

Chapter 233

Chapter 233 opens with Saint storming into a dark room, urgently waking Deputy Michaels from uneasy sleep. She insists that he immediately call U.S. District Judge Mark Cully and notify the Attorney General's office. Her voice trembles not from fear but from the mounting pressure of time. Marty Tooms's life, she warns, hangs by a thread. Michaels rubs his eyes, groggy, struggling to comprehend the emergency as Saint paces furiously, explaining that Tooms is innocent and will be executed unless they act. Although the clock is working against them, she refuses to accept defeat, pressing Michaels to move faster.

Outside, the early morning air is thick with tension as Saint speeds away from the station, her hands tightly gripping the steering wheel. Every mile she drives pulls her deeper into the urgency of the situation, and the weight of her responsibility gnaws at her. The phone on the seat beside her rings repeatedly, but the jammed network means calls can't go through. Her eyes flicker to the dashboard. The fuel gauge is nearly empty, but she pushes the thought away. Judge Cully remains their last real hope, and if Michaels can't find him, then all of this might be in vain.

Back at the courthouse, Michaels scrambles to track Cully down. Despite bureaucratic resistance and the lateness of the hour, he pushes past closed doors, demanding to be heard. Meanwhile, Saint's car sputters. The engine stalls just short of a narrow gravel road. With no time to waste, she spots an old Jeep idling nearby. A man shouts as she pulls a weapon and orders him out, apologizing through gritted teeth. It isn't personal—it's survival. And for Tooms, this is the only chance left.

Driving again, faster now, she tunes into a local radio show. The topic is the death penalty. Callers argue about justice and morality, some calling for strict enforcement, others advocating for reform. The contrast between the heated debate and her

mission cuts deep. She thinks of Tooms not just as a name on a file, but as a man—flawed, scarred, but human. The storm outside mirrors her state of mind. Wind whips at the Jeep, and rain starts to fall as she barrels toward the prison walls.

A crowd has already gathered near the gates. Dozens of protestors stand soaked and shouting, some waving signs demanding justice, others pleading for mercy. Riot police form a rigid barricade, unmoved by badges or arguments. Saint flashes hers, but the uniformed men don't budge. Their orders are clear. No one gets through. She grips the steering wheel tighter, then steps out into the storm, pushing her way through the mass. Someone yells at her. Others try to pull her back. None of it matters.

Reaching the front, her voice pierces the chaos. She shouts Tooms's name, hoping someone—anyone—inside might hear. Her cries go unanswered. Turning toward the prison fence, she draws her gun, not to use against another person, but to make a point. She fires a single round into the air, silencing the crowd. All eyes fall on her. Her voice, though strained, is clear: "You're about to kill the wrong man."

As guards approach, ready to disarm her, she lowers the weapon and puts her hands up. Her heart pounds like a drumbeat of desperation. She isn't just fighting for Tooms. She's fighting for justice, for the truth, for every case that fell through the cracks because someone didn't speak soon enough. The chapter closes with Saint whispering a prayer—not for herself, but for Marty and for what remains of the justice system she once believed in. In that fleeting silence, surrounded by noise, guns, and flashing lights, she chooses to stand still, hoping her voice—however hoarse—will be enough.