Chapter Fifty-Four

Chaol awakens in severe pain after overexerting himself the previous day, his back agony rendering him nearly immobile. Despite his discomfort, he resists summoning Yrene, the healer treating his spinal injury, due to both the unsafe conditions of his suite and his guilt over betraying Nesryn's trust. When he attempts to move, panic sets in as he fears his progress has reversed, but Yrene arrives unexpectedly, assessing his condition with her usual calm demeanor. She quickly identifies his mistake—using heat instead of ice for his strained muscles—and prepares to intervene.

Yrene reveals her plan to confront the darkness within Chaol's spine once and for all, determined to end his suffering that day. Though Chaol worries about the physical and emotional toll this may take on both of them, he agrees, trusting her expertise. Yrene explains she has a theory to test, one only possible with Chaol due to his unique condition—his body's taint from Valg magic. As she begins the healing process, Chaol braces for the pain, knowing this will be their most intense session yet.

The chapter shifts to Yrene's perspective as she delves into Chaol's body, her magic clashing violently with the lingering Valg corruption. The darkness fights back, a malevolent force of rot and hatred, but Yrene refuses to retreat. She pours all her strength into the battle, even as Chaol screams in agony above her. The narrative emphasizes her resolve and the high stakes of their struggle, with Yrene determined to purge the evil that has plagued Chaol for so long.

The chapter ends on a cliffhanger, with Yrene and the Valg darkness locked in a brutal confrontation. Her final thought—*I know what you are*—hints at a deeper understanding of the enemy she faces. The outcome remains uncertain, but Yrene's unwavering courage and Chaol's endurance underscore their shared commitment to defeating the darkness, no matter the cost. The stage is set for a pivotal resolution in

their ongoing battle against the corruption within him.