

Chapter 37

Chapter 37 begins with Patricia telling Carter that Korey is struggling with drug use. The news hits Carter hard, but he believes Patricia without hesitation, largely due to his own fears of such an issue. As they pack Korey's belongings into an overnight bag, Patricia can't help but feel a deep resentment, thinking to herself that her family's troubles extend far beyond their current predicament. While Carter remarks that no one in his family has had such issues, Patricia is reminded of the darker secrets that her own family carries, including a man they murdered and buried in their backyard. Her mind races as she prays for forgiveness, knowing the weight of the choices they've made.

The decision is made to take Korey to Southern Pines, a psychiatric and substance abuse treatment center. Patricia's anxiety is palpable as she asks the intake administrator about Korey's care, desperately wanting to ensure her daughter is closely monitored. As the facility is described as a place where some children react violently during intake, Patricia's fear of losing her daughter to the same fate as other troubled youth intensifies. At the same time, her thoughts turn to the horrific memories of other children who were failed by the system, fueling her need for a guaranteed outcome, not just the hope of improvement. She cannot shake the feeling that something darker looms over Korey's treatment, especially with the torment she's endured because of James Harris.

After dropping Korey off, the silence in the house becomes almost suffocating, amplifying Patricia's guilt and sense of urgency. She feels as though time is running out, and the fractures in her family are deepening faster than she can repair them. That evening, as Carter retreats into work to escape the emotional chaos, Patricia receives a call from James Harris, further complicating the already fragile situation. He demands answers about Korey, and though Patricia tries to buy time, Harris offers no

mercy. His threats weigh heavily on her, adding another layer of stress to an already tumultuous day. Patricia's life feels like it's teetering on the edge, unsure whether she can reclaim the pieces of her shattered family.

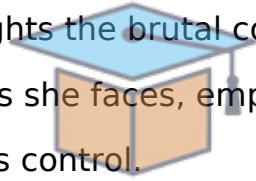
As the days pass, Patricia does her best to maintain some sense of normalcy for her son Blue, who seems distant and withdrawn. Despite her efforts to reassure him and tell him that none of this is his fault, Blue remains silent, lost in his own world. Patricia hopes that she can shield him from the horror, even as she struggles with her own emotions and guilt. When Saturday arrives, Patricia is overwhelmed with fear and uncertainty. To cope, she begins cleaning Korey's room, trying to fill the silence with actions instead of thoughts. The task helps her feel some semblance of control over her chaotic life, but her fear continues to build as the time draws nearer for her confrontation with James Harris.

Patricia's emotional state reaches a breaking point as she dresses in her black velvet dress, preparing for her meeting with Harris. The dress feels suffocating, a reminder of her internal conflict and self-doubt. She realizes how much she has lost and how far she's fallen from the woman she once was, but still, she steels herself for the encounter. When she arrives at Harris's house, the atmosphere is eerily quiet, and Patricia is greeted by the cold, dim light of his living room. As they face each other, Patricia's inner turmoil intensifies, knowing the darkness Harris represents and the toll his presence has taken on her and her family. She tells him of the pain he has caused, but it is clear that he sees her as nothing more than an object to be manipulated.

James Harris responds with laughter, mocking Patricia's plea and rejecting her offers of submission. His cruelty is evident, and Patricia's sense of humiliation grows as she tries to bargain with him, hoping to save her children by giving up whatever she has left. Harris's rejection of her is a blow, but she doesn't back down. She agrees to his terms, offering herself to him in exchange for her daughter's safety, though she knows the price will be high. Harris's cold response to her sacrifice reinforces the power dynamics he has controlled for so long. Patricia's realization that she has been manipulated, but is still trapped in his web, haunts her as she continues to negotiate

with him.

As Harris demands her submission, Patricia is left with no choice but to follow his orders. She removes her dress, feeling both physically exposed and emotionally drained. In that moment, she confronts the deepest parts of her shame and fear, realizing how much she has been broken by her choices. The chapter ends with Patricia's deep internal conflict as she prepares to meet Harris's demands, her mind swirling with regret and despair over the life she has created for herself and her family. This chapter highlights the brutal consequences of Patricia's decisions and the irreversible changes she faces, emphasizing the psychological and emotional toll of living under Harris's control.



Summary