

Chapter Sixty-Seven

Nesta and Emerie continue their perilous journey through the Illyrian wilderness, searching for their missing companion, Gwyn. Emerie recounts her near-fatal encounter with hostile males, while Nesta shares her own harrowing experiences. The pair moves cautiously, encountering scattered warriors and evidence of violent clashes. Their hope wanes as they find no trace of Gwyn, only the grim possibility of discovering her body. As night falls, they take refuge in a cave, huddling for warmth and taking turns keeping watch, their bond strengthening amidst the shared dread of what lies ahead.

The next morning, they discover ominous signs—bloodied snow and large animal tracks—heightening their unease. A relentless snowfall obscures their path, intensifying the bitter cold. Nesta reflects on past comforts, vowing never to take them for granted again. Their determination falters as exhaustion and cold seep in, but Emerie's sharp senses detect smoke, reigniting a fragile hope. Following the scent, they strategize silently, their communication reduced to gestures and shared glances, each step forward a test of their resilience and trust in one another.

Approaching the source of the smoke, they overhear male laughter and spot Gwyn's nightgown displayed like a trophy. Nesta's rage simmers as she scouts the camp, identifying weapons and a familiar face among the warriors. The absence of Gwyn fuels her fury, but before she can act, Emerie is captured by two males. The chapter pivots to Cassian and Azriel, who surveil a mysterious castle, debating whether to intervene in Briallyn's affairs. Cassian grapples with the laws forbidding his interference in Nesta's trial, torn between duty and love.

The chapter culminates in dual tensions: Nesta's desperate fight to save Emerie and Cassian's internal struggle over Nesta's autonomy. Both threads underscore themes of sacrifice and self-determination. Nesta's resolve hardens into vengeance, while

Cassian's restraint highlights his respect for her strength. The narrative leaves readers poised for confrontation, with the fates of Emerie, Gwyn, and Nesta hanging in the balance, and Cassian's loyalty to the law tested against his deeper loyalties.

