

Chapter Forty-Three

Nesta and Cassian arrive in the Spring Court forest, awaiting a tense meeting with Eris, the son of the Autumn Court's High Lord. The serene beauty of the blooming flowers contrasts with Cassian's discomfort due to allergies, which Nesta finds amusing. As they wait, Nesta reflects on how her sister Elain would adore the vibrant scenery, though their strained relationship prevents her from sharing it. The peaceful setting is further undermined by Nesta's disdain for the Spring Court's ruler and her growing impatience with Eris's tardiness.

Eris finally appears, impeccably dressed but radiating cold arrogance. He immediately provokes Cassian by questioning the deaths of his soldiers, who were killed after being enchanted by Queen Briallyn and Koschei. Cassian reveals that only two soldiers survived the battle, explaining they had no choice but to defend themselves. Eris, however, accuses Cassian of excessive brutality, implying he could have spared more lives. The tension escalates as Cassian struggles with guilt, while Nesta observes Eris's subtle reactions with suspicion.

Nesta intervenes, challenging Eris about the illegal ash arrows used by his soldiers, which nearly killed Azriel. She implies Eris may have darker motives, such as plotting against his own father, the High Lord. Eris's pale face and evasive responses suggest her accusations hit close to the mark. The confrontation becomes a battle of wits, with Nesta turning Eris's manipulative tactics against him, while Cassian watches in silent admiration.

The chapter ends with Nesta boldly accusing Eris of orchestrating the entire conflict as part of a larger scheme to manipulate their trust. Her sharp words expose the underlying power struggle, leaving Eris visibly unsettled. The encounter highlights Nesta's growing confidence and strategic mind, as well as the fragile alliances within the fae courts. The unresolved tension sets the stage for further conflict, with both

sides wary of each other's next move.

