

Chapter 14

Chapter 14 opens with Phoebe returning an outfit borrowed from Lila's mother, Patricia, before a bachelorette party. Patricia, surprised by the return, directs Phoebe to place the clothes near the raven sculptures that decorate her room. The presence of the ravens adds an eerie atmosphere, and Patricia half-jokingly suggests that they represent all that has been lost in her life. Although Patricia clearly desires privacy, Phoebe senses the loneliness in her presence and feels compelled to offer companionship. Despite the tension, Phoebe can't ignore her instincts and initiates a conversation, sensing a deeper need for connection in Patricia's life.

Their conversation begins with Phoebe thanking Patricia for the clothes and mentioning her visit to Patricia's gallery, praising the impressive collection of artists it has showcased over the years. Patricia opens up about her passion for art, mentioning her love for both living and deceased artists. She humorously discusses her collection, which includes Hudson River School paintings and a Warhol piece, but the discussion soon takes a more somber turn. Patricia begins to connect art with death, revealing her discomfort with the "death paintings" hanging over her bed, which represent the constant reminder of loss in her life. This dialogue about art and its intersection with personal grief becomes an insightful moment for both women, as they reflect on the presence of death in their lives, both symbolically and literally.

As the conversation continues, Patricia shares a drink with Phoebe, an elderberry hibiscus margarita, and reflects on her current situation. She confesses her feelings of being trapped in the chaos of Lila's wedding preparations, expressing how Lila's restrictions have stifled her freedom and sense of autonomy. The conversation naturally shifts to Patricia's relationship with her daughter, Lila, where she admits that their bond was once much stronger before grief and emotional distance took hold. Patricia's sense of loss is not only tied to her husband but also to the deterioration of

her relationship with Lila. This discussion about family dynamics reveals how personal grief and unresolved emotions affect connections between loved ones. Patricia's vulnerable sharing about her relationship with Lila shows how loss, both emotional and physical, shapes familial bonds and affects her sense of self.

The deeper the conversation goes, the more intimate the topics become, with Patricia offering her wisdom about love, aging, and loss. She recalls her tumultuous marriage to Henry and the profound pain of losing him, reflecting on how love transforms as one ages. Patricia expresses regret that Lila, much like herself, seeks validation from men, warning her that true love and self-acceptance can only come through experiencing and processing loss, not through seeking replacements. This insight comes from Patricia's own hard-earned wisdom, and she shares it with Phoebe in the hope of guiding her away from making similar mistakes. Their discussion about love, loss, and self-worth speaks to the complexities of relationships, particularly in the context of generational struggles with identity and validation.

As the chapter continues, the conversation shifts toward acceptance of aging and the lessons that come with it. Patricia urges Phoebe to embrace her true self, advising her not to conform to societal expectations or the persona others may expect her to be. Patricia's reflections on her own choices about style and identity emphasize the importance of personal authenticity over external validation. This chapter beautifully portrays the evolving relationship between Patricia and Phoebe, as they connect on a deeper emotional level, sharing stories of love, regret, and the complexities of their respective familial bonds. Through their intimate exchange, both women begin to understand the importance of accepting themselves as they are, moving away from the societal pressures that have shaped their past choices.