

Chapter 108

Chapter 108 of *All the Colors of the Dark* delves into Patch's life as he navigates through a difficult phase following the chaotic incident at the Merchants National Bank. In an attempt to put his past behind him, Patch sells his car, finding it necessary to cut ties with material possessions that once defined him. Instead, he takes on early morning work, hauling freight and loading frozen meat into trucks, seeking solace in the physicality of the task. His life is now confined to an old, worn-down house, where he rents a room from an elderly landlady, paying in cash upfront. Although she seems to know about his troubled past, there are no questions asked, and Patch accepts this unspoken acknowledgment. This quiet existence marks a stark contrast to the once chaotic and erratic life he led, with each day blending into the next, leading him into a quiet isolation that he is learning to accept.

As the days pass, Patch creates a sanctuary for himself within his small, dimly lit room. He blocks out the light from the streetlamps outside, pulling the shades tight to eliminate all distractions. This environment, stripped of light and excess, becomes a space where he can find some peace, though the solitude is not without its emotional cost. The absence of chaos allows him to rest, but it also brings with it the realization that his dreams of a particular woman are becoming less frequent. This shift disturbs him, as the woman, once a constant in his thoughts, now fades into the background of his mind. Patch's inner turmoil deepens as he grapples with the loss of something once so vivid and important, unsure of whether it signifies healing or the painful erosion of a connection that once felt vital.

During his monotonous days at work, Patch crosses paths with several university students, particularly girls who seem strangely familiar to him. Their interactions are brief, often only superficial exchanges that leave him feeling disappointed and unfulfilled. These girls, tired of their predictable college lives, seem to momentarily

connect with Patch, yet the encounters are fleeting, and he slips away before the first light of dawn. The loneliness of these brief meetings weighs heavily on him, as he finds it impossible to find anything of real substance or lasting emotional connection. These moments emphasize the growing isolation in his life and highlight how disconnected he feels from those around him, reinforcing the idea that his search for deeper meaning or companionship is being met with rejection or, at best, fleeting, superficial relationships.

After spending a month in this cycle of work and fleeting encounters, Patch accepts a job at a Gloucester marina, working with lobster traps. The work is physically demanding, but it provides him with a purpose, as he spends his days cleaning and measuring the traps amid the quiet, expansive backdrop of the sea. The peace of the setting contrasts with the physicality of the labor, offering Patch a strange sense of solace. As he works alongside the crew, he finds camaraderie, particularly with Skip, a more experienced member who takes him under his wing. Skip becomes a mentor of sorts, guiding Patch through the intricacies of the work. Despite the crew's playful teasing about his eye patch, Patch embraces their jests, finding comfort in their acceptance. The camaraderie provides him with a small sense of belonging, something he has longed for but has been unable to find in his previous encounters with others.

At night, as the crew winds down and the boat drifts into a peaceful rhythm, Patch seeks solace in solitude, choosing to stay behind with a beer in hand, gazing at the sunset as it sinks beneath the horizon. The beauty of the moment offers him a fleeting sense of tranquility, a temporary escape from the emotional weight that still hangs over him. Eventually, exhausted from his labor, Patch falls asleep on the beach, his shirt serving as a makeshift pillow beneath his head. The exhaustion from the day's work settles over him, but even as he rests, his mind remains unsettled. He eats little, surviving on the meager provisions Skip provides, but his focus is on the journey that still awaits him—one that is not just physical, but emotional. His mind drifts back to the woman who haunts his thoughts, the unresolved feelings he carries, and the way they continue to shape his present life. Patch knows that the road ahead will not be easy, and while he may be physically worn out from his labor, it is the emotional toll of his

past that continues to weigh heavily on him.