Chapter Fifty-Six

The chapter opens with the onset of winter in Velaris, where Nesta and her fellow Valkyries endure harsh training conditions, their weapons and shields often coated in frost. Despite the cold, Nesta thrives physically, her gaunt appearance replaced by a healthier visage, even as her intense sexual relationship with Cassian continues. Though their encounters are passionate, Nesta grapples with the emotional distance Cassian maintains, never staying to hold her afterward, leaving her to wonder when he might grow tired of her.

Nesta's life expands beyond training as she begins dance lessons with Morrigan, using the Veritas orb to study intricate waltzes from various Fae courts. The music captivates her, offering a rare joy, though the lessons remain strictly professional, with Morrigan offering little personal interaction. As the Winter Solstice approaches, Morrigan surprises Nesta by taking an interest in her attire for the upcoming ball, marking the first genuine conversation between them. Nesta's hesitant use of Morrigan's nickname, "Mor," signals a tentative step toward camaraderie.

Their dynamic shifts further when they visit the library, where Nesta witnesses Morrigan's warm friendship with Clotho, a contrast to the coldness she usually directs at Nesta. This moment stirs shame in Nesta, highlighting her outsider status. Meanwhile, Emerie's visit to the library reveals her admiration for Morrigan, adding another layer to the group's complex interpersonal dynamics. Gwyn teases Nesta about her dual roles as a dancer and shelver, lightening the mood.

The chapter closes with Nesta reflecting on her evolving relationships and the upcoming challenge of dancing with Eris at the ball. Morrigan's confidence that Nesta will humble Eris hints at the underlying tensions and unspoken alliances within the court. Nesta's physical and emotional transformations are central, as she navigates newfound strengths, vulnerabilities, and the delicate balance between intimacy and

isolation in her world.