

# Chapter Ten

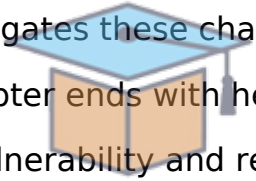
The chapter opens with Celaena awakening abruptly from a vivid, disorienting dream, only to realize she is no longer in the assassin's fortress but stranded in the desert. She is attended by Kasida, her horse, and finds herself missing her sword, which heightens her sense of vulnerability. Clutching a mysterious, hastily written letter from Ansel, she learns she is being released and ordered to return home. The letter's tone suggests a reluctant farewell, leaving Celaena to question her recent actions and the true reason behind her expulsion, especially since she still possesses her letter of approval from the Master. Her emotional turmoil underscores her uncertainty about her standing and future.

As night falls, Celaena prepares to leave the desert, choosing to head toward Xandria rather than risking a treacherous journey across the Singing Sands. Her decision is driven by the need for a safer route and the hope of finding a ship to continue her journey. While riding, she observes a large contingent of soldiers marching into the desert—likely Lord Berick's men—highlighting the tense political and military climate. Celaena's cautious observation of the soldiers, especially the mounted archer who scans her from a distance, emphasizes her awareness of the danger she faces and her desire to remain unnoticed, pondering whether her departure is also an escape from the Master's potentially protective or manipulative intentions.

The following morning reveals a subdued Xandria, with the city eerily quiet and deserted compared to its usual bustling market scene. Celaena, feeling the weight of recent events, purchases passage on a ship bound for Amier in Melisande, a distant port across the Gulf of Oro. Her plan is to travel on Kasida back to Rifthold and then continue along the river to reach the capital, seeking safety and clarity amid the chaos. Her brief exploration of the city underscores her growing sense of isolation and her determination to escape the political intrigues and threats that seem to follow her.

The departure symbolizes her attempt to reclaim control over her destiny, despite the uncertainty ahead.

Throughout the chapter, Celaena's inner conflict is palpable as she grapples with feelings of betrayal, loneliness, and the search for belonging. Her journey is marked by a series of strategic decisions motivated by survival and a desire for freedom. The sense of impending danger looms large, especially with the presence of soldiers and the mysterious circumstances surrounding her expulsion. Yet, her resilience shines through as she navigates these challenges, trusting her instincts and seeking a new beginning. The chapter ends with her preparing for the next phase of her journey, embodying both vulnerability and resolve as she moves toward an uncertain future.



Summary