

Chapter Six

Yrene, a healer, is unsettled by her first encounter with Lord Westfall, a former captain whose youthful appearance and hopeful demeanor clash with her expectations.

Despite her professionalism, she reacts with uncharacteristic rudeness, overwhelmed by unresolved emotions tied to his past. Struggling to compose herself, she arrives late to his appointment, distracted by the physical and emotional weight of his injuries, including a spinal condition that challenges her skills. The tension between them is palpable, as Yrene grapples with her conflicting feelings of resentment and duty.

After the tense meeting, Yrene seeks solace in the Torre, the healers' tower, where she interrupts the Healer on High, Hafiza, in a moment of distress. The Torre's atmosphere, filled with symbolic owl carvings and ancient secrets, contrasts with Yrene's inner turmoil. She reflects on the mysterious workshop rumored to hold forbidden knowledge, though she knows its mundane reality. The tower's history and myths provide a backdrop to her personal struggle, as she tries to reconcile her past with her present responsibilities.

Yrene's thoughts drift to her own journey as a healer, recalling her early days of loneliness and the kindness of Cook, who became her first friend in the Torre. This memory softens her, and she extends similar compassion to a young, homesick acolyte, offering comfort and almond cookies. The gesture highlights Yrene's growth from an isolated outsider to a mentor figure, though her own wounds remain unresolved. Her interactions with the acolyte and Cook reveal her deep connection to the Torre's community, even as she battles personal demons.

The chapter closes with Yrene's introspection about Lord Westfall's complex identity—both a warrior marked by scars and a man in need of emotional healing. She acknowledges the paradox of his relationship with Nesryn Faliq, a fellow outsider serving a contentious kingdom. Yrene's professional demeanor masks her inner

conflict, as she balances her duty to heal with her unresolved anger. The chapter sets the stage for her evolving role in his recovery, hinting at deeper emotional and historical layers yet to be explored.

