

Olivia 5

The chapter opens with Olivia preparing her beehives for her impending absence due to Asher's trial. May is a busy time for beekeepers, and she spends the day tending to her colonies, including those at an organic orchard. She observes the intricate workings of the hive, comparing it to a bustling city where each bee has a role. Olivia adds extra space for honey storage, reflecting on the labor-intensive process of nectar collection and the remarkable efficiency of worker bees, which can carry half their body weight in nectar. The hive's collective decision-making, exemplified by the waggle dance, serves as a metaphor for the democratic process she hopes the jury will emulate.

Asher's trial begins the next morning, and Olivia notices his healed wrist, now concealed by a watch that once belonged to her father. This detail prompts her to reflect on how both Asher and Lily used accessories to hide their scars, perhaps to shield themselves from painful memories. Olivia recalls her own past use of clothing to conceal bruises, drawing a parallel to Asher's current struggle. The tension is palpable as Jordan, Asher's lawyer, advises him to remain silent and composed during the trial, warning of the adversarial nature of the process. Despite Jordan's attempts to reassure him, Asher is visibly anxious.

The arrival at the courthouse is chaotic, with media swarming Asher and hurling accusatory questions. Olivia and Jordan shield him as they push through the crowd, emphasizing the invasive scrutiny surrounding the case. Inside the courtroom, Jordan continues to coach Asher, stressing the importance of maintaining a neutral demeanor and using written notes to communicate. Olivia positions herself to observe Asher's reactions, while Gina Jewett, the prosecutor, prepares her case. The scene underscores the high stakes and emotional toll of the trial.

The chapter juxtaposes the ordered, collaborative world of the beehive with the tumultuous human drama of the trial. Olivia's reflections on the bees' collective wisdom contrast sharply with the divisive and aggressive nature of the legal proceedings. Her hope for a fair and reasoned outcome mirrors the hive's democratic decision-making, but the chapter ends on an uncertain note, leaving the reader to wonder whether the jury will rise to the challenge or succumb to the same chaos that surrounds the trial's outset.

