

The Diver

The chapter opens with a tense domestic scene where the police arrive at G's house, investigating photographs of her daughter that were flagged by a printer. G's husband diffuses the situation with charm, convincing the officers it was a misunderstanding—he had merely complained about print quality. His performance shifts the officers from suspicion to acquiescence. However, once they leave, his facade collapses into violent rage. He shouts at G and their daughter, throws objects, and physically manhandles the child. G contemplates fleeing but is trapped by her husband's threats: he asserts legal control over their home and child, leaving her financially and emotionally cornered. The scene underscores the duality of his character—publicly authoritative, privately abusive—and G's powerless position as both witness and victim.

The narrative shifts to a dinner gathering at a hard-to-find restaurant, where Mauro, Julia, and others discuss the day's events, including a suicide at a museum. The director, who witnessed the suicide, arrives late and recounts the traumatic incident. She describes how the man, dressed in black, leaped from a gallery railing while she was on a call with her ex-husband. The juxtaposition of her ex's venomous words and the man's silent fall blurs the lines between external violence and personal torment. The director reflects on her detachment during the event, realizing a newfound separation from her ex's influence. Her stoic acceptance of death—rooted in her rural upbringing—contrasts with the group's shock, framing the suicide as both a public tragedy and a private revelation.

Conversation at dinner turns to art, parenthood, and societal expectations. Mauro theorizes that female artists like G grapple with motherhood as both a creative and destructive force, citing his own mother's failed artistic ambitions. Julia counters that parental idealization often stems from ego, recounting a mother at a school play who

filmed only her child, distorting reality. Betsy interjects with cynical humor, criticizing sanctimonious parenthood and praising G's unvarnished portrayal of maternal conflict. David, G's associate, offers fragmented insights into her children's lives, suggesting G emotionally distanced herself from them. The debate highlights tensions between artistic integrity and familial duty, with G's work serving as a focal point for these contradictions.

The chapter closes with the director's decision to resign and move to an island, rejecting the artifice of the art world. She compares museums to churches, where art is either sanctified or voyeuristically consumed, and laments how photography diminishes original works. Her disillusionment mirrors G's radical honesty in later life, which stripped away pretenses. As the group orders food, the director's calm resignation contrasts with Betsy's theatrics and Mauro's intellectualizing. The scene dissolves into a cacophony of costumes and clattering dishes, mirroring the chaos of the parade outside. The chapter weaves together themes of violence, artistic truth, and the fragility of human connections, leaving characters—and readers—to grapple with the unresolved tensions between reality and perception.