

Chapter 23: Rhysand

The chapter opens with Rhysand reflecting on the profound emotional and physical connection he shares with Feyre, emphasizing how their intimacy has left him utterly devoted to her. He cherishes the memory of her joy upon seeing the riverfront estate he gifted her, a stark contrast to the somber task that brings him to Tamlin's decaying manor. Upon arriving, Rhysand senses Tamlin's presence in the kitchen, where he finds the Spring High Lord in a state of despair, staring at a dead elk. The scene is grim, with blood pooling on the floor, symbolizing Tamlin's emotional and physical deterioration.

Rhysand attempts to engage Tamlin, noting the eerie silence and the High Lord's lack of response. He mentions his arrangement with Varian to send Summer Court soldiers to Spring's border, a gesture of uneasy alliance. Tamlin's eventual question—whether Feyre will forgive him—reveals his guilt and brokenness. Rhysand's internal conflict is palpable; he harbors deep resentment for Tamlin's past actions, particularly the harm done to his family, yet he recognizes the necessity of cooperation in their post-war world. The tension between personal vendetta and political pragmatism underscores their interaction.

The dialogue delves into themes of forgiveness and redemption, with Tamlin questioning whether he deserves absolution. Rhysand's blunt response—that an apology would never suffice—highlights the irreparable damage between them. Despite this, Rhysand's actions hint at a reluctant compassion. He uses his magic to prepare the elk for cooking, urging Tamlin to eat and survive, not out of kindness but out of necessity. This moment reflects Rhysand's pragmatic understanding that Tamlin's leadership is still needed, even if their personal wounds remain unhealed.

The chapter closes with Rhysand departing, leaving Tamlin to his solitude. His final act—preparing food for Tamlin—is a paradoxical blend of cold practicality and fleeting

empathy, driven by Feyre's influence and the broader needs of their world. The encounter underscores the complexity of their relationship, torn between past animosities and present obligations. Rhysand's actions, though devoid of forgiveness, suggest a reluctant acknowledgment of their shared stakes in the fragile new order they must navigate together.

