

Chapter 216

In Chapter 216 of "All the Colors of the Dark," the narrative revolves around Saint and Charlotte as they clear land for a new project. During a long weekend, they labor intensely under the sun, tackling the roots of mountain laurel, witch hazel, and wild blueberry. Their diligent work is punctuated by breaks for meals, where they enjoy beans, ham hocks, and cornbread, which Charlotte has perfected. The atmosphere is influenced by the memories of Norma, especially as they are accompanied by the background hum of Charlotte's bees.

On a key Sunday, an arborist arrives to cut down several oak trees, providing his services for free in exchange for timber. Saint offers him butter cake, which frustrates Charlotte, who had intended to use every crumb. Afterward, they continue their efforts, clearing a thirty-by-thirty section in preparation for the studio that Sammy's contractor is set to lay foundations for in a week. Initially hesitant, Charlotte eventually acknowledges her desire for a personal creative space.

Charlotte often expresses her feelings about Norma, noting how time and distance impact their grief. She and Saint reflect on the nature of prayer, suggesting that it serves more as a reminder of what truly matters rather than a request for divine intervention. The chapter captures moments of humor, like when Charlotte playfully calls a fallen tree her 'bitch,' contrasting with more somber reflections.

As the evening approaches, the land is finally clear enough for machinery to arrive. However, tranquility is disrupted when Saint discovers what appears to be a multitude of bones in the ground. The discovery correlates with the unsettling arrival of Officer Michaels, who ominously announces that a murder has occurred nearby, shifting the day's labor into a focus on a darker reality that looms over the community. This chapter blends themes of creation and destruction, encapsulating both the struggles of clearing land for new beginnings and the haunting echoes of the past.