

Chapter 135

Chapter 135 begins with Patch walking through a town blanketed by heavy snow, his thoughts consumed by the difficulty of reintegrating into society after his release from a lengthy prison sentence. He avoids the bustling Main Street, breathing deeply as the chill bites into his chest. Reflecting on the preparations he made for his reentry, particularly his conversations with Terrence Roots, a fellow inmate who helped him understand the importance of mentorship and routine, Patch is still haunted by the memories of a lost love. While he acknowledges the advice given to him, he struggles with the emotional turmoil of the life he had to leave behind. His longing for the past pulls at him constantly, particularly the love that was lost, making it difficult for him to fully engage in the present.

Though he tries to maintain stability by performing daily tasks like clearing the driveway and preparing meals, Patch is still burdened by the weight of his past. Saint, his friend, helps by stocking his freezer with meals, while Sammy offers temporary companionship, often bringing over expensive cognac and sharing drinks. Despite their camaraderie, Patch's isolation is apparent as he navigates through the rhythms of life, feeling detached from the world around him. His first trip back to Main Street since his release brings mixed feelings of nostalgia and alienation, as he notices the changes in the town, which now feels unfamiliar and distant. The place that once felt like home now seems like a distant memory, and Patch can't shake the feeling that he no longer belongs.

In Sammy's gallery, Patch is confronted by paintings of women he recognizes from his past. The art, each piece representing a lost connection, pulls him back into memories of the past, evoking emotions that he cannot ignore. Anna May, Lucy Williams, Ellen Hernandez—each woman captured in the artwork stirs up fragments of Patch's memories, and Eloise Strike's gaze brings back the most vivid recollections of Grace,

the love he lost. As he spends time in the gallery, Patch's internal conflict deepens, and the art serves as a reminder of the heartache he cannot escape. Each painting reflects his unresolved grief, forcing him to confront the emotional distance he feels from both the past and the present.

Among the art, Patch uncovers a sack of letters from the parents of missing women, each one filled with desperate pleas for answers. The weight of these letters adds to the already heavy burden he carries, reminding him of the pain and loss that permeates not only his own life but the lives of those around him. The contrast between these letters and the art on display emphasizes the struggle of a community marked by grief and uncertainty. Patch empathizes with these families, feeling the echo of their anguish, while also wondering if closure is even possible. The lingering uncertainty of the past makes Patch question whether he can ever truly find peace or if he is destined to live with the shadows of what he cannot change.

The chapter concludes with Patch taking care of Sammy, tucking him into bed and draping a silk blanket over him. This quiet act of care stands in stark contrast to the emotional weight that Patch carries. As he reflects on Sammy's role in his life, Patch realizes that the past, though honored, cannot be altered. This chapter delves deep into Patch's internal struggle, as he faces the challenge of reconciling his memories with the reality of his present situation. His yearning for closure, for peace, is palpable, but the past continues to haunt him, making it clear that the question of whether he can ever move on remains unresolved.