

THE SILT VERSES: SEASON 3, EPISODE 7

THE LINGER STRAITS, EXT, DAY

Birdsong. We hear VAL's footsteps, moving through the fields.

VAL:

This is the truth of it.

I'm making my way north-east towards through the emerald fields and verdant forests of the Linger Straits one morning, fresh from another good night's sleep in my mother's house.

Before I sent her once again to her grisly death last night, I told my mother that it would be a beautiful morning out here today: a clear and empty sky, and crystalline dew upon the fresh grass, and so it is.

(Chuckling)

Perhaps that's only a coincidence, in fairness. How powerful can one saint be? Am I really so arrogant to believe that the winds and clouds can turn on a single word from me, delivered to a frail old woman moments before her death?

But even if it **is** only coincidence, why not revel in it? What is a saint, if not the unshackling of possibility?

What am I, if not limitless?

So I walk on, ignoring the occasional buzzes in my ear from the command centre back in Glottage, the politicians and generals who want to scold me for not moving fast enough, for killing the wrong sorts of people, for not reporting to them frequently enough - these reports tell the commanders back home nothing they can meaningfully act upon, but my compliance reassures them that they're in control of me.

They're losing their war, so they're leaning on me.

I cross an empty highway. I descend into the valley. I encounter one woodsman who offers me coffee, and I consider briefly turning him into my mother and murdering him for that extra bite of satisfaction (I have yet to watch my mother decapitate herself with a woodsman's axe, after all)-

-but his unadorned kindness is soft, like my mother's hands on the days when she knew how to be kind and soft, and the coffee is a welcome respite, and if I **have** become a limitless thing, I must be capable of showing mercy.

So I let the woodsman live, and I tell him that later this afternoon, he'll fell an old oak, and in its rotten hollow, he'll find a hidden hoard of gold and silver from the nation's forgotten past, enough to live on for the rest of his days.

He thinks I'm joking. But the idea of his future happiness is its own kind of satisfaction, which...
(As if surprised)
...which pleases me.

We hear VAL's footsteps marching on.

VAL:

As I walk on, I sing - and I tell myself and the clear bright sky that my singing is in-tune and harmonious, even though the woman whose ruined shell I'm inhabiting, she never knew how to sing, and her mother always told her she sounded like a fox in heat-

-and do you know what? It sounds pretty damn harmonious to me.

And then, all at once, I stop singing.

Because I come to a place that used to be a town.

We hear the cawing of crows - and the sound of smouldering flames.

VAL's footsteps again. Now clambering over rubble. Debris slides down around her.

VAL:

The sign by the roadside says, 'Dutler's Weald.'

This one's been bombed overnight. The rescue teams haven't found it yet. The air-raid sirens are still crying like infants upon their battered steel poles.

It's just me out here, with the dead and the gone and the shapeless uniformity of the concrete rubble.

We really must be on the verge of defeat, I think. Because we're running out of saints, and so we're resorting to regular munitions; unhallowed, secular missiles filled with nothing but explosives.

They do a great deal less harm than the god-rockets, so we've fired a great many more of them.

The streets of Dutler's Weald have been flattened out. The buildings have become termite-hills; grave-mounds.

I walk, and I walk, and I count the bodies, or what passes for bodies.

They're easy to spot; you just have to watch for the crows.

Nearly fifty limbs have been scattered across the wreckage of Dutler's Weald - alone and stiff upon the tarmac, or jutting up from beneath the half-sunken ruins.

Countless others, no doubt, buried beneath their homes or their air-raid shelters.

Fingers held in beaks.

To die, trapped beneath the weight of your own security and comfort, choking on the dust of your material possessions, the bed that bore you, the books that defined you, suffocated under the warm bodies of the people who loved you-

-well, I suppose that's the same fate that awaits us all, but rarely is it quite so literal.

They'll bury these people with bulldozers and with steamrollers, when the rescue party comes. They'll flatten out the rubble, because it's easier than uprooting it. And they'll build something else here.

There's no industry, no tanks, no rocket installations. Nothing here worth bombing, nothing here that could make a difference.

This high street laid claim only to the same identical betting-shops, corner-shops, tired cafes and markets full of rotting fruits and vegetables, the same billboards and the same slow economic collapse that we had back home.

Now it's nothing but the same broken remains. The entire northern coast of the Peninsula must look just like this.

You, now - the ones listening to my idling progress from back home in Glottage - you're telling yourselves; *Val cannot possibly be growing angry over something like this.*

How dare she? The hypocrite.

How can this thing, this monster, this battle-saint, possibly find any kind of righteous anger in her twisted and repurposed heart for the lives of the fallen foe?

How does our terrible Val think she can justify any kind of anger at the sight of the flattened and buried corpses of enemy civilians and enemy children, when we've already been listening to her murder police officers, soldiers and townsfolk single-handedly in turn?

How can she be furious when we've heard her butcher her way through the little old ladies of the CLS in the hopeless effort to murder her own faraway mother?

(Mockingly)

See? You can be sacred and yet self-aware.

Yes, I am culpable. I am dreadful. I have been responsible for great atrocities and I will commit a great many more before I'm done.

And still - I **am** growing furious, as I walk through the devastation of this town. Because the wound of Sutler's Weald is not like any wound I would make.

It's clumsy, it's crude. It's thoughtless.

I begin to tell myself, as I walk - I wouldn't have murdered them like **this**. I would have been kinder. I would have killed them quickly or gracefully, and there would have been beauty and strangeness in the manner of it.

And even that's all deception, even if I **had** been cruel and slow and lingering in the massacre of these innocent people, upon my whim - I would at least have looked them in the eyes, and I would have borne the weight of my cruelty.

If they'd asked me to, I could have killed this town beautifully. And I'd have borne witness to the horror, and I'd have rejoiced in it - and it would have been considerably less vile and ugly than this.

The ones back home, the ones who are listening in, I don't think they **know** what they've done here.

The line of connection between the victim and the victimiser, the sacrifice and the god - it's long, and tangled, and indistinct.

A god should not be able to avert her eyes.

What a terrible thing it must be, to be monstrous and not even know it.

And even if all of this **is** lies, even if I am just as bad and just as careless as the people back home who did this to Sutler's Weald...

...well, then, let me hate them, pure and simply, for being just as bad as me, because people -

-people should be kinder than the gods that eat them.

The town square is largely intact. A few burning cars, a single shrine and statue to some goddess of victory, her snapped-off arm raised in imagined triumph.

I sit down upon the pavement in the ruined heart of the town, and I tell the dead people of Sutler's Weald beautiful lies.

I tell them that they survived, in their hundreds - miraculously and inexplicably, dodging the bombs. Not a single victim, not one death. An act of divine mercy.

When that doesn't work, I tell them that they were buried properly, according to whatever rites or customs they happen to cherish.

When that doesn't work, I try and turn them into my mother again, in the hopes of making the dead people hateful to me.

When that doesn't work, I tell them that I'm sorry. I tell them I wish they still had ears to become all the wondrous imaginings I had in store for them.

I tell them...

...that all things considered, they deserved a better avenging and foreign god, a better tormentor, a better oblivion, than the one that was forced upon them.

I tell them-

I will find a way to give them something better.

BELLWETHERS, EXT, DAY

Silence. The sound of a creaking, writhing tree.

And then PAIGE speaks, with quiet, contained anger and sorrow.

PAIGE:

(Narrating)

When I wake, I'm standing on an empty road, five miles east of Bellwethers - and it's still not dawn.

My head throbs. My tongue rasps upon my teeth.

I don't have my gas mask with me, and my bare feet are raw and bloodied upon the ruined tarmac, and my face is cut and bleeding from my passage through the hedgerows.

And standing in the road before me are the abominable signs of an unexpected miracle.

The concrete in the centre of the road has erupted.

Rising high above me, its knotted branches still shifting and writhing, is a great black tree.

There's a dead fox dangling from the branches. A chicken still drooping in its jaws.

Golden pelt and golden feathers both stained with the same dark blood.
(With rising anger)

The Many Below, the Woundtree - my god, my hated child, has led me out from the safety of my house, through the polluted lands and the hungering god-winds - through the Grace and the ruins of Bellwethers, walking me like...like a puppet-

-right back into the living lands. So it could feed.

The exact same voice that bellows in my head about the reckoning that's to come for all of us unworthy sinners...

...is a mouth without a face. A pitiful thing that feasts upon carrion when we don't have richer meat to offer it.

It could have killed me, bringing me out here like this . Perhaps it didn't care.

And when my god was done feeding, it left me here - so I could see what it had done.

Like a proud child displaying its first hunting trophy, like a cat presenting its catches.

Like it thought I'd be impressed.

Everyone - and everything - has their limit, I suppose. If there's hope for any of us, it's in that.

And so I gaze up at the two pairs of dead black eyes upon the empty road - and suddenly I know exactly what has to change.

PAIGE'S HOUSE, INT, DAY

We hear PAIGE uncork a bottle of spirits - and then begin to pour it down the toilet.

On the radio, SAM KINCANNON is pontificating.

SAM KINCANNON:

(Seriously, urgently)

Tonight - on Hard Truths With Sam Kincannon.

Military recruiters in the far-flung True South report being met with boarded-up doors and abandoned farms, while students at Greater Glottage University stage a sit-in protest against the draft.

Has the Peninsula become god-shy? And could a new community-service deity be the answer to cynical attitudes amongst the nation's youth?

PAIGE flushes the toilet.

CANTEEN TENT, INT, DAY

ELGIN is already sitting at the table with her papers. She, too, is listening to the radio:

CHUCK HARM:

This is Chuck Harm, with news from Nesh.

And if you're listening in from the other side of the channel, I just want to say; **thank you**, my Peninsulan friend.

If you've tuned into my broadcast, I can only imagine it's because you have questions, and my friend, I'm going to answer those questions.

I'm going to give you something that your government is never going to give you: the **truth**.

So sit back, listen up - and tell your friends, because the longer this goes on for, the more all of us suffer.

Truth number one. Your government are the aggressors in this war. We did not begin it, and we did not seek it.

Truth number two. This new draft, my friend. We're hearing this from our side of the channel, that the Peninsulan government is going to start drafting its citizens into auxiliary sainthood - and it doesn't make us smile. We're not laughing at you. We're horrified.

Because where - where are your standing auxiliaries? Three months in, you think you should have run out already? Your prisons were full of sentenced criminals this time last year, my friend.

Your government has been robbing you. Saints, weapons, supplies - do you know what we hear about the number of trucks filled with protective gear or rifles that just go missing on their way to the Peninsulan front?

Your soldiers are barely equipped. Your rights are being stripped away before your eyes. Your leaders are mocking you.

When do you rise up and take a-

The tent flap unzips - and PAIGE walks in.

She's controlled, firm, and decisive.

ELGIN turns the radio off and puts her pencil down.

ELGIN:

(Startled)

Oh! Widow, I...I didn't think you'd be coming today.

PAIGE stares at her.

PAIGE:

(A little harshly)

Uh. So why are you here?

ELGIN:

(A little guilty, a little defensive)

So people can see the meetings are still going ahead.

PAIGE:

And that means you sit up here alone and shuffle papers for an hour?

ELGIN:

Yes.

PAIGE smirks. After a moment, ELGIN awkwardly laughs.

PAIGE hesitates - and then sits down with a coffee which she slides across the table.

PAIGE:
Got you a coffee.

ELGIN:
(Not knowing what to say)
Uh-

PAIGE:
Give me the briefing, Elgin.

ELGIN:
(Checking the agenda)
Uh. Intake.

This week, seven coming up the old road. We intercepted them at the abandoned gas station. Disarmed them, questioned them, led them back to us.

(With a hint of worry)
Seven, that's-

PAIGE:
(*Calmly, seriously*)
A new record. Good.

Where are they coming from?

ELGIN:
Out from the farmlands; they were fruit-pickers. Apparently their boss had been angling to sacrifice one of them to something called the Merry Berry Bunch.

They said they'd been looking out here for us for weeks.

PAIGE:
Anything in their story that doesn't add up?

Silence.

ELGIN:
(*Just admitting it*)

I don't know.

A few of them are a little guarded, a little quiet.

More than likely they're just in shock.

You think we need to keep them locked up, apart from everyone else?

PAIGE considers.

PAIGE:

(Firmly and decisively)

You'll do two things, Elgin. Firstly, make sure they hear you talking about our other cells.

In Glottage, in Nesh. Our comrades working to build the network from overseas and in the heart of our cities.

Mention it offhand. See who asks the follow-up questions.

Second - let them know a new task's been added to the work rota.

While the Rootkeeper is away on the business of the faith, the Widow of Wounds will be taking over the broadcasts from the radio tower.

The outside world needs to know what kind of paradise we're building here.

I'm looking for an assistant who can help me with the technical side of things - make themselves useful.

ELGIN:

I don't understand.

PAIGE:

A spy will need to get a message out - and they'll certainly want to ingratiate themselves with me.

So we watch, to see who comes forward and what they do next.

Second item on the agenda?

ELGIN takes a breath.

ELGIN:
(Guiltily)
Losses. Six.

Harrier's party were scouting about to the south, in the hills.

They ran into another group. Words were exchanged. Shots were fired.

River-god worshippers from the White Gull, we think. Guessing they've got a temple in the area.

Harrier died first. The Tree took his killer - and four more of theirs, and five more of ours. A couple got away on either side.

(Guarded)
You were right. And I'm sorry.

PAIGE:
(Firmly, not unkindly)
We needed to make the attempt.

When's the memorial service?

ELGIN:
Tomorrow at midday.

PAIGE:
Expect me there.
(Moving firmly on)
Next item on the agenda, Elgin.

ELGIN:
(Not quite knowing what to make of this)
One from Dan. He says he's seen a woman out in the hills, when he's been patrolling the westward wall.

Three nights in a row.

An older woman, dressed in grey. No gas mask, no protective clothing. Walking through the god-winds.

And she was singing.

PAIGE:
(Dismissively)

Well, we know there are angels in the wilds out there-

ELGIN:

He says it wasn't an angel.

He, uh, says he yelled out the Woundtree's protective prayers to expel the apparition, but it didn't react, and it didn't seem to hear him.

PAIGE:

(With acid scepticism)

OK. Is there anyone who **isn't** Dan who's seen this woman?

ELGIN:

No.

PAIGE thinks.

PAIGE:

Change the rota. I'll take a turn out on the western wall tomorrow. You can patrol the day after. Pick a few more reliable people, let me know if they see anything.

ELGIN scribbles it down.

ELGIN:

(Checking the agenda)

Um, and that's all our items. Did you have-

PAIGE sits forward. She was prepared for this.

PAIGE:

Two. Two items.

(Firmly and simply)

First item. Elgin, I want you to take the vodka and the schnapps that's in the storeroom, and I want you to lock it away separately.

You can have the key. You decide who gets access and who doesn't. Nobody else. Make sure everyone gets a snifter tonight for Harrier's wake.

ELGIN:

(Uncertainly)

Of course. Is there a problem?

PAIGE:
(Simply)
I'm the problem.
(Taking a breath)
Second item. I need you to find me a book.

She takes out a book and dumps it on the table between them.

ELGIN:
"Upon The Birthing Of Gods. Professor Elaine Trask, revised edition-"

PAIGE:
I want you to find me the **unrevised** edition. It'll be an old book - thirty years old - and about twice as thick as this. A lot's been excised.

Ask our raiding parties to keep an eye out for it in the farmlands. Maybe in a back-room or a safe. Some abandoned factory. Whatever they can find.

ELGIN:
Yes, Widow.

PAIGE:
(Evenly, without rancour)
My name is Paige.

Is that everything?

ELGIN:
(Remembering)
Oh!

Uh- one thing.

Did you hear the news from Fenton this morning?

PAIGE:
I've been trying to stay away from the radio.

ELGIN:
Someone hit the power plant down there last night. Wiped out half the town. The prison, too.

Lot of civilian casualties - and this morning, what sounds like a lot of panic in Glottage. Fenton supplied about a fifth of the national grid.

Sam Kincannon says it was a Linger strike, an act of unwarranted atrocity that requires international condemnation. And across the border, Chuck Harm is blaming it on us.

(Lightly)

Dan's already telling everyone in camp that it was the Rootkeeper's doing, a miracle and a revelation delivered by the Woundtree, and our first great victory against the state, so I hope you weren't planning on denying it.

PAIGE:

(Turning this over in her head)

Do we even **have** people in Fenton?

ELGIN:

(Throwing up her hands, with rising passion)

I don't know. I - Paige, I've been trying all morning to find out. Nobody's come from that far south.

It could be us, it could be people operating in our name, it could all be a set-up.

(Exhausted and exasperated)

Did we just commit an atrocity? Did we just kill hundreds of the prisoners we swore to free? Are we about to face a mutiny out here because Dan keeps running his mouth off?

I've...I've got no fucking idea. I don't know what's coming.

It's other people, isn't it? That's what makes me want to down a bottle of schnapps.

I swear I could run things pretty well out here, if it wasn't for the...the disorder, the unpredictability, the madness, of other fucking people.

PAIGE gets to her feet and walks across to the edge of the tent, thinking.

This was how she felt not too long ago - and she's just realising, slowly, that her feelings are changing.

PAIGE:

(Softly, slowly)

Yeah. It's unmanageable. It's chaos.

But you know what, Elgin?

The only miracles that have ever fallen into my lap as a welcome surprise,
the only acts of true, unexpected grace - they've come right back to the
disorder, the unpredictability - the madness of other fucking people.

Not gods. Not saints.

Other fucking people.
(Shrugging, to herself)
So.

Maybe something good will come of this.

LANDSCAPE, EXT, DAY

We hear the wind chimes and howling storm of the Grace-

-and then we move, passing through forests and past a busy highway-

*-until we can hear the hum of electrical current, growing louder and louder, as we approach a
phone line -*

PHONE LINES

-until we enter the phone lines with a rush.

*We can hear the heartbeat of the current, a frenetic drumming. We can hear the phones ringing,
and snippets of conversation, overlapping with each other.*

All across the Peninsula, other fucking people are bickering, venting, and gossiping.

CALLER 1:

Hi! These are The Silt Verses.

I'm leaving a message for Lucille Valentine and Ishani Kanetkar.

Brrriing.

FURIOUS CALLER:

(As if calling a hotline, tired and upset)

Hi! Uh, I'm hoping to find out what happened to my uncle. There's been a mistake, I think he was listed as unemployed but he's still under one of the Saint's commercial contracts. We've got all the paperwork, I just need to get him released.

Brrriing.

CALLER 2:

These are The Silt Verses. Could someone please put me through to Damon Alums?

Brrriing.

TETCHY CALLER:

They keep telling us, "we all have to make sacrifices", because of the war. And fine, the war's important, we have to protect ourselves. Nobody's disputing that.

But I've seen empty trucks and government-marked crates by the roadside, I've seen ration packs being handed out in schools instead of canteen lunches.

Brrriing.

CALLER 1:

These are The Silt Verses. Just calling again, leaving a message for Madeleine Turley and Kale Brown.

Brrriing.

CALLER 2:

Hi! Yeah, these are The Silt Verses. Could I leave a message for Sarah Griffin and Rhys Lawton, please?

Brrriing.

CONSPIRACY-THEORY CALLER:

So I've heard a lot of conspiracy theorists, right?

Saying that, oh,
(*mockingly, airily*)

It's in the interests of the Legislatures to continue refusing peace talks with the Linger Straits, even if we are losing.

Because all the Adjudicators have got contracts in place with their friends in industry, which means they're making money off all the emergency sacrifices.

Or - or - they know this ends in surrender, but there's also no elections right now, so they're going to raid the coffers for as long as they can before our defences give out.

(Firmly)

It's all bullshit.

Briiiiiing.

EMOTIONAL CALLER:

(Bravely, as if confessing)

I cancelled my energy contract.

I threw out the little bobblehead Saint.

I - I know it's not much, but we have to take a stand. We all have to fight back, however we can.

Because otherwise...

How's it all gonna end, otherwise?

Briiiiiing.

And then we hear the voice of WEBB, a GRID SUPERVISOR with the CHURCH ELECTRIC.

WEBB:

I understand that, sir, but-

Why can't Commercial shut down for the night? Just for one night?

We can...we can still make toasters tomorrow, right? Even if Distribution went quiet until the morning, that'd free up a significant-

(Pause)

No, sir, I'm being serious.

We can still make it work, I think we can still make it work, but we've gotta have that blackout, and it's got to cover Glottage as well.

(Pause)

OK. OK, I'll wait to hear back from you.

(Hesitantly)

Sir?

We're taking care of our people, aren't we?

The whole team's busting their arses out there to keep the grid up and running, and it'd mean a lot to know there's no risk of-
(Pause)

OK. I'll tell them that.

Thank you, sir. Good luck to you too.

WEBB hangs up.

CATHEDRAL OF THE SACRED GRID, INT, DAY

We're somewhere vast. Buzzing electricity can be heard in the background, and pattering rain.

WEBB closes his office door and begins to climb a metal set of stairs.

Ahead of him, we hear the tannoy voice of CONNOR THE CONDUIT - an interactive visitor display.

Underneath CONNOR THE CONDUIT's cheerful spiel, we can hear repeated electrical shocks and pained gurgles from the actual CONNOR.

CONNOR THE CONDUIT:

(With good cheer and enthusiasm, as if talking to children)

Well, hello, visitors!

Praise the Signal which will not cease! Praise the sacred currents!

I'm Connor the Conduit, and I'm a vital part of the team here at the Greater Glottage National Grid.

By acting as a hallowed vessel for the Saint Electric's endless generation of sacred energy, I ensure that the Caged Maiden keeps watching over our engineering team's crucial work regulating the flow of power to territories all across the countries, and I guarantee that she continues to bestow her blessings of warmth, light, and heat, to homes just like yours.

Press the red button to give me an extra dose of voltage!

WEBB pauses in front of CONNOR, sighs, and then continues on, pushing open a door-

CATHEDRAL OF THE SACRED GRID (CONTROL ROOM), INT, DAY

-and entering the busy control room. We can hear workers all around. Rain - and a little thunder - is still faintly audible in the background, as is the repeating spiel of CONNOR THE CONDUIT.

WEBB claps his hands to get the room's attention.

WEBB:

(Calling everyone over, clipboard in hand)

All right, all right!

Gather around, everyone. Come on - Moss, Amos, Silverwood, listen up.

We've got a long night ahead of us. I don't want to see anyone without a coffee in their hands.

The Grindinglord is your chosen god for the night, and all of you love him, very very much.

(Taking a breath)

As you know, last night the Linger strikes hit the plant up at Fenton. That puts us down by 21% across the entire Peninsulan grid.

The dam on the White Gull's still doing a lot of the heavy lifting, but...we're struggling.

That's the truth of it. Right now, we're struggling.

The lights are due to come on at around six-thirty in the far west, seven-thirty in the eastern territories.

The bosses have formally written in to the Legislatures to request a nationwide rolling blackout, one hour off-grid at a time, followed by a total domestic blackout from midnight until six, so we can redistribute the load - keep corporate and military running at full power.

If the blackout is approved, and if Glottage is included in that, and if we can then cut back further in South and South-East, that puts us right back up and we can breathe easy.

I've assigned each of you to a territory - check the schedule, memorise the blackout hours. We can't afford any mistakes.

SILVERWOOD:

You think they'll shut Glottage down, chief?

WEBB:

(Wryly)

A time like this, why wouldn't all of us pull together to fix things?

A few chuckles and at least one loud 'HA!'.

WEBB:

(More sincerely)

Bosses are still negotiating.

Head office is well aware of the problem.

We've also spoken to GGR and the other radio stations - asked them to switch down for the night, put out a broadcast encouraging all citizens to stop using power unless in case of extreme emergency.

While we're waiting for that to happen, I want you all coordinating with your regional operatives. Make them understand the gravity of what we're facing.

One worker, MOSS, speaks hesitantly up.

MOSS:

(Raising a hand)

Chief-

WEBB:

Go on, Moss.

MOSS:

(A little afraid to speak it out loud)

You've heard what people are saying.

WEBB:

(Tetchy)

I have absolutely no idea what people are saying, Moss, no. I've been getting on with my job.

Will you enlighten me?

MOSS still hesitates - and then SILVERWOOD, another team member, speaks up instead.

SILVERWOOD:

They're saying it wasn't a strike in Fenton.

They're saying the bosses were calling in contracts.

An ominous silence.

MOSS:

(Anxiously chipping in)

To keep up with demand since last week. They'd run out of purchased sacrifices, so they were calling in contracts.

First the cleaners, then the administrative staff.

All of them offered up to the Saint.

(Getting worked up)

And then one worker, she was bearing the Woundtree's marks, and she was-

WEBB takes control of the room.

WEBB:

(Firmly)

Quiet. **Quiet.**

Moss, you can use the name of that Linger false-faith deity as much as you like in your home, but I won't have it spoken in our place of work.

We're professionals.

(Harshly)

Are we clear?

A moment's silence.

MOSS:

(A little sullen)

Yeah. Sorry, chief.

WEBB:

(Calling out)

Silverwood. What's the step-up from a single human sacrifice? What does the Saint return for that offering?

Give me the maths.

SILVERWOOD:

Not much.

WEBB:

(To the room)

As an average, just under 200 kilowatt-hours.

For a skinny fucker like Moss, you can halve that.

That's maybe 50 homes lit for the night. That's less than a single factory. It's nothing, it's penny-pinching. It wouldn't make any difference.

It doesn't help them to have any of us coming to harm.

Things are hard in the plants right now. We know that.

But not so hard that they're going to start calling in contracts out here. They need us just as much as we need them, remember.

You're all trained, you're all experienced. Nobody in this room is replaceable.

If you can't trust in that, trust in me.

I'm not going to let harm come to any of us. Am I?

MOSS / SILVERWOOD:

Right. / Right, chief.

WEBB:

(Satisfied)

All right. Back to your places.

(Casually rousing)

The Saint Electric may be born in turbines and steam, my fine folks, but she's channelled and driven through our dancing fingertips.

Her Signal shall never cease! Her Current shall forever flow! And we're the ones who make it happen.

Let's make it a smooth night for everyone out there, now! Come on!

WEBB claps again - and just like that, we descend into silence.

STREETS OF GLOTTAGE, EXT, DAY

Cars roar past in the rain. We hear yet another commercial - a RECRUITMENT AD - barking out over the street.

RECRUITMENT AD:

If you're not currently contracted to a licenced organisation or a licenced faith, the call for enlistment could come at any time from next week.

Make sure you're prepared for the knock at the door. Toothbrush. Toothpaste. Clean change of clothes.

Everything you need to keep the Peninsula safe.

(As a final slogan)

If you're not under contract, we'll make contact.

If you're not currently contracted-

SHRUE'S OFFICE, INT, DAY

SHRUE is sitting alone. We can faintly hear the RECRUITMENT AD continuing on in the background, over the driving rain.

SHRUE sighs, and pours themselves a hefty drink.

Beside them, the phone rings. SHRUE picks up in silence.

GREVE:

Adjudicator. It's Greve.

(Not getting an answer)

Are you...are you there?

SHRUE steels themselves - and answers.

SHRUE:

Yes, I'm here. Still at work.

What can I do for you?

GREVE:

(Questioningly)

We were expecting the announcement in the press this morning.

We're ready for it.

Silence.

SHRUE:

(Lying)

You saw the Lingers hit the Fenton plant, didn't you? That's taken up most of the government's attention today.

GREVE doesn't reply for a moment.

GREVE:

It's - I don't want to bore you with details, Adjudicator, but it's become increasingly urgent on our end that we get the announcement out there as soon as possible.

Our people need to know they're safe.

SHRUE:

(Stung)

I know. We're...we're still working on it.

Look, I actually meant to get back to you about this. I, ah...

GREVE:

Is there something the Parish can do to speed things along? Get us legalised as soon as possible?

Silence. SHRUE does not respond.

GREVE:

Adjudicator, if this is about the Wither Mark, I think it's important that we're honest with one another-

SHRUE:

(Roughly)

The Wither Mark is no longer a particular requirement for our deal to go ahead, as it's been explained to me.

What we need from the Parish now - what I've been **told** that we need to help with the war effort - is, uh...

It's bodies.

GREVE:
(*Curious*)
Bodies?

Is that living or dead?

Silence.

SHRUE:
(*With quiet dryness*)
I presume living, to begin with.
(*Sitting up and pulling themselves together*)
I, I'm going to be honest with you, Katabasian.

As far as I'm concerned, I made a bargain for the safety of your people, for the security of your people - and it was my intention to honour that.

It's **still** my intention to honour that.

I'm going to push back, I fully intend to push back. I just don't, ah...
(*A little weakly and desperately*)
I don't have a plan yet, and these people do nothing but lie to you, and everything is still in their hands.

So...

If I need to speak to High Katabasian Roemont about this, or Katabasian Mason, I'll gladly do so. I'll explain the situation to them, and we can go from there.

Silence.

GREVE:
(*Lying*)
I'll deal with Roemont and Mason. You don't need to worry about that.

Silence. We hear a bottle clink on SHRUE's side.

GREVE:
Are you drinking?

SHRUE:

(After a moment's hesitancy)
Yes.

GREVE:
(Chuckling in a bleak sort of way)
I'm drinking too.

SHRUE chuckles back. There's a sort of desperate camaraderie between them.

SHRUE:
What are you drinking?

GREVE:
Schnapps.

SHRUE:
Vodka.

GREVE:
It's early.

SHRUE:
(Drily)
It feels immensely late.

GREVE:
Shall we toast?

SHRUE:
I think let's toast.

GREVE:
(Toasting, in the old-fashioned manner, by cursing the name of the authorities)
Devlin: Drowned, Dragged, Delivered.

SHRUE:
(Taken aback by the sentiment)
...damn.

GREVE:
(Softly, as an aside)
Ach. Might be the last time I can say that one.

SHRUE:
(*Rallying*)
To your very good health, then.

Silence.

GREVE:
(*Returning to the topic*)
I think I might have some good news for you, Adjudicator.

If it's bodies your people need, then we can provide them for you, and it'll be no injury to us.

An acceptable sacrifice.

Last year your men went to a place called the Paraclete's Gulch, with a pair of god-hunters.

It was a crucial part of Mason's bargain with you that our followers there should be spared.

SHRUE:
I remember.

GREVE:
(*Quietly, carefully*)
I think you should go there again.

I imagine you'll find a large quantity of bodies at the Gulch which the Parish can stand to lose.

SHRUE:
Not your people?

GREVE:
Not any longer.

SHRUE:
How many?

GREVE:
Close to three hundred. Well-defended, I'm afraid.

SHRUE takes this in.

SHRUE:
Let me get back to you.

SHRUE hangs up-

-and begins to dial again.

CARSON'S OFFICE, INT, DAY

-and the phone rings again.

CARSON picks up. He's sitting at his desk as well. We can faintly hear patriotic music playing somewhere below.

CARSON:
This is Carson.

SHRUE:
It's, uh, Shrue, Press Secretary.

Is now a good time?

CARSON:
(Lying almost reflexively)
Yeah, yeah, you're good. Just at home. Winding down. Pouring myself a strawberry mojito.

What can I do you for, Shrue?

SHRUE:
I've heard back on the river god, the licence request. A body count.

They've got, uh, maybe a few thousand followers in total up and down the water, but they're scattered.

CARSON:
(Briefly confused)
The, uh-
(Remembering)
Yes. I remember.

OK, Shrue, that's not really what we're looking for-

SHRUE:

(Jumping in before the idea's dismissed)

-**but** they've got close to four hundred bodies, in a known location, who they'd be happy to give up at once in exchange for us speeding things along.

CARSON *considers.*

CARSON:

Hm. How quickly?

SHRUE:

With enough manpower, we could take them in tonight.

CARSON:

(Amused)

Tonight might be pushing it. There is a war on, after all.

But that's helpful, Shrue, that's seriously helpful. You see what happened at Fenton?

SHRUE:

I did.

CARSON:

(Venting a little)

We told the Saint's people, how can you remain neutral when it's your property being blown up?

They said they're insured.

(Remembering)

- oh, yeah, just to give you a heads-up, seems like there's going to be a blackout later tonight.

In your territory, not here in Glottage.

H.A. wants to show our global traders here in the city that we can keep the lights on even in wartime, and the Saint's people have their corporate offices here, so of course they're pushing for it too.

Anyway, the point is - the national grid needs more bodies, and we need them quickly.

So you've picked your moment well.

(Chattily)

Did you know how much power's stolen off the grid every year, Shrue?

About a hundred terrawatt-hours per year, according to the Saint's people. It's fucking killing us.

When you bring your river-god's people on board, you make damn sure you sign them up to a rolling contract.

Silence for a moment.

SHRUE:

(Prompting him)

On that note, Press Secretary.

If you want us to proceed with the licencing approvals, I'm really happy to take that back to H.A.'s office, or-

CARSON:

(Firmly)

No. No need. You're ready, aren't you?

SHRUE:

...yes, I'm ready.

CARSON:

(Encouragingly)

Then to hell with the red tape. Let's get this done. I'll put out a release first thing tomorrow. Start booking you in for press interviews.

You can bring the elders in, buy 'em a bus ticket into town for the ceremonies. Hose 'em down if you have to.

SHRUE is a little taken aback.

SHRUE:

...it's that simple?

CARSON:

Why wouldn't it be?

Congratulations, Shrue. You and I, we're mending the Peninsula, one broken faith at a time.

(Remembering)

Oh, and next week, remember - the summit. We need solutions on the Woundtree more than ever, with all this belt-tightening going on.

We'll send a car to pick you up. Got your thinking cap on?

SHRUE:

(A little weakly)

Yes, Press Secretary. Looking forward to it.

CARSON:

You got it. All right, take care of yourself. Sleep well when sleep comes. Don't let the bed-gods bite.

He hangs up, and takes a long breath and dials again.

CARSON:

(To someone on the other end of the line, dully and tiredly)

You get through to Val yet?

OK, try her again. I want coordinates on her.

He hangs up.

CATHEDRAL OF THE SACRED GRID (WEBB'S OFFICE), INT, DAY

WEBB, alone in his office, is also pouring himself a drink. We can still hear CONNOR THE CONDUIT, faintly, in the background.

WEBB:

(Softly, to himself)

Oh, man...

SILVERWOOD knocks on the door. WEBB doesn't respond, lost in his thoughts.

She pushes the door open.

SILVERWOOD:

Chief?

Chief, you OK?

WEBB:

(Trying to maintain his composure)
Close the door behind you, Silverwood.

SILVERWOOD does so. A moment of silence.

SILVERWOOD:
(Warily)
What's happened?

WEBB gets a grip.

WEBB:
Just spoke to head office again. They had an update for us.

Glottage isn't budging on the blackout, and the bosses aren't moving either.

(Choking on his rage)

Even the fucking radio station-

(Getting a grip, more softly and acidly)

- Greater Glottage Radio has sought governmental permission to continue its nightly broadcasts of Carlie Cape: Rise of Pulchritude as it believes the show fulfills an essential purpose in maintaining morale.

It is, however, content to pause regional programming for the sake of the greater good.

We're getting crumbs. Nothing but crumbs.

The rest of the country could go dark until tomorrow lunchtime and we'd still have a deficit.

Silence.

SILVERWOOD:
So. What happens now?

WEBB takes a breath.

WEBB:
(Roughly)
He says...

...he says we all need to pull together.

Make a few sacrifices.

SILVERWOOD:

(Appalled by the stupidity of it)

That won't make a difference.

You could give every one of us up to the Saint tonight and it wouldn't be a blip on the grid.

WEBB:

(Weakly, roughly)

I told him that. He says he knows.

He told me we're lucky.

Plants are being asked to cut back non-essential personnel by 10%. We only have to match that, and as we're a team of eight on the night shift, that means we're only losing one.

His department's losing six administrative assistants, he said.

I told 'em I should be the one, if anyone needs to go.

He said not to be a fool; I'm essential personnel.

(In a mocking voice)

"At a time like this, everyone needs to think pragmatically, everyone needs to show willing."

SILVERWOOD:

(Sourly)

Feels like there's two kinds of pragmatism out there tonight, doesn't it?

We need to be reasonable enough to lower our heads to the chopping block.

And in return, the bosses will be reasonable enough to swing the fucking axe.

A long silence between them.

WEBB:

(Weakly, distressed at the thought)

It has to be Moss, right?

I mean, I love that fucking boy like my own son, but he's run his mouth off too many times, and if it's anyone else they'll all tell me, "It should have been Moss. He's practically up in arms as a renegade as it is, why punish **me** when he's the one who's disloyal?"

(Trying to convince himself)

It has to be Moss, and it's his own damn fault.

Silence. SILVERWOOD is staring at WEBB.

SILVERWOOD:

(Accusatory)

You said we were safe, chief.

WEBB:

(Throwing up his hands)

No-one's safe. You know that as well as anyone. Who's ever been safe?

(Wounded)

It's a bad night.

It's a night we couldn't have seen coming.

We - we just have to get through tonight as close to intact as possible, and it's my job to get us there.

SILVERWOOD:

(Softly)

What happens tomorrow night?

Silence for a moment.

WEBB:

(Not believing it himself)

Maybe they'll have found a better way by then. They'll have figured out a solution.

SILVERWOOD:

Do you believe that, chief?

WEBB sits in silence for a moment. Of course he doesn't.

WEBB:

(Softly, with growing fury)

200 kilowatt-hours.

They keep the lights burning in Glottage, they keep playing their stupid fucking radio serials, they keep the belts moving on through the night.

And they tell us we need to do our part and show willing.

(Spitting)

They tell us to be **pragmatic**. They tell us to be **reasonable**!

A long silence.

SILVERWOOD:

(Softly)

If it makes it easier, boss.

We've already discussed it amongst ourselves, and we're not giving up Moss for the sake of their war.

We're not giving up anyone, in fact.

We're taking a stand.

WEBB raises his head from his hands.

WEBB:

Discussed it when?

SILVERWOOD:

Start of the night.

WEBB:

(Amused but a little hurt)

You didn't believe me, then, when I said to trust me.

SILVERWOOD:

You're a good boss, chief.

But-

WEBB:

(Softly)

Still a boss. Yeah.

Silence.

SILVERWOOD:

(Supportively)

We can lock you in the storage closet. Say we overpowered you.

This can be our decision. It doesn't have to be yours.

WEBB hesitates for a moment.

WEBB:

No.

(With a little humour in his voice)

No, I'm not having anyone say you fucking overpowered me.

Not now and not ever.

Have you **seen** yourselves?

Bunch of whimpering desk jockeys, not an ounce of muscle on any of you. I'd never live it down.

(Making up his mind)

Tell everyone I'm coming through.

I've got something to say to them.

CATHEDRAL OF THE SACRED GRID, INT, DAY

WEBB closes his office door and begins to climb the stairs again.

Ahead of him, we hear the tannoy voice of CONNOR THE CONDUIT once more.

CONNOR THE CONDUIT:

Well, hello, visitors!

Praise the Signal which will not cease! Praise the sacred currents!

I'm Connor the Conduit, and I'm a vital part of the team here at the Greater Glottage National Grid.

By acting-

WEBB stops in front of CONNOR - and then with a grunt, yanks the cable out.

The power dies. CONNOR'S pained sounds cease as he dies.

WEBB continues on into the control room-

CATHEDRAL OF THE SACRED GRID (CONTROL ROOM), INT, DAY

-and a furious hubbub immediately dies down as he enters.

WEBB comes out to the centre of the room. His voice booms commandingly out as he makes his final speech.

WEBB:

Some of you have families and children..

A few of you poor anti-social bastards only have the other people this room for love and company.

All of you have worked hard to keep things running smoothly. All of you have played your part, just like they asked you to. None of you deserve to die.

And if we down tools tonight, we'll die. Simple as that, there's no getting around it.

It won't make much of a difference, either. Matter of fact, we might only make things worse.

They'll find people to replace us who aren't trained and don't know the tools, and they'll stretch them thinner and work them harder.

The current will flow. The signal will not cease.

We won't change anything past tonight.

Me, I'll be happy so long as my corpse trips one of those fuckers up.

I'll take that moment as my victory.

If you feel differently, I want you to know that I love you, and I will always be proud of you - and you need to end your shift now, leave the compound, and not look back.

We'll say you clocked out early, before any of it started.

Silence. Nobody moves.

WEBB:

200 fucking kilo-watts. That's what you mean to them.

(Growing in anger)

They tell you to be reasonable, to be rational, to accept what's coming as a plain inevitability - when they're the ones who made it happen!

(Raging)

When they're still letting it happen!

That's what they call **reasonable**!

So this is what I'm thinking.

If they're the reasonable ones, their reason's not for me.

I'd rather die mad and raging than live on with their good sense.

And if the Saint has any true fucking power, if she isn't bound and broken just like the rest of us, then let her strike me down here in her temple!

Let her show!

He grabs a wrench from the side - and begins to smash the control panels.

Silence. Nothing happens. No divine revenge.

WEBB:

(Calmly)

That settles it, then.

Kill your gods.

We'll cut the signal and we will **choke** the current.

Is anyone leaving?

Absolute silence.

SILVERWOOD:

(Softly, supportively)

Set the schedule, boss. Give your orders.

WEBB:

Boss is what I call the prick in head office.

Tonight I'd like you to call me Francis. Francis Webb, if you want to be formal about it.

MOSS:

(Softly)

We're with you all the way, Francis.

WEBB:

First, call anyone you've got final words for.

Then - if you trust your regional ops, call them as well. Tell them they'll be next.

Pass the word on down the line.

It all goes dark tonight. Every substation, every street.

Then we barricade the doors, we shut the compound gates, and we wreak havoc upon our controls.

We're going to show them what our expertise is worth. We're going to make the Saint bleed.

They'll try calling us first. Then they'll try overriding our control.

After that they'll send a team out. When they can't get in, they'll resort to harder measures.

We'll be dead by morning at the very latest.

If you want to die swinging, find something fit for the purpose. If you'd rather go softly, head to the roof.

It'll be a beautiful night for stars.

(Roaring, clapping)

All right.

Let's go!

Everyone swings into action.

MOSS races to his desk, picks up his phone and begins to dial.

Someone picks up.

MOSS:
(Quietly, but with love, into the phone)
It's Moss.

It's happening. Just like we talked about. I-

-and we rush into the phone lines again-

PHONE LINES

It's a repeat of our earlier scene.

MOSS:
I'm not coming home. And I need you to know, I love you. I...I love you so damn much-

Brrriing.

TETCHY CALLER:
We're all being robbed. We're being robbed, and we can't do anything about it, because we've already agreed that gods must be fed and the war effort's what really matters.
(Bravely, furiously)
Show them fear. That's what I say. Show them fear.

The Woundtree's people, they've got the right idea-

-and then we hear the sound of a control panel being smashed.

The phone line goes dead.

CONSPIRACY-THEORY CALLER:
Here's what's **really** going on.

The Peninsula and the Linger Straits aren't enemies. They **chose** to go to war with each other, so they can take on the **real** enemy.

It's a god of peace. They call it the Soothing Salve. It's infiltrated every level of both governments, and the only way to root it out is all-out war.
(Very seriously)
It's everywhere! That's why there's-

Another control panel is smashed.

A second dead phone line.

FURIOUS CALLER:

I know you're there! Stop transferring me, dammit!

I want my uncle's body returned to me. I want it released. And I want a full explanation and an apology. That shouldn't be hard.

You killed him. You killed him, and you can't even say you're sorry?

I can keep calling back and I'll call as many times as it takes until you tell me wh-

(Being cut off)

Hello? Hello?

What's - can you hear me?

Smash.

A growing chorus of dead tones.

EMOTIONAL CALLER:

(Bravely, as if confessing)

Maybe there's nothing we can do to turn things around for ourselves now.

But...if it's too late to save ourselves, does this **really** have to be our final dance? The same old steps we've always known.

Even if it doesn't save us, even if it doesn't help? What's left to lose?

Break a few windows? Dance naked, and wild, and angry, while the darkness falls?

Couldn't we prove ourselves capable of that?

(Bravely)

I just think-

SMASH.

And then everything goes dead - and we descend into silence.

GLOTTAGE BAR, INT, NIGHT

A crowded bar. This is a listen-party for CARLIE CAPE: RISE OF PULCHRITUDE, a Marvel-esque spectacular that's playing over the speakers.

A HEROIC TYPE is dramatically pleading with A TRAGIC HEROINE TYPE mid-battle. Lots of very sincere yelling.

A HEROIC TYPE:

(Yelling)

Penny!

Penny, please! I love you, but this has to stop! This is madness!

A TRAGIC HEROINE TYPE:

(Very dramatically)

You said it yourself, Carlie. Too many people have died. And for what?

(With disgust for whoever Richter is)

So Richter can turn a profit?

A HEROIC TYPE:

We started this to stop Richter, I know.

But we have the proof now - we can show the world he was conducting unsanctioned sacrifices to line his own pockets. The children are safe.

The cops can take care of him, Penny. He's going away for a long ti-

The power cuts out. There's uproar from the crowd. A glass is thrown-

-as it does, we hear a soft instrumental reprise of THE RIVER, the song from the very beginning of the season.

MONTAGE (STREETS OF GLOTTAGE, EXT, NIGHT)

Cars are driving. We hear the same RECRUITMENT AD playing over the speakers across the street-

RECRUITMENT AD:

If you're not currently contracted to a licenced organisation or a licenced faith, the call for enlistment could come at any time from next week.

Make sure you're prepared for the knock at the door. Toothbrush. Toothpaste. Clean change of clothes.

Everything you need to keep the Peninsula safe. If you're not under contract-

-and it, too, cuts out (along with, we imagine, the lights).

We hear frantic car horns as drivers swerve - and one crashes.

MONTAGE (STREETS OF GLOTTAGE, EXT, NIGHT)

A helicopter roars overhead. Crowds can be heard in the background.

A GGR FIELD REPORTER is frantically reporting.

GGR FIELD REPORTER:

So, uh...we don't actually know when this is going to be broadcast, of course, since GGR is itself currently off the air.

It's now almost midnight, and out here on the streets of Glottage, close to two million homes, transport, commercial properties, industry - all gone dark, and we understand that outside the city, the situation is much the same.

As you can probably hear behind me, quite a considerable number of citizens have been gathering throughout the day along Hayman's Row in the heart of the city, ignoring repeated calls to disperse, showing no signs of heading to bed.

There's a lot of anger out here towards the government, a lot of anger towards the Church Electric -

MONTAGE (STREETS OF GLOTTAGE, EXT, NIGHT)

The sounds of protest rise. The FURIOUS CALLER has taken up a megaphone.

FURIOUS CALLER:

They can kill a man! By **mistake**! Without apologising! A hundred times a day!

But they can't keep the lights on!

They devour us, body and spirit, one by one, and they say it's for the war effort!

But they can't keep the lights on!

They're losing their war!

How many of us have lost loved ones to the draft? How many more are we going to lose? Hm?

When are we going to let them know, once and for all, that enough is enough?

If a god must feed, then maybe it can feed on them for a change!

Fuck the Legislatures! Fuck the Saint Electric!

I'm marching up to the Moridame tonight and I'm going to give them a piece of my mind! Who's coming with me? WHO'S COMING WITH ME?

Cheers and roars.

A POLICE OFFICER impotently broadcasts:

POLICE OFFICER:
This is an unlawful gathering.

By the order of the Legislatures, you have sixty seconds to disperse.

Failure to comply will result in lawful sacrifice to the Cloak-

MONTAGE (CARSON'S OFFICE, INT, NIGHT)

CARSON closes the window. He's furiously lecturing an underling.

CARSON:
I don't care what's caused this, I don't care!

You get onto the Saint's people, you get through to them however you can, you run down to their offices and smash a fucking window if you have to, and you tell them.

They need to fix this. The grid's going back up tonight or we're finished with them! That's not an idle threat, that's not a bluff, I will drive them into the fucking **sea!**

They need to fix this!

MONTAGE (STREETS OF GLOTTAGE, EXT, NIGHT)

The protest has become a full-scale riot. Sirens sound in the distance. Smashing glass can be heard. One EXCITED RIOTER broadcasts through a megaphone-

EXCITED RIOTER:

(Yelling out fervently and enthusiastically, even a bit rabid)

Glottage has gone dark! The Saint has fallen and her lights are out!

Hail to the Shade and the Still!

Smash the glass and break the bounds! Death to the Saint Electric and the false-faith Legislatures!

Let Mother Night rule the city once more, unfettered and free!

MONTAGE (**CATHEDRAL OF THE SACRED GRID**), INT, NIGHT

Gunfire and screaming. A battle is underway for control of the national grid building.

WEBB:

(Screaming as a war-cry)

200 FUCKING KILOWATTS AN HOUR-

200 KILOWATTS! 200 KILOWATTS!

Bang. He's hit - he goes down.

WEBB:

Agh! Get back! Everyone get back!

Beside him, we hear SILVERWOOD groaning. MOSS calls out-

MOSS:

Chief's hit! Grab him! Drag him back!

They won't last long. We fade out as another body hits the floor.

And the music, too, draws to a close.

OUTSKIRTS OF GLOTTAGE, EXT, NIGHT

And then we're listening to silence.

Cicadas. Passing cars.

CARPENTER and HAYWARD, on the edge of Glottage, have parked out on the roadside for the night. They're slouching on the bonnet, gazing out over the night countryside.

HAYWARD opens a beer and hands it to CARPENTER. CARPENTER takes it.

There's a kind of comfortable silence between them.

HAYWARD:
(Startled, stirring)
Hey. Look at that.

Lights should have come on over Glottage at dusk.

It's pitch black out there.
(Realising something else)
Power lines aren't humming, either..

Something happen?

CARPENTER:
Must be a blackout.

HAYWARD:
Huh.
(Joking)
Maybe we've overthrown the government.

CARPENTER:
That was quick.

HAYWARD:
Real weight off my shoulders, if I'm honest with you.
(Joking, as if getting to his feet)
OK, shall we head on home?

CARPENTER:
(More seriously)
Maybe Paige's people have taken down the power grid.
(Correcting herself)
The Lingers, I mean. I suppose we're Paige's people now.

A peaceful silence.

CARPENTER:

Nice to see the stars out here, at least.

HAYWARD:

(Dreamily)

My mother used to tell me, there's gods in the stars, but we mustn't worship them, because they belong to worlds beyond ours.

I liked that thought.

There's nothing we can ask of them and there's nothing they can take from us - but we get a little free light from them, all the same.

(Testing his riddle on CARPENTER)

Carpenter. What's the opposite of a sacrifice?

CARPENTER:

Fuck are you talking about?

HAYWARD:

(Calmly)

Paige didn't know either.

Silence.

CARPENTER:

Can I ask you something, Hayward?

HAYWARD:

Go on.

CARPENTER:

Are you afraid to die?

Silence.

HAYWARD:

Mm. I think this kind of talk is **probably** why Paige is so worried about you.

(Pause)

Yeah, of course. I'm frightened all the time.

But you have to keep going. You have to press on.

CARPENTER:

But maybe that's exactly it. Maybe we shouldn't.

Maybe Carpenter died years ago. I'm her ghost, nothing more.

Still pressing on.

HAYWARD listens, sincerely. He takes a swig of his beer.

HAYWARD:

After I lost my job. I had nothing, most of me wanted to lie down and call it quits. And I don't know why I pressed on, but I did.

And even now, I mean...

Paige didn't want me coming out here to recruit this adjudicator. She certainly didn't want you coming with me.

I said that we needed to make something happen, we had to force some real progress outside of our own walls. For the sake of the movement, for the sake of keeping this thing growing. And I meant it. I was being entirely, 100% honest.

I get out here, and suddenly it all starts hitting me wrong, and I think - well, maybe it **wasn't** 100% honesty after all, maybe there was a little performance in it too.

Because I felt stagnant, looking at lists, trying to cheer people up every damn day when I didn't feel cheerful myself.

On the road's always where I've been happiest. Destinations just made me realise I'm sick of myself.

CARPENTER watches the stars.

CARPENTER:

What's - what's one of those electrical things that just keeps on going?

HAYWARD:

(Thinking)

Like a dynamo?

CARPENTER:

(Gently)

You and I, Hayward, we're dynamos. We're a pair of old, worn-out engines.

The belt's wearing down, and maybe the product's no longer coming out like it used to.

I can't remember when it started or if it's doing any good rolling onwards like that, but it's too afraid to stop.

Do you know what I mean?

Silence.

HAYWARD:

The whole damn world's an engine. And all of us just keep feeding ourselves in.

Because it feels like stopping now could only end in disaster.

Silence.

CARPENTER:

(Softly)

Everything burns out in the end, though.

It has to.

A long silence.

We sit with them in the silence amongst the cicadas as the hum fills the air.

HAYWARD:

(Softly observing)

Mm. Lights are back on.

END OF EPISODE