

Chapter XXXI

In Chapter XXXI, the narrator searches frantically for a silver happy birthday pen amidst chaos, only to find it's missing. Will Junior is in the back bedroom, arguing with Carlene, who yells at him for messing with her blankets. The narrator observes two police officers approach the trailer through the rain, prompting immediate fear and urgency. They lock the front door and barricade it with a chair, hoping for an escape route.

Rushing through the trailer, the narrator encounters Fish, who is struggling emotionally in the bathroom, and Bobbi, who is rummaging through the washer and dryer. Fish eventually joins the narrator and Bobbi in Carlene's bedroom. As tensions rise, Carlene becomes unmanageable, screaming for help. To quell her shouts, Bobbi uses Bubble Tape gum to silence Carlene, who retaliates with flailing limbs and kicks. The narrator quickly draws a face on Carlene's foot with the pen once it is retrieved from Will, seeking answers about their missing brother, Samson.

Carlene's defiance continues as she attempts to shout for help. Nevertheless, the narrator persists, questioning Carlene about Samson's whereabouts. A newfound voice, presumably belonging to Samson, echoes through the narrator's mind, saying he is "in the wall." As the urgency peaks with police banging on the door, the narrator discovers uneven panels in the wall and manages to slide one open after some effort.

Inside, they find Samson nestled among clutter, blissfully drawing on himself with a pen. His doodles fill the narrator's thoughts with noise and colors, a chaotic but joyful representation of his inner world. They embrace, relieved to have found him, but their moment is short-lived as Carlene emerges threateningly with a broom.

The chapter captures the urgent, chaotic atmosphere as the family navigates the threat of the police and the unpredictable nature of Carlene, all while trying to unite and protect Samson.