

Chapter XIII

On a warm July night in New York City, Luc and Addie find themselves wandering uptown, their steps taking them through memories of places once visited together—Paris, Florence, Boston, and New Orleans. Despite the tension from earlier, they share in the magic of the city, and Luc, with his ever-mysterious manner, leads Addie to a secret bar perched atop a skyscraper. Named THE LOW ROAD, this establishment is accessed through an elevator embellished with a design mimicking Rodin's Gates of Hell, and it requires a special key for entry, which Luc possesses.

Upon arriving, the ambiance shifts noticeably from the stifled environments they had previously endured to one of open air and lively interaction among the city's elite. The crowd at THE LOW ROAD is a blend of notable figures from various sectors—politics, entertainment, literature—leading Addie to ponder if any among them had made similar pacts to hers or were on the verge of doing so.

As they enjoy a vintage bottle of Dom Perignon, Addie confronts Luc about Henry Strauss, the man she has feelings for, and implores Luc to release him from any malevolent intentions. Luc challenges her, presenting her with a cruel choice: select someone else at the bar to take Henry's place. Faced with the decision, Addie realizes the gravity of sacrificing another's soul for her wishes. Yet, when she hesitantly makes a choice, Luc responds not with action but with amusement at her attempt, suggesting that Addie has evolved more than she perceives.

This chapter masterfully intertwines the complexities of human emotions with the ethereal, showcasing the struggle between desire, morality, and the costs of the choices we make. Luc's enigmatic nature and Addie's moral dilemma stand in contrast to the vibrant backdrop of New York, reflecting on themes of temptation, redemption, and the value of human life and relationships.