

# Remnants, Episode 19: Leather Gloves

## Content Warnings:

- Implications of child neglect
- Child abandonment
- Descriptions of unsafe and poorly informed processes surrounding children and adoption processes, including a fleeting mention of a child being returned years after adoption
- Inappropriate behaviour from a teacher towards a student, which might be considered grooming. No sexual conduct between adults and minors.
- Mentions of war
- Mentions of sex
- Discussions of terminal cancer
- Violent, deliberate killing with descriptions of the actions, but without gore

# Transcript

AS THE APPRENTICE SPEAKS, HIS VOICE OSCILLATES ODDLY, EERILY.

APPRENTICE

I follow the path hidden before me. My feet know the way, though my mind does not.

It is a dream, unfolding again and again.

I walk these halls, strange and familiar, shifting but ever present.

Sometimes the walls are made of dust and I can walk through them. Others I am met with something solid, immovable, impassible, and yet I can see beyond it to the massive, turning cogs of this place. Great wheels made of dust and light and stars, ever turning, shapeless but always resolving into some form before my eyes, as though it is my mind constructing this place as I see it.

AS HE SPEAKS THE DISTANT SOUND OF SOMETHING DRIPPING, AND OF FOOTSTEPS, GETS LOUDER AND LOUDER.

APPRENTICE

I am a prisoner here.

I am also a guarded hoard.

The dragon coils on top of me, the weight and heat of him constant, watchful. Does he want to keep me for himself, or is he waiting for the proper moment to consume me?

What meaningful answer could I get if I even knew how to ask? What can something like me hope to understand of something like that?

What could a man know about a dragon? What could a pile of dust know of something close to a god?

I follow the path. I know the way. It is made as I walk it.

SIR  
Apprentice?

THE APPRENTICE GASPS. HIS VOICE IS SUDDENLY QUIETER, AND THERE IS A WHIPPING WIND. THE SOUNDS OF DRIPPING AND FOOTSTEPS ARE GONE.

APPRENTICE  
Sir!? I-- what--- where am I?

SIR  
Close to the edge. Come back to me.

APPRENTICE  
Sorry.

SIR  
No matter. How is your head?

APPRENTICE  
My head? Oh, it-- it's, fine?

SIR

Very good. Shall we return to your room?

APPRENTICE

No. No. I want to do it here, if that's alright with you.

SIR

By all means.

APPRENTICE

What have you brought for me today?

SIR

A pair of leather gloves.

APPRENTICE

Ok. Let me see them.

SIR

Here you are.

## APPRENTICE

These are soft. Worn. There are deep creases in the joints near the knuckles, and they smell like, oh, they smell like--

## WHOOSH

Adelaide shoves her hands under her arms against the cold.

'Adelaide!' Mrs Baxter hisses at her, tapping her elbows. 'What did I say?'

'Hands behind backs,' Adelaide mumbles.

'No mumbling. And stand up straight.'

Adelaide complies. She puts her hands behind her back and stands as straight as she can.

There's no point, anyway. The old lady was pretty clear about what she wanted, and it isn't a girl with uncombable hair. It's a pretty little blonde like Molly or Sarah. Adelaide's not sure why she's been forced to line up like this at all.

They let the old woman in. She looks up and down the line of girls, makes some comments about how lovely they all are and how she wishes that she had space to take them all. But she doesn't. Then she calls forward Molly. Almost four, tiny, with a halo of soft blonde hair. The old woman leads Molly to Mrs Baxter's office by the hand.

As soon as the door closes against its frame, all the girls in the line quiver, stepping out of formation and heading off in separate directions.

The only girl who doesn't move is Sarah. She's a couple of years older than Molly, but built the same. It's clear from the tears streaking down her cheeks that she'd been convinced it would be her this time. But then, Sarah is always convinced it will be her. Every time someone comes to the orphanage she's certain it's her that they'll be taking home with them.

She's only been here a year, though. Eventually that hope will die.

Adelaide has been at the orphanage since she was a baby. She was left on the steps outside. She's named Adelaide Step for this very reason, after the mother of the night warden who found her, and the place where she was found.

She's seen a lot of girls come and go. Never once has she expected she'll be one of the ones who leaves.

She wanders upstairs, sits in the big window in the hallway between the dormitories where she and the other girls sleep in their creaky wire beds. From the window she can see the playing yard. Lola and Penny are drawing a new hopscotch with chalk they probably pilfered from one of the classrooms. Tabby and Misty are throwing tennis balls at the huge wall which separates the girls' school from the boys'.

Sometimes, Adelaide daydreams about cutting off all of her hair and climbing that wall. She could pretend to be someone new, someone different. She'd call herself something exciting like Percival or Tristan and she'd say her parents had been killed in a tragic accident, and someone would adopt her then, maybe.

Adelaide swallows. The thought dies as she hears the bell ringing, calling her to dinner.

WHOOSH

The bell rings for lunch but Adelaide stays. She is collecting up the copies of *Alice in Wonderland* she and the other girls have been reading. Mr Cratchet, the literature teacher, thanks her for her help.

'I don't suppose you'd mind helping me cart all of this over to the boys' school, would you?'

Adelaide very much does mind, but Mr Cratchet is kind and he's young and he's the only teacher who doesn't seem to loathe Adelaide with a burning passion. So instead of refusing, she nods and holds the pile of books more closely to her chest.

Mr Cratchet leads her through the school, out of the front door, down the road to the gate which leads to the boys' side of the orphanage. As they walk, he talks a little, not saying much of consequence, but Adelaide appreciates the talking nonetheless. She's oddly nervous as they cross the threshold. There are boys in the corridor, queued up to go into their lunch room just as Adelaide and the girls queue up. Their uniforms are almost like hers, white shirts, knit cardigans, but the boys wear shorts instead of pleated skirts. This miniscule difference is enough for Adelaide to feel a bizarre flare of jealousy.

The boys stare at Adelaide as she walks past as though she is on fire. Her cheeks have grown so hot she wonders if she might be.

Mr Cratchet leads Adelaide past the boy's queue and up a short flight of stairs. The boys' half of the building is almost a mirror image of the girls' side. There is even a big window in the middle of the hallway on each floor like the ones which Adelaide so loves to stare out of.

She pauses for a moment next to one of them, looking over the boys yard. She can see the other side of the big wall she stares at so much from the girls' side.

'Are you coming?' Mr Cratchet asks.

'Yes, sorry!' says Adelaide, hurrying after him.

He opens the door to one of the classrooms. To Adelaide's surprise, it's not empty. There are a dozen or so boys crowded at the tables, which they've pushed together. On each one is a chess board.

'Sorry I'm a little late, boys!' says Mr Cratchet. 'Glad to see you've been proactive and set up without me!'

Adelaide hovers awkwardly in the doorway, staring. Is this chess club? On the girls' side she's not sure they have a single chess set, let alone enough to have multiple games happening at once. You can go to ballet classes with Mrs Gimble after school, or crotchet on Wednesday lunchtimes. There's no chess club.

'Come in, Adelaide, you can put the books on my desk. Thanks so much for your help,' says Mre Cratchet.

Adelaide nods.

Mr Cratchet's words have drawn attention to her. All of the boys are staring, now, as she crosses the floor and sets the books down. Mr Cratchet is watching too, an odd sort of smile on his face.

'Would you like me to walk you back, or would you be happy to go yourself?' Mr Cratchet asks.

Adelaide blinks at him.

'I'll walk you back,' says Mr Cratchet. 'If you don't mind, could we wait until after chess club? I'll have the cooks add an extra lunch to our usual trolley for you.'

'Berns ain't here, he's got stomach flu he's in bed,' says one of the boys, his attention on Adelaide unbroken.

'Even better!' says Mr Cratchet. 'Is that alright with you, Adelaide?'

Adelaide nods. 'That's fine,' she squeaks.

'Take a seat then! Do you know chess?'

Adelaide shakes her head.

'Very exciting! That means we can teach you all about it. Remember, Walker, you have to play by the rules always, but especially when new players are here!'

The chess club boys break into laughter.

Adelaide grabs one of the spare chairs from the side of the room and sits down next to one of the tables.

‘Well,’ says Mr Cratchet. ‘I suppose we ought to start with the names of the pieces.’

WHOOSH

Adelaide is helping Mr Cratchet put away the boards from chess club. She’s late for her next lesson, but it’s biology so she doesn’t much care. She’d rather stay and listen to Mr Cratchet. He’s wittering away as he often does when she’s alone in his company. The subject of today is Mr Cratchet’s older brother, Carlisle, who is following his father into the legal profession.

‘They acted like it was a great shame upon me that I was not born with an interest in the law,’ says Mr Cratchet. ‘I loved letters, but not the right ones, according to them. I love books, but the wrong ones, that’s what they’d say. You understand.’

Adelaide nods. She does understand, to some extent. The other girls don’t understand her interest in chess. They tease her about it, but it’s just one thing they tease her about amongst many.

‘I hear a girl was brought back, recently,’ says Mr Cratchet.

Adelaide nods. ‘Yes. Molly.’

‘I imagine that’s pretty devastating.’

Adelaide thinks of Molly’s despondent staring. She cries even more than Sarah used to, now, and that’s saying something. Of course, nobody’s seen or heard from Sarah since she ran away two summers ago so Adelaide can’t be sure if she’s still as weepy as she used to be.

‘I could never understand why nobody was interested in *you*, Adelaide,’ says Mr Cratchet.

Adelaide blushes. ‘I-- I’m nothing special.’

‘On the contrary! You’ve been playing chess a fraction of the time of the rest, but you’ve got the knack for it. You’re second on the leaderboard, and I bet by the end of the year you’ll be top. You’re a bright girl, Adelaide. You deserve to be cherished.’

Adelaide dips her head. ‘Thank you, Mr Cratchet.’

‘I mean it, Adelaide,’ he says softly.



Adelaide sets the boxes of chess sets down on Mr Cratchet's desk. He reaches out, grabs her fingers.

'You're so cold, you poor dove,' he says softly.

Adelaide blinks at him. 'Sorry.'

'It's alright,' says Mr Cratchet, smoothing his thumb over the back of Adelaide's hand.

'Please know you are special to me, Adelaide. I cherish you.'

Adelaide's eyes are stinging. 'I should get going off to biology, Sir, I'm mighty late already.'

Mr Cratchet blinks at her, confused for a moment. 'Yes, of course.'

Adelaide shakes her head.

'Thank you for your help!' Mr Cratchet shouts after her as she hurtles out of the door.

For some reason, the moment she's out of the boys' side of the school, she's weeping, inconsolable. She does not go to biology. Instead, she goes to bed, and cries until she falls asleep.

WHOOSH

Adelaide is loitering at the door of the shop she has been sent to apprentice at. The manager has told her off for this twice already today, but Adelaide doesn't care. She's watching for John Cratchet's car to turn around the corner.

Under her work apron, she has on her nicest dress. John bought it for her for last Christmas. It's navy blue, tea length, made of soft cotton. Adelaide loves how grown up she feels in it, though she doesn't like how it nips in at the waist, and how the dress follows the curves of her body so precisely.

Finally John's car rounds the corner.

'Thanks Mrs Melrose!' Adelaide barks, taking off her apron and slinging it into the background.

'Get back here, girl! You don't finish til eight!'

Adelaide isn't listening, though. She's trotting out to John's car. He beams at her as she slides into the front seat beside him.

'Looking marvellous, little lady,' he says.

Adelaide blushes.

'There's a gift for you, in the glove compartment,' he says, pulling away from the curb.

Adelaide opens the compartment. Inside is a neatly wrapped package. She opens it, carefully avoiding tearing the paper. Inside is a pair of fine leather gloves.

'Oh, they're lovely!' she says.

'You always seem to have such chilly fingers,' says John. 'This way you can have warm hands and still grip your chess pieces.'

Adelaide marvels at the thoughtfulness of the gift, and the fine, supple quality of the leather. She slips into them, flexing her fingers.

'They fit alright?' John asks.

'Like a glove,' says Adelaide.

John chortles. 'Very good. Next thing we'll have to see about is your shoes; such a pretty girl should not have to traipse about in such dull loafers.'

Adelaide bites her lip. She rather likes her loafers, though she doesn't say this.

The rest of the drive to the chess tournament, John witters about work, about his brother and his children and his brother's new business partner. 'Ned Pocket seems nice enough,' John concludes, 'but I find the whole thing to be rather a bore.'

Adelaide sighs. 'I'm sorry.'

John sighs too. 'So am I, Adelaide. I didn't mean to witter on about them so long again. Tonight is supposed to be about us. I wish they'd let you play but they wouldn't hear of it when I suggested it. Still, it'll be a riot to see Walker in a professional game, won't it, eh?'

Adelaide tries to smile. 'Oh, certainly,' she says.

John smiles as he parks the car.

As has become customary for them, John gets out and opens Adelaide's door for her, helping her to her feet in a way that is absolutely unnecessary. They walk into the church hall where the tournament is being held with Adelaide's hand through John's arm, and take their seats along the edge of the room.

They watch the tournament until the end. Walker does not win. In the car on the way to drop Adelaide back at the orphanage, she criticises all the plays they'd seen.

'You'd have beaten them all, dear, I'm sure,' says John, sounding a little bored.

'What is it?' asks Adelaide.

John shrugs. 'I just-- maybe, next time we go out. Perhaps we could go to dinner or something. I like chess just as much as you do, but. Don't you wish we had more to share than this?'

Adelaide blinks at him, perplexed.

John pulls up outside the school, gets out of the car and walks around to customarily help Adelaide out too.

'You have grown into a beautiful young woman, Adelaide. I'd love to take you to dinner, if you'd like.'

Adelaide is so stunned she is not sure how to speak. So she just nods.

John beams at her. He leans close, plants a small kiss against the corner of her mouth. His wiry moustache tickles her cheek.

'I cherish you, Adelaide,' John whispers.

Adelaide laughs nervously. 'Thank you.'

John shrugs, smiling. He steps back from her. 'Goodnight,' he says.

'Goodnight,' Adelaide squeaks back.

WHOOSH

Adelaide sips her cocktail, leaning against the balcony in the hotel, looking down at the men below, all dressed in tuxedos. John is somewhere down there with them. She knows they're all talking about chess, and about the impending war that seems to already be starting perilously close to where they stand in Antwerp, and about what it means that a Soviet won this tournament, in the context of all of that politics.

Adelaide has opinions about all of this, of course, but John doesn't like her talking about her opinions in public. It's unbecoming for a woman, he says.

So here she is. Looking down at the interesting conversations she's entirely out of earshot of. She swirls her wedding and engagement rings around her fingers.

'I saw you biting your tongue,' says a voice from behind her.

Adelaide jumps. In the dark, a man is standing there, holding a short glass of vodka over ice. It's Morozov, one of the Soviet players, the one who won the tournament. He's watching Adelaide intently. Between them, three feet of carpet and the entire Iron Curtain.

'You played well,' says Adelaide.

Morozov smiles. 'I did not, but I appreciate the flattery.'

Adelaide stands up straighter. 'You're right. You could have taken the American four moves sooner. You wanted to show off and it nearly cost you the game.'

Morozov's smile widens. 'Isn't that always the way, with Russians and Americans? It's a dance, push and pull. I knew I could win but I wanted him to think he had a chance.'

Adelaide shakes her head. 'Maybe so, but you really might've lost.'

Morozov finishes his drink. 'You like vodka?'

Adelaide shrugs. 'I've never had it neat.'

Morozov nods. 'Do not drink the vodka from this bar, it's shit.'

Adelaide laughs. Morozov laughs with her.

'You should come upstairs, I have good vodka there. We can play chess,' says Morozov. He raises his eyebrows.

Adelaide swallows her smile. 'Ah. I'm married, I'm afraid.'

'So?' says Morozov.

Adelaide lets out a startled laugh. 'So, I made a vow and I intend to keep it!'

Morozov shrugs. 'Why? He's down there, schmoozing with Americans. He does not need to know. I won't tell; if I do they'll shoot me. What's there to lose?'

Adelaide swallows hard. She looks down at the tuxedo clad crowds again. She squeezes her eyes shut.

'Ah, I see,' says Morozov, softly. 'He is rich. You are trapped.'

Adelaide's stomach drops. 'You don't know anything about it.'

'Young pretty lady with old man husband; an ancient tale, isn't it? He brought you here to make himself look better, and he's left you aside whilst he gets to talk about this thing he cares about with other people, ignoring *you*. One of the few people who noticed that I could have lost today.'

Adelaide stands up straighter.

'Come upstairs,' says Morozov. 'Play chess and drink vodka. Don't be a pawn. Be a knight. Jump over their heads.'

Morozov turns then, and begins to walk away.

After a moment, Adelaide follows him.

As they climb the staircases up to Morozov's rooms, Adelaide thinks of the first time she went to the boys' side of the orphanage, how John had led her through past crowds of staring boys.

Nobody is watching now. It's just the two of them as Morozov unlocks his rooms and ushers Adelaide inside. Just the two of them as they drink Russian vodka from the mugs the hotel has left out to make tea with. Just the two of them huddled over a chess board which is tossed aside the moment Adelaide wins. Just the two of them, lying naked, post-coital, breathing in time.

'I wanted to be a ballet dancer,' says Morozov.

'What?' says Adelaide.

'Yeah,' says Morozov. 'But I caught a bad sickness one winter, it made me breathe badly, and dancers need to breathe well. So now I play chess.'

Adelaide stares at the ceiling.

'What about you? I don't see you being a ballet dancer,' says Morozov. 'Was it always chess, for you?'

'I don't know. I'm not sure I've ever really been asked.'

Morozov is quiet for a moment. 'You just beat the chess world champion. It shouldn't be the way that someone who can do that has never been asked what she wants.'

'Oh, and would you say there's more freedom in Russia?' she asks, bitterly.

'No. Just that there is something wrong. That this is a problem.'

'My husband taught me chess,' says Adelaide. 'He asked for my help one day, and I saw the chess club he ran. He asked me to stay, and I did. So he taught me.'

'Is that why you love him?'

Adelaide sighs. 'I wonder sometimes if he understands that it was the chess that made me stay. Or if he thinks I stayed because of him.'

'I am sorry that he can not see who you are enough to even think of the question.'

For some reason, this makes Adelaide weep.

WHOOSH

Adelaide is carrying her a bag of vegetables against her chest. It's early spring. There's a sense of a gloom lifting, now. Those heady few months after the official end of the war became subsumed by the realities of post-war living. The busy, messy work of rebuilding, of recontextualising themselves after such violent experiences.

Adelaide is about to step into the road, when she feels a strange sensation in her ears, and then they start ringing.

Clumsily, she staggers back from the curb, knocking into some passers-by, and then everything goes dark.

Adelaide wakes hours later in hospital. She knows where she is at once from the beeping and the smell of disinfectant. She gasps, struggling to sit up, but John's hand on her shoulder makes her settle.

His face is drawn and haggard, his eyes ringed red as though he might have been crying.

'John?' Adelaide asks, nervously.

He shakes his head, covering his face with his hands, and weeps.

Adelaide does not understand why until later in the day when a doctor comes in to check on her. There is a growth in her head, they tell her. A cancerous growth. It's pressing on her brain. There's no hope of taking it out. Any attempt to do so would kill her.

'So what happens now?' asks Adelaide.

The doctor shakes his head minutely. 'I'm afraid all we can do is offer relief for any pain, and keep an eye on you.'

'But surely if I don't get any treatment, this cancer in my head, it will get worse?'

'Yes,' says the doctor.

'But that would kill me, surely!' says Adelaide, with a laugh.

'I'm afraid so,' says the doctor.

There is a beat of silence.

'So that's it?' says Adelaide, softly.

'I'm afraid so,' the doctor says again.

'Oh, don't be stupid, you've got nothing to be afraid of, it's not growing in your head, is it?!' Adelaide snaps. 'Absurd.'

The doctor is confused for a moment. 'A sense of levity might be helpful, but I'm not sure it's appropriate right now, your husband does not seem to be bearing this news well.'

It's true. John does not look well at all. In the corner of the room he is weeping openly into his moustache, his shoulders sagging.

'Cancer isn't growing in his head either,' says Adelaide.

'Mrs Cratchet—' the doctor begins, but Adelaide is shaking her head firmly.

'Damn him for acting like the one who's most injured here!'

'Adelaide, please,' says John.

'I'm not sure that's appropriate,' says the doctor again.

'Well, damn you too, then!' Adelaide hisses. 'Go on, off you go! You're not going to help me so you may as well just bugger off!'

'Adelaide!' John bleats pathetically from the corner.

'Oh, shut your face, you blanket,' Adelaide hisses. She swings herself out of bed.

Once she has dressed and forced John to drive her home, they sit quietly at the kitchen table, each holding a warm mug of tea, not looking at each other.

The whole drive home John wittered about his brother's wife, how she'd cared for him, looked after him. How sad it is that John should be beset with such a beautiful young wife who was going to die before he did.

Adelaide said nothing.

She sips her tea.

Into the silence, John speaks again.

'You know, I always thought you'd be the one burying me,' said John, miserably. 'I thought I'd have you to look after me in my old age.'

Adelaide is not sure what comes over her, but throws her mug at his head.

John yowls, clutching his head. 'You bitch,' he hisses.

Adelaide is not sure what it is about this utterance that breaks something in her. She is also not sure how to explain the emotion that rises in her chest. It's unlike anything she'd

experienced before, except perhaps the first moment she realised she knew how she might win a game of chess that someone else was playing, right before they themselves lost.

Adelaide was never even given a chance to sit at the board. There is no way to win. So she gets up, goes to the drawer in the kitchen, takes out a carving knife, and calmly stabs John in the neck.

He does not scream as the knife sinks in. It's a funny sort of gasping choke. It's the same sort of noise he makes when he's finishing inside of her after two minutes of effort.

Adelaide pulls out the knife. John slumps sideways onto the floor. He's writhing about, and Adelaide isn't sure but she thinks he might be trying to say something. So she stands over him and stabs him again, this time in the stomach, and then once more in the chest.

John stops squirming after that. His mouth is opening and closing like fish. His stomach muscles are quivering like he's trying to breathe. His left leg keeps twitching, spasming, knocking into chair he'd brought down with him as he'd fallen. It squeaks on the linoleum.

Adelaide goes to the sink. She drops the knife into it. She steps over John's still twitching body and wanders into the living room, dazed. She picks up the telephone from its little table next to John's armchair.

'Hello operator,' she says, trying to keep her tone light. 'I've just killed my husband. I suppose you ought to send the police.'

WHOOSH

Adelaide's lawyer runs his hand over his face. 'The jury will absolutely go for an insanity defence.'

Adelaide shakes her head. 'No. I'm not insane.'

'Not now, you're not; temporary insanity on the basis of your terminal diagnosis. Nobody would be in their right mind after that, people will understand!'

'It was not an insane act,' says Adelaide, calmly.

The lawyer nods earnestly. 'Alright. Alright,' he mutters. 'Well. We could. Frame it as a crime of passion?'

This is the third time the lawyer has suggested this. Of the things she felt when she killed John, passion was not one of them. If anything it was the opposite.



'Mr Samuels. I killed my husband. He insulted me, so I stabbed him in the throat. When this did not kill him, I stabbed him again. Twice,' she says. 'I killed him, Mr Samuels. On purpose.'

'But he groomed you, Adelaide. He was abusive, he—'

'He was not abusive, not physically, and not truly emotionally. Neglectful? Certainly. And perhaps his behaviour to me when I was younger was inappropriate. In the end, though, I think he was simply unkind. Thoughtless and unkind. Unpleasant as that is, it is not a crime. Unlike murder. Which is the crime I have committed and ought to be convicted of.'

'Do you want to go to prison?!' Mr Samuels asks, aghast.

'Not particularly,' says Adelaide. 'But I can't say I strongly desire not to go to prison either. I will be dead inside the year, most likely, I don't desire much of anything I can achieve now, not with the time I have been given, and certainly not in the context of who I am.'

'Prison or no, it is certain that I killed my husband. His family made it clear to me I shall have no money of his to live on as a result. I never made an income for myself, I have no children to support me, no other family besides the ones I gained when I married into the Cratchets, and I have ostracised them by killing John so they no doubt have no interest in caring for me. I am not angry about this, do you understand, Mr Samuels? I am simply stating the truth.'

Mr Samuels wilts in his chair. 'It just doesn't seem fair.'

Adelaide smiles. 'No. But life is rarely is,' she tells him. 'Nor is death, I'd venture.'

'I. I'm sorry,' says Mr Samuels. He seems to mean it. 'I really just want to help. Is there anything you need, Adelaide?'

Adelaide considers a moment. 'Besides a small fortune and an ability to turn back the clock and live my life afresh? Perhaps some gloves? It's awfully cold in the cells. I've got terrible circulation. Worse now, with the sickness.'

Mr Samuels nods. 'Any particular kind?'

Adelaide considers for a moment. 'If you go into my husband's car, you'll find a set of leather gloves in the glove compartment by the passenger seat. If you could bring me those, I'd be much obliged.'

'I'll do what I can,' says Mr Samuels.

Adelaide smiles at him. He gets up from the table. After a moment of pause, Adelaide is led back to her cell.

Her cellmate is much younger than she is, barely out of her teens. She's blonde, blue eyed, there's something wild about her. She talks whether Adelaide is there or not, does not seem to respond when Adelaide tries to engage with her, but she's not frightening. She just sits and talks as though she is spending time with some friends.

Adelaide lies down on her cot and closes her eyes. Her cellmate is talking to the people who aren't there, and the rhythm of their conversation is even and gentle, like a train slowing down as it approaches a station.

It reminds Adelaide somewhat of how John used to talk to her when she was young. She might've been anyone, so long as she gave the impression she was listening.

As she drifts into sleep, she thinks of Morozov, of what she said to him. She had stayed for chess, but he thought she'd stayed for him. It didn't so much matter who she was, only that she listened to John. He never saw her as anything more than someone who would care for him.

She dreams of climbing the wall in the school grounds, cutting off her hair and calling herself Reginald. She dreams of driving alone into the night, until it swallows her whole, like a whale swallows krill.

WHOOSH

A BEAT OF SILENCE

APPRENTICE

She died in her sleep?

SIR

I assume so.

APPRENTICE

He wasn't in it.

SIR  
Who?

APPRENTICE  
Your murderer, Stephen Grenville. He wasn't there.

SIR  
Irony that you call him mine.

APPRENTICE  
He wasn't there so what was the point in showing me that?

SIR  
Shelve, or discard.

APPRENTICE  
Again? This? Seriously?!

SIR  
That is the question.

APPRENTICE

But, why?! I don't understand!

SIR

You never do.

APPRENTICE

If it's not-- it's something else, isn't it? Something you're trying to show me? She's special, this one. Different from the others.

SIR

Oh. How so?

APPRENTICE

She tells us what criteria she wants to be judged on. She tells us how she wants to be seen.

SIR

More so than the others?

APPRENTICE

I mean, yes! She explicitly told her lawyer 'I'm a murderer and I did it on purpose'.

SIR

And we ought to take her at her word?

APPRENTICE

I-- well, I. I don't know.

SIR

You think they should be judged on their own terms.

APPRENTICE

I don't know.

SIR

Stephen Grenville, ought we judge him on his own terms?

APPRENTICE

We don't know what those are, so I can't possibly answer that.

SIR

You should be able to, as if the answer is that we are supposed to judge people on the terms they set themselves, then it should not matter what those terms are.

APPRENTICE

But Stephen Grenville is bad!

SIR

And Adelaide wasn't?

APPRENTICE

Not like-- she was honest about it!

SIR

Basil and Sidney were liars and artificers in their own ways and this was made no secret in your observations of their life. You value what you have perceived from the judgement of two liars as equal to that of a woman who killed her husband?

APPRENTICE

It's not that I-- I just. Adelaide. She was clear about how she felt about it.

SIR

So you might feel less generous in your assessment of her if she had not been so sure of her feelings in the end?

APPRENTICE

I don't know.

(pause)

Why is it the gloves, do you think?

SIR

Clarify the question.

APPRENTICE

Her remnant. It could have been a chess piece or a chess board but it wasn't it was the gloves. The ones John gave to her. Why?

SIR

The way you see these things is not how I see them. But to me, this woman is coloured entirely by her experiences of that man.

APPRENTICE

But she didn't want to be!

SIR

And yet she was.

APPRENTICE

And she can't escape that? Even dead, she's tied to him?

SIR

She lived the life that she lived. As does everyone who lives. Hoping and dreaming can shape us, but they alone can not define a lifetime. It is action, whether actions of their own or the actions of others, which make the most impression in the end.

APPRENTICE

So what we want, it-- it doesn't matter? It's just irrelevant?

SIR

Of course it is not. Nothing is. And yet, at once, so is everything. Irrelevant. Nothing but dust. That is the way of things, in the end.

APPRENTICE

So why make these judgments at all?

SIR

There in is the question.

APPRENTICE

In what?



SIR

Shelve or discard.

APPRENTICE

Oh.

SIR

So? Which will it be?

APPRENTICE

I-- discard.

SIR

Very well.

APPRENTICE

Very well.

PAUSE

APPRENTICE

What?

SIR

Oh, nothing.

APPRENTICE

Isn't everything?

SIR

In a sense.

APPRENTICE

Are you-- are you smiling at me?

SIR

I suppose I am. In a sense.

APPRENTICE

Have I done something right?

SIR

You just seem. Familiar. That is all.

APPRENTICE

Oh. Like déjà vu?

SIR

Perhaps. Yes. Perhaps.

END