

# Chapter 1

The chapter opens with the narrator recalling vivid childhood dreams of a mysterious city by a bay, filled with unfamiliar sights like horseless carts and flying objects.

Though young and never having seen a city, the narrator could visualize its streets, buildings, and lights in striking detail. When they asked their sister Mary about it, she dismissed it as a remnant of the "Old People's" world before a catastrophic event called Tribulation. She warned the narrator to keep these visions secret, as their community frowned upon anything unusual, including the narrator's left-handedness. Over time, the dreams faded, but the habit of caution remained.

The narrator describes their early life as outwardly normal, though they shared a secret understanding with their cousin Rosalind. This unspoken connection, along with the recurring dreams, hinted at a deeper uniqueness they didn't yet recognize. At nearly ten years old, the narrator often played alone, exploring the countryside, including a massive bank they assumed was a natural feature. One day, while sliding down a sandy gully, they encountered a stranger—a girl named Sophie, who lived beyond the bank. Her appearance was surprising, as the narrator knew all local children from community gatherings.

Sophie, curious but cautious, joined the narrator in sliding down the sandy slope. Initially reserved, she quickly embraced the fun, her excitement evident. However, on her third attempt, she landed awkwardly and cried out in pain. The narrator rushed to her side, finding her in distress with tears in her eyes. The chapter ends abruptly at this moment, leaving the nature of her injury—and its potential significance—unresolved, hinting at a turning point in the narrator's life.

The chapter subtly introduces themes of secrecy, difference, and the remnants of a lost world. The narrator's dreams and their encounter with Sophie suggest a deeper mystery about their society and its rigid norms. The narrative builds tension around

the idea of hidden truths, both in the narrator's visions and in the unexpected connection with Sophie, setting the stage for future revelations about their world and their place in it.

