

# Chapter 240

Chapter 240 begins with Chapter 240 finding Saint stepping into the terminal of Birmingham-Shuttlesworth International Airport, her presence sharp and quiet after the emotional intensity of saving Marty Tooms. The airport buzzes with activity—exhausted passengers drag roller bags over scuffed linoleum, announcements echo faintly through the terminal ceiling. Saint maneuvers through the crowd with purpose, her posture rigid, her gaze steady. She doesn't pause or break stride, her steps echoing her resolve. Around her, the clamor of human traffic contrasts with her singular focus, making her seem like the only person in motion who knows exactly where she's headed.

Reaching the rental car counter, she completes the transaction with crisp efficiency, choosing a nondescript silver Taurus—practical, fast enough, and discreet. As she pulls away from the lot, she lets the windows down and allows Alabama's thick, humid air to rush in, washing over her like a second skin. The scent of rain-soaked asphalt and freshly cut grass wraps around her, momentarily displacing the hospital smell and fear that had clung to her since leaving Tooms behind. Her shoulders ease slightly, though not fully. This is not a reprieve—it's a reset.

Navigating onto the highway, Saint presses her foot harder on the gas, eager to put distance between her and the memory of Marty's near-death. Each passing mile feels like a silent metronome marking the beats between what she's done and what she's heading toward. The Taurus hums smoothly beneath her, and her eyes stay locked on the horizon. In the rearview mirror, the city fades, swallowed by hills and flat farmland, replaced by open sky and the rhythmic blur of roadside trees. Yet her mind remains anchored somewhere between reflection and resolve, rehearsing outcomes, reconsidering plans. Every second behind the wheel is a step deeper into territory that may reshape what remains of her future.

There's a tension in her chest—not fear, not quite—but a compression of anticipation. She reviews the details she knows: where she's going, who she might confront, and the shadows that could emerge from both the landscape and her own memories. The road stretches ahead like a thread pulled tight, and Saint follows it, drawn toward an uncertain conclusion. Though the sun casts warm light across the dashboard, her hands grip the wheel tightly, as if steering toward answers that don't yet want to be found. With each town she passes, she glimpses pieces of stories—faded billboards, rusted mailboxes, children chasing dogs in empty parking lots—all of it reminding her what's at stake.

The Taurus eats up the miles, and the act of driving begins to feel meditative, though her thoughts never quite settle. She's thinking of Grace, of Charlotte, of Patch, and of Eli Aaron's chilling presence that still clings like a stain to every decision she makes. The past is not behind her, not fully. It's sprawled out in front of her, stitched into every destination, and mirrored in each stranger's face she passes on the road. Saint knows this leg of the journey will ask more of her—more grit, more clarity, and maybe even more forgiveness than she has ever had to offer.

As afternoon leans toward evening, the sky changes color, signaling that time is moving faster than she'd like. But Saint doesn't slow. If anything, she accelerates slightly, caught in the tension of urgency and the fragile calm between two storms. The Taurus becomes an extension of her determination, and the road becomes both a map and a test. There is no music playing, no calls to distract her—only the wind, the engine, and the pulse of determination pushing her forward. She's not running from anything. She's running toward it.

The chapter builds not just physical movement, but emotional gravity. Saint's journey becomes a metaphor for reclaiming agency after trauma, for stepping into confrontation rather than retreating. The narrative balances the introspective weight of recent events with the sharp clarity of forward momentum. It's a reminder that even amid exhaustion and loss, there are roads still worth traveling and truths still worth facing.