

PROLOGUE



*“A detour to your new life
Tell all of your friends good-bye”*

— BROKEN BELLS, “THE HIGH ROAD”



The Corner of Bowery and Rivington—Tuesday, October 5

My life has a soundtrack — it plays in my head all the time. Sometimes it’s on automatic, just a song stuck on repeat from the last thing I listened to. And sometimes I’m like a DJ, making a selection to suit my mood or the general circumstance. When there’s music playing in the outside world, though, sometimes it takes over. Like now.

My father taught me about music, which is how I know that the sound coming out of the bar called Mission doesn’t qualify. I think it’s Nickelback, or someone who was on, like, *American Idol*, but it’s completely beneath me to know for sure. I am a music snob, and proud of it. I’m a New Yorker; smugness is my birthright. But being alone, cold, and hungry — and homeless as of around ten o’clock this morning — has taken some of the smug out of me. I never thought I’d live anywhere but New York — never even thought I’d live above Houston Street.

Maybe if I hadn't messed up quite so completely, one of my two (former) best friends would be standing here with me. Maybe if I'd actually bothered to learn how to drive . . . maybe if my dad hadn't died . . . But no maybes would help: I had, I hadn't, he had.

So here I am saying good-bye to my neighborhood, alone, with no plan beyond the bus station and a really crummy song about love stuck in my head. And of course my stupid mother to go and find. What kind of father sends all his money to his crazy ex-wife and leaves his daughter completely broke? And what kind of mother runs away and joins the circus?