

Chapter Eight

Yrene arrives punctually for her appointment with Lord Westfall and Captain Nesryn Faliq, despite her late night with Princess Hasar and Renia. She reflects on her strained relationship with Kashin, the khagan's son, who grieves his sister Tumelun's suicide. Though Yrene feels guilt for avoiding Kashin, she remains resolved to focus on her own goals and avoid entanglement with the royal family. Her thoughts briefly turn to the oppressive conditions in Adarlan, contrasting them with the fair treatment of servants in the khagan's palace, before she steels herself to face Lord Westfall's skepticism.

Upon entering the suite, Yrene notices the tension between Lord Westfall and Nesryn but dismisses it as irrelevant to her task. She lies about consulting her superior, Hafiza, to justify her decision to treat Westfall's spinal injury. Despite his cold demeanor and apparent lack of hope, Yrene remains determined to help him walk again, though she cautiously avoids making promises. Her focus is clinical, but she bristles at Westfall's silent scrutiny, particularly when his gaze lingers on her scar.

Nesryn, though composed, reveals her restlessness and concern for Westfall's recovery. Yrene explains her experience with similar injuries but emphasizes the unpredictability of his magical wound. The dynamic between the three is fraught with unspoken tensions—Yrene's resentment of Adarlan's cruelty, Westfall's guardedness, and Nesryn's struggle with confinement. Yrene's practicality clashes with Westfall's stoicism, yet she refuses to let his indifference deter her from her professional duty.

The chapter underscores Yrene's internal conflict between compassion and self-preservation, as well as her determination to prove her skill despite Westfall's hostility. Her interactions with the khagan's family and the Adarlanian visitors highlight the political and personal complexities of her world. The unresolved emotions between the characters—grief, guilt, and pride—linger beneath the surface, setting the stage for further tension and potential breakthroughs in their relationships.