

THE SILT VERSES, SEASON 3 EPISODE 1: SOMETHING DREADFUL SHALL ARISE

THE RIVER RISES, EXT, DAY

We start with birdsong; and water gently dripping. We're somewhere underground - the wellspring of the White Gull.

Gradually, we hear the approach of rushing water. It grows louder, and louder-

-and as we hit the water and submerge, a peppy pop-folk song kicks in. (It's a love-ballad.)

We drift, underwater, carried helplessly along by the White Gull-

-and then we surface to the sound of rockets, planes, and explosions.

The music is now tinny and faint, as if playing from a radio.

PENINSULAN RADIO OPERATOR:

This is the White Gull missile battery-

He winces as glass shatters all around him. In the background, someone screams.

PENINSULAN RADIO OPERATOR:

I repeat, this is the White Gull missile battery, and we're under heavy fire!

We've got god-rockets raining down on us from over the channel. We need support! We-

-a missile comes roaring down.

As it impacts, we fall underwater again, and the river carries us on.

A moment later, we surface-

-and further downriver, a SACRIFICE is pleading for his life as he's winched up over the water's edge.

SACRIFICE:

Please-

PARISH WORSHIPPER:

(Cheerfully)

Hail to Katabasian Faulkner! The river rises!

WORSHIPPERS:

(Enthusiastically)

The river rises!

SACRIFICE:

(Panicking)

No, no, NO-

They fling him into the water, and we submerge with him.

As he drowns, the river carries us onwards-

-and we surface again to the hum of motor-boats and the laughter of children splashing in the shallows of the delta.

JOLLY KING KIPPER AUTOMATON:

(Cheerfully, stiffly)

Welcome to the Jolly King Kipper Wetlands Park!

Look to the north across the delta and you can see the Saint's Dam.

Did you **know** that both water and electricity have a current?

One of the kids dives from a board, splashing down into the water, and we submerge with them-

-the river carries us on, further and further, until finally we surface somewhere deep underground.

As the peppy song comes to an end, we hear the sound of bells, echoing through the caves-

KATABASIAN COUNCIL CHAMBER, INT, DAY

-and the bells come to an end.

We're somewhere deep and echoing with the drips of river-water; an underground chamber.

FAULKNER is standing before the Katabasians of the faith, as if bearing witness - or on trial.

The HIGH KATABASIAN, slumped in a chair, is calm, a little weary. Even, at times, faintly amused by FAULKNER's audacity.

HIGH KATABASIAN ROEMONT:

(Slowly)

So, ahm - perhaps you could begin by telling us in your own words exactly what happened.

A moment of silence.

And then FAULKNER speaks - with calm and confidence. He's rehearsed this story.

From Season 2, we might remember that FAULKNER has murdered MASON - his superior - and has blamed CARPENTER for it.

FAULKNER:

(As if he's blaming himself)

In retrospect, it was obvious.

Sister Carpenter, showing up again, alive and well after Bellwethers. It was too good to be true.

It was love that made me foolish, it was love that turned me from the proper path.

I...I loved her like my own blood sibling, and I believed that this was a sign; that the Trawler-man had brought her back to me for a reason.

I could never have imagined that the Legislatures could have won her over to their cause.

(With a weary finality)

But they had, and of course her return was no coincidence at all.

It was Sister Carpenter who alerted the government's forces to the location of the Paraclete's Gulch.

It was Sister Carpenter who attempted to undermine our defences from within.

And after their attack failed, thanks to the combined strength of our disciples...it was Sister Carpenter who waited for a moment when the entire Gulch was gathered below in joyful celebration, and she assassinated Katabasian Mason and poor Sister Thurrocks.

FLASHBACK: FAULKNER'S ROOM, INT

We hear a sudden, violent flash of FAULKNER assassinating THURROCKS. THURROCKS calling out his name in panic-

COUNCIL CHAMBER, INT

FAULKNER continues, perhaps a little shaken by the memory.

FAULKNER:

I arrived only seconds too late to stop her.

KATABASIAN GREVE - more harshly interrogatory than the HIGH KATABASIAN - chimes in.

KATABASIAN GREVE:

Brother Faulkner, I wonder if you could tell us-

FAULKNER:

(Almost testing her with an interruption)

Uh, that should be **Katabasian** Faulkner, Katabasian Greve.

The disciples of the Gulch formally crowned me Katabasian after the battle.

Our victory against an overwhelming foe was declared, by the collective vote, a miracle in itself.

A slight pause. And then GREVE corrects herself, reluctantly.

KATABASIAN GREVE:

'Katabasian' Faulkner.

(A little pointedly)

The assassination, as I understand it, took place in your own chambers?

FAULKNER:

(Trying to misdirect the question)

I know what you must be thinking.

It's occurred to me as well - that perhaps I was her real target.

But Mason, as we now know from the guards, had come to my rooms hoping to speak with me.

Perhaps Sister Carpenter's nerve was beginning to turn. Perhaps she thought he was an easier target. Perhaps she mistook him for me, in the darkness.

At any rate, she attacked him shortly after he entered the room. And she murdered poor Sister Thurrocks, who I had the good fortune to have served with in pilgrimage.

Sister Thurrocks must have sounded the alarm, which most likely saved my life.

There were others coming down the stairs. I heard them behind me.

As I entered the doorway, Sister Carpenter shoved me to one side and fled down the stairwell.

And as the other disciples pursued the assailant, I entered my chamber and tried to resuscitate Katabasian Mason.

All I managed to achieve, alas, was to cover myself in the poor man's blood.

FLASHBACK, FAULKNER'S ROOM, INT

And we flashback to FAULKNER standing alone, in the room, breathing hard and savagely amongst the bodies. The alarm is still going off.

CARPENTER is standing before him.

CARPENTER:
Faulkner-

FAULKNER:
I'm sorry about this, Carpenter. But...you're gonna need to run again.

Make for the river. You know the way.
(*Wretchedly*)
I'm sorry.

COUNCIL CHAMBER, INT, DAY

FAULKNER continues.

FAULKNER:

It was low tide. Sister Carpenter knew about the sluice gates in the lower levels, and we'd made use of them during the siege.

She got them open and made her escape, heading - as it turned out - upriver.

I directed some of the disciples to set out after her, but darkness fell, and-

HIGH KATABASIAN ROEMONT:

(Interrupting)

You directed them to take her alive, of course?

FAULKNER:

(A little on the back foot)

No, High Katabasian Roemont, I did not.

KATABASIAN GREVE:

(Sweetly but dangerously)

You didn't think it worth questioning her?

FAULKNER:

I considered her too dangerous, Katabasian Greve, and her crimes too severe, for her to be left breathing-

KATABASIAN GREVE:

(Calmly interrupting him)

A moot point, perhaps, since in any event you failed to catch her.

FAULKNER:

(Just slightly between gritted teeth)

I suppose so.

HIGH KATABASIAN ROEMONT:

(Pointedly)

Did Sister Carpenter say anything to you, Faulkner? As she was fleeing the scene?

FAULKNER hesitates. And then he tells the truth for one fleeting moment.

FAULKNER:

Yes.

She said she was sorry.

FLASHBACK: FAULKNER'S ROOM, INT

Now we pick up right where we left off last season. A moment as CARPENTER stands in the doorway before FAULKNER.

She doesn't move. The alarm is blaring. Footsteps can be heard on the stairs. FAULKNER pleads with her.

FAULKNER:

(Baffled)

What are you...what are you standing there for? You can make it if you run-

(Howling, distraught)

Why are you just standing there?

CARPENTER continues to remain still.

FAULKNER:

Run! Carpenter, please!

(Agonised)

I'm sorry, I'm so, **so** sorry!

CARPENTER just stares him down for a moment.

Then she says, coldly and with a broken heart:

CARPENTER:

I'm sorry too, Faulkner.

Then she turns, and runs.

FAULKNER breathes hard.

BROTHER FADE comes running into the room, rifle raised.

BROTHER FADE:

(Horried)

Katabasian Faulkner!

FAULKNER:

She...she's headed for the river.

Get after her. Go.

BROTHER FADE runs.

We hear FAULKNER's frantic, guilty breathing.

After a moment, he begins to sob.

KATABASIAN COUNCIL CHAMBER, INT, DAY

Silence.

HIGH KATABASIAN ROEMONT:

How did you feel, knowing that you'd brought Mason's assassin back into our midst?

FAULKNER hesitates.

FAULKNER:

(Answering honestly for himself)

Ashamed. But resolved.

I knew that I had a duty to make my friend's sacrifice count for something.

And the disciples of the Gulch, they needed a leader more than ever.

(A little hopefully)

Since that time, I'd hope I've proven my worth in that regard.

The HIGH KATABASIAN sighs quietly to himself.

HIGH KATABASIAN ROEMONT:

And I suppose we have no idea where Sister Carpenter is now.

FAULKNER:

Quite the contrary, your eminence.

At first we thought she must be heading south. She - had an ally down that way.

(With a little buried guilt)

She'd told me that.

Then we caught wind of her again upriver - a tip-off from a loyal member of the faithful who'd spotted her by the water.

Brother Fade is leading a hunting party to retrieve the assassin and bring her to justice - alive if possible.

(With quiet guilt and regret.)

She's got talent, we know, but she's alone now. There are soldiers on the roads, and her face is known to the lawful authorities.

And all of our people in the northern reaches, they've been vigilant in chasing her down wherever they've spotted her. She's had no chance to stop, no chance to rest.

By all accounts, she's wounded, and she's tired.

Soon she'll have nowhere else to go.

KATABASIAN GREVE:

(Peeved)

We **had** hoped to question Brother Fade at this council in person - since we understand he was also a partial witness to the attack.

FAULKNER:

(Lying)

Brother Fade insisted on heading north.

He'd lost his brother during the siege of the Gulch - he felt a sense of personal responsibility.

HIGH KATABASIAN ROEMONT:

(Drily and a little pointedly)

Brother Fade is to be commended.

Any further questions for Katabasian Faulkner, Greve?

KATABASIAN GREVE:

It's tangential, but - in Mason's absence, we're missing a good deal of our usual intelligence from upriver.

I'd appreciate a general status report.

FAULKNER:

We've been working hard to repair the Gulch, to clear out the flooded lower levels.

But we've also been sending out scouts to explore the hills in the upper reaches of the river - in the hopes of contacting some of the breakaway sects, maybe finding some of the old wellspring temples that might have been forgotten up there.

Maybe even the Grand Aquifer itself.

It's slow and dangerous work, that close to the polluted lands, but I'm hopeful. We're all hopeful.

HIGH KATABASIAN ROEMONT:

To reclaim the Grand Aquifer? A bold and...outlandish ambition, this council might remark.

FAULKNER:

The boldness is not for the sake of personal ambition, your eminence, but rather our community's continued survival.

Word has spread - to our people upriver, at least - that they're already trialing conscription in certain territories.

HIGH KATABASIAN ROEMONT:

(A little uncertain)

The, ah-

KATABASIAN GREVE:

(Quickly)

Yes, we're well aware.

(For ROEMONT's benefit)

The Dosser's Draft, they're calling it. Two weeks ago they were promising it'd never come to this.

(As if quoting)

"Citizens of age must be in possession of a contract with a licenced faith, or hold evidence of familial bondage to a licenced faith, to be considered ineligible for a year-long contract of indentured heroism, more specifically auxiliary duties."

HIGH KATABASIAN ROEMONT:

(Appalled)

Gods.

(Shaking his head)

Things really were simpler under Devlin. I know that's trite, but it's true nonetheless.

(A little sadly)

We can scoff and mock at the absurdity of their jargon as much as we like.

They have the freedom to go on repeating it, over and over, drowning us in a language of their design.

And soon enough we all lose track of what's real and what is not, and the world becomes theirs - by the strength of their clattering tongues.

Silence. FAULKNER politely returns to his point.

FAULKNER:

By the Trawler-man's grace, our belief is that the Aquifier - if found and if reclaimed - might pose a more reliable sanctuary for our people during the course of the coming war.

We know, or can assume, that at least someone in the Legislatures is aware of the Gulch's location. We cannot hold it indefinitely.

It has also occurred to me that rediscovering the Grand Aquifier would serve an important morale-boosting purpose - that a mass movement of our people upriver into the hills could be understood as a reclamation, rather than a retreat.

Silence. ROEMONT acknowledges this.

HIGH KATABASIAN ROEMONT:

Are you satisfied, Greve?

KATABASIAN GREVE:

Not quite.

How does our god seem to you, Katabasian Faulkner?

FAULKNER hesitates.

FAULKNER:

Our god is...hungering. One mouth seems to be vying with the other.

In several places along the middle reaches the river has drawn back, nearly to drought-levels.

In others we have seen sudden flash floods, violent surges that devour not just our sacrifices, but the faithful who offer them.

(Guessing correctly)
You've seen similar.

KATABASIAN GREVE:
(A little darkly)
Yes, we have.

HIGH KATABASIAN ROEMONT:
(Reassuring)
A god's hunger is not something within the scope of our reckoning. It has always been this way, Greve. The Father may glut himself upon flesh one season and then draw back into the Garden the next.

It is no cause for concern.

KATABASIAN GREVE:
My concern is less for the reality of our god, your eminence, and more for our people, who see less than we do; they observe signs and patterns in everything and they hanker for any explanation.

FAULKNER:
The faithful upriver are worried as well.
(Meaningfully)
There is a good deal of speculation as to whether we have angered the Trawler-man in some way.

KATABASIAN GREVE:
(Meaningfully and witheringly)
Well, how could that possibly be true, when a hero of the faith has won us such a grand and glorious victory at the Gulch?

A slightly tense silence.

HIGH KATABASIAN ROEMONT:
(Drawing himself up)
Very well, Katabasian Faulkner.

Return to the Gulch. We will summon you again, should we have any further questions for you.

And, of course, keep us informed on any progress in capturing Katabasian Mason's assassin.

FAULKNER:

Thank you, High Katabasian.
(Not leaving)
 If...if I may...

HIGH KATABASIAN ROEMONT:
 Yes?

FAULKNER:
 I...hesitate to say this aloud in these hallowed chambers, but I must remember that neither our god nor your eminence would hold me liable for the crime of honesty.

I have said that our people are growing concerned, and - in truth, I believe I know the cause.

Whispers have been spreading amongst the disciples upriver, wild rumours. It's being said that the Legislatures have reached out to this council in an attempt to...to licence, legalise, and co-opt our faith for their own purposes.

To use the Trawler-man as a pawn in their own frail and struggling war efforts.

To draft not only our people, but our god, to their cause.

A tense silence.

KATABASIAN GREVE:
 And where precisely did you encounter such a rumour, Brother Faulkner?

FAULKNER:
(Bluffing)
 As I have said, the Gulch's caverns have grown flooded with fresh disciples from across the territory. I hear everything from everyone.

Some of your own attendants here, I believe, have even placed requests with you to make pilgrimage to the site of the battle, which to date-

HIGH KATABASIAN ROEMONT:
(With sudden sharpness)
 I do not think you are seriously proposing that any attendant of mine would reveal privileged information to you behind my back, Brother Faulkner.

Nor that you would listen to them.

FAULKNER:

(Placatory)

Of course I would not, High Katabasian.

But I believe it would be wise to put out a formal edict denouncing these **absurd** rumours in full, before they can gather further traction.

The faithful are already growing worried. They may, in time, grow angry.

They all know how many of us stood our ground and spilled our enemies' blood in the stairwells of the Gulch. They can see how the river is raging and hungering at some unseen cause.

(Pushing harder)

We all know how much our people have suffered at the government's hands. This draft of theirs, this tyrannical effort at enlistment, should not frighten us into making common cause with them - it should do precisely the opposite.

(Pushing his luck)

We all know that Katabasian Mason would never have stood for this-

HIGH KATABASIAN ROEMONT:

(Snapping angrily, and with sudden fury)

Katabasian Mason was my **friend!**

We stood together at the Driftwood March! Together, we withstood the Purges of the Saint's Dam! Together, we examined the Gulfwalker's Wreck!

Do **not** presume to tell me what he would or would not have done!

His voice echoes in the silence.

FAULKNER:

(Trying to act contrite, but continuing to push his luck)

I apologise, your eminence.

Katabasian Mason and I had grown close, although certainly not to the same degree of your great friendship, in the days before his passing.

It was his intent, as he relayed it to me, to lay the wreath of kelp upon my head himself, but-

HIGH KATABASIAN ROEMONT:

(Dismissing him)

Thank you, Brother Faulkner. That's everything we need from you.

FAULKNER does not leave.

FAULKNER:

(Pushing his luck even harder)

I will **try** to keep my people under control, but the formal statement-

HIGH KATABASIAN ROEMONT:

(With finality)

Thank **you**, Brother Faulkner.

Silence.

FAULKNER:

(Bowing)

Thank you for your time, High Katabasian.

He goes.

We wait - and hear the doors close behind him.

KATABASIAN GREVE leans inwards towards the HIGH KATABASIAN.

KATABASIAN GREVE:

I think the little prick genuinely believes he can fool us.

HIGH KATABASIAN ROEMONT:

It's worse than that, Greve. He knows he doesn't need to.

Upriver, they're already talking about 'Katabasian Faulkner' as if he's Fleck reborn.

(Witheringly)

"Hero of the Siege of the Gulch, bearer of the Wither Mark."

And the river's misbehaviour, as you rightly said, will drive more of our people into his arms.

The momentum is with him, and he knows it. He's threatening a schism against us.

(Considering his next move)

Has there been any trouble with the Adjudicator's people?

KATABASIAN GREVE:

Not yet. The war's been keeping them occupied, and their elections keep on being pushed back.

They've been losing patience with us, certainly - they want to get on and make the public announcement, they say they've delayed for long enough already.

But as far as they're concerned, Mason is still making the calls from our side. They've no reason to suspect anything else.

HIGH KATABASIAN ROEMONT:

They won't wait for much longer.

(Lightly)

It all sounds as if the war's going remarkably badly.

(With a quiet sigh)

All right, keep stalling for time.

Make progress with them, but not **too** much progress. Let me know as soon as we're about to ruin things for good.

Tell our people to stay hidden in the meantime. Safe from the draft.

(Having a thought)

It might be prudent to employ a little theatrics to keep the good Adjudicator occupied, don't you think? The old hidden faiths did that sort of thing all the time.

We invite them to a secret ceremony by the water's edge. Hang a chain of bulrush cobs about their neck, make them eat an unshelled prawn's head.

Tell Shrue that means they're an honorary elder of the faith now, or some such nonsense.

Both chuckle lightly.

KATABASIAN GREVE:

(A little pointedly)

Shrue's expecting the Wither Mark from us before anything is signed.

They made that quite clear.

(About FAULKNER)

I noticed you didn't press him on the topic.

HIGH KATABASIAN ROEMONT:

(Scornfully)

To what end?

So he can lie to us, stall us like he stalled Mason, hold the threat and the promise of the damned thing over us?

At this point it seems more than likely that there never was any Wither Mark in Bellwethers in the first place; or if there was, Faulkner never figured it out.

We can negotiate with the Adjudicator's people if we need to. We can concoct a story, we can think of **something**.

Faulkner is our more pressing concern.

We have to deal with him before we can make our move.

He falls deeply into gloomy thought.

KATABASIAN GREVE:

What are you thinking, Roemont?

HIGH KATABASIAN ROEMONT:

(Thoughtfully)

Something Mason told me once.

A good story, once it finds its perfect vessel, is as relentless and as overwhelming as the White Gull itself. You'd be a fool to try and stop its course.

Instead you have to find a way to work with the current.

(Grandly)

Perhaps it'd be fitting for me to pay a visit to the site of the miraculous battle myself. To spend some time communing with this new Katabasian, this young hero.

To lay the wreath of kelp upon his brow and welcome him formally to the eldest of the faith.

He clearly longs to be praised for his efforts in raising a mob of the faithful under his banner; I can make him feel that he is.

In public, I can laud his achievements, I can call him whatever titles he wishes to be called.

In **private**, I can reassure him that Mason's intentions are not my own, and that the question of legalisation is no longer being actively considered.

Perhaps, during this visit, there will be an attempt on my life.

Perhaps Brother Faulkner will sacrifice himself - magnificently and memorably - to save me.

Nothing hits the heart quite like a youthful hero who becomes a youthful martyr. And so the story continues along its natural course.

(More casually)

Mason was clever, but he made a crucial mistake. You can't reason with a fanatic. And you can't make a dreamer fall in line.

(Calmly and decisively)

I'll learn from his example.

Silence for a moment. Then-

UNDERGROUND CAR PARK, INT, NIGHT

-we're listening to FAULKNER's footsteps as he approaches his car.

He stops and takes a moment to greet the disciple - RANE - who opens the door and holds it open for him.

FAULKNER:

Thank you, uh - Sibling Rane, isn't it?

RANE:

That's right, Katabasian.

FAULKNER:

Thank you, Rane.

The door shuts behind FAULKNER.

He sits back and sighs.

RANE starts up the engine.

RANE:

(Helpfully)

We'll stay amongst friends upriver tonight, Katabasian.

FAULKNER:

(Non-committal, his thoughts elsewhere)

Mm.

-and the car sets off-

CAR, INT, DAY

Perhaps ten minutes later. The car is out on the open road again, with RANE driving.

FAULKNER watches out of the window.

FAULKNER:

(Idly, as if to himself)

When Sister Carpenter and I found the Mark at Bellwethers, I imagined myself coming back to report to the Katabasians' council at the greatest refuge of the Lower Delta.

I pictured us - both of us - standing together upon the summit of that great and crumbling tower and presenting our findings before the elders of our people.

I thought it'd feel like coming home, being here.

Arriving at a place I'd always known and always belonged to, though I'd never seen it outside of dreams.

(Softly)

I never imagined it'd feel quite so much as if I was being placed upon trial - interrogated and called upon to justify myself, though I'd done nothing to deserve it.

I never thought I'd feel relief at leaving it behind.

RANE does not answer.

FAULKNER:

(Thoughtfully)

What did you make of it all, Rane?

RANE hesitates.

RANE:

(Being polite)

Magnificent, Katabasian. Utterly magnificent.

It was, a, a true privilege to have seen it with you. The frescoes, the banqueting hall...

They trail off.

FAULKNER senses that something is up.

FAULKNER:

And what else?

RANE does not respond.

FAULKNER:

(Persuasively)

You should never feel, Sibling Rane, that you cannot be honest with me.

We fought together in fire and in darkness at the Gulch; that's an unshakeable bond, a kind of baptism.

That's a mark of fellowship and unity that even the others of our faith would simply not be able to understand.

You are my sibling, as I am yours.

I can tell, you know. I can tell that there's a criticism lurking in the back of your mind, and you'd dismiss it as unkind so you'd rather not speak it aloud.

But can it truly be an unkind thought if it's honest?

Would it help if I told you that High Katabasian Roemont is clearly an old fool who's been clinging to his seat for far too long?

RANE smirks at that.

FAULKNER:

Please, Sibling Rane. Do me the honour of being honest with me.

RANE:

(A little guiltily)

I did -

(Catching themselves)

-forgive me, Katabasian Faulkner.

While I was waiting for you to be finished with the council, they brought me potted crab, from the kitchens, with a little bread and a little tea.

I devoured it.

The meat was rich, and it was densely packed, and it was...delicious...and I was grateful, and they laughed to see how heartily and how quickly I ate it.

But afterwards.

Some part of me, some part of me couldn't help but think...

FAULKNER:

Go on.

RANE:

(With a growing sadness and anger)

...that I grew up on soup. When I was young. Every single day of the week, we ate soup.

Soup, and whatever scraps of crabmeat we had needed to last a week in the broth, because we lived close to the Saint Electric's dam, and if the patrols saw Dad out in his boat they might recognise him as a wanted man.

So sitting there last night, with...flakes of potted crab on my damn face, I...

(Guiltily)

I couldn't stop the anger from rising in me.

How long have they lived like this down here, the High Katabasian's folk, Roemont, the inner circle - and yet they never once thought to share all that comfort?

(Growing angry)

And if it **is** true that-

RANE cuts themselves off for a moment.

RANE:

(Bravely and nervously)

Katabasian, **is** it true? What they're saying back at the Gulch - that they're planning to legalise us, in response to the government's enlistment draft?

Sister Jan says it's a lie, and we shouldn't gossip about the faith's affairs, but I **know** you would not lie to us, Katabasian. Not about something like this.

FAULKNER sits back and watches the road for a while.

He senses that he has a useful ally here.

FAULKNER:

Sibling Rane, you've been honest with me, so let me give you the same gift in return.

(As if he's troubled)

There's something that's been weighing on my mind, troubling me deeply, and I don't know who I can tell.

Can I trust you, Sibling Rane?

I'm - I'm sorry to even ask, but I have trusted dear friends in the past only to have them turn on me, and trust is lacking now in my heart.

(Repeating himself)

Can I trust you?

RANE:

With my life, Katabasian.

FAULKNER:

(As if relieved)

That means a lot, and I'm grateful to hear it.

I did not enjoy my meeting with the High Katabasian, Rane.

It felt just like this when I returned from the Pilgrimage of the Mark. Like ...being on trial.

Interrogations, and condescension, and threats, from the people at the very top. People who should recognise how much we've achieved upriver, how the Trawler-man has blessed our ascension.

The old ways keep on repeating their old patterns, you know? It's all they know how to do.

Over and over, until something breaks.
(Licking his lips, as if revealing a great secret)
 Sibling Rane...

...it is more than possible that there are those at the Katabasian's council who wish me **dead**.

RANE:
(Horried)
 -dead, Katabasian?

FAULKNER:
(As if RANE hasn't spoken)
 And when I am dead, of course...there will be no end to the lies they can tell about me.

The car roars on, upriver-

FISHERMAN'S COTTAGE (LIVING ROOM), INT, NIGHT

-and suddenly we're deep in the northern wilderness.

A TV is playing. We hear the driving rain outside and the FISHERMAN coughing and grumbling as he settles into his chair before the TV.

We can faintly hear a gameshow playing on the TV.

GAMESHOW HOST:
(On TV)
 Team One. You're down to your final lifeline. To put another twenty points on the board, and to avoid a grisly fate in the belly of the Big Bonanza, you must answer the following question correctly.

"If these are The Silt Verses, then who are our disciples?"
(Repeating the question)
 "If these are The Silt Verses, then who are our disciples?"

GAMESHOW CONTESTANT:
(On TV, nervously)

Steve Hendrickson, B. Narr, Sophie Lynch, and...um...ooh! And Méabh de Brún!

GAMESHOW HOST:

(On TV)

Is that your final answer?

GAMESHOW CONTESTANT:

(On TV, nervous but resolved)

Yes. Yes, it's our final answer.

GAMESHOW HOST:

(On TV)

That is the correct answer!

Applause.

GAMESHOW HOST:

(On TV)

I would also have accepted H.R. Owen, Steven Zivic, and Steven Anzalone.

The show's theme tune plays cheerily-

FISHERMAN'S COTTAGE, EXT, NIGHT

-and thunder crashes. We're outside now in the rain, and the sound of the TV is fainter. We begin to slowly hear the quiet breathing of CARPENTER, who's waiting in the darkness outside the house.

She's starving, shivering cold, and breathing hard as she gazes through the window into the house.

CARPENTER:

(Under her breath, softly talking to the FISHERMAN within)

Come on, mm? Get up, it's getting late.

You want to sleep, don't you? You're ready for bed.

Long day, dozing in front of your shows. Big day ahead of you tomorrow, dozing in front of your shows. Hah.

Go to bed. **Please** go to bed.

A moment of silence - and then, inside, we hear the sound of snoring. The FISHERMAN has fallen asleep.

CARPENTER:
(Under her breath)
Oh, thank gods...

The FISHERMAN continues to snore.

CARPENTER:
(Under her breath)
Yeah, sweet dreams, you old bastard.

She waits in the silence, breathing hard - and then creeps around to the back of the house.

After a moment, we hear CARPENTER whispering aloud to the CAIRN MAIDEN.

CARPENTER:
(Softly, frantically, exhaustedly)
Well, what do you think, mm? Is the coast clear, is he a heavy sleeper?

Or is there another reason you picked out this house for me?

Is this the place, hm, Maiden? Is this the moment?

That'd be a dirty fucking trick if it is.

Is this your last bad joke?

Silence.

CARPENTER:
(Softly)
Let's find out.

FISHERMAN'S COTTAGE (BACK ROOM), INT, NIGHT

-and CARPENTER steps through the open window, passing into a back room.

She creeps forward, inching the door open into the living room where the TV is still blaring.

The FISHERMAN is still snoring in his chair.

ADVERT:

(On TV, brightly)

-as a mother of four, I've got enough to worry about between shopping, chores, and these rascals. Keeping my home warm and bright should be the last thing on my mind. That's why I signed up to a platinum contract with the Church Electric-

CARPENTER backs out into the corridor again.

And then we hear the patter of little feet - as the FISHERMAN'S DOG appears before CARPENTER in the corridor.

It growls, curiously, at her, then

CARPENTER:

(Worried momentarily)

Ohh-

(Very softly)

Hey, there, hey.

Keep the noise down and you can have a nice treat from the fridge, all right? You going to stay nice and quiet for me?

She pets the FISHERMAN'S DOG - which then flops onto the floor and begins licking itself.

CARPENTER:

Yeah? We have an agreement?

(Wearily amused)

Oh, you've got no loyalty at all.

She steps over the DOG, making her way into the kitchen-

FISHERMAN'S COTTAGE (KITCHEN), INT, NIGHT

-where she opens up the fridge.

CARPENTER:

(Sighing in relief and expectant ecstasy)

Oh, yes, **yes-**

She opens up a milk bottle and begins to drain it, thirstily.

When she's done with that, she snatches up a block of cheese and begins to eat.

CARPENTER:
 Cheese, yes, yes-
(Her mouth full, spotting something else)
 -oh, jam, even better-

She takes a breath, gathering everything up in her arms, then closes the fridge door.

FISHERMAN'S COTTAGE (BACK ROOM), INT, NIGHT

CARPENTER sits heavily on the sofa with a sigh. The DOG settles down happily beside her.

For a moment there's only silence.

CARPENTER:
(Softly narrating)
 Well, here's the state of things. Here's the reckoning.

One meal of jam and cheese sitting heavy and uncertain on a starving belly.

Two weak and trembling legs. One of them never fully recovered, an old vulnerability that blooms back into life with every wrong step.

A couple of fresh wounds, a couple of broken ribs, a pain in my wrist that won't go away. A head wound that I can't quite see.

No money, because nobody out here has much saved up as it is, and the highway's motels and diners are all packed with soldiers heading north to the coast - and the occasional desperate recruiter looking for ragged vagrants like me who can be scooped up to fill their draft quotas without causing too much of a local uproar.

I learnt that lesson the hard way, four weeks back, in a Chitterling's Chapel. No sense being amongst the civilised if none of them are willing to stand up for you as they're dragging you away.

No sense having money in your pocket if it can't keep you safe.

No gun, because three weeks ago I stole a car on the highway that had a shotgun in the back seat and four shells left, and a week later I had to

abandon them both when the Parish's hunters almost caught me sleeping in it.

I don't feel too bad about losing the gun, in honesty.

I told Faulkner once I wouldn't take another life in the name of the god we shared, and the closer I feel to a lonely, painful and inevitable death the more vital it seems to me to maintain the obstinacy of my principles.

I'll remain myself, to the final choke and gurgle, out of spite. No more innocent deaths, no more drownings.

And he'll have to know he's to blame for it, then, won't he? There'll be no angle he can find, no story he can tell, to free himself from the weight of knowing he's killed me.

What else? Not a lot of sleep, out here in the rain and the cold.

One long trail of thefts, scavenging raids, nights spent in old barns whose owners have fled south to avoid the air raids, or the cellars of geriatric fishermen who refuse to leave their homes, being just as obstinate as I am.

Six phone calls to Acantha, far away to the south, who hasn't answered once.

What seems, at times, like an endless sea of pursuers.

The young people of the Parish who've been sent out here to hunt me and catch me - they're not skilled trackers by any means, not true pilgrims of the road.

They don't have the experience, and they've had nobody to teach them. They're noisy, and clumsy, and they invariably give away their positions before they need to.

Mason would have turned his nose up at the lot of them.

But they're relentless. They're fearless.

They're well supplied, and they can cover more ground than I can. They know the territory and the locals up here better than I do - so they're always waiting for me upriver and downriver, whichever way I turn.

There's a great many of them now, more than Mason would ever have been able to summon up, and they work together with endless enthusiasm and kindness.

I listen to them from my hiding places amongst the bulrushes or the stones, chirping over their walkie-talkies, cheering each other on, promising each other that they'll be the ones to bring me to justice, praising each other in the Trawler-man's name - and damn it, I almost start to root for them myself.

In truth, they've proven far harder to shake off than I'd have expected. Every day and every night, I wake to headlights in the mist, tramping feet through the reeds. Voices echoing through the walls of some cavern where I'd holed myself up and waited in vain for them to lose the trail and forget about me.

They haven't lost me yet. They're not forgetting me. And they're learning on the job.

Every time I shake them off, every time I slip free from the snare, it feels like they're doing better and I'm doing worse. They're making fewer mistakes, and I'm making more.

I'm hungry, and exhausted, and cold, I keep telling myself. I'm alone out here. If I can just get a moment's respite, I'll be able to get away from them for good.

Trouble is, that respite's never come.

They'd already have caught me by now, if I was entirely without help.

Her whispers keep waking me in the night as my pursuers creep closer to my hiding place.

Her silhouette, robed and long-fingered, can forever be seen at the top of some ridge or in the depths of a canyon, signalling to me where I'll find my next temporary refuge, my next escape route.

The Cairn Maiden has remained with me out here, in the rain and the cold, when everyone else has left me.

And she keeps on faithfully showing me the road I need to take - the onwards path to the meeting place that's been promised.

A floating willow by the twisting water.

It took a while for me to realise, with all the stops and starts and the turnings-back, that she was leading me north.

Longer still to realise just how close she's getting.

Sometimes I wake and her shadow is looming over me in a cracked and broken window.

Sometimes she's there in a doorway, her veiled head bowed, just five or six feet distant.

Like I could stretch out my hand and touch her.

Maybe that's why I'm getting clumsier. Maybe that's why my strength is failing me, and everything that hurts is hurting just a little more than it used to.

Because it's all beginning to feel very much like it's only a matter of time.

CARPENTER's narration ends.

She swigs the milk bottle.

Beside her, the FISHERMAN'S DOG growls unhappily - and after a moment, we hear the faint whispers of the CAIRN MAIDEN, watching from the doorway.

CARPENTER, exhausted and uncaring, continues to swig her milk.

CARPENTER:

(Falling asleep even as she speaks)

You want some cheese and jam, Maiden?

Or are you just...

You just going to keep standing there in the doorway staring at me like a fucking...

Like a...

The whispers continue to rise.

The milk bottle falls as CARPENTER falls unconscious.

FISHERMAN'S COTTAGE (BACK ROOM), INT, DAWN

-and we hear CARPENTER jolt awake with a quiet gasp.

She fell asleep. Someone is knocking at the door and ringing the doorbell. The DOG gets up, yapping excitedly.

CARPENTER:
(Hissing to herself)
 Oh, shit, shit, **shit-**

She gets to her feet-

FISHERMAN'S COTTAGE (LIVING ROOM), INT, NIGHT

And the FISHERMAN jolts awake, too. The doorbell ringing can still be heard. The TV is blaring out some SUPERHERO nonsense.

FISHERMAN:
(To himself)
 Who the devil can that be?

He gets to his feet, walking heavily - goes out into the corridor and opens the door.

BROTHER FADE is standing there.

FISHERMAN:
(A little confused)
 Good morning to you. What...what time is it?

BROTHER FADE:
 Close to five in the morning, sir.

I'm with law enforcement.

Sorry to disturb you so early, but we're looking for a fugitive who we think might be active in this area.

BROTHER FADE brings out the sketch of Carpenter.

BROTHER FADE:

Do you recognise this woman?

FISHERMAN:

Don't think I've seen her, no.

(Uncertainly)

Oh, or one of the jailbreakers, maybe?

A moment's silence. FADE has no idea what this means.

BROTHER FADE:

(Lying)

She's a spy from the CLS.

FISHERMAN:

(Mildly)

Oh, terrible.

You...heard there's been jailbreaks out this way as well?

BROTHER FADE:

(Dully)

Really.

FISHERMAN:

Aye, lots of trouble, lots of excitement-

The dog is still barking. FADE frowns.

BROTHER FADE:

Sounds like your dog's bothered about something.

FISHERMAN:

Ah, ignore him.

So, yes, the jailbreaks-

BROTHER FADE:

(With growing concern)

Do you mind if I just take a very quick look around your property?

FISHERMAN:

I don't see why you should-

BROTHER FADE:

(Barging past him)
 It'll just take a moment- excuse me-

We hear BROTHER FADE wiping his feet on the mat, then stepping into the house.

He stops by the living room, hearing the TV, then back towards the KITCHEN.

FADE pushes the door open. Inside, the DOG is barking.

FISHERMAN:
(Coming up behind him)
 Look, I don't want any trouble here-

FADE, ignoring him, walks forward into the kitchen.

BROTHER FADE:
(Realising what this means)
 Window's open.

The FISHERMAN'S DOG continues to lick itself happily.

FARMHOUSE, EXT, DAWN

We listen to the wind blowing through the reeds for a moment.

BROTHER FADE comes running out around to the front of the house.

He opens the van door, grabs the radio and speaks into it.

BROTHER FADE:
(Urgently)
 This is Fade. I'm at a fisherman's cottage just out from the falls.

She's close by.

Get out here as soon as you can.

FAULKNERIAN FANATIC #1:
(On radio)
 Praise the Prophet! Brother, we're on our way.

FAULKNERIAN FANATIC #2:
(On radio, exulting delightedly)

The river rises! The river ri-ises!

FADE grabs his shotgun, and slams the door.

He strides back out and yells into the marshland.

BROTHER FADE:

(Yelling out)

Carpenter! Carpenter! I know you're out there!

(Taunting)

You've got tired! You've got sloppy!

BROTHER FADE:

(Yelling out)

The others are on their way!

They're out for blood, Carpenter! You wanna surrender now? Make this easy?

No answer. He stalks on.

His footsteps pass right by CARPENTER, who's hiding in the reeds.

She waits, breathing hard for a moment.

CARPENTER:

(Whispering to the MAIDEN)

All right, come on, then. Hm. Where are you?

Show yourself, I'm counting on you. Which way do I go?

(Getting frustrated)

Into the fields or into the hills?

BROTHER FADE:

(Distantly)

Carpenter! You've got tired! You've gotten sloppy!

CARPENTER:

(Whispering to the CAIRN MAIDEN)

Come on, where are you?

And we hear the whispers of the CAIRN MAIDEN, off to the right.

CARPENTER exhales.

CARPENTER:
(Softly)
 Right it is, then.

CARPENTER waits for her moment - and then begins to stalk forward through the grass.

A sudden, piercing whistle. CARPENTER ducks back down - but it's too late.

CARPENTER:
Shit-

FISHERMAN:
(Yelling out)
 Hey! There she goes!

Off to the right! Hey! There she goes! There's the spy!

BROTHER FADE's rifle rings out. CARPENTER gasps, stumbles - toppling into a puddle of water - and runs onwards.

He fires again. She keeps on running-

FADE'S CAR, INT, DAWN

-and also breathing hard, FADE slides into the driver's seat. He starts the engine.

His music choice roars into life on the car radio - something absurdly, generically religious.

MOORLAND, EXT, DAWN

CARPENTER keeps running.

She comes to a tall wire fence - doesn't even hesitate, leaps and begins climbing it.

Overhead, on a tinny speaker, a GOVERNMENT PSA rings out repeatedly;

GOVERNMENT PSA:
(On tannoy)
 You have come to the end of the inhabited lands. Stray and starving gods dwell beyond this point. Turn back. Turn back.

CARPENTER reaches the top of the fence, and with a grunt, flings herself down.

She lands, roughly-

-but before she can get to her feet, we hear the roar of FADE's approaching car.

CARPENTER:

Shit-

She gets up and begins to run-

FADE'S CAR, INT, DAWN

FADE accelerates, following CARPENTER. The cheery religious music is still playing, rising to a crescendo.

FADE:

(Calmly, like a prayer)

The river rises.

He changes gear and turns the wheel, swerving into the fence-

MOORLAND, EXT, DAWN

CRASH.

We stay with the fence as it goes flying in either direction, FADE's car skidding through-

-and a moment later, a faint impact sound and the distant 'bing' of the hazard lights indicates that the car has crashed on the other side of the fence.

Silence.

For a moment we have no idea if CARPENTER was struck in the crash-

-and then she coughs weakly, in the foreground, and sits up.

Groaning in pain, she gets heavily and unsteadily to her feet, and begins to limp onwards.

FADE'S CAR, INT, DAWN

FADE, possibly upside-down, groans from the wrecked car. Glass debris clatters all around him.

He reaches for the car door-

HILLS/CAVE ENTRANCE, EXT, DAWN

CARPENTER, still fleeing, scrambles up a rockface - and half-collapses into a cave entrance. She's audibly moving much slower now.

Grunting in pain and staggering, she hobbles inside.

A long moment of silence.

Then we hear the approaching footsteps of FADE as he climbs after her.

FADE:

(Breathing hard)

That's enough, Carpenter. There's nowhere to go.

Come out now and we can talk.

Silence. CARPENTER doesn't respond.

FADE cocks his shotgun and staggers after her into the cave.

CAVERNS, INT, DAWN

FADE keeps walking into the cave. His breath is nervy and ragged.

Bats flutter overhead, making him flinch. We can hear a steady dripping - and closer, and closer, the sound of an underground river or waterfall.

FADE:

(Calling out a warning)

Carpenter! I'm supposed to shoot you on sight.

CARPENTER's voice echoes from the depths of the cavern.

She sounds tired, manic - and more than a little desperate.

CARPENTER:

(Calling out)

If you were going to shoot me, Fade, you could have done that already.

Hm? Out in the marshland, wasn't it?

Few days back now.

I was a shadow amongst the rocks. You were so close I could see the sweat dripping down the back of your neck. I was a spectre haunting your steps.

I could have killed you then, Fade, before you turned. Neck goes crack.

Did you realise that, mm?

But I didn't kill you. I could have, but I didn't, and a second later you turned and we were staring into each other's eyes.

You had a clear shot at me, and instead you froze in place and watched me go.

There must have been a reason for that. There must have been something that made you hesitate.

Or are you just a fuck-up, Fade?

FADE:

(Losing his nerve a little)

Stop talking.

CARPENTER:

You know I'm not to blame, don't you? You know it's a lie.

That's why you hesitated. That's why you don't want to shoot me, Fade.

(Insistent)

Fade? You saw me pass you on the stairs that night.

Faulkner was already down there, he was down there with Mason long before I got to them.

He did it.

You already know - you **must** already know it was him.

Faulkner murdered Mason, and he's been lying to all of you ever since.

That's why he sent you out here to find me - have you considered that as well?

Probably he was hoping we'd kill each other and he could be rid of us both.

BROTHER FADE:

(Trying to reassert his control)

You'd say anything to save your own skin.

CARPENTER:

(Quietly)

No, not anything.

I'm very tired, Fade, and I'm expected for a meeting.

To be quite honest, I'd be more than half-inclined to let you shoot me here - if it wouldn't be letting the bastard beat us.

Do you want that?

CARPENTER pushes her advantage.

CARPENTER:

You have a choice, though, Fade, don't you? Hm?

You can tell them - you can tell them you never found me. Tell them I drowned in the water and the body was lost. Put an end to all of this. Make it simple.

Tell them whatever lie gives you the best advantage - but tell a lie, and it'll be just as if I'd died in truth.

FADE hesitates. His voice cracks.

BROTHER FADE:

(Softly, wounded)

My brother is dead, Carpenter. Somebody has to pay for that.

Silence for a moment.

And then we hear CARPENTER, slowly and painfully, limping out into the open.

She comes out to face BROTHER FADE.

CARPENTER:

(Just as tired)

My brother's dead too, Fade.

You think I'd ever make peace with the people who did it? You think I'd work with them against my own family?

Against my brother, my parents, my grandmother?

You think I wouldn't have put a bullet in my own skull already if I had that weight pulling me down?

BROTHER FADE:

I don't care about that - I don't-

CARPENTER:

(Furious and exhausted)

Yes, you **do**. You **do** care.

It was Faulkner, Fade. Faulkner killed Mason. You know it was him.

And if you kill me now - if you let them kill me, Fade - you'll be singing to his tune.

You'll be writing a traitor into the Verses as a hero of the faith, and that lie will go on unchallenged, and become history.

What do you think of that, Fade? Could you really let yourself be a part of that?

Silence.

BROTHER FADE chokes. He stands there in silence for a moment, trying to control his own breathing.

And then he raises his rifle and cocks it.

BROTHER FADE:

I'm sorry, Carpenter. I really am sorry.

But this is the way it has to go.

He's already won.

CARPENTER:
Wait. Please wait, I-

Both gasp. A sudden, EERIE HOWL emanates from the depths of the cavern.

And then there's water rushing around their feet.

CARPENTER:
(Realising what's happening)
...oh.

Distantly, we hear the roar of water. The waterfall has become a great wave, a surging current, and it's coming for them-

CARPENTER:
(Roaring)
Get back!

FADE and CARPENTER dash back through the cave, scrambling for higher ground, as the rushing torrent sweeps around them.

FADE:
(Calling out)
Carpenter!

CARPENTER:
(Yelling back)
Fade! Hang on! Grab my hand! Grab my hand-

FADE cries out as he's swept underwater.

For a moment, as he drowns, we almost hear a faint, gentle song rising up from below.

And then the water drains away - and CARPENTER's left alone in the dripping cave.

She's stunned, and she's horrified.

CARPENTER:
(Shaken, breathing hard, to the Trawler-man)
Why did...why did you do that? He **loved** you.

I didn't pray to you.

I didn't ask for your help.

Nobody called upon you. You didn't need to do that.

Did you think I'd be grateful?

(Yelling in fury)

Did you think I'd be grateful?

Her voice echoes in the empty cave.

FOREST, EXT, DAY

CARPENTER gasps as she hauls herself, crawling, out of the cave.

Agonisingly, she raises herself to her feet-

-and below, we hear distant cries and whistles blowing. Someone (the rest of the FAULKNERIAN FANATICS...?) is in pursuit.

We hear CARPENTER's pained breath as she staggers on.

CARPENTER:

(To the CAIRN MAIDEN)

Which way?

(Furiously)

Damn you, which way? Just left me now, have you?

Where did you-

She turns to run again.

-and she trips.

We hear her cry out, and stumble, falling forwards into the bracken, tumbling down the hill-

-and she comes to an abrupt halt, wincing in pain as she hits the ground.

-and then from all around her, the sound of rifles cocking.

She's been caught. She's surrounded.

CARPENTER is exhausted. She's ready to die.

CARPENTER:
(Aching and in pain)
Do it. You've caught me, all right?

Just fucking do it.

Nobody moves.

CARPENTER:
(With growing anger)
Oh, what are you waiting for?
(Screaming)
Hm? I told you, I'm ready!

I'm ready!

I'm ready, so just get on with it!

Nobody moves.

-and at that moment, HAYWARD breathlessly comes jogging through the circle of guns.

HAYWARD:
Whoa, whoa, whoa - take it easy.

Rifles down, fellas, rifles down.
(Chuckling)
She's a friend, she's a very old friend.
(Just incredibly jovial)
Hey, Carpenter - how you doing?

CARPENTER is still tensed up and ready to die.

And this is, of course, exactly the opposite of how HAYWARD predicted their next encounter would go way back in Season 1.

CARPENTER:
(At a loss)
...what?

HAYWARD:

(Chattily)

We thought you and your friend back there were a posse, come looking for us. Scared the life out of me when I saw you.

Come on, let's get you someplace safe.

(Calling out to one of the other scouts)

Hey, Jessop, Dan - I'll cover our tracks out here.

Get a stretcher, get her a gas-mask. Haul her back to the Grace - if you make good time you should be there by nightfall and the god-winds start to blow.

The Widow of Wounds is gonna want to see her.

CARPENTER takes a breath. And then she says it again.

CARPENTER:

What?

END OF EPISODE.