

Chapter 28

Chapter 28 begins with an unexpected phone call that sets a chain of events into motion. Patricia receives a call from Slick, who is eager to brainstorm ideas for an upcoming Halloween celebration. However, Patricia is taken aback when Slick reveals she has decided to throw a Reformation Party instead of celebrating Halloween in its traditional form. Slick explains that her decision stems from her strong opposition to Halloween, particularly due to its association with Satanism, and she proposes that they honor the Reformation instead. With a blend of humor and passion, she begins outlining her plans, which include costumes based on historical figures like Martin Luther, John Calvin, and other heroes of the Reformation. As the conversation unfolds, Patricia feels the weight of the folder in her purse, its contents burning through the fabric, but she pushes the thought aside to engage with Slick. Despite the odd nature of the theme, Patricia can't help but be amused by the creative spin Slick puts on it, such as making a "Diet of Worms" cake and planning reverse trick-or-treating.

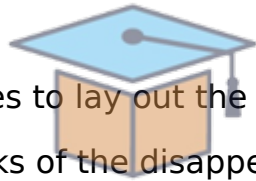
As Slick continues with her party plans, Patricia's thoughts are distracted by the photograph and the folder hidden in her purse. She begins to feel the pressure of the mounting danger around her and the growing sense of urgency. Slick's carefree attitude seems to contrast sharply with Patricia's growing unease, and the dissonance only deepens her resolve. She had hoped that the past few years of peace meant that the worst was behind her, but as the conversation unfolds, she can't shake the feeling that James Harris's dark influence still lingers. Slick, in her usual optimistic way, brushes aside Patricia's concerns, insisting that everything is fine. But Patricia cannot ignore the photograph that has been tormenting her—its unsettling familiarity and the eerie connection it has to James Harris. The evidence she holds in her hands is undeniable, yet she fears the consequences of confronting the truth.

Patricia struggles with the decision to reveal the photograph to Slick, knowing that doing so could potentially undo the progress she's made. She has tried so hard to move forward, to convince herself that things were different now. But the reality is impossible to ignore: children are still disappearing, and James Harris is at the center of it all. Slick, in her usual pragmatic way, urges Patricia to ignore the past and focus on the present, to leave the past behind and not dredge it up again. But Patricia's instincts refuse to let go of the suspicion that something darker is at play. With the weight of her decisions bearing down on her, Patricia finally pulls the folder from her purse and lays it on the table. Slick's reaction is immediate, but not in the way Patricia had hoped. As she picks up the photo, her fingers tighten around it, and her expression grows unreadable. She looks at Patricia with a mixture of disbelief and concern. The tension is palpable as Patricia presses for an explanation, urging Slick to see the truth.

The conversation between the two women becomes increasingly tense, as Patricia lays out the evidence before Slick. She reveals the tragic pattern that has unfolded over the past few years, linking the disappearances and deaths of children to James Harris. Each case, from the mysterious death of a young boy in Awendaw to the strange and unexplained circumstances surrounding the death of a little girl in North Charleston, seems to echo the same dark force. Slick's response is filled with skepticism, as she tries to rationalize the events, attributing them to coincidence. However, Patricia can't ignore the growing number of children who have been lost to this pattern of death and suffering. The weight of the past three years hangs heavy on her, and as the pieces of the puzzle begin to fit together, Patricia's frustration builds. She is desperate for Slick to see what she sees, to understand the gravity of the situation.

Patricia's voice trembles with conviction as she presses Slick for answers, demanding to know why James Harris has remained unchanged over the years, while everyone around him has aged. How is it possible that he looks the same now as he did years ago? This question becomes the central focus of Patricia's investigation, as the photograph and the letters from the past all point to the same unsettling conclusion.

Slick's resistance to acknowledging the truth grows more apparent, as she tries to deflect Patricia's probing questions. But Patricia's mind is made up. She cannot let the past slip into oblivion, especially when it concerns the safety of the children she holds dear. The conversation between them reaches a boiling point, and Patricia's frustration gives way to a sharp, demanding tone. She is no longer willing to stay silent, to ignore the evidence that has been staring her in the face for so long. She presses Slick for an explanation, certain that the answers lie within the dark history that James Harris has been hiding.



Summary

As Patricia continues to lay out the timeline of events, her determination grows stronger. She speaks of the disappearances, the strange deaths, and the pattern that has persisted, all of it pointing back to James Harris. Slick's attempt to dismiss Patricia's concerns is met with Patricia's unwavering resolve. She insists that the deaths are no accident, that there is something far more sinister at play. The more Slick tries to downplay the situation, the more Patricia's sense of urgency intensifies. She knows that time is running out, and the longer they wait, the more children will fall victim to whatever malevolent force is lurking behind the scenes. Patricia can no longer ignore the evidence, and with the weight of the truth pressing down on her, she makes a decision: she will confront James Harris, no matter the cost.

Slick's reluctance to believe that James Harris is capable of such horrors only strengthens Patricia's resolve. She knows that she cannot do this alone, but she also realizes that her search for justice will not be easy. As the chapter ends, Patricia steels herself for the dangerous path ahead. She knows that the truth will not be easy to confront, but she also knows that it is the only way to stop the cycle of violence that has plagued her community. With the photograph still fresh in her mind, Patricia prepares for the next steps in her investigation, knowing that every moment counts.