

# Chapter 15

The chapter opens with Theo discovering a printed message from a group called the Five Fishes, demanding reforms from the authoritarian government. The demands include holding a general election, granting civil rights to Sojourners (migrant workers), abolishing the Quietus (a euthanasia program), ending deportations to the Isle of Man Penal Colony, and stopping compulsory fertility testing. The message is simple and humane, but Theo reacts with exasperation, doubting its effectiveness. He suspects Julian, a member of the group, authored it, yet believes their efforts are futile due to their lack of resources and power.

Theo reflects on the group's unrealistic ambitions, questioning how they expect to challenge the regime without organization or public support. He acknowledges their goal of sparking dissent—such as refusing medical examinations—but sees it as meaningless in a society where hope has dwindled. The amateurish production of the message suggests the group operates clandestinely, likely with limited means. Theo doubts their secrecy can withstand scrutiny from the SSP (the state security force), further undermining their potential impact.

As he rereads the demands, Theo considers whether he could have influenced change during his time as an adviser to Xan, the Warden of England. He concludes that even then, he was powerless. The chapter delves into Theo's internal conflict: while he recognizes the nobility of the Five Fishes' cause, he believes their struggle is pointless in a world without a future due to human infertility (the Omega event). He questions the value of fighting for justice in a dying society where such concepts will soon become obsolete.

Ultimately, Theo's initial sympathy fades as he contrasts the group's idealism with the resigned stoicism of the general population. He views most people as enduring their suffering quietly, finding small comforts and maintaining decency despite their

despair. By tearing up and discarding the message, Theo rejects the Five Fishes' call to action, though he briefly envies their passion. The chapter ends with his conflicted dismissal of their "pitiably unarmoured fellowship," highlighting the tension between idealism and hopelessness.

