

## 27. Out Hog Mountain Road

Chapter 27 of the book takes place in 1966 and unfolds along Hog Mountain Road, where Kya and Chase share a special breakfast, marking nearly a year of being together. Chase, revealing plans for their future, mentions building a house for Kya, indicating a level of commitment that takes Kya by surprise and fills her with a sense of belonging and hope for a family life she has long craved. Despite her reservations, stemming from her isolated life in the marsh and the differences in their social backgrounds, Chase assures her of his parents' acceptance.

Their relationship progresses to a point where Chase invites Kya on a trip to Asheville, presenting it as an opportunity for Kya to explore beyond the familiar confines of the marsh and experience new sights, including the grandeur of the Appalachian Mountains. This trip symbolizes a significant departure for Kya, both geographically and emotionally, as she navigates the unfamiliar territory of a bustling town and the complexities of intimacy and trust in her relationship with Chase.

However, the trip also brings to light the challenges and disillusionments in their relationship. The motel experience marks their first physical intimacy, which is far from the idyllic moments they shared in the natural settings of the marsh, laying bare the reality of their relationship compared to Kya's romanticized expectations.

Back at the shack, the narrative dives deeper into the complexities of Kya and Chase's relationship, highlighting the limitations and exclusions Kya faces, particularly in participating in Chase's social life. Chase's excuses for not introducing Kya into his social circles further isolate her, making her question the authenticity of his promises and their future together.

The chapter takes a dramatic turn with the unexpected arrival of Tate, Kya's first love, who confronts her with shocking revelations about Chase's fidelity. Tate's re-entry into Kya's life reopens old wounds and forces Kya to confront her feelings of betrayal and abandonment, while also offering a glimpse of reconciliation and redemption as Tate expresses deep regret for his past actions.

Tate's proposal to help Kya publish her detailed natural studies not only recognizes the value of her work but also hints at the possibility of independence and a life beyond the confines of her relationship with Chase and the marsh. This chapter weaves together themes of love, betrayal, growth, and the search for belonging, as Kya navigates the complexities of her relationships against the backdrop of the natural world she cherishes.