

# Chapter 3

The chapter opens with Tamlin's overwhelming guilt after a recent event, which prompts Lucien to visit and assess the progress on a nearby village. The protagonist has been isolated within the estate for over a month, only mingling minimally during Winter Solstice celebrations. The scene is tense, with guards present and eyes constantly watching her, underscoring the atmosphere of surveillance and confinement. The emotional undercurrent hints at Tamlin's internal struggle and the weight of responsibilities he bears, which influences the interactions and the guarded environment surrounding the estate.

The narrative then shifts to a confrontation between the protagonist and Lucien, revealing underlying tensions and secrets. When Lucien attempts to leave, she questions his honesty about a recent fall from his horse, suspecting deceit about his true experience with a naga. Lucien's defensive response and subtle hint of pity expose the complexity of their relationship and the unspoken truths they share. The protagonist's desire to understand the real danger they face contrasts with Lucien's adherence to orders and the rigid hierarchy within their court.

As they ride through the spring forest, their dialogue deepens into political and emotional themes. The protagonist demands honesty and expresses her disdain for pity, while Lucien explains the importance of order and obedience under Tamlin's rule. He emphasizes the necessity of following Tamlin's commands to maintain stability and prevent chaos, reflecting the strict societal structure in their faerie court. Their conversation reveals the tension between personal agency and duty, highlighting the sacrifices made to uphold their fragile peace.

The chapter concludes with a discussion about the upcoming Tithe, a significant tradition for the court. Lucien explains that it is a biannual obligation where all faeries contribute resources to sustain their estate and ensure Tamlin's protection. The

mention of the Tithe underscores the ongoing challenges faced by the court in rebuilding after past curses and conflicts. It also symbolizes the broader theme of sacrifice, duty, and the constant balancing act between individual desires and collective responsibilities within their society.

