

# Eight: Norma

## ### Chapter Summary: Eight: Norma

Marriage often seems like a whimsical commitment, where two people bind their lives together, hoping their connection will endure. Norma reflects on this notion, confessing her envy towards those who find deep fulfillment in marriage. Despite her initial willingness to believe in love with Mark, the emergence of her past traumas strains their relationship. They wed in a small ceremony in Aunt June's backyard in August 1983, seeking jobs and happiness together. After struggling to find work and ultimately landing a teaching job in Maine, the couple settles into a routine filled with quiet domestic life. Although Norma's mother encourages her to engage with their church community, Norma feels detached.

The chapter pivots as Norma announces her pregnancy to her mother, who reacts with joy. However, this excitement is contrasted by the subsequent unease at a doctor's appointment when the doctor notes the lack of fetal movement. The ensuing medical examination reveals the devastating news: the pregnancy is no longer viable. This news plunges Norma into a painful emotional abyss, and despite the compassionate support of Mark, she spirals into guilt and despair. The delivery of their daughter, whom they named Sarah, is marked by subdued anguish rather than joy, leading to her eventual funeral and burial.

In the weeks that follow, Norma grapples with her grief and the silence that envelops her life. Despite efforts to confront the tragedy, she feels an insurmountable heaviness and withdraws from family and friends, seeking solace alone. A brief trip to Nova Scotia with Mark brings fleeting moments of joy, but the specter of their loss lingers. During quieter moments, Norma contemplates her relationship with Mother and the soon-to-be ghosts in her life, revealing fears about the future.

The chapter culminates in a profound internal struggle as Norma admits to Mark her reluctance to try again for children, asserting that the ghosts of her past and the fraught memories of Sarah would cloud any future child. Ultimately, this conversation becomes a turning point leading to tension in their marriage, marking the end of an era filled with hope, leaving both characters to navigate the complexities of their grief and the implications for their future together.