already working today, weren't you?

GREN:
Six to four.

HAYWARD:
(Baffled)
How are you even still upright?

GREN:
You bend, or you break.
(Confessing)
I've had four coffees.

Grand old house, isn't it, all lit up like that? I-

A distant squawk.

HAYWARD:
(Alarmed)
What? What is it?

GREN:
...I think I saw a peacock.

HAYWARD:

What did you say these people do again?

GREN and HAYWARD pass by a gushing fountain.

GREN:

(Absent-mindedly)

The Kenseys. It's Mr and Mrs Kensey. They made their money in, uh, coal round the last century.

(With a low whistle)

Look at that car. I'm gonna get one just like that.

HAYWARD:

(Scoffing)

What? When?

GREN:

(A little offended)

When it's time for me, Tanner. You just keep on laughing.

Silence as they continue to walk.

HAYWARD:

Uh, listen, I was speaking to some folks back home.

And the girl we saw, the false-faith renegade, it turns out there's a bounty on her. Big reward.

So I was thinking that you and me together, we could come up with something, a kind of plan-

GREN:

(Not listening, shushing him)

Just, uh, just keep your voice down, okay? We're getting close now.

The faint sounds of instruments being tuned from within the house.

And, up ahead, a cigarette being lit.

We hear the voice of MR KENSEY.

MR KENSEY:

You boys here to work?

GREN:

Yes, sir, we are.

MR KENSEY:
You want a smoke?

GREN:
(Eagerly)
No, sir, we're ready to get started.

MR KENSEY:
(Satisfied)
That's the right answer.
(Getting to his feet)
Come on around the back. I'll show you the ropes.

KITCHEN, INT, NIGHT

An industrial door clangs open. The sound of MR KENSEY's footsteps as he gives the tour.

MR KENSEY:
(Briskly)
All right, so - the guests will start arriving in the next half-hour.

Be ready for the first knock, make sure everyone gets a drink. We've got some sparkling wine, some non-alcoholic fizz.

Cola for the little ones, but only if it's requested.

You're the first servers here, so we'll trust you to pass the message on to the others.

(Lifting a lid)
The cold canapes are already out. Take these around after the first drinks.

The caterers have left the hot canapes in the oven.
(Switching on the oven)

At eight-oh-five, take the hot canapes out, shift them onto the silver trays, bring them around. It is essential that you do not forget the hot canapes, because they will burn.

If it's marked with a green flag, it's vegan. If it's marked with amber, it's dairy-free. If it's marked with red, it's neither vegan nor dairy-free.

Do you have all that?

GREN:

(Just repeating the last thing he's heard)

Of course, sir. Eight-oh-five. Marked with red.

MR KENSEY:

Things might go on a little later tonight than you're used to - some very old friends we haven't seen in a while.

I'll get up on stage in the ballroom and give a speech at around seven.

By that time, everyone should have a drink in their hand, and everyone should have eaten their fill.

You'll be compensated, of course.

We're having some party games as well. If you sense the mood starting to drop, or people aren't getting involved, we'd truly appreciate it if you could step in and help move things along.

It's very important to us that everyone has a memorable evening.

(Just remembering)

Oh, and it's my wife's birthday today, so if you see her, just give her a warm smile and say, 'Happy birthday, Mrs Kensey.' She'll like that.

GREN:

Of course, sir, of course.

How old is Mrs Kensey, if you don't mind me asking?

MR KENSEY:

(Proudly)

Forty-three. It's a big one.

GREN:

(As if impressed)

Forty-three, eh? That's, uh, that sure is a milestone. I was thinking-

A sudden knocking sound from the pipes.

MR KENSEY:

(Reassuring)

Just the plumbing. Pipes tend to knock.

It's getting on, this old place, as you can see. Needs a good bit of work put into it, but you never have the money or the time, do you?

GREN:

(Pusillanimous)

Oh, I hear that, sir - I hear that all right.

I was thinking. Maybe, uh, Mrs Kensey might like it if we sing the birthday song to her as well, when we see her?

Might get the crowd going.

MR KENSEY:

What a charming idea. Yes, I think she'd like that-

The kitchen doors swing open as MRS KENSEY enters.

MRS KENSEY:

(Announcing herself with a cough)

First car in the driveway, Martin.

MR KENSEY:

Ah, this is my lovely wife Sofia.

(To MRS KENSEY, annoyed)

Here already?

MRS KENSEY:

(To her husband)

I think it's the Harveys. Never could read an invitation.

(Referring to GREN and HAYWARD)

Did you tell them about downstairs?

MR KENSEY:

(To GREN and HAYWARD)

Oh - yes. There's a bathroom in the back corridor, which you're free to use.

But please don't use the one in the hall - that's for guests - and please stick to downstairs.

(Clapping his hands together)

Well, I'd better do the greetings. Bring those drinks out in a moment.

GREN:

Of course, we'll be right out.

And, uh, a very happy birth-

The slam of the door as MRS KENSEY leaves, ignoring him.

MR KENSEY:

(Also leaving)

Eight-oh-five for the canapes. Don't forget.

The door swings shut behind him.

A moment's silence.

GREN:

All right. I'll take the sparkling wine. You grab the fizz.

HAYWARD:

(A little shocked by GREN's behaviour)

What the hell was all that about?

GREN:

What?

HAYWARD:

You volunteered us to sing a birthday song.

GREN:

High. Net. Worth. You know what that means?

HAYWARD:

(Annoyed)

Yes.

GREN:

(Ignoring him)

It **means** you stretch for the tip. These people, they expect a different kind of serving. You have to give them a little more if you want to stand out.

My friend - he started out doing this kind of work for hire, and now?
They're like family to him.

Grab the fizz. Don't spill it.

Come on, now. Step up.

HAYWARD just continues to stand there in bafflement.

HAYWARD:
(Half to himself)
Is forty-three a big one?

GREN:
All smiles and charm, now, Tanner. Let's go. Come on.

The doors swing open.

THE KENSEY HOUSE, INT, NIGHT

Faint, muffled music and chatter.

In the foreground, the pipes continue to knock.

BALLROOM, INT, NIGHT

The sound of a chattering crowd. Lively string music plays from a corner. The party is in full swing.

We catch snippets of conversation as HAYWARD and GREN make their rounds.

HAYWARD:
(Gesturing to his tray)
-so this is arancini, and I, uh, I think this might be a spinach puff-

Rising and falling crowd noise.

GREN:
(Laughing uproariously)
Yes, very good, that's very funny. I might just have to steal it - do you mind if I use that one myself, sir?

Rising and falling crowd noise.

HAYWARD:
(Awkwardly - being flirted with)
No, nobody's ever said that to me about my jawline before.
(Receiving another question)

Oh. No, I'm not married-

Rising and falling crowd noise.

MRS KENSEY:

(Pitching into a conversation)

-the Conclave simply needs to toughen up, that's my opinion. Send a couple of saint-strikes over the border so they know who they're dealing with.

And I've got nothing against the people of the Peninsula, nothing at all. It's the Southerners' government that's the problem, it's the unwarranted aggression that's the problem. And sooner or later, that's going to need to be dealt with-

Rising and falling crowd noise.

FX: Footsteps upon a stage. The sound of a champagne flute being dinged.

The crowd noise fades.

MR KENSEY is on the stage. He addresses his guests.

MR KENSEY:

Your attention, please. Your attention, everyone.

(Taking a breath)

Well, thank you, first of all, for joining us on what's proving to be a rather miserable night.

Tonight is, you may already know, a very special evening. On two counts.

It's my darling wife Sofia's birthday.

Light applause.

MRS KENSEY:

Thank you-

MR KENSEY:

Yes, yes, it is.

But it is also the two-week anniversary of our historic partnership with the New Trinity of the Petropater.

Historic for us, but also for them.

To put it **crudely**-
(Some polite crowd laughter)
-sorry. Couldn't help myself.

To put it crudely, there's never been a partnership like this in Nesh. Oil, natural gas and coal, all now embodied within a single elemental deity.

So we've been collaborating with the Petropater's local branch on a few fun little rituals for the new aspects of the faith. And we'd like to share them with you tonight.

Polite applause.

MR KENSEY:
We have Edwin's little girl Aranissa with us onstage - a big hand for Aranissa, everyone!

More enthusiastic applause.

MR KENSEY:
Just seven years old. Wonderful.

And I'm going to need a second volunteer, as well. If one of the serving staff wouldn't mind-

Silence for a moment.

Then GREN pipes up.

GREN:
I'll do it!

I don't mind, sir.

MR KENSEY:
Delightful! Come on up with us.

HAYWARD attempts to stop GREN.

HAYWARD:
(Hissing)

You don't even know what you're volunteering for.

GREN:

(Quietly)

Stretch for it, Tanner. Watch and learn.

GREN's footsteps on the stage as he jogs on up.

MR KENSEY:

Thank you-

GREN:

William, sir.

MR KENSEY:

Thank you, William.

MR KENSEY:

Now. We begin with a little blood-drawing ritual.

Nothing too severe, William, you don't need to worry. This is a respectable evening. just a drop.

GREN:

(Playing to the crowd)

Whew.

A little laughter.

MR KENSEY:

Aranissa is going to use the ceremonial hammer to give the mineshaft - that's you - a single tap. Drawing forth the sacred coal, in liquid form. The blood of the Petropater.

All clear?

GREN:

(Cheerfully)

All clear.

(To ARANISSA)

All right, young lady. Give me your best shot.

The thud of a hammer.

MR KENSEY:
(To ARANISSA)
Careful lifting it. Use both hands.

The crowd begins to steadily clap. The string quartet plays a jaunty tune.

We hear ARANISSA quietly whimpering with frustration.

MRS KENSEY:
(As an aside to MR KENSEY)
She can't reach his head, Martin.

MR KENSEY:
(To ARANISSA, sweetly)
Try standing on your tiptoes, darling. Or just clock him in the shins.

MRS KENSEY:
Hey, hey, sugar, that's all right - oh, she's getting upset, poor thing.

GREN:
(Trying to be helpful)
Let me kneel down. Give her a proper swing.

MRS KENSEY:
Oh! Oh, are you sure?

MR KENSEY:
(Delighted)
Did you ever see such service...?

Thank you, young man. It's very much appreciated.

GREN:
(Charmingly)
Of course. Only right that she gets a proper go.

A slight squeak as GREN gets onto his knees.

GREN:
(To ARANISSA)
That's it - now you can reach me, can't you? That's much better.

MRS KENSEY:
Say thank you, darling.

The clapping and the string quartet start up again.

GREN:

Now just make sure you get the grip right-

*A sudden, dull thwack as the hammer knocks GREN in the head. He grunts and falls back.
There's laughter and applause.*

GREN:

(Dazed)

Good!

You can go again. It's all right, you can go again, you didn't quite draw blood.

Try and swing harder this time-

A harder, louder knock. GREN grunts as he falls back.

More laughter and applause.

MRS KENSEY:

(To ARANISSA)

That was such a grand swing, darling!

GREN:

(In great pain, from the floor)

Really good. Really well done...

MR KENSEY:

A big hand for Aranissa, everyone!

Enthusiastic applause.

After a moment, the crowd chatter rises. The music starts up again.

MR KENSEY:

(Quietly, to MRS KENSEY)

They're looking bored. I don't think they got the metaphor.

We're going to step it up a notch next, yes? Really blow their socks off with the next one.

HAYWARD approaches GREN.

GREN:
(In pain)
Tanner. Help me up.

HAYWARD:
(Hissing)
What is wrong with you? What do you think you're doing?

GREN:
(Still in pain)
Listen. It does not bother me *necessarily* that you were born without a hint of charm. If you want to come away from this evening without making any connections, without building anything for yourself, that's your choice.

But your bad attitude is starting to reflect badly on me now, and I need you to watch it.

HAYWARD:
This is **insane**. You're bleeding from the eye.

Let's just leave.

GREN:
(Furiously)
Get off me!
(Breaking down a little)
You got all this fucking pride in you, Tanner, and it's making you stupid. It's cutting you off from opportunity.

I'm making friends here tonight. I'm building my way out.

And you're not bigger than all of this. You're **not**. Your pride, it won't save you. So you can just keep laughing at me, you can keep on demeaning -

HAYWARD:
(Pleading)
I'm not laughing at you, Gren. I promise I'm not, but these people, they're not-

He breaks off as MRS KENSEY approaches them, laughing.

MRS KENSEY:

William, William, I just wanted to say thank you - you are **so good** with children. Do you have kids?

GREN:

No, ma'am, not yet. But some day I'd love to.

Oh, and Aranissa, she's a delight, isn't she? So grown-up, so sharp-

HAYWARD:

(Abruptly)

-excuse me.

He turns and strides away.

MRS KENSEY:

(A little offended)

Is your friend all right?

GREN hesitates for a split second.

GREN:

(Lying)

Ahh, him? New hire.

Don't worry, I'm keeping an eye on him.

KITCHEN, INT, NIGHT

The kitchen doors swing open and bang shut.

An angry clatter as HAYWARD puts down the trays.

Munching sounds as he begins to snack on one of the canapes.

And then, from behind him, we hear the voice of GRAMMA KENSEY.

GRAMMA KENSEY:

Disgusting, isn't it?

HAYWARD begins to choke in shock.

HAYWARD:

(Gasping and choking)

I beg your pardon?

We hear the clack of GRAMMA KENSEY's walking stick as she slowly approaches.

GRAMMA KENSEY:

(Sourly)

New inventions.

New rituals.

This dreadful god of oil, this...Pitter-Patter.

HAYWARD:

"Petropater"?

GRAMMA KENSEY:

(Ignoring him)

We never put on these airs, back in the old days.

We didn't preen over the final product. We didn't show off our god before a crowing crowd.

That's my son out there, young man, if you can believe it. Bragging, and boasting.

Think he ever had a whiff of the black lung from long days in the dark heart of this earth?

Think he ever put pick to shaft himself?

HAYWARD:

(Quietly)

I'd imagine not.

GRAMMA KENSEY:

Well, I did. His father did.

And we knew better than to worship the coal we struck for, in the foothills of Old Nesh.

(Her voice turning rapturous)

The god **we** loved, while we struck... he was a spirit of the darkness and of the deep shaft, and his name was the Gloomings Guest.

Do you know him, young man?

HAYWARD:
I'm afraid I don't.

The pipes begin to gently knock.

GRAMMA KENSEY:
(Softly remembering)
You'd hear him when you were working. A low, gentle sound. Softly knocking at the walls. Letting you know that he was there.

And as the weeks and months went on, the knocking would grow louder, and louder, because the Gloomer Guest was patient, but all patience has its limits.

So you'd draw lots, and one of you would venture down into the depths alone, scratch the marks in the rock, and you'd whisper, 'Thank you for waiting. Welcome home.'

Because if you waited too long, the patience of the darkness, it ran out.

And the Guest would enter without warning. Collapsing an entire shaft. Wiping out months of work. Killing whoever was caught in his path.

Martin's father, rest his soul, he understood that we all had a share in that accord.

And when he drew the lot, he walked down alone into the darkness to welcome in the Gloomer Guest, just as any one of his workers would have.

Now...
(With disgust)
The Pitter-Patter. Hm. Where are his songs? What is his glory?

Success brings its own kind of failure.

Don't you ever go becoming successful, young man.

HAYWARD:
(Uncertainly)
I'll try not to.
(Trying to end the exchange)
If you'll excuse me, ma'am, I really...I should really get back to the party.

He pushes the door open, to go-

GRAMMA KENSEY:

Oh, I'd stay in here a while longer if I was you.

They've only just begun.

HAYWARD stops.

HAYWARD:

(With dread)

Begun **what?**

BALLROOM, INT, NIGHT

Crowd noise.

MR KENSEY claps his hands again and the noise dies down.

MR KENSEY:

All right, we're just about set-up.

I need a second volunteer. Perhaps one of the other servers would like to come forward?

A long silence.

MR KENSEY:

...no-one? Really? That's a little disappointing, I have to say.

Then GREN, hesitantly, speaks up.

GREN:

I don't mind going again, sir.

MR KENSEY:

(Gratefully)

Our knight in shining armour. Join us on the stage, won't you? Can we get a little applause for William, please?

Scattered applause as GREN climbs the stage.

MR KENSEY:
(Quietly)
Thank you, William, thank you.

GREN:
It's a pleasure, Mr Kensey.

MR KENSEY:
'Martin', please.

GREN:
(A little awed)
Martin.

MR KENSEY:
(To the crowd)
Now - we don't exactly have the licences for this next part, so I'm expecting all of you to be discreet.
(Pointing at someone in particular in the crowd)
I'm looking at you, Chief Inspector.

Mild laughter.

The clink of a glass.

MR KENSEY:
William, we've got a little drink for you - chin, chin. Take a shot of this.

GREN:
(Swallowing)
Delicious. Oh, it's - it's certainly got a kick to it, Martin.

MR KENSEY:
It's a muscle relaxant. Should make you droop. Keep you calm, prevent any moving about or undue thrashing.

GREN:
(Woozily)
Oh. Oh, that's very sensible.

The sound of the glass smashing as GREN drops it.

MR KENSEY:
(Steering GREN down onto his knees)

And...there we go. Onto your knees, rest your weight on your hips, and then you can just relax there as you like.

All good? Stage floor not too cold?

GREN:

Very comfortable, Martin, thank you for asking.

MR KENSEY:

By this point, you're **probably** finding yourself unable to move at all. That makes this next part easier.

We're going to show off your stomach to the crowd, William. Hope you're not feeling shy.

The sound of GREN's shirt being opened up.

GREN:

(Increasingly woozy, but still trying to play along)

...ate a...ate a few too many cakes before I came...

MR KENSEY:

(To the crowd)

Now. In this next ritual, the sacred coal, having been raised from the earth, is transmuted. Through the power of fire, and furnace.

GREN:

(Just starting to lose his nerve, but incredibly woozy)

Martin...

MR KENSEY:

I'm afraid this next part's going to be a little cold, William.

(To ARANISSA)

All right, Aranissa, hold the knife to his stomach. Nice and steady.

Grip it with both hands, like he showed you before.

And...**drive it in.**

GREN:

Martin...wait, please, Martin...

The noise of a knife driving into flesh.

GREN gasps in pain.

The knife continues to cut.

MR KENSEY:

Nice straight lines. make it a square in the flesh. Think of it like you're cutting a door.

We're building a furnace. Well done, that's it.

GREN:

(In incredible pain)

Wh - h - h - h -

The horrible peeling sound of GREN's stomach flesh being torn off and tossed to one side.

A stove door opens. The noise of a sizzling, steaming hot coal. ARANISSA is lifting it in a pair of tongs.

MR KENSEY:

Now, the furnace is open. And we feed in the hot coals.

That's it, sweetheart. Use the tongs. Be careful.

(Grandly)

We feed the furnace!

We hear GREN's horrified, deadened shrieks. The hiss of the steaming coals.

We hear the sound of his skin hardening, cracking, changing.

MR KINSEY:

(Beaming, turning to the crowd)

And as the Petropater accepts the offering, a miracle occurs...

...the sacrifice turns to sacred coal.

Enthusiastic applause and cheering from the entire crowd. Outside, fireworks go off to complete the display.

The music comes to an end.

A moment of silence.

MR KENSEY:

Would we like to go again, my friends? I think we would, wouldn't we?

All right, let's go again.

Silence.

MR KENSEY:

Don't be shy, now. Who's next?

A clank as one of the musicians drops their violin in sudden terror.

KITCHEN, INT, NIGHT

HAYWARD swings the door shut again.

HAYWARD:

(Horried)

Oh, *shit!*

(Frantic)

Did you see that? Did you see what they did to him?

GRAMMA KENSEY:

(Amused and teasing)

I'd quit your panicking if I was you, young man. If you want to get out of here in one piece, you'd best be moving fast.

(Stopping HAYWARD in his tracks)

No. Stop.

Not that way.

The back doors will already be locked. You'll need to get to the first floor, see if you can't climb out of the windows, make it out into the gardens.

(Stopping HAYWARD as he begins to go the other way)

Young man.

Arm yourself.

HAYWARD:

Yes. Right. Of course. Uh-

A clatter as he picks something metallic up from the side.

HAYWARD:
(A little breathless)
Thank you.

GRAMMA KENSEY:
You might want to take the prawns off the skewer first, but...yes, I suppose that'll do.

GRAMMA KENSEY:
Good luck, young man. If they **do** catch you - do me a favour and spit in that Pitter-Patter's eye when you're brought to him.

HAYWARD:
Right. Okay.

Right.

We hear a door creak open - and HAYWARD flees.

HALLWAY, INT, NIGHT

We hear HAYWARD's footsteps running from right to left, getting louder as he passes us-

HAYWARD:
Shit, shit, **shit**, shit-

Hayward runs back, from left to right.

HAYWARD:
-shit, shit, shit, **shit**-

His voice recedes.

BALLROOM, INT, NIGHT

Another sudden scream - and another sound of sizzling, cooling flesh.

More applause from the partygoers.

MR KENSEY:
(Counting)
...three, four, five. All right, I think that's everybody.

MRS KENSEY:

(Softly, to MR KENSEY)
No, no, no. We paid for six.

MR KENSEY:
(Softly, to MRS KENSEY)
Oh, you're quite right. It's the Peninsulan, isn't it? The sullen one?

Daniel, I think William called him.

Where can he have got to?

MRS KENSEY:
(Softly, to MR KENSEY)
Perhaps he's in the bathroom.

MR KENSEY:
(Softly and grimly, to MRS KENSEY)
Perhaps he's skiving off.
(Growing upset)
Well, what are we meant to do? We can't kill the string quartet, the Sheringdons have already hired them for the harvest festival.

And I told the partners we were having a six-soul sacrifice tonight. The Harveys had **ten** the other week!

MRS KENSEY:
(Softly, to MR KENSEY)
Well, we can wait for him to get back-

MR KENSEY:
(Softly and angrily, to MRS KENSEY)
No, I'm not waiting. We'll lose momentum. I'm not hosting another party where people leave early, I'm **not**. Tell you what-

He turns back to his guests.

MR KENSEY:
(Grandly)
Friends? An unexpected addition to tonight's festivities.

Let's spread out.

Check the gardens, check the stables.
(Menacingly)

See if we can't find our wayward waiter.
(*Chuckling as an aside to MRS KENSEY*)
'Wayward waiter'. That's quite good, darling. Don't you think that was quite good?

His voice fades.

We hear the sound of knocking pipes, rising and falling.

THE KENSEY HOUSE, INT, NIGHT

We hear a pair of PARTY GUESTS passing by, on the hunt for HAYWARD.

PARTY GUEST:
(*Complaining*)
I mean, it was fine. I just think - do you remember the Portsmansleigh party? They had a mass sacrifice and it just all came together a lot more smoothly. That's the mark of a really good party, you know, when you don't notice the cracks-

We hear the distant knocking of the pipes.

PARTY GUEST:
Did you hear that?

This way, this way! Quickly!

Their footsteps recede.

A moment later, we hear HAYWARD's heavy breathing.

BEDROOM, INT, NIGHT

A door opens.

HAYWARD enters the room.

He takes one step, another - and knocks into a vase.

It instantly falls and shatters.

HAYWARD:

(Frustrated)
Oh, come on, now-

And then, from below, we hear a distant, annoyed voice.

MRS KENSEY:
(Muffled)
Is there someone up there? Daniel?

HAYWARD crosses the room and scrambles into a wardrobe. We hear the door close.

A long silence.

And then, after a moment, we hear footsteps outside.

We hear the door creak open as MRS KENSEY opens it.

MRS KENSEY:
(Genuinely annoyed)
You're not supposed to be in here, Daniel.

Downstairs only, we said.

We had an **agreement** between us.

Her feet creak on the floorboards as she explores the room.

We can hear HAYWARD's panicked, heavy breathing from inside the wardrobe.

She sighs.

MRS KENSEY:
I **know** you're in there, Daniel.

Come out of the wardrobe, please.

HAYWARD:
(Muffled)
My...

My wife knows I'm here.

MRS KENSEY:
(Rolling her eyes)

Stop being such a baby, Daniel. Come out of the wardrobe. You know you shouldn't be in there.

Come on out now.

If you just-

Her foot clinks against the glass.

MRS KENSEY:
(*Growing furious*)
Have you been causing property damage?

HAYWARD:
(*Muffled*)
Mrs...Mrs Kensey, I am armed. And I **will** defend myself if you attempt to enter this wardrobe.

Please, don't-

MRS KENSEY:
I said - **come out!**

MRS KENSEY tears the wardrobe doors open-

-and we hear a horrible fleshy squelch, as HAYWARD flails out and impales MRS KENSEY's mouth on the prawn skewer.

A beat of silence.

A shocked intake of breath from MRS KENSEY as she begins choking on the skewer that's sticking through her mouth and throat.

MRS KENSEY:
(*Horried, in absolute shock*)
My mouff! My mouff!

HAYWARD:
I'm...I'm sorry, Mrs Kensey.

MRS KENSEY:
(*Shrieking, muffled*)
Argghhhhh! Argghhhhhh!

Get it out! Get it out!

HAYWARD:

Don't do that.

(Trying to calm her down)

No, Mrs Kensey, please, don't try and take out the prawn skewer-

We hear a horrible popping sound as the skewer comes free - and MRS KENSEY topples onto the floor, haemorrhaging fast.

She gags, and gasps-

-and then topples over, and dies.

A long silence.

HAYWARD:

(Sighing exhaustedly)

I...told you not to take it out.

GARDENS, EXT, NIGHT

A car door slams. Some of the guests are leaving.

MR KENSEY:

(A little miserably)

No problem at all - thank you for coming.

Drive safe now. Bye-bye.

The car roars away.

MR KENSEY waits for a moment - and then kicks the gravel and moans in anguish.

BALLROOM, INT, NIGHT

We hear HAYWARD's footsteps echoing on the empty floor.

We hear a faint hissing and sizzling as HAYWARD approaches GREN. The sound of GREN's heartbeat.

HAYWARD:
(Cautiously)
Gren. Gren, you there?

You...Gren, can you hear me?

GREN does not respond.

HAYWARD sighs unhappily.

HAYWARD:
Sorry to leave you here like this, pal.

He turns to go.

-and then GREN grabs hold of him with a horrible yell.

GREN:
(Distorted, through a tongueless mouth)
...Martin...Martin...

HAYWARD:
Gren! Let go! Let go of my leg, dammit!

GREN:
(Distorted, through a tongueless mouth)
...Martin...Martin...come quick! Come quick!

HAYWARD kicks out.

Once, twice, and a third time - and then GREN collapses into ash.

HAYWARD:
Ugh...fuck...

HAYWARD gets to his feet again and begins to limp towards the exit.

MR KENSEY:
(Barking out)
Daniel!

MR KENSEY:
(Listing his grievances)

You've led us on a wild goose chase tonight. You disrupted the night's entertainment. You were surly with the guests. It is now eight-forty, and you left the hot canapes to burn.

(Snarling)

You have **ruined** this evening, Daniel-

And then we hear another voice, from the other end of the ballroom.

GRAMMA KENSEY is striding forth, her walking stick clacking on the floor.

GRAMMA KENSEY:

No, my son.

No, I rather think that honour goes to you.

MR KENSEY:

(Infuriated)

Go to bed, Mother.

(Calling for his wife)

Sofia! Sofia! I've found him!

Silence. Nobody responds.

GRAMMA KENSEY:

(Gleefully)

Sofia can't hear you, Martin. Can you guess why?

Because she's dead! She's upstairs bleeding on your bedroom carpet with a prawn skewer sticking out of her throat.

MR KENSEY:

What-

GRAMMA KENSEY:

This is the ruin that descends when you abandon your faith, Martin. This is shaft's collapse-

MR KENSEY:

What did you say?

GRAMMA KENSEY:

(Overlapping)

-this is the ruin that descends when you take up with false gods, this is your rightful reward-

MR KENSEY:
(Completely losing it)
Oh, shut your trap, you useless old bat!

A moment of furious, still silence.

MR KENSEY:
Do you have any idea how sick I am of hearing you bleat about your
hoary, useless old forgotten god of filthy mine-shafts?

The, the Gloomington Guest? What kind of name even is that?

Who cares, Mother, about what you used to whisper in the dark - now that
we're standing in the glow of fine electric candles, and our faith is stronger
than anything you could have made?

And then we begin to hear the sound of KNOCKING from the walls.

Low at first, then growing in volume.

GRAMMA KENSEY:
(Wickedly, and coldly)
You should care, my son.

Because he's still here, if you only had the wit to see it.

He's always been here.

Knocking at the walls, calling out to us from the innards of this house.

He built it for us, you see. It's always belonged to him.
(Increasingly delighted)
And now he's out of patience with us.

The knocking sound grows.

MR KENSEY:
(Overlapping)
Mother. Mother, what are you saying...?

GRAMMA KENSEY:
Yes. Yes, I think he's been waiting for quite long enough.

MR KENSEY:
(Now increasingly terrified)
Mother-

GRAMMA KENSEY raises her voice to the sky and bellows triumphantly, as the knocking sound rises all around her-

GRAMMA KENSEY:
(to her GOD)
I'm sorry. Welcome.

GRAMMA KENSEY:
I'm so sorry.

We kept you out for far too long.

WELCOME HOME!

WELCOME! WELCOME HOME! WELCOME HOME!

We hear the knocking get louder and louder, from every direction at once-

And then a violent creaking sound that becomes a crash, as the ceiling begins to cave in...

The collapsing sounds go on.

Silence.

HAYWARD:
(Narrating)
I don't see all of it - as I throw myself bodily through the doors, rolling down the steps, out onto the lawn, tearing shreds out of my borrowed tux, coming to a halt against the edge of the patio.

But as I gaze up at the collapsing ruin of the Kensey House, the dust rising in great billowing clouds, the roof toppling inwards into the walls-

- for a single moment I observe a vast form of darkness, a towering silhouette, rise up to embrace the tiny figure of Gramma Kensey.

Her arms are outstretched in welcome.

Her son shrieks in terror, clasping at her legs.

Then the roof falls in, and the shape is broken, and as the dust-clouds dissipate into the night I'm gazing up at the colossal wreckage of a once-great house, the city lights twinkling behind us.

And then, in the silence and in the dark, I begin to hear the distant cries of unhappy partygoers from across the lawn, calling for someone to catch the Peninsulan, to stop the Peninsulan, before he can get away.

I get to my feet, I test my weight upon my polished black shoes...

...and I decide to go on living, for now.

We hear the sound of his footfalls, as he turns and runs.

Beyond, in the dark, the faint squawk of peacocks.

We hear the sound of rising police sirens.

END OF EPISODE.