

THE SILT VERSES: SEASON 2, CHAPTER 4

HILLS, EXT, DAY

We hear CARPENTER's footfalls on rock and grass as she walks onwards.

Under her breath, she recites a prayer to the Cairn Maiden.

CARPENTER:

(Out of breath)

The road ahead is long and aching,
Beset by walls and razor wire,
But there's no other road I could be taking,
And walls are steep but I'll climb higher.

Her feet scuff at the dirt.

CARPENTER:

So you and I will meet...

A grunt as she keeps climbing.

CARPENTER:

You and I will meet,
With bloodied flesh and ruined feet,
For that final, empty sleep,
To lay me down in your arms.

She stops, at the top of a hill.

CARPENTER:

(To herself, muttering)

Well, did that do anything?

Did you take anything from it? Was there comfort?

Pause.

CARPENTER:

Stupid. Idiotic.

Just...mouthing off at someone else's god.

Wearing someone else's clothes.

Silence.

CARPENTER:

(Narrating)

I'm carrying a body home, westward over the hills.

A rifle slung over my back.

Once, at around dawn, I come across a little stacked heap of grey pebbles, atop a crooked tor, that looks like it could have been left for me, as a sign - by someone who's walking ahead of me.

(More cynically)

...or it could just be a heap of grey pebbles, of course.

It's high up here. The sullen landscape forces itself into a kind of sense.

I can make out the faint curve of my old river, far below.

The wind whistles right through me.

It feels like it could lift me off my feet.

CARPENTER spreads her arms. She announces to the sky, bellowing cathartically,

CARPENTER:

These are The Silt Verses.

And these are our disciples, in order of their arrival.

Méabh de Brún.

Daphne Nitsuga.

Caleb del Rio.

Carmella Brown.

Jonny Sims.

A moment later, there's a thump as she lays her pack down.

CARPENTER takes a swig from her water tankard.

We hear the muffled voice of the HOMESICK CORPSE.

HOMESICK CORPSE:

Please...

CARPENTER:
(To the CORPSE)
You tired?

Don't see why. You're not doing the fucking walking.

A rustle as CARPENTER takes out her map.

CARPENTER:
(As if showing it to the CORPSE)
All right.

So we make it to the top of the bluffs, and we can follow them north. Good view from up there. Clear sight of the flood-plains and the White Gull.

Sooner or later, there's bound to be someone from the Parish we can run into.

But if we keep high up, away from the roads, we can still minimise the risk of running into anyone else.

What do you think?

THE HOMESICK CORPSE:
Please...I need to get home...

CARPENTER folds the map back up.

CARPENTER:
Yeah. We're getting there.

We're trying.

We listen to the winds howling across the landscape.

We drink in the silence.

And then we hear, in the far distance below, ELIZA's voice - a young voice - raised in panic.

ELIZA:
(Distantly)
Help me!

Please, somebody help me!

CARPENTER sits upright.

CARPENTER:

(Calling back)

Hello?

Hello?

Silence.

ELIZA:

(Distantly)

Help me! Please, is anyone there? Is anyone there?

CARPENTER:

(Calling back urgently)

I'm here! I'm here!

Just hold on!

(To the CORPSE)

-come here, you...

CARPENTER heaves the rucksack back onto her back.

We hear her scrambling and sliding down the rocks as she runs.

The sound of her feet on bracken, branches snapping to either side-

CLEARING, EXT, DAY

A young teenager, ELIZA, abandoned and alone, is standing in the middle of the clearing, calling out for help.

ELIZA:

(Distraught)

Is anyone there? Please!

Where did you go?

Where did you all go?

CARPENTER comes to a breathless halt in the clearing.

CARPENTER:
Hey. Hey, it's okay. I'm here.

ELIZA doesn't seem to hear her.

ELIZA:
Where are you? Where did you go?

Mum? Dad?

CARPENTER is baffled.

CARPENTER:
Kid. Can't you hear me?

I'm right here, I'm standing next to you-

CARPENTER reaches out to grab ELIZA by the shoulder - and instantly ELIZA screams in shock and horror, as if she's been attacked.

ELIZA:
(Shrieking out)
Leave me alone! Get away from me!

Somebody! Please help!

CARPENTER:
I'm not trying to hurt you. I'm here to help.
(Baffled)
Kid? Kid? What's wrong?

ELIZA:
(To the open air)
Where did you go?

Where did all of you go?

We hear another voice from the edge of the clearing.

CARPENTER raises and cocks her rifle, turning.

BROTHER WHARFING:
There's no use trying.

She doesn't know you're there. You don't exist to her.

You can go ahead and lower that rifle, pilgrim. There's no threat to you here.

CARPENTER:

(Astonished)

Brother...Brother Wharfing?

BROTHER WHARFING:

(Wearily amused)

Hell of a thing, running into you like this.

Hell of a thing.

ELIZA:

(Still calling out)

Is anyone there?

CARPENTER:

(Worried)

Kid-

BROTHER WHARFING:

(Urgently)

No, stop, **stop**. There's - there's no use trying to touch her. You'll only cause her pain.

Trust me on that.

Sooner or later she'll get tired of waiting for someone to come find her, and she'll head back home. She's got a cabin further down the hill.

That's all we can do.

ELIZA:

(Screaming to the open air, her voice echoing)

Where are you?

Where did you go?

Why did you abandon me?

She turns and leaves, her footsteps fading.

BROTHER WHARFING:

(Relieved)

There we are, she's heading back.

Follow me, pilgrim. I'll get the tea-kettle on the stove.

(Calmly)

You mind chopping the wood? I don't have the arms for it so much these days.

WOODSMAN'S HUT, EXT, DAY

We hear the grunt of CARPENTER chopping wood. The crack of the wood splitting.

She chops again.

BROTHER WHARFING:

(Not helping)

Can't get over meeting you like this, you know.

Funny thing is, I was just thinking of you, just a few weeks back.

Remembered how you said you liked the quiet.

CARPENTER grunts and continues to chop.

BROTHER WHARFING:

Because someone told me, there's a new hairdresser's god of quiet that's worshipped out on the north-west coast.

They call it...

He stops talking.

After a moment, CARPENTER looks up.

CARPENTER:

What?

(After a moment)

Oh, I see.

(Unamused)

Very funny.

BROTHER WHARFING:

I'm not even joking. The Children Of The Burnished Mirror, they call themselves.

They're a licenced faith, based in Gladda, and they offer, uh, free trims to nonbelievers.

Nobody speaks. Nobody makes a sound.

They just show you to a chair, there's the gentle snip-snip of scissors and the tzcch of the seltzer bottle, and you get to enjoy a quiet that feels deeper than any ordinary quiet has the right to be.

It's very restful. I think you'd like it. Pay them a visit sometime. Give yourself a little treat-

CARPENTER:

(Impatiently interrupting)

What's wrong with that girl in there, Wharfing?

BROTHER WHARFING takes a breath.

BROTHER WHARFING:

(Unhappily)

I think there's a god in her.

CARPENTER:

God of what?

BROTHER WHARFING:

(Reluctantly, and with increasing distress)

Something I've never seen before.

God of solitude or isolation or emptiness, I suppose. Some clever new trick, one of the invented deities.

She's got its mark on her wrists, on her back. Prayer branding.

Older scabs, too, half-healed scars. I think they must have tried a few different patterns on her before they found one that worked.

Eliza, that's her name.

She thinks she's alone here.

She can see and hear just fine.

That's the thing. She can see the trees, she can hear the wind.

There's no physical issue here.

But there's no human life in the world around her as far as she knows.

No people, no voices. To her, you and I are ghosts.

CARPENTER:

(Sharply)

I want to see these marks.

BROTHER WHARFING:

(Holding up a hand)

Just...wait. She's closed the cabin door. Best to leave her alone in there.

If you want to take a look at her, wait for her to sleep.

I found her about a month ago.

Sobbing in a heap halfway down the mountain.

I tried to reach out to touch her, take her by the arm - make her realise I was here and real and everything would be all right now.

But...like you saw, that just made her shriek.

I wasn't there, I wasn't helping; something unseen was clawing at her.

She curses me, calls me a ghost.

She thinks she's **surrounded** by ghosts in this place. Invisible tormenters. Some kind of punishment.

New wonders every day, aren't there?

CARPENTER thinks.

CARPENTER:

I'm surprised you haven't prayed it out of her yet. You know, your whole business with the boil and the sore?

BROTHER WHARFING winces.

BROTHER WHARFING:
I tried.

I mean, I was afraid **to** try, at first.

What she's got in her, it's not like an ague or an illness or a broken leg, you know?

It's a horrible thing, to be abandoned to an empty world.

Then I got a grip on myself. Remembered my duty, shrugged off my cowardice.

I laid my hands over her - her crying and screaming all the while - and said the words, called upon Brother Boil and Sister Sore to lift her harm and deliver it unto me.

It didn't take. She kept on screaming.

She begged me - the invisible ghosts, her tormenters - to leave her alone.

She begged the empty sky for someone **else** to come and save her.

You can't imagine the shameful relief of it, pilgrim - realising this was a sickness I wasn't capable of taking on myself.

So now I...I stay out of her way.

I bring her food and firewood, leave it by the doorstep. Tidy up after her. Sometimes she notices it, mostly she doesn't.

When she **does** notice how I'm helping her...that seems to torment her almost as much.

She thinks there's someone out there, some secret ally, who's hiding from her, and she prays for that person to come on out and protect her from the silent ghosts that snatch her by the arms or trail after her through the forest.

(Half to himself)

It might be cruel to hang around like this, but I don't know what else I can do to help.

She's got a busted radio in the cabin. Spends a lot of time trying to fix it up, which keeps her occupied.

I'm guessing she thinks she might be able to contact civilisation.

What frightens me is - one day she might give up on that small hope.

Pack her things, make the three-day march into the town in the valley below.

Just picture it. A city of ghosts.

Invisible things that jostle and snatch at you. Empty roads. Empty homes.

If she doesn't get knocked down by a bus she doesn't know is there, she'll lose her damn mind.

Wouldn't you?

The cabin door creaks open.

ELIZA steps out. She kicks the chopped wood.

ELIZA:

(Muttering to herself)

They've been here again. Chopping wood. What are they up to?

BROTHER WHARFING:

(Warning Carpenter)

Mind her, pilgrim. She'll walk right into that fire if you let her.

Better to grab her before that happens.

CARPENTER:

She won't see the **fire**?

BROTHER WHARFING:

She might see the coals later on, once the touch of us has faded.

That'll grieve her.

ELIZA screams to the open sky.

ELIZA:

I know you're out there! I said, I know you're out there!

Well, you can just stop playing games!

It isn't funny!

(Pleading)

Please!

BROTHER WHARFING:

(To himself, distressed)

Almighty gods...

ELIZA gives up, turns, and goes back inside. The cabin door slams behind her.

BROTHER WHARFING:

What else did I try? Writing messages for her.

'I'm here, I'm real, you just can't see me. You don't need to be frightened. You're not alone.'

(Chuckling humourlessly)

She walks right past it.

Her parents are buried out back, in unmarked graves. She can't see them. She doesn't know they're dead - she thinks they abandoned her.

I think it happened like this. They took her. Killed the grown-ups when they tried to resist. They hallowed her.

And then, later on they let her go - once it was clear they could do no more with her.

So she came back home, in the hope of finding her people.

A long silence.

CARPENTER:

(With cold but rising fury)

Who's they?

BROTHER WHARFING:

The ones that make gods out here.

Oh, they've got one of their outposts up on the bluffs to the south. Radio tower and compound. They like it to be remote, see, far from the city, in case something goes wrong.

(Changing tack)

Listen. Now that you're here, I'm thinking we might be able to try something else.

There's a couple of my brethren down in the town.

If you can watch her for a few days, I might be able to head down there and persuade them to-

CARPENTER slams her axe into the log.

A rustle as CARPENTER unfolds her map.

CARPENTER:

Show me. Show me the place on the map.

BROTHER WHARFING:

(Pointing, reluctantly)

There.

I'd think someone like you would be better off staying clear of a place like that, pilgrim. It's government-run.

CARPENTER:

And there are people kept there?

BROTHER WHARFING:

Prisoners and sacrifices.

Doubt there'll be much left of any 'people' there.

What are you...what are you doing?

CARPENTER is on her feet, gathering up her things.

CARPENTER:

(On the fucking warpath)

I'm gonna pay them a visit.

BROTHER WHARFING:

Pilgrim-

CARPENTER:

I'm a wanted woman already. May as well use it towards something good.

I'm taking the axe, yeah?

We hear the axe being pulled free from the log.

BROTHER WHARFING:

(Trying to calm her down)

Pilgrim. Are you, are you listening to me?

These people catch you on their property, they'll call in the cops, they'll call in the military.

You'll bring their wrath down upon you - and down upon the kid and me, as well.

CARPENTER:

(Coldly)

You don't need to worry, Wharfing.

There'll be nobody left to call in anything.

BROTHER WHARFING:

(Patiently)

You're worked up.

I'm mad as hell for this poor child, too.

But you know this is just the way of things. Some faiths take 'em old, some take 'em young. It's a damn shame, but a god must feed.

(Pointedly)

Your Trawler-man's people never sacrifice a young girl before it's her time, pilgrim?

CARPENTER:

(Hissing furiously)

But there have to be limits, don't there, Wharfing?

There have to be some kind of limits to the cruelties we inflict. To the indignities, to the wasteful harm.

BROTHER WHARFING:
 Not in my experience.
(Pleading)
 Leave the rifle behind, pilgrim.

Please. You can go, but just...leave the rifle behind, why don't you?

CARPENTER ignores him. She hefts her belongings.

BROTHER WHARFING:
 Carpenter!

Harm begets harm, and cruelty has its own price. That's something I've learnt at cost.

Don't carry these people's sickness into yourself.

CARPENTER:
(Scoffing)
 Oh, people always say this facile shit.
(Mockingly)
 'Bloody your hands and stain your soul.'

And, I mean, so what if I do, Wharfing?

How much sickness would **you** take on, to stop this from happening to another child like her?

How clean can my hands be, hm, if I let this stand?

BROTHER WHARFING:
(Soothing)
 But you can still help. You can help her and me. Like I said. I have a plan-

CARPENTER:
 Do you genuinely think there's a way back for her from this?
 Honestly? Do you?

BROTHER WHARFING does not respond.

CARPENTER:
(With finality and spite)
 There's a dead body in that rucksack, if you're wanting for conversation.

She kicks at the wood and goes.

We hear BROTHER WHARFING breathe out, heavily.

A faint rumble of thunder overhead - and then rain begins to fall.

BROTHER WHARFING:
(Looking upwards, to himself)
 Hm.

SUB-STATION PERIGLOSS, EXT, NIGHT

The storm is in full flow. Heavy rain and thunder.

We hear someone keying in a security code. The rattle of a security gate.

Footsteps through the rain as someone runs back to a waiting van and slams the door.

The van drives away. A moment later we hear the fence rattling back into place.

SUB-STATION PERIGLOSS, INT, NIGHT

We can hear the faint whirr of machinery. The patter of rain on the roof above.

HELEN is keying in some kind of sequence on a computer terminal.

We can hear faint thumps on glass from the TEST CHAMBER, and a low occasional growl.

After a moment, HELEN rolls her chair across to one side.

She leans forward and speaks into a dictaphone.

HELEN:
 This is Doctor Helen Hayes.

Sub-station Perigloss.

Pilot deity 3472.

Worship was induced in the subject 24 days ago through a combination of physical measures and psychological influence.

Now we begin to hear knocking from the other side of the room - the door to the outside.

HELEN ignores it. After a moment, we hear a security code being keyed in.

HELEN:

Symptoms of sainthood first became visible eighteen days into the experiment.

Frostbite. Swelling. Gradual loss of fingers. Initial readings indicate-

We hear a brief spatter of rain as a door creaks open, then slams again as ALF (HELEN's supervisor) enters.

HELEN:

(Annoyed, breaking off)

Don't you know how to close a door quietly? I'm **recording**.

ALF:

You starting without me?

HELEN:

Sam said you were busy helping him unload the truck.

ALF:

(Settling into his chair)

It's raining out there, so I've decided you need to be personally supervised.

HELEN:

(Snapping)

I'm **fine**, Alf. I'd rather work alone.

ALF:

(Snapping back)

Well, maybe the rain will stop and I'll gain newfound confidence in you.

(Nodding towards the observation glass)

What's this one?

HELEN:

God of winter. It was Forrest's idea.

ALF:

Open the shutters. Let's get a look at it.

HELEN pauses - and then rolls her chair across and types. We hear the shutters grinding open.

A muffled, inhuman roar from within the room.

A low, insistent thumping on the window.

HELEN:
Subject appears...
(Feebly)
...restless.

Snow appears to be visibly gathering now upon its scalp and shoulders, suggesting a significant emanation of cold air from within its own body.
(Fascinated)
Curiously, room temperature is registering as almost normal overall. The cold temperatures appear, then, to be highly localised-

ALF:
(Interrupting, as if bored)
Purge it.

HELEN:
Excuse me?

ALF:
Look, ultimately the bosses want one of two things from us.

One. A god for us. Something terrifying, primordial. Unstoppable.

Two. A god for our enemies. Something that's enticing, alluring, but ultimately harmful to their cause.

This is fascinating. But it's neither.

Purge the damn Saint, Helen.

HELEN hesitates - and then we hear her press a button.

We hear the rising sound of machinery, a sudden rush of flames from all sides - and a hideous SHRIEK from the other side of the glass as the SNOW-SAINT is burnt alive in the observation chamber.

ALF:

(Disgusted)

Ugh, close the shutters first!

HELEN:

Sorry, sorry-

She keys in a sequence.

A whirr and a clank as the shutters close again. The machinery slowly powers down.

They sit there in silence for a moment - then HELEN rolls her chair back and continues to type, ignoring ALF.

ALF:

(More gently)

I know you think I'm being unkind, Helen.

But you...honestly, you can't understand the pressure I'm under right now.

They don't want us wasting our time on failures.

You understand that, don't you?

HELEN reflects on this.

HELEN:

(Idly)

How long do you think we have?

ALF:

Until what?

HELEN:

Until the next war.

ALF:

(Deadpan)

Well, who says there's going to be a war?

He waits a moment, then snickers.

ALF:

No idea.

But if you could see how hard the bosses keep sweating me, you'd think the first shot was about to be fired.

(Quieter)

Long time coming. You heard about some of the gods they've got up there now?

HELEN:

Quentin was saying, that thing up north this summer, with the border town, the attack on the radio station? That's the least of it.

Try and cross the seaward stretch of the Black Neck by water these days, and odds to evens you'll come out as something else. The sky, the water - reality doesn't stay still from one moment to the next.

The polluted lands keep on growing, and the Lingers won't take responsibility for it.

Remember what happened at Olvidian, that's what my dad says.

ALF:

Ah, you really think the Legislatures care about any of that?

(A little melancholy)

They're out-performing us, that's the problem. We beat them once, and now they're doing better.

Give it another decade and they'll swallow us up.

-and at this moment, from outside in the distance, we hear a sudden, faint scream.

HELEN and ALF look up, startled.

ALF:

Wha-

HELEN:

(Shocked)

That's Sam.

ALF:

If he's broken something in one of those boxes, I'll murder him.

He goes to the door and opens it.

ALF:

(Calling out)
Sam?

Sam?

We hear the door being thrown open by ALF.

The noise of rain becomes audible from outdoors.

ALF:
(Baffled)
No sign of him out there.
(Calling out again)
Sam!

Silence.

ALF:
(Growing worried)
Check the instruments.

One of them got loose?

HELEN keys in another sequence.

HELEN:
(Checking)
The cages are...all showing as secured.

ALF:
Who fitted the sensors?

HELEN:
Quentin did.

ALF:
And you trust **Quentin** not to fuck something up?

HELEN does not answer him.

ALF:
Give me the keys to the gun cabinet.

The rattle of keys as HELEN tosses them to ALF.

He complains as he opens the cupboard, pulls out a shotgun, and begins to load it.

ALF:

I've been telling them for years, they should station a trooper up here with us.

Out here in the hills, with false faiths on the march, and a pack of rabid saints locked in here with us. It's not safe!

Ammunition spills out onto the floor as ALF fumbles with it.

HELEN:

Sure that shotgun works?

ALF:

Let's hope so.

HELEN:

Are you sure you know how to-

ALF:

(Snapping)

Obviously, **no**.

Come on - I need you to hold the torch.

SUB-STATION PERIGLOSS, EXT, NIGHT

The door creaks open. The sound of the rain rises.

We hear HELEN's footsteps on the gravel.

HELEN:

(Shouting)

Sam!

Sam, can you hear me?

Her voice fades as she strides out into the rain in search of Sam.

Behind her, ALF stoops.

ALF:
(Muttering to himself)
 Shit.
(Calling out)
 There's...blood in the gravel behind the lorry.
(Realising)
 And...the tyres have been slashed.
(To himself)
 False fucking faiths on the march. I told them.

We hear the sound of pounding feet through the rain as HELEN runs back.

HELEN:
(Breathlessly)
 Alf! Alf!

The compound gates are open.

ALF:
(Trying to keep calm)
 All right. Come on.

Back inside. Quickly.

Let's get on the radio, call this in.

SUB-STATION PERIGLOSS, INT, NIGHT

The door slams behind HELEN and ALF.

We hear the bolts being drawn by ALF. He fumbles with his keys.

ALF:
(Still muttering to himself)
 Couldn't send one trooper up with us, not **one**-

HELEN, across the room, snaps, urgently-

HELEN:
 Alf. Alf.

ALF:
 What?

HELEN:

(Tensely)

There's an axe buried in the fucking wall, Alf.

And writing.

ALF:

(With dread)

Is that...

HELEN:

(Quietly)

Yes, I think it is.

ALF:

(Reading aloud)

'Four'.

Wh - what does it mean, 'four'?

HELEN:

Maybe like a countdown.

ALF:

What, like 'we fucked Sam up and now we're coming for the rest of you?'

Like that?

HELEN:

Yes, maybe.

ALF:

But - no.

There's six of us here. You, me, Sam, Quentin, Forrest, and Roger in the crow's nest.

Take out Sam, and that leaves five.

Silence.

HELEN:

(Unhappily)

How long's it been since we heard from Roger?

ALF:
Oh, sainted current.

He races to the radio. Turns it on with a crackle.

ALF:
(*Into the radio*)
Hello. Hello, come in.

This is Station Perigloss. In urgent need of assistance. Repeat, in urgent need of assistance.

He waits. We hear only static.

ALF:
Nothing. Could be the storm. Could be something else.
(*To HELEN*)
Go to the window. Check the radio mast.

HELEN:
It's pitch black out there, Alf-

ALF:
(*Snarling and slapping his hand on the desk*)
So wait for the lightning!

HELEN:
All right, Alf. I'm going-

She moves to the window.

A long, tense silence. ALF continues to play with the radio dials, to no effect.

We hear a roll of thunder (and presumably, a moment before, a flash of lightning.)

HELEN says nothing.

ALF:
(*On his last nerve*)
Well?
(*Half-screaming*)
Helen? What do you see?

HELEN speaks almost calmly.

HELEN:
There's...something dangling from the mast, Alf.

ALF:
'Something'?

HELEN:
I think it's Roger.

ALF:
(*Freaking out*)
Fuck! Fuck!

He thinks.

ALF:
All right, let's...head down through the cages, get to the living quarters.
Find Quentin and Forrest. We'll be safer together.

Forrest's been taking mixed martial arts on his weeks off, hasn't he?

He won't go down easy. He can protect the rest of us.

HELEN:
He booked the course, but I don't know if he ever went.

ALF:
(*Furious*)
Asshole never commits to anything!

See if you can reach them on the tannoy.

HELEN grabs the tannoy and turns it on.

HELEN:
(*Into the tannoy*)
Hello? Quentin? Forrest?

You there?

We hear the tannoy crackle.

We hear the sound of someone gurgling, faintly, in quite incredible pain, as they lean over the mic.

HELEN:
That's Quentin.

He's hurt. We need to get to him-

ALF:
Wait! Just wait.

QUENTIN's gurgling fades.

And instead, we hear a calm, cold voice as CARPENTER cocks her rifle.

CARPENTER:
(Over the tannoy)
Three.

We hear a gunshot over the tannoy - and very faintly, in the background as well. She isn't far away.

CARPENTER:
(Over the tannoy)
Two.

The tannoy goes dead as CARPENTER turns it off.

Silence. ALF chuckles manically to himself.

HELEN:
We could make a run for it.

ALF:
Are you kidding me? How far do you think we're going to get on foot? We-

He snaps his fingers.

ALF:
There's...there's another option, though. We open the cages.

HELEN:
That's-

ALF:

Those poor hallowed bastards, they'll butcher anything they come across.
There's no fear in them.

(Growing in confidence)

Yeah. We open the cages, we barricade ourselves in here, and we wait
for help to arrive.

They won't know what hit 'em.

HELEN:

What if the saints make it down the valley?

ALF:

Then at least we'll still be alive, Helen!

HELEN pauses - and then rolls back to her desk and begins to type.

HELEN:

We'll still need to override the locks manually. That means going out to
the cages and doing it from there.

ALF breathes in slowly.

ALF:

Yes. Yes, it does.

(Reluctantly but sincerely)

All right. I'll do it. I'll go down to the cages. Unlock them. Pelt it back up
here as fast as I can.

You...Helen, you need to stay here and watch the door - be ready to close
it quickly when I get back.

Okay?

(With even a little sincere emotion)

If you see anyone or anything else coming down the corridor, you close it
and bolt it - don't open it up no matter what happens.

HELEN:

Yeah. Yeah, I've got it.

*ALF hefts the shotgun and chuckles weakly to himself. He goes to the inner security gate and
opens it.*

ALF:

Wish me luck.

He creaks open the gate, cocks his shotgun - and descends.

A very long silence.

HELEN waits.

Then she heads across to the radio, takes a seat, and begins to mutter a desperate prayer.

HELEN:

Blessed Saint. Your signal carries over hill and vale,
Through stone, steel and flesh.
Let your voice be heard.
Let your every whisper meet its intended ear.

She picks up the radio and tries it with a crackle.

HELEN:

Is...is anyone there? This is Doctor Helen Hayes.

Sub-station Perigloss. We have suffered casualties. We urgently require assistance.

Can anyone hear me? Is there anyone there?

(Cracking as little)

Damn it, come in! Come in, please, please come in-

She gives up, and sits back with an unhappy sigh.

Silence.

And then a moment later, an alarm beeps on her console. We hear the faint thud of a distant door.

HELEN gasps and gets to her feet.

We hear a sudden, frantic thumping on the glass of the TEST CHAMBER.

HELEN:

(Filled with dread)

Is someone there?

Is...someone in there?

HELEN types.

We hear the shutters creak open - and HELEN gasps again.

ALF is trapped in the observation chamber, hammering on the glass.

ALF:
(Muffled)
Help! Help!

Get me out of here! Get - me - out!

HELEN:
Oh gods, Alf!

I'm going to get you out of there, okay? I'm going to turn the power off. I-

ALF:
(Muffled)
Behind you! Helen, look behind you-

HELEN shrieks, suddenly, and we hear a thump as she's struck from behind with the butt of a rifle.

ALF:
(Muffled, thumping on the glass)
Hey! Hey! Leave her alone!

Do you hear me? Leave her alone!

CARPENTER pauses for a moment.

Then we hear her press the 'purge' button. The same noise we heard earlier.

ALF:
(Muffled, thumping on the glass)
What are you doing? Don't- don't do that - please-

The machinery fires up. There's a moment of pure silence.

And then the flames roar into life.

ALF screams as he's burnt alive.

The flames die down again, a moment later. And the button resets.

CARPENTER:
(Calmly)
One.

She smashes the console. And then begins to walk through the room, smashing the instruments.

We hear HELEN, groaning from the floor, trying in vain to rise.

HELEN:
(Highly distressed)
What are you...what are you doing?

CARPENTER turns to her and cocks her rifle.

HELEN:
Please. Please don't-

CARPENTER:
(With absolute venom)
How does it feel to know that you're alone, sister?

That nobody's coming to help you, that there's no kindness, no mercy left to be had?

HELEN:
I don't...I don't understand what you want-

CARPENTER:
How many have there been?

HELEN:
How many what-

CARPENTER:
(Furious)
How many?

HELEN:
I don't...

(Swallowing and babbling)

I don't know. I've only been working here for a year and a half now, I'm not sure. We work in batches of about a dozen-

CARPENTER:

(Scoffing)

No wonder you don't understand.

You probably don't even remember her.

She takes a seat facing HELEN.

CARPENTER:

A girl. A child, down in the hills.

She thinks she's alone. She thinks she's been abandoned, she's living in an empty world of pain and confusion, and she's never going to wake up from that. Because of you.

You killed her parents. You murdered her comfort.

You broke her. And then you let her go.

Silence.

HELEN:

(Weakly, unhappily)

Yes. Yes, I remember her.

One of the, um, failures.

Alf told us to purge her. Roger and I, we couldn't bring ourselves to.

We let her loose.

I didn't know about her parents. I promise, I didn't.

(Pleading)

Please. Please...

(Breaking down)

I...**hate** this fucking job.

Really, I do.

Let me go. Please. You have to believe me.

I don't want to keep doing this.

I don't want to be here any more.

Silence.

CARPENTER:

(Softly)

I believe you.

But, uh, will they **let** you?

HELEN:

(Baffled)

What?

CARPENTER:

You're good at what you do, I'm sure of that.

You're under contract, the same as anyone else.

So when the rescue helicopter flies in tomorrow, your bosses, they'll give you six weeks' paid leave, you'll get access to a very good psychiatrist...

But after that...

(Through gritted teeth)

...will they let you stop?

And if not, will you give up all that you've built to prevent this happening again?

Will you flee into the hills and dodge their patrols, live off the lichen and the hares, abandon career and citizenship alike for the sake of putting an end to this life you've built?

If they won't let you, will you be the one who **makes it stop**?

HELEN hesitates.

HELEN:

(Wretchedly)

I, um...they...I don't know what you're expecting me to-

(Changing tack)

...please, you-

We hear the loud retort of the rifle as CARPENTER shoots her.

HELEN's body slumps.

CARPENTER:
(Quietly, sadly, to herself)
 No. Didn't think so.

SHACK, INT, NIGHT

We hear the sound of the rain rattling on the roof of the cabin above.

ELIZA is sleeping. BROTHER WHARFING whispers a prayer over her.

BROTHER WHARFING:
 Brother Boil, you swell to burst.
 Let your relief come swift to this poor child.
 Sister Sore-

Behind him, we hear the cabin door creak. The sound of footsteps on the floorboards.

CARPENTER has returned.

BROTHER WHARFING takes a breath - and then finishes his prayer.

BROTHER WHARFING:
 -Sister Sore, the aches you send serve as warning of harm and herald of healing.
 Let your bruises turn to purple, then to yellow.
 For it is in the nature of all things to heal in time, and nothing should be borne forever.
(Pause; turning to CARPENTER)
 You're back.

Suppose that isn't your blood.

CARPENTER:
(Shortly)
 No.

I'm heading out tomorrow. You and her, you don't have anything to worry about.

BROTHER WHARFING doesn't respond.

CARPENTER:
Did you hear me, monk?

It's dealt with.

Silence. This infuriates CARPENTER.

CARPENTER:
(Sneering)
Well, how did all the prayers work out for her? Did you make any kind of difference?

BROTHER WHARFING:
(Simply)
Did you?

CARPENTER scoffs - but the words strike at her.

CARPENTER:
Going to sleep outside.

We hear the door slam behind her.

BROTHER WHARFING kneels there for a moment in silence.

Then he returns to ELIZA, and begins to pray again.

BROTHER WHARFING:
Brother Boil, you swell to burst.
Let your relief come swiftly upon this poor child.
Sister Sore, the aches you send serve as warning of harm and herald of healing.
Let your bruises turn to purple, then to yellow.
For it is in the nature of all things to heal in time, and nothing should be borne forever.
Brother Boil, you swell to burst-

As he prays, we fade out.

CABIN, EXT, NIGHT

-and as the storm thunders overhead, we hear CARPENTER, stood frozen in place.

She's breathing hard and unhappy.

The rain pours all around her.

END OF EPISODE.