

the bitter ends in their teeth

As twilight set in, the atmosphere turned frigid as the protagonist and Sol prepared to make their escape using a sailboat. Following Essie's precise instructions, they stripped the vessel of its canvas and tied the mast down, camouflaging it with muck from the water to escape detection. Earlier, the protagonist ventured into Brighton, a haunting ghost town, where the remnants of a community contrasted starkly with the signs of destruction; many homes were abandoned or charred. Essie's home was a somber shrine to her son, who had joined a dubious medical program and returned severely incapacitated.

Despite feeling that their plan was tenuous due to Alistair's poor eyesight and the boat's rigging, they resolved to move forward, prioritizing urgency over caution as they approached the bridge separating them from the mainland. From their vantage point, they observed Alistair, the bridge operator, and a gathering of men and boys preparing for some sort of aggressive gathering. When Douglas, a fervent leader among the men, arrived, he ignited zeal, leading a march across the bridge.

As they waited in the shadows, chaos erupted in Brighton, marked by fires and shouts, quickly escalating into violent confrontations with the local populace. Alistair stayed oblivious in his booth, offering no indication he was aware of the tumult below. Sol and the protagonist prepared to maneuver their boat, named Flower, but their path was obstructed by the bridge.

With no alternative but to submerge the boat slightly to fit beneath, Sol entered the hull to let in water. The act of sinking Flower was simple yet harrowing, as they risked detection by Alistair, who had begun to take notice of their presence. In a tense moment, he nearly spotted them but instead failed to recognize the disguised boat against the backdrop of murky water. After a heart-pounding transition beneath the bridge that nearly cost them their chance of escape, they emerged unscathed yet shaken.

Returning to the dock, the protagonist faced devastating visuals of the aftermath of the night's violence, with the site of the bridge now alight with flames and the figures of those recently hanged still suspended above the water. In the aftermath, the protagonist called out for Sol, escalating concern as she seemed to have vanished amidst the chaos. His frustration and anxiety grew, emphasizing the tenuous hold on fate as he searched for her in the darkness .