Chapter 14

The chapter begins with the narrator, David, slowly regaining consciousness after an attack by Fringes people. He reflects on Rosalind, the woman he loves, distinguishing between her outward persona—a practical, armored facade crafted for survival—and her vulnerable, hidden self. David admires her physical beauty and the strength of her constructed identity but cherishes the rare moments when her true, tender nature emerges. Their deep emotional and almost mystical connection is described as a fleeting union where their individual selves dissolve into one, transcending physical separation.

The narrative shifts to the aftermath of the ambush, where David and Rosalind, along with Petra, are captured and placed in panniers on great-horses. Rosalind communicates telepathically with Michael, explaining their situation: the Fringes people are transporting them deeper into their territory, seemingly unsure what to do with them. Despite their captivity, the captors appear non-threatening, even somewhat indifferent, focusing more on the horses. Petra, unharmed, interacts amiably with one of their guards, who seems simple-minded.

Michael, concerned for their safety, learns of the attack and the group's plans to pursue them. The Fringes people's decision to move the captives farther into their territory aligns with David's group's goal of escaping their pursuers, though their ultimate fate remains uncertain. David, now standing in the pannier, observes the strange, distorted landscape of the Fringes, noting its unnatural flora, which confirms his father's warnings about the region's aberrations.

The chapter blends introspection with action, contrasting the intimacy between David and Rosalind against the peril of their captivity. The Fringes people's ambiguous intentions and the surreal environment create tension, while the group's resilience and telepathic bonds offer hope. The narrative leaves their future unresolved, emphasizing

the unpredictability of their journey and the deepening mystery of the Fringes.