

Chapter Sixty

Cassian's return after five days away marks a subtle but meaningful shift in his perspective and relationships. During his absence, he had been inspecting the Illyrian legions and trying to regain his composure, but upon his return, he notices a significant change not only in the world around him but also in the dynamics between Nesta, Emerie, and Gwyn. The chapter begins with Cassian observing them in a practice ring, where the atmosphere is charged with a sense of camaraderie and emerging strength. The scene sets the tone for the chapter's focus on growth, resilience, and the forging of new bonds amidst ongoing challenges.

The training session reveals much about the characters' evolving states and their inner struggles. Gwyn's focus and determination are on full display as she faces a ribbon like an adversary, culminating in her executing a perfect slice that symbolizes her inner strength and resolve. Nesta's pride and pain are intertwined as she witnesses Gwyn's victory, and her own internal conflict is palpable, especially given her desire to be close to Cassian. The ritual of cutting and crowning with the ribbon signifies a rite of passage, marking Gwyn, Emerie, and eventually Nesta as Valkyries, embodying their newfound confidence and resilience.

Following the ritual, Nesta's internal turmoil intensifies, as her longing for Cassian becomes overwhelming. Despite her efforts to focus on her achievements and the ritual's significance, her desire to be with him grows stronger, leading her to consider seeking him out. Cassian's avoidance becomes evident when he leaves without explanation, hinting at deeper emotional tension. The chapter underscores the complex interplay of personal growth, unspoken feelings, and the unyielding passage of time, setting the stage for further emotional development and confrontation.

The chapter concludes with a shift to a new challenge—the obstacle course designed to test their teamwork and strength. Cassian's speech about Valkyries emphasizes the

importance of unity and collective effort. The women's attempt to complete the course reveals their determination despite the daunting difficulty, with Gwyn, Emerie, and Nesta making significant progress. The scene highlights themes of perseverance and camaraderie, illustrating that true strength comes from working together. Despite setbacks and injuries, the resolve to improve and prove doubters wrong remains unshaken, emphasizing the chapter's core message of resilience and solidarity.

