

Chapter Seven

Celaena and Ansel face the consequences of their reckless decision to steal Asterion horses, realizing their actions have already reached the Master. Upon returning to the fortress, they are met by Mikhail and other assassins, forcing them to kneel before the Master in his receiving chamber. As the Master approaches, Celaena recalls a traumatic memory of Arobynn's violence and Sam's desperate threats, momentarily distracting her from the present. The tension escalates as Ansel attempts to justify their actions, while Celaena remains silent, fearing the Master's wrath and the potential loss of her training opportunity.

The Master's disapproval is palpable as he examines the two young assassins, his silence amplifying their dread. Ansel takes the lead in apologizing, suggesting stable duty as a fitting punishment, while Celaena unexpectedly claims responsibility for the theft. The Master's reaction is inscrutable, but his subtle amusement hints at leniency. To their relief, he assigns them morning stable duty, sparing them harsher consequences. However, the moment takes a surprising turn when the Master signals Celaena's long-awaited first lesson, leaving her elated and hopeful for her remaining time at the fortress.

The next day, Celaena and Ansel endure the grueling task of cleaning the livestock pens, a punishment far more unpleasant than their usual training. Despite the physical exhaustion, Celaena's anticipation for her sunset lesson with the Master grows, overshadowing her fatigue. Ansel offers encouragement as Celaena prepares for the unknown, her nerves mingling with excitement. When the time arrives, she ascends to the fortress rooftop, where the Master awaits, gazing across the desert, his intentions still a mystery.

The chapter concludes with Celaena standing on the rooftop, surrounded by torchlight and the vast desert landscape. The Master's silence and the presence of a covered

reed basket heighten the suspense, leaving Celaena—and the reader—curious about what her first lesson will entail. This moment marks a turning point for Celaena, as she finally earns the Master's approval and steps closer to her goal, though the challenges ahead remain uncertain.

