

# Chapter One

Chaol Westfall, former Captain of the Royal Guard and now Hand to the King of Adarlan, finds himself confined to a wheeled chair, a constant reminder of his physical limitations. The chapter opens with his disdain for the sound of wheels clattering, a noise that haunts him as he navigates the opulent palace of the Khagan in Antica. The palace's grandeur, built from materials sourced across the Southern Continent, serves as a stark contrast to Chaol's inner turmoil. He reflects on the mosaics depicting the khaganate's history, drawing parallels to what his own kingdom might have become under different rulers.

Accompanied by Nesryn, the newly appointed Captain of the Guard, Chaol prepares for a critical meeting with the Khagan. Nesryn's calm demeanor contrasts with Chaol's unease, as they navigate the palace's political undercurrents. Chaol's discomfort is further highlighted by his choice of clothing, a deliberate departure from the black uniforms of his enemies. The absence of his sword and his reliance on the chair underscore his vulnerability, both physical and emotional, as he grapples with his new reality.

Chaol's mission in Antica is twofold: to secure the Khagan's military support against the demon king Erawan and to seek healing at the legendary Torre Cesme. The latter task fills him with disgust, as he struggles with the idea of being "fixed." His internal conflict is palpable, as he balances his duty to his kingdom with his personal desperation. The Torre, a symbol of hope, looms over the city, a constant reminder of the possibility—and the impossibility—of his recovery.

The chapter closes with Chaol and Nesryn moving through the vibrant city of Antica, its streets alive with activity despite the white cloths signaling a recent death. The city's diversity and resilience mirror Chaol's own journey, as he confronts his limitations and the daunting tasks ahead. The Torre Cesme, visible from nearly every corner of the

city, stands as a beacon of both hope and uncertainty, encapsulating Chaol's fraught emotional state as he prepares to face the Khagan.

