

Chapter XIII

Chapter XIII opens in the lively and bustling setting of New York City on October 23, 2013, where Henry, Robbie, and Bea gather in Henry's apartment for an anticipated movie night, which marks the beginning of the Halloween festivities. With the air turning crisp and the city's streets decorated for the holiday, they decide to watch the classic horror film *The Shining*. Robbie, as always, amplifies the celebration, extending the Halloween spirit well beyond what Henry and Bea had initially imagined, both of whom humor him with gentle amusement. The evening, while beginning as a lighthearted way to mark the holiday, soon becomes a space where deeper thoughts are revealed, starting with their Halloween costume ideas. Robbie is set to dress as the flamboyant David Bowie's Ziggy Stardust, Bea's choice is a witty and clever rendition of the Dread Pirate Roberts, while Henry, facing a period of uncertainty in his life, is unsure about what costume to choose. His indecision reflects an underlying issue of identity, which is further emphasized by his lack of a clear direction in life—a situation that leaves him caught between the desire for something new and his current feelings of being stuck in his own skin. Halloween, often seen as a time to embrace transformation, presents a challenge for Henry as he struggles with the idea of truly embracing change.

The mood becomes more playful as the night goes on, and the trio's banter grows lighter. In between moments of laughter, they delve into costume ideas for Henry, with Robbie acting as both a host and a comic relief, enthusiastically snapping photos, even though his camera lacks film. Bea, ever observant, teases Henry about his abandoned hobby of photography, prompting him to reflect on a skill that he once loved but left behind, much like many aspects of his past. The humor in the moment brings a sense of ease to the gathering, yet there's an underlying current of missed potential and unspoken dreams that still linger in Henry's mind. This subtle exchange reveals the complexity of their dynamics—what appears as a casual conversation is actually an exploration of the gap between Henry's present self and the person he once aspired to be. As the group prepares for the movie, Robbie ensures that the ambiance is perfect, carefully setting the stage to make sure every moment is as chilling and thrilling as the movie itself. Yet, for Henry, the eeriness of the film seems to mirror the more personal uncertainties he is grappling with beneath the surface of their jovial conversation.

The intensity of *The Shining* amplifies the unspoken tension among the friends, especially as the movie's most famous scary moments lead to physical reactions that blur the lines of personal space. Henry, having spent so much of his life suppressing his emotions, finds himself caught off guard when Robbie suddenly kisses him. What starts as a spontaneous, emotionally charged kiss between the two is abruptly interrupted by the sound of popcorn popping in the kitchen, an ordinary noise that contrasts sharply with the heightened emotions of the moment. The kiss, both a culmination of pent-up desire and a reflection of their complicated past, highlights the emotional complexity between Henry and Robbie. Robbie's confession that he had been waiting for this moment exposes the vulnerability and deep emotions that Henry had long buried, revealing that while Robbie is ready to confront the past, Henry still struggles with the reality of their relationship's closure. This kiss, born out of longing and internal conflict, forces Henry to reflect on the unresolved feelings he has for Robbie, as well as his own internal struggles about love, connection, and self-identity.

The chapter captures the raw emotional conflict Henry faces as he tries to reconcile his past with his present desires. Henry is torn between his yearning for the comfort and familiarity of past relationships and the harsh truth that some things cannot be reclaimed. Despite Robbie's open expression of his feelings, Henry remains hesitant, unable to fully accept or understand the depth of their bond in the present. The situation becomes even more complicated as the two navigate their shared history while Henry also grapples with his own feelings of self-doubt and uncertainty. The night, initially planned as a simple movie night, becomes a pivotal moment in Henry's personal journey, filled with regret, reflection, and the realization that some connections can never fully be severed, no matter how much time passes. Ultimately, this chapter speaks to the complexity of love, friendship, and the struggle to find peace within oneself. The fleeting moments of

vulnerability and emotional exchange reflect Henry's internal battle, highlighting the tension between his desires and the reality of his situation. As the evening unfolds, it becomes clear that their relationship, while rooted in the past, still holds a powerful influence over Henry's current emotional state, and the choices he must make in the future.