



*The Budget Inn in Crescent Valley*

They had laid the cobblestones down right on top of the root system. The Passerby had a better angle on the break. Their T-shirt broke up around its lettering. Narrowly avoiding tripping, H. tried to read it without seeming to stare.

At the same moment, on the other side of town:

Two siblings emerge from the train car. One's T-shirt reads: *Nantucket, Mass.* The other: *Thrasher Magazine.* Their mother searches desperately for a moment alone.

The Mother remembers her nannied child best—their daytrips to the Island, their long strolls through the Park, tying balloon to his wrist as they left the Party, his vast curiosity, his little discoveries... Whose children were these in front of her now—committed to drudgery, with too much of her own boredom in their eyes?

Left inside:

The Figure in Waiting with the neat grey beard playing scratch-offs, lip-synching the train conductor's announcements, and whistling complements to the wheels' screech over familiar sections of track.

Above their heads:

The Sweeper stayed in the street 'til it shone. The rain was salty, as if the sea had been referred to the air.

That afternoon:

There was A New Man selling gods to those transferring between the (L) and the (A) at Broadway Junction.

And here I want to make sure that we understand The New Man is also The Figure in Waiting from the previous scene, or else looks just like him.

Earlier:

He would have yelped. The water would have changed temperatures while he was soaping his hands. The ringing would have entered his ears again.

Everything could be attributed to your intentions, and nothing to his own. He was amazed to see the gray, swollen body move forward through space, thanked whomever had shown him this kindness. Like anyone, he wished for his mind to work in ways other than those it did.

He wished someone had been there to take his photograph just then: in his underwear, on the arm of the sofa, ankles crossed, hair in the shape of a head. His dog writhed on the ground with its nose in its groin.

We must be convinced, from the start, that this person deserves what will happen to his next. At the same time, we can never doubt that his heart also breaks.

*[A knock at the door]*

Ten years later:

Character by the name of Account, formerly of the *Nantucket* T-Shirt. She can't see the mosaic for the grout, can't see the books for the shelves. She had been given an orchid on the occasion of her graduation and carried it around the rest of the day, from lunch to dinner, nearly losing it several times on bathroom countertops.

Her office is impossibly small, nearly— she sits behind a painting. A small cough suggests she will emerge, but she does not. Outside, she removes the lid from her cup to chew ice. She is studying the language of explanation that evolves around poorly named objects.

*[MONTAGE: books and letters.]*

It was not the light, but the sound of the lights, that helped her sleep. Her many lovers of all ages and affiliations would nod and grimace as she explained this.

Next door:

*[flat screen TV, oblique angle through window]*

- "There was death all around us, and we came to know it was everywhere else."
- "The War had begun to take its toll on the home front."

Outside, nearby:

H. studies the ground, as if she is growing something there. Carrying the weight of all things, and even those in her pockets, she and her Followers have traveled some distance.

Let us imagine days behind them. The Actors themselves are all actually dehydrated. Their pupils seem submerged in the whites of their eyes. Can we get away with this?

At the Budget Inn:

The baby birds thought the sound of the air conditioner was part of their mother. The rain that was predicted burns off for the third day in a row. The Man begins to ask what the gods have saved for him on the edge of the plate of the world. His dog wanders around the knees of the cameraperson, jostling the image.

A familiar plot is hatched, the consequences of which we are quick to imagine. The comfortable lull of story. Minor action can occur unfettered by anticipation.

Meanwhile, Account's apartment:

*[MONTAGE: Throwing away the objects we have come to associate with what she can no longer be.]*

The next day:

A drink at the Stadium costs more than a wish. A bet on the dog costs the same as the biscuit they get when they win—a very nice biscuit. The Man looks always the same, his outfits only completing his nakedness. When he doesn't want to talk, it might be because he doesn't want to lie, and he knows his truth is no good.

*[Time lapse sequence of The Man's slow deterioration in health.]*

When The Day asks to know what The Man thinks, at the gates of his mind:

- "I don't like how it gets dark so early now."
- "4 o'clock and it's almost dark."
- "I don't like the rain, but I guess the plants needed it."
- "I actually like the cold when it feels *brisk*, but not *frigid*."

*[MONTAGE: life outside the crescent valley of the cult.]*

*[H. and Account meet and are married, at first only to guarantee H.'s visa, and later because of love, and later because of inertia.]*

In response to lovers hanging thick locks from the bridges to Manhattan, the NYPD was given cause to engage in the art of metaphor, sending some eternal vows to the bottom of the East River.

At the vows renewal ceremony:

“A lot of emotional irresponsibility is called love,” H. begins, and “Someone’s desire for you can come to seem a proof for other parts of your life.”

Tenor of the quiet changes in the room. We have made an uneasy peace with this moment as

THE END