

Chapter 17

In Chapter 17, Chaol is acutely aware of Celaena's foul mood during the royal ball, though she remains uncharacteristically rebellious by not hiding in the shadows as instructed. From his concealed vantage point, he observes her leaning against a pillar, dagger at her side, with evident frustration and boredom. The opulent setting of the ball, decorated in icy hues in honor of Hollin, contrasts sharply with the tension beneath the surface. Chaol reflects on the nature of Hollin's future, worried that his spoiled innocence could evolve into cruelty, and contemplates the delicate balance of power and morality that Dorian and he must maintain once Hollin becomes king.

The scene shifts to Dorian, who is engaging in courtly dance, fulfilling his royal duties with grace and charm, oblivious to Chaol's concern about Hollin's potential for corruption. Chaol's attention is divided between the lively festivities and the increasing unease that Celaena has abandoned her post. His internal conflict grows as he considers the rules being broken—Celaena's departure from her guard duties—highlighting her reluctance to conform and her desire for freedom, even if it means risking her position. Despite the formal environment, chaos lurks beneath the surface, and Chaol's vigilance remains sharp as he worries about her safety.

Outside the ballroom, Chaol finds Celaena dancing alone, a rebellious act that underscores her boredom and frustration. Her sharp tongue reveals her annoyance at being made to attend the event and her disdain for the superficial courtship around her. Her playful yet bitter comments expose her desire for normalcy and her aversion to the political machinations she's forced to witness. Chaol's mixed feelings surface as he observes her, torn between his duty and his empathy for her longing to escape the constraints of her role. Their interaction reveals a complex dynamic of tension, unspoken feelings, and mutual understanding.

Ultimately, Celaena's candid vulnerability prompts Chaol to break the rules himself, offering her a chance to dance with him. Her initial surprise and hesitation contrast with the quiet, moonlit moment that follows. This act of defiance and connection symbolizes a fragile, shared moment of rebellion against their circumstances. Chaol's gesture underscores the emotional undercurrents running through their relationship—conflicted loyalty, unspoken desire, and the hope for a rare moment of genuine freedom amid the political and personal chaos they face. The chapter ends with the unspoken invitation to dance, hinting at deeper complexities beneath their outward composure.



Summaryer