

Chapter 14

Chapter 14 begins with Saint discovering an old Langstroth beehive buried beneath a layer of dried leaves and ivy in the backyard of their new home on Pinehill Cemetery Road. Her grandmother, Norma, is too busy directing the movers to notice her fascination. But for Saint, this quiet, wooden box becomes more than an artifact—it's an opportunity to build something of her own. She envisions herself becoming a beekeeper, inspired by what she's read about honey production and pollination. Day after day, she pesters Norma, sharing facts about worker bees, colony structure, and the healing properties of raw honey. Even after getting stung while poking around a thistle bush near the hive, her enthusiasm doesn't fade. Eventually, Norma gives in, perhaps sensing that this small passion might provide her granddaughter with a purpose during a difficult adjustment.

Together, they begin preparing for their first hive. Norma helps her string wire into wooden frames and unbox the equipment that arrives piece by piece through the mail. Saint savors every moment—the smell of the new wood, the feel of wax foundation, and the hum of possibility. When the bees finally arrive in the evening, packed in a wooden crate, Saint watches them with reverence. Norma, clearly uneasy about housing thousands of stingers in their backyard, checks on the hive repeatedly that night. Saint assures her it's normal for the bees to gather at the entrance while adjusting to their new home. That summer, their bond grows with each day they spend in the garden, tending to the hive and observing its rhythms. For Saint, beekeeping is more than a hobby—it becomes a quiet rebellion against loss and a way to cultivate something meaningful.

Back at school, things remain complicated. Saint often feels like an outsider, especially when her peers mock her modest clothes or quiet demeanor. Still, she tries to bring pieces of her newfound joy into the classroom. She offers classmates small jars of

honey, labeled in careful handwriting, hoping it might spark connection. Though most show only mild interest, her confidence grows. She begins to dream of selling her honey at local markets, even if Norma worries about drawing too much attention. Saint reads about apiary practices late into the night, filling notebooks with observations and plans. Her growing knowledge doesn't go unnoticed—teachers compliment her dedication, and a few parents even inquire about buying her honey. For a girl who's been through grief, these small wins feel enormous.

One afternoon, while sharing her honey at lunch, a boy named Patch takes interest. With an eyepatch over one eye and a mischievous grin, he stands out just as much as she does. Patch is curious—not just about the honey but about the bees and the whole process. Saint is cautious at first, unsure of his intentions, but his humor begins to chip away at her defenses. Their first conversation is awkward but charming, filled with jokes about pirate treasure and bee stings. Over the next few weeks, he becomes a regular presence near her locker, asking questions about drones and nectar. It feels new—refreshing—to share something she loves with someone her age who genuinely wants to understand it. Slowly, she starts to look forward to these interactions.

The chapter takes a playful turn when Patch exaggerates their friendship during a run-in with Norma. "She's letting me name one of the bees," he claims with a laugh, prompting a furrowed brow from Norma and a sharp glance at Saint. Though the misunderstanding makes her blush, Saint can't help but find the moment amusing. She defends herself with an eye roll and a quick change of subject, but the incident lingers. Norma's protectiveness is nothing new, but it sometimes feels like a wall between Saint and the rest of the world. Even so, Saint is learning to navigate these moments—balancing her grandmother's concerns with her own growing need for independence and connection.

By the chapter's end, the beehive is thriving, producing frames of golden honey that glisten under the late summer sun. Saint, though still struggling with loneliness, feels a new sense of direction. Beekeeping teaches her patience, care, and resilience. It becomes a metaphor for rebuilding—a gentle reminder that even in a season of

sorrow, something sweet can still be made. And for the first time since moving to Pinehill, she begins to believe that her life, like her hive, has the potential to grow into something beautiful and strong.

