

# Death right down to the cheekbones

In this chapter, a character named Sol excitedly reveals to her companion that she has stolen a considerable amount of money from Richard, whom she refers to as "King Richard." Though initially cautious, she has taken the opportunity to clean him out, knowing various hiding spots within his property. There's tension between the two characters as they consider the repercussions of their theft, worried that Richard might pursue them out of retaliation.

Sol dismisses the idea that Richard will catch them, pointing out his incompetence. However, as they navigate their boat, the characters have a conversation about Richard's boat, revealing it to be an old, slow tug named "Relax," which reassures them. As they continue down the waterway, they observe herons and murals depicting figures that appear to come alive during their journey. Sol expresses curiosity about the painted figures, pondering the significance behind these representations.

The narrative shifts as they reach Blinker, where they encounter Alistair at a bridge. He questions their purpose for passing through, revealing the high toll for using the bridge and the complications of being a first-time traveler. Despite being robbed of their money for the passage, the protagonist remains determined to confront the unfair practices of the bridge toll system. Alistair appears apathetic and insistent on collecting the fee for crossing the bridge, emphasizing the expenses linked to its maintenance.

As tensions rise, Sol pushes her companion to act decisively, displaying a certain cunning and resourcefulness. They decide to dock for the night rather than pay the toll, amidst an ominous atmosphere filled with distant screams and gunfire. The chapter concludes with whimsical moments shared between the characters, as they try to distract themselves with stories despite the night's earned weariness.

Overall, the chapter blends tension and humor, revealing character dynamics and establishing an intriguing conflict against the backdrop of a treacherous landscape and authority.