

Chapter 5

The chapter opens with the protagonist being led by a beastly faerie into the dark forest, filled with dread about her uncertain fate. A white mare awaits them, displaying an eerie calm despite the beast's presence. As they journey north toward Prythian—the faerie realm—the protagonist grapples with her fear of entering a land from which no human returns. She reflects on her forced bargain to live with the faerie, uncertain whether this means servitude or death, and worries about her family's survival in her absence.

The protagonist's internal conflict is palpable as she alternates between guilt over killing a faerie and defiance, believing the world is better without such creatures. She clings to the knowledge that ash wood can harm faeries, though her only ash arrow has been destroyed. Her thoughts reveal the precarious balance between human and faerie realms, with the Treaty offering little real protection. The stillness of the forest heightens her tension as she scans for ash trees, aware of her vulnerability in this unfamiliar territory.

Historical context about Prythian emerges, painting it as a dangerous land ruled by seven powerful High Lords. The protagonist recalls fragmented legends and the grim reality that humans taken across the border never return. She questions why humans settled so close to such peril, despite the Treaty's supposed safeguards. Her dread intensifies as she contemplates the brutal side of Prythian that fanatics like the Children of the Blessed ignore, bracing herself for the horrors she might soon witness.

The chapter concludes with the protagonist oscillating between vengeful thoughts toward her neglectful family and desperate plans for survival. She considers using her hidden knife against the beast, though she recognizes the futility of attacking such a powerful creature. Their tense exchange—where the beast refuses to share his name—underscores their mutual hostility. Despite her fear, she clings to a sliver of

hope, envisioning escape or even killing the faerie, though the chapter ends on an unresolved note, emphasizing her precarious situation.

