

The Saint Chapter 30 - Tips

Dread claimed Liam's gut, turning his blood to ice. Gannon had never once mentioned Miranda to either him or Carmen, and he sure as hell had never said anything about her coming to retrieve the database herself. Something was very wrong here. But he had to play the part, and play it carefully, so he stepped up to the plate and swung.

"Who the hell are you?" he asked Miranda, loaded with attitude. "And who the hell are you?" he spat at Daniel for good measure. If Daniel was behind this...

Shock moved over Daniel's face, but it was impossible to tell if it was manufactured or real. Ignoring Liam's question, his eyes gave up nothing as he smiled. "Miranda. This is a lovely surprise. I was under the impression that Royce would be joining us for this part of the venture."

She shrugged. "The last time I left an important job in my husband's hands, he couldn't deliver, so I decided to take control of this one. You don't mind, do you?"

Liam tried his hardest to read Daniel's face, to no avail. What the fuck was Miranda playing at? And was Daniel in on it? He needed to figure it out, and fast.

"Of course not," Daniel said. "Truth be told, I rather prefer your company."

Miranda preened at the attention, but only for a second before she turned her attention to Liam and Carmen, sniffing in disdain. "Detective Hollister. Ms. Desoto. I'd like to get this over with. Preferably before anyone catches sight of us."

"Miranda, is it?" Liam said, not budging so much as a millimeter. "We had a deal with Royce, not you. In fact, he never even mentioned you, yet here you are. I don't take too kindly to people who change the rules once the game has started."

She stepped toward him, her expression full of frost. "Too bad, because you don't get a say. Anyway, none of the rules have changed. As soon as Daniel gets the information from the database, you and Carmen will still get your cut. Whatever extracurriculars you and Royce talked about will still go through him. He's actually quite eager to work with you. So, can we get on with it, rather than standing here, wasting precious time?"

Liam's mind spun, his thoughts soaked in adrenaline. Both Daniel and Roman had insisted Miranda was the brains behind this operation, and fuck, the power play she'd just pulled was a pretty good indicator she was edging Gannon out. If Liam balked at the deal now, they'd have nothing. The whole op would be blown.

He had to take the risk.

"Fine," Liam said. "Let's do this, then."

"I assume you can handle the security system," Miranda said.

Liam snorted. "I'm not exactly here for my good looks. Yeah, lady. I've got the system."

"Excellent," she clipped out. "Then let's go."

They moved toward the clinic's employee entrance, with Miranda leading the way, Daniel right behind her, and Liam and Carmen side by side at the back of the class. Liam used the security code Capelli had specially engineered for the op, smiling as the lights on the keypad turned from red to green and the door unlatched with a heavy click.

"Told you," he said.

Miranda didn't even bother hiding her eye roll. She pointed toward Connor and Harlow's office, where the security equipment was kept. "Kill the feed. And the cameras in the parking lot," she added. "You can take care of that while we download the database from one of the computers at the nurses' station."

Liam's blood froze in his veins. "No." The nurses' station was too far away. "Carmen doesn't leave my sight."

"We can't be on the same computer at once. We're wasting time," Miranda argued, but there was no fucking way Liam was going to lose eyes on Carmen and Miranda and Daniel, even if the rest of the team could still see her.

"I'm buying you all the time you could ask for by killing the feeds," Liam said. "For fuck's sake, we could stay in here half the night and no one would know."

Miranda was set to argue—Liam could see it in her eyes—but before she could say anything, Daniel stepped in.

"I can download the information in a matter of minutes, Miranda. Remember, I'm very good at what I do," he said, giving her a smile and a wink that made Liam want to throw up. "And after I get everything I need, we can celebrate privately."

It seemed Gannon wasn't the only one with an ego that needed feeding. Miranda warmed at Daniel's attention, dismissing Liam with a wave. "Fine. Just be quick about the feeds."

Liam did as he was asked, leading the way to the large, private office with Carmen right beside him. He maneuvered through the security system with ease—score one for Capelli's big brain—swapping out screen after screen for the video feeds they'd pulled from last night's activity, when all had been quiet and dark.

"There you go," Liam said, and Miranda scanned each one with care before finally nodding.

"Fine." She turned to Carmen. "Access, please."

Carmen frowned, her tough persona locked in place. "I want my cut first."

Miranda's brows lifted. But the ADA had said the exchange of money would be icing on the cake, and Carmen clearly wanted to make sure Miranda went down for this.

"Rather opportunistic of you," Miranda said, and Carmen laughed.

"Says the woman stealing an entire database full of patient information to run who knows how many scams with it. Come on. A deal's a deal."

For the longest second of Liam's life, she said nothing. Then, "Fine."

Liam watched very carefully as Miranda withdrew a thick envelope from her jacket pocket and handed it over. Carmen smiled sweetly, tucking it into the back of her jeans. She leaned over the desk, navigating through the login screen to access the clinic's homepage, then the patient portal.

"All yours," she said to Daniel.

He scrolled through page after page of patient information, his massive smile sending a chill all the way up Liam's spine. Daniel deftly chose the information he needed, downloading it in minutes, as promised. He covered his tracks with precision, logging out of the system as if he'd never been there before passing the thumb drive over to Miranda.

"Now, let's get out of here and meet up with Royce, shall we?" Daniel asked. "I'd like to get started on this job sooner rather than later."

Miranda nodded. "Of course."

They retraced their steps back to the employee entrance, and yes, yes, they had her. Liam's heart began to race, the giddiness he felt when he knew they were about to come out on top of an op filling his chest.

But the feeling faded as soon as they crossed the threshold back into the parking lot, and Miranda pulled out a gun and aimed it directly at Liam.

Carmen's pulse went absolutely ballistic, her heart pinballing off her ribs. She reached for Liam's sleeve out of pure instinct, but the cold click of the safety stopped her in her tracks.

"Little change in plan," Miranda said. "I've decided that the partnership Royce offered you isn't in my best interests, so I'm going to have to cancel it, and the both of you."

Oh God. Oh God, oh God. "You're going to k!ll us?" Carmen whispered. "But, you can't."

Miranda rolled her eyes. "Funny, that's what Royce said right before I put a bullet in his skull. But I assure you, I'm fully capable."

Shock took over so fully, Carmen couldn't speak. Miranda had k!lled Royce?

"Miranda," Daniel said, his voice entirely calm but his expression serious. "This is a large change in plan."

"You're welcome to join these two if you don't like it," she snapped. "I'd rather give you Royce's cut. You are rather useful. But if this is too much for you to stomach, then I guess we'll part ways, too."

Daniel lifted his hands in deference. "You're in charge."

"You're right. I am."

Carmen slid a covert stare to the shadows, desperate. She knew the unit had to be closing in, but surely they wouldn't just swarm in, sirens blazing, if Miranda was pointing a gun at Liam, would they?

He edged forward, shielding Carmen by degrees, and it took all she had not to yank him back to her side. "So, what? You're just going to shoot us right here in the parking lot?" he asked, and Miranda laughed.

"As a matter of fact, yes. You and Carmen are going to be the victims of a very sad murder/suicide. The murder weapon will never be found, of course, and without that video feed, the case will go cold very quickly. You'll be buried and forgotten, and I'll have the security of no loose ends."

"You planned this all along, didn't you?" Carmen breathed. God, this woman was unhinged.

"Of course I did," Miranda said. "I've always held all the power. Royce was nothing. Graceless, sloppy. Stupid. He deserved what he got. And now I'm going to take what I deserve."

Fear swirled through Carmen as Miranda lifted the gun, her aim right in the center of Liam's chest. "You first, Detective."

Carmen babbled out plea after plea for Miranda to stop, adrenaline coursing through her so swiftly that her knees threatened to buckle. "No. No. Please, you can't—"

Miranda turned her attention to Carmen, her voice full of rage. "Stupid b!tch. Don't you know by now? I can do anything."

Miranda returned her focus to Liam, and no, no. This couldn't be happening. But then a chorus of shouts rang out across the parking lot, followed by bright floodlights and a flurry of movement.

"Remington PD! Drop your weapon!" Isabella was closest, with Detectives Hale and Garza on either side of her, guns drawn and closing in fast. Miranda's chin jerked upward in surprise, but it didn't last. Ignoring the shouts around her, her finger curled tighter around the trigger, and Carmen began to move out of sheer instinct.

But Daniel got there first, diving for Liam just as Miranda fired. The sound shredded Carmen's eardrums, then another shot turned everything into a series of muffled shouts. Dazed and disoriented, she tried to make sense of the chaos in front of her.

Miranda was on the ground, her shoulder bleeding and her weapon knocked out of the way. She was conscious and already demanding a call to her lawyer, even as Detective Garza put her in handcuffs. Carmen jerked toward the spot where Liam had been standing, but she couldn't see past the knot of people on the ground beside her, all of them scrambling and speaking in rushed, serious voices.

"Liam! Liam," she shouted, elbowing her way into the fray. He could not be dead. He could not.

"Carmen!" he called back, and she crumpled over the pavement in relief. But as soon as she caught sight of him, her relief turned into pure, uncut dread.

Liam was kneeling on the ground, pressing both of his hands over Daniel's belly, which was bleeding profusely.

"He pushed me out of the way," Liam said, his eyes wide and wild as he looked at her. "He knew she was going to shoot me, and he took the bullet instead."

Carmen's training kicked in, and she was beside him in an instant. "Okay. Let me see."

Liam lifted his hands, and oh, hell. "Put pressure on that wound. Use both hands, and push harder than you think you need to." Over her shoulder, she yelled, "We need an ambo, here. Like, now!"

"We called them before we closed in," Isabella said from somewhere behind Carmen. "ETA two minutes."

Carmen checked Daniel's pulse—faint and thready, fvck—and made sure his airway was secure. "Daniel, can you hear me? Daniel?"

He let out a low groan, but it was weak, and damn it, he was losing too much blood. "Daniel, you need to stay with me here, okay? Stay awake. Help is on the way."

His eyes opened a fraction. "L...Liam?"

"I'm here. I'm not hurt," Liam said. "The ambulance is coming, okay?"

Daniel smiled. "Okay."

And then his pulse disappeared beneath Carmen's fingertips.