

# Chapter 185

Chapter 185 begins with Patch's abrupt awakening in a sterile, unfamiliar operating room, his mind racing with confusion and the feeling of having lost track of time. As his eyes struggle to focus, he realizes that he cannot recall the events of the past year, and this disorienting realization sends waves of anxiety through him. In a moment of fleeting hope, he imagines being able to reverse time and return to his hometown, reliving the simpler, less complicated days of his past. He longs for the comfort of his childhood memories—Misty Meyer and Chuck, his mother's quiet rest after her exhausting night shifts—wishing he could undo the mistakes that led him to this point, to a life that feels increasingly distant and out of his control. This longing for the past highlights his internal battle between the innocence of his earlier years and the painful consequences of his present existence.

As Patch attempts to ground himself, his gaze falls upon the starkness of the room, contrasting sharply with the faint beauty of the outside world visible through the windows. The treetops and the clear blue sky seem serene, but the sterile environment surrounding him feels foreign and cold, amplifying his sense of isolation. His focus shifts to the clinical details—the silver trolley beside him and the strange cluster of lights above—adding to the overwhelming sense that he is in an alien world, disconnected from everything familiar. He makes an attempt to stand, only to inadvertently send the trolley clattering across the floor, its noise a jarring reminder of his disarray and a sharp intrusion into the silence of the room. This chaotic noise mirrors the turmoil inside his mind, reflecting his emotional and mental disorientation in the face of the uncertainty surrounding him.

At this moment, a man seated at a white desk observes Patch's struggle and offers calm reassurance. He informs Patch that his daughter, along with Keeper Jen, is elsewhere, engaged in feeding meerkats, offering some comfort with the news of her

well-being. The man attributes Patch's fainting to the summer heat, which is common in the zoo due to dehydration and lack of proper sun protection, further painting a picture of Patch's fragile state. Although Patch attempts to explain that the fainting might have been caused by the presence of snakes, the man dismisses his theory, instead focusing on Patch's general health. This exchange adds a layer of detachment to the situation, as the man's tone lacks any humor, further increasing Patch's discomfort. The sense of unease grows as Patch realizes that while he is being tended to with care, he is still at the mercy of circumstances that feel entirely out of his control.

The conversation moves forward, with Patch expressing his concern about a slight headache, yet still unsure about the man's role in his recovery. When Patch finally asks if the man is a doctor, he learns that he is not, but instead works with animal care—an unexpected revelation that deepens his sense of disorientation. The man offers Patch a bottle of water and briefly mentions that the room must be cleared because a wolf is suffering from tuberculosis, a matter of pressing concern that momentarily shifts the focus back to the practicalities of the situation. As Patch struggles to make sense of his environment, his attention is drawn to the name on the door: "Jimmy Walters." This startling discovery brings a wave of recognition, though it leaves Patch with a sense of confusion about the man's connection to him. It's an unsettling moment, as the past, in the form of someone he has known, now re-enters his life in a context completely removed from the familiar. Patch's internal turmoil only deepens as he tries to reconcile the presence of a figure from his past with the strange, surreal circumstances he now finds himself in. The chapter ends on this note of uncertainty, leaving readers with a haunting sense of unresolved questions and emotional disarray that mirrors Patch's own confusion.