

# O God that maple fretboard

In this chapter, the protagonist arrives at a public dock after enduring a fierce three-day storm. As he disembarks, he encounters a young girl in the cockpit of his boat, playfully teasing him about his fishing skills and the state of his boat. Despite the initial tension, she offers to help him find supplies in the nearby town of Winton, where her uncle, referred to as "King Richard," runs a store that trades in various items. They have a brief exchange about the girl's life and her struggles with her uncle, whom she claims is not truly related to her. The protagonist senses her fear and the weight of her past as she shares troubling stories about King Richard, and it becomes clear that she feels trapped.

As they walk through Winton, the protagonist is apprehensive, noting that the town appears rough and unstable. He also reflects on his cautious nature, as he notices many locals armed with weapons. When they reach King Richard's store, they find it locked, prompting the girl to suggest visiting Richard's house instead. Upon arriving, they meet King Richard, a rugged man who seems to embody the town's harshness. The protagonist offers to trade a pistol for supplies, and King Richard, while dismissive of the exchange, shows interest in the gun's history.

After completing the trade, the protagonist is pressed to understand more about Richard's true nature. King Richard's attitude implies he has not been an effective guardian for the girl. Despite the unfriendly atmosphere, an exchange occurs where the protagonist decides to take the girl with him to escape her dire situation. After some compelling negotiations, he manages to convince King Richard to let the girl go in exchange for his beloved bass guitar.

In a moment of brief liberation, the girl introduces herself as Sol, and they leave the oppressive environment behind. The chapter concludes with a mix of relief and apprehension as the protagonist feels an unsettling burden of responsibility toward her, pondering his capability to protect her as they return to the boat, which remains untouched at the dock. The sense of loss for his guitar weighs heavily on him, symbolizing the sacrifices made for their newfound freedom.