

Chapter 21

In Chapter 21 of "All the Colors of the Dark," the atmosphere is heavy with melancholia as Saint sits at the piano, playing Chopin while her grandmother, Norma, remains beside her in a rocking chair. The loss of Joseph Macauley weighs heavily on Saint, leading to a profound sense of grief that manifests in her eating and sleeping habits at school, where she often stares at the empty chair where Joseph once sat.

The chapter recounts a pivotal moment when Saint locks herself inside the kitchen, consumed by her thoughts about Joseph. Norma seeks help, leading them to Chief Nix, who discusses the situation with Doctor Tooms, the family physician linked to the troubling events. Although Tooms offers a sympathetic smile, the tension surrounding the case deepens, and Saint becomes fixated on observing the Tooms property with a spy telescope.

As the weeks progress, a reward announcement for information on the case grows to two thousand dollars, yet interest in Joseph's disappearance dwindles in the media. Meanwhile, Saint becomes aware of broader social issues as she reads about disturbing incidents, such as violence against women, and engages in discussions with Norma regarding women's rights and control over their own bodies. These conversations reveal the generational divide and differing perspectives on societal issues.

With summer fading into fall, Saint finds herself wandering the woods in a restless state, seemingly inviting danger, while Norma voices her concerns and suggests counseling. However, Saint dismisses the idea, struggling with her identity and physical appearance but detached from conventional standards.

The chapter also highlights the changing dynamics within the community, with Ivy Macauley, Joseph's mother, visibly shaken by her grief, and the impact of public events like Ronald Reagan's presidential campaign on Saint's outlook. The culmination of these experiences leaves her feeling a deep existential uncertainty as the world around her shifts, painting a vivid picture of loss and societal dynamics in her life.