

WEAVER, Chapter Two:
"Watch"

By Newton Sweeney

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Scene: 1

MUSIC: OPENING THEME PLAYS AND THEN FADES OUT.

LORNA:

I think they've finally gone to sleep.

Helena, I'm not alone here, not anymore. Isn't that strange? Even with the man, I was alone.

SOUND: WOOD CREAKING.

Or was it just the house, sad and full of grief and closed windows?

The house isn't empty anymore. The windows are open and light shines onto the carpet and makes shapes of warmth under their feet.

Not under mine. I can't touch. I can't feel the warmth. They can. How should I feel about that?

They stormed in, before.

SOUND: THE DOOR OPENS.

The one who spoke first, they scared me, their voice made me... I stopped. I don't know why, but I did. They couldn't hear me, no more than the man could, but still. It felt... wrong, somehow, to speak. To talk to you.

Do I *talk* to you? Or is it prayer? You are like a god to me, Helena. So I suppose it must be prayer.

Surely I remember your name for a reason. It won't leave my head. It circles, never sleeping, like a shark. *Helena*, I think as I stare out the windows. *Helena*, I think, as I watch them move suitcases and boxes into the house. *Helena*, I think, as they talk about things I can't quite understand.

SOUND: BLOOD DRIPPING.

Is it true that sharks can smell blood from miles and miles and miles away? Maybe if I bled for you, you'd appear. Maybe if I *could* bleed...

The one who spoke before, their name is Goose. I think that is a strange name, but do I know many names to compare it with? I know mine, Lorna, and yours, Helena, and the names of my... What should I call them? Companions? Coinhabitants? Compatriots? Hm.

Goose is... strange. Their hair is a dark, dark black, so dark that it's like looking into a deep pit. So deep that it appears to go on forever, just falling and falling and falling and your heart in your throat and your stomach in your chest. I look at them, and I feel vertigo. I wish I could put out a hand, to steady myself, but instead I...

What is it that I do? Watch?

I watch. From afar.

Their clothes...

SOUND: FABRIC RUSTLES.

So many layers, and none of them matching. I wear a shirt and pants and socks and shoes, and under that I assume I wear a bra and ... But Goose? They wear a shirt and a sweater and a skirt and leggings and mismatched socks-

SOUND: GOOSE'S HEAVY FOOTSTEPS.

And big boots that track mud into the house, because they always forget to take them off.

SOUND: GOOSE'S JEWELRY CLINKING.

And they have dangly necklaces that sway when they walk, silver rings that glint when they pass through the patches

of sunlight from the windows, big earrings that are different every day... I do not know what to make of this.

But Goose isn't alone here. Their companion is named Evelyn. Evelyn and Goose.

When these people arrived, I had hoped one of them would be you.

SOUND: WOOD CREAKING.

You'd heard my prayers and you had finally decided I had earned your love and you were ready to make the dust flee. Helena, my goddess, my love, my glowing girl, you had come to save me. You'd press your lips to the spot mine occupy in space and I would feel it. You would see me. And you would tell me that I had proven myself worthy and we would live happily ever after.

Happily ever after. Hm.

But no. You are still far from me, and I am still stuck in this place with these strange people that confuse me so.

Goose's name was the first I learned.

SOUND: THE DOOR CREAKS OPEN.

The door had swung open and they had spoken enough to scare me. Then from... out there, I heard her call.

"Goose, a little help?"

They turned and walked back to her, but the door was left open in their wake. I could only just make out a few trees and a driveway before... It doesn't matter. I looked away. That... The outside, it's not for me. The house is my world, and you are my religion, and that is all that I need. All that I'm for.

Goose returned a moment later, carrying a big suitcase with bright stickers on it, too many for me to read. Not that I particularly tried, though; I... I was scared. I kept my distance.

Then the woman walked in. Evelyn. She carried a suitcase of her own.

When I first saw her, I had hoped she would be you. Her clothes, plain enough, especially against Goose's, I noticed did not glow. But still I waited. I watched. She looked around the house, her brow knitted tightly under her big glasses. Her shoulders were drawn in tight, like she didn't want the house to see her. She's larger than I am, her body made bigger by the loose-fitting sweater she wore, but still she looked so small. Tense as a bowstring ready for release, potential energy stored in great reserves. It didn't do her much good; if I saw her, then surely the house did as well? If the house can see, that is. I don't know if it does, Helena, that's hardly my business.

The two of them carried on like that for... time. Back and forth, carrying suitcases and boxes. By the time they were done, they had to squeeze their way around them to get to the door, the foyer stuffed with pieces of whatever place they had come from. They didn't say much. Goose tried to, a few times, asking the woman what she thought of the place and if she thought it would be a good fit, but their friend didn't want to talk. She just combed her eyes over everything she could see: the dust gathering on the hardwood floor and the ratty old couch in the living room and the stairs where, unbeknownst to her, the man had fallen so long ago.

Was it so long? I can get the order right, but everything in between... Hm.

Anyway, soon enough I knew Evelyn by name and my hope was gone again. I'm not alone but I am. They can't see me, can't hear me, I can't have any connection to them.

Not that I want to? I don't think I want to... I think that I want to be alone again. It's loud, having them here. The man may have been angry, and the glass in his hand may have destroyed him after all, but he was quiet. Sad. He carried grief with him, heavy on his shoulders and making him dull his mind to feel it ease, if for only a moment.

But Goose and Evelyn, they are not the man. They bring noise and life wherever they go, taking away what little I had to call my own. The darkness of the room from the closed windows had begun to feel like... Well, I imagine the man's comfort in his bed, his pillows and his covers and the dreams as he slept, I imagine that it felt how my quiet spaces felt. A reprieve. A tiny corner of the world, like the spider's web.

They took that, too. Swept it away on the first day they were here, when they opened the windows and swept the floors-

SOUND: THE FLOOR IS SWEEPED.

-and dusted all the skin and hair and leftover pieces of the man away. His things are still here, the basement still locked up tight and the old bedroom remains hidden away, his clothes in his closet and his furniture and the screen in his room that hurts to look at. Still, more and more of him is swept away every day. As rock erodes and snow melts, the man disappears slowly but inevitably. One day it will all be gone. I don't miss him, but there's a certain sentimental attachment I hold to the idea of him. The familiarity. *His* habits I knew.

They have habits of their own, these new inhabitants. After they had cleaned the whole house and moved all of their things into the bedroom where the man died, I started to adjust to the way they moved, filling up the place with light and life.

SOUND: A SPRAY BOTTLE SPRITZING CLEANER.

Goose did a lot of the cleaning, as Evelyn spends a lot of time... out there. In the world.

SOUND: THE FLOOR IS SWEEPED AND A VACUUM IS RUN OVER THE RUG.

They swept the hard wood of the kitchen and the halls, ran a loud vacuum over the rug in the living room that made me want to curl up and hide in a closet, safe and far away from the sound. I didn't, though. I didn't trust them. Still don't, though I'm not sure what I'll do if they decide to tear down the house by its foundation or steal from the man or... Any number of things, I suppose. I'm hardly in a position to stop them, Helena.

You could. Would you intervene, if they tried to hurt the house? To hurt me?

Anyway, now they just... sit. Hunched over a tablet. I watch them, as long as I can bear to. They scribble for hours and hours, playing something that must be music. Fast beats, and pulsing rhythms, and pitched-up voices that sing nonsense; I don't know what they get out of it. It seems to help them focus.

And focus they do. On the few times I've gotten close enough to truly see what they labor over, I've been stunned by the skill they wield. One picture was only half-colored, but seemed to be alive on the screen:

SOUND: A BLADE IS PULLED FROM A SHEATH, AND GIANT WINGS BEAT THE AIR.

A woman, holding a giant sword, with wings outstretched, slicing through the air. She didn't glow, but aside from that, she might have been you. The woman was vibrant, full of life, even though she only existed under Goose's hand.

I think I might hate the woman in the picture, Helena. She's not real, but she's so alive. She's radiant. I must be real, if I'm here, and I'm talking to you. But am I alive? What does that mean- to be alive? Does it mean to be

seen? Heard? I can hear the sword cutting the throats of a thousand of the woman's enemies, even if she's frozen on the screen. I don't think anyone can hear me. Sometimes I think even you can't. I don't know if that's worse than being ignored. It might be.

When they finished the woman, they closed the screen before I could see her. In my mind, she's stuck there: half-colored, the clothes on her deep brown skin a simple and flat white, her wings only made of plain grays with no shadows or highlights to deepen them. I feel a cruel sense of satisfaction at that. Even when she lives so beautifully on the screen, someone knows when she was flat and lifeless.

Often, they'll stand up from where they've been working, stretching their arms and making their spine pop loudly, then pick up the little screen from which the music plays. They pause the music, dialing a few buttons, then hold it up to their ear, just like the man used to do with the phone in the kitchen. Then they talk into it, saying things like, "Hey, buddy," and "Love you, too," and "Oh, she's holding in there." I wonder who they talk to. A sibling? A friend? Someone from whatever place they come from, that mysterious before, that forbidden outside world. A thread, connecting them to somewhere else.

Sometimes, Goose pulls out a deck of cards and sits in front of them on the floor. Their back is stiff and straight, their hair pulled back as they close their eyes and breathe for... a time. They think as they sit there. I know they do, though I know not what they're thinking about.

SOUND: GOOSE SHUFFLES THE CARDS.

Then they shuffle the cards, their eyes still squeezed shut, and pull out any number of them, placing them in any number of patterns. Then, one by one, they look at the cards. I don't know what they get out of this. It seems...

strange, to me. I never get close enough to see the faces on their cards. Maybe next time, I will.

They never do this when Evelyn is home, though. When Evelyn is home, they talk. They talk about the basement-

SOUND: THE KEY IS TURNED IN THE LOCK.

SOUND: THE DOOR SHUTS.

-about whether to leave it locked up or to break down the door, to search for the key, to pick the lock... Goose is in favor of exploring. Evelyn, though... She's afraid of the door and what lies beyond. I catch her sometimes, when Goose is elsewhere, just staring at that door, her every muscle frozen in anticipation, as if at any moment it may fly open and destroy her. Sometimes I think she might be right to worry. I'm glad, I think, that they've agreed they have enough to worry about without exploring the mysterious basement and its hidden treasures. Whatever those might be.

SOUND: STATIC.

Evelyn is harder for me to observe. Goose remains a mystery to me, of course, but at least I can see them. I can observe, guard this house best I can, gather what I can from their actions and the creations on their screen. Evelyn is rarely here; there is much, much less opportunity for observation with her. Something about her reminds me of the man, though.

SOUND: WOOD CREAKING.

This is not a compliment; she's quick to anger, holds herself stiffly like a tightened bowstring, like he did. At least she doesn't drown out her sorrows in the way he did. At least she's not shut out of the world.

She talks about work. A library. Shelves and shelves of stories, and she hates it. I don't understand her. I think heaven, if it exists, is a library. Tales to be told,

waiting to be read, to be absorbed and appreciated and loved. Waiting to speak to someone who needs it. Helena, you know that I am a storyteller. I weave countless tales to fill the gaping absences in my mind. Without these stories, without you to tell them to, I sometimes think that I would fade away entirely. But Evelyn does not see the beauty of a place full of tales waiting to be told. She simply complains of people being loud in the shelves, of young couples forgetting that the silence of a library does not equal privacy, of having to shelve and reshelve for so little pay. And she doesn't like the house, either.

She said something about ghosts, about her uncle being a strange recluse whom she'd never met. The angry man. Her uncle. I'd never considered...

SOUND: STATIC.

He'd had no will, I have gathered, and as the only living relative, the house went to her. The house is hers, and for that she resents it.

I do not understand her.

Still, she and Goose are close. There is only one bedroom in the house, as the other is... inaccessible. They've mentioned buying a new bed on their endlessly growing list of tasks that need achieving, but for now they sleep nestled together, their arms brushing as Evelyn snores lightly. I don't watch them much, I prefer to stay here and watch the house, but when I do... They're sweet, almost. Despite the blinding light they let in from the windows and the constant noise as they clean and go through boxes and complain and live, they're sweet.

If you save me, Helena, could we have that? Sleeping side by side, not quite touching, the care for each other as solid a fact as our own names? Could I be Lorna, loved by Helena?

Do I want them gone? I can't decide. I wish... Hm.

SOUND: STATIC.

I think I want to be alone.

THE END

MUSIC: END THEME PLAYS.

VOICE:

Weaver is written and produced by Newton Sweeney. This episode featured Newton Sweeney as Lorna. Our script editor is Veda Wheeler. Our production consultant, sound designer, and sound engineer is Newton Schottelkotte. Our theme is composed and performed by Rhea Ming. Our cover art is by James Smith. To find cast and crew bios, links to our social media, episode transcripts, and more, check out our website at weaverpod.carrd.co for more information. Thanks for listening.

CONTENT WARNINGS

Static SFX
Memory loss