

# Chapter Thirteen\_Branthor

In Chapter Thirteen, Branthor grapples with a moral dilemma as he confronts Teal's passionate desire for intimacy. Teal, with her blue-green eyes and naked body, exudes an allure that challenges Branthor's resolve. Despite his inner turmoil, he assertively informs her that they cannot proceed, especially with their impending visit to the Temple. Teal, however, counters with an emotional appeal, sharing that she has been waiting for this moment for five years since she sent her blood to the Temple, leading to their union.

Her revelation that she chose this path at a young age leaves Branthor bewildered. The idea that an eighteen-year-old would willingly opt for an arranged marriage to someone perceived as a monster raises questions about her motivations. Teal insists that this connection is special and implores Branthor to reconsider his hesitation. Although he acknowledges the wrongdoings of his brothers in orchestrating the match, he cannot reconcile his feelings about abandoning the life he thought he could have.

As Teal expresses her determination to spend the night with him, Branthor is torn. He warns her about the consequences of losing her virginity, believing that the Temple's DNA matching system would disallow any future prospects. Teal's reaction is one of resolve, as she states that her match is Branthor, dismissing the worry of other potential suitors. Unable to maintain eye contact, Branthor finds himself drawn into her warmth and desire yet struggles with the implications of their actions.

Teal's gentle entreaties prompt Branthor to confront his conflicting emotions around intimacy and commitment. She yearns to experience a bond with him, even if it is fleeting. Her sincere request for a shared moment pushes him to a breaking point. Ultimately, he takes the bold step of pouring oil into his palm, signaling willingness to embrace their shared destiny, even if only for that night. The tension between duty and desire hangs palpably in the air as they prepare to cross the boundary from mere connection to physical intimacy.