

Chapter 10: The Bonnie Dahl Disappearance

On July 23, 2021, *Chapter 10* of Holly Gibney's life unfolds in an unexpected way—she discovers that she has inherited over six million dollars from her late mother's estate. The sheer magnitude of the inheritance feels out of place in her world, which has always been guided by modesty, purpose, and an unwavering pursuit of truth rather than material wealth. As she sits in her car, parked under the relentless midday sun, she hesitates to turn on the air conditioning, almost as if punishing herself for indulging in a luxury she does not believe she deserves. Instead, she shifts her focus to something far more pressing than money—her current investigation into the mysterious disappearance of Bonnie Dahl.

Bonnie's case has been full of dead ends and frustratingly vague clues, but Holly remains determined. Her latest lead takes her to George Rafferty, a local man who, along with his friend Marvin Brown, stumbled upon Bonnie's abandoned bicycle near an old, defunct auto repair shop. The bike, left as if she had vanished into thin air, raises more questions than answers, and Holly knows from experience that disappearances rarely happen without a trace. Both Rafferty and Brown offer bits of insight, but Holly feels the real key to cracking the case might lie with Lakeisha Stone, Bonnie's closest friend and confidante.

Unfortunately, Lakeisha is unavailable, leaving Holly to chase secondary leads while she waits for a chance to speak with her. Seeking more context about Bonnie's recent activities, Holly meets with Penny Dahl, Bonnie's mother, who is as desperate for answers as she is heartbroken by her daughter's disappearance. Penny provides Holly with access to Bonnie's credit card transactions and phone records, details that could paint a clearer picture of her last known whereabouts. However, what strikes Holly most during their conversation is Penny's quiet resilience—despite the agony of not knowing what happened to her daughter, she clings to the hope that answers are still out there.

Holly's investigation soon leads her to the local library, where employees Edie Brookings and Margaret Brenner confirm that an earring found near Bonnie's bicycle indeed belonged to her. The discovery reinforces the eerie certainty that Bonnie didn't simply leave of her own accord—something happened to her. The librarians describe Bonnie as an intelligent yet introverted woman, someone deeply loyal to those she cared about, further complicating the theory that she may have walked away from her life voluntarily. The more Holly learns, the more she suspects that Bonnie had stumbled into something dangerous, something she wasn't prepared for.

Throughout the day, Holly wrestles with two distinct struggles—her relentless commitment to the case and the overwhelming weight of her inheritance. She can't shake the irony of it all: while she has suddenly acquired vast wealth, she still feels powerless when it comes to helping those who need her most. Her conversation with Pete Huntley, a former detective and trusted ally, serves as a momentary distraction, but it also reminds her of the fine line she is walking between legal investigation and the temptation to cross into morally gray territory. She considers utilizing less-than-legal methods to gain deeper insights into Bonnie's financial history, aware that every second wasted could mean the difference between finding Bonnie alive or losing her forever.

As night falls, Holly finds herself overwhelmed by the complexity of both the case and her personal life. The responsibility of managing her mother's estate looms over her, a burden she has neither the emotional energy nor the desire to deal with. Her mind keeps drifting back to Bonnie—her abandoned bicycle, the missing earring, the transactions that could provide a final clue before the trail goes completely cold. Despite the exhaustion that gnaws at her, Holly knows she cannot slow down now. Every missing person's case has a crucial window, and if she doesn't act quickly, Bonnie Dahl's name could soon be added to the ever-growing list of those who were never found.

This chapter captures Holly's unwavering dedication to her work and the internal battle she faces as she attempts to reconcile her newfound wealth with the life she has always known. Torn between duty and self-

reflection, she presses forward, determined to unravel the mystery of Bonnie's disappearance while grappling with the ghosts of her own past. The deeper she digs, the more she realizes that both cases—Bonnie's and her own—may hold answers she isn't ready to face.