

Chapter 66

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I didn't let Lucien's declaration sink in.

Nesta, however, whirled on him. "She is no such thing," she said, and shoved him again.

Lucien didn't move an inch. His face was pale as death as he stared at Elain. My sister said nothing, the iron ring glinting dully on her finger.

The King of Hybern murmured, "Interesting. So very interesting." He turned to the queens. "See? I showed you not once, but twice that it is safe. Who should like to be Made first? Perhaps you'll get a handsome Fae lord as your mate, too."

The youngest queen stepped forward, her eyes indeed darting between all the Fae men assembled. As if they were hers for the picking.

The king chuckled. "Very well, then."

Hate flooded me, so violent I had no control over it, no song in my heart but its war-cry. I was going to kill them. I was going to kill all of them—

"If you're so willing to hand out bargains," Rhys suddenly said, rising to his feet and tugging me with him, "perhaps I'll make one with you."

"Oh?"

Rhys shrugged.

No. No more bargains—no more sacrifices. No more giving himself away piece by piece.

No more.

And if the king refused, if there was nothing to do but watch my friends die ...

I could not accept it. I could not endure it—not that.

And for Rhys, for the family I'd found ... They had not needed me—not really. Only to nullify the Cauldron.

I had failed them. Just as I had failed my sisters, whose lives I'd now shattered ...

I thought of that ring waiting for me at home. I thought of the ring on Elain's finger, from a man who would now likely hunt her down and kill her. If Lucien let her leave at all.

I thought of all the things I wanted to paint—and never would.

But for them—for my family both of blood and my own choosing, for my mate ... The idea that hit me did not seem so frightening.

And so I was not afraid.

I dropped to my knees in a spasm, gripping my head as I gnashed my teeth and sobbed, sobbed and panted, pulling at my hair—

The fist of that spell didn't have time to seize me again as I exploded past it.

Rhys reached for me, but I unleashed my power, a flash of that white, pure light, all that could escape with the damper from the king's spell. A flash of the light that was only for Rhys, only because of Rhys. I hoped he understood.

It erupted through the room, the gathered force hissing and dropping back.

Even Rhys had frozen—the king and queens openmouthed. My sisters and Lucien had whirled, too.

But there, deep within Day's light ... I gleaned it. A purifying, clear power.

Cursebreaker—spellbreaker. The light wiped through every physical trapping, showing me the snarls of spells and glamours, showing me the way through ... I burned brighter, looking, looking—

Buried inside the bone-walls of the castle, the wards were woven strong.

I sent that blinding light flaring once more—a distraction and sleight of hand as I severed the wards at their ancient arteries.

Now I only had to play my part.

The light faded, and I was curled on the floor, head in my hands.

Silence. Silence as they all gawked at me.

Even Jurian had stopped gloating from where he now leaned against the wall.

But my eyes were only on Tamlin as I lowered my hands, gulping down air, and blinked. I looked at the host and the blood and the Night Court, and then finally back at him as I breathed, “Tamlin?”

He didn’t move an inch. Beyond him, the king gaped at me. Whether he knew I’d ripped his wards wide open, whether he knew it was intentional, was not my concern—not yet.

I blinked again, as if clearing my head. “Tamlin?” I peered at my hands, the blood, and when I beheld Rhys, when I saw my grim-faced friends, and my drenched, immortal sisters—

There was nothing but shock and confusion on Rhys’s face as I scrambled back from him.

Away from them. Toward Tamlin. “Tamlin,” I managed to say again.

Lucien’s eye widened as he stepped between me and Elain. I whirled on the King of Hybern. “Where—” I again faced Rhysand. “What did you do to me,” I breathed, low and guttural. Backing toward Tamlin. “What did you do?”

Get them out. Get my sisters out.

Play—please play along. Please—

There was no sound, no shield, no glimmer of feeling in our bond. The king’s power had blocked it out too thoroughly. There was nothing I could do against it, Cursebreaker or no.

But Rhys slid his hands into his pockets as he purred, “How did you get free?”

“What?” Jurian seethed, pushing off the wall and storming toward us.

But I turned toward Tamlin and ignored the features and smell and clothes that were all wrong. He watched me warily. “Don’t let him take me again, don’t let him—don’t—”

I couldn't keep the sobs from shuddering out, not as the full force of what I was doing hit me.

"Feyre," Tamlin said softly. And I knew I had won.

I sobbed harder.

Get my sisters out, I begged Rhys through the silent bond. I ripped the wards open for you—all of you. Get them out.

"Don't let him take me," I sobbed again. "I don't want to go back."

And when I looked at Mor, at the tears streaming down her face as she helped Cassian get upright, I knew she realized what I meant. But the tears vanished—became sorrow for Cassian as she turned a hateful, horrified face to Rhysand and spat, "What did you do to that girl?"

Rhys cocked his head. "How did you do it, Feyre?" There was so much blood on him. One last game—this was one last game we were to play together.

I shook my head. The queens had fallen back, their guards forming a wall between us. Tamlin watched me carefully. So did Lucien.

So I turned to the king. He was smiling. Like he knew.

But I said, "Break the bond."

Rhysand went still as death.

I stormed to the king, knees barking as I dropped to the floor before his throne. "Break the bond. The bargain, the—the mating bond. He—he made me do it, made me swear it—"

"No," Rhysand said.

I ignored him, even as my heart broke, even as I knew that he hadn't meant to say it—

"Do it," I begged the king, even as I silently prayed he wouldn't notice his ruined wards, the door I'd left wide open. "I know you can. Just—free me. Free me from it."

"No," Rhysand said.

But Tamlin was staring between us. And I looked at him, the High Lord I had once

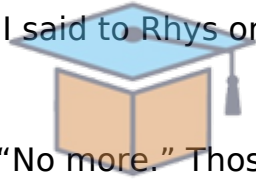
loved, and I breathed, “No more. No more death—no more killing.” I sobbed through my clenched teeth. Made myself look at my sisters. “No more. Take me home and let them go. Tell him it’s part of the bargain and let them go. But no more—please.”

Cassian slowly, every movement pained, stirred enough to look over a shredded wing at me. And in his pain-glazed eyes, I saw it—the understanding.

The Court of Dreams. I had belonged to a court of dreams. And dreamers.

And for their dreams ... for what they had worked for, sacrificed for ... I could do it.

Get my sisters out, I said to Rhys one last time, sending it into that stone wall between us.



Summaryer

I looked to Tamlin. “No more.” Those green eyes met mine—and the sorrow and tenderness in them was the most hideous thing I’d ever seen.