

Chapter 181

Chapter 181 of *All the Colors of the Dark* opens with Sister Cecile and Saint engaging in a quiet, reflective conversation while inspecting a set of rosary beads. These beads, made of cedar wood and black glass, are crafted by Sister Agnes, and they bear a medal of Mary Magdalene, a symbol of deep spiritual significance. As Sister Cecile examines them, she reflects on the nature of sin and forgiveness, noting how such sacred objects can serve as reminders of these heavy concepts. The conversation shifts when Saint, holding photographs of Eli Aaron, mentions Marty Tooms, prompting Sister Cecile to recall a figure from her past—Robert Peter Frederick, an altar boy who mysteriously disappeared, his death believed to be tied to a tragic incident.

Despite the gravity of Robert's disappearance, Sister Cecile remains composed, offering little emotional reaction to the sad news. Saint is further intrigued by the connection between the rosary beads and Robert, who, according to Sister Cecile, was a troubled young man. She learns that Robert's behavior was far from ideal during his time in the community, which had eventually led to his departure. Saint becomes increasingly curious about a particular incident where a woman, who had confessed to being unmarried and pregnant, was linked to Robert's story, and how her refusal to press charges played a role in his exit from the community. This quiet admission reveals a series of unspoken tensions and the complexities of dealing with moral dilemmas within a religious community, where the lines between right and wrong often become blurred.

As Saint reflects on these revelations, she connects Robert's story to Eli Aaron, a biblical figure known for his lack of control over his children, leading to divine punishment. Sister Cecile offers her interpretation of Eli's legacy, explaining how his neglectful parenting caused God to show wrath upon him and his family. Saint, now fully engaged in the narrative, begins to see the parallels between Eli's failure as a

father and the mysterious disappearances that continue to haunt the community, suggesting that Eli's influence may have cast a long shadow on many lives, including the ones she is now trying to unravel. The conversation shifts between the moral failings of the past and the lingering impact these figures have had on present lives, raising deep questions in Saint's mind about the unresolved tragedies that stretch across generations. As the discussion continues, she starts to form a clearer understanding of how past decisions, particularly those made by figures like Eli Aaron, have contributed to the brokenness in the community and beyond.

Just when Saint prepares to leave, she is halted by Sister Isabelle, who casually reveals a troubling detail—an individual had recently purchased a second set of similar beads. This revelation strikes Saint with a mixture of surprise and suspicion, prompting her to ask about the identity of this man. The conversation takes a darker turn when she learns that this man had died in a tragic and violent incident, an event that immediately draws her attention. Shocked and unsettled, Saint instinctively responds with a chilling confession: "I set him on fire," a statement that shocks both her and Sister Isabelle. This moment of realization is deeply unsettling, as Saint recognizes that the events of the past are inextricably linked to the present in ways she hadn't fully understood. The intensity of this confession serves as a reminder that the past never truly fades, and the actions of individuals can have lasting repercussions that haunt them in unexpected ways. The chapter ends with an eerie silence, as the weight of Saint's confession settles into the air, a reminder that the ghost of the past looms larger than she had imagined.

The exchange between Saint and Sister Isabelle deepens the emotional complexity of the story, as they both grapple with the weight of their past actions. Saint's realization that she has been tied to these events for far longer than she could have imagined is a stark reminder of the connection between past decisions and present consequences. As the chapter draws to a close, the implications of the unfolding mystery grow more unsettling, with Saint now forced to confront the ghosts of her past in a way that she had never expected. The lingering presence of these memories, coupled with the deeper understanding of their consequences, paints a dark portrait of a woman trying

to reconcile her past with the present, all while struggling with the mysteries that continue to unfold around her.