

# Chapter 254

On a fine spring morning, Sammy stepped out onto Main Street after leaving the gallery. He shared a coffee with Mary Meyer, enjoying a comfortable silence filled with their newspapers. Sammy frowned at images of Carter and Castro while Mary read about a vast investigation led by the FBI and police chief Saint Brown, which spanned seventeen states. The investigation utilized interview transcripts from Joseph Macauley to uncover the life of Eli Aaron. Recently, authorities had found the last body in Pearl River County's Hemmsford Swampland, providing a small measure of closure for the families enduring years of anguish. Despite this grave discovery, no mention of Grace had surfaced in any reports, a glaring absence for Sammy.

Mary remarked, "Justice is served," to which Sammy replied, "And it only took three decades." Their conversation turned reflective as Mary posed a question about belief in karma. This prompted Sammy to respond, "More so each day," hinting at a growing sense of moral balance in their world.

The tone was lightened when Mary commented on Sammy's romanticism, prompting him to recall her father's face. This question about life choices often intrigued Mary; she frequently asked, "If you had your time over..." But Sammy only smiled, never offering a definitive answer. Eventually, he joked about dismissing the elders of her family, saying he would leave behind the Rothko painting in favor of a life filled with something far more beautiful.

As they continued to read, Mary turned the page, noting a listing for that evening's entertainment. Sammy planned to take her to the newly reopened Palace 7, where they would enjoy a showing of Cleopatra. The moment hinted at romance and connection, as he envisioned taking her hand, knowing she would welcome the gesture without hesitation.