

Chapter 17: Part Two - Seventeen:

Into the Wightwarrens

The chapter opens with Covenant, Linden, and the Giants exhausted yet driven by urgency as they ascend the foothills of Mount Thunder. The landscape of Andelain, once lush and vibrant, is now marred by the Sunbane's devastation, with vegetation reduced to sludge and the ground pitted like a battlefield. Linden is deeply affected by the destruction, feeling the world's sickness seep into her, while Covenant appears gaunt and hollow-eyed, his spirit weighed down by the ruin around them. The group presses forward, their fatigue overshadowed by their determination to reach the Sousease River, their gateway into Mount Thunder.

Linden's anguish over Andelain's decay mirrors Covenant's internal turmoil. He grapples with guilt, believing his mere existence causes destruction, and quotes Lord Foul's taunts as if they were his own thoughts. The First attempts to bolster his resolve, arguing that doubt weakens them and that certainty is their only weapon against despair. Covenant, however, counters that doubt is essential to humanity, a stark contrast to Lord Foul's unwavering malice. His conflicted gaze toward Linden reveals a desperate plea for understanding, though he seems resigned to a grim fate.

The emotional tension peaks as Pitchwife snaps his flute in half, a symbolic rejection of hope, and declares his doubt to Covenant. This act stuns the group, but Covenant responds with approval, emphasizing the necessity of doubt. The moment underscores the chapter's theme of grappling with despair and the cost of resilience. As they resume their journey, Linden wrestles with her own fears and the weight of Covenant's unresolved pain, haunted by past accusations and the looming threat of the Sunbane.

The chapter closes with the company navigating the harsh, boulder-strewn slopes under the relentless desert sun. The physical struggle mirrors their emotional and

spiritual battles, as Covenant's resolve hardens into something ominous. Linden follows, torn between love and dread, aware that Covenant's path may lead to sacrifice. The landscape's decay and the group's exhaustion amplify the sense of impending confrontation, leaving the reader with a foreboding tension as they approach Mount Thunder's depths.

