

# Chapter Thirty-Eight

The chapter opens with Nesta training alongside her friends Emerie and Gwyn, who tease her about her obvious tension with Cassian. Emerie directly asks if Nesta slept with him, sparking a flustered reaction. Nesta attempts to deflect, but her friends notice the lingering glances between her and Cassian, hinting at their unresolved attraction. Cassian, aware of their gossip, chastises them for not focusing on their exercises, though his amused demeanor suggests he enjoys the attention. The playful banter highlights the growing intimacy between Nesta and Cassian, even as she tries to maintain her composure.

The conversation shifts to Nesta's mysterious absence the previous day, which Gwyn correctly guesses involves the Trove—a set of powerful magical objects. Nesta avoids divulging details, but her silence confirms Gwyn's suspicion. Emerie circles back to Cassian, pressing Nesta for confirmation about their relationship. Nesta's evasive yet suggestive response—"I didn't say that"—fuels her friends' curiosity. Cassian interrupts again, playfully scolding them, but the tension between him and Nesta is palpable, leaving the group in a charged atmosphere.

Gwyn introduces a Valkyrie technique called Mind-Stilling, a meditation practice to calm the mind and emotions. Nesta, intrigued, sees it as a way to regain control over her thoughts, especially around Cassian. Gwyn explains its benefits in battle and emotional regulation, contrasting it with the Illyrians' brute-force approach. Nesta requests copies of the text, eager to master the technique. The exchange reveals her desire for self-improvement and hints at her deeper struggles with inner turmoil and attraction.

The chapter closes with Cassian confronting the trio, his smug demeanor confirming he knows they were discussing him. Nesta's friends barely contain their laughter, while she struggles to maintain her defiance. The dynamic between Nesta and Cassian

remains electric, with unspoken tension simmering beneath their interactions. Nesta's physical transformation—noticing her stronger body in looser training gear—subtly underscores her personal growth. The chapter leaves their relationship unresolved but teases future developments, blending humor, tension, and character development.

