

Chapter 28

The narrator attends a potluck with Jordi, feeling emotionally fragile and socially adrift. After Jordi leaves to move her car, the narrator is approached by Tara, a former assistant to the elusive Arkanda, who reveals a surprising connection: Arkanda had reached out due to their shared experience with Fetal-maternal Hemorrhage (FMH). Tara explains that Arkanda's nanny, Jess, facilitated this connection, leaving the narrator stunned by the revelation and the unexpected personal link to the celebrity. This encounter shifts the narrator's focus from their recent breakup to the looming mystery of Arkanda's intentions.

With Tara and Liza's help, a meeting with Arkanda is arranged, though the narrator remains wary of another cancellation. The choice of location—a discreet motel in Monrovia—becomes a point of negotiation, as the narrator insists on its suitability despite Arkanda's team's concerns about privacy. The narrator's emotional state is palpable as they oscillate between vulnerability and determination, even considering a gift basket as a peace offering. Meanwhile, Jordi's obliviousness to the narrator's turmoil is highlighted by her focus on her latest sculpture, a headless woman on all fours, which she describes as a symbol of stability.

The chapter delves into the narrator's internal struggle, marked by their father's grim metaphor of the "deathfield"—a state of existential awareness they can no longer ignore. The narrator's attempt to compartmentalize their pain is juxtaposed with their growing fixation on the upcoming meeting with Arkanda, which holds the promise of closure or further confusion. The green marble sculpture, a recurring but unnoticed presence, serves as a haunting metaphor for the narrator's own fragmented state, both exposed and resilient.

The chapter culminates in the narrator's arrival at the motel, where Arkanda's entourage has already secured the room. The narrator's nervous anticipation is

tempered by a sense of surreal familiarity, as they knock on the door of a room designed to mimic luxury yet hidden in plain sight. The unresolved tension—both personal and professional—hangs in the air, leaving the reader questioning whether this encounter will bring clarity or deepen the narrator's sense of disorientation. The motel, like the narrator's emotional landscape, is a paradox of concealment and revelation.