

Death Right Down to the Cheekbones

Death Right Down to the Cheekbones, the chapter begins with Sol excitedly confiding in her companion that she has successfully stolen a large sum of money from Richard, who she humorously refers to as "King Richard." Though initially hesitant, Sol has taken the opportunity to pilfer Richard's hidden funds, knowing precisely where to find his secrets stashed away. As she shares this with her companion, the weight of the situation begins to settle in, and the tension becomes palpable between them. They both know the potential repercussions of their actions, with Richard possibly seeking vengeance, which adds a sense of uncertainty to their lives. Despite the apparent victory of their theft, the anxiety of what might come next lingers, and they cannot avoid the looming possibility of Richard discovering their betrayal.

Sol, however, remains confident and dismisses the idea that Richard will catch up with them. She scoffs at the thought, pointing out how inept Richard is and how unlikely it is that he could track them down. As the boat drifts along the waterway, they talk about Richard's boat, an old and slow tug named "Relax," which provides some comfort in their minds, knowing they are escaping from a vessel unable to match their pace. The sluggish boat offers little threat, so their confidence grows, and they begin to relax as they continue their journey. The natural beauty of the surroundings also offers some peace, as herons soar gracefully through the air and murals depicting mystical figures line the riverbanks. Sol is captivated by the painted images and wonders aloud about the hidden meanings behind these ethereal representations. The strange and vibrant images evoke a sense of mystery, sparking Sol's curiosity about what lies beyond their immediate surroundings.

When the pair reaches the town of Blinker, their path is blocked by Alistair, who demands a steep toll for them to cross the bridge. He questions their reason for passing through, and though the toll seems exorbitant, it is clear that Alistair is merely following protocol. Despite the injustice of the situation, the protagonist, having already been robbed of their money, remains determined to challenge the system, unwilling to accept such unfair practices without resistance. Alistair, seemingly unfazed by the protagonist's complaints, continues to insist on the toll, providing a cold justification that the fees are necessary for the maintenance of the bridge. Despite this, the protagonist and Sol refuse to pay, realizing that there is a greater principle at play, and they decide to dock instead of handing over the money.

Sol, ever the pragmatic one, urges her companion to take decisive action, showing her resourcefulness in the face of adversity. They agree to avoid the toll altogether and seek shelter for the night, their decision punctuated by the eerie sounds of distant screams and gunfire in the background. These ominous noises add a layer of unease to their situation, yet the two of them try to distract themselves with stories, lighthearted conversations, and shared moments of humor. Although the tension of their circumstances remains ever-present, the companionship between the two helps to alleviate some of the stress, giving them a fleeting sense of normalcy amidst the chaos. Despite the weariness that has overtaken them, the exchange of stories and laughter brings a sense of comfort and temporary reprieve from their otherwise dangerous and unpredictable environment.

The chapter effectively blends humor and suspense, deepening the characters' relationships while introducing significant challenges and conflicts. It showcases the growing connection between Sol and the protagonist, as they navigate the treacherous landscape filled with authority figures and systemic oppression. As their journey continues, the stakes increase, and it becomes evident that their bond will be tested as they face external pressures. The narrative explores not just the physical obstacles they encounter but also the moral dilemmas they must address, setting the stage for further developments in their quest for freedom. The chapter concludes with a poignant reminder of the delicate balance between hope and survival, with the uncertainty of the future hanging in the air as they continue their journey.