

46. King of the World

In the chapter titled "King of the World" from the year 1969, Kya sets off in her boat to the wharf managed by Jumpin' to acquire a bus schedule. Her journey is fueled by an uneasy anticipation; she is to meet her editor, Robert Foster, in person for the first time after years of exchanging letters and notes on her book's artistic and editorial content. These exchanges, rich with technical insights and poetic expression, have fostered a unique bond between them, centered around their shared love for the natural world's beauty, particularly noting the intricate details of hummingbird feathers.

Upon her arrival, Jumpin' engages in light conversation, intrigued by Kya's travel plans to Greenville to meet her editor. However, the conversation takes a grave turn when Jumpin' notices and inquires about the bruises on Kya's face—remnants of an assault by Chase almost a month prior. Despite her initial attempt to deflect with a common excuse, Kya confesses the truth to Jumpin', revealing it was indeed Chase who hurt her. This marked a significant moment for Kya, as she had not admitted this to anyone before. The acknowledgment of her vulnerability and Jumpin's concern reflects a deep trust between them. Jumpin' reacts with a mix of anger and protectiveness, suggesting retribution against Chase for his actions.

This chapter delicately explores themes of trust, vulnerability, and the complexities of human connections against the backdrop of Kya's isolated existence and her deep bond with nature. It also touches on the impact of violence and the support that comes from unexpected places, showcasing Jumpin's protective stance towards Kya despite the quiet, reserved nature of their relationship.