

## Chapter 2: Rhysand

The chapter opens with Rhysand observing the harsh winter conditions of the Illyrian Mountains, contrasting the bustling Windhaven camp with his peaceful, snow-covered city of Velaris. He reflects on his mate, Feyre, and their brief mental conversation, longing to show her the beauty of their home. Meanwhile, the Illyrian camp thrives despite the brutal weather, with warriors training and others performing daily chores. Rhysand notes the rigid gender roles, where females are confined to domestic tasks under strict expectations, a tradition unchanged for centuries despite the recent war and world-altering events.

Rhysand and Cassian confront Devlon, the camp-lord, over the exclusion of females from combat training under the pretext of Solstice preparations. Cassian insists on a compromise: two hours of training before domestic duties, highlighting the ongoing struggle to challenge Illyrian traditions. Devlon resists, appealing to the warriors' sacrifices in the recent war, a tactic that visibly affects Cassian, who carries the weight of his soldiers' losses. Rhysand intervenes, reducing the training time to ninety minutes, asserting authority while acknowledging the delicate balance of power and the need for gradual change.

The tension underscores deeper issues within Illyrian society, where post-war losses have bred resentment and potential instability. Rhysand recalls how some Illyrians previously sided with Amarantha, hinting at the lingering threat of rebellion. Despite the need for a permanent presence to enforce reforms, the demands of rebuilding and political tensions elsewhere make it impractical. The chapter reveals the fragile state of the Illyrian camps, where tradition clashes with the inevitability of progress, and the scars of war fuel underlying hostility.

Devlon's manipulative reference to disabled warriors strikes a nerve, exposing Cassian's guilt over his soldiers' suffering. Rhysand's internal struggle with his dark

power reflects the moral boundaries he refuses to cross, even to expedite change. The chapter closes with a sense of unresolved conflict, emphasizing the slow, arduous path toward reform in a society resistant to change. The dynamics between Rhysand, Cassian, and Devlon illustrate the broader challenges of leadership and the cost of maintaining order while pushing for equality.

