

Chapter 92

Chapter 92 opens in the late afternoon as Saint finds herself surrounded by the natural beauty of Monta Clare woodland. She immerses herself in the tranquility of her surroundings, capturing the picturesque moments through her camera lens. As she wanders, her gaze lands on a distant whitetail, its graceful presence adding to the peaceful atmosphere. Saint takes a quiet moment to appreciate its majesty while reflecting on her grandmother's wisdom about patience. The sight of the summer tanager, perched nearby, reminds her of the importance of waiting for life's answers to come, a lesson passed down through generations. This fleeting moment of calm provides a brief respite from the haunting memories of her bad dreams and the unsettling face of Eli Aaron. Though the peace is temporary, it offers Saint a moment to breathe and regain a sense of inner balance amid the chaos of her thoughts.

Afterward, Saint finds herself waiting in line at the local drugstore to develop her film, a task that feels ordinary but offers her a sense of normalcy. It is during this wait that she bumps into Ivy Macauley, whose distressed demeanor immediately catches her attention. As they exchange words, Ivy confesses her concern about the nervous boys trying to buy condoms for senior prom, a situation that highlights the awkwardness and anxiety often felt during milestones of youth. Despite the heaviness in Ivy's demeanor, she nostalgically reflects on Saint's innocence, a reminder of their shared childhood memories. The conversation turns toward their evening plans, with Saint mentioning that she will be accompanying Jimmy Walters to the prom—a significant step in her young life. This brief exchange between them reveals the contrasting paths their lives have taken, with Saint's youthful anticipation and Ivy's burdened experience marking the different stages of their journeys.

Their discussion shifts to deeper, more painful themes as Ivy shares the heartache and grief she's experienced over the years. She speaks candidly about the trauma of losing

her son and even recounts a suggestion that she should bury him without a body, an event that has clearly scarred her. Ivy's words carry a heavy sadness, one that leaves a mark on Saint, making her reflect on the long-lasting effects of grief. As the boys they had been discussing make a hasty exit, Ivy's stare seems to hold weight, prompting Saint to joke about the consequences of youth and the potential unpredictability of the night ahead. This lighthearted comment serves as a brief distraction from the emotional gravity of their conversation, but the sadness remains just beneath the surface. The encounter between the two women, though marked by moments of humor, is ultimately overshadowed by the unresolved pain Ivy carries with her, drawing a parallel between their lives and the contrasts in their experiences.

However, the conversation takes a darker turn when Ivy admits to her ongoing battle with nightmares and insomnia, revealing the depth of her emotional struggle. She pleads for pills at the pharmacy, hoping for relief from the psychological torment she has endured, but the clerk's rejection of her request highlights the limitations of the help available to her. Saint, though initially unsure of how to respond, instinctively gathers the papers Ivy has dropped after she leaves in frustration. Upon examining them later, Saint discovers that the papers contain prescriptions for various medications, including sleeping pills. This discovery, though not immediately alarming, stirs a sense of concern in Saint as she connects Ivy's struggle with her own experiences of grief and loss. The tension in the chapter builds as Saint's curiosity deepens, and the mystery of Ivy's ongoing pain intertwines with Saint's own unresolved feelings, creating an emotional complexity that lingers.

Returning home, Saint feels the weight of the prescription papers in her pocket, an unexpected burden she cannot shake. As she inspects them later, she is struck by the alarming proximity of the refill dates, which seem to coincide with the time Patch was taken from her. This chilling realization forces Saint to confront the unsettling possibility that Ivy's pain and her own loss may be more connected than she initially thought. The parallel between Ivy's ongoing struggle and Saint's own experience with Patch's disappearance feels inescapable. The discovery leaves Saint shaken, the weight of the realization sinking in as she processes the haunting similarities between

their lives. This moment is pivotal, as it forces Saint to grapple with her grief in a new way, seeing it through the lens of Ivy's pain. The chapter closes with a deep sense of vulnerability, as Saint is left to wrestle with the emotional weight of her discoveries, unsure of what they mean for her future. The unresolved conflict between their pasts continues to echo through the narrative, leaving readers with a lingering sense of tension and sorrow.

