

Chapter 40

Feyre faces her second trial under Amarantha's watch in a cavernous chamber, where the Attor and other faeries mock her. Tamlin stands silently behind Amarantha, his presence a fleeting comfort. The queen taunts Feyre about her unsolved riddle, offering a cruel "practice" round. As Feyre struggles to maintain composure, the floor suddenly lowers her into a pit, isolating her from Tamlin and the spectators above. The tension escalates as she realizes the trial's deadly stakes, with Amarantha's smug confidence underscoring Feyre's vulnerability.

The pit reveals a divided chamber: one side holds Feyre, the other Lucien, chained and terrified. A spiked grate begins descending from above, threatening to crush them both. Feyre spots three levers and an inscribed riddle on the wall—her only hope for survival. Panic sets in as she recognizes her illiteracy; the carved words are indecipherable to her. Lucien's frantic shouts amplify her desperation, while Amarantha's glee and the faeries' bets heighten the cruelty of the setup.

Time runs out as the glowing, red-hot spikes inch closer, filling the pit with oppressive heat. Feyre's inability to read the riddle leaves her paralyzed, and Lucien's distant position makes his help impossible. The scene underscores her isolation and the brutal whims of Amarantha's games. The chapter's tension peaks as the grate nears the levers, symbolizing Feyre's impending doom and the queen's twisted entertainment.

The chapter ends on a cliffhanger, with Feyre staring at the levers, her fate hanging in the balance. The physical and psychological torment—Amarantha's manipulation, Lucien's peril, and Feyre's illiteracy—converge into a moment of sheer helplessness. The trial's design exposes Feyre's weaknesses while testing her resilience, leaving readers anxious for her next move. The narrative masterfully blends action, emotion, and stakes, reinforcing the series' dark, high-stakes tone.