

THE HIDDEN PEOPLE

Episode 2.15

"Ultimatum"

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TEASER

154. The Hidden Court, Alder Niamh's study. Stepping sideways arrival.

NARRATOR

The purposes of a challenge are many and varied.

ALDER NIAMH

Ah, trainer. You've finally returned.

SHAYLEE

A litre of freshly squeezed pomegranate juice, as requested, Alder Niamh.

NARRATOR

Some challenges we give ourselves, to become better, stronger, more able individuals.

ALDER NIAMH

Squeezed by your hands, correct?

SHAYLEE

Aye, one seed at a time. As requested by the Court.

NARRATOR

Some challenges are given to others because we believe in their possibility to achieve those self-same qualities.

ALDER NIAMH

Commanded. You do know the Court commands you, don't you, trainer?

SHAYLEE

Aye. As commanded by the Court.

ALDER NIAMH

Good.

Liquid sloshes in the bottle as she takes it from Shaylee.

ALDER NIAMH (CONT'D)

But this was commanded a half hour ago,
and now I am no longer thirsty.

Niamh upends the bottle, emptying its contents onto the
wood floor and rug.

ALDER NIAMH (CONT'D)

Clean that up, changeling, and don't
leave a single stain. The snow-wolf's
fur is an antique from the time of the
old god.

SHAYLEE

And you were using it as a rug?

ALDER NIAMH

Indeed.

(beat)

Do be quick. Alder Odhran will be
arriving at noon to discuss the
upcoming Reaping. He would surely have
some interesting questions for you
about how a historic relic such as this
came to be damaged.

Alder Niamh leaves.

NARRATOR

And some challenges are given simply to
break you.

END TEASER

155. Beach House. Stepping sideways arrival.

SHAYLEE

Fecking dryshite tool of a pox-bottle!

MACKENNA

I didn't understand a lot of that, but
it sounded like Irish for "angry."

SHAYLEE

Treating me like a feckin' freshman,
running around, doin' the messages like
I'm some langer.

MACKENNA

Is any of that slang for "murder,"
because your fingers are red.

SHAYLEE

Wha--no, no it's pomegranate juice,
stained me and about every cloth in a
metre radius.

MACKENNA

Okay, I'll bite: why pomegranate juice?

SHAYLEE

Fuck if I know! I've never seen one of
the Hidden eat anything!

MACKENNA

Is it Niamh?

SHAYLEE

Of course it's Niamh, no one else ever
summons me, even though they all have
the power to. It's just her, sending me
from trivial task, to useless errand,
to uncomfortable position.

MACKENNA

Knowing that I'm going to feel really
shitty if the answer is yes, is she
doing this because of the deal I struck
with her?

SHAYLEE

Yes.

MACKENNA

Thanks for that.

(sighs)

So, she's going to keep hazing you. To
what end? Just to fuck with you?

SHAYLEE

Well, she can't kill me thanks to your very specific wording, but there's nothing that says she can't make me wish I were dead.

MACKENNA

Don't joke about that.

SHAYLEE

I know, it's not that bad...yet. The whole thing feels like a crappy job with an asshole boss that I just can't wait to quit.

MACKENNA

Um, you're a trust fund baby with multiple vacation homes in beautiful foreign countries. Have you ever had a crappy job?

SHAYLEE

Well, no, but I've seen the storyline on the telly.

MACKENNA

Right, well, in not TV land, we only stay in crappy jobs we hate because we need the money. And you don't, so the analogy doesn't really work.

SHAYLEE

But I still want to have the dramatic storming out scene when I finally do quit.

MACKENNA

You've let Riley talk you into watching classic shows instead of training her, haven't you?

SHAYLEE

She's very convincing. Where is the newbie?

MACKENNA

I had her step sideways over to Conley, so she knows an escape route in case something happens here. But then she met Nissa, and had all these questions about computers and coding, so I just...left her there for a bit.

SHAYLEE

Oh, so you can quit changeling-sitting when you get bored, but I've got to work myself to the bone fulfilling Niamh's stupid whims?

MACKENNA

Right, well, you can't quit. You have a contract.

SHAYLEE

Humans break contracts all the time.

MACKENNA

Well, you're not human, and you said yourself that getting out of a contract with the Hidden is impossible.

SHAYLEE

Every time I've said something is impossible, you've made it your personal mission to prove me wrong. Why not this?

MACKENNA

I think I'm rubbing off on you, Shaylee.

SHAYLEE

(innuendo)

Yeah, you are.

(beat)

Fecking again?

MACKENNA

Another summons?

SHAYLEE

Of course it is. I'll be back as soon as I can.

Stepping sideways departure.

MUSICAL TRANSITION

156. Nissa's apartment. Nissa and Riley sit at her computer desk, while Nissa types on her keyboard.

NISSA

So, what I do more or less depends on what I want to do. For example, taking down a site is really simple if you use a Distributed Denial-of-Service Attack.

RILEY

That's DDoSing, right?

NISSA

Yeah, that's right. Just overloading the system with too many requests for it to process.

RILEY

I always thought you needed, like, a bunch of computers and people for that.

NISSA

Not really. I run a client program to multiple handlers, so to the targeted service, my one computer looks like many different ones.

RILEY

But the bigger servers would have some kind of protection for that, wouldn't they? Like another hacker furiously typing on the other end?

NISSA

Not so much that, but if the requests all come from one source, or from too many foreign sources, they deny them before they can overload their system.

RILEY

You're smirking. You have a way around that, too, don't you?

NISSA

Of course I do. Specific client programs that look like they come from reasonable local sources so they're not flagged by security protections. Not an easy thing to fake digitally.

RILEY

That is...you are...so cool! What else do you do?

NISSA

Well, it's a bit more time consuming, but if I wanted to break into a system rather than shut it down--

RILEY

You hack into the mainframe!

NISSA

That's not a thing.

RILEY

You bypass the firewall!

NISSA

Still fictional buzzwords.

RILEY

You...phish for passwords! With a P-H but without the extended jams.

NISSA

Yeah, that's on this side of reality. But like I said: time consuming. You've got to find your target, get past their spam folder, and hope they open the e-mail and the spyware-infected attachment. That's why I usually go small or plan out way in advance.

Alfie enters through the unlocked front door.

ALFIE

(whining)

Nis-sa! Mack and Shaylee aren't answering my texts, and I don't need to see Thomas and Sam playing tonsil hockey again.

(shivers)

Once through a computer screen was enough!

NISSA

I don't know how either of those things led you here.

ALFIE

I'm bored!

NISSA

Alfie, just because you're sleeping on my couch doesn't mean I'm your keeper.

(to Riley)

So, finding the target is easy enough. Most companies have employee contact info somewhere online, including their e-mail address.

ALFIE

But I'll die without attention!

RILEY

(to Nissa)

Do you have to do that manually, or do you have a search program?

ALFIE

Wither away into nothingness!

NISSA

(to Riley)

Of course I have a search program.

ALFIE

Did you name it Tron?

RILEY

Technically, we're the hackers, so it would be Clu, wouldn't it?

ALFIE

Young Jeff Bridges Clu or corrupted genocidal Clu?

RILEY

Young Clu teamed up with Quorra and Yori, because there were not enough women in either movie. And, Clu was young Jeff Bridges even when he was corrupted and genocidal.

ALFIE

The "corruption" refers to the hack-job of de-aging special effects they did in the sequel.

RILEY

Look, the effects were advanced for their time.

ALFIE

(beat)

Preference: original or Legacy?

RILEY

Original, but synced up to the Legacy soundtrack.

ALFIE

(beat)

Marry me?

RILEY

Well, I'm supposed to meet Shaylee and Mack for training in like... 5 minutes ago, but I'm free this Friday!

NISSA

You do know Alfie asked to marry you, and not out for coffee, right?

ALFIE

Friday works for me!

RILEY

Great! I'll leave the planning to you.
FYI, I'm allergic to lilies so keep
those out of the bouquet. Gotta run,
Nissa. See you later!

NISSA

Later, Riley.

ALFIE

Later.

Riley steps sideways exit.

NISSA

You can pick your jaw up off the floor
now.

ALFIE

So that's--

NISSA

The new changeling? Yup.

ALFIE

Riley. Huh, I guess Mack's weird
"instant attraction" thing applies to
changelings, too.

NISSA

No, Alfie, it doesn't.

ALFIE

Huh.

NISSA

Stop drooling, you'll stain my rug.

MUSICAL TRANSITION

157. The Beach house. Riley stepping sideways arrival.

RILEY

Sorry I'm late, you wouldn't believe
the traffic.

MACKENNA

Shaylee's not back yet, so you can't sweet-talk me into watching movies instead of training.

RILEY

I mean, come on, you really haven't seen Changeling? Clint Eastwood directing Angelina Jolie? It's literally like the first thing I thought of when you guys were all "you're not really who they say you are." Hey, what's with all the books? Does the beach house have a library?

MACKENNA

The world's your library when you can step sideways.

RILEY

Holy smokes, I can sneak into pretty much any movie I want that way, can't I?

MACKENNA

No sneaking. You have more training to do. Once Shaylee gets back--

Shaylee stepping sideways arrival.

RILEY

(gagging)

You smell gross!

SHAYLEE

Did you know the Hidden use bloody latrines? Thousands of years of advancement in waste management, and these uppity pricks still prefer holes in the ground!

RILEY

(holding her nose)

Is faeries' shit magical? Like, a special ingredient in a spell or--

SHAYLEE

No, and it isn't made of rainbows and glitter, either.

RILEY

Then why are you reenacting the Shawshank Redemption, exactly?

MACKENNA

Did Niamh order you to clean the bathrooms?

SHAYLEE

With a toothbrush, Mack. My toothbrush.

RILEY

What a mega-bitch. She's like Nurse Ratched, Regina George, and Claire Underwood smashed into one awful person. With a powdered-sugar dusting of Cersei Lannister on top.

SHAYLEE

I'll never be clean again.

MACKENNA

You'll be clean and free, once we break you out of that contract.

SHAYLEE

Oh, found a way around "impossible" already, have you?

MACKENNA

Well, I've been researching--

RILEY

You know there's wifi here, right? You coulda researched digitally, without the fortress of solitude made of books.

MACKENNA

Yeah, well, I did it the old fashioned way.

SHAYLEE

And?

MACKENNA

And every legend about breaking fae contracts is less about breaking and more about loophole finding.

SHAYLEE

I could have told you that.

MACKENNA

Well, what we need is the specific wording of the contract. We focus on the exact words to find the loophole.

RILEY

Great, so did you get a copy at signing, Shaylee? One of those pink or yellow carbon copy papers that are smudged and impossible to read two weeks later?

SHAYLEE

Hidden contracts are spoken, not written. But I remember the words, what the Magister said before I began my training.

MACKENNA

Okay, if I'm right, there should have been a time limit, right? Most of the job-contract lore I've seen is for a set period of time, even if it's something ridiculous like a thousand years.

SHAYLEE

Yes, technically, there's a limit.

Mackenna flips a few pages in the books in front of her.

MACKENNA

Right, so, I'm thinking our best bet is time magic then. Something that bends time around you so you fulfill the bounds of the contract.

RILEY

Ooo, can we time travel? Like, just jump her forward however many years it takes?

MACKENNA

No, then we'd just be missing her for however many years it takes.

RILEY

There's plenty of room in the TARDIS for everyone; we'll just go with!

SHAYLEE

The contract isn't to a set date like that.

RILEY

Oh, what if we just use magic to age Shaylee, like Fred and George in the Goblet of Fire?

MACKENNA

I mean, I don't think constructs can die of old age--

SHAYLEE

You aren't listening. The contract isn't a set period of time. I'm bound to the Court until death. My death.

MUSICAL TRANSITION

158. Sam's house. Sam's on the phone, listening to old voicemail messages. From 206, scene 55.

RON

Hey, Sam. It's Ron. Guess, uh...guess you haven't changed your voicemail yet. Which is totally fine. Just reminding you in case you forgot about it.

SAM

(muttered)

Dick.

RON (CONT'D)

(beat)

Right, so I just wanted to call and chat. Maybe just...I don't know...catch up? As friends? I mean, we were sort of becoming friends. At least, I thought so. And maybe you didn't, which would be totally fine and understandable. But maybe just call me back? Or text. That's fine, too. I'd like to know how you're holding up. And pick your brain about things.

(beat)

Okay, cool. That was it. Short and sweet, you know me. Sitwell out.

Digital tone from phone.

THOMAS

(voicemail)

Hey Sam, its Thomas again. I know you said you needed some space, but I just wanted to reach out and let you know that I'm available if you need anything. Not just about...you know, but anything in general. Shopping, dinner, medical bills...I'm a bit of a swiss army guy, I guess. But, uh, even if it's just to talk, I'm here. Always.

(beat)

Right, honestly, I'm worried about you, Sam. So, even if you don't want anything from me, could you just call me back to let me know you're alright? Or, text me. Maybe stop by the house...hell, I'll take smoke signals at this point. I just want to know that you're okay.

Digital tone from phone. Sam hangs up.

NARRATOR

There are some days where all you want is to be left alone. Former-detective Mulligan has been having more and more of those days, recently. However, the

universe rarely just gives us what we want.

Thomas knocks at the door, waits a moment, and then tries the unlocked handle. He walks in.

THOMAS

Sam, are you home?

SAM

(sighs)

Yeah, in the kitchen.

THOMAS

Hey, there you are. The door was unlocked, so I let myself in. What are you up to?

SAM

Just organizing some old paperwork.

THOMAS

Paperwork from what?

SAM

Just...Thomas, what are you holding?

THOMAS

Oh, I, uh...well, I sort of stress bake?

SAM

I'm aware.

THOMAS

And I was thinking. About you. And how you've been going through a lot. So I made tiramisu...well, actually several tiramisu, and I can't eat all of them myself, so I thought I'd just swing by with one to see if you were home and... yeah, I'm rambling.

SAM

(deadpan)

Tiramisu?

THOMAS

Yeah.

SAM

You thought I'd like tiramisu?

THOMAS

Yeah?

SAM

(like he's a dumbass)

Thomas, what's in tiramisu?

THOMAS

Oh, uh, it's savoiardi dipped in coffee, layered with a whipped mixture of eggs, sugar, and mascarpone cheese, and dusted with cocoa.

SAM

Savoiardi?

THOMAS

Yeah.

SAM

Also known as...?

THOMAS

Lady fingers...

(realizing, then rushed)

Oh. Oh shit I'm so sorry, I didn't mean--

SAM

(manic laughing)

THOMAS

Sam, are you all right?

SAM

(still laughing)

THOMAS

Sam, you're freaking me out. I'm really sorry. I wasn't thinking--

SAM

(calming down)

I know, I know, I just...if I don't laugh, I'll cry, and I've done too much of that the past few weeks.

THOMAS

Sam, please believe me, I didn't think about this and, you know, your--

SAM

My lack of lady fingers?

THOMAS

Can I call it a Freudian dessert?

Sam opens a drawer and pulls out some silverware. Grabbing a fork and the cake from Thomas, she eats a bite.

SAM

Mmm, much better than the last finger I ate.

THOMAS

Sam! That's too dark to make jokes about!

SAM

It's dark comedy. So either laugh with me, or I'll be laughing alone.

THOMAS

I guess that's one way to deal with it. I think I made some pretty inappropriate jokes right after my parents died.

SAM

See? Healthy.

THOMAS

She says, eating a mound of caffeine and simple carbs.

SAM

Healthy for the soul, Thomas.

A few moments of silence as they eat the tiramisu.

THOMAS

I didn't mean to interrupt you if you were doing something. I guess in my mind you're always just sitting here alone.

SAM

And you thought, what, I'd need you to come rescue me from myself? I thought we went over this last time.

THOMAS

No, I just wanted to return the favor. When you came and rescued me on my birthday, I guess.

SAM

Oh. Thanks. No, I've gotten that all out already. Now I'm just--trying to find something to do.

THOMAS

And you settled on tidying?

SAM

No, I...I mean, this is...

THOMAS

Oh.

Thomas picks up a paper from the table.

THOMAS (CONT'D)

This is Ron's obituary.

SAM

Yeah. And the report from the responding officers who found him. The crime write up in the local newspaper. It's just...it's like there's not enough of him. A whole life is gone, and this is what is left. It doesn't feel right to me.

THOMAS

So you're not...you're not obsessing over Cygnus anymore?

SAM

No, not obsessing. Not anymore, at least. Just...trying to think constructive thoughts.

THOMAS

What Cygnus did isn't your fault.

SAM

I just...I keep saying that, but I could never believe it. I still feel so much guilt. That even if it wasn't my fault, I should be doing something now.

THOMAS

And that's why you're looking through all of this? Trying to find something you can do?

SAM

Cygnus is dead, and I killed it; it will never hurt anyone again. Back when I was a detective, getting the bad guy was enough, but now...I'm not satisfied yet.

Sam falls silent, and Thomas moves some papers around, looking through them.

THOMAS

You know, no one's ever really gone.

SAM

Huh?

THOMAS

I got a lot of that after...you know.

SAM

You don't have to keep reliving that for me.

THOMAS

I'm not reliving. It's just a part of me now.

(beat)

Anyway, this idea of legacy, what we leave behind after we're gone. Everybody dies, eventually, and we all leave behind something. Rich people leave behind grants and endowments, parents leave behind children, some people just leave behind the memories their friends have of them. Ron isn't just newspaper cutouts and police reports; he's your memories of him, too. And as long as you're thinking of him, or someone is thinking of him, he has a legacy.

SAM

A legacy...he could be more than that.

THOMAS

What are you thinking?

SAM

A legacy fund. Something with his name on it. To help others, so that no one forgets him, and that others can at least know his story. A scholarship, maybe, for the police academy.

THOMAS

That sounds perfect, Sam.

SAM

Thanks, Thomas. I'm going to get started looking up what needs to be done for that sort of thing: paperwork, and accounts, or whatever.

THOMAS

Would you mind having some help? I know you can handle it on your own, I just want to be useful.

SAM

You are. And if you leave the rest of the tiramisu, you are more than welcome to stay and help.

THOMAS

Absolutely.

MUSICAL TRANSITION

159. Nissa's apartment. Riley's typing on a computer. Nissa unlocks the door and enters.

NISSA

What are you doing in here?

RILEY

Oh, hi! Welcome back!

NISSA

Shouldn't you be training with Shaylee and Mack or something?

RILEY

Nah, their conversation got a little... heavy. So, I just stepped sideways back over here, but you were gone--obviously you know that, but your computer was still on, so I--

NISSA

What did you do?

RILEY

Nothing, yet. See, I had this idea from before, and I found this tutorial on Girls Who Code, and I just finished what I think will work--

NISSA

What. Did you. Do.

RILEY

I just said, I haven't executed the program yet. Anyway, let me tell you the whole idea. So, people are stupid, right? Right?

NISSA

Continue, person.

RILEY

Right. And they're lazy. Even when it comes to important stuff like passwords and security. So lazy, they'll reuse the same few passwords for different stuff.

NISSA

Okay?

RILEY

So, okay, well, some websites are less secure than others: the home-cook recipe blogs, the bro-science fitness forums, the sell-your-homemade-crap-here websites. All of those usually run off of the same web-builder format, which is notoriously hackable.

NISSA

The line of curiosity keeping me from perma-banning you from my digital space is pixel thin.

RILEY

My point. Yes. Okay, if my algorithm works, you plug in the email address of your target, and if they used that email to sign up for any of those websites, the program trolls for the password they used, and boom! No phishing, just a really big net.

NISSA

A net that only works if I have an e-mail address. And they signed up for one of those websites. And they use the same password.

RILEY

Look, sixty percent of the time, it'll work everytime. And it should be really fast, too. See?

Riley clicks the mouse a few times.

RILEY (CONT'D)

Um, give me an email address! What's yours?

NISSA

I'm not giving you my email.
(beat)
Scoot over, I'll type it in.

Riley slides out of the way as Nissa moves in front of the keyboard and clicks the mouse.

NISSA (CONT'D)

Where's the command. Here?

RILEY

Yeah, between the parentheses.

Nissa types on the keyboard, but then pauses and quickly deletes a parenthesis.

NARRATOR

And here, young Riley learns a valuable lesson: never let a hacker near your unsaved code without supervision. Like many stories, all it takes is the removal of one tiny character to send everything else crashing down around it.

NISSA

Alright, there. Show me what you've got.

RILEY

Okay, here it goes!

Riley hits the enter key, the computer responds with a deep, disappointing error message.

RILEY (CONT'D)

What?

Riley hits the key again and again, but is met each time with the sound of failure.

RILEY (CONT'D)

No, no, no, I don't get it. This should have worked! I was a cyborg arm away from SkyNet.

NISSA

Don't worry about it, kid. Everyone fudges their code the first time.

RILEY

I don't get it. I double checked everything and--oh, wait, there's a parenthesis missing.

NISSA

I can't believe you forgot to close a line. Beginner stuff.

RILEY

No, no, I'm sure I did, I just--

(beat)

Nissa, did you...?

NISSA

What? No, of course not. I have no idea what you're talking about.

RILEY

Oh my glob, you did. You purposely messed up my code.

(beat)

I know what this is.

NISSA

Riley, listen, it was just a little--

RILEY

(excited)

Hazing! Oh Em Gee, you were totally hazing me, weren't you?

NISSA

(confused)

Um, maybe?

RILEY

Eeee, I've read about this! It's like, welcoming a person into the group, right? Oh, gosh, you want me in your group? For really reals?

NISSA

I, um, well, uh--

RILEY

Oh man, this is great! I've never been in a group before!

NISSA

(underbreath)

Clearly.

Alfie enters.

ALFIE

Hey, Niss, I--Riley! You're back!

RILEY

Fiance! Nissa's hazing me!

ALFIE

What?

RILEY

It's great!

NISSA

Is it?

ALFIE

I'm happy if you're happy?

NISSA

Good answer, Mr. Proposal.

ALFIE

Oh, that reminds me: honeymoon. I'm torn between Universal Studios and Disney World.

RILEY

Universal, duh!

ALFIE

Yeah, but what about the new Star Wars exhibit now that our Mousey overlord bought out that franchise?

RILEY

Yes, but, hear me out: I can do actual magic at Hogwarts!

ALFIE

Oh man, eat your heart out, J.K.!

NISSA

Mother Goddess, help me; there's two of them.

MUSICAL TRANSITION

160. The beach house.

SHAYLEE

I'm sorry, Mack. There's no way out of this. I'm bound to the Court for life.

MACKENNA

No, no, you're bound until death. That's the specific wording, right?

SHAYLEE

Yes, but maybe you haven't thought of this: I don't want to die.

MACKENNA

But you already have. My fetch killed you. Your contract should have ended with your death.

A moment of silence as Shaylee thinks.

SHAYLEE

What were the words?

MACKENNA

What?

SHAYLEE

What were the words? The exact words you used when you bargained with the Magister.

MACKENNA

"Bring her back."

SHAYLEE

You're sure?

MACKENNA

Yes, it was very dramatic. I said it, like, three times.

SHAYLEE

"Bring her back." Back. Not remake. The bloody, stupid, idiot wording.

MACKENNA

No.

SHAYLEE

Yes. "Back" remade me exactly as I was, with all my memories, but also all my ties to the Court.

MACKENNA

So if I had just said something different, we wouldn't be in this mess?

SHAYLEE

The Magister would have found some other way to fuck us over. Remade me without my memories and experience, or brought me back as a wee babe or something.

MACKENNA

Baby Shaylee would have been pretty adorbs.

SHAYLEE

Ack, I was fierce and mighty from the moment I left the womb.

MACKENNA

Except you were never in a womb, so...

SHAYLEE

Don't change the subject.

(beat)

The solution is right here. I need to die to be out of the contract. And until I'm out of the contract, the Court could make me do anything. Niamh could keep calling me back so I'm worthless at helping you. Any of the other Alders could command me to do something horrible. There's no way out.

MACKENNA

Don't say that. There's still time to figure something out before then.

SHAYLEE

But what if you don't, Mack? What if this is the one impossible thing you can't fix?

(beat)

Mack, if the Court commands me to do something, something horrible, and I can't stop it, you...you may have to stop me.

MACKENNA

What?! Fuck no, there's no way...I can't do that.

SHAYLEE

You might have to. It's the only way if the Court commands me to do something we can't take back or fix. They've made me do it before. What if they targeted something more important the next time? I couldn't live with myself if I caused anything bad to happen to...the people I care about.

(beat)

Mack, I--fuck, not again. Not now.

MACKENNA

No, no way, you do not get to drop a bombshell like that and just step sideways out--

Shaylee stepping sideways departure.

MACKENNA (CONT'D)

Goddammit!

MUSICAL TRANSITION

161. The Unseelie Court. Shaylee stepping sideways arrival.

ALDER NIAMH

Ah. Trainer. I have a job for you--

SHAYLEE

What? What is it this time, hm?
Emptying out all the hearths with chopsticks? Maybe cleaning the windows with my tongue? What now?!

ALDER ODHRAN

The Alders would have you send word to our human agents to prepare for the Reaping. However, if you are preoccupied with other, menial, tasks such as those--

SHAYLEE

Only the stupid busy work Alder Niamh's been sending me off on!

ALDER NIAMH

I was just telling the other Alders how since your search for Mackenna Thorne has given them nothing, perhaps you would have more success with the tasks typically relegated to lesser constructs.

SHAYLEE

And you expect me to produce better results with even more on my plate?

ALDER NIAMH

Honestly, we'd settle for any results from you, trainer.

(beat)

Perhaps we're being unfair, expecting too many results from just a single changeling. Alders, would you approve expediting the search for Mackenna Thorne by sending a Sentinel in place of the trainer? Alder Niall, perhaps one of yours?

SHAYLEE

I've already told you, I can't find her, how do you bloody expect--

INQUISITOR

She speaks false.

NARRATOR

It's all in the wording, Shaylee. The stupid, bloody, idiot wording.

ALDER NIAMH

What, exactly, was false, Inquisitor?

(beat)

Trainer?

SHAYLEE

I...

ALDER ODHRAN

Trainer, I command you to speak true: have you found Mackenna Thorne?

SHAYLEE

(choking, trying to resist)

Yes.

ALDER NIAMH

The rogue assassin is finally revealed. Alder Odhran, I believe we know what must be done.

(beat)

You will bring Mackenna Thorne to us by next nightfall, or--

ALDER ODHRAN

Enough, Alder Niamh. It's time we end this. Trainer, kill Mackenna Thorne, or die trying.

NARRATOR

Some challenges--even if you succeed, you fail.

THE END