

# Chapter 35

Chapter 35 begins with Saint caught in a moment of overwhelming dread, her mind racing as her body reacts instinctively to the terror surrounding her. She stumbles in the dark, falling to her knees in a frantic search for her lost glasses, each movement fueled by pure survival instinct. Her hands instead land on her bag, and without hesitation, she retrieves the firearm hidden inside, her grip tightening as she points it toward the unknown. The air feels thick with danger, but her moment of control is fleeting—within seconds, the weapon is snatched from her. A mocking voice, low and menacing, echoes through the space, questioning whether she is truly a "saint" or something far less virtuous. The taunt cuts deep, stirring a sense of shame and vulnerability as fear takes hold.

Grasping for anything that can offer defense, Saint reaches for the steel ball bearings and slingshot tucked away in her pocket. Her hands tremble, causing several bearings to slip through her fingers and scatter across the ground. She manages to load one, steadying her breath just enough to take a single, desperate shot. The loud crack reverberates through the room like a warning, but it brings no comfort. Instead, her ears ring, her heartbeat pounds in her throat, and her muscles shake from the sudden release of adrenaline. When she finally dares to move, she steps onto shattered glass—its crunch beneath her feet a grim reminder of how fragile her situation has become. She locates her broken glasses and places them on her face, even though the lenses distort her view and warp the already terrifying scene around her.

The dim, red-tinged light washing over the area gives the space an unnatural feel, distorting shadows and making the walls appear to pulse with malevolent energy. Determined to escape or at least uncover the truth of where she is, Saint walks deeper into the barn's maze of boxes and crates. Her every step feels heavier, like wading through invisible resistance. The air grows warmer, thicker, with the scent of dust and

something unclean clinging to her skin. A distant mechanical hum blends with the thudding of her heart, making it hard to distinguish what's imagined and what's real. As she rounds the corner of one narrow aisle, something in her line of vision stops her cold. The gasp that escapes her is not from physical pain, but from a sudden and devastating recognition—whatever she's seen has stripped away the last of her illusions.

Everything about the barn feels designed to unsettle. Boxes are stacked with military precision, yet coated in grime, as if forgotten by time. In her distorted vision, Saint thinks she sees movement—subtle, shadow-like shapes shifting between the crates, but nothing solid enough to confirm. Every instinct screams for her to flee, but fear keeps her rooted. Her mind flashes to all the missing girls, to every newspaper article and rumor that led her here. The realization that she may now be part of that same narrative crashes over her like a wave. The weight of it steals her breath, and for a brief moment, her knees threaten to buckle again. Still, something in her refuses to give in. There is a thin thread of resolve keeping her upright, forcing her forward through the labyrinth of horrors.

She presses on, heart thudding in her chest, each breath shaky and loud in her own ears. The red light intensifies ahead, spilling from a gap in the barn wall like a warning flare. As she approaches, she sees what looks like an old photo studio setup—backdrops hung crookedly, strange props abandoned mid-scene, and dark liquid stains on the floor. A cold understanding dawns in her gut, one that makes her skin crawl. This place had been used—perhaps recently—and not for anything innocent. She feels like a trespasser in someone else's nightmare, but now she's been cast in the leading role. There is no stage exit, no curtain to fall, and no guarantee of rescue. Saint knows she must either find a way out or become another nameless face in a story that no one will believe.