

# Chapter XXI

In Chapter XXI, the narrator reflects on a lesson taught by their mother, Momma, about the concept of "scumbling"—an artistic technique symbolizing emotional expression. She explains that using the right amount of paint allows one's unique qualities, or "savvy," to shine without overshadowing everything else in life. The lesson resonates with the narrator, especially in light of their brother Fish's struggles with his powerful savvy, likened to a tempest requiring care and control.

As the scene unfolds in Emerald, the environment grows chaotic with Fish's wind intensifying. The narrator experiences distress as they realize the absence of familiar comforts from home and the uncertainty of their journey. This culminates in a moment of danger when a "No Parking Any Time" sign flies through the air due to Fish's storm. However, Fish demonstrates newfound control over his powers by deflecting the sign, an event that grants him a feeling of achievement and reassurance.

With Fish feeling calmer, the group, including Bobbi and Will, begins to rally together, sharing in a moment where they sense Fish's growing mastery over his abilities. Despite the chaos outside, a sense of unity emerges as they all make an effort to support each other. They board a bus with Lester, who seems oblivious to the turbulent weather. Lill Kiteley proposes to join their journey towards Salina, potentially to find their father, reassuring the children amidst the unpredictability.

The chapter also highlights Lester's anxiety over his deliveries and job security, prompting a tension between the children's needs and his obligations. Lill urges him to prioritize the children's urgency to reach Salina. The culmination of the chapter shows Lill's determination to seek clarity in their circumstances, emphasizing their shared situation and calling for transparency about their next steps, as she senses an underlying tension among them.

As they continue, the characters grapple with the conflict between personal desires and responsibilities, painting a vivid picture of their journey in an unpredictable world filled with challenges and emotional growth.