

Chapter Thirty-Seven

In the early hours of a cold Saturday morning at 6:45 A.M., the narrator finds themselves next to a frosty field, ready to interview hunters dressed in camouflage, armed with loaded weapons. The temperature is a brisk 34 degrees, and they reflect on the choices that led them to this situation. Their crow column hinges on this first crow hunt, initiated by their inquiry to Dr. Cornell, a bird expert. The discussion centers around another town's unsuccessful attempts to control a troubling crow population – a staggering estimated fifty thousand. Dr. Cornell notes that despite the community's desire for action, sporadic hunts will fail to make a significant difference in the crows' numbers or migration patterns.

The narrator discovers an alternative approach from another town, which embraced its crow problem by establishing a festival celebrating the birds, transforming the situation into a tourist attraction rather than a hunt. This innovative strategy piques the narrator's interest, questioning the effectiveness of the current crow hunt.

Liam, present with the narrator, reveals that his father expressed a desire for them to bond over hunting, a tradition he himself isn't keen on. He understands his father's intent but admits he finds little joy in the idea of hunting crows, stating his fondness for them instead. Their conversation reveals a generational gap and differing perspectives on traditional practices.

As they discuss potential interviewees at the hunt, the narrator's mind drifts to Joe and Juniper, anxious about Joe's involvement in the hunt. When Liam notices the change in her demeanor, he offers a comforting gesture but she deflects, insisting she is fine and does not like guns. Liam's concern grows, leading him to advise caution as they part ways.

Despite the hunters being generally uninterested in the impact of their actions on the crow population, they eagerly engage with the narrator. However, upon hearing gunshots, the narrator becomes increasingly unsettled, wishing for a more positive town celebration instead of the grim reality of the hunt, pondering how they could transform the entire town into one of Juniper's notes for the crows, longing for a better exchange for their efforts.