

Chapter Seventy-Nine

Cassian reluctantly meets with Eris in the Hewn City to assess his loyalty and gather information. Despite being recently kidnapped and tortured by his father, Beron, Eris appears composed, though tension lingers beneath his polished demeanor. Their conversation quickly turns confrontational as Cassian probes Eris about his past actions, particularly his abandonment of Mor in the woods years earlier. Eris deflects, revealing he manipulated Beron with a mix of truth and lies to protect their alliance, but his bitterness and jealousy toward other courts hint at deeper emotional wounds.

The chapter delves into Eris's complex relationship with his father, highlighting the abuse he endures to maintain his position. Cassian recognizes the parallels between their upbringings—both surrounded by violence—but where Cassian found love and purpose, Eris remains trapped in a cycle of cruelty. Eris's defiance masks his pain, and when Cassian presses him about Mor, he refuses to explain, suggesting only she deserves an answer. This evasion fuels Cassian's frustration, as Eris's actions contradict his apparent desire to overthrow Beron and ally with Rhysand's court.

Their exchange shifts to political threats, with Eris warning that Beron may ally with Koschei, urging Cassian to focus on the larger conflict rather than old grievances. Despite his hostility, Eris's commitment to their cause is evident, as he endured torture to safeguard their secrets. Cassian, however, remains torn between distrust and a grudging acknowledgment of Eris's sacrifices. His thoughts drift to Nesta, his mate, whose strength and growth inspire him, reinforcing his gratitude for the life he's built—a stark contrast to Eris's isolation.

In a final, cutting remark, Cassian challenges Eris's self-perception, calling him a "decent male" too afraid to act on his morals. The accusation strikes a nerve, exposing Eris's internal struggle between survival and redemption. Cassian leaves, pitying Eris's loveless existence but refusing to absolve him of his past cruelty. The encounter

underscores the chapter's themes of trauma, choice, and the possibility of change—even for those long shrouded in darkness.

