

Chapter 40

The chapter opens with a vivid description of the mortal queens, highlighting their diverse ages, appearances, and temperaments. The eldest, dressed in deep blue, exudes authority and resilience despite her wrinkles, symbolizing experience and strength. The middle-aged queens present contrasting personalities—one gentle and the other stern—dressed in black and white, hinting at their contrasting kingdoms and possibly their alliances. The youngest queens, one cautious and the other strikingly beautiful, symbolize vitality and potential. The portrayal emphasizes that outer appearances and societal roles are secondary to their inner qualities and the power they wield, setting the stage for a tense diplomatic encounter.

The scene shifts to a formal meeting in an expansive sitting room, where Rhysand and his companions arrive to meet the queens. The queens' guarded demeanor, along with their stoic guards armed with oversized swords, underscores the underlying tension and the potential threat of hostility. Rhysand's calm confidence and strategic diplomacy are evident as he begins the conversation, subtly asserting his authority and testing the queens' resolve. Morrigan's imposing presence and her connection to the legendary War add an element of historical weight, heightening the gravity of the meeting. The scene underscores the delicate balance of power, diplomacy, and the potential for conflict.

The dialogue reveals that the purpose of the meeting is to warn the queens about an impending war and to seek their aid—a plea for support from a territory that appears indifferent or unprepared for the coming threat. The eldest queen dismisses the importance of the small territory, viewing it as insignificant in the grand scope of the continent. Her pragmatic, cold attitude contrasts with Rhysand's moral stance on the value of innocent lives, creating a clear tension between their priorities. The queens' responses reflect their strategic and pragmatic approach to war, prioritizing resources

and the larger good over individual lives, which underscores the political and moral dilemmas at play.

In the final moments, the chapter emphasizes the urgency of the situation. The queens' dismissiveness and their focus on protecting their own interests reveal a stark reality: they are unwilling to commit resources or risk their territories for the greater good. Rhysand's appeal to their sense of morality is met with cold practicality, illustrating the divide between their worldviews. The chapter concludes with a sense of foreboding, as the mortal queens' indifference and the queens' pragmatic stance threaten to leave the vulnerable populations unprotected in the face of looming war. This sets the stage for the difficult choices and sacrifices that lie ahead.