

Chapter 170

In Chapter 170 of "All the Colors of the Dark," the narrative unfolds as a new semester begins, with Patch sorting through mail and reflecting on Charlotte's discomfort with her sneakers. He discovers an envelope that catches his attention. By midday, they are traveling along Route 63, having removed Charlotte from school, while an office staff member watches them with a sense of concern. Charlotte gazes out, taking in the landscape, especially as they cross Jefferson City and the Missouri River.

During a stop for lunch in Columbia, Charlotte expresses her aspirations of being a writer and attending Harvard, a nod to her mother's past. Their conversation turns somewhat humorous yet poignant, revealing feelings about Charlotte's unplanned existence. After some escapades, including a bout of nausea during their travels, they arrive in Minneapolis and search for a house that seems abandoned.

That night, Patch, seeking connection, calls Saint in the bathroom, revealing his uncertainty about their situation and the girl they are searching for. He mentions finding a letter that hints at another possible lead, referencing a missing girl named Rosie. Saint expresses her disapproval of Charlotte being out of school, and Patch takes a reflective stance, contemplating the nature of his pursuit for missing individuals, likening them to flickering lights that he strives to reach but often find extinguished.

Their conversation grows deeper, touching on the complexities and emotional burdens they carry from the past, including Patch's feelings of guilt and the impact of his actions on Charlotte. Saint challenges Patch's motivations and choices, pointing out the possible roots of his survivor's guilt as he pulls Charlotte into his chaotic search for absolution. As they exchange intimate thoughts, an underlying strain of regret and reflection runs through their discourse, resonating starkly as Patch perceives his daughter under the moonlight, emphasizing their complicated relationship and its intersections with their pasts.

The chapter closes on a quiet note, with Patch contemplating the emotional chasms between himself and Saint, reflecting on why she never painted him, a question that lingers in the silence they share.