

Chapter 27

Chapter 27 begins with Patricia feeling a wave of uncertainty as she drives down Rifle Range Road towards Six Mile. Her palms are sweaty as she grips the steering wheel, the nerves gnawing at her. Despite the distance that has grown between herself and Mrs. Greene, she attempts to convince herself that the visit is nothing out of the ordinary. Maybe Mrs. Greene won't be home, and that would offer her an easy escape from the discomfort she's feeling. The new development along the road brings a strange sense of disconnection, with empty houses and For Sale signs littering the once vibrant community. Patricia feels the change, not just in the physical landscape but in herself. She's coming to terms with the quiet after years of turmoil, yet her unease is palpable as she pulls into Mrs. Greene's driveway.

The high-pitched noise of construction from the nearby Gracious Cay site assaults Patricia's senses, adding to her tension. She raps on the window and waits, but there's no response. In a small relief, Patricia starts to walk back to her car, but her attention is caught by Mrs. Greene's voice. Surprised, Patricia turns to find Mrs. Greene standing at the door, looking unkempt and tired. The conversation begins with pleasantries, but Patricia quickly notices the exhaustion on Mrs. Greene's face. She learns that Mrs. Greene works long hours between her cleaning job and stocking shelves at Walmart, something that takes a toll on her well-being. Yet, despite the fatigue, Mrs. Greene maintains a certain level of pride in her independence.

Their conversation turns to family, and Patricia is reminded of the stark differences in their lives. Mrs. Greene's children, Jesse and Aaron, live far away, and Patricia senses the sadness in her voice as she talks about the two boys. The tension grows as Patricia inquires about Mrs. Greene's thoughts on the changes in the community, especially the large-scale construction happening around them. Mrs. Greene's refusal to leave, citing her attachment to the church, highlights her deep roots in the area, even as the

world around her is changing. Patricia, feeling a sense of guilt about her own departure from Six Mile and the changes in her own family, offers to help Mrs. Greene with some cleaning. However, Mrs. Greene, now working for a cleaning service, seems less interested in small talk and more resigned to her current situation.

Patricia's discomfort grows as Mrs. Greene reveals the nature of her work for the cleaning service, highlighting the impersonal, detached nature of her job. The conversation shifts to a more personal topic as Patricia brings up Miss Mary, a figure from their past who looms large in Patricia's memory. Mrs. Greene's reaction to the mention of Miss Mary is subtle, yet Patricia senses a deeper, unspoken connection to the elderly woman. The past and its painful memories continue to weigh on both women, and the tension in the room becomes palpable. As the conversation turns to the subject of the children, Patricia finds herself questioning the choices she made years ago. She never fully understood Mrs. Greene's struggles or her own role in the changes that took place.

Patricia's discomfort reaches its peak when she broaches the subject of the photograph. Mrs. Greene's response is defensive, and Patricia feels the walls go up between them. She is desperate for answers, yet every attempt to gain insight is met with resistance. The photograph she holds in her hands, an image of two men from years ago, one of whom bears an uncanny resemblance to James Harris, becomes the focal point of their conversation. Patricia presses Mrs. Greene for answers, yet she is met with skepticism and confusion. The photograph, along with the unsettling memories it stirs up, forces Patricia to confront the haunting questions that have plagued her for years.

Mrs. Greene's reluctance to share the photograph is understandable, given the emotional weight it carries. As she hands the picture over, Patricia is struck by its age and poor quality, but it's the man in the photo who haunts her. The resemblance to James Harris is undeniable, and the connection to their past grows clearer. The writing on the back of the photograph, dating it to 1928, sends a chill down Patricia's spine. James Harris, despite the years that have passed, appears unchanged. Mrs. Greene, in

her quiet way, acknowledges the unsettling nature of the photograph, but she refuses to entertain the idea of confronting the truth. She seems to have accepted the horrors of the past as a part of her reality, but Patricia is not ready to let go.

Patricia, filled with a mix of fear and determination, realizes that the answers she seeks may lie in confronting the past head-on. Mrs. Greene's unwillingness to face the truth becomes a roadblock, but Patricia knows that she cannot ignore the photograph any longer. The unsettling feeling in her gut grows as she considers the implications of what she's learned. The realization that James Harris may be far more dangerous than she ever imagined forces Patricia to act. She knows that the time for hesitation is over; the children's safety, her family's safety, is on the line.

As Patricia stands in Mrs. Greene's house, torn between the past and present, she is faced with a difficult decision. The photograph and the growing evidence point to the reality that James Harris is not just a figure from their past—he's a threat that has lingered for decades. Patricia knows that confronting this threat will not be easy, but the stakes are too high to ignore. Mrs. Greene's warnings about the consequences of facing the truth weigh heavily on her, but Patricia cannot turn back now. She must find a way to stop James Harris, no matter the cost.