

Chapter XII

Chapter XII unfolds with a poignant and emotionally charged evening between Addie and Henry, capturing the complex emotions tied to fleeting moments of connection, paired with the anxiety and anticipation that naturally accompany the beginning of something new and the inevitable endings that follow. As the night progresses, their bond strengthens, and an unspoken understanding between them grows. Both share a reluctance to part ways, their time together filled with a sense of urgency, as if they both instinctively know that this rare connection is something worth holding onto. At the heart of this, Addie is confronted with the impossibility of her curse, which has left her forever forgotten by everyone she meets, yet Henry remains the exception, offering a rare hope that defies her decades-long isolation.

As they make their way through New York City, the vibrant nightlife contrasts with the intimate bond they share. Their journey takes them from bar to bar, each stop offering a new layer of interaction, until they find themselves seated in a quiet corner sharing a late-night slice of pizza. Underneath the flickering city lights, Henry confesses his longing for the stars, a simple yet profound wish that resonates deeply with Addie. She finds herself drawn to his openness and vulnerability, and their shared sense of longing creates a connection that transcends the moment. For the first time in a long time, Addie feels that she's found someone who understands her, someone who truly sees her, and not just the fleeting shadow that the curse has turned her into.

As the night slowly comes to an end, there's a palpable reluctance between them to let go of what they've discovered together. Addie's acknowledgment of her inability to leave a lasting impression on the world, highlighted by her inability to make a mark in the form of a phone number or a memory, exposes the deep burden she carries.

Despite this, Henry's request to meet again sparks a combination of hope and dread in Addie. It's a request that brings with it the potential for genuine human connection,

yet it also carries the weight of all the possible heartbreaks that may follow, especially considering the challenges that Addie faces in maintaining any kind of connection with someone.

In a deeply vulnerable moment, Addie, driven by an overwhelming need for authenticity and recognition, dares to reveal her true name to Henry—a name she's had to keep hidden for so long. The act, though seemingly small, is momentous for her. It represents a desire to finally be acknowledged for who she truly is, to break free from the suffocating anonymity that the curse has imposed on her. Henry, unaware of the full depth of the risks involved, accepts her truth with grace, showing no signs of hesitation or disbelief. In this quiet acceptance, Addie finds something precious, a rare moment where she feels seen, heard, and remembered.

Their parting words, though tinged with uncertainty, offer a sense of hope that lingers as they say goodbye. For Addie, this moment represents a shift in her existence, a change in her internal narrative that suggests that connection, while fleeting, is still possible for her, despite the curse that has haunted her for so long. As she walks away, she is left to wonder if this encounter will alter the course of her life, or if it will remain yet another memory fading into the shadows of time. The chapter leaves readers contemplating the nature of connection, memory, and the human need to be seen, reminding us that even in the most challenging circumstances, moments of real connection and recognition can provide a glimpse of something more meaningful. The possibility that recognition can be a powerful force in the face of despair and loneliness underscores the profound human desire for belonging and understanding.