

skeletons climbing stairs in the rain

In this chapter, the atmosphere in the Shambles remains oppressive, characterized by hot tar and the incessant noise of bilge pumps. Rainy reflects on his continuing work there, feeling the weight of impending doom as the corridor leads into darkness. He is informed by Marcel, who operates the incinerator and appears visibly distressed, about the fate awaiting children, including Sol, who are being placed in "trials" for compliance therapeutics. This news alarms Rainy, especially recalling Kellan, who fled from such a program.

Marcel explains that these trials are legal if a child's guardian consents. Rainy is consumed by dread and suspicion about how Griff, Sol's guardian, may have quickly agreed to such procedures. He learns that these trials target "noncompliant minors," rated five or higher on a behavior scale. The urgency of the situation intensifies Rainy's resolve to speak with Werryck, hoping he might intervene; however, Marcel is doubtful of Werryck's willingness to help.

Later, when Rainy meets Werryck, they engage in a tense conversation about Sol's impending involvement in the trials. Werryck dismisses concern for the medical personnel's decision-making, calling it another universe. Rainy attempts to appeal to Werryck's sense of authority and previous fondness for Sol, as she showed promising progress in her recovery.

As they leave Werryck's quarters, Rainy witnesses Werryck's excitement over the capture of twelve newcomers, detailing their miserable state as they emerged from an abandoned cabin, begging to return to the ship. When the children arrive, Rainy is struck by their ghostly appearance, noting their shattered spirits. Among them, he recognizes Kellan, frail and worn, indicating the struggles they faced.

Werryck evaluates their situation, reflecting on the resources expended on their recovery and hinting at consequences for Kellan's actions. The chapter ends with Rainy shivering from the cold, feeling the deepening emotional and physical toll of their plight, leaving him to ponder the fragility of those they had just brought back.