

# Chapter 16

The chapter opens with the protagonist enjoying a rare moment of relaxation as Alis, her faerie attendant, brushes her hair by the fireplace. The soothing atmosphere is underscored by the indulgence of molten chocolate, a small luxury in her otherwise tense existence. However, the tranquility is short-lived as the protagonist's thoughts turn to the looming threat of war between the faerie courts and its potential spillover into the human world. Her anxiety prompts her to question Alis about the lack of control over rogue faeries, but Alis rebuffs her, warning against inviting bad luck with such inquiries.

Tensions escalate as the protagonist presses Alis for answers, revealing her deep concern for her human family's safety. Alis, in turn, chastises her for recklessly trapping the Suriel and confronts her with a harsh truth: the protagonist's ignorance is a form of protection. The conversation takes a personal turn when Alis discloses her own tragic backstory—her sister and brother-in-law were murdered decades ago, leaving behind two young faerie children she now cares for. This revelation humanizes Alis and adds depth to her stern demeanor, while also highlighting the slow aging process of certain faerie breeds.

The protagonist's unease lingers as she joins Tamlin and Lucien for dinner, where Lucien's casual revelation shatters another human myth: faeries can indeed lie. This disclosure rocks the protagonist's trust, forcing her to reevaluate every interaction she's had in Prythian. Tamlin attempts to reassure her, insisting they've never willingly deceived her, but the damage is done. The chapter underscores the protagonist's growing isolation and the precariousness of her position, caught between conflicting loyalties and half-truths.

The chapter closes with the protagonist alone with Tamlin, the weight of her discoveries pressing down on her. The once-familiar dining room now feels suffocating

as she grapples with the realization that nothing in Prythian is as it seems. Her journey from momentary comfort to profound distrust mirrors the broader themes of the story—the fragility of safety and the high stakes of navigating a world where even the most basic truths are unreliable. The stage is set for further confrontation and revelation as the protagonist's understanding of faerie politics deepens.

