

22. Same Tide

In 1965, at nineteen, Kya observes her childhood peers on Point Beach from a distance, feeling isolated yet longing for connection. The narrative describes an incident where Kya, dubbed "the Marsh Girl," hides from the group that includes Chase Andrews, a figure she's observed from afar and who briefly acknowledges her presence. The next day, Kya returns to the beach, hoping to see them again, especially Chase, but finds solitude instead.

Kya's life is portrayed as one of deep loneliness, punctuated by brief moments of connection with nature and the odd social interaction. Her solitary existence is highlighted by her avoidance of the beach where her peers gather, driven instead to the marsh's solitude. The rare instances when she ventures out, such as her visits to Jumpin's wharf, underline her struggle between the desire for social bonds and her habitual retreat into solitude.

Chase Andrews eventually approaches Kya at Jumpin's wharf, initiating a conversation that leads to an invitation for a picnic. This moment is crucial for Kya, offering her a glimmer of hope for social interaction and possibly more. Despite her hesitation and conditioned fear of rejection stemming from being labeled "marsh trash," she accepts Chase's invitation, hinting at the deep-seated human need for connection and acceptance.

The narrative also touches on Kya's practice of reciting poetry, reflecting her inner life and connection to nature. This hobby offers her a temporary escape from her isolation, showcasing the depth of her character and her ability to find solace in the beauty of language and nature.

The chapter concludes with a poignant reminder of Kya's abandoned friendship with Tate, her first and perhaps most significant connection. Tate's return and observation of Kya, unbeknownst to her, introduce a layer of missed opportunities and unspoken connections that persist despite the passage of time.