

Chapter 20: NOW: May 1998 (2)

The chapter opens with a tense courtroom scene where Chris, the defendant, falls silent after his testimony, leaving the room in shock. Jordan, his attorney, realizes the only way to salvage the case is to aggressively cross-examine Chris before the prosecutor, Barrie Delaney, can dismantle his credibility. Jordan takes the stand and begins questioning Chris with brutal cynicism, forcing him to admit inconsistencies in his account of the night Emily was shot. Chris struggles to recall details, growing increasingly agitated as Jordan dismantles his narrative, culminating in Chris admitting he doesn't know for certain whether he pulled the trigger.

Jordan's strategy shifts as he subtly guides Chris to acknowledge the possibility that Emily's actions may have contributed to the gun firing. By the end of the cross-examination, Chris is emotionally shattered but arrives at a moment of clarity, admitting he cannot definitively say he killed Emily. This pivotal admission undermines the prosecution's case, leaving the courtroom stunned. However, Barrie Delaney seizes the opportunity to reaffirm Chris's confession, pressing him on the undeniable facts: his hand was on the gun, his finger on the trigger, and a shot was fired.

During redirect, Jordan methodically reconstructs the events, emphasizing Chris's lack of intent to kill Emily and the ambiguity surrounding who ultimately caused the gun to discharge. Chris reiterates that Emily's hands were on the gun and that she urged him to act, casting doubt on his sole responsibility. The chapter closes with Jordan leaving the courtroom without acknowledging Chris, while Barrie celebrates her perceived victory, anticipating the case's high-profile impact on her career.

The chapter masterfully captures the psychological and legal maneuvering of a trial, highlighting the fragility of truth under adversarial scrutiny. Chris's emotional breakdown and Jordan's ruthless tactics reveal the complexities of justice, where perception often outweighs certainty. Barrie's confidence contrasts with the

unresolved questions, leaving the reader to ponder the blurred lines between guilt and innocence. The scene sets the stage for the trial's climax, where the jury must weigh conflicting narratives against the elusive nature of truth.

