

# Chapter 250

Chapter 250 begins with Saint stepping into a heavy stillness, where the air is thick with a strong chemical odor that immediately makes her cover her mouth. Her eyes strain to adjust to the dim light, gradually revealing the space as some kind of makeshift darkroom. Faint outlines of metal lockers and old steel tables begin to take shape, their cold surfaces reflecting barely enough light to give away their form. A sink sits unused, its porcelain surface dull beneath a faint glow. She scans the walls where papers flutter slightly, pinned in uneven rows, though their words remain unreadable in the shadow. There's a disquieting sense that the space had once served a different, more personal purpose—one that now feels corrupted by the eerie quiet.

The sound of the storm outside softens, rain easing into a light patter as Saint calls for Patch, her voice restrained but urgent. With each step, her gaze jumps from object to object—plastic trays, metallic tools, and darkroom supplies labeled with names like Rapid Fixer and Vario Fix Powder, each carrying its own quiet menace. The familiarity of the labels both comforts and unsettles her, reminding her of long-forgotten corners of her own past. Moving deeper into the barn, she notices something strange at the far end—a structure that doesn't quite match the rest. A false wall juts out ever so slightly, and she inches closer, her breath shallow. Her hand, though trembling slightly, pushes gently on the edge of the panel.

At that moment, the storm fully subsides, and the quiet feels sharper than the thunder that had preceded it. The barn's door swings ajar, flooding the room with light that lands directly on the hidden area she's just uncovered. What she sees brings her to a standstill: a photograph, old but chillingly vivid, tacked onto the wooden beam behind the false wall. It's her. A teenage Saint, wide-eyed and afraid, tears glistening on her cheeks, and no glasses on her face. The raw emotion captured in that photo stabs through her with merciless precision, dragging her mind back to a time she'd long tried

to bury.

The shock propels her backward as her hand instinctively reaches for her gun. She doesn't raise it, not yet—just holds it, as though anchoring herself to something real. Her breath catches in her throat, and she feels the scream rise, only to force it back down with a clenched jaw. That single image—of her younger self staring helplessly at the lens—summons memories she had not merely forgotten, but forcibly erased. Her surroundings disappear in that instant; she is no longer in the barn but pulled back into that vulnerable version of herself. The photograph isn't just documentation—it's proof that someone had been watching, preserving her fear like a trophy.

Each detail in the room seems to scream with new meaning. The labels, the trays, even the papers she couldn't read before now feel like fragments of someone's twisted gallery, perhaps documenting not just her, but others. This space, far from just being a storage room or work area, was a sanctuary for something dark. Saint's heart pounds, the photograph now burned into her mind as a symbol of everything she had hoped to outrun. A lifetime's worth of trauma had never truly left; it had been waiting for her here, tucked behind a wall, untouched but far from forgotten.

She tightens her grip on the weapon, steadying herself. Her focus narrows—not out of fear, but clarity. The past is no longer hiding, and neither is she. This confrontation is no longer just about memory—it's about justice. She whispers Patch's name again, softer this time, but with purpose. If he's here, he deserves to know. If he's in danger, she needs to find him. The silence that follows her call lingers longer than it should.

Outside, the sunlight stretches further across the floor as the day finally claims the sky. The contrast between light and shadow in the room mirrors the clash between what Saint remembers and what she now must face. Somewhere in that room, buried within the symbols and silence, lies a truth waiting to be unearthed. And she will no longer run from it.