

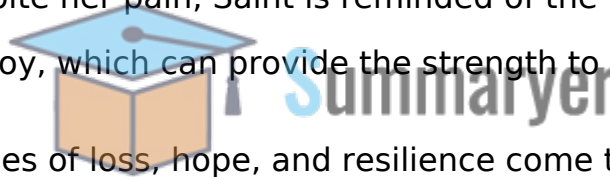
# Chapter 28

Chapter 28 of *All the Colors of the Dark* opens with Saint reflecting on the arrival of spring, a season that contrasts sharply with the dark emotions she feels. The cold, harsh winter still lingers in her memory, and as icicles begin to melt and goldenrods begin to bloom, Saint's thoughts drift back to Patch's birthday. She had feigned illness to avoid school that day, a memory now tied to her emotional battles. Her grandmother, Norma, had tried to cheer her up with ice cream and a jigsaw puzzle of Mount Rushmore, yet despite the attempts at comfort, Saint feels distanced from the innocence and carefree nature of her younger self. The beauty of the season seems lost on her as she grapples with the weight of her emotions, unable to fully embrace the positive change outside. Her struggle is not only against the cold of winter but also the emotional chill that lingers in her heart, a stark reminder of her unresolved grief.

One day, while waiting for the bus on Main Street, Saint meets Jimmy Walters, who notices her lack of a smile and expresses how much he misses it. Their brief conversation reveals the stark contrast in their outlooks on life. While Jimmy remains cheerful and unaffected by the hardships surrounding him, Saint feels burdened by her inner turmoil. As they ride the bus together, Saint's mind wanders to memories of Norma, who always worked tirelessly to keep their home in order, despite the strain of long hours and life's challenges. She recalls how Norma insisted on keeping the bus clean during their travels, a small yet significant act that symbolized her resilience and determination. For Saint, these memories stand as a poignant reminder of the simple acts of care and love that can sometimes go unnoticed but are deeply meaningful in their consistency.

As the journey continues, Saint captures the beauty of the landscapes through her camera lens, trying to capture fleeting moments of peace and normalcy in the midst of the turmoil she feels. Her thoughts, however, are interrupted by a sense of loss and

nostalgia, particularly when she mentions missing the familiar sound of bees buzzing in the warm summer air. This memory is a stark contrast to the current season, where the world seems still and frozen in time. During a picnic with Norma, their conversation deepens, and Saint expresses her grief over Patch's absence. She struggles to reconcile his disappearance with the mystery of the missing children in the town, fearing that something darker may be at play. Norma, ever the comforting presence, listens patiently and offers a reminder of the power of memories and laughter, even in difficult times. Despite her pain, Saint is reminded of the importance of holding on to these moments of joy, which can provide the strength to face the challenges ahead.



The chapter's themes of loss, hope, and resilience come to the forefront as Norma shares more stories about Patch, helping Saint feel connected to him even in his absence. These stories strengthen their bond, fostering a sense of understanding between the two, as they both navigate the complexities of life and loss. As the chapter draws to a close, Saint reflects on a conversation with Norma about the importance of making others smile, even in the midst of hardship. This exchange reinforces the idea that human connection and kindness can offer moments of respite in a world filled with uncertainty. Despite the emotional heaviness that looms over them, Saint finds solace in her grandmother's wisdom, realizing that even in a world full of pain, there is room for love, laughter, and shared memories. The chapter encapsulates the journey of emotional healing, highlighting how love and connection can be sources of strength in even the darkest of times.