

Chapter I

In Chapter I of the story, we encounter the protagonist, who reflects on their family's recent move to a remote area due to a hurricane triggered by their brother, Fish. The family had lived by the coast, where the protagonist felt a strong affinity for the waves; however, Fish's connection to water was trouble, leading them to relocate deep inland. The hurricane coincided with Fish's thirteenth birthday, abruptly transforming the festive atmosphere into chaos as the storm wreaked havoc around them. Trees fell, windows shattered, and the family fought to keep Fish calm amidst the storm's fury.

Post-hurricane, the family settles in the isolated stretch of land between Nebraska and Kansas, affectionately dubbed Kansaska-Nebransas, where the absence of major water bodies could prevent big storms. Their home is away from neighbors, with the nearest town failing to boast even the most basic amenities. This isolation allows them a sense of peace, albeit mixed with nostalgia for their previous life.

The chapter also introduces Grandpa Bomba, who playfully recounts a whimsical story of how Idaho came into being on his thirteenth birthday. His tall tales are a source of amusement for his family, contrasting with the protagonist's anticipation of their own thirteenth birthday, which is expected to bring a personal, unique "savvy" or special ability. The family dynamic is further fleshed out with siblings Rocket, Fish, and the narrator. Rocket, at seventeen, claims that girls possess unremarkable savvies, while he has electric powers, demonstrating sibling rivalry and teasing.

As the narrator prepares for their imminent birthday, which they hope will be special, tension escalates unexpectedly during a family dinner. A phone call disrupts the evening, leading to devastating news: their father, Poppa, has been involved in a severe car accident and is unresponsive in the hospital. This revelation casts a shadow over the family, particularly on the narrator, who grapples with feelings of anger and disappointment about the potential ruin of their birthday, their joy overshadowed by the gravity of the situation around them. The chapter captures the blend of familial love, the innocence of childhood wishes, and the life-altering realities they face together.