

Chapter 38

The protagonist is tormented by the dark ink on her left arm, a constant reminder of her bargain with Rhysand, as she scrubs a marble hallway under the threat of being roasted on a spit if she fails. The filthy water provided only spreads more grime, turning her task into a cruel game designed to break her. Her physical exhaustion and mental anguish are compounded by the eerie sensation that the inked eye on her palm watches her every move. The chapter vividly captures her desperation and the psychological torture inflicted by her captors.

As she struggles with the impossible cleaning task, the protagonist reflects on the horrors of the dungeon's screams and fears the fate of being tied to the spit. Her frustration peaks when her efforts only create more mud, leaving her on the verge of collapse. The arrival of the Lady of the Autumn Court brings an unexpected reprieve; the water in her bucket miraculously cleans the floor, hinting at a debt repaid. This fleeting moment of relief is overshadowed by her lingering dread and the realization that she hid her marked arm in shame.

The next day, the guards subject her to another cruel task: sorting lentils from ashes in a dark, ominous bedroom belonging to Rhysand. The protagonist's keen eyesight, usually her strength, fails her as the lentils seem to multiply endlessly. The oppressive environment and the threat of skinning if she fails heighten her paranoia. She prepares to defend herself with an iron poker, resolved to fight back despite the odds, showcasing her resilience amidst relentless torment.

The chapter culminates with Rhysand's sudden appearance, his casual demeanor contrasting sharply with the protagonist's terror. His mocking question about her activity in his fireplace leaves her poised to flee, underscoring the power imbalance and her precarious situation. The scene encapsulates the tension between their fraught relationship and the protagonist's determination to survive, even as she faces

seemingly insurmountable challenges designed to break her spirit.

