

# Chapter 102

In Chapter 102 of "All the Colors of the Dark," we meet Walter Strike, a man bearing the marks of history and personal loss, as he walks with Patch. He carries a cane and a limp, sharing the saga of his ancestors—those who fought in the Revolutionary War and a secessionist government advocating for fierce independence. As they stroll amidst the picturesque backdrop of Virginia's mountains, Walter reflects on a time when he believed they could rely solely on themselves.

Walter shares painful memories of his daughter, Eloise, who went missing at fifteen. The frustration with law enforcement lingers in his voice as he recounts how they dismissed Eloise's youth, treating her as an adult. Engaged in conversation, they pass a woman speaking in the vibrant Gullah language, highlighting the cultural richness around them—a stark contrast to Walter's haunting memories. Patch listens attentively, trying to piece together Grace's story from fragments of recollections and missing pieces.

The narrative unfolds at Middleton Place, a plantation along the Ashley River, where elegance starkly contrasts Walter's sorrow. He recounts the day Eloise vanished and how the search led to murky black water swamps. Standing by a gazebo, they observe a happy couple taking pictures, and it becomes painfully clear that Walter will never witness his daughter's wedding or share in her joy.

Walter's son, Coop, lost his path after Eloise's disappearance, opting for a quiet life as a librarian, suggesting the profound effect of loss on familial bonds. As the day dwindles, Patch's unease surfaces when Walter prompts an acknowledgment of goodbyes, prompting reflective thoughts on the many haunting faces of the missing Patch has seen in his life's work.

Walter's poignant words resonate deeply—they are left with the harsh reality that while the world may not be enough to aid in their search, their individual stories remain significant. The conclusion of their day together reinforces the importance of connection amidst grief, leaving Patch with a lasting impression of Walter's struggle and the shared humanity in their experiences of loss and remembrance.