

Chapter Forty

Chaol continues his recovery with Yrene's help, though his mobility remains limited. While he can now walk with a cane and even engage in light sword training with Hashim, running and more strenuous activities are still beyond his reach. Yrene supervises his sessions, focusing on rebuilding his leg muscles. During one such training, Chaol manages to land a few hits on Hashim, impressing Yrene, who later surprises him with a passionate kiss in a secluded alcove. However, their moment is interrupted by a servant, leaving Yrene embarrassed and prompting her to maintain distance in the days that follow.

Despite the physical progress, Chaol grapples with the emotional weight of his recovery. He considers telling Yrene that her efforts are already enough, as he's grateful for the mobility he's regained. His thoughts drift to the impending war and his desire to stand alongside his friends, even if it means fighting with limitations. Meanwhile, Yrene remains cautious about their relationship, aware of the risks to her reputation in the Torre and the palace. Chaol respects her boundaries, though his attraction to her lingers, especially during their healing sessions.

The chapter shifts focus as Yrene reveals she's orchestrated a birthday celebration through Princess Hasar. By hinting at her desire to visit the desert, she manipulates Hasar into hosting a party at the royal family's oasis, Aksara. Yrene shares her unease about the location, which is rumored to be built atop a city of the dead, potentially hiding dangerous secrets. Chaol notes her scheming side but remains wary of the oasis's history, wondering if it holds the answers they seek about the Valg or other threats.

As the chapter concludes, the tension between personal desires and looming dangers becomes palpable. Chaol and Yrene's relationship teeters between passion and practicality, while the upcoming desert party introduces new uncertainties. The oasis's

mysterious past adds a layer of intrigue, hinting at future revelations or perils. Their individual struggles—Chaol’s acceptance of his limitations and Yrene’s balancing act between duty and desire—mirror the broader stakes of their mission and the war on the horizon.

