

# Chapter 11

The chapter begins with an optimistic tone as the spring inspections reveal a high normality-rate in crops and livestock, signaling a prosperous year for the district. The community's morale improves, with bets placed on record-low deviation figures. Old Jacob, however, cautions against complacency, hinting at potential divine retribution. The favorable conditions persist, with even the later vegetables showing orthodoxy, and the inspector's idle office hours reflect the season's tranquility. Despite this, the narrative foreshadows disruption with the mention of Petra, hinting at impending chaos.

Petra's reckless adventure into the forbidden woods sets the chapter's central conflict in motion. Ignoring safety protocols, she ventures alone and encounters danger, triggering a distress signal that overwhelms the telepathic communication among the protagonists. Her uncontrolled emotional broadcast creates a "blotting" effect, disrupting their ability to coordinate. The urgency of her distress forces the narrator to abandon work and rush to her aid, armed and on horseback, though the journey is fraught with obstacles like a fall and dense undergrowth.

Upon reaching the glade, the narrator discovers Petra's pony brutally killed by a grotesque, deviational creature—a hybrid beast with predatory features. Before the narrator can act, Rosalind and Michael intervene, skillfully killing the creature with arrows. Despite the danger being neutralized, Petra's distress persists, amplified by the sight of her dead pony. She remains frozen in a tree, requiring physical assistance to descend, and her emotional turmoil continues unabated, underscoring her lack of control over her telepathic abilities.

The chapter culminates in a tense yet unresolved moment, as Petra's overwhelming distress disrupts the group's cohesion and hints at deeper consequences. Her actions not only endanger herself but also expose the fragility of the community's perceived

safety. The incident serves as a stark contrast to the earlier optimism, emphasizing the ever-present threat of deviation and the unpredictability of their world. The chapter leaves readers questioning the broader implications of Petra's powers and the potential fallout from her recklessness.

