

Chapter Sixty-Three

The chapter opens with Cassian reflecting on the terms of his bargain with Nesta, which required him to wait a night at the House of Wind before speaking to her unless she initiated contact first. Despite the restrictions, Cassian is determined to resolve their conflict, undaunted by the mating bond or Nesta's potential rejection. His only fear is that she might hate him for it, especially after their heated argument the previous day. He plans to apologize and declare his feelings once she speaks to him, breaking the silence between them.

Cassian seeks out Rhys at dawn, asking to be winnowed to Windhaven after learning Nesta is there with Gwyn and Emerie. Upon arriving, he senses the presence of Nesta and Gwyn at Emerie's shop but is alarmed when Rhys reveals they are missing. Cassian's panic escalates as he breaks into the shop, discovering signs of a struggle and male scents in the room. The absence of the females and the evidence of a violent abduction send him into a frenzy of fear and anger.

The scene shifts to Cassian's horrified realization that Nesta, Gwyn, and Emerie have been forcibly taken to participate in the Blood Rite, an ancient and brutal Illyrian trial. The abduction serves as a cruel message to the females for challenging traditional Illyrian norms and to Cassian for defying their rigid hierarchies. The chapter underscores the gravity of the situation as Cassian and Rhys confront the terrifying reality that the three women are now trapped in a deadly ritual meant only for Illyrian warriors.

The chapter ends with Rhys confirming the Blood Rite's commencement at midnight, leaving Cassian reeling with dread. The abduction of Nesta, Gwyn, and Emerie is a calculated act of vengeance, targeting them for their defiance and Cassian for his support. The stakes are impossibly high, setting the stage for a desperate rescue mission as Cassian grapples with the fear of losing Nesta and his friends to the

merciless traditions of Illyrian culture.



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