

the phantom gramps

In the third morning on the seawall, Sol was troubled as she climbed on deck for breakfast. Noticing her unstable demeanor and shiny eyes, it felt as if a second child lurked behind her gaze. To stave off the haunting presence of this "waiting child," the narrator filled her plate with food, but she barely touched it. An official vessel arrived, prompting a conversation about leaving the confines of their current location to search for a man named Griff. Despite Sol's initial agreement, her demeanor changed as she described Griff, stating he was a machine mechanic, vendor, and part-time actor. Her vague details raised suspicions, leading the narrator to question if Griff was a mere fabrication to escape the grip of Richard.

As they sailed along the coast, Sol insisted Griff was near a town called Ghent. However, upon reaching the supposed location, they found no town, just remnants like brick chimneys and an abandoned breakwater. Their journey continued to Baglow and Redfield, but each time, they encountered nothing but empty promises regarding Griff's existence. The narrator recognized that Sol had likely invented this ideal protector out of loneliness.

Days passed peacefully on the water. They shared evenings catching fish and reading under the stars, yet Sol caught peculiar, unhealthy fish. Approaching Port Mineral, the narrator contemplated Sol's future and hoped to find safety among neighbors who were calm, unlike the chaos surrounding them. Arriving at the harbor, the narrator went ashore despite Sol's reluctance. An uneventful reconnaissance led him back to find Sol fishing again. Just then, a familiar voice startled them—it was Griff, holding an overnight bag and appearing both surprised and relieved.

The meeting was bittersweet; Sol's face reflected mixed emotions of joy and resignation as she approached him. Griff, who seemed to have an aura of relief upon seeing her, shared his own struggles, implying he was free from his previous life. Their reunion hinted at deeper complexities. Sol asked Griff to join them on their journey to Canada, believing it was the start of something new. Although Griff's background raised caution, the narrator felt compelled to extend kindness.

As they cast off towards Jolie, the sun warmed their spirits, now enriched with a new dynamic on board, establishing the uncertain but hopeful journey ahead.