

Chapter XXXVII

In Chapter XXXVII, the narrative unfolds around the protagonist's family life after a traumatic event involving Poppa, who is gradually recovering from an accident that left its marks on his memory and demeanor. As the protagonist turns fourteen on a bright spring day, the unfolding scene is infused with warmth and nostalgia. Momma prepares a cake—a reminder of a year earlier when the cake held more significance to the protagonist, though now it feels overshadowed by deeper experiences.

The protagonist and Poppa share a moment on their porch swing, which symbolizes comfort and connection. Their swing, while not grand or beautiful, represents the best of their home, infused with love and belonging. The scene is lively with interactions among family members: Grandpa Bomba dreams on a chair, while Fish watches over their younger sister, Gypsy, who engages in her whimsical antics with dandelions.

Poppa's ongoing recovery is emphasized; although he struggles with memory loss, this day is significant since he recognizes the protagonist, providing a moment of joy amidst uncertainty. Fish provides playful pushes to the swing, and Momma, busy in the kitchen, checks in on the family, revealing that Rocket, the older brother, is preparing to leave for a summer with Uncle Autry. Rocket's decision to leave is tinged with sadness, marking a change in the family dynamics as he grapples with his identity and abilities following the incident at Salina Hope Hospital.

Amid the lighthearted exchanges, the protagonist reflects on her own development and the friendships she has formed, particularly with Will and Bobbi, who are now integral to her life. Despite the anticipated changes, a secret looms—a potential new addition to the family, hinted at by Momma's writing a recipe on her hand, often forgotten amidst the everyday chaos.

The chapter ends on a contemplative note, suggesting quietude for now, with the protagonist wishing her savvy could manifest her happiness externally. Overall, this chapter encapsulates themes of resilience, familial love, and the profound but often unspoken complexities of growing up within a vibrant and ever-evolving household.