

Chapter 4

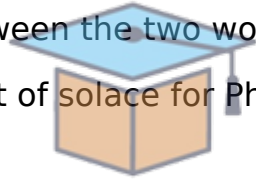
Chapter 4 delves into Phoebe's internal turmoil as she lies on a king-sized canopy bed, grappling with the weight of her impending death. While the wedding reception buzzes below her, she is consumed by unsettling, trivial concerns—like the thought of a bride's dress stained with blood, which shatters her vision of peaceful closure. Seeking an escape, Phoebe tries to use her old Discman, only to be frustrated by the scratched CD that prevents her from finding solace in music. Stepping out onto the balcony for a brief respite, she lights a cigarette, attempting to calm her nerves, though the act only leads to painful coughing, emphasizing her sense of unease and discomfort.

With the day stretching on without any obligations, Phoebe reflects on her situation, each puff of the cigarette serving as a small relief from her morose thoughts. Despite this, the looming awareness of her mortality fills her with the stark realization that life will go on without her, and that people will easily forget her existence once she's gone. As she watches the wedding guests below, their joy and carefree interaction seem both captivating and foreign, and she feels detached, almost judging their interactions from her elevated perch. This sense of separation amplifies her feelings of isolation and highlights her internal struggle as she contemplates her own place in the world.

The solitude is soon interrupted by a knock on the door, and the bride, a figure of authority and expectation, enters and confronts Phoebe about smoking in her room. Their interaction reveals the underlying tensions between them, particularly around beauty and privilege, as the bride vents about her less-than-ideal room and the lavish wedding plans funded by her deceased father's wealth. Phoebe, listening to the bride's complaints, begins to realize how the lack of a loving maternal figure in their lives has shaped both of their perspectives on love, expectations, and identity. The conversation takes an unexpected turn, and Phoebe finds herself empathizing with the bride in ways she hadn't anticipated, as they both share frustrations about the burdens of familial

expectations.

As the conversation deepens, Phoebe starts to sense a strange connection with the bride, whose own anxiety about marriage and her mother's influence mirrors Phoebe's struggles with her past. They engage in a candid discussion about the value of art and their individual choices in life, with the bride confessing her doubts about living up to her mother's legacy and the pressures of fulfilling her father's dreams. Through these shared thoughts on love, loss, and the weight of familial obligations, a fragile bond begins to form between the two women, despite their differences. The conversation becomes a moment of solace for Phoebe, as she finds herself relating to the bride in unexpected ways.



The mood shifts slightly when they share a laugh over dark anecdotes about death and absurdity, with Phoebe momentarily lightening the atmosphere. The bride, sensing Phoebe's hesitation, suggests that Phoebe reconsider her plans, urging her to choose life. Phoebe firmly rejects the idea, reiterating that her decision has already been made. However, the chapter takes a tender turn when the bride begins to floss her teeth, a seemingly insignificant act that nonetheless symbolizes a calm before the storm of her wedding. This simple, intimate moment offers Phoebe a glimpse of companionship, stirring emotions she hasn't felt in some time. It contrasts the isolation she has been experiencing since her husband's departure and deepens her inner conflict about the intersection of life and death. The chapter concludes with Phoebe contemplating her decision, torn between the weight of her past and the faint possibility of hope in an unexpected connection.