

Chapter 196

In Chapter 196 of "All the Colors of the Dark," Patch stands outside Tooms's cell, faced with a heavy sheet obscuring the view inside. Rather than confront his own misdeeds, Tooms has isolated himself. The oppressive heat of nearly a hundred degrees mirrors the intensity of the situation. Patch glances back, noticing Blackjack retreating to the cooler comfort of the captain's office.

Patch begins to recount memories of a remarkable woman who profoundly impacted his life. He describes her brilliance, recalling her ability to take him from darkness and reveal a vibrant world filled with knowledge and wonder. She could recite poems and stories, sharing extraordinary facts, such as prairie dogs kissing and ghost crabs producing noises with their stomach teeth. Her knowledge extended to koala fingerprints, which are so similar to humans that they could contaminate a crime scene. Ricky Nelson interrupts, humorously asserting that it was the koala responsible for the alleged crime, provoking laughter among onlookers.

Patch reflects on her kindness, lamenting the scarcity of such traits in the world. Despite the police's skepticism regarding the veracity of his memories—suggesting they were fabricated—Patch remains steadfast in his connection to her. He longs to reclaim the part of her he holds in his heart, pleading with Tooms to reveal her identity and the location of her burial. He emphasizes that, despite his confinement, Tooms has the power to provide him this vital information.

As Blackjack taps his stick against metal, signaling impatience or acknowledgment, Patch, on his way back, hands a copy of Alice Walker's *The Color Purple* to Howie Goucher in cell two. He promises to cherish it and share tales of the protagonist, Celie. The chapter concludes with a sense of quiet as Howie is later led away, marking a poignant moment of reflection on loss and memory amidst the harsh realities of prison life.