

Chapter 27: Tamlin and Farewell

Chapter 27—the silence after the storm was deafening, settling over the manor like a veil of unspoken words and fractured emotions. The remnants of Tamlin's fury lingered in the air, a silent testament to the chaos that had erupted within these once-tranquil halls. My eyes traced the shifting patterns of moonlight against the walls, seeking comfort in its steady indifference, yet finding none. The weight of what had transpired pressed against my chest, an invisible force that left me hollow and disoriented.

Dinner had come and gone, but I had not the heart to sit at the table and face the wreckage of what we had become. My sanctuary—the paints, the canvases, the quiet moments of escape—lay untouched, as if they too had been tainted by the storm of emotions that had passed through. The house, usually alive with whispered conversations and quiet companionship, felt lifeless, haunted by the echoes of a fury too powerful to ignore. Every creaking floorboard, every sigh of wind against the windows, only reinforced the loneliness settling deep in my bones.

The knowledge of Amarantha's looming presence, the shadow she cast over Prythian, had become an inescapable weight. Rhysand's words had planted a seed of fear within me, a realization that I had been blind to the greater forces at play. The idea that Tamlin, a High Lord of unfathomable strength, was powerless against her sent chills down my spine. What could I—a mere human—possibly do against a force so ancient and ruthless? The answer clawed at the edges of my mind, the inevitability of it tightening like a vice around my heart.

Tamlin's sudden presence shattered my spiral of thoughts, his arrival like a breath of wind through suffocating stillness. His golden eyes, usually alight with determination, now held something more fragile—resignation, sorrow, and a desperation he struggled to mask. The weight of unspoken truths stretched between us, heavy and suffocating.

The admission of his powerlessness, of the inevitability of what was to come, made the walls around my heart tremble. His need to protect me warred against my unwillingness to leave him, an impossible choice set before us like a cruel joke played by fate.

His hands, once steady and unwavering, now trembled as they reached for me, as if the very act of touching me would make the reality of our separation more bearable. The idea that distance was the only way to keep me safe, that leaving was the best form of protection, cut through me like a blade. This was no mere parting—this was an exodus forced upon us by the whims of power beyond our control. It was a sacrifice neither of us wanted to make, but one we both knew was necessary.

For a fleeting moment, defiance sparked between us, a desperate refusal to let fate dictate the end of what we had found in each other. The world outside could crumble, the forces of darkness could loom closer, but within this embrace, within the fragile space of our connection, nothing else existed. The press of his lips against mine was not just a kiss—it was a vow, a silent plea against the cruelty of separation. If this was to be our last moment, then we would make it count.

The night stretched on, each breath between us measured, each touch memorized as if etching our presence into the other's soul. When the dawn finally arrived, it carried with it the inevitable acceptance neither of us had wanted to acknowledge. The time for arguments had passed, replaced now by quiet resignation and a hope neither of us dared voice aloud. Even as I prepared to leave, as the final words between us remained trapped in my throat, I held onto the promise that this was not the end.

The future loomed uncertain, riddled with dangers I could scarcely comprehend, yet even as I stepped away, I carried the knowledge that love, no matter how fragile, could endure even the cruelest of partings. The sun rose behind me, casting a golden glow over the manor, over the world I was being forced to leave behind. And though my body moved forward, my heart remained tethered to him, a silent vow lingering in the morning air—a promise of return.