

Chapter I

Chapter I unfolds in the heart of 18th century Paris, where Addie LaRue, a woman bound by the restrictive gender norms of her time, chooses to disguise herself as a man, seeking a brief, but deeply yearned-for, sense of freedom. The weight of societal expectations is a constant burden, but in her disguise, she finds a fleeting release from the constraints of her true self. Addie's decision to swap her soul for eternal life, a choice that has shackled her to a solitary existence, takes on a dual significance as she experiences the world as both an immortal and a woman. Her curse, imposed by a dark figure named Luc, has forced her into an existence of constant erasure—no one remembers her once she leaves their presence. Yet, for a rare moment, she is able to escape this relentless cycle, wandering through the streets of Paris as a nameless man, free from the stigma of being a forgotten woman.

As Addie enjoys the brief illusion of autonomy, she reflects on the years she has lived, how the seasons come and go without her ever growing older, and the weight of a world that continues without her. During this period of reflection, she prepares to celebrate her rare solitude with a picnic at Sacré Coeur, a spot she often visits to indulge in her love for the city and its quiet beauty. But this quiet moment is interrupted by an unexpected encounter with Remy Laurent, a young, vibrant man whose energy fills the air. The serendipitous meeting quickly escalates as Remy becomes aware of Addie's disguise, but instead of exposing her, he chooses to engage with her, seamlessly adding to the mask she's carefully constructed. They share a delightful conversation, and Remy introduces her to a simple joy she's never experienced before—a taste of coffee, a beverage that Parisian society has only recently begun to embrace, something that represents a cultural shift, one she's been on the periphery of for so long.

As the night deepens, the two continue to converse, delving into philosophical discussions about identity and societal roles, touching on the stark contrast between the privileges afforded to men and the limitations imposed on women like Addie. Still posing as “Thomas,” Addie finds herself confiding in Remy, though not entirely—she shares bits of herself, giving him a version of her life that is only a shadow of the truth. Remy, a young man from Rennes, is deeply involved in the world of literature, aspiring to become a writer, but Addie, unable to read or write in the formal sense due to the lack of opportunities for women in her time, is reminded of her own limitations. As they discuss life, art, and the human condition, Addie is forced to reckon with the growing gap between Remy’s intellectual pursuits and her own cursed existence, where knowledge and experience are relegated to fleeting memories and forgotten truths.

Their conversation takes a brief pause when Monsieur Voltaire enters the café, igniting Remy’s admiration for the renowned philosopher. Remy’s excitement is palpable as he discusses his admiration for Voltaire’s work, and Addie, on the other hand, feels an undeniable sense of alienation—there’s a world she can never truly partake in, a world of men’s ideas and intellectual spaces that seem so out of reach for her. Despite her separation from this world, Addie finds moments of deep connection with Remy, who, although unaware of the curse that binds her, offers her a sense of camaraderie and understanding. Yet, even as these connections spark, Addie can’t shake the feeling that her existence remains out of sync with the world around her. Her encounter with Remy brings to the surface her eternal longing for a life she can never fully live—a life of connection, intellectual fulfillment, and love, but one she can only experience in fleeting, fragile moments. The chapter delves into the themes of immortality, isolation, and the deep human desire for identity, recognition, and the fleeting warmth of belonging. Through her conversation with Remy, Addie reflects on the beauty of transient moments in an otherwise unyielding existence, while simultaneously confronting the painful truth of her eternal solitude and the curse that dictates her every move.