

Chapter 34

The chapter opens with the protagonist being forcibly dragged by the Attor, a menacing creature, through a cavernous throne room filled with indifferent faeries. Despite her fear, she clings to thoughts of her loved ones—Tamlin, Alis, her sisters, and Lucien—as she is paraded past leering onlookers. The grandeur of the chamber, adorned with intricate carvings and jeweled chandeliers, contrasts sharply with the brutality of her captors. The scene culminates in her being thrown before Amarantha, the ruthless High Queen, who lounges on a black throne with Tamlin, masked and motionless, beside her.

Amarantha's chilling presence dominates the scene, her beauty marred by a cruel sneer and a history of violence. The protagonist notes the bone pendant around her neck, a grim reminder of her brutality. The Attor taunts the protagonist, demanding she explain her presence in the catacombs leading to the Spring Court. Despite her fear, she remains defiant, calculating her options for escape or attack. The tension escalates as Amarantha interrogates her, revealing Tamlin's cursed state and her own twisted amusement at his supposed affection for a human.

The protagonist boldly declares her love for Tamlin, shocking the assembled court and provoking Amarantha's mockery. The High Queen revels in the revelation that Tamlin protected the protagonist by allowing another human to be tortured in her place. This revelation horrifies the protagonist, but she steels herself to confront Amarantha, demanding Tamlin's release. Her defiance is met with disdain, as Amarantha belittles her plea and threatens violence, showcasing her sadistic nature and disdain for humanity.

The chapter ends with a tense standoff, as the protagonist refuses to back down despite Amarantha's threats. Tamlin remains eerily silent, his lack of reaction deepening the protagonist's despair. The confrontation underscores the power

imbalance and the protagonist's vulnerability, yet her determination to save Tamlin hints at an impending clash. The scene sets the stage for a high-stakes confrontation, blending dread, defiance, and the lingering hope that love might still break the curse.

