

Chapter 11

The chapter opens with the protagonist hastily preparing to escape, layering clothes and hiding a stolen knife in her boot. Her father has unexpectedly arrived to rescue her from Tamlin's estate, sparking hope for a new life far away. Despite her father's physical limitations, she is moved by his effort and imagines possibilities like a hidden ship or sold cottage to facilitate their escape. The tension builds as she surveys the grounds, noting the silent house and her father waiting by the hedge, urging her to hurry.

As she climbs down the trellis and follows her father toward the gates, her excitement is tempered by practical concerns—his lack of winter clothing and the mystery of how he arrived. She moves stealthily, avoiding moonlight, while her father surprisingly speeds toward the forest. The protagonist's internal monologue reveals her desperation to flee Tamlin and the looming threat of the blight. Her hope peaks as they near the open gates, but her relief is shattered when Tamlin abruptly intercepts her, his claws and fangs bared in fury.

Tamlin reveals the cruel illusion: the "father" was a shapeshifting creature luring her to her doom. He chastises her for falling prey to the deception, warning of far deadlier dangers in the woods at night. The protagonist's terror turns to defiance as she confronts Tamlin, accusing him of trapping her under the Treaty's unjust terms. She passionately defends her vow to her mother to protect her family, refusing to accept that her stay with Tamlin fulfills that promise. Their exchange highlights her internal conflict between duty and desire for freedom.

Tamlin counters that her family is now well cared for, fulfilling her vow better than she could alone. Though skeptical, the protagonist grapples with the possibility that her sacrifice has secured their safety. The chapter ends with her lingering doubt and Tamlin's ambiguous reassurance, leaving her torn between resentment and reluctant

acceptance. The emotional weight of her choices—and the cost of her loyalty—resonates as she questions the significance of her past struggles and dreams.

