

Chapter Sixty-Seven

Yrene stands on the deck of a ship at dawn, preparing to leave Antica for her homeland. As the city stirs to life, she takes in the familiar sights—the minarets, the shining quarters, and the Torre Cesme—one last time. The autumn winds whip the seas, and the ship bobs beneath her, marking the beginning of her journey home. Despite the bustling activity around her, Yrene remains lost in thought, reflecting on her time in Antica and the uncertain future that awaits her across the Narrow Sea.

Before departing, Yrene shares a poignant farewell with Prince Kashin, who arrives just as she is about to board. Their conversation reveals lingering pain but also mutual understanding and friendship. Kashin expresses regret for past words but gratitude for their bond, hinting at his own future freedom now that his brother Sartaq is the heir. Yrene thanks him for his kindness, and their parting is bittersweet, filled with unspoken emotions and the hope of meeting again.

As the ship sets sail, Yrene remains on deck, watching Antica shrink into the distance. The Torre Cesme, a symbol of hope and calm, stands tall against the morning sky, its white stones glinting in the sunlight. Yrene wonders if she will ever return, knowing the war that lies ahead. The wind, as if blessed by the gods, propels them forward, carrying her toward an uncertain destiny. The city's sights, sounds, and scents linger in her memory as she braces herself for the challenges to come.

The chapter closes with Yrene's unwavering gaze on the horizon, even as Antica fades from view. The Torre Cesme remains a distant beacon, its presence a comforting farewell. The journey home is fraught with emotion and anticipation, as Yrene and her companions prepare to face the looming conflict. The imagery of the tower, like an upraised arm, underscores the themes of departure, resilience, and the enduring bonds forged in Antica.