

Chapter 31: Ten Years Later

The chapter "Ten Years Later" follows June Iparis on her 27th birthday as she reflects on the past decade of her life. She recounts celebrations from previous years, including quiet dinners with friends, international trips, and milestones like becoming the youngest lead commander in Republic history. Her relationship with Elector Anden evolved from a romantic partnership to a mutual separation, though she remains fiercely protective of him. Despite the joys and sorrows of adulthood, June acknowledges that nothing compares to the tragedies of her teenage years, particularly the loss of her brother Metias and her complicated bond with Day.

June spends her birthday overseeing Anden's security during diplomatic talks with Colonies delegates, proud of his progress in fostering unity between former enemies. Later, she visits Metias's memorial, where she emotionally confronts the fact that she has now reached the age he was when he died. She shares updates about her life with his ghost, finding solace in the imagined comfort of his presence. The visit underscores her enduring grief and the weight of outliving her brother, a milestone that leaves her feeling both vulnerable and reflective.

After leaving the memorial, June reconnects with her daily life, anticipating dinner with friends Tess and Pascao. She muses on how Tess's updates about Day—once frequent—have dwindled over the years, though she still cherishes the memories. Her thoughts drift to Day, wondering about his happiness and whereabouts, revealing her unresolved feelings. The chapter captures June's quiet resilience, balancing duty with personal longing, as she navigates the complexities of adulthood and loss.

The chapter takes a surprising turn when June receives a cryptic message from Tess urging her to check the news. A small headline reveals that Day's brother, Eden, is in Los Angeles for a job interview, implying Day's return to the city. June's composure wavers as she processes the news, her heart racing at the possibility of seeing Day

again. The chapter ends on a note of anticipation, leaving June—and the reader—eager to discover what this reunion might bring.

