

Chapter 13

The chapter opens with a tense encounter as the protagonists, riding a great-horse, confront an armed man who immediately draws his bow. A brief skirmish ensues, with both sides exchanging arrows. Rosalind manages to hit the man's horse, causing it to bolt and throw him into the bushes. The protagonists ride past the fallen man, noting his injuries but leaving him behind. Their primary concern shifts to the riderless horse, which could raise an alarm ahead of them, complicating their escape through the forested terrain.

As they emerge from the forest, they survey a cultivated valley dotted with farms and livestock. Spotting a group of people examining the escaped horse, they decide to press forward rather than risk confrontation. The sight of their massive great-horses terrifies the villagers, who scatter in fear, allowing the duo to pass unhindered. They continue across fields, breaking fences as they go, and eventually reach another stretch of forest. Behind them, the villagers watch in stunned silence, reinforcing the protagonists' otherness and the fear they inspire.

The landscape shifts as they venture deeper, encountering bizarre, oversized vegetation and unfamiliar terrain. Seeking refuge, they settle in a copse with ordinary grass, where they rest and eat. Their respite is interrupted by Petra, a young companion with extraordinary telepathic abilities, who relays a urgent message from an unknown woman. The message emphasizes Petra's unparalleled psychic power and the critical need to protect her at all costs, hinting at her significance to an unseen group already sending help.

The chapter concludes with the group grappling with the implications of the message. They question whether the sender misunderstands their identity, possibly mistaking them for primitive "Fringes people." Despite their skepticism about receiving aid across the impassable Badlands, they acknowledge Petra's unique abilities. Rosalind,

exhausted, opts to delay further discussion, prioritizing rest. The chapter leaves tension unresolved, underscoring the mystery of Petra's importance and the uncertain promise of outside assistance.

