

THE SILT VERSES - 3.8

HIGHWAY, EXT, DAY

Driving rain. Passing cars.

After a moment, we hear the whirring of an enormous animatronic CHITTERLING MASCOT by the roadside.

CHITTERLING MASCOT:

(Oinking)

It's a thousand miles to Glottage, but only ten to your next Chitterling's Chapel!

The Host of Hogs is ready to welcome you, weary traveller, for arrays of ribs, platters of porcine product, and a veritable feast of flesh.

Come on by, and make the lonely road feel a little less lonely.

THE AMICUS HOTEL, ROOM, INT, DAY

A cuckoo clock bursts forth to mark the hour - and then the mechanical bird retreats. We continue to hear the ticking.

DEVEREAUX (20s) draws the blinds in his room open. The whirring MASCOT is still faintly audible as he stares out - and then deeply sighs.

THE AMICUS HOTEL, BOILER ROOM

SEBASTIAN (20s), the hotel's owner and sole operator, is fixing the boiler. It's slow and frustrating work, and we hear him grunt in frustration.

A radio on the counter is playing an advert from a SLAG KING SPOKESMAN.

SLAG KING SPOKESMAN:

We all dream of building something beautiful.

But how can you be certain that you're building your dreams on solid ground?

How can you know that a fresh start is truly a fresh start?

If you've recently purchased a property and you're worried about a history of illicit worship, sunken temples, or forgotten sacrifices buried in the walls or floor, call the Slag King Excavation Service hotline today.

A leak spews water everywhere. SEBASTIAN frantically redoubles his efforts to fix the problem.

SLAG KING SPOKESMAN:

With the cleansing power of liquid concrete, we'll purify your foundations. And we'll give you the opportunity you need for a genuine fresh start.

We're the best at what we do. And our clients agree.

Clients like Nishi Ghosh, Axandre Oge, Meabh de Brun, Jimmie Yamaguchi, and Alan Coveney.

(As a final sign-off)

The Slag King. Firm Foundations, New Heights.

The leak bursts again. SEBASTIAN splutters and gasps.

THE AMICUS HOTEL - RESTAURANT, INT, DAY

DEVEREAUX is sitting, sipping his coffee while scribbling on a map. He's quiet, haunted and anxious. He's the only person in here.

A moment later, we hear SEBASTIAN, the hotel owner - around DEVEREAUX's age but sharper and more charismatic - approaching with the coffee jug.

SEBASTIAN:

Refill your coffee?

DEVEREAUX:

(Jolted awake)

Oh?

...ah. Yes.

Yes, thank you.

SEBASTIAN refills the coffee.

SEBASTIAN:

(A little pointedly - DEVEREAUX has not touched his breakfast)

Eggs okay?

DEVEREAUX:

(Looking down at his untouched eggs)

Oh. Yes.

(Unconvincingly)

Really good. Really, uh...juicy.

SEBASTIAN:

(Taken aback by the word choice)

The eggs are 'juicy'?

DEVEREAUX:

(Regretting the word choice)

Really good, I mean. I'm just...I'm savouring them.

SEBASTIAN:

Well, that's OK. Take your time.

You just let me know if there's anything you need with the room, too.

DEVEREAUX has already turned back to his maps.

DEVEREAUX:

(Lost in thought)

Mm-hm.

SEBASTIAN waits patiently for a moment - and then gives up.

SEBASTIAN:

All right, then. Nice chatting with you.

He turns to go. But DEVEREAUX wakes up.

DEVEREAUX:

(Calling after him)

Uh, excuse me - excuse me! Sorry!

(Taking a breath)

You're the owner of the hotel, aren't you?

SEBASTIAN:

Owner, waiter, bed-turner and chef of the Amicus Hotel.

(Lightly)

So you can feel free to place a complaint with me about the juicy eggs, and I'll pass it on to myself.

DEVEREAUX:

(Thrown off by the joke)

No, I didn't -

(Getting a hold of himself)

-is it, um, an old family place?

SEBASTIAN:

Ah. You're thinking I'm very young to have ascended to such dizzying heights of wealth and success all by myself?

DEVEREAUX:

(Feebly)

Haha.

SEBASTIAN hesitates for a moment - it seems like that's all he's getting.

SEBASTIAN:

No, I bought it.

Silence.

DEVEREAUX:

Did you change the name, perhaps?

SEBASTIAN:

It's always been the Amicus as far as I know.

Silence.

SEBASTIAN:

(Just starting to lose patience)

Anything else you need to know?

DEVEREAUX holds that silence for a moment. Then he says, quietly and intensely,

DEVEREAUX:

Do you have time to talk with me?

SEBASTIAN stares at him for a moment.

SEBASTIAN:

(Gazing out over the empty hotel canteen)

Well, I'm not sure. Got all these other tables to serve.

(DEVEREAUX does not react)

That was a joke.

(Sliding into the booth opposite DEVEREAUX)

What's on your mind?

Silence. DEVEREAUX is working himself up to a confession.

DEVEREAUX:

I'm trying to decide if I've been here before.

SEBASTIAN:

We don't have a loyalty card.

DEVEREAUX:

I was wondering about the name, because the name is all wrong. The Amicus Hotel. It's the wrong nomenclature.

SEBASTIAN:

(Bewildered)

Come again?

DEVEREAUX:

It's not a hotel, it's a motel. A **big** motel, but it's still a motel.

The rooms all face outwards. They open out to the car park.

SEBASTIAN:

(Amused now as well as bewildered)

That's the most specific complaint I think I've ever heard.

I didn't name the hotel. I took it over from a guy called Amicus, and I imagine he named it after himself or it's one hell of a coincidence.

Why does that matter?

DEVEREAUX:

It doesn't.

It just caught my eye because I'm...trying to find my way back to a place that pretends to be one thing but is really another.

It's such a serious answer that it takes SEBASTIAN aback.

SEBASTIAN:
Well, you found that all right.

This is most definitely a colossal one-star dump pretending to be a two-star dump.

DEVEREAUX gently smirks at this.

DEVEREAUX:
You, um - you make a lot of jokes.

SEBASTIAN:
(Caught off-guard)
Well, perhaps it's because you're a little intense.

Maybe it's because you're making me nervous.

DEVEREAUX:
(Abashed)
I don't mean to.

SEBASTIAN:
(A little more kindly)
I'm sure you don't.

Silence.

SEBASTIAN:
(Sympathetically)
You been on the road a long time?

DEVEREAUX:
Six weeks now since I first set out.

SEBASTIAN:
Not a lot of people to talk to. I'd be a little out of practice myself.

DEVEREAUX:
I, I, don't **mind** that. Necessarily.

Silence between them.

SEBASTIAN:

My name's Sebastian.

DEVEREAUX:

Devereaux.

SEBASTIAN:

(Gently)

It's a nice name.

What was on your mind, Devereaux?

DEVEREAUX takes a breath.

DEVEREAUX:

I've actually been this way once before - westwards along the highway.

SEBASTIAN:

OK.

HIGHWAY, EXT, DAY (FLASHBACK)

We hear a rush of cars - and suddenly we're in the rain of the highway.

DEVEREAUX:

(Working up the courage)

The last time I was eleven years old.

I came out here with my older sister Francine. We set out together from Glottage. Heading north-west.

We were hoping to find our parents - or some sign of our parents, maybe anyone who used to know them. We were just looking for any trace, really.

We knew their names, and we knew that they'd grown up out this way, and we were desperate to learn just a little more about who they were and where they'd gone.

THE AMICUS HOTEL - RESTAURANT, INT, DAY

We cut back. SEBASTIAN is watching DEVEREAUX sympathetically.

SEBASTIAN:

(Understanding)

Foster-home.

DEVEREAUX:

Foster-home.

Francine was sixteen, and for years before we made the journey she'd always said she was going to run away from that foster-home the first chance she got.

She was going to run away, and find our parents out west, and then she'd come back for me.

But I begged her, and I clung to her, and I begged her again - "take me with you, please take me with you."

Do you have any siblings?

SEBASTIAN:

(Quietly - lack of family is something that weighs on him)

Not any more.

DEVEREAUX:

She'd been taking care of me ever since we came to the home, Francine.

FOSTER-HOME, EXT, DAY (FLASHBACK)

-and suddenly we hear the chatter of children at play; a bouncing ball.

DEVEREAUX:

She resented that pressure that had been placed on her.

I was dead weight to her, whining, mewling dead weight...but she'd always taken care of me.

She said, "OK, you can come with me, Dev, but you need to be as silent as a mouse and you need to always do exactly as you're told. If you make my life difficult, if you whine or complain or cause a fuss, I'm leaving you behind."

I promised her yes. I thanked her. I sobbed until she told me to stop sobbing or once again, she'd leave me behind.

FOSTER-HOME, EXT, NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

The sound of cicadas outside the home.

DEVEREAUX:

And a few days later, Francine woke me up in the middle of the night and she told me it was time.

She'd snuck into our host's rooms earlier that day and raided the jewellery drawer, she'd stolen a week's food and water from the kitchens.

And as she shooed me down the stairs, I remember she grabbed me by the hand and we were both laughing, maybe the last time we both laughed together, because it felt like the start of a grand new adventure. It felt like...hope and joy and better things and better ways of living lay ahead of us on the westwards highway.

We hear the foster-home doors bang open; a fire alarm goes off. We hear YOUNG DEVEREAUX and YOUNG FRANCINE laughing as they make their escape.

DEVEREAUX:

We made our way across the territory, slowly.

Francine did all of the work. She scraped together the money for food - sometimes for a place to stay. She fought to keep us alive and keep us safe, she stuck her thumb out to find us rides while I hid in the bushes. She did so much for me.

I mostly sobbed, and complained, and I said unhelpful things like how much I missed my friends back at the foster-house.

And Francine kept telling me, "Dev, if you don't stop crying, if you don't stop complaining, I'm going to leave you behind and go on by myself," but she never once made good on her threat.

And then one night we were sleeping in a cheap motel-

SEBASTIAN:

(Interrupting)

Hotel or motel?

THE AMICUS HOTEL - RESTAURANT, INT, DAY

DEVEREAUX:

Motel. Definitely a motel.

SEBASTIAN:
(Teasing)
Because the rooms open out onto the car park.

DEVEREAUX:
(*Not necessarily accusatory, more trying to figure it out*)
Are you making fun of me?

SEBASTIAN catches himself.

SEBASTIAN:
(*Honestly*)
Yes, and I'm sorry. Keep talking.

DEVEREAUX:
It was called the Rapture-and-Bliss. That part I remember vividly.

RAPTURE-AND-BLISS, INT, NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

We hear the faint creaking of an old motel room at night.

Gradually, we begin to hear YOUNG DEVEREAUX shifting in bed.

DEVEREAUX:
Two floors, on all four sides of the motel. Chipped wallpaper.

One of those old motels where the pipes bang all through the night and the ceiling creaks - and it's like footsteps, like there's something moving beneath the skin of it.

We were shivering beneath the sheet in a double bed, because a double bed was all they had left. We slept in our clothes, which was partly because the rooms were freezing and partly because Francine thought the cops could show up at any minute and drag us back to the foster-home.

And my feet hurt from the walking, and I couldn't sleep from the cold, and I was frightened, so I kept on snivelling, and tossing and turning, and throwing the blankets off Francine in the process.

Francine told me to shut up. She told me to stop crying and stop wriggling about.

And at some point late into the night, she grew impatient, and she whispered to me,

"There's a God Under The Bed."

"Dev, there's a God Under The Bed, a god with many legs and big eyes and a bigger grin, and he takes offerings that have been left for him in the night. So you need to stop crying, because if you keep crying he's going to hear you."

"And if he comes up from his haunt beneath the floorboards, and he hears you crying, and sees you thrashing about, he's going to think you're leaving him an offering, and he's going to take limbs off you, Dev, one at a time, plucking them off of you like a doll's limbs, like an insect's legs, and he's going to add them to himself."

I was terrified. I told her to stop it, I begged her to stop, but she just kept insisting,

"When the God Under The Bed comes, Dev, if there's any part of you that isn't remaining absolutely still beneath the bedsheet, whether it's your head or your arm or your leg - he's going to pluck it from your body, and take it as his prize."

So you just be quiet, Dev. You just be quiet and still.

Sssh-ssh. I can hear the god under the bed is coming. You can hear him too, can't you, Dev? So just be quiet and be still, and go to sleep."

Well, I I threw my head under the blanket. I buried my face in the pillow, and I fell quiet and still, although of course I did not sleep.

I was too frightened to sleep. I was too frightened to breathe.

I couldn't get the thought out of my head, that there was a god under my bed, and he was coming up from under the floorboards, and if I wasn't absolutely quiet and still, he would hear me, and he would pluck the limbs off me one by one.

We hear the faint, frightened breathing of YOUNG DEVEREAUX

DEVEREAUX:

It must have been two or three in the morning by then - that kind of still and uncomfortable quiet you only get in the hours before dawn.

I rolled over onto my stomach.

And then I heard it.

We hear it too. Soft, muffled movement.

DEVEREAUX:

There was scratching from somewhere beneath me.

Scratching, like nails on wood. Like something coming up from underneath the floorboards.

I wanted to call out to Francine, I wanted to wake her up, but I couldn't make a sound and I couldn't raise my face from the pillow, and the scratching got louder and louder and then I thought I heard **something** creaking out onto the boards beneath the bed, a long and inhuman slithering, and I felt the pressure of **something** pushing down upon the weight of the mattress as it rose up onto its feet beside me.

We hear it too. A horrid, heavy movement - and something that sounds like a roar.

The terrified breathing of YOUNG DEVEREAUX-

THE AMICUS HOTEL - RESTAURANT, INT, DAY

-becomes DEVEREAUX, breathing out hard as he remembers it.

SEBASTIAN:

(A little shocked)

...gods.

DEVEREAUX:

I flung the sheets off me, and I leapt out of bed, and I ran without looking back.

I remember throwing the door open, I remember dashing out into the balcony, and I can remember I heard Francine calling after me before the door to the room slammed shut.

I ran down the stairs and through the lobby and out into the car park and I crouched there, hands clutching my knees, shivering on a bonnet, staring up at the balcony.

There was no way I was brave enough to go back up there, I knew I could not go anywhere near that room, so I stared fixedly at the door instead.

And I waited, and I waited, and I prayed.

Silently, I pleaded with the God Under The Bed - please. Please. Give me back my sister.

I can't remember if I drifted off on the car bonnet, but I do remember that all at once the sun was rising and the motel owner was striding out across the car park towards me, he was calling out, "You OK, kid? You OK?", and I stammered out that something terrible had happened to my sister.

We went up to Room 41 together.

Francine was gone. Her things were gone - her rucksack, her toothbrush, her shoes.

There was no sign of any struggle. The bedsheets were neatly folded. The room-key was still on the bedside table.

And when the motel owner and I looked together, there was nothing underneath the bed.

He was sympathetic, and looking back, I know he didn't want to say what he was thinking - that I was making things up. That I'd had a nightmare, that I'd lost time.

That my sister had abandoned me.

He offered me another night in the motel - in another room - to sort myself out, but I couldn't stand the thought of staying there any longer, and I thought the God Under The Bed might come for me next.

I told him I was heading westwards to try and catch up with my sister.

"That's the spirit," he told me. "Never lose hope."

Anyway, I left the Rapture-and-Bliss behind, and I began walking south-east. Back towards Glottage. Back to the foster-home.

A long silence. SEBASTIAN is a little haunted by the strange story - a little less snarky, a little more cautiously sincere.

SEBASTIAN:
And you think this is **the** motel?

DEVEREAUX:
(Uncertainly)
It's never as you remember it, right?

Twenty-five years. Trauma really...it really does a number on your recall.

I've stayed at every single motel, hotel and rest-stop along this highway, even if it didn't match the description.

After a while, all of them just start to blend into one.

When I arrived last night, I didn't think this could possibly be the place. The carpet was a different shade, the lobby was the wrong shape.

I went and stood out in the carpark, and I looked up at the second floor balcony, and I thought I felt a kind of recognition.

The same terror I felt on the night.

And I wondered if this could be the place.

Silence. SEBASTIAN is now, quietly, gentler and kinder with DEVEREAUX.

SEBASTIAN:
Is that why you asked for a room on the ground floor?

DEVEREAUX:
Yes, it is.

SEBASTIAN:
(Still with sympathy)
What exactly are you expecting to find here?

DEVEREAUX takes a breath - and sighs.

DEVEREAUX:
For a very long time growing up, I believed I'd summoned the God Under The Bed - that I thought about it too hard, I imagined it too well, and I brought a stray god to life in my terror, and then it took my sister.

I came out here in the hopes of freeing myself from that guilt. Shedding that weight.

Finding a way to move on from it.

SEBASTIAN considers this for a moment.

SEBASTIAN:

I'm guessing you had to take a long vacation from work to set out on this grand quest of yours.

DEVEREAUX:

No, I quit.

He says that calmly and seriously.

SEBASTIAN:

You're off-contract?

DEVEREAUX:

Paid sabbatical.

SEBASTIAN:

(Softly)

You must have done well for yourself.

SEBASTIAN sits back, considering the story.

SEBASTIAN:

(Practically)

Ok. You were right. The Amicus is a motel.

But it's a good place. It has...good bones to it.

After every guest leaves, I check beneath the bed and in the cupboard and I sweep it for any prayer-marks.

Basic good practice when you're cleaning a room.

Most folk are decent, but sometimes you'll get a traveller who decides to leave a little piece of their god behind - like a nasty joke, a bad-dream deity, something like that.

If you find it, you just have to sand it away before anyone else spends the night.

(Coming to a reasonable explanation)

Maybe that's what happened to you.

DEVEREAUX:

(Uncertain)

Maybe.

SEBASTIAN watches him for a moment. Then he asks,

SEBASTIAN:

Would you like to see the room?

THE AMICUS HOTEL: ROOM 41, INT, DAY

We hear the motel room door unlock.

DEVEREAUX's footsteps as he steps into the room.

SEBASTIAN:

(Watching from the door)

Think this could be it?

DEVEREAUX:

I don't know.

(Staring around)

I don't remember the wardrobe facing the bed like that. I remember wallpaper, not paint.

SEBASTIAN:

They could have moved it. Brought in new furniture.

Given everything a fresh coat of paint. It's been a long time, from what you said. Nothing keeps its shape forever.

DEVEREAUX:

(Distracted)

Twenty-five years.

You ever take up the paint?

SEBASTIAN:

It's all just as it was. I'm not really a decorator.

DEVEREAUX:
Do you mind if I look under the bed?

SEBASTIAN:
Sweep out any cobwebs you spot while you're down there.

DEVEREAUX grunts and gets onto his knees to examine under the bed. After a moment, SEBASTIAN comes forward.

SEBASTIAN:
Here - I've got a flashlight.

DEVEREAUX turns it on and examines the underside of the bed.

SEBASTIAN:
Anything?

DEVEREAUX:
(A little disappointed)
No. Nothing.

He taps the floorboards experimentally.

DEVEREAUX:
What's **under** the floorboards?

SEBASTIAN:
About a foot of crawlspace, filled with pipes and insulation. Beneath that, the first-floor rooms.

DEVEREAUX:
You've seen it?

SEBASTIAN:
Once, to fix a leak.

I'm not making a fortune out here - I try not to pull the place to pieces unless I have to.

DEVEREAUX:
And you've never had guests...go missing or anything like that?

SEBASTIAN:

(Calmly, casually)

Guests go missing all the time. That's why I charge upfront.

Most travellers on the highway aren't that sociable. Sometimes people check out without saying goodbye, or they don't stay for breakfast.

I don't take that one to heart.

But they take their cases with them, and they drive their cars away if they've got one. They just...drift on.

(Shrugging)

That's the real difference between a hotel and a motel, right?

In a hotel the ghosts stick around. In a motel they leave you after the first night.

DEVEREAUX:

(Not listening)

Any strange noises?

SEBASTIAN:

Like you said. Knocks, creaks. Pipes groan and the windows rattle.

But none of that's abnormal.

You could talk to every hotelier up and down the highway and they'll tell you how they drink their way through every winter to survive the empty corridors and the empty rooms. How they feel like they're being watched.

People aren't meant to live alone in places this big. It makes us lose our minds.

DEVEREAUX:

(Still exploring)

You sound as if you've never liked this place all that much.

SEBASTIAN:

(Softly)

Don't get me wrong. The Amicus saved me.

DEVEREAUX:

Do you mind if I sit on the bed?

SEBASTIAN:

(Kindly but firmly)

Dev, you can just go ahead and assume you're free to poke around at everything you like in this room.

DEVEREAUX sits with a sigh.

He contemplates the room for a moment.

Then he deflates.

DEVEREAUX:

Yeah, it's not the Rapture-and-Bliss.

I'm in the wrong place.

Silence.

SEBASTIAN:

Can you really be certain, though? That you'd recognise your motel if you saw it?

DEVEREAUX:

(Weakly, roughly)

I have to be certain. Otherwise what am I even out here for?

Silence. Then SEBASTIAN tries to cheer DEVEREAUX up.

SEBASTIAN:

You like, um, drinking whiskey?

DEVEREAUX:

(Softly)

Not at all.

SEBASTIAN:

That's good to hear, because the whiskey I'm about to fetch for you is very bad indeed, and I'm guessing you won't be able to tell the difference.

He walks back to the door.

SEBASTIAN:

Give me a minute, I'll be right back.

Just heading down to the bar, OK?

DEVEREAUX:
OK. Thank you.

He turns and leaves.

DEVEREAUX stays sitting on the bed. After a moment he lies back with a grunt.

He breathes, hard and heavy.

We stay with him in the silence.

The tick of the cuckoo clock grows louder.

And then - in a flash - we hear the terrified breathing of YOUNG DEVEREAUX.

DEVEREAUX turns - and we hear his breathing again. And again.

DEVEREAUX is having a panic attack.

THE RAPTURE-AND-BLISS, INT, NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

-and suddenly we're back with YOUNG DEVEREAUX, terrified, as we hear the slithering beside him.

A voice, distorted and slow, says,

THE MAN IN THE WALLS:
It'll...be...all...right...

AMICUS HOTEL (ROOM 41), INT, DAY

The cuckoo clock goes off. DEVEREAUX jolts awake with a gasp of terror.

SEBASTIAN is sitting next to him. He's kind, and he keeps joking out of kindness to prevent any awkwardness between them.

SEBASTIAN:
(Soothing)
Hey, hey, hey.

Ssssh, it's OK, it's OK.

Just a bad dream.

DEVEREAUX is breathing hard and a little delirious.

DEVEREAUX:

What-

SEBASTIAN:

You fell asleep.

Hate to say it, Dev, but I think you might be running a fever.

(Still unable to stop himself from teasing)

I brought the first aid kit and I don't think there's really anything in here that can help with that, but, uh -

(Gesturing at the kit)

-there are plasters and things!

(Kindly)

You didn't even notice you were sweating, did you?

DEVEREAUX:

How...long?

SEBASTIAN:

Maybe an hour.

I came back, found you like this. I drank your whiskey.

Then I came back up and I sat with you just in case anything crawled out from under the bed.

(Unnecessarily)

Nothing crawled out from under the bed.

DEVEREAUX:

(Realising something)

I...I think I've sweated all over your sheets.

SEBASTIAN:

Don't worry about it, Dev.

DEVEREAUX:

My...my sister called me Dev.

SEBASTIAN:

I know. I'm taking liberties.

DEVEREAUX:

(Trying to get to his feet)

I should be going-

He tries to rise and instantly falls back.

SEBASTIAN:

Well, that's the interesting thing, actually, because we've got a late checkout policy here at the Amicus, and it applies specifically to sweating, shivering invalids.

He gives DEVEREAUX a gentle pat on the arm.

SEBASTIAN:

I'd give it a day at least.

Do you want to be in another room, or are you OK sleeping here?

DEVEREAUX:

I don't know if I can stand.

SEBASTIAN:

Fair enough.

He gets up and goes to the door, opening it. We hear the rain coming in.

SEBASTIAN:

I'm gonna leave the door ajar, OK? So you can see out.

And I'll be back in a while to check on you.

DEVEREAUX:

(Protesting weakly)

That's not-

SEBASTIAN:

(Calmly but firmly)

Dev. Don't worry about it. There's nowhere you need to be.

Just take it easy, rest up, sleep well and feel better.

If the god under the bed comes to eat you in the night, I'll wake you up so you don't miss it.

He turns and goes.

DEVEREAUX lies there, breathing hard and feverish, unable to rest.

HIGHWAY, EXT, DAY

The rain continues to pour as cars roar past-

CHITTERLING MASCOT:

(Oinking)

Starting to drift off on the road? Seeing things that aren't really there?

An injection of processed protein and triple-cooked carbohydrates is exactly what you need.

Come on by to the Chitterling's Chapel. Just ten miles down the road.

HIGHWAY, EXT, DAY

-and then the rain has ended. We can hear birdsong along the roadside. A day or two has passed.

CHITTERLING MASCOT:

(Oinking)

These are today's Chitterling's Choices.

Full rack of ribs, beef. 50% off.

Full rack of ribs, pork. 50% off.

Sharer's slaw with burnt ends-

AMICUS BAR, INT, DAY

We hear the jukebox in the corner whirring - and then it begins to play gentle music.

DEVEREAUX is propped up at the bar. SEBASTIAN is shaking a cocktail shaker.

Over the course of the scene, SEBASTIAN is clearly starting to flirt with DEVEREAUX. DEVEREAUX takes some time to actually pick up on this.

DEVEREAUX:
(Softly, weakly)
What are you making?

SEBASTIAN:
Well, we've got a couple of cocktail kits behind the bar. No instruction books, though.

So I have poured some whiskey and ginger and schnapps into this shaker, and now I'm shaking it.

He shakes it.

DEVEREAUX:
(Abashed)
I don't know why you're being so kind to me.

SEBASTIAN:
I think people **should** be kind to one another.

DEVEREAUX:
(Perhaps a little softly self-loathing)
People aren't usually kind to me.

They don't often like me.

SEBASTIAN:
I like you, Dev.
(Stopping his shaking)
I expertly calculate that this has been shaken for precisely long enough.

He pours them both a cocktail and slides DEV's drink along the bar.

SEBASTIAN:
(Joking)
What, you think I'm lying? You think I make delicious original-recipe cocktails for everyone who stops by here?

DEVEREAUX:
No, I don't think you're lying. I just don't understand it.

SEBASTIAN is quiet for a moment as he shakes.

SEBASTIAN:
So where to next?

DEVEREAUX:
(Simply)
There's only one direction as far as I'm concerned.

SEBASTIAN:
Next motel along the road is the Golden Beacon.

Owned by the Swinsons - nice old couple, and they've been there for decades. So I don't think it's your motel, but you never know.

I can call ahead.

Silence.

SEBASTIAN:
Think you'll recognise your motel owner if you see him again?

DEVEREAUX:
I hope so.

SEBASTIAN:
If something **did** take your sister, you know it's odds to evens that he was caught up in it.

DEVEREAUX:
I know.

SEBASTIAN:
(Lightly)
That's why you asked me if I inherited the motel. In case I was caught up in it.

DEVEREAUX:
Yes, it was.

SEBASTIAN:
(Joking)
And that's why you didn't eat my eggs. In case I'd poisoned them.

DEVEREAUX:

(Joking, but deadpan)

No, the eggs were just disgusting. Like this cocktail.

SEBASTIAN chuckles.

DEVEREAUX:

(A little nervously)

I don't think you're caught up in anything. Are you?

SEBASTIAN stares at him for a moment - then answers sincerely.

SEBASTIAN:

(Honestly)

I haven't been caught up in anything since I was fourteen.

My people were pig farmers. Don't know if you've seen how they conduct the Chitterling's sacrifices, but it'll either numb you to the entire business or it'll put you off for life.

I had to do a lot of the dirty work. My old man used to say it'd toughen me up.

(Lightly but tensely)

It worked. Just not in the way he expected.

Silence between them. The song changes on the jukebox.

SEBASTIAN:

(Conversationally)

You see those people out north, the Children of the Woundtree? Anti-god, anti-sacrifice?

DEVEREAUX:

I've been following the news, yeah.

(Softly, a little conspiratorially)

Good for them, honestly.

SEBASTIAN:

(Nodding in quiet agreement)

Good for them.

DEVEREAUX:

Everyone at work was saying - the draft's gone too far. We need tangible, meaningful sacrificial reform.

SEBASTIAN:
(As a riposte)
We need to burn all of it to the fucking ground.

DEVEREAUX does not respond.

SEBASTIAN:
(*Teasing*)
Maybe you and I should head out and join them in the hills.

DEVEREAUX:
(*Faintly, taking the suggestion seriously*)
Those people are...very brave, I think.

And I'm not like them at all. I never had a lot of courage.

SEBASTIAN:
(*As kindly and firmly as ever*)
You left your job to go out and look for your sister.

That takes courage.

DEVEREAUX:
Not much. I've got security. I've got a safety net.
(*A worrying thought occurring to him*)
Are you on a contract, Sebastian?

SEBASTIAN:
(*Dismissively*)
Yeah, I'm safe. I've got one of those consumer contracts with the Church Electric. Premium membership and a special gas meter.

Hasn't saved me from the power cuts, but nobody's enlisting me.
(*As an afterthought*)
Can you call me Seb, please?

DEVEREAUX:
Of course. I'm sorry.

SEBASTIAN:
There's no need to be sorry.

DEVEREAUX chuckles weakly.

SEBASTIAN:

(Appraising DEVEREAUX)

You seem better today, you know. Bit more light in your eyes.

The song changes. Silence.

SEBASTIAN:

(Changing the subject)

It's early yet. What would you like to do with your evening?

DEVEREAUX:

What, uh - what do you want to do?

SEBASTIAN:

(Firmly)

I want you to pick something that makes **you** happy.

We can head up to the roof, see if we can spot the missiles falling over the coast, toast the imminent collapse and surrender of our nation-state.

I can make you another drink, if you can stand that.

DEVEREAUX considers.

DEVEREAUX:

(Avoiding the cocktail suggestion)

How do we get up to the roof?

SEBASTIAN:

(Chuckling)

Absolutely no idea, I've never been.

(Coming up with more ideas)

We can play pool right here in the bar.

(Now very obviously flirting)

We can dance.

DEVEREAUX:

I don't think I can play pool and I certainly can't dance. I'm not much good at anything.

SEBASTIAN:

Why do you insist on pitying yourself like that?

DEVEREAUX:
(Caught off-guard)
It's not very charming, I know.

SEBASTIAN:
I didn't even realise you were trying to be charming.

DEVEREAUX:
(Embarrassed)
Well, I'm-

You're very charming, Seb, and so I suppose I feel like I have to live up to that.

SEBASTIAN takes the compliment and sips his drink.

SEBASTIAN:
What did you do to pass the time with your sister?

Silence for a moment.

DEVEREAUX:
Well, we...we played games.

SEBASTIAN:
Perfect. So play a game with me. Entertain me.

DEVEREAUX:
I don't want to bore you.

SEBASTIAN:
(Kindly)
Impossible. You're too charming for that.

DEVEREAUX thinks for a moment. He's a little embarrassed.

DEVEREAUX:
Um.
(Reciting)
I was on the road to Glottage, when I met with an...aardvark.

SEBASTIAN:
(Realising)
Oh, I know this one. It's...it's a memory game, right?

DEVEREAUX:

(Softly, remembering)

Francine liked memory games. So that's what we'd play.

She used to make me repeat facts about our parents.

Things she'd remembered.

That Dad's hair was long and curly, and Mom liked to wear red. That she laughed deep from her belly and he had a mad cackle that went on and on.

She made me repeat those things to her, over and over again. Like prayers.

So we didn't lose sight of them.

(Embarrassed)

I thought this was a lighter alternative.

SEBASTIAN takes this in, sympathetically. Then he speaks.

SEBASTIAN:

I was on the road to Glottage, when I met with an aardvark, and...a brave man who should be kinder to himself.

They exchange glances. DEVEREAUX is embarrassed, but he acknowledges and repeats it.

DEVEREAUX:

I was on the road to Glottage, when I met with an aardvark, a brave man who should be kinder to himself, and...

(Bravely)

...comfort.

Comfort that I wasn't expecting.

SEBASTIAN takes it.

SEBASTIAN:

(Teasingly)

I was on the road to Glottage, when I met with an aardvark, a brave man who should be kinder to himself, comfort that I wasn't expecting, and delicious cocktails and eggs.

DEVEREAUX chuckles. The back-and-forth has become its own kind of game now.

DEVEREAUX:

On my way to Glottage, I met with an aardvark, a brave man who should be kinder to himself, comfort that I wasn't expecting, delicious cocktails and eggs, and, um...

(He's embarrassed, but brave enough to say it)

...electricity in the air.

Electricity.

(Pause; looking for reciprocity)

Is that, uh...?

Silence.

A long silence.

DEVEREAUX begins to panic.

DEVEREAUX:

(Joking his way out of embarrassment)

It's your turn.

If you don't want to say electricity, you don't have to say electricity, I, I, I meant to say elephant.

(Nervously)

Elephant.

Silence.

SEBASTIAN:

I don't want to play this game any more, Dev.

DEVEREAUX:

(Assuming the worst and panicking back into politeness)

That's - that's no problem at all-

Uh, why not?

SEBASTIAN smiles. He is, as ever, far more charming than Dev.

SEBASTIAN:

I'm not waiting until we get to K.

DEVEREAUX:
What's K?

-oh-

He makes a small noise of surprise as SEBASTIAN leans in and kisses him.

They lean in further and kiss again.

AMICUS HOTEL, EXT, NIGHT

Outside DEVEREAUX's room, SEBASTIAN and DEVEREAUX stop to kiss again. SEBASTIAN is understandably leading DEVEREAUX.

SEBASTIAN:
You sure you're feeling up to this?

DEVEREAUX is fumbling for his keys.

DEVEREAUX:
(Breathless, absolutely fucking up for this)
Yes, please.

SEBASTIAN:
(Amused)
Ah, such a godsdamned gentleman. What does f stand for?

We hear the door crack open, they kiss as they fall through it, and-

DEVEREAUX'S ROOM, INT, NIGHT

-and the cuckoo clock sounds.

SEBASTIAN and DEVEREAUX are lying in bed together. They've just had sex.

DEVEREAUX:
I'm sorry if that wasn't very good.

SEBASTIAN:
(Softly, satisfied, chuckling)
Now is not the moment to say stupid things, Dev.

Silence. And then DEVEREAUX immediately begins to beat himself up.

He tosses and turns in bed.

DEVEREAUX:

(Under his breath, self-flagellating)

I'm meant to be finding Francine. I'm meant to be figuring out what happened to my sister.

Instead I've been lying about drinking cocktails and...and...

SEBASTIAN:

(Head in pillow)

Sex.

DEVEREAUX:

I'm meant to be back at work in two weeks. And I've made no progress.

I've got no time for...for something like this.

SEBASTIAN:

There should always be time for something like this.

(Rolling over; firmly)

Dev. Hey. Look at me.

You have not failed your sister, you have not failed your mission, by lying here in a warm bed next to me.

You have not let yourself down by permitting yourself a moment's joy and connection on a vast and endless road.

It's not wasted time. This is something you deserve.

DEVEREAUX tries to calm down.

DEVEREAUX:

I really don't know how you can be so...so chipper and confident all the time.

SEBASTIAN:

(Gently, thinking aloud)

I'm not, really. I just sound confident.

Helps me feel like I'm in control instead of adrift.

DEVEREAUX:
I mostly feel adrift.

SEBASTIAN:
Wouldn't trust anyone who didn't.

DEVEREAUX:
Sometimes, Seb, I...I feel very dark about the state of my life and the world around me.

I feel like I'm walking in a fugue. Like if I keep stumbling forward I'll just fall off the horizon and disappear.

Silence.

SEBASTIAN:
(Gently teasing)
Mmm. You've got that look about you.

DEVEREAUX:
And I can't go on living like that, so of course I come up with a damn stupid idea like this one.

I tell myself, maybe I only feel like this because of what happened to Francine when I was young.

So if I can set out and find her, if I can solve the mystery, if I can fix that part of myself - the fugue will lift. The darkness will fade.

And I'll become who I was meant to be.

Silence for a moment.

SEBASTIAN:
I feel dark as well. All the time.

But you have to remember how remarkable it is.

DEVEREAUX:
What's remarkable?

SEBASTIAN:
(Being charming again)

That every once in a while, even in the dark, in spite of everything around us -

-you can still stretch your fingers out and touch something beautiful.

Silence.

SEBASTIAN's turn to confess.

SEBASTIAN:

When I left home, Dad told me, "you'll come to a bad end for this."

Like a curse upon my back.

"Choose this road and there'll be no satisfaction, no lasting happiness. You'll never find your peace.

Your life will turn on you, Sebastian, loss after loss, betrayal after betrayal, just like you turned on your family."

You'll end up alone and in terrible pain, with nothing but your final sorrow and your suffering - exactly as you deserve."

(Shaking his head)

First time in his life the fucker had any kind of emotional articulacy and he wasted it on **that?**

Silence.

SEBASTIAN:

A curse like that, you grow up in the shadow of it, you're quite certain that you're going to die alone and in pain-

-and then everyone along the road who tells you otherwise is the servant of some fucking god trying to make use of you.

Hope and happiness, they're lures. They're other people's stories.

Silence.

SEBASTIAN:

Can I confess something to you, Dev?

DEVEREAUX:

Go on.

SEBASTIAN hesitates - and then admits it.

SEBASTIAN:

(The first time he's ever told anyone this - cautiously and hesitantly)
I didn't buy this place at all.

I stole it.

HIGHWAY, EXT, DAY (FLASHBACK)

Cold, howling winds.

SEBASTIAN:

It was late midwinter, the year before last; I was travelling along the highway. No money, no food, no job. I was drifting.

I was thinking about turning around, going home, begging for forgiveness. I needed a miracle.

And then I found it. The sign still flashing - Amicus, Amicus. Friend, Friend. Like it was exactly what I needed.

We hear the door slam.

DEVEREAUX'S ROOM, INT, NIGHT

SEBASTIAN:

Lights were out, everything locked up. The key was under the doormat. The bedsheets were in the closet.

I walked the corridors, I explored the rooms.

It was empty. Completely abandoned. A refuge, right when I needed it.

Amicus had already left.

I never even met him. I only know he existed because the other motel owners on the highway told me this belonged to another guy years back.

People didn't seem to really care that I'd taken over - they were just happy to see the lights were back on.

And soon enough travellers started stopping by again.

I stopped surviving and I started living here.

This place saved me.

But...I never trusted it with my whole heart. I didn't change the wallpaper, and I didn't move the clocks.

You don't want to look too close at a miracle, do you? Because maybe it's not a miracle at all.

Maybe it's the last trick that - that's being played on you before you get the bad ending that you really deserve.

So when you came to me and told me about Francine, and your God under the bed - *I thought, well, that must be it. That's the trick.*

This place wasn't my miracle. It was your motel, the Rapture-and-Bliss, just biding its time.

DEVEREAUX:
But it's not the same motel.

SEBASTIAN:
That's worse. Then I'll have to keep waiting for whatever the real trick is.

Silence.

SEBASTIAN turns over in bed.

SEBASTIAN:
Would you like to stay with me a little longer, Dev?

A few days. No more than that. I-

DEVEREAUX surprises both of them by answering, quickly.

DEVEREAUX:
Yes. I'll stay.

But I don't like the ground floor rooms.

SEBASTIAN:

I can put you back on the top floor. Room 30 - right on the end, other side from Room 41.

DEVEREAUX:
Just in case?

SEBASTIAN:
People like you and I, Dev, we can never entirely let go of our caution.

AMICUS HOTEL (BOILER ROOM), INT, DAY

We hear SEBASTIAN, working on another boiler fix.

Behind him, the radio is playing a SECURITY ANNOUNCEMENT.

SECURITY ANNOUNCEMENT:

The Consolidated Linger Straits are conducting aerial bombardments against civilian settlements across the northern coast of the Peninsula.

Their god-rockets may fall without warning - and without mercy.

Be prepared for anything.

DEVEREAUX'S ROOM, INT, DAY

-we cut to DEVEREAUX, in bed, still breathing hard and ragged, as if he's experiencing another flashback-

AMICUS HOTEL (RESTAURANT), INT, DAY

-and back to SEBASTIAN, who's sweeping. The SECURITY ANNOUNCEMENT continues to play.

On the other side of the room, DEVEREAUX is reading a book.

SECURITY ANNOUNCEMENT:

If a saint-strike lands in your neighbourhood, remember - prayer-marks may be activated by hearing, by sight, or by touch.

Follow these simple instructions to deal with the problem.

First, remove your ear-plugs from your government-issued package and insert them firmly into your ears.

DEVEREAUX'S ROOM, INT, DAY

-and then we cut back to DEVEREAUX, breathing hard...

...and after a moment, SEBASTIAN rises in bed beside him, also breathing hard.

AMICUS HOTEL (KITCHEN), INT, DAY

SEBASTIAN is chopping carrots.

SECURITY ANNOUNCEMENT:

Next, remove your blindfold from your government-issued package and put it securely on. Remember to secure your own blindfold before attempting to put on anybody else's.

Then, and only then, should you leave your home and attempt to deal with the saint-strike.

If your community has installed its own public-usage saint dedicated to the Flame Dampener, simply release it from its cage and stand well back-

DEVEREAUX walks past, grabs SEBASTIAN, gives him a kiss, walks on.

SEBASTIAN, distracted, begins to cut carrots again - and then cuts his own finger with a grimace.

DEVEREAUX'S ROOM, INT, DAY

DEVEREAUX opens his window. We can hear birdsong outside.

DEVEREAUX sighs - more happily, this time.

AMICUS HOTEL, EXT, DAY

A car trunk slams.

CARPENTER and HAYWARD have arrived. Cabin fever has well and truly set in, and they're annoyed at each other, arguing about nothing.

CARPENTER:

Can't even believe we're having this conversation-

HAYWARD:

'Bluebirds Perish Mid-Flight' was an original single by Bebbie and the Cat-Attack-

CARPENTER:

It was not! That was a **cover**, and the original hit single was by Suzie Cliff, sorely overlooked despite being vocally superior-

AMICUS LOBBY, INT. DAY

-and we hear a bell ringing insistently upon the lobby counter.

HAYWARD and CARPENTER continue to argue as SEBASTIAN emerges from a back room.

HAYWARD:

How would you even have heard about it? You were squatting with your Parish in your river-mud houses-

CARPENTER:

We had radio!

SEBASTIAN:

Hi! Hi! Welcome to the Amicus Hotel! How can I help you today?

CARPENTER spills a handful of coins over the counter.

CARPENTER:

We want two rooms just for tonight, we want double beds, and we want those rooms to be a reasonable distance from each other.

HAYWARD:

(Deliberately winding her up)

Three nights ago you said you were starting to like me.

CARPENTER:

Should have been an impossible thing to fuck up, shouldn't it?

(To SEBASTIAN)

A **considerable** distance between those two rooms.

I don't know if you've got separate outbuildings, or a hot air balloon, or...

HAYWARD:

(Calmly)

My friend has gone some time without coffee, and she's been proven wrong on a particular detail from her childhood.

It's all made her very cranky. I'm not taking it personally.

CARPENTER:

(To SEBASTIAN)

Do you know 'Bluebirds Perish Mid-Flight'?

SEBASTIAN is busy consulting the logbook.

SEBASTIAN:

I have not heard of it.

CARPENTER:

(To HAYWARD)

Younger generation, huh?

HAYWARD chuckles.

SEBASTIAN:

(Just ignoring all of that)

OK, so I've got two rooms for you. 45 on the second floor, which is the top floor. 12, on the ground floor.

CARPENTER:

I'll take 12. His bullshit is airborne, it wafts upwards.

HAYWARD:

(Getting in a dig)

Bebbie and the Cat Attack came first.

(Politely, to SEBASTIAN)

Is your restaurant open?

SEBASTIAN:

(A little harried)

Uh, I can open it. Just give me ten minutes, OK?

HAYWARD:

Sure, we can go freshen up.

He hefts his bag.

CARPENTER:

Maybe freshen up your musical knowledge, you obstinate fucking mule-

SEBASTIAN claps his hands.

SEBASTIAN:
Perfect. Be right back.

DEVEREAUX'S ROOM, INT, DAY

The room door bangs open.

SEBASTIAN:
(Laughing, ready to share the gossip)
We've got guests, and they are quite a pair-

He stops dead.

On the other side of the room, DEVEREAUX is closing his suitcase.

SEBASTIAN is hurt. DEVEREAUX is quietly embarrassed and withdrawn.

SEBASTIAN:
(Softly)
You've packed.

Dev. What are you doing?

DEVEREAUX:
I'm going back to work. Back to Glottage.

Reality awaits.
(Explaining himself)
My sister abandoned me twenty-five years ago upon this highway.

I'm not going to find her here. I'm not going to find any kind of certainty.

I need to accept that; I need to stop chasing after something I can't control.

Thank you, Seb. You really did help me a lot. You've...you've cured me, if you want to look at it that way.

Silence.

SEBASTIAN:

(Angry)

Were you trying to sneak away in the night?

DEVEREAUX:

It's the daytime.

SEBASTIAN:

Dev.

DEVEREAUX:

(Trying to joke)

It's a motel. Like you said, all the ghosts drift on.

(More seriously)

I...look, I knew you'd try and convince me to stay for longer.

SEBASTIAN:

(Frustrated)

I'd want to **talk** to you, yes.

Why wouldn't you want to talk to me?

DEVEREAUX:

I told you I wasn't brave.

SEBASTIAN comes forward.

SEBASTIAN:

Look. Give up on finding your sister. Give up on anything you like.

But you don't have to go so soon.

Why - why can't you stay for a few days longer, Dev?

Is that really so unthinkable? Why can't you give yourself that?

DEVEREAUX:

Because I'd want to stay for longer.

They stare at each other.

From far downstairs, we can hear the ringing of the counter bell again.

SEBASTIAN:

I need to get down to the kitchen.

(Pleading)

Look, I- please, Dev, will you just...will you wait for me to get back before you go anywhere? Please?

And we can talk? Can you promise me that?

Silence.

DEVEREAUX:

Okay. I'll wait.

I promise, Seb. I'll wait, and we can talk before I go.

SEBASTIAN:

(Relieved)

Thank you. Thank you, Dev. I won't be long-

He turns and rushes downstairs.

DEVEREAUX sighs.

He goes to the door, closes it, and then walks back.

He sits on the creaking bed.

He starts to read. The ticking of the cuckoo clock grows louder and louder.

And then, horribly, the sound of something vegetative, moving and growing in the room.

The sound rises, and rises-

-until we hear something entirely unexpected.

FRANCINE:

(A strange, echoing voice)

Found you.

DEVEREAUX:

(Dumbfounded)

Francine?

AMICUS HOTEL (RESTAURANT, INT, NIGHT).

We can hear *SEBASTIAN* hurriedly cooking in the background. *CARPENTER* and *HAYWARD* are arguing. *HAYWARD* is now definitely trying to wind *CARPENTER* up.

HAYWARD:

-in fact, I'd argue that her musical contribution was actually overhyped for some time due to her tumultuous relationships with Jax Shine - all those headlines, ugh!

CARPENTER:

"Overhyped"? Are you...are you **trying** to annoy me, Hayward?

Silence. HAYWARD starts to chuckle as he sips his beer.

CARPENTER:

OK, I see how it is. Well played.

CARPENTER turns her attention to SEBASTIAN instead.

CARPENTER:

(Yelling from a distance)

Hey! Excuse me! How's it coming?

SEBASTIAN:

(Flustered)

Yeah, it's good!

You wanted waffles, right?

A long silence. CARPENTER, of course, wanted pancakes.

SEBASTIAN:

(Desperately)

...or was it crepes?

AMICUS HOTEL (MOTEL BAR), INT, NIGHT

The jukebox turns on.

-and we hear CARPENTER and HAYWARD touch glasses.

HAYWARD:

Cheers.

CARPENTER:

(Mollified)

Yeah, cheers.

Now, Misophonic Stew, that was an all-time album.

HAYWARD:

I don't remember that one.

CARPENTER:

Lead track had this epic guitar riff, it went, uh,

(Just making noises)

BAM-daddle-adda-BAM-whadda-dadda-

HAYWARD listens politely.

HAYWARD:

Mm. Mm-hm. Mm-hm. I think that's just noises.

CARPENTER:

No, it's not just noises-

SEBASTIAN pops his head through the door.

SEBASTIAN:

(Trying to get their attention)

I, uh, I just need to head upstairs for a second. You two OK for drinks before I go?

HAYWARD:

Yeah, thank you - we're just nursing these.

SEBASTIAN:

Great. Be right back.

They watch him go.

CARPENTER:

(Calmly)

Bottle's under the counter.

HAYWARD:

(Calmly)
I saw it.

He reaches over the counter and opens the bottle, pouring CARPENTER a measure.

HAYWARD:
Now, what was that guitar riff? The, ah-
(Mocking CARPENTER)
BAM-daddle-addle-adda-

CARPENTER mock-angrily slaps the counter - or possibly HAYWARD's shoulder.

CARPENTER:
No, it was, it was - don't fuck with me, Hayward - it was

BAM-daddle-adda-BAM-whadda-dadda—

DEVEREAUX'S ROOM, INT, NIGHT

-and SEBASTIAN enters the room.

SEBASTIAN:
Dev, I'm sorry that took so long. I-

He stops. A long silence.

The room is empty. DEVEREAUX has gone.

SEBASTIAN:
(To himself)
He left.

Of course he left.

He walks across the room and sits heavily on the bed.

Silence.

We hold the silence as he sits there.

Until-

SEBASTIAN:

(Under his breath)

No.

No, no, no, I don't believe that. I don't fucking believe that-

You wouldn't **do** that, Dev.

You're not unkind, you've never been unkind. You care about people. You care about your sister-

You wouldn't break a promise, that's not in you-

You wouldn't just leave. I don't believe that, I don't believe that for a second-

The cuckoo clock goes off - it makes SEBASTIAN start.

He takes a breath.

And then we hear that same vegetative slither - and DEVEREAUX's voice, echoing and strange.

WHISPER OF DEVEREAUX:

I've made it home. I can't believe I've found you. I've found you.

SEBASTIAN:

Dev? Where are you?

AMICUS HOTEL (KITCHEN), INT, NIGHT

SEBASTIAN comes running into the kitchen. He starts grabbing tools from the side.

We can faintly hear background music bleeding in from the bar.

SEBASTIAN:

(Panicking)

OK. OK.

It comes through the floor. That's what you said. The god comes up through the floor.

If it took Francine in Room 41, and it took you in here, it can get in anywhere, anywhere on the top floor, maybe...

He turns to go-

-then stops and grabs a knife from the rack.

In the background, we can hear CARPENTER and HAYWARD, both tipsily
BAM-daddle-adda-BAM-whadda-dadda-ing.

DEVEREAUX'S ROOM, INT, NIGHT

SEBASTIAN drops his tools and crouches on the floor.

SEBASTIAN:
(To himself)
Under the boards? Maybe a mark?

He picks up a hammer and begins to yank at one of the boards-

-but as SEBASTIAN strains, we suddenly hear the WHISPER OF DEVEREAUX again, making him stumble back.

*WHISPER OF DEVEREAUX:
I'm here, Francine. Mom. Dad. I made it home. I've found you.*

SEBASTIAN:
(Weakly)
Dev.

How am I meant to find you?

Silence.

And then, slowly, SEBASTIAN realises something.

SEBASTIAN:
(Slowly)
You said you buried your face in the pillow.

And then you heard it - underneath you.

Not underneath you. Behind you.

Because you were lying on your stomach.

You remembered it wrong, Dev. It wasn't coming from underneath you, it was coming from **above** you.

He pulls up a chair, stands on it, and begins to press on the ceiling, straining to do so.

SEBASTIAN:

How do I get up there, Seb? A...a button? A switch?

He stands there for a moment, then drops, grabs the hammer, hops back up-

-and begins to smash the plaster. He tears and pulls at it with his hands-

-but there's nothing there.

SEBASTIAN;

(Desperately)

There's nothing there, Dev.

How is there nothing there?

Finally, he offers up a kind of desperate prayer to the motel.

SEBASTIAN:

Open up. Just - please open up.

I know you're there. I know you took him.

Please. Open up and let me in.

Silence.

The cuckoo clock stops chiming.

And hidden mechanisms of flesh in the walls of the hotel begin to move. The plaster peels back.

A great vegetative staircase opens up in the wall, leading upwards into the ceiling.

SEBASTIAN is astonished- but after a moment, resolved.

He grabs the knife, turns on the flashlight.

SEBASTIAN:

Hang on, Dev. I'm coming.

I'm coming-

He scrambles up the staircase and begins to climb..

Silence.

After a moment, the room shifts and changes again, sealing him in.

HAUNT OF THE RAPTURE

This is no attic, but something far grander and stranger; it sounds almost like a garden. Roots and blooms twist and move.

This is a giant space, an unexplored labyrinth. The haunt of a forgotten god.

SEBASTIAN walks, gingerly.

SEBASTIAN:
(Softly)
Dev? Dev, are you here?

He keeps walking.

Behind him, we hear his footprints springing up as vegetation, a new HOPEFUL BLOOM.

The plant grows, and grows-

-and then bursts with a horrid sound. A cuckoo-clock bursts forth from the flower.

SEBASTIAN walks on.

SEBASTIAN:
Dev?

DEVEREAUX-IN-HOPE:
(A strange and distant echo)
I'm here. Francine. Mom. Dad. I've made it home.

SEBASTIAN:
Dev?! Dev, where are you?

He breaks into a run.

Behind him, another HOPEFUL BLOOM erupts and bursts - taking on the form of a whining microphone.

SEBASTIAN comes to a halt, lost.

DEVEREAUX-IN-HOPE:
(A strange and distant echo)
I've found you! I've found you!

SEBASTIAN:
(Calling out)
Dev! Dev! I'm here, it's me!

DEVEREAUX-IN-HOPE:
(A strange and distant echo)
I'm here...

And then, echoing out from the passageways as if over the radio, we hear a distant and aged voice, making SEBASTIAN gasp and stumble.

THE MAN IN THE WALLS is surprisingly gentle, surprisingly kind. There's nothing sinister or menacing in his tone. He's genuinely trying to help SEBASTIAN.

THE MAN IN THE WALLS:
He's up here, Sebastian. He's here with me, in the heart of the Rapture.

We're both waiting for you here.

SEBASTIAN gasps and stagger back to his feet.

THE MAN IN THE WALLS:
(With quiet pride)
I apologise. I didn't mean to frighten you.

I knew you'd come looking for him. You were always braver than you realised.

SEBASTIAN:
...Amicus?

THE MAN IN THE WALLS:
(Gently amused)
Your predecessor? No, no. I predate him. I was already in the walls when he came here.

The voice seems to be coming from another direction now.

THE MAN IN THE WALLS:

I'm your very first benefactor, Sebastian.

I'm the one who's watched you from the walls, I'm the one who's followed you from corridor to corridor as you've made beds, greeted guests, cleaned away her cobwebs.

I've watched you growing into your inheritance with a considerable amount of pride.

SEBASTIAN begins to walk in the direction of the voice.

THE MAN IN THE WALLS:

Better stop walking. Careful!

SEBASTIAN gasps and comes up short - as the blooms and roots rise up like a wall in front of him.

THE MAN IN THE WALLS:

The walls of the Rapture shift and change, as they need to.

I've never been able to control them.

SEBASTIAN changes direction - eeps walking.

THE MAN IN THE WALLS:

It's a long way in the dark, I know. And you may feel lost in here.

Despair is an endless labyrinth.

But you'll find your way to me, and after that you'll understand everything.

Don't give up hope.

You're going to rescue Devereaux.

It's not going to end in tragedy.

This will only be a passing moment of fear and unhappiness, and you will both be better for having experienced it.

He will stay with you in this place, and his pain will flake from him, and your lives will turn to joy at last like silver hair turning to white.

It will be the very best kind of love story.

SEBASTIAN stops walking.

He has no idea which way to go next - so he calls out, trying to keep THE MAN IN THE WALLS talking.

SEBASTIAN:

(Calling out)

You...you were the God Under the Bed.

A moment of silence.

THE MAN IN THE WALLS:

(Gently amused)

Are you trying to keep me talking, Sebastian?

You don't need to trick me. I'll lead you right to the inner sanctum.

Follow the sound of the cuckoos, Sebastian. They herald the coming of spring.

And ahead, we hear the BLOOMS-IN-HOPE bursting open - and the sound of distant cuckoos.

SEBASTIAN runs after them.

His footsteps fade.

And then we hear him running in again, from another direction, still lost.

THE MAN IN THE WALLS:

(Encouraging)

I'll explain everything to you, Sebastian, before you save him. There'll be no mysteries left.

SEBASTIAN:

(Keeping him talking)

Explain it to me now. Help me understand.

Silence. Then-

THE MAN IN THE WALLS:

You already understand. Because you're a compassionate soul, just as I am.

SEBASTIAN runs on, in the direction of the voice-

PIG FARM (FLASHBACK), INT, DAY

-and he stumbles into muddy water with a gasp and a splash.

All around us, we can hear the grunting and snorts of pigs. This is SEBASTIAN's childhood.

He presses on, wading through the mud.

THE MAN IN THE WALLS:

We love and we pity them in equal measure, Sebastian. These poor forlorn creatures, these ghosts who rest for a night within our walls, before drifting on.

They drop their bags at reception, tired and weak, their eyes haunted by the road that lies behind them, and a smile only rises upon their lips when they talk about their destinations.

Dear Francine. Dear Devereaux.

We can change the name of the motel, we can spruce her up and apply a fresh lick of paint to make her feel like something new - but it's the travellers who look just as tired and unhappy as they did last year.

You and I, we know their journeys will never lead them to anything but despair, but we love them for persevering.

How cruel would it be, to rob them of their hope by letting them drift on to that destination?

There was never a god under the bed. There was never anything to be frightened of here.

The only deity that feeds in this place is the Rapture herself, and she bestows wondrous blessings upon all who are delivered to her.

You've always been her priest, although you did not know it.

HIGHWAY (FLASHBACK), EXT, NIGHT

SEBASTIAN stumbles out onto the highway. He keeps pushing on, forever pushing on, to find DEVEREAUX.

THE MAN IN THE WALLS:

(Continuing on)

Hope built this place, after all.

It's soaked into the bones, the foundations of this motel.

It isn't about which way the rooms face, Sebastian. It never was.

(Dismissive)

A hotel is a, a **venue**, a squatting place for tourists.

(Reverent)

A motel is something **sacred**. A bastion to hope, along the endless road.

A traveller's shrine, a stopping-place of comfort and relief in a world of uncertainty. A place where we can dream of journey's end and our final destination.

Motels are cathedrals to hope.

SEBASTIAN hurries his pace, breathing hard.

Ahead of him, we can hear the whirring of the animatronic CHITTERLING MASCOT.

SEBASTIAN is back at the motel.

He staggers on, fumbling for his keys-

THE MAN IN THE WALLS:

(Supportive)

You're so close now, you're already there.

THE RAPTURE-AND-BLISS (LOBBY), INT

-the front door unlocks, and SEBASTIAN steps into the RAPTURE-AND-BLISS.

.

It's an audibly huge, cathedral-like space.

As he walks, we hear the BLOOMS-IN-HOPE twist to slam the door shut behind him.

THE MAN IN THE WALLS:

(Encouragingly)

You've arrived. You're in the inner sanctum now, the heart of the Rapture.

It's been here waiting for you all of this time.

SEBASTIAN keeps walking.

And ahead, we can hear the twisting of ropes and the happy whispers of HUNDREDS OF LOST GUESTS, hanging from the rafters.

SEBASTIAN stops walking.

THE MAN IN THE WALLS:

Can you see them?

The Rapture doesn't kill them; she keeps them safe.

Your predecessor Amicus is up here, too, twisting on his rope. And his predecessor. And hers.

Yours is a magnificent lineage.

SEBASTIAN:

(Calling out)

Dev? Dev, where are you?

Dev?

He runs on.

THE MAN IN THE WALLS:

He's here, Sebastian. Fourth row, third on the right.

Dangling beside his sister. He's **happy**.

He's reached his destination.

SEBASTIAN:

Dev!

SEBASTIAN has found DEVEREAUX, dangling in an embrace of roots and blooms - still very much asleep.

DEVEREAUX:

Mom! Dad! I can't believe I've really found you. I've found you. I've found you.

SEBASTIAN:

(Pleading)

Dev, please wake up-

THE MAN IN THE WALLS:

He's watching a front door open, and his mother, and his father, and Francine, are all coming out, running, to greet him.

He's growing old alongside them. Family celebrations and laughter.

He'll keep on like that, a lifetime's joy playing out before his eyes, until his body withers and rots a hundred years from now-

And both of them are happy at last.

SEBASTIAN:

(Frantically)

How do I get you loose from this? Dev? How do I get you out?

Dev, **wake up!**

The MAN IN THE WALLS continues talking.

SEBASTIAN draws his knife and tries to cut the ropes - but each time, the BLOOMS-IN-HOPE grow back.

THE MAN IN THE WALLS:

Take it easier on yourself. You've got plenty of time.

(Reminiscing happily)

I felt so guilty, the first time Devereaux fled from me. I always remembered him. He was so young, but already so full of pain.

When I took his sister, when I came down from the ceiling and dropped the garrote about her neck and I claimed her for the Rapture, I watched as the struggling stopped and the fear left her eyes and she fell into our god's embrace-

-and it was such a beautiful thing. To see her smile at last.

I wished he could have had that for himself, the young boy - instead of drifting on.

But the Rapture summoned him back here in time, of course, and I should have expected that.

Where else could he possibly have gone?

The BLOOMS-IN-HOPE, growing back again, knock the knife out of SEBASTIAN's hand.

He continues to plead with DEVEREAUX.

SEBASTIAN:

Dev! Dev!

THE MAN IN THE WALLS:

(Sorrowfully)

You're frightened for him now.

That's the pity of it.

They lure us in with love stories, and then they break us with unhappy endings, and they've been doing it since time began.

Well, you're done with unhappy endings, Sebastian.

You're almost at the end of your journey, and it's an ending that'll make you smile.

Can you see me moving in the dark yet, Sebastian?

SEBASTIAN gasps. He dives for the knife, picking it up again, and takes a stand, gazing out into the darkness. He can see nothing.

SEBASTIAN:

(Lying)

Yes. Yes, I can see you.

And you'd better not fucking move-

THE MAN IN THE WALLS:

(Just as gently and kindly as before)

Let me tell you what's going to happen next.

It'll hurt - for a moment - as you're lifted up into the Rapture's embrace.

You'll be frightened, and confused, and in pain - but only for a moment.

And then you'll have certainty. You'll have happiness. You'll get everything you deserve.

You'll live on in a perfect moment of your own choosing, an exquisite dream of your life's destination.

I'll be sorry to lose you, but you've more than earned it.

Can you still see me, Sebastian?

SEBASTIAN keeps looking out.

SEBASTIAN:

(Frantically lying)

Yes, I can still see you-

THE MAN IN THE WALLS:

No, you can't see me. Because I'm standing behind you.

SEBASTIAN gasps, begins to turn - and the garrote goes over his neck. Something drops to the floor - we don't know for certain if it's the flashlight or the torch.

He begins to struggle, rising up into the air, strangling and kicking.

The MAN IN THE WALLS is right next to him now, straining audibly as he lifts him into the air.

THE MAN IN THE WALLS:

(Soothing as he works, audibly struggling with the weight)

No, no, please, don't worry, don't panic - it's going to be all right.

You'll find a way to kill me, Sebastian. You'll wriggle free, you'll buck and kick, or else there'll be a great intervention and some heroic soul will come bursting in to save you.

You'll rescue Devereaux in time.

You'll cut him down, and he'll gasp and blink as he wakes from his dream, and you'll laugh together in relief and happiness.

I've watched over you since you came to this place, Sebastian.

And above all I know you deserve to be **happy**-

SEBASTIAN cries out- and then swings at the MAN IN THE WALLS. We hear the knife drive in, and out, and it falls to the floor.

The MAN IN THE WALLS cries out and falls, dropping the rope.

SEBASTIAN hits the floor as well, coughing and gasping-

ATTIC, INT, NIGHT

-and gradually, the illusion of the RAPTURE-AND-BLISS begins to fade. We can hear the humming of a heating system and the distant roar of traffic on the highway.

And THE MAN IN THE WALLS lies on the floor of the attic, breathing hard as he bleeds out.

THE MAN IN THE WALLS:
(Weakly, pleading and croaking as he dies)
Sebastian.

String me up. String me up amongst them.

Please. Hope is all we have, Sebastian.

Hope is-

-and he dies.

A long silence.

MOTEL, EXT, DAY

We can hear birdsong again. It's the morning.

HAYWARD slams the car trunk, goes around, and gets into the driver's seat.

CAR, INT, DAY

HAYWARD and CARPENTER sit in contemplative silence for a moment. Then-

CARPENTER:
(Realising something)
Godsdamn it.

Bebbie and the Cat Attack **did** sing the original version of Birds Perish Mid-Flight. Suzie Cliff was the cover.

How did I get that wrong?

HAYWARD stares at her.

HAYWARD:
(Deadpan)
I forgive you, Carpenter.

HAYWARD turns, and drives away-

DEVEREAUX'S ROOM, INT, DAY

And overhead, SEBASTIAN watches them go.

He draws the blinds, and walks back across the room. We can hear the ticking of the cuckoo clock.

DEVEREAUX is in bed, weak and croaky, but alive. He is gently reassuring and supportive.

SEBASTIAN:
How you feeling?

DEVEREAUX:
Coming back to myself, I think.

SEBASTIAN comes and sits next to him.

He's not as happy as he should be. He's quietly terrified that none of this is real, and he's still in the dream.

DEVEREAUX:
Francine, is she-

SEBASTIAN:
You can see her as soon as you'd like.

This doesn't answer the question, of course.

DEVEREAUX:

You must be exhausted. Will you come to bed? Everything else can wait.

SEBASTIAN:

Sure, I'll come to bed.

He gets into bed beside DEVEREAUX - but not before quickly checking underneath the bed.

SEBASTIAN:

Nothing underneath the bed.

DEVEREAUX gets the light.

DEVEREAUX:

I don't think you need to worry. The motel feels different already, doesn't it? Like...like a presence has been banished.

That feels a little too easy, too unearned - or perhaps DEVEREAUX is just being kind.

SEBASTIAN:

Perhaps.

DEVEREAUX:

Close your eyes. Try and rest.

I'm going to stay a little longer here at the Amicus. Help you get things sorted.

SEBASTIAN:

Thank you.

DEVEREAUX:

We should probably think of a new name for it.

Everything's going to be OK now, you know?

Everything's going to be better. For both of us.

SEBASTIAN is lying awake in the silence.

DEVEREAUX:

Are you awake, Sebastian?

-and for a moment, SEBASTIAN hears the violent sound of his gurgling, his choking, in the embrace of the RAPTURE-AND-BLISS-

-then he turns over in bed.

SEBASTIAN:

(Dully, quietly)

Yes. Yes, I'm here with you.

You've found me.

As they lie there in bed, the ticking of the cuckoo clock slows, gently - into silence.

END OF EPISODE.