

# Chapter 34

Chapter 34 opens with Saint sitting on a wooden crate in a dimly lit room, the walls of which are obscured by heavy drapes. The atmosphere feels suffocating, with only the faint light from the photographer's setup casting sharp shadows across the room. Mr. Aaron, the photographer, murmurs softly as he adjusts the lighting, his voice cutting through the silence. He unknowingly draws Saint's attention when he starts reciting a familiar scripture from her childhood, "He leads me beside quiet waters." These words, once whispered by her grandmother during times of sorrow, bring with them a wave of discomfort, making Saint feel as though she's being drawn into something she doesn't fully understand. Before she can react, the generator powering the lights fails, leaving the room shrouded in darkness, intensifying the already uneasy atmosphere.

As Mr. Aaron moves around in the pitch-black room, flashes of light from his camera momentarily illuminate the space. He instructs Saint to take off her glasses, and she reluctantly complies, her vulnerability on full display as the flashes continue. Her unease grows as Mr. Aaron suggests that she shouldn't smile because it hides her true self, which only deepens her sense of discomfort. With each flash of the camera, the tension between them rises, and Saint's mind begins to connect him to something more sinister than just a photographer. She recalls the unsettling reports she's heard about missing girls and connects them to the man before her, particularly thinking about a high school girl and a college student who have disappeared under mysterious circumstances. Her heart races as she realizes that the photographs being taken might not just be an innocent session, but part of something darker and far more dangerous.

After an unsettling exchange, Mr. Aaron asks Saint for her name, and she responds hesitantly, unsure of where this conversation is heading. His delighted reaction is far too enthusiastic, and his next question digs deeper into her personal life, asking about her spiritual beliefs. When she tells him that she prays, seeking comfort in the idea of

a “fit and just end,” the words seem to satisfy him, though they only add to the growing sense of dread she feels. His laughter comes next, unsettlingly light, but with a hint of malice. He begins referencing “fiery serpents” and admires her beauty with an eerie intensity, which unsettles Saint even more. She can’t help but feel trapped in the conversation, wishing she could escape but unsure of how to proceed. Her mind races back to an article she had read about the disappearances, remembering how a blue van was connected to the girls who had gone missing, and now that image comes into sharp focus.



Summary

The tension reaches its peak when Mr. Aaron casually mentions that he owns a blue van. The revelation sends a jolt of fear through Saint as the pieces of the puzzle begin to fall into place. When she dares to ask him about his connection to the disappearances, his chilling response, simply saying “Yes,” confirms her worst fear. The full weight of the situation crashes down on her, and she feels paralyzed by the realization that she is in the presence of someone deeply connected to the abductions. The room feels even more suffocating, and Saint can’t shake the thought that she’s in immediate danger. Despite the terror clawing at her, a strange mix of urgency and helplessness fills her—she must find a way to escape. The room, the light, and the air all feel oppressive, as if closing in on her, and the chapter ends with the horrifying thought that her reality has shifted irrevocably, and the true nature of her peril has been revealed.