

# Olivia 1

The chapter opens with Olivia reflecting on her initial desire to have a daughter, envisioning a future filled with shared moments like manicures and school bus rides. However, when her son Asher is born, she feels relief, believing a boy will be less vulnerable to the hardships she fears for a girl. This introspective moment sets the tone for Olivia's protective nature and her tendency to prepare for the worst, a theme that recurs throughout the chapter.

Olivia introduces her life as a beekeeper in Adams, New Hampshire, where her family's history is deeply rooted. She describes the town's quaint, unchanging character and the irony of Slade Brook's name, tied to a local undertaker's tragic demise. This backdrop highlights her connection to the land and her family's legacy. She recalls bringing her husband, Braden, to meet her parents, a memory tinged with nostalgia and the sharp contrast between her youthful optimism and the realities that later unfolded.

The narrative shifts to Olivia's unexpected return to her family's farm after her father's sudden death. Initially resistant to becoming a beekeeper, she gradually embraces the role, expanding the apiary and finding financial success. Her father's lessons about bees—emphasizing patience, protection, and the consequences of sudden actions—mirror her own life philosophy. These teachings become a metaphor for her resilience and the defensive mechanisms she develops, shaped by personal loss and hardship.

The chapter closes with Olivia honoring her parents' deaths by following the tradition of informing the bees, a ritual that underscores her deep respect for both her family's legacy and the natural world. The act of singing to the colonies, draped in black crepe, symbolizes her grief and her commitment to carrying forward her father's wisdom. This poignant moment encapsulates Olivia's journey from reluctance to acceptance,

weaving together themes of inheritance, adaptation, and the enduring bond between humans and nature.

