

Chapter Eleven

Chaol waits impatiently for Yrene's arrival, frustrated by her tardiness and his own physical limitations. To pass the time, he engages in strenuous exercises, pushing his body to its limits despite his injuries. His thoughts drift to Dorian, his absent king, adding to his agitation. When Yrene finally appears, she looks visibly distressed, though she avoids explaining her condition, focusing instead on Chaol's workout and making a pointed remark about the khagan's rugs. Their interaction is tense, marked by Chaol's stubborn refusal to engage with the palace guard, revealing his unresolved emotional wounds.

Yrene's demeanor is unusually withdrawn, and she devises a ruse to send Kadja away, claiming Chaol has a rash. Once alone, she reveals the shocking news: a healer was murdered in the library the previous night, and Yrene believes she was the intended target. The victim's body was drained of life, resembling a desiccated corpse, a detail that immediately alarms Chaol. Yrene explains that the killer likely mistook the other healer for her due to their similar appearance, and the books she was reading about Chaol's injury mysteriously vanished after the attack.

Chaol's instincts point to the Valg, ancient enemies he has encountered before, as the likely culprits. He presses Yrene for details, trying to piece together the threat. Yrene, exhausted and fearful, admits she was researching the dark power that injured Chaol, suggesting a connection between his presence and the attack. The realization that someone is targeting healers—and possibly Yrene specifically—heightens the tension between them. Chaol's protective instincts kick in, though he struggles with his physical limitations and the growing sense of danger.

The chapter ends with a chilling revelation: Yrene's research into Chaol's condition may have drawn dangerous attention. The murder in the library suggests a larger conspiracy, and Chaol's arrival in the city seems to have triggered it. Their

conversation leaves both characters unsettled, with Yerne's fear palpable and Chaol grappling with guilt and concern. The stage is set for further conflict as they confront the looming threat together, their partnership now tinged with urgency and shared vulnerability.

