

Chapter XI

In Chapter XI, Lester Swan, the bus driver, enjoys chatting with his passengers. He encourages everyone to sit at the front, while Bobbi and Will Junior sit uncertainly beside him. Mibs and Fish, who are eager to reach Salina because their father is in poor health, sit across the aisle. As Lester drives the delivery bus, he rambles about its quirks and a past incident where it broke down. Fish interrupts anxiously, asking how long until they reach Salina, prompting a tense realization among the group about the urgency of their journey.

Lester checks his watch, realizing he's running late for a stop in Bee before continuing on to Wymore and Manhattan to deliver money to a friend. Despite their protests that tomorrow is too far away, Lester insists he cannot sacrifice his job for their urgent need, making Mibs feel guilty for asking the driver for a favor that could jeopardize his livelihood.

As they arrive in the tiny town of Bee, they find the sole church locked and dark, and Lester grows increasingly agitated. Mibs reflects on memories of her mother, who taught her that no one is truly perfect and shared warmth and life lessons while cooking together, reinforcing the idea that the Beaumont family experiences both joy and sorrow like everyone else.

Distracted, Mibs steps outside, distancing herself from the complaints surrounding her in the bus. She thinks fondly of the past moments with her family, particularly the dream of a porch swing that her father wanted to build. As Mibs sits on the porch of an old, abandoned house, Will Junior finds her and inquires about her experiences on the bus. Mibs tries to deflect his curiosity, revealing her secretiveness but ultimately finding solace in sharing a light moment about his nickname.

Their conversation shifts as Will Junior offers a birthday gift, a pen set Mibs hadn't opened yet. As she tries to draw on his hand, a sun sketch miraculously comes to life, surprising Mibs and marking the beginning of her blossoming abilities. The chapter encapsulates a blend of urgency, childhood innocence, family bonds, and the unfolding of Mibs's unique powers.