

THE SILT VERSES, SEASON 2, CHAPTER 6

CAFE, INT, NIGHT

We hear the ringing of a shop-bell. The gentle chatter of patrons.

HAYWARD is writing. He sounds exhausted.

HAYWARD:
It is now, uh...
(Thinking)
...must be the first Wheeze-Day of Fathoms.

Suspect's name is Paige Duplass.

Suspect has been...
(Acknowledging the absurdity)
...suspect has been shopping.

First spotted at around dawn, at the Mondegreen Avenue supermarket.

Similar purchases as before. Chalk. Store-brand psychotropic tea.
Cleaning supplies.

Behaviour seems indicative of covert religious activity.

Suspect does not appear to be gainfully employed. Again, this is suspicious. How does she spend her time?

How does she occupy herself? What is she **doing** with herself?

HAYWARD:
Pursuit of the suspect has-

He breaks off as we hear sirens go past outside.

HAYWARD:
Pursuit of the suspect has been met with some challenges, as I am...in fact, currently being pursued by certain misguided members of the Neshite police force due to local circumstances beyond my control.

An unfortunate incident at a party.

It's been some time without restful sleep and some days without substantial food, but that's not a problem for me.

I know how to survive on a little.

(Faltering a little)

I'm still capable. I still have a way forward. I just have to find my way back home.

The Cloak can corroborate my statement on this matter.

It seems plausible that at some point my suspect will make contact with her co-conspirators across the border. At this time, I'll be ready to pounce.

Reinstatement, perhaps an apology, all of these things will follow, especially when it becomes clear that I did not flee - that I absolutely did **not** flee - but was rather undercover.

Until then, I'll bide my time.

Observe her, at a distance.

We hear a siren growing closer.

A police cruiser has come to a halt outside. The doors slam.

HAYWARD:

(Getting to his feet, quickly)

At a **closer** distance-

We hear the shop bell ring in the background as he leaves.

APARTMENT, INT, NIGHT

We hear the quiet, tired, monotonous voice of HEMBRY.

Strangely, he's giving stage directions.

HEMBRY:

Lights up.

We hear the sound of a light flickering on. A pair of wings, fluttering away.

HEMBRY:

Onstage is a dishevelled, distressed-looking apartment. Dishes rest in the sink. Litter piles up across the floor. There's a steady dripping sound from nowhere in particular.

We hear the drip.

HEMBRY:

There are five knives upon a rack, close to the sink.

The windows are cracked and darkened. We can see nothing outside or beyond them.

The outside world...the outside world might as well not exist.

Hembry, forty-six years old, sits centre-stage at a cluttered dining-room table, his head in his hands.

He looks tired. Already wounded. As if he knows what's going to happen here tonight.

A very long silence.

And then Hembry begins to recite our opening credits. He states that these are The Silt Verses, and, just as we're accustomed to, he offers up the names of our performers.

Jimmie Yamaguchi.

Lucille Valentine.

David Ault.

Then he asks a question he already knows the answer to.

'It's time, isn't it? It's time to begin again.'

A long silence.

HEMBRY:

Sound: the unpleasant blare of a door buzzer.

A door buzzer sounds.

HEMBRY:

Hembry does not look up. He tries to ignore the door.

The buzzer sounds again, and again.

The buzzer sounds again. And again,

HEMBRY:

From off-stage left, we hear the voice of Paige-

PAIGE:

(Muffled, through a door)

Hembry? Hembry, it's Paige. We, uh, worked together back at OBC, I don't know if you remember me-

HEMBRY:

Hembry looks up.

Hembry: whispered,

(Whispering desperately)

Turn back. Turn back. Turn back.

The buzzer continues to sound.

The buzzer...yes, continues to sound.

HEMBRY:

Hembry gets to his feet. He's conflicted. Fearful. Hungry.

He turns, slowly, out towards the audience, as if remembering that he's observed.

A strange look forms upon his face - like he's making up his mind.

Then he walks rapidly across to the door, undoing several bolts and chains in quick succession, and opens it up.

Paige, thirty-one, enters, stepping quickly past him. She's holding flowers.

PAIGE enters.

PAIGE:

Uh. Whew. Thought you might have moved.

(Feigning enthusiasm)

Hey! It is so good to see you!

HEMBRY:

She's an old work colleague of Hembry's, although tonight she's pretending they were close back then, closer than they ever truly were.

She has a dishevelled air about her, a kind of excited mania, as if she's recently stumbled onto some great discovery.

PAIGE stares at him.

PAIGE:

...excuse me?

HEMBRY:

Paige gives Hembry a strange look.

PAIGE:

What did you - what did you say, Hembry?

HEMBRY:

Hembry turns from her, retreating to the safety of the dinner table.

Hembry, sourly: Close the door behind you, please.

Paige hesitates. Then she puts the flowers down on the side and goes to close the door.

A long moment of silence.

Then we hear PAIGE close the door.

PAIGE:

(Concerned)

Hembry, uh...are you okay? Is everything all right with you?

HEMBRY:

Hembry: I'm fine. It's just been a long while since I've seen anyone, that's all.

Not used to company these days. Spend most of my time monologuing now. Sorry if I'm talking a little strangely.

This - sort of - seems like a semi-reasonable explanation for HEMBRY's behaviour.

PAIGE:

Oh. Oh, I'm so sorry to hear that.

Did your sister move out, or-

HEMBRY:

Hembry: She died. It was a tragedy.

PAIGE:

Oh, *Hembry*-

HEMBRY:

She crosses the apartment floor and embraces Hembry.

Hembry stays where he is, his arms stiffly held at his sides, not reciprocating the gesture.

PAIGE:

You...you know you can always reach out, right? Your friends are always here for you.

HEMBRY:

Hembry, sullenly: you were still working. Never had the time. You never reached out.

(Prickly)

Before she can answer: I'm fine. My contract didn't renew, they didn't see the use in keeping me. What does that matter?

Heard it was a lot worse for some of those who stayed, were needed, were used. Whole lot worse.

PAIGE:

Doesn't mean you haven't struggled too, though.

HEMBRY:

Hembry: Ah, I've been pouring myself into my hobbies.

PAIGE:

(Trying to sound cheerful)

Oh, that's great-

HEMBRY:

Hembry, interrupting her: Amateur theatrics, mostly. The man of many faces.

PAIGE:

(Chuckling)

Explains the get-up.

(Trying to be a good friend)

Well, fantastic. Are you putting on a show? How can I get my hands on a ticket?

HEMBRY:

Hembry: Tell me why you're here, Paige. He's getting restless.

PAIGE:

Yes. Yes, of course. Uh - do you mind if I sit?

HEMBRY:

Hembry gestures to the dining chair opposite. Paige sits. Hembry does the same.

We hear the squeak of a chair as they both sit.

PAIGE:

(Gingerly)

Listen. I've been through an experience.

(Almost chuckling to herself)

-that's the only way to describe it, an experience.

And it's made me realise that something has to change.

It has to - in me, or in the world, because I can't bend to it any longer. I can't pretend I'm happy to go along with it all.

So the only solution left is for one of us to break, the world or me, and I've had enough of breaking.

We can't go on as we are.

I remember you as a kindred spirit, Hembry. I'm hoping I wasn't wrong about that.

HEMBRY:

Hembry, quietly: Get to the point, please.

PAIGE:

(Getting to the point)

You kept the books when you were still working at OBC. The reference catalogues, the official guidance - on gods both licenced and forbidden.

I'd like to ask you - informally - if you still have those materials.

HEMBRY:

Hembry: You have to hand those over when you leave. You're not allowed to keep any copies.

He's lying.

He is lying.

PAIGE:

I'd...I'd really appreciate it if you could share a copy with me, or give me some time with those books.

Obviously, I wouldn't tell anyone you helped me, it would never trace its way back to you-

HEMBRY:

Hembry: What are you going to do with the catalogues, if I give them to you?

PAIGE hesitates - and then she speaks honestly.

PAIGE:

I want to make a new god.

Something that stands apart from everything that already exists.

Something they can't weaponise, or profit from, or corrupt.

Something that doesn't belong to them.

HEMBRY:

Like what?

PAIGE:

(Faltering)

I don't know yet. I'm still trying to figure it out. That's why I need your books.

HEMBRY:

Hembry: If they catch you making a god, unlicensed, unlawful - they'll kill you.

PAIGE:
I know. I know they will-

HEMBRY:
Hembry gets to his feet and paces away across the kitchen.

His voice begins to tremble as he speaks.

Hembry: The authorities aren't the only danger, you understand, not even the worst danger, of meddling in the unlicensed divine. You delve into those catalogues, start poking about, experimenting...

...a god might come over you by accident.
(Becoming panicked)
It happens. It happens all the time. They're all calling out to us.

They all want to be seen, they're all hungry.

He's sweating. His voice grows urgent. He's speaking from experience, we begin to realise.

PAIGE stares at him. Something is definitely really wrong here.

PAIGE:
Hembry. What's happened to you?

HEMBRY:
Hembry: urgently, Not now. Not now.

We need to keep it going, we need to maintain our momentum. We need some action.

He doesn't like it when we explain too much, he doesn't care for wordy scenes, needless exposition.

PAIGE:
Who doesn't like it?

HEMBRY:
Hembry leans in. He whispers, softly, in Paige's ear, the truth he's been holding onto all of this time.

Hembry: There's a god in here with us right now. Standing in the wings.

Watching us from the darkness beyond the walls. Observing the performance. Making judgements, and if he doesn't like what he sees, there's no telling what he might do.

PAIGE is disturbed by this.

PAIGE:

O-kay. We're going to get out of this apartment, you and I. Let's go for a walk-

HEMBRY:

She tries to rise. Hembry leaps to his feet.

Hembry, frantic: No. No, I can't leave. You can't leave either.

We need to keep our focus, we can't just have characters wandering in and out-

PAIGE:

All right. Just take it easy. We can stay here, if you like. It really doesn't matter.

Can I get you a glass of water?

HEMBRY:

Hembry, laughing sourly: the sink doesn't work.

Paige walks to the sink anyway. Tries the taps. They squeak drily and they do not function.

We hear the taps squeak as PAIGE does just that.

PAIGE:

They turned off your water?

HEMBRY:

Hembry: No. It's part of the set.

PAIGE:

(Beginning to lose her patience)

There's no set. What are you talking about?

HEMBRY:

(Close to tears)

Hembry is close to tears.

Hembry, distraught: You shouldn't have come in. Because you're a part of the performance now, you understand. You're going to have to play your part in what comes next.

And he likes tragedies. He finds them soothing.

PAIGE:

What...what do you mean?

HEMBRY:

(Babbling)

Hembry, babbling now:

Sometimes it's a one-man show. Mostly those are about despair. Loneliness. They're dull, really, they have their limitations, but that's when I can be clownish.

Sometimes he sends me supporting acts, and those are the unhappy shows.

Those are the ones he likes the most, that's when you get the **real** applause.

The Tragedy of the Social Worker Who Asked Too Many Questions. The Tragedy of the Plumber Who Made Too Many Jokes.

(His voice cracking)

The Tragedy of Hembry And His Sister, Who He Loved, And Who Tried To Help Him.

It ends in death. One way or another, the performance ends in death.

PAIGE:

(Quietly horrified)

Why does it have to end in death?

HEMBRY:

Because it's the only thing that satisfies. Because the show needs to go somewhere that matters.

PAIGE:
How long has this been going on for?

HEMBRY mutters, to himself.

HEMBRY:
Hembry, muttering: Twice-nightly performances, come see him on stage,
the Man With Many Faces, his run's been extended again-

PAIGE:
(With growing anger and dread)
How did your sister die, Hembry?

HEMBRY:
(Softly)
Hembry: I'm so sorry about this. We all have a part to play, you
understand?

And I'm the star. I'm the star of the show, and that means I have certain
responsibilities-
(With desperation and terror)
We've spoken too long. This is getting talky. He doesn't like it when we
get too talky, he needs action, we need to have forward momentum. The
Watcher in the Wings, he needs action, we need to stick the landing-

PAIGE:
(Trying to calm him down firmly)
No, we don't need to do anything. We haven't finished talking-

HEMBRY:
End of scene.
(Bellowing)
Blackout!

And all the lights in the apartment go out. BOOM.

Silence.

PAIGE:
(Calling out)
Wh- Hembry? What's going on?
(Annoyed as much as frightened)
Hembry, what happened to the lights?

When we next hear HEMBRY's voice, it's grown strange - echoing and faint, as if he's speaking from nowhere and everywhere all at once.

PAIGE looks around in consternation. HEMBRY is nowhere to be seen.

HEMBRY:
(Overhead, distorted)
Lights come up. Slowly.

Paige is now standing in an empty apartment. Hembry is nowhere to be seen.

She moves to the door. Tests it.

PAIGE:
Hembry? Hembry, the door won't open-

HEMBRY:
(Overhead, distorted)
Paige rattles the handle. It's beginning to occur to her that she's trapped in this place.

PAIGE:
Hello? Help! Help!

HEMBRY:
(Overhead, distorted)
We hear a frantic knocking on the other side of the apartment door-

And we do.

HAYWARD:
(Muffled)
Hey! Hey! Police! Open up!

HEMBRY:
(Overhead, distorted)
The door bursts open - and Hayward, dishevelled and filthy, stumbles clownishly onstage, almost falling over in the process.

We hear the door burst open - and HAYWARD's stumbling footsteps.

HAYWARD, looking up, hears the narration.

HAYWARD:
(Confused)
Who said that...?

But PAIGE has recognised him.

PAIGE:
(Furiously)
You. What the fuck do you want?

What are you doing here?

Answer me.

HAYWARD is actually taken aback by this.

HAYWARD:
I heard yelling, you were calling for help. I thought someone might be in trouble-

PAIGE:
(More firmly)
No, what are you **doing here**?

HAYWARD:
(As if this is perfectly reasonable)
I've been watching you-

HEMBRY:
(Overhead, distorted)
Paige attempts to run past him for the door. Hayward catches hold of her wrist-

HAYWARD:
(Overlapping)
Wait, wait, just hold on. Please hold on. We can make a deal, we can be reasonable about this.

We just need to talk-
(Hearing HEMBRY, freaking out a little)
Uh. Where is that voice coming from?

How did it know-

PAIGE:
Yeah, I don't know.

He was here a second ago. Now he's vanished.

HAYWARD:
What is it, like a speaker, or...?
(Calling out, uncertainly)
Hello?

HEMBRY:
(Overhead, distorted)
From offstage, the sound of sirens.

Hayward panics, his eyes bulging, flattening himself against the wall.

An instant later, we hear the sound of sirens.

PAIGE:
What's - **now** what are you doing?

HAYWARD:
(Nervously)
Police are after me.
(Gazing up towards the sound of HEMBRY's voice)
How is he doing that, though? How did he know...

How does he know my name?

PAIGE:
What do you mean, the police are after you? **You're** the police.

HAYWARD:
No, I'm not-
(Getting a grip on himself)
Okay, look.

We can discuss this later. I do not much like your friend who's hiding in the walls, and...you're under arrest, so.
(Calling out to HEMBRY)
Sir? We're leaving. Thank you.

PAIGE:
No. Just hold on.

I still don't have what I came for.

HAYWARD:
That doesn't matter, I-

HEMBRY:
(Overhead, distorted)
Hayward turns back to the door, swinging it open.

Instead, he finds himself gazing out onto the emptiness of our backstage area.

Cluttered props. Stray scripts and chairs. Nothing but locked doors and stifling darkness beyond.

There's no longer any way out.

There never was any way out.

HAYWARD closes and opens the door experimentally.

HAYWARD:
No fuckin' way.
(Panicking)
No fucking way-

HEMBRY:
(Overhead)
And on this final note of confusion and terror...the curtains come down.
House lights rise.

Interval.

HAYWARD:
Wait, you can't just-

PAIGE:
Hembry-

BOOM of the lights. The heavy sound of curtains - or something - unravelling to the ground. The stage has gone dark again.

AUDITORIUM, INT, NIGHT

The sudden, violent slapping of many hands - or the beating of wings.

And suddenly, the sound fades.

HAYWARD:
(Muffled)
Did you hear that?

PAIGE:
(Muffled)
Yes, I heard it.

HAYWARD:
(Muffled)
There's people in here with us. What's, what is this stuff?

PAIGE:
(Muffled)
Curtains!

HAYWARD:
(Muffled)
They don't...feel like curtains.

PAIGE:
(Muffled)
Get under it. Get to the other side.

We hear the curtains rustle and a faint gasp as HAYWARD and PAIGE come up from the other side, into a deserted auditorium.

There's something faint humming in the air.

Their voices echo faintly, as if they're walking in a vast arena.

HAYWARD:
It's so...bright out here.

HAYWARD and PAIGE venture out, slowly, with an increasing dread.

We might hear their feet creak slowly on the floor.

HAYWARD:

All these seats.

This place is deserted. But...I heard people, I heard clapping.

PAIGE:

It didn't sound like clapping. More like...

(Losing her train of thought)

Feel the texture of that. Doesn't feel like fabric, does it?

And there's something in the air out here, a kind of stillness.

HAYWARD:

(Unhappily)

We've strayed.

This is the haunt of a god.

PAIGE:

See that in the back?

HAYWARD:

'Exit'. Red and flashing.

PAIGE:

Think we can trust it?

HAYWARD:

Not in a million years. I think it'll take us further in.

Maybe it's where the crowd went, the ones who were clapping.

PAIGE:

Again, I don't think it was clapping.

It sounded more like...wings. Hundreds of wings, all beating at once.

(Realising something horrible)

'The Watcher In The Wings.'

...we need to get out of here.

HAYWARD:

Yeah, I know.

Maybe there's an axe back in the apartment - back on the stage, I mean.
Something we can cut through the walls with, force our way out.

PAIGE:
I don't think so.

Hembry, he's...controlling the action. There's nothing here until he **says**
it's there.

We need to talk him down.

HAYWARD:
I don't know if that's such a good idea-

She calls upwards.

PAIGE:
(Calling)
Hembry! Hembry, I know you're there.

Silence for a moment.

Then we hear the distorted voice of HEMBRY, from above. It sounds more and more like he's speaking through several mouths at once.

HEMBRY:
(Almost sullenly)
Paige shouts.

Her voice is small and pitiful. She's wasting her time trying to negotiate,
and she realises it just as soon as the words are out of her mouth-

PAIGE:
No. No, that's not true, Hembry.

Hembry, you can get us out of here.

We can help you.

Silence.

HEMBRY:
She throws up her hands. Gives up on arguing. She's beginning to realise
that it'll go easier now, if she just plays her part.

PAIGE:

(Firmly)

Not going to happen.

HEMBRY:

She doesn't need to worry. She'll last to the end - she'll get a fitting send-off at the end of the show, something that tugs at the heart.

She has a traditional kind of heroic quality to her. Second billing, at least.

Not like Hayward, who stands beside her. He can die early on, after the lights come back up. As a kind of punctuation, to raise the stakes. This is his only purpose here.

HAYWARD:

(Annoyed)

What? What did he just say?

HEMBRY:

Take my advice. Play your part, follow your cues. It's the only escape.

I read the books, I made the marks. I said I wanted to act, to be a great actor. I was sick of myself, sick of being Hembry-

And the Watcher in the Wings whispered from the darkness beyond the stage-

I'll make you the Man With Many Faces instead.

I'll give you a show that never ends-

PAIGE:

So let's find a way to end it.

HEMBRY:

(With sudden fury)

You're not listening to me.

I'm wearing too many faces, Paige.

Each one breaks the skin and twists the bone as it presses through. I've been too many people, and each one of them is me.

Too much weight has accumulated, too much shame, too much contradiction-

PAIGE:

(Calling up)

Just listen to me, Hembry.

Just listen for one second.

We've been trapped before, both of us.

There was a time when you sat beside me in the break room, day after day, and you swore that you'd find a way out of that place even if it killed you.

Now you're telling me there's no escape? You know that isn't true.

If we really can't save ourselves, if we can't take back control of what's happening to us, then we wrest ourselves fucking free, we twist the wheel - if only for a heartbeat.

No matter what you've done, no matter what's become of you, that's still an option.

You can do that. We can do it, together-

A long silence.

HEMBRY:

(Resigned)

He's coming back. Let's try and stick the landing, please. You're getting talky again.

PAIGE:

Hembry, wait. Just wait-

HEMBRY:

He's coming back, he expects action, drama, an ending, there must be an ending-

(Roaring)

Take your places!

LIGHTS! CURTAINS!

HAYWARD:
(Frantically)
She told you to wait!

PAIGE:
Hayward, don't move!

We hear the lights BOOM on.

A slither and a creak as the curtains rise.

And from all around, the sound of clapping hands - or beating wings - rises.

HEMBRY:
The set has changed during the interval.

You can see the people now. The remnants of the past shows, the supporting cast. Folded into window-frames, twisted into the shape of cupboards, stretched out into the thick red-and-pink curtains that hang on either side.

The lights flicker madly. On. Off.

On. Off.

Hayward, in his panic, has strayed back onto the stage.

Exactly where he needs to be.

HAYWARD:
Stop talking!

HEMBRY:
He doesn't see that The Man With Many Faces is standing right behind him, spreading outwards in a nightmare silhouette, a dozen grinning heads stretching out upon long and swan-like necks-

HAYWARD turns and sees it.

HAYWARD:
Please don't-

We hear a sudden, heavy thud and a cry of pain from HAYWARD.

HEMBRY:

(Out of breath)

He falls. The Man With Many Faces reaches out with two of his many hands, lifting Hayward's head, bringing it down upon the edge of the sink.

Again-

We hear the thud.

HEMBRY:

And again. We hear the split of Hayward's skull.

It satisfies.

Another clunk.

HEMBRY:

And once more. It satisfies, yes, it satisfies.

Scarlet ribbons burst forth from Hayward's head, dancing in every direction across the stage.

He collapses.

Panting heavily from his many mouths, the Man With Many Faces turns, his fingers fumbling for the knives, drawing them forth from the rack, one after the other, dancing in his hands-

PAIGE:

-and he stops.

She takes a step forward, narrating as she goes.

PAIGE:

The Man With Many Faces stops, because he can see the gaunt face of his sister, who he loved, staring back at him from the stretched fabric of the curtains.

He can see that the set that used to be his apartment is built on hurt and blood and sorrow, and if he goes on like this, there will be a million bloody endings, a million more victims, and the applause will go on unabating, and the weight will only grow heavier, and his run will never cease.

No matter how bad things have got, no matter how much has accumulated - he can still change the course of the show.

HEMBRY:

(Protesting)

It'll be an anticlimax.

It won't satisfy.

It seems contrived, it goes against the grain-

PAIGE:

(Gently)

He knows it doesn't matter.

HEMBRY considers - and then he changes the course of the show.

HEMBRY:

(Softly)

The scarlet ribbons retract, dancing back across the stage like flickering flame, like rewinding tape. Back into Hayward's head.

And perhaps it isn't contrived after all.

Perhaps it's a beautiful trick, good stagecraft, whatever's making the ribbons dance like that.

PAIGE:

(Firmly)

Hayward groans, softly.

So we know he's alive.

HAYWARD groans softly.

HEMBRY:

The Man With Many Faces turns back to Paige.

One of his faces, the one which used to be called Hembry, stretches forth across the stage upon its long neck - and bows.

The Man With Many Faces (sincerely): You can leave now. The door is open.

Take him with you. Take the catalogues, too.

I...need to wrap up the show.

And just like that, the books are resting on the dining room table, waiting for her to pick them up.

And so it is.

PAIGE:

Paige smiles as she lifts the books under one arm.

Half-supporting Hayward, who's still groaning and clutching at his bloodied forehead, mumbling incomprehensibly as he staggers to his feet, she turns - and she leaves the apartment through the unlocked door.

We hear the door slam as they go.

Silence.

HEMBRY:

The Man With Many Faces, who once was known as Hembry, turns back towards the darkness beyond the stage.

For a moment, we think he might be about to make a final speech, a monologue, some kind of lasting statement that the Watcher in the Wings can know him by.

But what is there left to say, really?

His faces open up in toothy grins, one after the other, from left to right, like ripples on the wind.

The applause is rising, all around him.

It sounds angry. Frightened. Like it's trying to put a stop to the show.

We hear that sound, now. The beating of wings.

HEMBRY:

The Man With Many Faces raises his dozens of mouths in a triumphant roar of meaningless noise-

-and he charges his audience.

The Watcher In The Wings flees from him, dissipating in every direction, screeching in unhappy protest.

He pursues it onwards, dashing through the endless aisles, further into the darkness, and the lights of the stage begin to fade behind him as his audience rallies, and now the applause batters down upon his tormented flesh from all sides, beating him down, lashing him apart-

It won't be long now.

Lights out.

Lights out.

Lights out.

Lights-

His voice cuts out.

The beating of wings fades.

A long silence.

WOODS, EXT, NIGHT

The sound of a forest at night.

CARPENTER is walking, unhappily, through the woods.

She stops. She's seen a vision of the CAIRN MAIDEN through the trees.

We hear the soft, rising whispers.

CARPENTER talks back, quietly, but with anger (increasingly directed at herself).

CARPENTER:

I can see you there.

Staring back at me through the trees. Old Soilbreath.
(Mockingly)

What is this, then? Is this the place? Already?

No?

So then...what?

You here to guilt me?

What, you think I shouldn't have done anything?

Should have let that poor girl go, because I've been as bad myself at one time or another, and after all, the harm is done, and gods know nothing's going to change anything in the greater scheme of it all?

Is that what your people teach?

Just let the bodies keep on washing up, just keep on burying them, away on the outskirts, growing old and pious off of the distance from all the hurt?

Making busywork amongst the ruins, doing nothing, changing nothing.

If that's what you are, if that's what you need from me, then I'm done.

I'll bear this boy home, and then I'm done. With you. With all of it.

You know, I'm tired of chasing after faceless things.

Why don't you come to me?

(Like talking to a dog)

Come on. Approach. I'm not coming to you, you come to me.

Come to me, and tell me what I should have done.

No? Don't have all the answers?

My old god was terrible, he was cruel...but he was never **pitiful**.

Cairn Maiden. Shovel-handed hag.

(With venom)

Useless old woman.

You've-

The CAIRN MAIDEN's whispers have faded.

CARPENTER:
(Wounded)
Gone.

Scared her off.

Good. Wasn't wanting for company anyway.

A moment's silence.

We hear her continue to trudge onwards, alone.

END OF EPISODE.