

Chapter Seventy-Four

The chapter opens with Briallyn, the antagonist, wielding the power of the golden Crown to halt a storm and assert control over nature. Her dark satisfaction is evident as she turns Cassian into a motionless, empty-eyed statue, revealing her manipulation of events to lure Nesta into her trap. Nesta, horrified, realizes Briallyn orchestrated the capture of her friend Emerie to weaken her, exploiting Nesta's recklessness and emotional attachments. Briallyn taunts Nesta, explaining how she used the Illyrians and Eris as pawns to ensure Cassian's proximity, enabling her to ensnare him with the Crown's power.

Briallyn's motives become clear as she reveals her desire for retribution and power, specifically the Trove—a collection of magical artifacts. She admits to manipulating Nesta into gathering these items unwittingly and now demands their exchange for Cassian's life. Nesta, though shaken, senses Briallyn's deceit and refuses, prompting Briallyn to escalate her threats. Cassian, struggling against the Crown's control, shows flashes of resistance, his anguish evident as he fights the compulsion to harm Nesta. Briallyn coldly calculates the psychological torment of forcing Cassian to kill his own mate, believing it will break Nesta's resolve.

The tension peaks as Cassian, under the Crown's command, attacks Nesta, pinning her down with a knife to her throat. Despite his physical actions, his eyes betray his internal agony and love for her. Nesta, terrified yet defiant, warns Briallyn that killing her will forfeit access to the Trove, but Briallyn remains unmoved, confident she can extract what she needs from Nesta's blood. The scene underscores the brutal stakes of Briallyn's power play, as Nesta confronts the horrifying reality of Cassian being weaponized against her.

In the final moments, Nesta's trembling subsides as she locks eyes with Cassian, recognizing the unwavering love he still holds for her—a love she feels unworthy of but

which fuels her determination. The chapter ends on a cliffhanger, with Cassian poised to kill Nesta, his internal struggle mirroring the external conflict between Briallyn's ruthless ambition and Nesta's desperate resilience. The emotional and physical brutality of the confrontation leaves the reader questioning whether Nesta will find a way to break Briallyn's hold or succumb to the Crown's deadly influence.

