

Chapter 1: One

Kathy H., a 31-year-old carer with over eleven years of experience, reflects on her prolonged tenure in the role. While she acknowledges that her extended service isn't solely due to exceptional performance, she takes pride in her ability to keep her donors calm and facilitate their recoveries. She attributes her success to an instinctive understanding of when to offer comfort or space. Despite her competence, she humbly recognizes that other equally skilled carers receive less recognition, and she addresses potential resentment over her privileges, such as choosing her donors, often favoring those from Hailsham, her childhood home.

Kathy explains that her preference for Hailsham donors stems from a natural inclination to connect with those who share her background, which helps sustain her emotional resilience. She recounts how reconnecting with Ruth, a childhood friend, reinforced the value of these bonds. Over time, however, fewer familiar donors remain, making her work increasingly challenging. This diminishing connection has led her to accept that her time as a carer is nearing its end, though she cherishes the memories and relationships she's maintained through her role.

A poignant moment with a dying donor highlights the significance of Hailsham in Kathy's life. The donor, nearing the end of his life, finds solace in Kathy's vivid descriptions of Hailsham, as if her memories could become his own. This encounter deepens Kathy's appreciation for her upbringing, realizing how fortunate she and her peers were. The donor's longing for her past underscores the emotional weight Hailsham carries for those who never experienced its comforts.

Now, as Kathy drives across the country, she often mistakes landscapes or buildings for Hailsham, particularly sports pavilions that evoke nostalgic memories. These structures remind her of the pavilion at Hailsham, a cherished place for solitude and camaraderie. The chapter closes with Kathy's lingering attachment to her past, as she

continues to seek traces of Hailsham in the world around her, a testament to its enduring impact on her identity and emotions.

