

Chapter 187

In Chapter 187 of "All the Colors of the Dark," Patch reflects on his surroundings from a tall, narrow window in the prison, which resembles a flipped letterbox. His limited view captures vast stretches of prison land and a distant water tower, conjuring images of the world beyond, filled with voices discussing contemporary events. He imagines conversations about Monica Lewinsky, Hillary Clinton's struggles, economic talks around the Dow, school shootings, and natural disasters—showing a world teeming with life outside his confinement.

This prison is the third oldest in America, with a history embedded in its cracked stone walls and unsettling dust. From his vantage, Patch observes new prison construction, contrasting the old with the emerging structures as heavy machinery works relentlessly. Each day, after the laborers finish their shifts, they travel back to civilian life, where the mundane act of cleansing themselves takes on deep significance for Patch, knowing their freedom starkly contrasts with his imprisonment.

Despite the passage of time in confinement, Patch's routines remain largely unchanged. He rises early to manage his daily tasks, including responsibilities at the prison library—his intellectual haven. He's been dedicated to building the library's art reference section while promoting self-help and therapy texts for fellow inmates. The library, filled with four thousand books and a strict operational framework, offers a temporary escape from harsh realities.

A librarian named Cooper arrives, engaging in light banter and sharing grievances about the construction dust en route to work. Their camaraderie builds over the months, culminating in Patch sending a significant letter to Warden Riley, seeking change after enduring 513 days in prison.

Eventually, one day after lunch, Patch faces the inevitable as he's summoned from his cell by Blackjack, a towering guard known for his intimidating presence. Their conversation hints at a bond, with Blackjack inquiring about his daughter's school project—an interaction that humanizes the otherwise stern atmosphere of the prison. Despite humor woven into their dialogue, Blackjack remains perplexed about Patch's questionable past, illustrating the ongoing complexity of relationships formed in constrained circumstances .