

Chapter 20: Twenty

The chapter begins with Kathy becoming Tommy's carer at Kingsfield, a year after their trip to see the boat. Tommy is recovering from his third donation and is given a spacious but oddly shaped room, which they adapt to comfortably. Their days are peaceful, filled with reading classics like **The Odyssey** and casual conversations, rekindling their bond. Despite the idyllic atmosphere, there's an underlying tension as they navigate their new roles and the unspoken weight of their past.

Their relationship takes a new turn as they begin a physical intimacy that had been absent for years. Kathy initiates it cautiously, aware of Tommy's recovery and their shared history. While the act brings them closer, it's tinged with melancholy, as if they've missed their chance for a deeper connection earlier in life. Tommy's quiet acceptance and the lingering sadness hint at the inevitability of their circumstances, even as they try to lose themselves in passion.

The chapter also explores Tommy's continued fascination with his imaginary animal drawings, a creative outlet from his youth. Kathy notices his meticulous work on a frog-like creature, sparking curiosity about his artistic process. The sketches, detailed and imaginative, serve as a reminder of their shared past at the Cottages. Yet, the topic remains delicate, as it's tied to unresolved emotions and the possibility of seeking a deferral, a plan once suggested by Ruth.

Throughout the chapter, the contrast between their tender moments and the looming reality of their roles as donors creates a poignant tension. The frosted glass of Tommy's room, the sounds of other donors outside, and Tommy's occasional remarks about his declining vitality underscore their fleeting time together. Their attempts to hold onto each other, both physically and emotionally, highlight the bittersweet nature of their relationship, caught between love and inevitability.