

Chapter 43

The chapter opens with Lorcan still grappling with the aftermath of a harrowing encounter, three days after surviving an ilken attack on the plains. The heavy weight of fear and trauma lingers as they leave the town behind, and the group's survival remains a mystery even to themselves. Lorcan's internal struggle is compounded by the wary stares of Nik and Ombriel, who are still assessing Lorcan's true nature, and Elide's evident distance from him. The lingering sense of danger and the unspoken questions about their ordeal set a tense, uncertain tone for their journey forward.

As they reach a small, neglected town, Lorcan observes the environment and the people with a mixture of curiosity and guardedness. Elide's cautious exploration of the town reveals her perceptiveness and her understanding of what storms symbolize—inevitably leading to confinement and the spread of gossip and news. Lorcan's protective instincts surface as he follows her, sensing the impending storm both literally and metaphorically, and contemplating the hidden threats that might be lurking in the shadows, including the possible training of ilken against powerful enemies like Aelin Galathynius.

The narrative shifts to their time inside a dilapidated tavern, where Lorcan's imposing presence contrasts with Elide's sharp, calculated demeanor. While Lorcan is instinctively alert to his surroundings, he recognizes Elide's skill at observing and gathering intelligence. Her calm, unbothered attitude and her command to him to drink suggest her confidence and strategic mindset. Lorcan reflects on her potential usefulness to Maeve and fears what she might be forced to do if she falls into the hands of more manipulative powers, pondering her future as a spy or courtier in a dangerous political landscape.

The chapter concludes with Elide's sudden interruption of the conversation, revealing her awareness of recent events—specifically, the fall of Rifthold—an incident already

known to Lorcan. Her assertiveness and sharp wit highlight her resourcefulness and determination to stay informed despite the chaos surrounding them. Meanwhile, Lorcan's internal thoughts underscore his complex feelings towards her—admiration mixed with concern about her vulnerability and the perilous path she is navigating in a world filled with treacherous alliances and hidden dangers.

