

Chapter Thirty-Eight

In this haunting chapter, the narrator describes a chilling scene marked by a stark contrast between life and death. The landscape is littered with dead crows—thirty-two in a precise formation—as a result of a crow hunt. The air is frigid, each breath a painful reminder of the cold. The crows, now lifeless, are arranged in number formations, creating a macabre image reminiscent of a child's math homework. The feathers and vacant eyes of the birds evoke a deep sense of loss, and the narrator reflects on the communal experience of the crows, sensing that they may represent more than just individual lives, but rather a single entity dividing itself across many forms.

As the narrator walks through the scene, they count the crows displayed by each kill—57, 82, 154—each number a stark reminder of mortality. The thought of the crows flying overhead, potentially observing the bleak aftermath of the hunt, leads to introspection. The narrator recalls Dr. Cornell's insight that crows mourn their dead, which raises the unsettling question of whether these birds comprehend the slaughter of their own kind. This contemplation deepens the emotional impact of the hunt; the narrator finds themselves disturbed not solely by the act itself but by the way the bodies are arranged, creating a morbid spectacle.

There is a complex layering of emotions at play—fear, sorrow, and a poignant reflection on death. The imagery of the dead crows spirals into thoughts of girls in a crawl space, heightening the sense of perversion in the scene—a reminder of other lost lives and the unresolved traumas associated with them. The chapter encapsulates a profound meditation on mortality, community, and the sometimes painful intersection of existence and violence, compelling the reader to confront the uncomfortable truths of death's broader implications.