

## 28. The Last Love

In "The Last Love," Anna Morse, the owner of Morse's Funeral Home, grapples with the burdens of her work and the emotional weight following her husband's death three years prior. She contemplates leaving Linfield, Pennsylvania, yet remains tethered by her reliable worker, Nate Timblin, who helps her with repairs and brings friendship. On Memorial Day weekend, Anna is in good spirits as no one has died yet. However, she is concerned about a leak in her building that threatens the sanctity of her mortuary—a thought that unnerves her as it could disrupt a viewing.

As Anna drives to pick up Nate, she senses something is off with him, sensing a quietness that she tries to break through with casual conversation. Nate brushes off her concerns and mentions plans to stay overnight at Hemlock Row, hinting at a clandestine visit to his nephew, embroiled in troubling circumstances. Anna offers to leave him to work on the leak while she visits her cousin in Reading, but Nate insists on working alone.

Later, as Nate completes the repairs, he recalls past trauma and prepares to meet with Miggy, who is supposed to help him escape from his past. Meanwhile, Miggy is left waiting for him, worried that he has been caught and delayed. Introduced into this developing tension is Bullis, who delivers coffee and eggs to Pennhurst and finds himself unexpectedly caught in conflict with Son of Man, a menacing figure.

In a startling climax, Bullis confronts Son of Man, leading to a physical altercation that wraps Nate into the narrative. Here, a figure from Nate's past emerges, intertwining with his present struggles. Released from a metaphorical and physical prison, Nate confronts his demons, ultimately leading to a tragic act of violence as he attempts to save a boy and redeem himself.

The chapter weaves themes of community, survival, and the haunting legacy of one's past, encapsulated in the lives of people striving for justice and redemption in an unforgiving world.