

Chapter Nine

Nesta enters a small shop in search of warmer clothing, noting its polished pine floors and neatly displayed garments. She encounters Emerie, a striking dark-haired female with scars on her wings, who offers practical assistance without acknowledging Nesta's fame. Their conversation reveals Emerie's blunt yet kind demeanor, as she inquires about Nesta's needs and suggests fleece-lined leathers to combat the cold. Nesta, initially guarded, finds herself drawn to Emerie's straightforwardness, a contrast to the judgment she often faces.

Emerie shares her traumatic past, explaining her clipped wings as a result of her father's oppressive beliefs. Nesta expresses sympathy, but Emerie dismisses it, focusing instead on her present life running the shop. The discussion shifts to Nesta's financial constraints, prompting her to admit she's been cut off from Rhysand's support. Emerie, undeterred, offers to help regardless, displaying a resilience that resonates with Nesta. Their interaction hints at a budding mutual respect, underscored by Emerie's admiration for Nesta's role in killing the King of Hybern.

Nesta's internal conflict is evident as she grapples with her reputation and self-perception. Emerie's approval unsettles her, as she's accustomed to fear or awe from others. The chapter highlights Nesta's isolation and her tentative steps toward connection, even as she maintains a defensive exterior. The townspeople's wary reactions to her departure reinforce her sense of alienation, yet Emerie's kindness lingers as a rare positive encounter.

The chapter closes with Nesta returning to her duties, still chilled but perhaps slightly warmed by Emerie's unexpected camaraderie. Their brief exchange plants the seeds of a potential friendship, offering Nesta a glimpse of understanding and solidarity. The narrative underscores themes of resilience, trauma, and the slow process of healing, as both women navigate their pasts and present challenges with quiet strength.