

ROAD, EXT, DAY

We hear the roar of a jeep engine - and the splatter of mud.

It's raining, hard.

MERCER and GAGE's procession is stuck.

MERCER:
(Roaring at her soldiers)
Get those boards laid down!

Come on, push! Put your backs into it!

She squelches through the mud.

Elsewhere in camp, GAGE is crouched in their tent, on the radio to SHRUE.

SHRUE:
(On the radio)
I'm just about to go into the legislation meeting. Can you...can you repeat that?

GAGE:
We've found their temple - the Trawler-man's renegades. Just like you said we had to. One of the ancient centres of their faith.

We're-
(A little reluctantly)
-asking your permission to go on in.

If you give us time to get this done, we can give you the results you've been looking for. Something you can take to the press.

A long pause.

SHRUE:
(On the radio)
How long?

GAGE:
(A little embarrassed)
We're...we're in the mud right now. Just trying to get free.

We'll be there by dusk.

SHRUE sighs.

SHRUE:
(On the radio)
It's too late.

You understand that, don't you? It's much too late. We're about to vote-

MERCER snatches the receiver from GAGE.

MERCER:
(Hissing furiously at SHRUE)
Listen to me, you mewling dunce. Listen.

You called us to this hunt. You paid for these troops of yours to march out here and serve in our care because you wanted us **to kill a god**.

You entered into a pact that Gage and I, we understand as something sacred.

But you must have imagined it was something else, some kind of -
(with contempt)
-business arrangement, because then you changed the terms. And now you want to change them again, because all you know how to do is dance and squirm.

So if we're now re-negotiating, we have a new offer for you.

For every minute you make us wait to pursue our quarry, we'll hunt down one of your soldiers instead.

GAGE:
(Warning)
Sister-

MERCER:
We'll take their skulls and we'll take their skin and we'll wear these things as trophies to the glory of the Beast That Stalks In The Long Grass.

And then we'll ride into the city, we'll find whatever hole you've coiled up in, and we'll drag your carrion carcass home through the streets with us,

and **that** can be the final sacrifice to our god, worthless as you are to anybody else.

Payment made in full.

What do you say? Do we have an agreement?

A very long silence.

SHRUE:

(On the radio)

Fine. Wipe out the temple.

Take a few of the ringleaders alive, if you can.

(Very much fed up with all of this)

Just...fucking get it done.

The radio cuts out.

MERCER replaces the receiver, spits, then grabs a box of equipment and begins to sourly rummage through it - ignoring GAGE, who is staring at her.

GAGE:

You think the politico's going to stand for that?

MERCER:

I don't care if they do.

MERCER continues to rummage.

GAGE:

(Calm, accusatory)

You should never have agreed to this-

MERCER tosses the box to one side.

MERCER:

(Offended)

I?

We agreed to this.

GAGE:

You agreed to it. I said I wanted a break. I wanted time to breathe.

But you didn't **listen** to me.

MERCER:

Gage, what's happened to you?

We agreed to the hunt. Together. Always, together. We agree on everything we do-

GAGE:

(Almost laughing in disbelief)

We only agree because **I let you decide for us.**

MERCER is genuinely hurt by this.

MERCER:

That isn't true, sibling. You don't...you don't really believe that.

We're of one mind, we act as equals. We always have, ever since the hunt began.

Ever since that first sacrifice we made in the fields, when we moved as one, hunted as one, and the Beast hunted with us-

GAGE:

You **know** that isn't how it happened.

Sister, you must remember. I **know** you remember. That isn't how it really happened, that's only the story you like to tell for us.

Tell me you remember.

MERCER, very pale, attempts to wrap up the conversation.

MERCER:

Let's just get back on the road.

Tonight we'll wipe out the Trawler-man's people in their caves, and the politico can have their victory.

(Shortly)

And then you can have your breather. I'm sorry if I've been pushing you too hard.

GAGE:

(Trying to remind her, calling after her)
I was running, sister. You must remember.

I was running from him through the fields, I would have been his quarry.
And I tripped and fell.

And he was on top of me, choking me, and you came at him with the
knife, and it wasn't easy, it was hard and ugly and when it was finally
done, you sobbed, you sobbed like a baby-
(Desperately yelling)
Sister, **I know you remember!**

MERCER ignores GAGE.

MERCER:
Get those jeeps moving! Go, go!

We hear the jeeps rumbling into life, onwards-

THE GULCH ENTRANCE (UPPER FLOOR) INT, NIGHT

We hear CARPENTER hammering at the great iron door of the GULCH from the outside.

Approaching footsteps on stone stairs. BROTHER FLICKER and BROTHER FADE are on guard duty on the parapet above.

CARPENTER:
(Calling up)
Hey! Open up, damn you! Open up!

BROTHER FADE:
(To BROTHER FLICKER)
Be ready with the rifle.

He opens an iron window hatch. We can hear the rain outside.

BROTHER FADE:
(Calling out)
You down there! This is private property!

CARPENTER:
(Calling up)
I know it is, you fucking idiot! The river rises!

BROTHER FADE closes the window hatch.

BROTHER FADE:
(*To BROTHER FLICKER*)
She said the river rises.

BROTHER FLICKER takes his turn to open the hatch.

BROTHER FLICKER:
(*Calling down*)
What's the passphrase?

CARPENTER:
(*Calling up*)
I've got an injured child of the water back down the hill! She needs medical attention.

BROTHER FADE:
(*Calling out*)
If you're a child of the water, you'll know the passphrase.

CARPENTER:
(*Exasperated*)
I know one from last summer.
(*Unable to quite remember it*)
It was a passage from the Verses. Something about tides, I don't-

BROTHER FADE closes the hatch.

BROTHER FADE:
(*To BROTHER FLICKER*)
Cock the rifle so she can hear it.

BROTHER FLICKER cocks the rifle. It's not very loud.

BROTHER FADE:
(*A little disappointed*)
No, that's too quiet.

CARPENTER:
(*Calling up, muffled*)
Just open the gate.
(*Trying to see what works*)

I'm here with Brother Faulkner.

Send for Katabasian Mason - you can ask him.

BROTHER FLICKER and BROTHER FADE glance at one another.

BROTHER FLICKER:

(Less certainly)

A trick. Don't trust her.

BROTHER FADE:

And who should we tell him is at the door, exactly?

CARPENTER:

(Calling up)

My name's Carpenter.

BROTHER FADE:

Sister Carpenter is-

CARPENTER:

(Impatiently)

Dead, yes. If you'd just listen to me-

-and a moment later, FAULKNER arrives alongside her.

FAULKNER:

Brother Flicker, Brother Fade? It's me. The passphrase is 'Calm waters rise to swallow shattered roads.'

BROTHER FLICKER:

(Recognising the voice)

That's-

BROTHER FADE:

Brother Faulkner!

(Calling down)

We're sorry, Brother, we thought-

FAULKNER:

That's OK. Open the gate, please.

BROTHER FADE:

Of course. At once, Brother.

(To BROTHER FLICKER)
Open the door.

We hear FLICKER turning a lever.

FLICKER and FADE run down the steps as the gate laboriously clunks open.

THE GULCH ENTRANCE (LOWER FLOOR) INT, NIGHT

As they reach the ground floor, FAULKNER and CARPENTER step inside.

FAULKNER:
Thanks. Carpenter, this is Brother Flicker and Brother Fade.

CARPENTER glances them up and down.

CARPENTER:
Twins?

BROTHER FADE:
I return, he devours.

BROTHER FLICKER:
(Suspiciously)
You're not really Sister Carpenter-

FAULKNER:
(Intervening)
Brother Flicker, Brother Fade.

We left Sister Thurrocks in a car further down in the trees. I need you to send a stretcher for her right away.

BROTHER FADE:
Of course, Brother.

FAULKNER:
And then I want you to see about getting the disciples ready to leave this place before dark.

We're no longer safe here.

We need to speak to Katabasian Mason as soon as possible.

The two twins are taken aback by this.

BROTHER FLICKER:

I'm...afraid that's going to be quite impossible, Brother.

FAULKNER:

(Taken aback)

Why?

BROTHER FADE:

Katabasian Mason left us earlier this morning.

He...he said he had business in the city. He took one of the jeeps, and he told us to hold the fort here until he returned.

FAULKNER is horrified and furious.

FAULKNER:

Bastard! The...coward!

I told you, Carpenter - he godsdamned abandoned them!

BROTHER FADE:

You're not - Brother, I think you're misunderstanding me. He didn't abandon us, he simply had business-

CARPENTER:

(Urgently)

It doesn't matter. In some ways this makes things easier.

Load up the rest of the jeeps with as many supplies as you can, and get everyone ready to leave. We're emptying this place out.

Like Faulkner said, we need to be in the hills by sundown. We leave no trace behind.

The twins just stare at her.

FAULKNER:

You heard her, didn't you?

BROTHER FADE:

I- I'm sorry, Brother, but I'm not so sure we can do that either.

FAULKNER:
Why not?

THE DREAMING POOLS, INT, DAY

A door opens, and we hear footsteps on the metal parapets of the GULCH's lower levels.

And then we hear the coughing, and muttering, of a large crowd of people in the vaulted chambers of the Gulch. Children are playing below.

There are a shocking number of people down here.

From above, FAULKNER, CARPENTER and the twins stare downwards in disbelief.

FAULKNER:
How many people are down here?

BROTHER FADE:
Fifty-four adults. Twenty...uh, I think twenty-eight children.

BROTHER FLICKER:
They've been coming in little by little almost since you left us, Brother Faulkner.

Every few days, another family, sometimes two.

FAULKNER:
(Still a little stunned)
The old historic place of refuge.

BROTHER FLICKER:
Some of them were nearly starving by the time they reached us - they spent weeks hiding out in the reeds by the water's edge, waiting for the soldiers to pass.

BROTHER FADE:
Katabasian Mason said that we could be confident the danger might have passed us by.

CARPENTER:
(Shortly)
Katabasian Mason was wrong.

How many jeeps do you have?

BROTHER FLICKER:

Um...three.

FAULKNER:

How many of these people can walk?

BROTHER FADE:

Maybe half.

CARPENTER and FAULKNER reflect on this for a moment.

CARPENTER:

What do you think?

FAULKNER:

There's no way in hell I'm leaving them behind.

CARPENTER:

Good.

Then we need to get ready.

MASON'S STUDY, INT, DAY

The sound of a map unfurling.

FAULKNER and CARPENTER are bent over a map, planning their defences.

FAULKNER:

So. The Gulch has two floors above ground, facing the hillside and the road beyond.

There's a few narrow windows carved into the rock of the upper floor. Could be used to take shots at anyone coming up the hill.

CARPENTER:

There's a lot of trees, a lot of shade. They'll need to be good shots to have a chance of hitting anything. Are you confident in your people?

FAULKNER:

(Sort of a mehhhh gesture)

They'll slow them down, at least.

CARPENTER:

Fine. So we station maybe six disciples up there with rifles. No more than that, let's not overcommit.

What about the canyon side, facing the river?

FAULKNER:

There are three low sluice gates at the base of the rock. They open up to fill the sacrificial cages.

CARPENTER:

Yes, I remember. They're reinforced, aren't they?

FAULKNER:

And well hidden. If anyone wants to take the time to break through them, they'll be wading through the river up to their necks.

CARPENTER:

Okay, so we should keep a couple of the greenest on watch there, but I don't think we need to worry too much.

FAULKNER:

Maybe let's hide some supplies on the far bank. Could make for a good escape route if we get the opportunity.

CARPENTER:

(Disagreeing)

The problem is, then we'll be the ones struggling through the current. And we'll be visible from the road.

We'll be easy targets for anyone watching from above, and that'll be far worse if we're carrying wounded with us.

(More gently)

I agree that it's a potential escape route, but it's not one we should think about using other than a last resort - once we know the enemy's committed their forces to a direct assault.

Maybe we could jam the gates behind us, hold them up while we get to safety across the river.

FAULKNER:

We could get some of the wounded disciples down there to pray for a favourable tide, perhaps.

CARPENTER:
(Conceding, perhaps a little gently)
Couldn't hurt.

So they need to go in through the front door. We can make them pay for that, but once they're in...

It's numbers, that's the problem.

Even if you count one of ours for one of theirs, we're talking about forty, fifty trained and fully-armed soldiers against a bunch of...

FAULKNER:
Children.

CARPENTER:
A few sour old fucks, too. But yes.

She considers.

FAULKNER:
What are you thinking?

CARPENTER:
Accumulative warfare. Remember how they used to defend the bunkers on the northern coast?

They'll get past the gate and they'll get past the first barricades, that's a certainty - we can't hold them forever.

So. Once they make it past our defences, we need to make use of the Gulch itself. Split them up, get them lost.

Get them chasing us down the corridors, send runners out to draw them away.

We can lead some of them down to the vaults, where the water comes in. That's where we can find an advantage.

We try and take a few of them alive. We brand them with the prayer-marks, we say the hallowing words, and we shove them back out in the hallways to find their comrades.

If we're lucky, they'll change quickly enough to cause some proper havoc.

(Conceding)

It's unreliable, I know, but...

FAULKNER:

There's an alternative, though.

We could call for volunteers from amongst our own people. Hallow them ahead of the attack, not during it.

We'd create a few saints that could already be wandering the hallways before they even broke through the front doors.

It'd be a lot safer. A lot more reliable.

CARPENTER:

Yes, it would be.

(Quietly testing FAULKNER's morals)

Is that what you want to do?

FAULKNER thinks.

FAULKNER:

We'll make do with what we have.

(Taking a breath)

All right, where do you want to be?

You want to take one of the rifles and go to the upper floor? We could really use a killer up there - help to thin them out as they come up the hill.

CARPENTER stops. Something has been weighing on her for a while, and that final word has stung at her.

CARPENTER:

(With great feeling and tiredness)

I think...

I think...Faulkner, I think...

...I really can't bear the thought of taking any more lives in the service of the Parish of Tide and Flesh.

I came here to help. And I intend to.

But...I've bloodied my hands my entire life in the name of this fucking god, and now that I've actually, finally, made some kind of change, I really don't think I can stand to go out like that.

Not in the bastard's own temple. Not surrounded by his people.

You know?

(Backtracking)

If we're going to die down here, I don't want to die as a weapon of the faith, as his attack dog.

I want to die doing some good for other people.

Silence. FAULKNER is staring at her.

CARPENTER:

I know it's a...I hear myself saying it, and it's a ridiculous distinction, and it's the worst possible time-

FAULKNER:

(Reassuringly)

It might be the **only** time.

OK. You're a supporting party. We'll put you down in the dreaming pools.

You can be in charge of the disciples down there. Get the traps set up for the last defences. Check on the wounded, keep everyone's spirits up.

If we need to take the escape route into the river, they'll need someone to lead them out. Does that work?

CARPENTER:

(Heavily)

Yes, it works.

FAULKNER:

(Supportively)

You'll be an asset wherever you are.

A moment of silence.

FAULKNER:

Thank you, by the way. For not telling them it was all my fault.

CARPENTER:

Come on, now.

What kind of story would that be?

A knock at the door. SISTER THURROCKS pokes her head in.

From behind her, we can hear raised voices. The disciples of the Gulch are gathered.

FAULKNER:

Sister Thurrocks. Good to see you on your feet.

SISTER THURROCKS:

Limping, at least.

FAULKNER:

Good.

(To CARPENTER)

Carpenter - you want to say a few words to them?

CARPENTER:

(Gently)

These aren't my people any more, Faulkner. Besides, I don't know what I'd even say-

FAULKNER:

(Interrupting her)

That's all right. I've got something prepared.

He turns to go.

CARPENTER:

(Muttering under her breath, sarcastically)

Of course you do.

FOREST, EXT, DAY

We hear the birds amongst the trees. It's silent and still, broken only by-

MERCER:
Again.

GAGE blows again.

And we hear the distant sound of the GULCH's gates opening.

GAGE:
They're coming.

We hear CARPENTER and FAULKNER approaching through the grass.

CARPENTER:
(Calling)
We're unarmed.

MERCER:
(Calling back, mockingly)
Us too!

Come a little closer, there's nothing to be frightened of.

CARPENTER and FAULKNER come to a halt in front of MERCER and GAGE.

During this exchange, CARPENTER is holding herself back, trying to let FAULKNER lead.

MERCER is sweet and mocking, with the fury just bubbling up inside her. GAGE is watching, a little reluctantly, from the sidelines.

MERCER:
(Calling out a mocking greeting)
Hi! You must be Carpenter.

So sorry we didn't recognise you before.
(Laughing a little hysterically)
We have been killing our way up and down your river for so long now, and I have to tell you, it is such a relief to get someone in your crosshairs who **actually matters.**

I suppose you're the one in charge here.

CARPENTER:
(Gesturing to FAULKNER)

No. He is.

FAULKNER:

(Firmly)

I'm Katabasian Faulkner, of the Parish of Tide and Flesh. Prophet of the river.

We've come to negotiate for the safe return of your hostage. Before we go any further, I'd like to know who I'm speaking to.

GAGE:

I'm Gage, and this is Mercer-

MERCER:

(Dismissively)

Not so fast. Not so fast.

(To CARPENTER)

If **he's** in charge...what's your role in all this, precisely? I like to know who I'm talking to, and I get easily confused.

CARPENTER:

I'm just a friend of the family.

FAULKNER:

(Intervening)

She's one of the Cairn-Maiden's people. She left our faith behind a long time ago.

She's a neutral party in this, and she shouldn't be considered a combatant.

MERCER:

Oh.

(Mockingly)

'Shouldn't be considered?'

(Snickering, to CARPENTER)

So...why are you here, exactly? You stopped by for a, for an inter-faith conference?

CARPENTER doesn't respond.

MERCER:

Well, one mystery solved. I suppose our hostage belongs to you.

(Yelling back)

Bring it out!

We hear the RUCKSACK containing the HOMESICK CORPSE as it's flung onto the grass in front of CARPENTER.

MERCER kicks it open.

HOMESICK CORPSE:
Home...I have to get home...

MERCER:
Gage here started speaking to the old heap of bones, and what-do-you-know, it spoke right back.
(Chuckling lightly)
I'd never even have thought of it. Guess every corpse has a story to tell.

FAULKNER is baffled.

FAULKNER:
Where's your other hostage? Where's Brother Tapper?

MERCER:
(Dismissive)
I don't know who that is.
(With curiosity)
You're really not part of this, Carpenter? Is he telling the truth? You're a Cairn Steward now?

CARPENTER does not react.

MERCER:
(Calmly lying)
All right. We're not unreasonable.

So long as she stays out of the way and she doesn't cause us any trouble, she can be left out of it.

Hear that, Cairn Steward? Find yourself another room to hide in, and you'll be left alive.

You can bury the corpses once we're done here.

CARPENTER:
(Calmly and coldly)

No.

I won't bury you.

FAULKNER:

(Intervening)

We also have some families with us - a lot of children. I'd hope that we can negotiate for their safe release.

MERCER:

(In mocking disbelief)

Just listen to him. The confidence from...

What was your title again? Prophet of the river?

Do you...do you actually think you're at war with the government? Do you think this is a meeting of equals?

(Aside)

What's the aim here, Gage? What do we intend?

GAGE:

(A little reluctantly)

The aim is to wipe your god from the face of the land.

MERCER:

Precisely right. No, there's only one offer that needs to be made here today.

(To FAULKNER)

Bring out your leaders, your preachers, your keepers of history. Lead them to the front here, into the wet grass. Put them on their knees. Take your place amongst them.

Unbar your doors and raise your hands.

And if you're lucky, perhaps we'll run out of bullets before we come to the sick and weak and young.

FAULKNER:

(A little repulsed)

If you don't want to negotiate with us, why did you come out here at all?

MERCER:

(With cruelty)

To look our quarry in the eyes, and to cherish its final moments.

This hunt's been-

(With a little sigh)

- challenging, in its way, for my sibling and I. We've earned what's coming next.

CARPENTER says, suddenly.

CARPENTER:

Your death is waiting up ahead of you, hunters.

She keeps watch over the gates of this place, and if you strain your ears, you'll hear her whispers reaching out for you.

This is my advice to you, and it's as kindly as she is.

Turn around. Make a detour. There'll be another time for you to meet with her.

The walls here have withstood attackers for centuries. You'll lose half your people just coming up the hill.

You're both still young.

You can have a long life ahead of you, a life that's filled with endless possibility - if you take another path.

(To GAGE)

What about you? You haven't said much.

Does she speak for the both of you?

A moment's silence.

GAGE:

(Finding the words)

She and I-

And MERCER erupts in anger, lunging at CARPENTER.

MERCER:

(Snarling)

You smug, stupid old woman!

You think you can divide us? You think **either** of us can be swayed from the course?

(Bellowing)

You think barbed and broken words will save you?

GAGE holds her back.

GAGE:

(Urgently, overlapping)

Sister. Sister, that's enough-

CARPENTER:

Let's go, Faulkner.

FAULKNER:

We'll be waiting for you to make your move.

CARPENTER hefts the rucksack containing the HOMESICK CORPSE.

MERCER calls after FAULKNER and CARPENTER, as they walk away.

MERCER:

(Yelling out)

Go back to your people. You and your little 'prophet of the river.'

Say your final prayers.

Run and hide, if you like, drown yourselves in your river if that's how you'd rather die - it doesn't matter.

This is how it ends! This - tonight - this is how it ends!

Her voice echoes out

We hear the GULCH's doors close once more-

GULCH, EXT, DUSK

And the birdsong turns to cicadas as day turns to dusk,

GAGE approaches MERCER.

GAGE:

(Flatly)

We're almost ready. There's a hidden ditch about halfway up the hill, and we're not getting the jeeps up past that.

We'll keep them back, shine the spotlights up into the windows, try and buy us enough time to blow the doors.

Five of the fastest runners have satchel charges. Ten more are carrying decoys. They'll fling smoke grenades up as they go.

MERCER:

(Shortly)

Fine.

You disapprove, of course.

GAGE ignores the 'of course'.

GAGE:

We'll lose people going up the hill. There's no changing that. We'd be better off trying to starve them out-

MERCER:

A real predator strikes without hesitation.

GAGE:

(Annoyed)

A real predator knows how to **wait**, and choose their moment.

MERCER:

If we wait too long, the politico's apt to change their mind again. You see, sibling, I have thought about this.

Send them on up as soon as it's dark.

GAGE turns to go.

MERCER:

(Sharply)

Gage.

You're not dressed.

She means that GAGE isn't wearing their skull-helm.

GAGE:

(A little hostile)

It'll be dark down in the tunnels. The helm and hood, it'd be...an inconvenience.

MERCER:

(Hurt)

An 'inconvenience.'

(Shrugging it off)

All right, then. Let's get started.

THE GULCH ENTRANCE (UPPER FLOOR) INT, NIGHT

We hear disciples of the GULCH working on barricades, loading rifles, etc, as FAULKNER walks past them.

He takes up position at one of the upper-floor windows, sliding the metal-hatch across.

As the sound of cicadas becomes audible, FAULKNER breathes hard for a moment - and then regains control of himself.

He speaks into a walkie-talkie.

FAULKNER:

Carpenter - it's me. Barricades are all set up. We've got our rifles watching from the windows.

No movement yet.

CARPENTER:

(On the walkie-talkie)

They'll wait until it's properly dark.

You could try throwing a few torches down into the grass.

It's too wet out there to start any wildfires, but it'll give you more light to see them by.

FAULKNER:

Good idea.

CARPENTER:

(On the walkie-talkie)

They'll try and blow the doors. Quicker than trying to get them open by hand.

Keep an eye out for anyone with a rucksack, anyone who looks like they might be carrying explosives.

You made sure the barricades are placed well back, didn't you?

FAULKNER:

(Smiling lightly)

We did, don't worry.

CARPENTER:

(On the walkie-talkie)

Good. Make you retreat as soon as you need to. We'll be waiting for them down here.

(Trying to reassure him)

These people are ready to put up a fight worthy of any heroics from the Verses, Faulkner.

If we survive to tell the story, you might end up getting your own chapter in the damn thing.

FAULKNER:

I've planned for that.

CARPENTER:

(On the walkie-talkie)

...what do you mean, you've planned for that?

FAULKNER:

If we die tonight, I've hidden a record under the flagstones in Mason's office. Tells how it all went down.

We fought a hundred and fifty government men and we drowned the steps in their blood before the Trawler-man rose to drag us down to the safety of his garden.

CARPENTER:

(On the walkie-talkie)

And how do I die?

FAULKNER:

Oh, you were never here. You appeared as a vision to convince me not to give up hope.

CARPENTER:

(On the walkie-talkie)

Well, thank you for giving me such a tidy ending.

A moment of silence. And then FAULKNER says, with feeling,

FAULKNER:

Carpenter.

CARPENTER:

(On the walkie-talkie)

I'm here.

FAULKNER:

I never had a sister.

Growing up. I had two older brothers, and when you have two older brothers you spend a lot of time thinking about how a sister might somehow be better, and...

(Unable to articulate it)

I-

Please don't make me spell it out.

CARPENTER:

(On the walkie-talkie)

You don't have to explain anything to me.

(Unable to stop herself from mocking him)

The prophet of the water, though, the young Katabasian, maker of speeches, defender of the Paraclete's Gulch - he doesn't need a sister, does he?

FAULKNER:

No. That's not why I need her.

They sit with that for a moment.

CARPENTER:

(Roughly, over the walkie-talkie)

Well, I **did** have a brother, and I never got over what happened to him.

So you just be fucking careful out there, Faulkner. All right?

FAULKNER:
I will. You too.

He shuts the window hatch and begins to walk.

A moment later, we hear an alarm begin to sound. Consternation from below.

FAULKNER runs back to the window, opens it up, and watches.

We hear the rumble of engines far below.

FAULKNER:
(Into the walkie-talkie)
They're gathering at the foot of the hill.

Looks like they're bringing out the jeeps. They've got a couple of...looks like spotlights?

CARPENTER:
(Over the walkie-talkie)
They're going to try and blind you.

We hear the faint hiss of smoke canisters.

FAULKNER:
(Into a walkie-talkie)
They're throwing something up into the grass, it's...

...a smokescreen along the hill. I think this is it, it's happening.

I'd better go.

CARPENTER:
(Over the walkie-talkie)
Keep in touch.

FAULKNER drops the walkie-talkie and runs back down to the lower floor.

THE GULCH ENTRANCE (LOWER FLOOR) INT, NIGHT

He calls out, across the hall, to the bickering disciples, until silence descends:

FAULKNER:
(Calling out)
Siblings! Siblings!

Why does the Trawler-man have two mouths and why does he have two faces?

Because there's not a damned thing in this world that can be accomplished alone.

The soldiers out there are government people. They're not like us. They've always been alone, they've just never understood that.

They're looking to their paychecks to give them courage, and when that falters, they'll look to their leaders - and when their leaders are lying dead in their own blood, they'll have nothing else to give them strength.

We'll look to each other. As we always have.

When your brother falls, pick him up. When your sister reloads, it's your turn to shoot.

When your sibling falters, you need to show double the courage until theirs returns.

Ensure every one of these interlopers dies lost, and alone, and quivering as they're dragged down to the Trawler-man's garden.

The river rises!

A roar of excitement from the assembled disciples-

THE GULCH ENTRANCE (UPPER FLOOR) INT, NIGHT

-which becomes muffled as FAULKNER races back upstairs to take his position, with a rifle, at the window.

From outside, we hear the distant rising sound of GAGE's pipes.

FAULKNER:
Fire at your own pace, siblings. Good luck, everybody.

The tune ends.

And FAULKNER gasps as the blinding spotlights are activated from below.

Gunfire breaks out on both sides-

THE DREAMING POOLS, INT, NIGHT

-which becomes distantly audible in the lowest levels of the GULCH.

Silence. Occasional whimpering.

CARPENTER is prowling. She asked for this...but now she feels a little useless.

The gunfire ends.

CARPENTER:

(Into walkie-talkie)

How's it going out there, Faulkner?

Silence for a moment. And then we hear FAULKNER. He already sounds exhausted.

FAULKNER:

(From walkie-talkie)

They've pulled back.

I counted...maybe a dozen? We got five of them, I think. We lost four.

Hard to see anything through the smoke and the lights.

They're all carrying the same satchels. Think some must be decoys. One of them blew when he got close to us. Lucky shot from Brother Flicker.

We won't keep on getting lucky.

CARPENTER:

You need to wait until they get close.

There'll be a moment where they'll pause before they toss their charges.

The decoys will pull back and your targets will run ahead.

FAULKNER:

(Over the walkie-talkie, getting a little tetchy)

I know what I'm doing, Carpenter.

(Exhausted)

Movement. They're coming again.

CARPENTER:

(Conceding)

All right. We'll be waiting for them down here. Good luck.

She lowers the walkie-talkie.

Gunfire erupts above.

She strides onwards.

CARPENTER:

Brother Fade! How are we looking?

BROTHER FADE:

Stretchers are prepped; the tide remains low and the currents are calm.
The Trawler-man smiles upon us.

CARPENTER:

How long do you need to open the sluice-gates?

BROTHER FADE:

A few minutes.

CARPENTER:

Wait for the signal. Faulkner will let us know as soon as his people reach
the lower levels.

If they're not-

A distant explosion. A child begins to cry.

CARPENTER:

If they're not giving chase, if they're not following us down into the Gulch,
if they stay on the surface and wait for us to emerge...the bell won't
sound.

BROTHER FADE:

Then what do we do?

CARPENTER:

(Abruptly)

Die in a hole, most likely.

(Checking herself)

We'll have to make a dash through the currents to the far bank. They'll have a clear shot at us from the road, but...maybe the Trawler-man will give us another miracle.

So keep on praying.

Go.

She turns and descends the staircase. Below, the wounded disciples are panicking.

CARPENTER grabs an iron bar and slams it down onto the staircase railing for silence.

And then, dropping it, she delivers her own slightly less romanticising speech to the disciples surrounding her.

CARPENTER:

Keep your eyes and ears open.

When you hear the right words from someone running down the stairs - you let them pass.

When you **don't** hear the words, you don't hesitate. Grab them. Brand them. Twist the gun out of their godsdamned hands when they come through the doorway.

And you push them back out, and you lock that door behind them.

If someone falls, focus on the enemy. You can help them once the work is done.

All right. Be ready, take up your positions. It won't be-

From high above, we hear a muffled explosion - much closer now. Debris falls from above.

The assembled disciples begin to cry out in fear.

CARPENTER:

(Grimly, wearily)

It won't be long.

THE GULCH ENTRANCE (UPPER FLOOR) INT, NIGHT

FAULKNER is running down the upper floor. Gunfire can be heard all around.

We hear a distant voice cry out the beginnings of a warning-

-and suddenly, a far louder explosion. FAULKNER cries out as he's thrown off his feet.

Silence descends.

FAULKNER staggers up and continues on down the stairs.

THE GULCH ENTRANCE (LOWER FLOOR) INT, NIGHT

The gunfire is closer now. Distant cries can be heard. The doors have been blown.

FAULKNER:

They're through! They're through, get back! Everyone get back! Into the tunnels!

(Yelling)

Brother Flicker! Run!

BROTHER FLICKER:

(Wounded but exhilarated)

You go, Katabasian! You go!

(Manic)

I'll keep these godless wretches back!

FAULKNER flees as BROTHER FLICKER continues firing wildly, praying as he does so.

BROTHER FLICKER:

'Ease away my grateful skin, Trawler-Man,

I will rejoice at skin reshaped in silt,

And my fragments will swim in the currents of the abyss.

Fill my eyes and mouth with thick and choking mud, Trawler-man;

I will exult in the death of sight, sensation, and noise.

All around him, we hear cries of pain. A smoke grenade lands somewhere nearby, causing another disciple to choke.

BROTHER FLICKER:

Bear me away into black depths, Trawler-man;

I will forget my pain and the name I once wore.

Rise like a dark river in my throat, Trawler-man.
And my drowning lungs will-

BANG. His head explodes as we hear a distant rifle shot. He topples down.

Silence descends.

And a moment later, we hear the approaching footsteps of MERCER.

MERCER:
(*Idly*)
Mine.

GAGE:
(*To the soldiers*)
Torches on, take it slow. Burn anything that moves.

If you're stupid enough to get separated, you deserve everything that's
coming to you.

Follow me!

She descends into the darkness.

THE GULCH STAIRWELLS, INT, NIGHT

*We hear one GOVERNMENT SOLDIER lighting up a flamethrower, marching through the
corridors, setting stone and flesh aflame-*

*-And far below, we hear FAULKNER, running down a staircase and hissing to his disciples as he
goes.*

FAULKNER:
Move, move! They're coming this way. Stay quiet.
(*Into walkie-talkie*)
Carpenter.
(*Despairing*)
This isn't working. They're sticking close together. They're not letting us
split them off.

We're taking losses up here. I don't know what to do.

Silence. No response from CARPENTER.

FAULKNER:
(Into walkie-talkie, urgently)
Carpenter. I need help, I need ideas-

Silence.

We hear a man screaming far above as he's shot, his body tumbling down the stairs-

And then FAULKNER has an idea of his own. He lowers the walkie-talkie.

FAULKNER:
(To himself)
Why stay quiet?
(To his disciples)
Use the echoes. Use the echoes, keep running, but make some noise
wherever you go-
(Yelling)
This stairwell's clear!

He gets up and begins to run, his feet pounding on stone.

Every few paces, he stops and yells again.

FAULKNER:
(Yelling)
Turn back! Turn back, there's something down here!

FAULKNER:
(Yelling)
This passage's flooded! There's no way down here!

FAULKNER:
(Yelling)
I've got one of them! I've got one, follow me!

His voice echoes in the darkness as he runs.

WESTERN GULCH CORRIDORS, INT, NIGHT

We hear echoing cries from all directions.

Gunfire, screams, all of it making it impossible to tell which way to go.

MERCER:
(Furious and disoriented)
Can you...can you hear me?
(Realising something)
Wha-

Where did that idiot go? Where's the torch gone?

We hear a sudden, horrible scream from the distance.

MERCER shudders and begins to descend.

THE DREAMING POOLS, INT, NIGHT

-and the screams which becomes a lot closer as a soldier is branded with a prayer-mark.

He cries out as he's 'baptised' in water, gurgling in pain.

His body begins to transform.

BROTHER FADE:
Get him out! Get him out into the corridor!

A door slams. From behind it, muffled, we hear the horrible sound of the soldier slowly transforming into a saint.

BROTHER FADE:
(Into his walkie-talkie)
Blessings upon the Trawler-man. The first saint is loose in the eastern stairwell. Get clear of there as soon as you can.

Silence.

BROTHER FADE:
(Into his walkie-talkie)
Can...can anyone hear me? Katabasian Faulkner? Sister Carpenter?

Flicker?

Nobody responds.

WESTERN STAIRWELL, INT, NIGHT

FAULKNER comes running through and takes up a hiding position.

FAULKNER:

(Into the walkie-talkie, breathless)

All right. We're making progress. There's a lot of panic up there now, and the-

We hear a horrible, guttural howl in the distance.

FAULKNER:

(Into the walkie-talkie)

-and the Saints are starting to turn.

I'm going to gather up everyone I can and we'll head down to you.

You ready to make a run for it?

CARPENTER:

(From the walkie-talkie)

Timing's good. The tide's starting to turn, as well.

If our luck holds, it'll be flooded down here by the time they arrive, and they won't be able to follow. But we'll need to be quick.

FAULKNER:

(Into the walkie-talkie)

Give me five minutes and I'll be there.

Everyone! It's time to move! Just as we practiced!

He looks up - SISTER THURROCKS is amongst the faithful.

SISTER THURROCKS:

(Hissing)

Katabasian Faulkner, I need to speak with you-

FAULKNER:

Sister Thurrocks - you should **not** be up here.

You need to get down to the dreaming pools, right away. If you can't walk fast, find someone to carry you.

He starts to walk away.

SISTER THURROCKS:

(Plaintively, as if she's made up her mind)

You've got enough wounded to carry as it is.

Katabasian, I want to stay behind.

FAULKNER stops.

FAULKNER:

We're not leaving anyone behind, Thurrocks. Get down there with the rest of them, quick. Come on, now-

SISTER THURROCKS:

(Firmly, persuasively)

Katabasian. Please. Please, listen to me.

I want to be useful to you.

Give me the Wither Mark.

FAULKNER:

(Shocked)

That's not-

SISTER THURROCKS:

I'll barricade myself in Katabasian Mason's office. I'll wait until you're clear - and then I'll set it off.

There'll be nobody left to follow you into the hills.

Please.

We all have our part to play, don't we?

And this way...maybe others will be inspired to follow you.

Everyone, up and down the country...they'll know that when our enemies fell upon us, it was by your hand that the river's wrath fell upon them.

FAULKNER stares at her for a long moment.

Then he gives in.

FAULKNER:

No. They'll say it was by yours.

(Firmly)

Keep your walkie-talkie close to hand, and stay on the line. I'll contact you once we're well clear and in the hills.

The Wither Mark is...immense. You need to understand that, it's like nothing you've seen.

So you'll need to give us time - maybe more time than you'll have.

Don't use it until I give you the signal.

If they find you, if they break through to you, before we're ready - then do whatever you need to.

But leave the Mark alone.

THURROCKS:

(Sincerely)

I understand.

FAULKNER hesitates - and then he tells the truth.

FAULKNER:

Begin with the Dolorous Rose. Inside that, a hexagonal frame with a pair of Twinned Eyes, old pattern, in the heart.

Six rods connecting the corners to the petals.

Then six basic prayer-symbols. Clockwise, starting at the top: Earth. Water. Pain. Fury. Effort. Completion.

THURROCKS:

That's it?

FAULKNER:

Yes, that's it. Will you remember it?

THURROCKS:

I will, Katabasian.

Thank you. Um...thank you for giving me this opportunity-

-and then we hear gunfire from the upper stairwell.

FAULKNER:
(Urgently)
Go. Go. I'll draw them off-
(Yelling)
Hey! Hey, this way! Over here!

He runs - just as MERCER takes a shot at him.

MERCER:
(Snarling)
Prophet of the river. Where do you think you're going, hm?

Where are you running to?

She comes down the stairs and pursues him.

THE DREAMING POOLS, INT, NIGHT

We hear FAULKNER's breath as he runs - we're back in the man o'war's tank-room from the first episode of the season.

Silence.

Then we hear MERCER's steps.

MERCER is stalking FAULKNER through the darkness.

MERCER:
I know you're down here.

Silence.

MERCER:
Come on, make this easy.
(Taunting FAULKNER)
Come forward into the light and I'll kill you quick...?

Silence.

And then we hear the crackle of a walkie-talkie from far away across the room.

CARPENTER:
(Over the walkie-talkie)
Faulkner?

MERCER fires, immediately in the direction of the sound.

We hear a faint noise, like glass cracking. Water pouring through. MERCER doesn't notice.

She reloads and fires again. The cracking sound intensifies.

MERCER:
Prophet? You still breathing?

She creeps forward. We hear the walkie-talkie, far closer, crackle again.

CARPENTER:
(Over the walkie-talkie)
Faulkner, are you there?

No FAULKNER. Just the walkie-talkie. MERCER growls in frustration and tosses it down, breaking it.

MERCER:
(Calling out, seething a little)
All right, maybe I was wrong. Maybe you are the brains of the operation.
(Waiting for FAULKNER to shoot at her)
Well, are you going to take your shot?

We hear FAULKNER's voice from high above.

FAULKNER:
No need. You took it for me.

The hissing water sound grows louder.

And we hear the JELLYFISH-SAINT slamming into the side of its tank.

MERCER gasps, letting off a stray shot, crashing down into the ground. She tries to struggle to her feet.

MERCER:
(Horried, to herself)
What the fuck is that?

And then we hear the glass begin to crack under the weight of the water.

FAULKNER:
It's a man-o-war.

MERCER shrieks in fury, a wordless animal scream, and fires, as the tankful of water and the JELLYFISH-SAINT come down on top of her-

FAULKNER turns and runs.

DREAMING POOLS, INT, NIGHT

CARPENTER tries again.

CARPENTER:
Faulkner! Faulkner, can you hear me?

For fuck's sake, Faulkner. We need to get moving-

And then we hear-

FAULKNER:
(Over the walkie-talkie, breathless)
It's me, it's me. Linked up with the survivors from the northern passage.
We're heading your way.

You start leading 'em out into the currents. We'll catch you up. Seal the door behind us.

The bells begin to ring far above.

CARPENTER:
All right! Brother Fade.

Let's get these people out onto the water.
(Yelling)
Let's go! We're getting out of here!

Her voice echoes in the silence.

THE WHITE GULL RIVER, EXT, NIGHT

-and we hear the sluice gates opening. The escape route is open.

PARKING GARAGE, INT, NIGHT

And breathe.

Silence, peace and quiet.

We're in an empty parking garage. Distant traffic can be heard.

Footsteps, slowly. SHRUE approaches their car, fumbling with their keys. They're a little tipsy.

SHRUE:

Come on, come on - damned thing-

MASON:

(Warmly)

Adjudicator. How were the peace talks?

SHRUE drops their keys, toppling back against the car.

SHRUE:

(In shock)

Who the hell are you?

MASON:

You and I actually went to school together, if you'll believe it.

Back when you grew up along the water's edge - as you're so fond of telling the papers.

But I'm here tonight **not** to reminisce about old times - but rather as a senior representative of the Parish of Tide and Flesh.

SHRUE takes the situation in.

SHRUE:

To kill me?

MASON:

(Cheerily)

Oh, let's hope not.
(A little warning in his voice)
The car door's already unlocked.

I saw they'd equipped you with a silent alarm - that was extremely prudent of them, under the circumstances, but please don't go lunging for it.

SHRUE doesn't respond.

MASON:
Let me get to the point.

I've been reliably informed that the god-hunters in your employ have just this morning located one of our main refuges.

(With a little genuine concern)

A good number of my people are defending that position, to the point of what I could only describe as hopelessness.

Wounded, families, and so on.

SHRUE:
(Feeling a little more in control)
Ah. So you want to beg for your people's lives.

MASON:
If their survival can be worked into our arrangement, I'll take it as an added bonus.

SHRUE:
(Growing annoyed)
There's not going to be any arrangement.

MASON:
(Laying out his case)
The results of the Legislatures' vote on retributive military action will be announced to the public tomorrow morning, I understand.

The sheer number of whiskeys you consumed at that last bar, however...gives an early impression of what we can expect.

SHRUE:
You've been following me.

MASON:

Closely enough to hear you tell your advisors that you're - admirably - planning to lead a protest appeal, but you must already know it will fail.

When the war begins tomorrow, as one of its key opponents, you will become useless.

Or, worse, suspect.

Your odds of retaining your position after the local election results - well, we both know how that's going to turn out.

They stare at each other for a long moment.

SHRUE:

(With an unhappy smile)

Maybe I don't want to retain this position. Have you considered that?

Maybe I've had enough of these...these fucking twisters.

MASON:

If it helps, I still believe you could still do a considerable amount of good where you are.

If a war **must** break out tomorrow, and of course we all hope that it doesn't - it's surely better that it has good, moral people overseeing its direction. The right hands at the wheel.

Allowing someone like Adjudicator Barbeau to take control - it seems like a dereliction of duty more than anything else, doesn't it?

SHRUE:

(Stung)

That's not her title yet.

MASON:

(As if to say, 'but she will be.')

No. Not yet.

It takes wisdom, in the face of hopeless inevitability, to understand that our circumstances must, **inevitably**, change.

And it takes cunning, to consider how said change might make the hopeless future look...not quite so hopeless after all.

I believe you possess both of these qualities in ample measure,
Adjudicator.

Our faith is old.

Our god is powerful, as you've seen.

And you will most certainly be able to re-assert yourself - reinvent
yourself, even - in the Legislatures, in the press, wherever such a
reinvention is required, during the course of the coming war...

...by offering the strength of the White Gull river towards the national
effort.

(Putting it simply)

We're available for hire.

You **are** still looking for a running mate, aren't you?

Silence. SHRUE is gobsmacked.

SHRUE:

You think people have forgotten about what you did at Bellwethers?

MASON:

I'd go further.

I'd suggest that thanks to the sterling efforts of Ms Barbeau and company,
a considerable proportion of our citizenry are already fully persuaded that
it was our enemies across the water who were responsible.

When war breaks out, Bellwethers could be just another terrible crime to
be added to the litany of charges against them.

The formal licencing and recognition of our faith, accompanied by some
suitable press statements as to our innocence, should be enough to settle
the matter for the history books.

The tune is already written; the song merely needs to be sung.

Silence.

MASON:

Alternatively, I kill you right now in this parking garage, and your
assassination - which again, will presumably have been carried out by the

same agents of the Linger Straits who made an attempt on your life last week...

...it can be my personal solace for our loss today.

Under those circumstances, whether they mourn you or replace you, Adjudicator - the war will still go ahead. Inevitably.

SHRUE laughs, hollowly.

SHRUE:

And how...and how will your own people feel about becoming lawful again, exactly?

MASON:

The Katabasians will agree with me. They understand that change is needed, if we're going to survive.

We have a few younger, more fervent elements, it's true, but I've been working to deal with those in my own fashion.

They stare at each other in the silence.

Abruptly, SHRUE's car-phone begins to ring, muffled, from inside the car.

MASON:

Nifty little gadget, that. The perks of leadership.

SHRUE:

(Icily)

They installed it as another security measure. In case of attack.

Can I take this?

MASON:

(Gesturing to the phone)

Oh, please do. It'll be for me, anyway.

SHRUE lifts the phone, baffled.

SHRUE:

...Hello?

(To MASON)

It's for you.

SHRUE hands the phone over.

MASON:

Thank you.

(Into the phone)

Sister Thurrocks. Good to hear your voice.

(With satisfaction)

Mm-hmm.

Yes, I'll remember. Love you lots.

Bar the doors and keep yourself safe, now.

He replaces the receiver. Waits smugly for SHRUE to ask him-

SHRUE:

What the hell was that?

MASON:

(Now very confident)

Oh - the final piece in our negotiations. A gamble that paid off.

The Wither Mark - the wrath of the White Gull river - is now available for sale as part of our arrangement.

A miraculous new weapon - only one previous owner to date - which can be turned upon any foolish invaders who set foot in the North-Western Territory.

Drowning towns, armies. Whatever's required.

It's been uncontrollable and somewhat clumsy, yes, in the hands of fanatics and fools, but that doesn't mean it **can't** be controlled and put to good use.

In the right hands.

It's yours, Adjudicator - if you want it.

Well? What's your answer?

SHRUE hesitates.

END OF EPISODE