

Chapter Forty-Eight

Chapter Forty-Eight Summary

I wake long before dawn, listening to the soft rain against the window. My mind initially feels like a blank slate, suspended between sleep and wakefulness—a solitary being in the dark, devoid of identity. However, reality soon reasserts itself, pulling me back down to Earth. The bare arm wrapped around my ribs and the larger hand clasping my own belong to Liam, whose warm breath tickles my neck. The past events don't matter as we simply wished to be close to one another.

This is the first deep sleep I've experienced in a long while—no nightmares or unsettling noises to disturb me. As I lie in Liam's bed, I try to remember the shapes of the shadows in his room when light filters through. It seems that sleep, which I've long sought, is just out of my reach now.

I notice we aren't alone, prompting me to slip out of Liam's embrace. Barefoot, I tread quietly on the cool hardwood floor towards the window. Outside, Joe perches in the tree, still and silent, facing the street like an immobile statue. My thoughts drift to how long he might have been there, watching, frozen in time. Right as this idea crosses my mind, Joe's head tilts slightly, allowing me to glimpse his black eye, gray feathers, and the sharp edge of his beak glinting in the streetlight.

“Good night, Joe,” I whisper softly before I draw the shade closed, blocking the view of my silent guardian. Through this moment, I feel a connection to the quiet, watchful world outside and the companionship of Liam beside me, both offering a sense of comfort amid the uncertainty that often shadows my thoughts.