

# Chapter 22

Chapter 22 opens with Patricia feeling emotionally drained, choosing to retreat into her own space and away from the ongoing tension at home. She heads to bed early, sensing that her relationship with Carter is fraying at the edges, but instead of confronting her feelings, she lets him handle the kids while he tries to keep their home running. After dinner, Carter takes the initiative to have a serious talk with their children, Blue and Korey, while Patricia takes a step back, not ready to engage in their domestic turmoil. As the night progresses, Carter's choice to sleep on the sofa further deepens the emotional distance between them. The next morning, Patricia is confronted with the grim reality of a news article about a young girl, Destiny Taylor, who had tragically taken her own life, a child who had been in their orbit. This news leaves Patricia feeling empty and numb, but she is soon drawn into a conversation with Carter that forces her to reexamine their life together.

The conversation quickly becomes charged when Patricia expresses her horror at the idea of a young child like Destiny ending her life, a tragedy she feels they could have prevented in some way. She contrasts this with Carter's increasingly clinical perspective on their own children's struggles, with a particular focus on Blue and his growing fascination with disturbing topics like Holocaust footage. Patricia is furious that Carter seems to be dismissing the gravity of Destiny's death in favor of critiquing their children's behavior. When Carter insists that his offer of medication—Prozac—could "fix" her, Patricia feels a wave of frustration and powerlessness. Carter's suggestion feels like another attempt to control her, masking his own inability to confront the emotional disarray in their family. She finds herself questioning the depth of their connection, realizing that they are drifting apart despite their shared history.

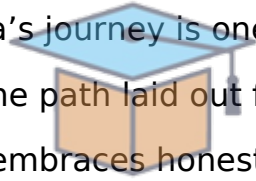
This sense of emotional alienation intensifies as Patricia tries to reach out to her friends for support. However, her calls to Kitty, Maryellen, and others are met with disinterest or avoidance. The tragedy of Destiny Taylor seems to be fading from everyone's thoughts, replaced by a focus on their own lives and business ventures. This lack of empathy from those around her only reinforces Patricia's growing sense of isolation. At the same time, her attempts to warn others about the dark undercurrents in their community are dismissed. Slick, who Patricia has always viewed as a true friend, seems to be more focused on maintaining her own stability and family life than on acknowledging the horrors unfolding around them. Patricia's frustration grows as she realizes that the people she once trusted now view her as an outsider, someone to be avoided rather than supported.

Later, Patricia's conversation with Grace further unravels her sense of connection to those she once called friends. Grace, who Patricia believed would understand the gravity of their situation, turns defensive, brushing off Patricia's concerns as overdramatic. Grace's refusal to acknowledge the significance of Destiny's death and her focus on maintaining a facade of normalcy only deepens Patricia's sense of betrayal. The confrontation leaves Patricia feeling as though she is the only one willing to confront the painful truths about the world around them. As the conversation deteriorates, Patricia is forced to confront the uncomfortable reality that she might be standing alone in her fight against the apathy that has taken over her life and the lives of those she loves.

Patricia's emotional journey intensifies as she returns home, where she faces yet another painful interaction with her daughter Korey. The tension in the house is palpable, and Patricia, driven by a mix of frustration and helplessness, lashes out, attempting to assert control over a situation that feels increasingly out of her hands. She realizes that she is stuck in a cycle of reaction and suppression, unable to break free from the constraints placed on her by Carter and the weight of her own unresolved feelings. Her desire to break free from this toxic pattern is clear, but as the Prozac sits on the table, Patricia is forced to confront the grim possibility that her only

way forward may be through the very pill Carter has offered her—a lifeline to stability, but one that also represents another form of control.

The chapter concludes with Patricia standing at a crossroads. She is caught between the desire to maintain her family's façade of normalcy and the need to acknowledge the deep emotional scars that have been left unaddressed for too long. Her internal conflict is palpable as she grapples with the pressure to conform to Carter's vision of what her life should be versus the reality of the trauma that continues to haunt her. It is clear that Patricia's journey is one of self-discovery, where she must decide whether to continue down the path laid out for her or to break free and forge a new way forward—one that embraces honesty and healing, no matter the cost.



Summary