

Chapter Fourteen

Cassian waits anxiously in the training ring, uncertain if Nesta will honor their bargain after their first lesson. His concern grows when she misses breakfast, though he notes the House of Wind has discreetly provided her with food. The possibility of the sentient House observing his past actions unsettles him. When Nesta finally arrives, visibly sore and struggling from the previous day's training, Cassian hides his relief with humor, teasing her about her stiffness while guiding her through stretches.

The training session progresses with Nesta pushing through her physical discomfort, though she complains relentlessly at first. Cassian explains the cause of her muscle soreness and emphasizes the importance of stretching for mobility. As he assists her with deep stretches, their proximity sparks tension, but Nesta distracts herself by focusing on the surroundings. Cassian shares his own experiences with post-battle pain, subtly bridging the gap between their worlds as a warrior and a reluctant trainee.

During a moment of vulnerability, Nesta reveals fragments of her past, mentioning her childhood dancing lessons and her father's former wealth. The conversation turns darker as she contrasts herself with her sisters, labeling herself as her mother's "creature"—a colder, harsher version of herself. Cassian probes gently, but Nesta shuts down, unwilling to delve deeper into painful memories. The exchange highlights her emotional barriers and the complexity of her relationship with her family.

The chapter closes with a mix of physical exertion and unresolved tension. While Nesta makes progress in her training, her emotional wounds remain raw. Cassian's patience and occasional humor provide a counterbalance to her defiance, suggesting the beginnings of trust. Yet their dynamic remains fraught with unspoken history and mutual resistance, leaving their future interactions uncertain. The House of Wind's silent presence adds another layer of intrigue to their evolving dynamic.