

Chapter 161

In Chapter 161 of "All the Colors of the Dark," the narrative unfolds during a crisp morning when Patch answers the Meyers' phone, learning that Charlotte has cut school. He takes it upon himself to cover for her, informing her teacher she has fallen ill. He sets out through Monta Clare to locate her, maintaining a sense of calm as he sends Sammy to search higher up the streets.

Patch eventually discovers Charlotte alone by the lake, where she is engaged in the quiet act of stripping leaves from a sunflower and floating them onto the water. They exchange a greeting, and Patch shares a nostalgic admission: he used to skip school in the same way at her age. However, Charlotte insists she's not cutting but has made a deliberate choice, asserting her autonomy with, "It's not prison." Their conversation reveals a deeper tension as Patch probes her feelings about her mother, perhaps hinting at a fear she may harbor.

Charlotte defends her mother's beauty and questions Patch's presence in their lives, stating that her mother chose him, a fact that seems to baffle her. Patch reflects on his past struggles, narrating how his poverty made him hard to love, a truth Charlotte echoes bluntly. When the conversation turns philosophical, Patch asks if she believes in God, and she denies it, creating a rift of understanding between them.

Charlotte's emotional charge culminates in a painful declaration: she will never accept Patch as a father, emphasizing her refusal to show any affection or connection towards him. Patch acknowledges her sentiments but offers little in response. Their exchange highlights the stark realities of their relationship dynamic—Charlotte's resentment and independence juxtaposed with Patch's longing for connection. After their confrontation, Charlotte walks toward home, and Patch remains behind, choosing to follow at a distance, both protective and respectful of her space, aware of the emotional threshold that remains unbridged between them.