

# 14. Voice

The chapter opens with Venli observing the transformed palace at Kholinar, a striking blend of organic and architectural design. The once-boxy human fortress has been reshaped into a grand, conical structure with sweeping arcs and ridges, resembling a plant or crown. Venli reflects on the history and artistry of her people, imagining cities filled with such designs. The palace, rebuilt by the Fused known as the Altered Ones, stands as a testament to the cultural achievements of the singers.

Venli's recent days have been chaotic, accompanying Leshwi to investigate the awakening of new Fused spirits. Leshwi's unease suggests something ominous about this group. Amidst the turmoil, Venli is summoned to a conclave of singers at the palace, where she is expected as the Voice. As she walks, she grapples with mixed emotions—admiration for the Fused's immortality and wisdom, but also a growing awareness of their flaws and her own past mistakes.

Inside the palace, Venli encounters the eerie presence of the Fused, some of whom are lost to the endless cycle of rebirth. She ascends to the pinnacle room, where the Nine—leaders of the Fused—are entombed in stone pillars. The chamber fills with Voices, each attending to their masters. Venli takes her place beside Leshwi, who hovers among the Heavenly Ones, signaling her readiness for the conclave.

The chapter delves into Venli's internal conflict: her longing for the honors she once believed she deserved, contrasted with her realization of the destruction she helped unleash. Timbre, her spren, warns her against these cravings, reminding her of Odium's deception. Venli resolves to find a balance between her heritage and her desire to escape the Fused's rule, even as she marvels at the remnants of her people's lost culture.