

Chapter 3

The chapter opens with the protagonist and her sisters, Elain and Nesta, navigating a muddy winter road to their village's market day. The sisters maintain a tense silence following an unresolved conflict from the previous night. Despite their strained relationship, Nesta and Elain accompany the protagonist, likely motivated by the prospect of financial gain from the hides she plans to sell. The bleak winter landscape and ramshackle village contrast with the tantalizing aromas of rare spices from the market, hinting at both their poverty and fleeting hopes for small luxuries if the trading goes well.

Their journey is interrupted by an encounter with the Children of the Blessed, a fanatical group worshipping the High Fae. The pale-robed acolyte's attempts to convert them are met with immediate hostility from Nesta, who displays an iron bracelet as protection against faeries. This sparks a tense exchange where villagers join in condemning the group, revealing the deep-seated human resentment toward the High Fae due to their historical cruelty. The confrontation highlights the cultural divide between those who fear the fae and those who romanticize them.

The acolyte persists, describing Prythian as a land of plenty and sharing a story of a human supposedly living in luxury as a High Fae's bride. Nesta counters that the girl was likely eaten, while the protagonist privately considers even worse fates. This interaction underscores the chapter's central tension: the dangerous allure of the fae world versus the harsh reality of human experience under their rule. The sisters ultimately disengage, with the protagonist noting the acolytes' privileged cleanliness compared to their own hardscrabble existence.

The chapter concludes with the sisters separating at the bustling market square, where the protagonist begins assessing potential buyers for her hides. The unresolved family tensions and lingering threat of the fae create an atmosphere of unease

beneath the mundane market activities. This sets the stage for future conflicts while effectively portraying the protagonist's world—a place where economic struggle, familial friction, and supernatural dangers intersect in everyday life.

