

Chapter 8: Cassian

The chapter opens with Cassian anticipating an approaching storm in Windhaven, disrupting the usual Solstice preparations. He halts training exercises and limits patrols to only the most skilled warriors, aware that enemies might strike despite the harsh weather. The camp braces for being snowed in for days, prompting Cassian to visit the craftsman center to procure winter supplies. The scene sets a tone of urgency and practicality, highlighting Cassian's leadership and foresight in protecting his people.

Cassian enters Emerie's clothier shop, noting its relative newness and the warmth inside. He is immediately struck by the scars on Emerie's wings, evidence of the brutal Illyrian tradition of clipping females' wings. Despite this, Emerie meets his gaze with defiance, reminiscent of Nesta's unyielding demeanor. Cassian learns that her father, Proteus, died in the war, leaving her to inherit the shop—a rare occurrence in Illyrian society, where females seldom hold such roles. Their interaction reveals Emerie's resilience and Cassian's respect for her strength.

Cassian observes the well-stocked shop, realizing Emerie's business struggles due to the camp's biases. He decides to buy all her winter gear, offering payment without condescension. Emerie initially resists charity but accepts the transaction on her terms, meticulously calculating the cost. Cassian's gesture reflects his understanding of Illyrian pride and his desire to support those marginalized by their own culture. The exchange underscores the tension between tradition and progress in Illyrian society.

In a final act of generosity, Cassian pays Emerie to distribute the winter supplies to those most vulnerable in the camp before the storm hits. Emerie, though wary of her unpopularity, agrees to the task, showing a willingness to help her community. The chapter closes with Cassian's quiet admiration for Emerie's courage and a sense of hope for change in Illyrian attitudes. Their partnership hints at potential future collaboration, bridging divides within the camp.