

Lily 4

The chapter opens with Lily and Maya practicing fencing at Adams High, four weeks before a pivotal event. Lily is emotionally drained after a week of no communication with Asher, who abruptly walked out on her. Despite her desire to retreat into sadness, she agrees to teach Maya a flèche attack. As Lily demonstrates the move, her instructions take on an emotional intensity, likening the aggressive fencing technique to confronting life's injustices. Her outburst culminates in a physical collapse, leaving Maya concerned and prompting Lily to break down in tears.

Lily reflects on her paradoxical self-perception as a fundamentally happy person despite her struggles with depression. She distinguishes between clinical depression and the profound sadness stemming from life's hardships. The weight of her past feels like an anchor dragging her down, even as she glimpses a brighter future. This introspection reveals her inner turmoil, contrasting her outward resilience with the emotional scars she carries.

Maya comforts Lily on the gym floor, urging her to share what's troubling her. Lily hesitates, fearing the vulnerability of revisiting her pain. Maya's calm demeanor and perceptive questions hint at her own resilience, shaped by her identity as an Asian girl with two mothers in a predominantly white, straight community. The conversation shifts to Asher, with Lily confessing their week-long silence and the intensity of their unresolved conflict. Maya probes whether Lily's declaration of love triggered Asher's withdrawal, given his history of ending relationships when emotions deepen.

Maya speculates that Asher's fear of commitment may stem from his parents' failed marriage, suggesting he associates love with eventual disaster. Lily reveals that Asher had reciprocated her love declarations multiple times, making his sudden distance even more confusing. Maya's surprise at this revelation underscores the unusual nature of Asher's behavior, leaving both girls grappling with unanswered questions.

The chapter ends on a note of unresolved tension, highlighting Lily's emotional vulnerability and the complexity of her relationship with Asher.

