

Chapter 12: Teal

Chapter 12 begins with Teal sharing an evening in the kitchen with Branthor, where they face the humorous challenge of using his oversized cooking equipment. As they prepare the meal together, their playful banter reveals an undercurrent of tension related to their unconventional arrangement. Teal, noticing that Branthor doesn't have the specialized utensils that his sisters-in-law use, gently inquires about it, and they both laugh, acknowledging in a light-hearted exchange that he never expected to have a human bride. Despite the levity, the comment hints at deeper feelings about their unique situation, with Teal realizing the subtle complexities of their bond.

Throughout the evening, Teal reflects on her own habits, particularly the social taboo of licking spoons while cooking, which she questions after seeing Branthor casually indulge in the act. Their teasing escalates as Branthor's playful behavior becomes increasingly charming, and Teal feels herself drawn to him, especially when he licks the spoon clean, igniting unexpected desires in her. The kitchen, once filled with laughter, shifts to an intimate space where attraction begins to build between them, leaving Teal more aware of her feelings for Branthor. The connection they share seems to grow with every playful interaction, yet she senses that Branthor remains hesitant about their relationship, unsure of fully embracing their chemistry.

The evening takes on a more romantic tone when they share a meal of spaghetti and meatballs on the back porch, surrounded by soft garden lights. As they enjoy the meal, Teal becomes more attuned to Branthor's reluctance to acknowledge their potential relationship, despite their evident chemistry. She can't help but notice the irony of their situation—while their DNA suggests compatibility, Branthor still seems unsure about taking the next step. This moment of intimacy contrasts with the emotional distance Branthor maintains, leaving Teal to wonder about his true feelings and why he resists the connection that seems so natural between them.

As the night unfolds, Teal grows increasingly tired but feels a sense of reluctance about retreating to her own bedroom, where the reality of the next day's expectations at the Temple weighs heavily on her mind. Instead of going to bed, she takes a bold step by sneaking into Branthor's bedroom, slipping into his sheets without clothes, in an attempt to shift the mood and create a more intimate atmosphere. The decision feels daring, but Teal is driven by her desire to get closer to him, to test the boundaries of their relationship, and to confront the tension that hangs between them. When Branthor finds her in his bed, a mix of embarrassment and attraction fills the air, as they both try to navigate this unexpected turn in their relationship.



Their flirtatious exchange continues as Teal teases him about the comfort of his bed, and the playful banter takes a deeper turn when they discuss a mysterious oil Branthor mentions. Branthor explains that this oil is designed to help couples with significant size differences, subtly acknowledging the physical challenges their relationship might face. This conversation, while lighthearted at first, reveals more about their vulnerability and the obstacles they might encounter. Teal, intrigued by the oil's effects and the way Branthor speaks of it, expresses a desire to understand its purpose and how it feels. Branthor, though conflicted, is undeniably drawn to her, and the shared moment feels like a crossroads in their relationship, one where both are forced to confront the complexities of their physical and emotional connection.

The chapter intertwines moments of humor, romance, and deepening tension, reflecting the evolving dynamics between Teal and Branthor. The playful nature of their interactions contrasts with the underlying emotional stakes, as both characters struggle with the expectations placed upon them in their arranged marriage. Teal, despite the challenges, grows more determined to act on her feelings, signaling that the emotional stakes in their relationship are only becoming more significant. This chapter sets the stage for future growth in their connection, highlighting the internal conflicts and desires that will shape their journey together.