

# Chapter 9: Nine

The chapter begins with Kathy reflecting on a conversation in the Art Room, where Cynthia E. casually mentions that Kathy is the "natural successor" to Ruth in Tommy's life. This remark unsettles Kathy, as it suggests an outside perspective on her relationship with Tommy, complicating her feelings. Around the same time, Hannah points out Tommy sitting alone, further fueling Kathy's confusion about the assumptions circulating among their peers. These interactions disrupt Kathy's previous plans to pursue a physical relationship with Harry, as she becomes preoccupied with the idea of being Tommy's next partner.

Kathy's initial resolve to be with Harry wavers as the "natural successor" notion takes hold. She recalls her careful preparations to approach Harry but now finds herself avoiding him, making excuses whenever they meet. Later, she reflects on this period with regret, realizing Harry might not have even been interested, and her behavior could have seemed absurd. The chapter then shifts to a poignant encounter years later, where Kathy briefly meets Harry at a recovery center after a donation. The interaction is bittersweet, as Harry doesn't recognize her, leaving Kathy with a sense of gratitude for his past decency.

The narrative returns to Kathy's youth, describing the summer trend of sharing Walkmans among friends in the fields. These moments of communal music listening create a sense of camaraderie, contrasting with the underlying tension in Kathy's personal life. During one such session, Ruth approaches Kathy with a request: she wants to reunite with Tommy and asks Kathy to mediate. Ruth admits she trusts only Kathy to communicate her sincere intentions to Tommy, emphasizing their shared history and Kathy's unique influence over him.

Kathy agrees to help, though she is surprised by Ruth's sudden change of heart. The chapter ends with Ruth outlining her desire for a fresh start with Tommy,

acknowledging their past mistakes. Kathy, though conflicted, reassures Ruth of her support, setting the stage for the emotional complexities to come. The chapter captures the delicate dynamics of friendship, loyalty, and unspoken desires among the characters at Hailsham.

