

Two: Norma

In this chapter titled "Norma," the protagonist reflects on her childhood dreams, specifically two contrasting dreams that plagued her since she was around four or five years old—a bright dream filled with light and a darker counterpart. The bright dream unfolds in a car where she enjoys the warmth of sunlight, contrasted starkly by the unsettling nighttime darkness of her other dream, which features a bright moon and whispering owls. She recalls a mysterious woman in these dreams who resembles her mother but remains faceless and enigmatic, leading to feelings of confusion and intense longing.

As Norma grows older, she acknowledges the shift of her childhood dreams into sources of anxiety. The carefree innocence of her youth transitions into fear and uncertainty, particularly regarding her mother's odd responses to her nightmares, which culminate in a pattern of guilt and sadness. Her parents offer inadequate explanations that further diminish her attempts to articulate her fears: her father's reasoning often leads to shame, while her mother expresses a need to control their home environment.

The chapter delves into the emotional landscapes shaped by these dreams, highlighting how they impact Norma's self-perception and familial relationships. With childhood innocence eroded by the burdens of adults' hidden fears and the fracture of family dynamics—specifically the strain caused by her mother's past traumas—Norma is left questioning her reality. Her mother often tries to redefine her fears, attributing them to childish imagination or even suggesting consultations with a minister, dismissing the gravity of the dreams.

Eventually, the impact of grief from the loss of siblings becomes apparent in Norma's consciousness. The dreams serve as a poignant reminder of familial love laced with anxiety and guilt surrounding her existence as the lone survivor. Through a therapy introduction with a friend of her Aunt June named Alice, Norma is encouraged to express her feelings through writing, marking a crucial shift in her coping mechanisms.

As the narrative progresses, the chapter encapsulates the complex interplay of memory, trauma, and perception, all central to Norma's unfolding identity crisis against the backdrop of her mother's mental decline. This relationship is further complicated by a unique mix of guilt, responsibility, and the desire to be understood amidst the tangled realities of her family life. Ultimately, the dreams and their interpretations become a mirror of her emotional state and familial dynamics, suggesting deeper issues concerning loss and the struggle for emotional validation.