

Chapter 18

Theo reflects on his diary, which he initially intended as a personal exploration of his past but now feels compelled to censor due to growing unease. He locks away his account of Rawlings's visit, aware that his self-censorship reveals underlying anxiety. The diary, once a cathartic routine, feels pointless if he must deceive rather than illuminate. Theo questions the necessity of such precautions, irritated by the intrusion of fear into what was meant to be a self-indulgent exercise. His frustration underscores the oppressive atmosphere of his world, where even private thoughts are shadowed by suspicion.

Recalling Rawlings and Cathcart's visit, Theo initially prided himself on handling the encounter without fear. However, revisiting their cryptic conversation in writing stirs new anxieties. He justifies his single lie—denying knowledge of others who received Five Fishes pamphlets—as a minor deception to protect his ex-wife. Despite his rationalizations, he grapples with the possibility that even small lies could draw scrutiny. Theo clings to the belief that legal protections still exist for Britons, yet his confidence wavers as he contemplates the implications of his actions.

Restless and unsettled, Theo paces his empty home, acutely aware of the silence around him. Gazing at the rain-soaked street, he is overwhelmed by depression and guilt, his earlier confidence replaced by dread. He realizes Rawlings and Cathcart's true focus was Julian and the Five Fishes, not him, yet their visit signals suspicion. Theo fears the SSP will return with harsher methods, and his mind races with scenarios of Julian's arrest. The weight of his isolation and the futility of his efforts to remain uninvolved press heavily on him.

Theo cycles through paranoia and helplessness, questioning how much the authorities know and whether Julian is already captured. He regrets his involvement with the group but feels powerless to warn them without exposing himself. The thought of

interceding with Xan offers little solace, as he lacks the means to contact Julian or her allies. Theo resigns himself to waiting, trapped between fear and inertia, as the threat of surveillance looms. His loneliness intensifies, leaving him yearning for a confidant—a stark contrast to his earlier dismissal of such needs.

