

36. July 27, 2021

In this chapter, Holly Gibney is deep into her investigation, her keen sense continuously pulling at threads that might seem irrelevant to many. She begins by receiving an unexpected call from Randy Holsten, who brings up a seemingly trivial detail about Bonnie, a girl Holly is investigating, claiming she was a Christmas elf during a party. This minor piece of information leads Holly down a path of connecting dots that appear unrelated at first glance.

Her investigation leads her to reach out to Lakeisha Stone, who confirms Bonnie's role as one of Santa's elves during a COVID-era Zoom Christmas party hosted by two retired professors, the Harrises. This connection sparks an intuition in Holly, driving her to pursue the lead further. Despite trying to remain grounded in facts rather than suppositions, Holly can't help but follow her gut feeling that there's more to Bonnie's disappearance and her connection to the Harrises.

Attempting to trace Bonnie's steps, Holly learns that Bonnie had worked for Mrs. Harris after the Christmas party, aiding in administrative and computer-related tasks. This piece of information adds another layer to Holly's investigation, hinting at possible personal connections between Bonnie and the people she worked for. As Holly delves deeper, she becomes increasingly involved in her work, her thoughts consumed by the case.

Amidst her investigative work, Holly receives a call from Tanya Robinson, updating her on Barbara, a mutual acquaintance, and her recent accomplishments and challenges, including Barbara's close relationship with her mentor, Olivia Kingsbury, who is nearing the end of her life. This conversation, while seemingly detached from Holly's investigation, underlines the personal connections and emotional depth involved in Holly's life beyond her work.

The chapter closes with Holly trying to unwind, only to be drawn back into her investigative mindset by a text from Barbara, responding to an inquiry about Cary Dressler, a figure potentially related to her case. Holly's relentless pursuit of truth, her methodical approach to the investigation, and the personal interactions that intersect her professional life paint a picture of a deeply involved and complex character who is as driven by her intuitions as she is by the facts of the case.