

# Chapter 26

The chapter opens with Chaol observing a hunting party, reflecting on how many of the lords lack skill and how he often discreetly kills animals to avoid embarrassing them. This setting highlights his practical approach and underlying sense of disillusionment with the aristocratic pastime. As he rides alongside the king, Perrington, and other nobles, Chaol's thoughts drift to his past, including his relationship with his family and the expectations placed upon him. He considers whether he would have ended up like these men if circumstances had been different, revealing his internal conflict about his current path versus his origins.

Throughout the chapter, Chaol's interactions with the king reveal a layered dynamic. The king's commanding presence and casual remarks about hunting contrast with the ominous tone of their conversation regarding political intrigue. The king's mention of questioning Celaena, coupled with his directive to ensure no interruptions during her interrogation, underscores the dangerous political machinations at play. Chaol's awareness of the risks involved and his attempt to remain discreet indicate his loyalty and concern for Celaena, even as he senses the potential fallout from these covert dealings.

The chapter also explores Chaol's personal reflections and relationships, particularly his friendship with Dorian. Dorian's subtle warning—"Treat her well"—and his subsequent departure hint at underlying tensions and unspoken emotions. Chaol's internal struggle is palpable as he keeps his worries to himself, recognizing the precariousness of his position. Meanwhile, Dorian's guarded attitude and the mention of the upcoming interrogation reveal the wider political unrest and the fragile alliances within the court. Chaol's silent observations emphasize his role as a protector caught between duty and personal loyalty.

In the closing scenes, Chaol's thoughts turn inward as he grapples with the implications of the king's plans and the secrets he's keeping. He chooses not to disclose what he knows to Celaena, fearing that revealing too much could worsen their situation. As he leaves her sleeping peacefully, he contemplates the possibility of betrayal and the dangerous tests of loyalty he faces. His resolve to protect Celaena and Nehemia, even at great personal risk, underscores the chapter's central themes of loyalty, secrecy, and the looming threat of political violence. Ultimately, Chaol's internal conflict and determination set the tone for the escalating tensions ahead.



Summaryer