

## Chapter 29: Day 15

The protagonist, Daniel, hovers between life and death, his consciousness fading in and out as he recalls fragmented memories of his past. He remembers his difficult childhood on the streets, his relationships with Tess, John, and June, and the warmth of his family—his mother's home, his father's smile, and his brother Eden as a baby. Despite the pain, he feels a strange detachment, as if his fate was always predetermined. His focus shifts to June, who is crouched over him, though her face is blurred by his failing vision. The chapter captures his acceptance of mortality, underscored by the line, "It's simply not written in my stars."

As Daniel's awareness wavers, he notices a bright light behind June, which gradually takes the form of his mother. She appears youthful and radiant, free from the injuries and suffering he remembers. Overwhelmed with emotion, he reaches for her, and she comforts him with a tender touch, calling him her "little lost boy." Daniel apologizes repeatedly, consumed by guilt and grief, but his mother reassures him, kissing his forehead and making him feel like a child again. Through her golden glow, he glimpses his own broken body on the ground, with June weeping over him, highlighting the stark contrast between his physical and spiritual states.

Daniel asks about his father and brother John, and his mother assures him they are well and love him deeply. He expresses the daily pain of missing his family, to which she responds, "We never left," suggesting their enduring presence in his life. She urges him to return to Eden, who is waiting for him, emphasizing his unfinished journey. Daniel searches the crowd for his brother but doesn't see him, torn between the pull of his mother's light and his ties to the living world. Her words, "Live well, Daniel," serve as both a blessing and a charge to make his remaining time meaningful.

The chapter culminates in a poignant farewell as Daniel's mother prepares to leave, her light growing brighter. He pleads to go with her, but she refuses, explaining that he

still belongs to the world of the living. The metaphor of "the other side of the looking glass" underscores the boundary between life and death, with the promise of reunion when his time comes. Daniel is left suspended between two realms, his mother's love and wisdom guiding him toward a purposeful life, even as he grapples with the pain of separation and the inevitability of his eventual departure.

