

Chapter XV

Chapter XV opens with Addie LaRue experiencing a sharp contrast to the bustling, energetic atmosphere she has become accustomed to. Alone in her spacious New York City apartment, she feels the weight of James's absence—a presence that had unknowingly filled every corner of the space. The memory of a simple, intimate evening spent with him, where they made grilled cheese and shared unspoken comfort, now feels distant and unreachable. The stark silence of the apartment, accompanied by the view of a muted Manhattan, deepens her sense of loneliness, amplifying the absence that only she can feel. In an attempt to fill the emptiness, Addie plays music, but even her favorite records fail to resonate as they once did. The sound seems hollow, and the once-welcoming space now feels enormous and uninviting, further emphasizing the solitude she now faces.

Unable to find solace in the media that once connected her to the outside world, Addie is confronted with the cold, gloomy weather of the day. The apartment's luxurious but impersonal setup only adds to her discontent, lacking the warmth and familiarity she once enjoyed. There's no favorite tea to brew, no well-worn fiction books to read, and no cozy fire to sit by. This absence of comfort pushes Addie to abandon her attempts at creating a sense of peace within the walls of her apartment. Wrapping herself in a soft plaid cashmere scarf, she steps out into the city, walking aimlessly in search of something to quell the quiet turmoil inside her. Her destination is unclear, but the walk becomes a way to escape the overwhelming emptiness she feels inside James's home, a place that was once a refuge but is now a reminder of her isolation.

As she walks through the streets of New York, Addie is haunted by the fear of forgetting herself, a dread that has followed her for three hundred years. She reflects on the nature of memory and the feeling of being forgotten, likening it to a passage from J.M. Barrie's *Peter Pan*, where Peter forgets Wendy Darling. In this moment of

introspection, Addie feels the sharp sting of her curse, a condition that keeps her from forming lasting bonds and being remembered. Her thoughts take her to the Metropolitan Museum of Art, a place where she feels a connection to something greater than herself. The museum, with its timeless displays of history and art, offers Addie a semblance of companionship, even as she feels like a solitary exhibit herself. Inside the museum, she navigates the familiar halls, finding solace in the stillness and beauty that surrounds her.

As she wanders through the galleries, she comes across a sculpture called *Revenir*, featuring five birds in mid-flight, poised as though ready to take off into the sky. The intricate craftsmanship of the sculpture captures her attention, particularly the fifth bird, which seems to symbolize the theme of return. This moment of connection is powerful for Addie, as it mirrors her own deep longing to return to a time when she felt seen and understood, particularly in her moments with James. The sculpture, in its delicate detail, symbolizes her yearning for connection and a return to a sense of belonging that she can never quite grasp. As she stands in front of it, Addie is forced to confront the loneliness that defines her existence, a theme that runs through every aspect of her life, from the cold apartment to the empty streets of the city. Through this journey, Addie's day becomes a meditation on the transient nature of relationships and the inability to hold onto the things that once brought her joy, a stark contrast to the vibrancy of New York City that continues around her, seemingly indifferent to her personal struggle.