

# Chapter 25

The chapter opens with the narrator grappling with rumors about her marriage to Harris, as word spreads about their unconventional relationship dynamics. While she resents the assumption that they must be divorcing, she argues to her friend Jordi that marriage should be fluid, like parent-child relationships, rather than a rigid binary. Jordi, whose partnership with Mel remains her primary focus, gently reminds the narrator that her perspective may isolate her as a minority viewpoint. This exchange highlights the narrator's struggle to reconcile societal expectations with her personal beliefs about relationships.

During a visit to Jordi's art exhibition, the narrator observes how the gallery space fails to accommodate Jordi's large-scale sculptures, prompting Jordi to announce her decision to quit her advertising job. Their conversation shifts to hormonal changes and perimenopause, as they search online for a graph depicting hormonal decline—a metaphor for the narrator's evolving self-perception. The narrator reflects on how her preoccupation with hormonal shifts has faded, replaced by a detached curiosity, suggesting her personal growth has altered her relationship with her body.

A mundane grocery trip takes a surreal turn when the sounds of the store trigger a vivid flashback to the narrator's traumatic experience in the NICU with her newborn, Sam. The sudden sensory memory overwhelms her, and Jordi comforts her afterward. This episode underscores the lingering psychological impact of past trauma, which resurfaces unpredictably in daily life. The narrator's attempt to reconnect with an online support group for mothers who shared similar experiences fails when she discovers the forum has vanished, leaving her feeling untethered and isolated.

The chapter closes with the narrator's quiet resignation to these losses—both the tangible loss of her support community and the intangible erosion of certain fears and fixations. Her flashback and the vanished online space emphasize the impermanence

of comfort and the importance of cherishing fleeting connections. Meanwhile, her evolving views on marriage and hormones reflect a broader theme of personal transformation, as she navigates midlife changes with both resilience and vulnerability.

