

Chapter 75

Chapter 75 of *All the Colors of the Dark* opens with Patch arriving at the Meyer residence, greeted by the sight of Misty waiting for him near a broad, curved driveway that leads to a stately white colonial house. Misty's red dress, though modest, radiates a kind of youthful elegance that catches Patch off guard, stirring emotions he would rather keep buried. As he hands her a small bouquet of flowers, Misty smiles nervously and admits her mother has been concerned about the timing of his arrival. This seemingly small detail hints at the underlying tension and expectation within the household. When Mrs. Meyer appears at the door, tall and graceful with an air of authority, she greets Patch with a measured handshake and quickly takes on the role of host. As they walk toward the entrance, she engages him in a conversation about the rare plants growing in her garden, including a rare Japanese wisteria, revealing both her pride in maintaining the grounds and the unspoken social dynamics at play.

Inside, Patch is introduced to Mr. Meyer, whose impressive height and confident demeanor stand in contrast to his warm smile and hospitable tone. He welcomes Patch with a handshake that feels both polite and evaluative, as if measuring more than just grip strength. The house itself feels like a museum of curated success, with polished wood floors, heavy drapes, and elegant antique furnishings. As the five-course dinner begins, Patch feels the weight of the formal environment pressing in, especially as he tries to navigate the conversations around him. Misty's father opens a discussion on college football while Mrs. Meyer turns the topic toward Misty's recent foray into politics. They highlight her role in a local campaign as an early sign of ambition, painting a portrait of a young woman who is expected to succeed and represent the family's aspirations. Patch, while respectful, can't help but feel like an outsider in this carefully controlled world.

The meal continues with elegant silverware and dishes served in a rhythm that feels foreign to Patch, who is more accustomed to casual meals and simpler environments. The conversation around the table shifts to cultural milestones—ballet, literature, and classical music—prompting Patch to ask about Swan Lake. Mrs. Meyer, pleased by his interest, shares a story about attending a performance at Lincoln Center, her recollection laced with nostalgia and pride. Throughout the meal, Patch notices Misty glancing at him, offering small smiles that anchor him momentarily in the present. But despite the refined setting and warm food, his thoughts inevitably turn toward Grace—the girl who remains a ghost in his mind, occupying a place that no polite conversation can reach. Her absence feels even more profound in contrast to the material fullness around him. Patch's internal conflict intensifies, and although he's physically present, emotionally he's slipping into memories of loss and longing.

As dessert is served—an intricately prepared tart with fresh fruit and handmade whipped cream—Misty's mother brings up a scholarship opportunity, suggesting it could be a stepping stone for Misty's potential in law or politics. Misty's eyes meet Patch's, silently acknowledging the pressure placed upon her. While she politely agrees with her parents, Patch senses a hesitation, as though she is playing a part rather than speaking from her heart. When Misty offers a spirited rebuttal to her mother's opinion on a recent court decision, the room fills with laughter and mock tension. Patch admires her sharp wit and confidence, but again, he feels like a guest in a carefully scripted performance. Misty touches his arm under the table, a gesture that brings him back to reality for a fleeting moment. It's clear she wants him to be present, to belong, but Patch's mind still drifts.

As the evening winds down, Mr. Meyer walks him to the porch and politely thanks him for coming. Patch nods, offering his gratitude while inwardly reflecting on the emotional distance between himself and the world he has just stepped into. Misty joins him outside under the soft glow of the porch light, her red dress glowing faintly in the night. She thanks him for enduring the dinner and whispers that she hopes he felt welcomed. Patch smiles, but it's a fragile one, as he can't help but feel like an observer in someone else's well-rehearsed life. The warmth of the family, the beauty of the

home, even Misty's affection—all of it seems to exist in contrast to the emptiness he carries within. As he walks away, the air feels heavier, and Grace's absence grows louder in his mind, leaving him torn between two worlds—one filled with polished expectations, the other with unresolved grief.

