

## 20. July 4

On July 4, 1961, Kya, donning a now snug peach chiffon dress, ventured barefoot to the lagoon, sitting on a log, her eyes scanning the waters for Tate's boat amidst a sweltering heat. The day wore on slowly, marked by stifling humidity and the distant hope of seeing Tate. Kya intermittently cooled herself with lagoon water, all the while engrossed in the books left by him. As the sun lingered overhead, she found respite against a tree's base, later retreating swiftly to her shack for a quick meal, anxious not to miss Tate's arrival.

The absence of Tate's boat, coupled with a growing swarm of mosquitoes, highlighted the day's oppressive atmosphere. Dusk turned into night without a sign of him. Kya, seeking solace, shed her dress and swam in the serene, dark waters, emerging only when the moon hid its face. The following days morphed into a continuous cycle of waiting, heat, and disappointment as hope for Tate's appearance gradually faded. The lagoon's vibrant yet decaying essence offered a stark backdrop to Kya's growing despondency.

Intrigued by the night's natural ambiance, Kya observed the fireflies' mating rituals. Recalling her brother Jodie's explanations, she noted the distinct flashing patterns each species used to attract mates, reflecting on the simplistic beauty of their communication. However, a startling behavior caught her attention: a female firefly altering its signal to lure and then consume a male of another species. This ruthless act of deception among the firefly's dance of light sparked a poignant moment of realization for Kya, underscoring the intricate dance of attraction and danger in the natural world, paralleling her own wait for Tate amidst the mingling scents of life and decay at the lagoon's edge.