

THE SILT VERSES - SEASON 2, CHAPTER 9

NANA GLASS'S HOUSE - BEDROOM

CARPENTER, slowly, stirs in her sleep.

Silence.

All around her, we can hear the creaking of the CABIN.

THE HOMESICK CORPSE:

(Muffled)

Please. Please. I need to get home-

CARPENTER:

(Sleepily)

Shut it or I'll plug it.

Silence.

Then, suddenly-

ELIZA:

(Crying out)

Please! Help me!

Is anyone there? Is anyone there?

The bedsprings creak again as CARPENTER gets to her feet.

CARPENTER:

(Stunned)

Eliza?

She pushes the door open and quietly pads through the house.

CARPENTER:

(To herself)

Why's it so dark-

We hear the faint sound of BROTHER WHARFING's voice from the shadows.

BROTHER WHARFING:
Follow me, pilgrim-

CARPENTER:
(Calling)
Brother Wharfing?

We hear the voice of ACANTHA next-

ACANTHA:
I have a proposition for you, Carpenter-

CARPENTER:
(Bewildered)
Acantha?

She strides forward.

The voices die down.

Silence.

And then we hear-

NANA GLASS:
(Calling from the kitchen, muffled)
Did you call for me, Mallory?

CARPENTER stands there in absolute shock.

She recognises the voice.

CARPENTER:
(Feebly)
Nana?

NANA GLASS:
(Calling from the kitchen)
If you see Em, tell him dinner's almost done.

And he mustn't forget to take the boy in the cellar out back before
it gets dark, either.

Silence.

NANA GLASS:
(Calling)
Did you hear me, Mallory?

CARPENTER:
(Softly)
Absolutely impossible.

We hear her feet on the floorboards as she creaks forwards.

NANA GLASS:
(Calling)
The door's been sticking lately.

Give it a good push.

The door creaks open.

KITCHEN, INT, NIGHT

Nana Glass is humming softly to herself as she clatters about on the stove. Some light, old-fashioned jazz music is playing.

CARPENTER stands there and watches her in stunned silence. She's dumbstruck and horrified.

NANA GLASS, apparently oblivious, continues to prepare dinner.

NANA GLASS:
Lay the table. We're almost there.

CARPENTER whispers softly, to herself.

CARPENTER:
No.

No, this isn't right.

NANA GLASS:
If it doesn't rain tomorrow, we can get started on repainting the coracle. What do you think?

CARPENTER:

(With growing anger and confidence)

You're not standing there, Nana.

I'm not taken in by this, this...whatever it is.

You hear me?

NANA GLASS:

We'll have enough for leftovers tomorrow, I reckon.

CARPENTER:

You're dead, Nana. You're dead, and faceless, and rotten. You've been that way for decades.

There's no way for you to ever come back to me.

This is dream or it's delusion - and I'm confident in that, no matter how real all of this looks.

NANA GLASS:

(Oblivious)

Would you like to say grace, Mallory?

CARPENTER:

You know how I can be so sure of myself, Nana?

Because I **know** I've lived this night already.

I remember every word in the routine. I know when this performance is supposed to be set.

It's the worst night, the most shameful night of my life.

The night that makes my nails curl tightly into my palms at night when I'm staring up at the stars and I think of it.

(Violently)

Do you hear me?

Silence. And then NANA GLASS continues, as if CARPENTER hasn't spoken.

NANA GLASS:

You're very quiet, girl. Everything all right?

CARPENTER remembers - softly, shamefully.

CARPENTER:

This is the night when you turned from the sink, and you said to me, like it was nothing-

NANA GLASS:

(Calmly)

It's getting dark. Damn Em, he knows he mustn't be out this late.

You'll have to do his work for him, Mallory. You're old enough now - yes, it's about time.

Unlock the cellar. Take that boy by the halter and lead him down to the garden.

Make him ready for the angels to come.

And see that he's tethered properly, too.

Lose him, and I'll make you chase him down yourself.

CARPENTER:

You turned your back on me, and you went on with the washing up.

And I summoned up every ounce of my courage, I licked my lips, and I told you...

...no.

No, I didn't want to do it.

The radio clicks off.

And a moment later, NANA GLASS stops washing up.

NANA GLASS:

(As if reacting to something CARPENTER's said)

What do you mean, you don't want to?

CARPENTER:

You weren't angry. Not yet.

But I could feel the first ripples of your anger, coming on.

I told you I felt sorry for the boy who was sobbing in our cellar, the boy who'd just come out here to deliver leaflets from door to door.

I hated hearing him cry - the sound drifting up through the floorboards. Impossible to ignore, impossible to shut out.

I said it wasn't fair that I should have to take him out into the garden.

I was too young, and Em was taller than me, and stronger, and I'd done my household chores for the day already - and besides, we'd sacrificed another girl down by the water just last month.

NANA GLASS sighs as she turns off the tap and squeezes out a sponge.

NANA GLASS:

(Quoting)

"A coward comes prepared with the soundest arguments.
Courageous souls need none at all."

CARPENTER:

I wasn't a coward, I told you, I wasn't afraid.

I just didn't want to take that boy down to the sacrificial post at the bottom of the garden tonight.

Another night. Another time. But not tonight, I begged you.

Not tonight.

NANA GLASS strides forward towards CARPENTER.

NANA GLASS:

(Sourly, as if responding to a child)

And why not?

CARPENTER:

I don't even remember what I stammered out to you.

I wasn't articulate, back then. I've never been articulate, but back then I was worse.

But you understood what I was thinking. You knew me like nobody else.

How I hated you for that.

NANA GLASS walks forward to the table and begins to scrub it.

NANA GLASS:

(As if giving a lecture - sympathetically)

If we want our god to hear us, this is the method. It's the only method - it's the way that's always been.

It isn't a pleasant duty, it isn't something we should take joy in, but it's a part of life.

The boy's to be given tonight. And you're the one who's to do it.

(Sternly)

Do you think you're above this, Mallory?

CARPENTER:

I did.

I told you I didn't.

NANA GLASS returns to the sink.

NANA GLASS:

(Growing stern and increasingly angry)

You think you can live rich and well and bountiful on crab and fish without making a single offering to the water in return?

Do you think you can live in ingratitude, and not suffer the consequences of that?

Or would you prefer to keep yourself apart from the god of your people, and pat yourself on the back for being kindly, and starve to death alone in the wilds with only your kindness for company?

You're an organ in the working body of this world, Mallory Glass.

No amount of scornful looks and sour remarks is going to change that.

You're no better than what's come before, and you're no better than what's coming after.

So - you **will participate**.

CARPENTER:

(Still half to herself)

In that moment, Nana, I hated you so much I wanted to kill you tonight myself.

And the days and nights to come, they stoked my hatred, and I dreamt of killing you over and over again.

Grabbing you by the collar. Fixing you to the sacrificial leash.

Dragging you to the very end of the watery garden and tethering you there amongst the dead and eaten boys and girls, in the same place where you'd left Em and I to drown.

Leaving you there, no matter how you begged or pleaded, and returning to the cabin where we'd dance and laugh and play in the golden light.

But I was afraid of you, too, and I loved you all at once - and besides, it was the last spring.

Four months later, they came and they killed you for me.

And they took me away from this place, and then I grew to hate them even more.

NANA GLASS:

(More firmly)

Stop crying.

Down to the cellar. Now, Mallory. It's time.

CARPENTER stares hard at NANA GLASS.

And she hardens.

CARPENTER:

(Firmly, but trying to convince herself)

I went to sleep last night amongst the hills, underneath the stars.

A secluded place, a heaped accumulation of old stones where I could shelter from the rain and the wind - a natural formation, I thought, but perhaps it was a dolmen or something worse.

It should be dawn by now.

I'm not back in this cabin, and you aren't here, and I'm not living through this night again.

This is a trick. Nothing but a trick, and a lousy, unsubtle kind of trick at that.

I've stumbled into the haunt of some stray scavenging god, some frail and feeble thing stealing into my mind from the outside, and now you're trying to trap me here.

I went to sleep in the wrong place, that's all. Just bad luck.

Do you hear that?

I've figured you out. You haven't fooled me, you haven't trapped me here. It took me a **heartbeat** to see through what you were trying to do to me.

You've failed. I'm leaving.

She turns. We hear her fumbling with the door.

The creaking of the CABIN begins to rise-

NANA GLASS:

(Calling from the other side of the door)

The door's been sticking lately. Give it a good push.

The door creaks open.

And CARPENTER stumbles through - back into the kitchen. The loop has begun again.

NANA GLASS:

Lay the table. We're almost there.

CARPENTER:

(To herself, in astonishment)

Fuck off.

NANA GLASS:

If it doesn't rain tomorrow, we can get started on repainting the coracle. What do you think?

CARPENTER:

(To herself)

All right, that's fine. There's a way out of this, no matter what.

It'll have left its marks somewhere, there'll be signs to follow.

(Searching)

Nothing on the walls.

Maybe on the floor-

She begins to scrabble about, tossing objects off the shelves as she searches for the prayer-marks.

NANA GLASS continues her routine.

NANA GLASS:

We'll have enough for leftovers tomorrow.

Would you like to say grace, Mallory?

CARPENTER continues to throw things.

NANA GLASS:

You're very quiet, girl. Everything all right?

CARPENTER:

(Calmly and coldly)

Whatever you are - you need to understand that I won't put up with this. I won't submit.

I won't rest until I've found my way out of this, and I've torn you to pieces.

NANA GLASS:

(Oblivious)

It's getting dark. Damn Em, he knows he mustn't be out this late.

You'll have to do his work for him.

Unlock the cellar. Take that boy by the halter and lead him down to the garden-

CARPENTER:

(Coldly furious)

How dare you take this shape. How **dare** you choose this night, the worst night, the most shameful night.

If you want to speak to me, do it with your own face and your own tongue.

NANA GLASS ignores her, continuing to wash up.

CARPENTER:

(Yelling)

Speak!

NANA GLASS falls silent for a moment.

Then she says, just as calmly, with an odd inhuman echo in her voice,

THE SORROW-AND-SHAME (NANA GLASS):

But you can't actually be certain about tonight, can you?

You find it difficult to keep the facts straight in your head.

You can't even be sure, as you stand in your nana's kitchen again, that this **was** the worst night of your life, the most shameful night, the night that makes you coil your fists and wince as you remember it.

Perhaps it was the night after.

When Em finally came back home - looking stoned or hungover, refusing to answer any of Nana's questions about where he'd been - and as he sat and painted the coracle as punishment, you danced around him in the silt and you boasted to him about what you'd done while he was away.

You pretended you were proud to have participated, proud to have helped your Nana.

You scornfully acted out the soft, desperate cries of the boy that you'd left tethered out by the water.

You boldly bragged that you intended to carry out the next sacrifice yourself as well, as he'd been doing it for far too long and you were owed a proper turn.

And Em looked at you like...what was that look he gave you?

Because it wasn't pride, like you were hoping for.

It was something else.

(Thoughtfully)

How many worst nights of your life have there been, Mallory?

How many nights does it hurt to remember?

CARPENTER stares at her, long and hard.

CARPENTER:

If I go to the cellar, if I play this out, will you let me go?

NANA GLASS continues to wash up, ignoring her.

CARPENTER:

(Giving up)

Fine, I'll go. I understand the game, I see how this works.

OK, I'll go to the cellar. Let's see this through.

She gets to her feet and goes.

CELLAR, INT, NIGHT

We hear the cellar door creak open. The sound of a pull-light being turned on. A bulb humming into life.

CARPENTER sighs - and begins to descend. Her feet creak on the boards of the steps.

And we hear an unexpected voice.

THE SORROW-AND-SHAME (HELEN):

(Narrating, calmly)

The steps are as high and wide as you remember.

The cellar is as dark as you remember.

It's like you never grew up at all.

CARPENTER recognises the voice.

CARPENTER:

(Weakly)

No.

Come on, now. That isn't fair, you can't be here-

THE SORROW-AND-SHAME (HELEN):

Nana kept her fishing nets down here, and her copy of The Silt Verses, and her altar with the sodden candles that could not be lit.

And three tall cages, with hooks upon the walls to secure the catches.

This place frightened you. It always frightened you.

You never felt at home down here. It seemed less like a true part of the cabin and more of a distinct place, a haunted place, that had crept into the shadows underneath your rooms without permission and taken up residence there.

You always felt like you were walking down those steps to meet with a monster that dwelt in the black below.

But there was never anything like that down here, was there?
Only...

We hear a faint whimpering from somewhere below. The BOY is down here.

THE SORROW-AND-SHAME (HELEN):

Only a boy in a filthy and torn postman's uniform, mewling in the darkness, with sack-cloth tied over his head - perhaps even the same sack-cloth she'd made you wear when you first arrived at this place and she tried to offer you to your god.

Because your Nana was prudent; saved everything, threw away nothing.

And you, who cared about fairness above all else, you understood at once that the grace that had been shown to you should be shown to this boy in turn...

CARPENTER:
(Getting furious)
You're not here.

She swings the cage door open.

THE SORROW-AND-SHAME (HELEN):
The boy is indistinct beneath his sack-cloth.

Nana and Em caught him in the night while you were still sleeping.

You'll never see his face while he's alive.

You'll see his face later on, when Nana pulls the sack-cloth off.

You'll stare into his eyes.

You'll gaze at his swollen and crab-bitten flesh, hating yourself and ashamed of yourself, drinking in every detail.

The cheeks, engorged with river-water and pocked with holes.

A rough and clumsy miracle, to be sure, but enough solid work has been carried out here by the angels of the tide for Nana to nod begrudgingly, pat you on the shoulder, and commend you for a job well done.

His face isn't the only one you remember, is it?

CARPENTER:
No, it isn't.

THE SORROW-AND-SHAME (HELEN):
That young couple, the ones you lured to the abandoned temple-house on the river-road. Mason waiting patiently from the shadows to see that you followed through.

They were the ones that came next.

We hear running footsteps and laughter-

They saw you as a friend, until that last awful moment when they couldn't any longer.

-and awful screams as someone is drowned beneath the water.

CARPENTER:

(Horried)

I swear, I'll end you for this-

THE SORROW-AND-SHAME (HELEN):

And my face. You won't ever forget my face, will you, Mallory?

We hear the gunshot from Chapter 4 - HELEN's death.

THE SORROW-AND-SHAME (HELEN):

I was still pleading with you when you blew it to pieces. Flesh and fragments.

Last night, when you went to sleep in the shadow of the stones, you were thinking -

CARPENTER:

...I was thinking Nana's face must have looked the same.

THE SORROW-AND-SHAME (HELEN):

And shame rose in you like the tide.

CARPENTER hauls the chain down from its pulley.

CARPENTER:

(Through gritted teeth)

You're not real. This is a performance, nothing more.

So let's get this over with, and maybe you'll be satisfied.

The clank as she lifts the chain.

THE SORROW-AND-SHAME (HELEN):

(Vaguely)

'Let's get this over with'.

Yes, that's what you kept whispering to yourself, as you stood there before the whimpering boy and you tried to work up the courage.

"Let's get this over with. And once it's over, you'll have made it past the initial fear and past the initial doubt, and every time you do this from now on will be so much easier."

No more delays, no more convincing yourself.

You had to act.

You reached for the hook upon the wall. You took the boy's chain in your hands, and it jangled like bells at a summoning.

CARPENTER hesitates - then she takes the chain and hauls the BOY forward. He whimpers pitifully.

CARPENTER:

Are you a god? I don't think I've ever spoken to a god, not really, not truly.

THE SORROW-AND-SHAME (HELEN):

What sort of creature did you honestly think you were going to become, once it was over?

Did you really think life was going to be easier for you from that moment on?

CARPENTER:

Not a god, then. Maybe something else.

Maybe you're a saint, maybe you're something created, some haggard, horrid thing of old regrets and self-loathing and self-disgust.

Roaming the wilds, looking for prey.

Were you human once?

THE SORROW-AND-SHAME (HELEN):

(Retorting)

Were you?

A long silence.

Then CARPENTER begins to climb the stairs.

THE SORROW-AND-SHAME (HELEN):

When you do remember tonight - in the long sleepless nights of your life that's to come - sometimes you try and drive it from your head by reassuring yourself that things could have gone very differently.

You wanted to defy your Nana - you could have defied her.

You could have set the boy loose. You could have set the cabin aflame, and fled. Em could have returned home early and freed you from this burden.

There are so many different ways this could have gone, you keep telling yourself.

But there's no version of tonight where this didn't happen, Mallory.

There's no version of yourself that didn't take the chain into your hands.

CABIN, INT, NIGHT

We hear faint, muffled jazz music as CARPENTER passes back through the cabin.

THE SORROW-AND-SHAME (HELEN):

You led the boy up the steps. Gently, offering him soothing words, promising him that he'd soon be free - just as you'd seen Em do it.

You led him right past the kitchen door, and you knew Nana could hear that you were doing as you were told.

She could hear that all of your lies were having no effect at all, and the boy was still crying and struggling and begging you not to do this.

You were still half-hoping that she'd put a stop to it all; decide you were too young, take the halter off your hands. Deal with him out of sight.

But Nana didn't come to rescue you, and you had no choice but to keep walking out through the cabin door-

MARSHLAND, EXT, NIGHT

-and we hear the cabin door swing open as CARPENTER splashes out into the mud of the garden.

THE SORROW-AND-SHAME (HELEN):

The boy fought you with every step, but he was blind and he was bound, and his feet slipped in the mud, and you made it to the post, yanking the chain through its links, yanking it tight so he had nowhere to go but wait for the rising tide...

CARPENTER sighs - and then she does as she's told.

THE SORROW-AND-SHAME (HELEN)

And you stood back and observed him, tethered and in the correct place, as Nana might observe a casserole steaming on her stove, ready to be devoured.

Did you whisper one final sorry to him?

You can't quite be certain if you said it out loud, although you like to imagine that you did.

CARPENTER:

(Holding onto it for comfort)

I did. I told him I was sorry.

I'm certain I did.

THE SORROW-AND-SHAME (HELEN):

(With cruelty)

If you did, it didn't help him. Not at all.

You turned back, and you could see the bright and comforting lights of the house, where dinner was waiting for you...

...and you left him behind.

You didn't have to watch what happened next, when the angels came to take him away.

And the BOY begins to whimper and shriek as we hear something moving in the water below him, yanking him about-

CARPENTER:
Oh, damn you! Damn you!
(Her voice cracking)
Please! Please, I said that's enough!

The ANGELS continue to come in for the kill, gathering in the water-

CARPENTER:
(Calling towards the house)
It's over. It's over. Do you hear me?

I did it, I played my part, so let me go.

Let me go, please let me g-

KITCHEN, INT, NIGHT

We hear the door smack open.

Nana Glass is humming softly to herself as she clatters about on the stove.

We're here again.

NANA GLASS:
Lay the table. We're almost there.

CARPENTER restrains herself from choking with emotion and fury.

NANA GLASS:
If it doesn't rain tomorrow, we can get started on repainting the coracle.

What do you think?

CARPENTER:
Do you have a name - whatever you really are?

Was there ever anyone here to give you a name, or did you survive here alone like stinking weeds by the water's edge?

Are you lonely? Is that why you're doing this?

Does nobody talk to you out here?

Tell me who you are.

Talk to me.

NANA GLASS:

We'll have enough for leftovers tomorrow, I reckon.

CARPENTER:

(Increasingly sour and bitter)

Mason took me back to the cabin once - years ago, now. They'd burnt it to the ground. Blackened wood and rotten ruin.

You're rotten and gone, and this place is rotten and gone, and Em's never coming home, because he's dead too.

He died, alone and in chains, because my Nana was too obstinate and far too proud. She had to keep flaunting the old ways, because anything less would be an insult to the god she lived.

And they came for her, because clever as she was, she was too stubborn to change.

So. Who are you?

Silence. No response.

CARPENTER:

(Sarcastically)

Cairn Maiden, maybe? Is that you?

I'm sorry I yelled before.

Is there a moral lesson here, some kind of initiation I'm not fully appreciating?

Are you teaching me how to bury the dead? Leave the past behind?

Let's find out, shall we?

She lifts a plate - then drops it with a crash.

Then she grabs another plate.

Then CARPENTER tears the washing-up off the side with a roar.

*She continues to smash up everything around her, furious, until-
-the radio clicks off.*

And NANA breaks character.

THE SORROW-AND-SHAME (NANA GLASS):

(Calmly)

This is how you've always been.

You never knew how to solve a problem that wasn't smashing it to pieces.

CARPENTER:

(Breathing hard)

Usually has an impact.

'NANA' moves to the table and begins to scrub it.

THE SORROW-AND-SHAME (NANA GLASS):

Your fury always followed in the footsteps of your shame.

You'd take a kind of sour pride in tearing apart everything you'd built.

You couldn't stand to be seen. And so you convinced yourself, time and time again, that if you only burnt everything down, you'd have a better chance of escaping in the smoke.

CARPENTER:

Stop talking to me. You're nothing but masks, nothing but angles-

THE SORROW-AND-SHAME (NANA GLASS):

You broke everything life gave you.

CARPENTER:

I'll break you, you son of a bitch-

She turns and smashes another plate.

THE SORROW-AND-SHAME (NANA GLASS):
That's why you abandoned your god.

That's why you abandoned your family.

That's why you abandoned the young boy, and the frail old woman, and the girl who walks alone-

We hear the RISING SOUND of the cabin creaking and changing.

CARPENTER:
(Furious)
I didn't. I left her with-

WOODS, EXT, NIGHT

CARPENTER gasps.

We've changed scene; we're back in the forest from Chapter 4.

We can hear the wind blowing through the trees.

CARPENTER walks forwards, uncertain of herself.

THE SORROW-AND-SHAME (NANA GLASS):
No, Mallory. You just left her.

You left her with a sick old man who was struggling to cope, with nowhere to run to and nobody to help them.

Because they felt like weight, and your whole life has been spent trying to tear yourself free of that weight in vain.

As CARPENTER walks, we begin to hear something horrible - the buzzing of flies, and the wriggling of worms.

THE SORROW-AND-SHAME (NANA GLASS):
The girl is dead already, Mallory.

She's lying in the woods. Her ribcage opened up like a doorway.

The sick old man is wheezing his final breaths as he lies beside her, mumbling words that will not help.

The frail old woman is lying out in her garden, wheezing your name-

ACANTHA:
Carpenter-

CABIN, INT, NIGHT

CARPENTER roars.

She keeps screaming as she hammers down with her fists, again and again. We hear NANA GLASS' flesh begin to bleed, her skull cracking and caving inwards-

CARPENTER collapses, wheezing and sobbing. All around her, the CABIN creaks and changes.

And we hear the familiar, unhappy sound of NANA GLASS from behind the door.

NANA GLASS:
(Muffled)
"The door's been sticking lately.

CARPENTER:
(Horrificed)
No!

I'm not going back! Do you hear me? I'm not going back again-

NANA GLASS:
(Muffled)
Give it a good push-

BOILER CUPBOARD, INT, NIGHT

We hear a quiet, gentle sound.

CARPENTER is hiding under the boiler. She's sobbing, quietly to herself.

A moment later, we hear-

THE SORROW-AND-SHAME (FAULKNER):

This was the very first place, wasn't it, where you'd leave people behind?

Squatting under the boiler, the only place where you were small enough to fit and nobody would see you even if they opened the door.

A place where you could hold the world at bay.

CARPENTER:

(Under her breath)

Not you too, gods, not you too-

THE SORROW-AND-SHAME (FAULKNER):

You abandoned me, didn't you?

I came back for you, in Bellwethers, when it mattered. Why didn't you once consider coming back for me?

CARPENTER:

I would have, Faulkner. I would have tried to find you, but I didn't know where you were, I had no way of knowing-

THE SORROW-AND-SHAME (FAULKNER):

I'm lying face down in the silt, Mallory.

In my final moments, as I drowned beneath the tide, I was reaching out through the dark water, searching for a hand-

Your hand, to pluck me from the torrent-

A hand that never came.

CARPENTER:

(Utterly broken)

I'm so sorry. I'm so sorry.

I don't know what to do. I don't know what to do-

A long silence.

And then FAULKNER says,

THE SORROW-AND-SHAME (FAULKNER):

(Calmly)

The door's been sticking lately. Give it a good push.

KITCHEN, INT, NIGHT

The door creaks open.

NANA GLASS is humming once again.

CARPENTER says nothing.

She sits, exhausted and defeated.

NANA GLASS:

Lay the table. We're almost there.

CARPENTER:

(Weakly)

If I lay the table, will you let me go?

NANA GLASS:

If it doesn't rain tomorrow, we can get started on repainting the coracle. What do you think?

CARPENTER:

Sure, Nana. We can do that tomorrow.

NANA GLASS:

We'll have enough for leftovers tomorrow. Would you like to say grace, Mallory?

You're very quiet. Everything all right?

CARPENTER:

No, Nana. Nothing's all right.

'NANA' tuts. And she turns the radio off.

NANA GLASS:

(Tutting mildly)

Well, that's no good, that's no good at all.

She goes to sit at the table.

NANA GLASS:
Tell me about it.

CARPENTER stares at her - and then just laughs.

Silence.

And then she goes and takes her seat at the table besides NANA.

CARPENTER confesses. Quietly and sadly.

CARPENTER:
When I came back to the faith, I told them I wanted to go by a different name.

Very common, of course, amongst new initiates.

A little controversial for a child of the Parish, especially someone whose grandmother was Adelina Glass, but Mason was there to push it through, and I never cared if any of the elders gave me disapproving looks.

I didn't want to be Mallory Glass any more.

Names can be daggers, they can become something you need to run from, and my name was a dagger when it came out of your mouth.

I think I also imagined, somehow...that if I became Carpenter and I stopped being Mallory Glass, I could shed who I was before, I could extricate myself from what I'd **done** before.

The face of the boy I left to die in my grandmother's garden.

I could leave you behind, Nana, where you belonged.

It didn't work, of course.

And now I'm making the same mistake all over again.

New beginnings. New gods. A chance to become someone better.

And it isn't helping me. None of it is helping me.

I understand that I've been given a chance, a chance to finally start moving forwards, but there's so much life behind me now, and it's weighing me down, I'm drowning in it.

I feel so hollow. Yet so heavy.

So maybe I was right after all. There's no such thing as a second act.

There's only debris. And I keep thinking that I must have lived too long.

She thinks.

CARPENTER:

You had it right before.

Fury and shame. Fury drives me onwards, shame halts me in my tracks. That's the way it's always been.

Because I could sit with my shame and my doubt forever, my regret for everything I've done, and I could let the long grass grow over me.

And every time I take a step forward, I can feel my anger for the things that have been done to me, yanking me about this way and that way, and I realise I'll never know which way is true and which way is leading me into the mire.

I hesitate, if only for a heartbeat, and then the shame overtakes me once again.

It's like walking with ballast. Like anchors in the flesh.

And everyone must feel like this, you know - I think that's the truly awful thing. We've all got this piling onto our backs.

How are we meant to build anything on this earth, when we're all so alone, we're all so tired, and we're all so twisted?

A long silence.

CARPENTER:
(With a heavy sigh)
Well, I told you mine.

Now tell me yours.

What are you, really?

A long silence. We hear the CABIN begin to creak.

The radio clicks on, and the jazz music begins to play - but it's distorted and strange.

'NANA' squeezes out her sponge and tosses it down onto the table. Her voice echoes oddly.

THE SORROW-AND-SHAME (NANA GLASS):
There's an old story, a very old story. You've always known it.

About the Trawler-man, and a hundred other ancient gods or air of fire and earth and wood and water - all of those with a halfway reasonable claim to have been the very first.

The beats of the story are always the same. A hero with a great desire or a desperate need.

The hero is struck by a vision, or they hear a strange voice, imparting wisdom that has not been heard before upon this earth.

To receive their heart's desire, the hero must sacrifice something they value dearly.

The hero does as they're told. They sacrifice their husband, wife, their child: with knife, stone, or flame.

And at once the hero receives some divine reward or great miracle falling from the sky or sprouting from the earth, and they go running back down through the hills to tell the people of their village the good news, and so the very first god is summoned forth into existence.

A few faiths add a coda, too.

They say that the hero shed a single tear, in shame and in sorrow, as they sacrificed the person they loved.

And that in that instant a second god - a god of lasting regret and awful shame - sprung into being and seized the offering as its own, dragging the hero and the sacrifice down into the depths of the earth together.

And this is why we must not flinch, and we must not weep, when we make our offerings.

We hear a rising wind, and footsteps upon rock. The wheezing breath of the MAN.

THE SORROW-AND-SHAME (NANA GLASS):

The old traveller - the man who was both an executioner and a priest - must have been thinking of that coda, when perhaps he lay down in this place, a great many years ago.

Wrapped in furs and pelts and dying from the cold, he sat upon the very height of the dolmen and he gazed out across the landscape.

And he felt shame and sorrow for the family that he'd abandoned, and for the faces that had stared up at him so many times from the flat of his great stone altar - for all feet that tread this earth for long are siblings to the hands that clutch the knife.

Silence. We listen to the rising wind.

And then the MAN breathes hard, and falls to one side, and dies.

THE SORROW-AND-SHAME (NANA GLASS):

His tears fed the rock, and he withered and changed.

Becoming something else.

A saint of tears and shame, to catch those who came to this place thereafter.

The strange music fades, and the CABIN creaks.

Silence.

CARPENTER:

(With quiet sympathy)

Is that what you are, then?

Silence - and then we hear a horribly fleshy noise.

HELEN's face is working its way out of NANA GLASS' head.

THE SORROW-AND-SHAME (HELEN):

Perhaps.

(Dismissively)

Or perhaps these stories are your own increasingly desperate imaginings - another faint memory of a story your Nana told you once, a very long time ago.

Because it's only natural under the circumstances to imagine that you are **not** dying here alone, that you're speaking to something which can understand you, and that your final pain can have some kind of meaning.

You could forgive yourself for indulging in this kind of delusion, I'm sure.

And you are dying here, Mallory Glass, hour by hour.

CARPENTER:

How do I get myself out of this?

We hear the same horrible noise as FAULKNER's face emerges.

THE SORROW-AND-SHAME (FAULKNER):

You won't.

THE SORROW-AND-SHAME (HELEN):

You can't.

CARPENTER:

Well, then, what am I supposed to do?

THE SORROW-AND-SHAME (NANA GLASS):

You don't need to do anything. It's already happening.

THE SORROW-AND-SHAME (HELEN):

Stop struggling. Stop fighting. Stop trying to break free.

THE SORROW-AND-SHAME (FAULKNER):

Let the weight bear you down.

THE SORROW-AND-SHAME (NANA GLASS):
And in time, you won't see our faces. You won't hear our voices.

You'll leave it all behind, Mallory, at last.

CARPENTER:
That can't be it. That can't be the only way forward.

THE SORROW-AND-SHAME (NANA GLASS):
It's the only second act you'll ever have.

Trust me on that, Mallory.

CARPENTER:
Yes.

Yes, I do.

She considers.

And then we hear her chair squeak back, as if to leave.

CARPENTER:
I'm leaving this place, Nana. And I'm not coming back.

THE SORROW-AND-SHAME (FAULKNER):
Foolish.

THE SORROW-AND-SHAME (HELEN):
Obstinate.

THE SORROW-AND-SHAME (FAULKNER):
Useless.

THE SORROW-AND-SHAME (NANA GLASS):
You won't be rid of us. There's nowhere to go.

CARPENTER:
I know that, Nana.

CARPENTER:
I'm leaving this place behind.
(Finally, wearily)
Come with me.

All of you. Come with me.

Silence. CARPENTER pushes the door open-

HILLS, EXT, DAWN

And we hear the sound of wind rising.

And CARPENTER sits upright with a gasp.

CARPENTER:

(Narrating)

It is dawn. And I'm back in the hills, amongst the old stones.

The homesick corpse is gurgling and grumbling familiarly in his rucksack.

It doesn't take me long to find the prayer-marks of whatever god was summoned here, carved into loose stones that lie scattered here and then.

I was right all along. I missed them in the dark.

There are bodies out here, too, buried in the long grass. Rotten sleeping bags, yellowing bones, lying still and silent.

Other travellers, no doubt, who spent the night in this place, and were trapped by whatever lingers amongst the stones.

There's an older body, too.

Resting upon the very height of the dolmen, its back against the flat of the rock, hidden from view.

A withered and ancient corpse, its hands hugged around its knees, wrapped in tattered pelts.

Gazing out over the landscape of the valleys and the distant river below.

I take a second turn amongst the stones.

Carefully and methodically, I scratch out the prayer-marks so that nobody else will be caught in this place.

I spend the day working away at the soil, hacking with the butt of my rifle until it buckles and breaks, then tossing it to one side and working with my hands-

And I bury them, one by one.

We hear the heavy breathing of CARPENTER at work as she digs.

She says, aloud,

CARPENTER:

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

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

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

She keeps digging.

CARPENTER:

These were The Silt Verses.

And these were our disciples, in order of their arrival.
Méabh de Brún.
Liz Ryan.
Carmella Brown.
B. Narr.
And Harlan Guthrie.

We sit with that final name in the silence for a moment.

Then she turns - and grunts in pain as a rifle butt strikes her in the face.

She falls, unconscious.

REVEREND TOES:

(Confused)

How deeply peculiar.

(To someone else)

Brother Armpit, this is your lure-site, isn't it?

Did you ever see one of them wake up before?

(Not receiving an answer)

No? Ah, well.

Come on - let's get her to the van.

We hear the footsteps as they pick up CARPENTER's body and drag it away.

END OF EPISODE