

THE SILT VERSES

CHAPTER V

INTRO

Perhaps unexpectedly, we hear the voice of CHARITY.

She sounds tired, a little hoarse.

CHARITY:

(Narrating)

They'd bring me to the old woods, my father and mother, when I was small.

They'd say its name aloud to me - Penda's Slake - and they'd tell me that every name in this world has two meanings, one of them buried.

That these woods had a thirst in them, just as you or I had a thirst.

That we had a responsibility to see that thirst was quenched.

So we would be performers, in a piece that had been acted out through the Slake, again and again with people playing the different parts of the chaser and the chased, since time first began.

They taught me a song, and we sang it together, my mother and father and me, as we walked our way through the woods, and we whispered it to the sacrifice who had come with us, its head bound in thick sackcloth, and the harmony of our voices was the sweetest thing I'd ever heard, and the words were a poetry that was sacred and only ours, no-one else's.

*We will bring you terror
And you will bring us meat.*

*You will make me savage.
We will make you fleet.*

*You thank us for the chasing,
We thank you for the feast.*

*The grass leaps up about your carcass,
Long and lean and sweet,*

*We'll be your chosen hunters.
And you - the god we eat.*

These are the Silt Verses.

And ahead of me, taking flight through the trees, I can see our
disciples. In order of their arrival:

Daisy Bilenkin as Charity
David S Dear as Sid Wright
B. Narr as Faulkner
Calder Dougherty as Stanton
Méabh de Brún as Carpenter
And Jimmie Yamaguchi as Hayward.

Created by Jon Ware and produced by Muna Hussen,
Audio production by Sammy Holden.

As before, she goes on to credit the cast and crew, and offer up any content warnings.

STING.

MOTEL ROOM, INT

We hear the radio click.

SID WRIGHT:
Good morning, folks - and it's time for the six o'clock news bulletin.

Our top story today.

In the Miller's Bank of Glottage, law enforcement have reported a troubling slew of mechano-sacrificial crimes in the abandoned automobile factories.

These factories have been closed down for twelve years now, folks, so sacrifices are not permitted there, and local residents are urged to stay vigilant for any signs of unlicensed worship.

Do you know what your children are speaking to, late at night?

This is Sid Wright, starting your day right-

From the depths of the bedsheets, we hear FAULKNER stir.

FAULKNER:

(Narrating)

Prattle on, jester. The river rises.

A creak of the sheets as he gets up.

FAULKNER:

(Narrating)

Carpenter is sleeping. Let her sleep.

She's wasted enough of our time. Her sojourn in the woods led us nowhere.

She's led by her own pride and obstinacy, which she mistakes for gut instinct.

She doesn't know what it means to be chosen by a god.

She led us to a dead end. She'll wake this morning chastened, humbled.

Ready to accept that a different approach is needed. And yes, I have some ideas on that front...but I'll be led by you.

I turn on both of the taps in the sink. Both of the taps in the bathtub.
Letting the water run in four flowing streams that makes the pipes
behind the wall shriek and bang.

I take the chalkboard out from my case, I prop it up in front of the
bathroom mirror, and I begin to etch the sacred-prayer marks out upon
it.

Practicing. Washing away. Practicing again.

Prayers of gratitude. Prayers of beseechment. Ritual signs of the high
tide at morning and the low tide at dusk.

Everywhere I go, I etch these in hidden places, for the faithful to find
and follow. Because others must know that they are not alone.

My handwriting is careful. Precise.

Even beautiful.

At school, it was remarked upon - perhaps the only thing about me
that was. *You, kid, you're great at mathematics, and you, you'll be a
natural tennis player.*

But you, Faulkner, you've got good handwriting.

Not the most practical of talents. But I'm grateful for it, all the same.

And as I mark and wipe and mark and wipe, eventually, I must get
something right, because the running water in the sink and in the
bathtub begin to twist, the hot stream flowing into cold and winding
about itself.

Turning itself about and upwards in two parallel streams, to rise in a
joyful, impossible ascension.

Reaching for the dull grey ceiling and, beyond that, a stagnant yellow
sky.

MOTEL RECEPTION, INT

We hear the motel reception bell ring, insistently. It's our first signal that FAULKNER has moved.

A moment later, we hear the door creak as STANTON comes to stand at the reception desk.

FAULKNER tries to be cool. Commanding.

He's not quite as good at it as CARPENTER is.

FAULKNER:

We're checking out today. I'd like to settle up.

STANTON:

No problem. Just need to print out the receipt.

(As if making conversation)

You were back late last night.

FAULKNER:

Well...yes, I suppose we were.

We stayed out late. Birdwatching.

STANTON:

(Gently incredulous)

Must have been hard, in the dark.

FAULKNER:

(Trying to take control of the conversation)

Looks brighter today, anyway.

STANTON:

All right. So for two nights, that's twelve regular apiece, and then there's the filter tax, which adds fifteen erratic.

Where did you say you were heading next?

FAULKNER:

I didn't.

STANTON:

Well, I've got all the local maps of this territory right here under the desk. Show me where you're trying to get to. I can point you in the right direction.

FAULKNER:

No, that's-

He hesitates as he looks up and notices something.

FAULKNER:

Your, um, security camera.

STANTON:

Hm?

FAULKNER:

The green light wasn't blinking before. You've turned it on.

STANTON:

(A little unnerved that this has been noticed)

Oh, well. Just thought it was a good idea to be sensible.

Need to protect my guests in case of any trouble.

FAULKNER:

I suppose that's one advantage to the sun coming out.

(Explaining himself)

You must have guests coming in to enjoy the good weather. A weekend out on the river.

STANTON:

(A little too quickly; he's lying)

Oh, sure. We had a handful of others coming in last night. Expect a few more couples today. It's going to be busy.

FAULKNER:

(Narrating)

The board is visible behind him in the gloom.

The keys look dusty. Only two empty hooks - Sister Carpenter's and mine.

A moment of silence. FAULKNER is thinking.

FAULKNER:

(Casually)

I'd actually like to leave my case here as I head out for breakfast.

Would you mind terribly storing it in your back room?

STANTON:

Er-

Yes, of course.

FAULKNER:

Thanks. It doesn't have a lock, so I just want to make sure it's safe.

STANTON:

(A little more eagerly, doing mental calculations in his head)

Not a problem, not a problem.

Here, let me take it from you-

The door to the back room creaks as STANTON heads through.

STANTON:

(A little muffled)

And, uh, if you need anything else at all, please don't hesitate to-

We hear the heavy, wet THUMP of FAULKNER slamming STANTON's head against the wall.

A second THUMP. A third, violent THUMP.

The sound of a body slumping to the floor.

FAULKNER:

(Out of breath, exhilarated)

The river rises.

STING

BACK ROOM, INT

Some manner of back room or basement. STANTON is handcuffed to a chair.

His voice is filled with desperation.

FAULKNER is moving silently about across the room.

FAULKNER:

(Narrating)

They told me this sort of thing might happen.

At the seminary, the Katabasians were very clear with each of us that when we headed out on the road, we might find ourselves forced to face off against enemies of the faith, those who might attempt to trick or arrest or murder us.

And this is nothing to be afraid of, these inevitable confrontations. You mustn't hesitate, and you mustn't shrink back from their consequences.

They must be handled with grace and cunning and unyielding will, and all of these things, in time, will be written into the Verses.

'An early test of the young prophet's talents.

A triumph for the Trawler-Man, and his servant Faulkner, who at that time was only just beginning to prove himself.'

If my hand is shaking, that's only from excitement.

And if I feel uncertain, and a little frightened - well, that's only because the hotelier, bound to a chair and glaring back at me, reminds me indisputably of my father.

It isn't in the face. And it isn't in the shock of white hair.

Perhaps it's the eyes.

STANTON:

(Pleading, in some pain)

Please...please.

FAULKNER:

(Narrating, quite calmly)

Dad had a funny habit, when we were young.

He'd never quite look at you.

It wasn't just me.

He did it with all three of us, holding entire halting conversations with us while keeping his gaze just fixed on an empty patch of air that was elsewhere.

His hands twitching in their sleeves, as if he was thinking about pruning in his garden.

And none of us ever spoke about the fact that we had a father who didn't look at us, which meant that it took a very long time for me to actually realise that this was not normal, this was not just part of talking to your father about school grades or holiday plans.

I'd look back and forth at my brothers, and wonder - were they seeing it? Were they as confused as I was, or was it a defect in my father's sight that I'd somehow failed to understand? What could possibly be causing this?

STANTON:

Please...listen to me.

FAULKNER:

(Narrating, still calmly)

But eventually, sharp as I was, I understood; Dad, like the perfect gardener he was, was setting boundaries. He needed to hold himself at a distance from us.

I don't know for certain whether it was a sense of shame that he wasn't a more active parent, or the lowliness of our surroundings, or even that he hated us by association for what had become of his wife...

Part of me always suspected it was more than that. He didn't have any strong feelings about any of us, specifically.

But he didn't want to be here, in the same kitchen as us, in this life and this body.

He wanted to be something else, somewhere else, and he dreamt of these possibilities as he gazed into the depths of the television screen each night, and we were the anchors that were keeping him tethered to this reality with our insurances on conversation, attention, on being fed.

If he didn't ever quite look at us, he could keep our animal needs satisfied, but he could keep on pretending that he was elsewhere.

My friend the hotelier, through bruised and bloodied eyes, is doing just the opposite.

He won't stop looking at me.

He stares right at me, bold and mocking, as if he doesn't know that he's supposed to be afraid.

So perhaps I'm not quite sure why he reminds me quite so much of my Dad.

We hear STANTON stir in his bonds.

STANTON:

You've already got the security tapes, so you don't need to worry about those.

I can give you the safe code. There's money in there.

A couple of watches.

FAULKNER:

You already know I don't want the safe code.

And you know I'm not interested in watches.

STANTON:

(Placating)

All right. I'm a captive audience. So what do you want?

FAULKNER:

I want you to tell me the truth.

How do you know us?

STANTON:

Know what?

FAULKNER:

If you drag this out, I'm not paying for late checkout.

How did you guess we weren't really birdwatchers?

Silence.

Then STANTON chuckles, mockingly, without humour.

STANTON:

I could see that from the moment you walked through the damned door, you fool.

But then last night I went through your rooms.

Found the etchings you left underneath the bed. Found your little book, too.

FAULKNER:

That's a violation of privacy.

STANTON:

(Scornfully)

What, thought you were being subtle? I could see you coming from a mile away.

I knew you didn't belong here. Nobody comes here to birdwatch.

FAULKNER:

(Genuinely a little shaken)

These are my sacred territories that you're squatting in.

I belong here more than you'll ever know.

STANTON:
Oh. So you are one of them.

FAULKNER:
(Coldly)
Yes. I am.

STANTON:
We really thought we'd seen the back of you mud-worshipping freaks.

It was a good day when they drove you out into the hills, you know.
We cheered to see your chapels burn. My father and mother told me
how they danced on the ruins of your false-faith shrines. We reclaimed
the land that had been lost to the waters.

They should have gone further. Should have followed you into the hills
and wiped you out. You hear me?

FAULKNER:
(Muttering to himself)
The river rises.

STANTON:
Go jump in your sodding river. See if it doesn't drown you just like it
drowns everything else.
(Trying to get FAULKNER's attention)
I'm talking to you.
(Trying harder)
Hey - where's your boss?

FAULKNER:
Excuse me?

STANTON:
The other one. The one in charge. I want to speak to her.

FAULKNER:
I'm the one in charge.

STANTON:
I-
(Suddenly frightened)
What are you doing with those?

FAULKNER has produced a set of fishing hooks.

FAULKNER:

If you're familiar with our faith, I'm guessing you'll know something of our rituals.

The right tides won't come for a sacrifice unless you take the necessary steps.

First you need to bait the hook-

STANTON:

(In sudden searing pain, as a hook is thrust through their earlobe)

Ahh!

FAULKNER:

And next you mark the flesh-

STANTON:

(Ragged and desperate)

Wait! Wait, wait, wait, just...

...just give me a second. Give me a second.

FAULKNER:

(Calmly)

Are we the only members of our faith you've encountered? Or have there been others?

STANTON:

One of you came to live out of town a decade or so back. An artist, so he claimed. Made things with his hands.

We'd ride up the river and see his statues, staring back at us from the banks.

Eyeless faces. Long necks. Degenerate stuff.

We could see him, mumbling and muttering down by the waterside, etching his signs and binding the reeds in knots, and we knew him then for what he truly was.

He kept dogs to try and drive us away. He didn't want us coming near his bungalow.

He didn't want us seeing what he was calling out to, in the lonely places.

FAULKNER:

What happened to him?

STANTON:

We saw to him. What do you think?

He woke up one morning and we'd left him a present in his drive-way.

Took one of his statues, and knocked the head off, and slipped a dead eel around its neck on in its place.

He didn't listen to us.

So we took things a step further.

Saw to his dogs. Left him another present.

Started giving him a beating or two, whenever he tried coming into town looking for supplies.

(A strange laugh)

Until he got the message and left.

Fled upriver, into the wilds.

FAULKNER:

That's cruel.

FAULKNER:

Why did you hate him?

STANTON:

If you have to ask that, you're too far gone yourself.

FAULKNER:

Tell me more about the artist. What was his name?

(Forcefully)

What was his name?

STANTON:

His name was Roake.

FAULKNER:

(Thoughtful)

Roake. Tell me how we get to his bungalow.

STANTON:

Take the river road north for about an hour. Keep on the left as it splits, and the road becomes track and the fields rise up. 113 Longray Mansions.

You'll see the stone heads, towering over the reeds, welcoming you home.

FAULKNER:

Thank you. You've been a tremendous help.

FAULKNER:

(Narrating, with growing fervour)

I take the empty tub and place it under the sink.

As I fill it, the water clouds, and darkens.

I can see something staring back up at me.

It's not my reflection.

Not even close.

But the thing in the water meets my eye and it smiles at the sight of me, just as I smile back.

All of these people have forgotten you, Trawler-man.

Even their hatred is inchoate. They don't know what they're afraid of, but the fear is all they have left to cling on to.

I'm going to remind them.

I'm going to show them what's coming for them.

A clunk and a splash as FAULKNER places the filled water tub down on the nearby table.

STANTON:

(Pleading)

You're a sensitive soul. I can tell that. You're not going to take this too far, do something you can't undo. I've got the measure of you.

I-

(Being grabbed by the throat)

Ahh!

FAULKNER:

(More calmly)

You're a good judge of character. That's something I could never take away from you. I'm glad you understand me.

Just going to bring your chair forward. Here we go.

STANTON:

What are you-

FAULKNER:

(Soothingly)

I'm not going to hurt you.

I'm going to make you a Saint.

Hold still for me now.

STANTON:

No, don't-

FAULKNER:

(Narrating)

I etch the canticle marks across his forehead, in a hand that's careful.

And precise.

And beautiful.

The water rises up in yearning, twisting tendrils from below. Reaching up and out for what's been offered.

I deliver it.

We're plunged into water.

We can hear STANTON's muffled screams and violent thrashing. Air bubbling out from his lungs.

And then we hear the horrible, crackling sounds of something changing. Bone reshaping.

It sounds almost peaceful.

FAULKNER:

(Uncertainty growing in his voice)

I watch him buck as he drowns, the man who reminds me of my father. I watch the dark water ripple, as it reaches him, pours up in through every choked orifice, and he thrashes and screams as the Trawler-Man's crawling changes are brought upon him, try as he might to resist.

I take a step back as he rears up and free from the tub, no longer capable of being contained, his dripping tendrils reaching gloriously up towards the sky like clear water surging forth from deep and hidden places.

And I tell myself, it's all right, there's no need to worry.

They won't write about this part. They'll write something different.

MOTEL ROOM, INT

We hear the radio click.

SID WRIGHT:

All right, it's almost time for the eight o'clock news bulletin, but before we do, I'd like to talk to you about something truly important.

The Grindinglord be praised, his tireless servants have been hard at work on an entirely new limited-release product, all for the delectation of you and I, listeners.

He has heard your prayers for a psychotropic tea that tastes good and helps you see the world exactly as it truly is - but also offers you the wakefulness and productivity that you have come to expect from us.

Third Eye Tea is headed to chemists next week, please do keep an eye out for it. Because if you sleep too long, it will be gone.

This is Sid Wright, starting your day right-

The radio cuts out.

And from the depths of her bedsheets, CARPENTER groans.

CARPENTER:

(Narrating)

I'm drowning in gods.

A god in the woods. A god in the radio. A god in the water.
Everywhere you look, that glut of thought and meaning and purpose.

And there's a god in your pain, as well.

When you open your eyes, and the first thing you feel is that twinge of
a fresh wound, an extra level of surging sensation from muscles and
tendons that you'd come to take for granted, a revelation and reminder
of the meaningful work taking place beneath your own skin...

...that's a voice from within you that needs to be listened to.

There's a voice in the raw divet where the flesh of my calf used to be,
and it's calling me a damned fool.

And then I remember.

There was nothing for me in the woods. Nothing for us in this town.

We should already have left this place behind.

We just didn't know where the hell we were supposed to go next.

MOTEL CORRIDOR, INT

We hear CARPENTER rapping at FAULKNER's hotel room door.

CARPENTER:

Faulkner. Faulkner.

(To herself)

Shit.

MOTEL RECEPTION, INT

We hear CARPENTER ringing the reception bell.

She waits for a moment, then impatiently rings it again.

She sighs.

CARPENTER:

Shit.

DINER, INT

We hear the diner door clatter open.

The faint chatter of diners as CARPENTER takes her seat at the bar.

CARPENTER:

(To the servers)

I would like some pancakes and a very strong filter coffee, please.

Beside her, we hear her fellow diner turn to her.

HAYWARD:

Busy, isn't it?

Guess last night's excitement has everyone up and about.

CARPENTER:

(Casually)

I wouldn't know. I was out of town last night.

What happened?

HAYWARD:

Oh, they found new evidence regarding those missing fishermen.

Serious enough to call in the police.

CARPENTER:
What happened to them?

HAYWARD:
They suspect something horrible.

Silence.

CARPENTER:
You can't just drop that on the table and leave it there.

HAYWARD:
(Settling in to tell a story)
As I understand it, one of the other fishing crews began moving their junk into the missing men's boathouse yesterday evening. Well, it had been long enough, and there's no sense in a good berth going unused.

They poked about, salvaged what they could - and then found something in the water beneath the mooring jetty.

Lobster-pots. Woven wicker. And there had been carved stone dolls placed carefully inside, one for each missing crew member, each of them etched with ritual signs and clinging with leeching barnacles.

Someone had marked those men for sacrifice.

I'm sure you'll tell me you can't imagine anyone from around here who'd do such an awful thing, can you?

CARPENTER:
Wouldn't know.

I'm not from around here.

HAYWARD:
(Not seeming to hear her)

People always say that. "This sort of thing happens in other towns. But not here. We're just not like that here."

(Curiously)

Are you married, do you mind me asking?

CARPENTER:

(Incredulous)

Are you my mother?

HAYWARD:

(Choking back a laugh.)

I'm sorry. I just honestly can't think of a single good reason why anyone who isn't from around here would be hanging around in such a dreary place by themselves.

Here with a partner, though, a wife or husband - yeah, I can see that.

Some godawful, fatally misconceived anniversary weekend where you end up fighting and screaming in the dank and dripping holiday cottage and finally realise how far apart you've drifted.

"Honey, I thought it'd be rustic!" "You never listen." Etcetera.

A pause. He's waiting for a response.

CARPENTER:

There's two dozen species of rare waterfowl along this stretch of the White Gull alone.

The gold-billed oystercatcher in particular is more plentiful here than anywhere else on the Peninsula.

(Simply)

I'm birdwatching.

HAYWARD:

Ah.

CARPENTER leaves it for a second. But has to retort-

CARPENTER:

Are you married, then?

HAYWARD:

Increasingly less so, of late.

CARPENTER:

Mm.

HAYWARD:

I read somewhere that every relationship is a negotiation.

But it's when things are falling apart - that's when you realise you're doing most of the negotiating with yourself.

'If I can only do better, maybe he won't look at me like he hates me.'

'What do I need to put in to get the response I'm looking for?'

CARPENTER:

Sounds rough.

HAYWARD:

Rough doesn't really cover it. It's a very specific sensation, when your marriage is failing.

I mean, there's mingled terror and shame and all the rest of it. But also - anticipation. fervent, maddening anticipation.

At long last, this thing between the two of us gets to be resolved.

Something we set into motion actually gets to end, and we can come out on the other side as something else. Maybe shrunken and saddened. Perhaps something made anew.

It's like you're tangled up in barbed wire: draw closer, it'll be agony.

Pull away, you don't know what pieces of yourself you'll leave behind.
But you have to pull away, or this person, this gravitational orbit, is
going to destroy you.

CARPENTER:

(Engaging with the conversation despite herself)

There's an alternative.

You could destroy them.

HAYWARD:

I mean, yes, but that would cause harm, and when you're beginning a
new life alone, the last thing you want to do is cause any harm. You
can't be reborn with that in your heart.

No escape is truly clean, but at least once you've fled you don't have
to look at the mess.

CARPENTER:

I don't think you have any choice in the matter.

When someone's been that close to you, when you've been known so
well and you've been loved so closely, when every wrinkle of you has
picked out and exposed to another's sight...they can't be allowed to
continue on.

It'd be like losing your faith, but letting the lie of it keep standing.

They sit in silence for a moment. We hear the clatter of plates. Then-

HAYWARD:

(Enjoying himself)

I read a story once about one of these parochial gods, somewhere
south.

There was a stone bridge, with iron railings, over a small and
inconsequential river. Like this one. And after a time the young people

began to leave locked padlocks dangling from the railings, as young people do.

And after a time the story began to spread that there was a god of love dwelling in the bridge. And if you both went down to the river at dusk, and you both leant over the side to fix a padlock to the railings...well, if your love was untrue, the Lady of Linked Hearts would know.

And you'd feel a sudden stabbing in your hand and look down to see the padlock locked over your own palm, and then as the weight pulled you down another lock, clamping through your cheek and mouth, rendering you unable to speak, and another lock, and another, slicing unstopably through bone and flesh, iron chains and padlocks dragging you down and over the side to a slow and choking death beneath the river's surface.

And your date would cry and mourn your death, but they'd probably be OK in the end, because this was the proof of it: your love for them was never true.

They could try again. Bring others to the bridge. And if you passed the Lady of Linked Heart's trial, you were free to marry with confidence that you'd found what you were looking for; the real deal.

The problem with gods is, the more people who know the story, the worse it gets. You know how there are some couples that renew their vows every couple of years?

He chuckles.

Like spinning the chamber and holding the gun back up to your head.

Over and over again.

Anyway, eventually the authorities got wind of it, they sealed off the bridge and sent a couple of experimental theologists down with a bag of cats, and soon enough it became very clear that the bridge had no method to its sacrifices other than its own hunger.

It was just feeding as it pleased.

Love eats us all. I suppose that's my point.

CARPENTER:

Are you an expert on outlawed gods?

HAYWARD:

(Chuckling)

Just a reader of papers. Don't turn me in to the cops.

Do you want another cappuccino?

CARPENTER:

Sure.

HAYWARD:

(Calling out to the waiting staff)

One more here.

A moment of silence.

CARPENTER:

(Prompting)

So what are you going to do?

HAYWARD:

About what?

CARPENTER:

About your marriage.

HAYWARD:

Watch and wait, I suppose. For a sign.

(As if checking his watch)

Right. I'd better get down to the docks. They've got a sibyl down there, casting yew branches, seeking guidance from the Cloak.

It's embarrassing, this sort of superstition, but the ritual's written into procedure, and once something's wormed its way into procedure there's no prising it free. Might as well be in our hearts.

Pleasure talking with you-

CARPENTER:

At me.

HAYWARD:

I'm sorry. Talking at you.

What did you say your name was?

A micro-second of hesitation.

CARPENTER:

Sandra.

HAYWARD:

My name's Investigating Officer Hayward.

Have a good day, Sandra.

CARPENTER:

Thanks.

You too.

Silence returns to the diner as HAYWARD leaves.

CARPENTER sits alone with her thoughts for a moment. Then-

CARPENTER:

(Breathing out heavily)

Shit.

STING.

VILLAGE, EXT

FAULKNER:

(Narrating)

Was that right, the way it happened?

Did I get it right, have I failed in some way? Is it OK that I ran, as the saint reared forth?

I suppose it's only natural. There's always some small part of yourself that betrays you.

But when I step out through the motel door, my case in one hand, into the grey light of Marcel's Crossing...

...I feel renewed. Resolute.

Beyond the end of the promenade, past the temporary and rickety jetties of the town, I can see the deep waters of your river glimmering in the sun.

We've left a sign, my Trawler-man, for others to follow.

If the current state of the Dozy Pilgrim motel is any indication, it could be days, or even weeks, before anyone finds it.

That suits our purposes well enough. But they will find it, in the end, once we're long gone.

And the faithful and faithless alike will know we came this way.

We hear the van horn honking.

CARPENTER:

(Distantly)

Hey! Hey! Over here!

VAN, INT

We hear the van door slam as FAULKNER gets in.

CARPENTER:

Where the hell have you been? I was looking everywhere.

FAULKNER:

(Confidently)

There's no time for that now. Get us on the road. I know where we need to go next.

CARPENTER:

Something happen?

FAULKNER:

I've taken care of it. I've scrubbed our names from the motel guest book. I've wiped down our rooms for fingerprints.

As far as anyone knows, we're-

A sudden tapping on the van window.

HAYWARD is standing out there.

HAYWARD:

(Muffled)

Another minute of your time, ma'am?

CARPENTER:

(Calmly)

Open the window, Faulkner.

A whirr as FAULKNER winds it down. HAYWARD's voice is no longer muffled as he leans in to the car.

HAYWARD:

Is this, uh-

CARPENTER:

A fellow birdwatcher.

HAYWARD:

Mm.

(Politely)

Nice van.

CARPENTER:

Not really.

HAYWARD:

Well, I suppose you and your fellow birdwatcher will probably be sticking closely to the water's edge, so you can spot oystercatchers and storks and such.

Me, I'll be hanging around town for a few days to find out what happened to those poor fishermen.

You never quite know where an investigation like this will take you, but I'm sure I'll be drifting this way and that way in search of information.

That's the thing about the river - there's only two ways to go.

So if I run into you again, that's just 50:50 odds.

And it'd be pretty reasonable for me to take that as a sheer coincidence, if I do see the two of you again, driving your little van in the same direction as me, skulking about in the fens and the shallows, not doing much of note. I might give you a friendly wave and ask what birds you've seen, and continue on my way.

(Meaningfully and with menace)

50:50 odds.

Drive safe.

He leaves.

FAULKNER whirrs the window back up.

FAULKNER:

(Baffled)

Who was that?

CARPENTER:

Plainclothes.

FAULKNER:

(Rapidly losing confidence)

You spoke to the police?

CARPENTER:

Bastard talked my ear off for half an hour before he introduced himself. He's hanging around in town trying to find out what happened the fishing crew.

Don't worry, he doesn't have anything on us.

We'll just have to be more careful from now on.

(With a breath)

All right - so what's the story?

Where are we going next?

FAULKNER takes a breath.

FAULKNER:

(With sudden dread)

Sister Carpenter, I...

...I think I've made a mistake.

OUTRO.