

8. July 23, 2021

In Chapter 1 of the book dated July 23, 2021, we are introduced to Holly, who alongside Jerome, interviews a group of boys about the disappearance of their friend, Peter Steinman, referred to as "Stinky." The boys, including Tommy Edison and Richie Glenman, offer varied accounts about the night Peter disappeared, mentioning theories ranging from him running away to Florida to being abducted by Slender Man, an urban legend. Despite their theories, Holly is more interested in finding a link between Peter's disappearance and another case, that of Bonnie Dahl. Their investigation continues as Holly picks up an earring she believes belongs to Bonnie and debates the reliability of the boys' accounts with Jerome.

Jerome decides to look into Steinman's disappearance more thoroughly, hoping to confirm it's unrelated to Dahl's case. Holly then reflects on the strangeness of Bonnie leaving her bike helmet behind if she indeed decided to leave town spontaneously, contemplating the possibility that Bonnie was abducted.

The chapter shifts to Holly's personal life as she deals with the estate left by her late mother, Charlotte. She's contacted by David Emerson, the executor of Charlotte's will, who informs her that her mother left everything to her, a revelation that surprises Holly due to past financial misfortunes blamed on a swindler named Daniel Hailey. As Holly processes this newfound wealth and the responsibilities it entails, she also grapples with her feelings about her mother and the house filled with painful memories. Despite her reluctance, she agrees to meet Emerson to inspect the property, motivated by a sense of duty and a need for closure.

Throughout the chapter, Holly balances her professional dedication to solving cases with her personal struggles, especially the complicated emotions regarding her family and inheritance. She shows a keen observational nature, a pragmatic approach to her work, and a deep, albeit troubled, connection to her family's past.