

Chapter 29

The protagonist reflects on the fabricated story of her time with Aunt Ripleigh, who supposedly left her a fortune of gold and uncut jewels. Her father, revitalized by a mysterious healer's tonic, meticulously inventories the treasure, his demeanor transformed from the despair of their past hardships. The family's newfound wealth has brought a sense of vibrancy, though her sister Nesta remains distant and withdrawn, a stark contrast to Elain's cheerful presence in the garden they share.

Elain, radiant and content, tends to her garden with devotion, dreaming of visiting the tulip fields of the continent with her father. She invites the protagonist to join her, expressing a longing for adventure beyond their previous struggles. The protagonist, though hesitant, finds herself drawn to the idea of exploring the world, a stark departure from her earlier life of deprivation. Elain's joy is infectious, and her bond with their father highlights the family's fragile reconciliation.

The chapter delves into the peculiar social dynamics the family faces upon their return to wealth. Elain recounts how their past poverty was ignored by society, as if it had never happened, leaving her oddly nostalgic for the closeness of those harder times. Nesta's behavior grows increasingly isolated, refusing social engagements and unsettling visitors with her silent scrutiny. The protagonist learns that Nesta once attempted to visit her, hinting at unresolved tensions and the lingering effects of their separation.

The protagonist grapples with the subtle changes in herself—a faint glow from her time in Prythian—that Elain notices but cannot explain. She deflects Elain's probing questions about her past, choosing instead to focus on the simple pleasures of gardening. As days pass, the protagonist finds solace in Elain's company, though the shadow of her unresolved emotions and Nesta's distance lingers, underscoring the complexity of their family's newfound stability.