

The Empty Hive

THE CASE FILE

Nine hives stand in the home yard, and none opens but under its own slip, one task to a slip: feed dosing, which draws the treatment syrup; frame wiring, which pays out the spool; hive wrapping, which closes the burlap. A cracked frame lay in the grass, swarm gone; every hand here cracks one. The rack bands the nine by the kit drawn, three to a kit, and fuel ash rides every kit there.

Bellows tins: Hadley feed dosing, Ravenel frame wiring, Hadley hive wrapping. Capping forks: Ravenel feed dosing, Sturdivant frame wiring, Hadley hive wrapping. Frame lifters: Ravenel feed dosing, Sturdivant frame wiring, Marlowe hive wrapping. The outyard round falls to one hand a week on the truck book, which draws no rack; Sturdivant had it last, two dosings. The lab returns two lines: what killed him, and the kit that slip drew.

THE VICTIM	FOUND AT	TIME	APPARENT CAUSE
Alder Coswell, apiary owner	The clearing between rows four	6:40 p.m.	Undetermined

THE SUSPECTS

1

DELIA RAVENEL

Yard keeper, brood rows

Motive: Coswell had signed her queen-rearing lease over to a broker.

Alibi: "I was down at the pump house." The water log stamps her draw at 6:12 and the fill at 6:51. A draw fixes the pump, not the row back.

2

CORBIN HADLEY

Yard keeper, honey house

Motive: Coswell had opened an audit on the drums he had sold off the book.

Alibi: "I was banding drums in the honey house." The drum tally carries his mark on nine. A tally counts drums, never an hour.

3

WYNN STURDIVANT

Yard keeper, wax room

Motive: Coswell had cut him out of the wax contract he had brought in.

Alibi: "I was stacking the truck at the bay." The truck book logs his gate-in at 6:18. A gate time fixes the truck, not the man.

4

IRIS MARLOWE

Yard keeper, queen rows

Motive: Coswell had reported her queen shipments to the state inspector.

Alibi: "I was grafting cells in the queen room." Her graft sheet is dated and signed but carries no clock time. A date fixes a day, not an hour.

N	A	U	A	E	S	G	N	I	P	P	A	C	V
M	X	N	X	M	R	S	I	L	O	P	O	R	P
D	G	J	A	U	U	E	X	P	O	S	U	R	E
R	G	N	K	P	S	A	B	X	L	W	E	T	H
O	N	L	I	W	H	B	R	U	M	B	B	W	T
W	I	G	W	R	W	Y	M	T	M	P	N	G	O
N	T	H	N	O	E	G	L	O	T	U	B	N	M
I	T	V	G	I	U	H	C	A	C	N	T	S	X
N	O	Q	Q	M	G	E	T	B	X	R	U	A	A
G	R	C	M	R	N	N	O	O	J	I	R	L	W
B	R	A	R	O	H	X	A	B	M	W	S	U	B
H	A	K	R	B	O	M	A	H	O	S	T	C	B
N	G	D	S	B	R	O	O	D	N	E	S	T	B
H	I	V	E	T	O	O	L	K	J	T	S	N	W

EVIDENCE 2 - THE HIDDEN MESSAGE

1. BROODNEST
2. PROPOLIS
3. BURRCOMB
4. HIVETOOL
5. CAPPINGS
6. SLUMGUM
7. WAXMOTH
8. NUCBOX
9. DRONECOMB

YOUR LETTERS**THE HIDDEN WORD**

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EVIDENCE 1 - THE MISSING WORD

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| ☐ ANAPHYLAXIS | ☐ SMOTHERING | ☐ BLUNT TRAUMA | ☐ DROWNING |
| ☐ HANGING | ☐ EXPOSURE | ☐ POISONING | ☐ GARROTING |

EVIDENCE 1 - METHOD**EVIDENCE 2 - PROFILE****VERDICT - CULPRIT**