

Chapter 89

Chapter 89 of *All the Colors of the Dark* opens with Saint completely engrossed in playing *Liebstraum* No. 3 on the piano. Her small hands glide over the keys with impressive speed and accuracy, reflecting her dedication and deep focus on perfecting the piece. Outside, the spring rain creates a reflective atmosphere, with the street becoming a mirror-like surface, its serenity punctuated by the blooming of white trillium. The setting adds to the introspective mood, as Saint becomes absorbed in her music, which harmonizes with the rain's gentle rhythm. The peaceful environment surrounds her, making the moment feel almost surreal, as though she is lost in a world of music and nature, where time slows and emotions flow freely. This tranquil moment, however, is soon interrupted by her grandmother, Norma, whose unexpected entrance signals a shift in the narrative.

As Saint reaches a particularly challenging section of the piece, Norma unexpectedly steps into the room and stands beside her. This intrusion is unusual, as Saint typically practices alone, making the moment feel all the more significant. Saint's attention is momentarily diverted to the large envelope Norma holds, which has a Hanover postmark—a detail that immediately piques her curiosity. Norma, adjusting her glasses nervously, stands at a distance, indicating that something important is inside the envelope. The visible anxiety in her posture and trembling hands reveals the weight of what she is about to share, which immediately captures Saint's full attention. It's clear that the letter contains news that is both exciting and nerve-wracking for Norma, adding an emotional layer to the moment. Saint, sensing the importance of this interruption, puts aside her music, preparing herself for whatever news is about to be revealed.

Norma's nervousness is palpable as she opens the envelope, and Saint gently encourages her to read the contents aloud. When the acceptance notification from Dartmouth is revealed, Norma's joy overflows, marking the culmination of years of hard work and sacrifice. The news is a significant moment for both of them, as it signifies the culmination of Norma's hopes for Saint's future. As Norma celebrates, Saint returns to the piano, playing with even greater passion. The intensity of her emotions is channeled into her music, with each strike of the keys echoing her inner turmoil and excitement. Her playing becomes a reflection of her own personal struggle, her deep connection to the music expressing everything that words cannot convey. The dual emotions of triumph and uncertainty mix together, captured in her thunderous performance, which serves as an emotional outlet during a time of change.

Norma, deeply moved by Saint's playing, offers her praise, but Saint, ever the perfectionist, is critical of her own performance. She feels that she lost her "counterweight" during the song, a subtle indication that something in her has shifted emotionally. The news of her acceptance to Dartmouth is both a triumph and a challenge—while it opens the door to new opportunities, it also brings the painful reality of leaving behind the only family she's known. The weight of the decision looms large over her, leaving Saint torn between her aspirations and her deep attachment to her grandmother. In this tender moment, Norma reassures her with affection, calling her a "silly girl," and emphasizes that she will always support her dreams, no matter where they take her. This reassurance brings some comfort to Saint, who still feels the tug of her roots, reluctant to leave the person who has been her steadfast support for so long.

Despite the joy of receiving such prestigious news, Saint admits to her reluctance to leave. She confesses that Norma is the only family she has ever known, and the thought of leaving her behind is almost unbearable. Norma, ever the optimist, counters Saint's sadness with a promise of celebration, suggesting they go out for ice cream at Lacey's Diner. This moment of lightheartedness offers a temporary escape from the heavy emotions that have been stirred up by the acceptance letter. Saint, feeling both the weight of the decision and the love of her grandmother, turns back to the piano with renewed determination. Her resolve to continue playing, despite the emotional turmoil, reflects her unyielding spirit and her unwillingness to give up on what lies ahead. This moment encapsulates the chapter's themes of ambition, love, and the bittersweet nature of personal growth. It highlights the emotional complexity of pursuing one's dreams while remaining deeply connected to the people who shape us.