

Chapter Eight

Nesta, determined to escape her confinement, attempts to descend ten thousand steep, spiraling steps from the House of Wind to the city below, seeking solace in alcohol. Despite her High Fae strength, the physical toll is immense—dizziness, exhaustion, and nausea overwhelm her as she counts each step. The oppressive, endless stairwell mirrors her inner turmoil, and her father's haunting final words resurface, a painful reminder of her past failures and losses. After just one hundred steps, her body gives out, forcing her to confront her limitations and retreat.

As Nesta struggles back up the stairs, her frustration and self-loathing intensify. She questions the purpose of her Fae transformation if it cannot conquer such a basic challenge. The House of Wind, a symbol of her imprisonment, becomes a target of her rage. Crawling on hands and knees, she finally reaches the top, drenched in sweat and humiliation, only to find Cassian waiting with amusement. Their encounter underscores the tension between them, with Nesta's defiance clashing against Cassian's observant demeanor.

Meanwhile, Cassian's subplot reveals the political tensions brewing in Prythian. After reporting Eris's warning about Briallyn and Koschei's alliance with Beron, Cassian is tasked with monitoring Eris, despite his disdain for the Autumn Court heir. The Night Court debates whether Briallyn or Beron poses the greater threat, highlighting the fragile peace and hidden agendas at play. Cassian's return to the House and his discovery of Nesta's failed escape attempt provide a moment of dark humor amid the looming crisis.

The chapter juxtaposes Nesta's personal struggle with the broader political stakes, emphasizing her isolation and unresolved trauma. Her physical collapse mirrors her emotional fragility, while Cassian's role as both observer and enforcer hints at their complex dynamic. The looming war and Nesta's internal battle set the stage for future

conflicts, blending personal and political narratives in a tense, character-driven chapter.

