

Chapter 5: Teal

Chapter 5 delves into Teal's discomfort as she finds herself at the center of attention during a gathering, hidden within a birthday cake. Everyone's gaze is fixed on her, making the situation all the more embarrassing, and she silently wishes for Branthor to acknowledge her as his bride. As she struggles to fit in amidst the celebration, she feels displaced, her heart pounding with both excitement and anxiety. When Branthor steps toward her, his deep green eyes scan her with a look that mirrors her own discomfort. He offers his hand, and Teal, feeling a sense of both relief and hesitation, reaches out to take it, voicing her desire to escape the cake without causing a scene.

As Branthor lifts her effortlessly from the cake, his strength is evident, highlighting the noticeable difference in their physical sizes. Teal, small and delicate in comparison to his towering presence, can't help but be both fascinated and slightly overwhelmed by his figure. Branthor, a grendel with striking dark hair and those intense green eyes, possesses a commanding presence, which both draws Teal in and makes her question her own position. She struggles with how she views him—his beauty is undeniable, but his physical dominance and strength are intimidating, leaving her feeling small and unsure of herself.

Their interaction is filled with awkward pauses as they navigate the newness of their relationship, unsure of how to move forward. Branthor tries to make her feel comfortable, even offering a chair for her to sit in, but the moment becomes unexpectedly comical when he chooses one that's much too high for her. They share a brief, light-hearted laugh, but it helps break the tension, and Teal begins to acclimate to her new environment. As the conversation shifts, Teal is introduced to the other women in the family, such as Nova and Maren, who immediately make her feel welcome. The genuine warmth they extend helps ease her anxiety, making the transition into this new family feel less daunting.

The atmosphere around the table is filled with laughter and lively chatter, allowing Teal to relax and observe the bond between the women. The sense of community she experiences is a stark contrast to what she has known in the past, and she finds herself yearning to belong in this new world. Her desire to connect with Branthor deepens as she sees the genuine affection between the people around her. However, despite the warmth and camaraderie, she still feels a quiet fear about her place in the family and her future with Branthor. She longs for reassurance from him, hoping that their relationship will grow into something deeper.

Amidst the joyful conversations and delicious food, Teal can't shake the feeling that Branthor is not fully present, his quiet demeanor making her uneasy. His preoccupied expressions raise doubts in her mind, leaving her wondering about the true nature of their marriage and whether it will last. The memory of the marriage contract signed by his brother Kairos looms in her mind, a reminder of the obligations they both face and the uncertainty of their future together. Branthor's behavior makes Teal question her role in this relationship, and she starts to wonder if the connection they share is as solid as it seems.

As the evening continues, Teal reflects on her emotions, torn between the warmth of the new family she's joined and the lingering doubt about her future with Branthor. The sense of belonging that she craves remains elusive, and the uncertainty of what lies ahead weighs heavily on her heart. Despite the growing affection she feels for Branthor, she can't ignore the lingering questions about their marriage and the role that the contract plays in shaping their future. This chapter portrays the complexity of Teal's emotions, as she navigates the challenges of adjusting to a new life while grappling with the uncertainty of her relationship with Branthor.