

Chapter Fourteen

Yrene, exhausted from a late-night vigil, collapses into bed without caring for her safety or appearance. She wakes past midnight, disheveled and still in her stained gown, but with enough energy to barricade her door before falling back asleep. Oversleeping the next morning, she rushes to meet Lord Chaol in the castle courtyard, sprinting through the Torre and Antica's streets, arriving thirty minutes late. Despite her frantic state, she finds Chaol already attempting to mount a horse, refusing the ramp she had prepared for him.

Chaol, determined to regain his independence, struggles to mount the mare with the help of guards but refuses their prolonged assistance. Yrene observes his impressive muscle control as he maneuvers himself into the saddle, securing the leg braces she designed. His pride and stubbornness are evident, but so is his physical strength, which allows him to adapt to his new limitations. The guards disperse as Yrene arrives, and Chaol's tense demeanor softens slightly when he notices her disheveled state.

Yrene apologizes for her tardiness and questions Chaol's rejection of the mounting ramp, to which he responds pragmatically, stating he must learn to manage without such aids. His focus on practicality hints at his preparedness for future challenges, possibly even battle. Meanwhile, Yrene is surprised when a guard brings out a second horse for her, realizing Chaol expects her to join him on the ride despite her unpreparedness and stained clothing.

The chapter highlights the dynamic between Yrene and Chaol, showcasing her dedication to his recovery and his stubborn determination to reclaim his autonomy. Their interactions reveal mutual respect beneath their banter, as well as unspoken tensions about the looming threats they may face. The scene sets the stage for their shared journey, both literal and metaphorical, as they navigate physical and emotional hurdles together.