

Chapter 15: Fifteen

In Chapter Fifteen, Kathy and Tommy share a quiet moment together after the others have left, discussing Ruth's recent behavior. Tommy dismisses her comments as mere venting, insisting that their origins or "models" don't define them. Kathy agrees, though her mood is subdued. Their conversation shifts when Tommy reveals he had been searching for a replacement for Kathy's lost Judy Bridgewater tape, a sentimental item from their time at Hailsham. His earnest but clumsy efforts to find it in a Woolworth's store earlier that day end in failure, as he couldn't recall the tape's details. Kathy is touched by his thoughtfulness, and their shared nostalgia lightens the atmosphere.

The pair decide to embark on a spontaneous search for the tape in Norfolk, playfully embracing the idea of it being the "lost corner of England." Tommy's childlike belief in the possibility of finding it amuses Kathy, but she humors him, suggesting they look in second-hand shops. Their quest becomes less about the tape and more about the joy of spending time together, exploring dusty stores filled with eclectic items. The experience rekindles a sense of carefree connection, as they lose themselves in the thrill of the hunt, momentarily forgetting the weight of their circumstances.

As they rummage through various shops, their focus shifts from the tape to the simple pleasure of each other's company. Kathy describes the warmth she feels during this shared adventure, a rare moment of uncomplicated happiness. Tommy's enthusiasm is infectious, and even when their initial searches prove fruitless, they continue with lighthearted determination. The chapter captures the bittersweet beauty of their bond, as the search becomes a metaphor for their deeper longing for meaning and connection in a world that often denies them both.

The chapter culminates in Kathy's unexpected discovery of the tape in a second-hand shop. Her reaction is mixed—surprise, hesitation, and even a fleeting desire to ignore

it, as its appearance threatens to end their joyful escapade. When she finally shows it to Tommy, his skepticism mirrors her own ambivalence. The moment is poignant, underscoring how the tape symbolizes both their shared past and the fleeting nature of happiness. The chapter ends on an unresolved note, leaving their emotions and the significance of the find open to interpretation.

