

Chapter 238

Patch struggled to find rest after the preceding events, feeling as if each moment on the bus stretched into eternity, with an empty stomach as his companion. During a stop at Rowan Bridge, a woman caught his gaze, leaving him momentarily unnerved; he almost considered disembarking in Birmingham. However, he managed to stay composed, choosing to wait alone through the hour, the warmth of the night lingering as the driver kept the window down.

As dawn approached, Patch gathered his small bag and exited the bus into the fresh Alabama air. The early morning ambiance was punctuated by the slow movement of cars until they vanished over a nearby hill, engulfed in semi-darkness, with a full moon still visible as the sun prepared to rise in the east.

Montgomery, the river city, greeted him with its white dome of the state capitol standing prominently. The streets soon filled with the bustling sounds of morning workers as Patch took his final bus ride from the city. Leaning back against the seat rest, he aimed to catch a moment of peace. Eventually, he stepped off the bus, retrieved his map, and inhaled deeply as he set out to cover the remaining distance on foot.

Upon reaching his destination, he paused to touch the lettering on the sign: "Grace Falls." This moment felt significant, bridging all his previous experiences with the anticipation of what lay ahead.