

Chapter Two_Teal

Teal's evening begins with the pressure of preparing dinner; she reluctantly makes a chicken stew requested by her father and brothers, despite her exhaustion from chores and a recent plumbing disaster. Teal reflects on her harsh reality since her mother died a week before her eighteenth birthday. Her mother's parting words about sending her blood to the Marriage Temple linger in her mind. This promise led her to secretly submit her blood for an arranged marriage, a step she took to escape her oppressive home life.

Teal's brothers, comforting their need for control, have enforced a life of servitude upon her—one marked by isolation and physical domination. After her mother's death, she was left managing the household alone, becoming the replacement for her mother's care. Her attempts to run away were thwarted by her father and brothers, reinforcing her sense of entrapment within a brutal family dynamic that thrives on fear and violence.

As she prepares the meal, anxiety grips her; she worries she hasn't met her family's high expectations. When they arrive home earlier than usual, tension fills the air. Teal attempts to appease them with her cooking, but her father is already suspicious. The mood darkens significantly when he presents a letter from the Marriage Temple—indicative of the future that Teal hoped for but her family fiercely opposes. In an explosive confrontation, her father physically assaults her, enraged by her secret actions.

Teal endures the attack from her father and brothers, feeling powerless yet oddly liberated by the prospect of marriage to someone who could potentially be far better than the familial "monsters" she has known. After isolating herself in her room, she reads the letter over and over, envisioning escape and the chance for a different life. In the shadow of her troubled past, Teal clings to the hope of finding freedom and the possibility of being cherished in her new future.