The Assassin and the Underworld

The Assassin and the Underworld is the third novella in *The Assassin’s Blade*, a prequel collection to the *Throne of Glass* series. After returning from her punishment in the Red Desert, **Celaena Sardothien** is determined to leave the Assassin's Guild for good. But first, she must complete one final mission.

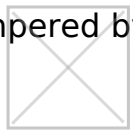
Assigned to infiltrate and destroy a powerful criminal operation in Rifthold, Celaena dives into the city’s dangerous underworld. But nothing is as it seems—secrets, lies, and betrayal lurk around every corner. As her trust in those closest to her begins to crack, Celaena must decide who she is fighting for—and whether freedom is truly within reach.

Dark, suspenseful, and emotional, this novella explores Celaena’s growing doubts about the life she leads—and the cost of defiance.

Chapter One

The chapter opens with Celaena Sardothien arriving at the Assassin’s Keep, a place of silence and guarded anticipation. She carries a letter that signifies her recent achievements and her determination to regain her independence from Arobynn Hamel, her former master. Her journey has been marked by hardship, including a brutal punishment that left her battered but unbroken. The atmosphere underscores her resolve to prove herself and reclaim her freedom, symbolized by the gold trunks and her plans to move out. Her arrival is deliberate, and her confidence hints at her readiness to confront her past and her captor.

As Celaena approaches Arobynn’s study, her awareness of the ever-present danger is palpable. Wesley, the loyal yet formidable guard, stands as a reminder of the threats lurking within the Keep. Despite her status as Arobynn’s protégée, she recognizes that Wesley’s loyalty is rooted in his own survival instincts, and she must navigate this tense dynamic carefully. Their interaction underscores the underlying tension and the unspoken power struggles that define her position within the assassin’s hierarchy. Her confidence is tempered by the understanding that she is still under Arobynn’s watchful eye.



Inside the study, Arobynn remains composed, absorbed in his work, displaying the cold, calculating nature of the King of the Assassins. Celaena’s bold move to present the letter is met with silence, emphasizing her current lack of influence and the dominance of Arobynn’s control. His indifferent response and the act of dismissing her words highlight her limited agency at this moment. Her patience is tested as she waits for acknowledgment, knowing that her future hinges on his willingness to recognize her efforts and her independence.

The chapter concludes with a tense yet poignant confrontation. Arobynn finally acknowledges her, expressing remorse for past violence and offering a rare moment of vulnerability. His words reveal a complex mixture of regret and manipulation, as he claims to pray for forgiveness while still asserting control. Celaena’s restrained reaction and the physical scars she bears serve as symbols of her resilience and the brutal history she shares with him. The scene sets the tone for her ongoing struggle for autonomy and the lingering shadows of their tumultuous relationship.

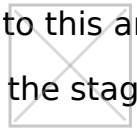
Chapter Two

The chapter opens with Celaena waking to a relentless rain, receiving an elegant gift from Arobynn—a pair of exquisite gold hair combs decorated with sapphires. Her reaction is a mix of genuine delight and restrained defiance, as she acknowledges the luxurious gesture while harboring lingering resentment toward Arobynn’s manipulative nature. She briefly admires her reflection, feeling a sense of empowerment from her appearance but is also reminded of her unkempt state, especially her damaged nails and hair. The contrasting feelings highlight her complex emotions—her longing for normalcy and her awareness of her precarious position within Arobynn’s world.

As she prepares to face the day, Celaena takes time for personal grooming, visiting her preferred beauty shop despite the miserable weather. Her transformation from disheveled to polished underscores her desire for control and self-respect amid the chaos of her environment. She then ventures into the city streets, observing the somber, rain-soaked capital of Rifthold. The vibrant city life persists despite the downpour, with street performers and wealthy spectators bundled in cloaks, creating a lively yet subdued atmosphere. Celaena’s observations reflect her keen awareness of her surroundings and her longing for normalcy, even as she remains wary of the political and social undercurrents at play.

The arrival of the Melisande convoy marks a significant event, and Celaena navigates the wet, bustling streets to avoid the crowds. She reflects on her relationships, particularly her suspicions about Sam and Lysandra’s closeness, which stirs feelings of betrayal and jealousy. Her thoughts reveal her internal conflict—her desire for independence clashes with her emotional vulnerabilities. Despite her bitterness, she remains observant of her environment, noting the hardships faced by the city's inhabitants and her own sense of isolation. Her mood oscillates between defiance and introspection as she contemplates her next move.

The chapter concludes with Celaena preparing for a dangerous mission, donning a sleek, black combat suit tailored for stealth and combat. The suit’s design emphasizes her readiness and transformation into a lethal assassin, with concealed weapons and a concealed blade system. Arobynn’s influence persists as he orchestrates her training, demonstrating her new capabilities. The scene underscores her resolve to confront her enemies and her acceptance of her role as a formidable, deadly force. Her transformation into this armored, skilled assassin signifies her shift from vulnerability to power, setting the stage for the challenges ahead.



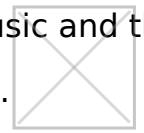
Chapter Three

The chapter opens with Celaena and her companions arriving at Arobynn’s private box during a theatrical performance, where they are greeted with wine and conversation. Arobynn’s familiarity and ease in the social setting contrast sharply with Celaena’s more detached demeanor. She chooses to sit near the stage, appreciating the grandeur of the theater, which she considers her sanctuary. Her thoughts reveal a longing for independence, as she contemplates moving out from her current apartment closer to the theater, intending to pay her debt and reclaim her autonomy from Arobynn’s influence.

As the scene progresses, Celaena observes the audience and the prominent figures present, including a woman named Leighfer Bardingale, who is seated with her companions. Arobynn provides details about Bardingale’s background, hinting at her strategic motives for attending the event—she is a former wife of Doneval, the man she plans to assassinate. Celaena recognizes the importance of Bardingale’s poised exterior, suspecting that beneath her elegant facade lies a ruthless determination. The presence of bodyguards and associates highlights the political and personal stakes intertwined with the assassination plot.

The narrative shifts focus to Celaena’s interactions and internal reflections. Lysandra’s flirtations and her own feelings of exposure in her gown contrast with her internal resolve. She contemplates the significance of her words to Sam, her companion, and feels a mixture of nervousness and determination. Her awareness of the danger she faces is palpable, yet she remains composed, observing Doneval and his seemingly indifferent demeanor, which belies the gravity of his role in the impending violence. The scene underscores her internal conflict between her outward composure and the weight of her covert mission.

The chapter culminates as the performance begins, with the orchestra setting a mystical and shadowy tone. Celaena’s attention is caught by the unfolding drama, and her focus sharpens as she prepares for the critical moment. Sam’s subtle gestures and words serve to bolster her resolve, even as her emotions swirl. The act of watching the play becomes a metaphor for her own life—shrouded in darkness, with secrets and danger lurking beneath the surface. The chapter ends with Celaena surrendering herself to the music and the story, fully immersing in the moment before her deadly task commences.



Chapter Four

In Chapter Four, Celaena Sardothien is depicted in a tense surveillance operation, crouched in the rain on a rooftop, observing a well-guarded house belonging to Doneval. Her discomfort is palpable as she navigates the slick, rain-soaked surface, emphasizing her dedication and the physical toll of her clandestine activities. The house's elaborate architecture and constant activity of servants and guards highlight the wealth and security measures taken to protect Doneval’s interests. Celaena’s keen eye for detail reveals her methodical approach to gathering intelligence, focusing on the movement and routines of the household to identify vulnerabilities and potential points of entry.

The chapter details her careful reconnaissance, noting the presence of numerous guards, their rotations, and the layout of the house. She and her companion Sam analyze the security setup, debating whether to attempt a stealthy passage or to neutralize the guards. The narrative underscores the high stakes involved in their mission, with Celaena aware that any misstep could jeopardize their entire plan. The strategic observations about the house’s interior, including the possibility of secret passages, demonstrate her experience and resourcefulness as an assassin. Meanwhile, her interaction with Sam adds a layer of camaraderie and tension, revealing personal stakes and her internal conflict about their dangerous task.

As they monitor the house, Doneval’s sudden departure signals a shift in their intelligence. His hurried exit, flanked by a formidable bodyguard, suggests urgency or a clandestine purpose. Celaena and Sam speculate on his whereabouts, considering various social events that might distract or delay him, which could influence the timing of their infiltration. Their covert observation continues to build suspense, emphasizing the importance of timing and the unpredictability of their environment. Celaena’s focus remains sharp, aware that missing this window could mean losing their

opportunity to uncover Doneval’s dealings.

The chapter concludes with a cautious retreat as the evening approaches. Celaena and Sam prepare to move away from their vantage point, mindful of the guards and the rain-slick rooftops. Their conversation reveals personal tensions and a shared understanding of the danger they face. Despite her physical discomfort and the absence of her ideal gear, Celaena persists in her stealthy approach, driven by her mission’s urgency. The chapter ends with a sense of anticipation, as they plan to follow Doneval’s bodyguard, knowing that their success depends on precise timing and careful execution within the perilous, rain-drenched night.

Chapter Five

The chapter opens with Celaena navigating a tense social setting, where she maintains her composure despite the presence of courtesans and the watchful eyes of Doneval. She employs a calculated act of demure innocence, engaging Doneval with subtle flirtation and clever conversation. Her goal is to gather intelligence and manipulate the situation to her advantage, all while concealing her true intentions behind a veneer of politeness and charm. The scene underscores her skillful deception, as she carefully balances appearing vulnerable and approachable to lure Doneval into a trap. Her awareness of her surroundings and her ability to play the part of a young maiden are central to her strategy.

Celaena’s interaction with Doneval reveals her mastery of manipulation and her understanding of social cues. She expertly feigns modesty and innocence, while subtly steering the conversation toward her desired outcome. Her mention of her uncle’s connections and the invitation to meet at a specific time are deliberate moves to lure Doneval into a false sense of security. Her dialogue is laced with innuendos and calculated politeness, designed to keep him engaged without revealing her true purpose. The scene highlights her confidence and her ability to adapt her persona to suit her needs, all while maintaining the appearance of a naive girl.

As the conversation progresses, Celaena’s plan begins to take shape. She skillfully arranges a meeting at her uncle’s house, knowing that Doneval’s arrogance and overconfidence make him vulnerable to her scheme. Her subtle cues and flirtatious demeanor are aimed at ensuring he underestimates her intentions. Behind her poised exterior, she remains alert to any signs of suspicion or danger, ready to adapt her approach if necessary. Her strategic use of social settings and her understanding of Doneval’s character are vital to her success, illustrating her resourcefulness and determination.

In the closing moments, Celaena’s outward composure masks her inner satisfaction. She successfully convinces Doneval to agree to her plan, while also observing the reactions of others, such as Leighfer Bardingale, who seems to harbor pity or regret. Celaena’s focus shifts to her own gratification as she indulges in food and reflects on her victory. The scene emphasizes her resilience and her ability to maintain her cover despite the underlying danger. Her silent partnership with Sam and her awareness of her surroundings underscore her readiness to act when the moment is right, setting the stage for her next move.



Chapter Six

In this chapter, Celaena continues her rigorous training, demonstrating her progress with new movement techniques learned in the Red Desert. Despite her physical exhaustion and a throbbing headache from the previous night’s celebration, she pushes herself through her exercises, catching the attention of her instructor and Sam. Her focus remains on the upcoming infiltration of Doneval’s house, highlighting her dedication to her mission and her desire to gather intelligence on the documents before the scheduled exchange. Her interactions reveal her cautious nature, especially when she avoids revealing her plans to the other assassins, emphasizing her preference for secrecy and independence.

The chapter delves into the complex relationship dynamics among the characters. Celaena’s connection with Sam is fraught with tension, as she fights her feelings and her desire to keep her plans private. Her conversation with Sam underscores her confidence in her abilities, despite the danger involved, and her reluctance to accept help. Meanwhile, her interactions with Lysandra and Clarisse introduce underlying romantic and social tensions, especially with Lysandra’s flirtatious behavior and her own guarded attitude toward forming bonds within the assassin’s circle. Celaena’s sharp wit and guarded demeanor reflect her experience and her determination to maintain control amid these interactions.

As the story progresses, Celaena prepares to execute her plan to infiltrate Doneval’s house. She notes that the estate is poorly guarded, with most guards away, leaving her an opportunity to slip inside unnoticed. The heavy rain provides cover, allowing her to bypass security without detection. Her meticulous planning and cautious approach highlight her resourcefulness and resolve. Despite her reluctance to get her suit wet, she recognizes the importance of weather conditions in aiding her stealth. Her focus on gathering intelligence before the upcoming bidding night demonstrates her

strategic mindset and her commitment to her mission.

The chapter concludes with Celaena’s resolve to proceed alone, emphasizing her independence and readiness to face danger. Her internal dialogue reveals her confidence in her skills, recalling her past successes in freeing slaves and taking down enemies. Her decision to go ahead with the infiltration, despite the risks, underscores her fearless attitude and her commitment to uncovering crucial information. As she slips into Doneval’s estate under the cover of rain, her careful planning and determination set the stage for the next phase of her dangerous mission, illustrating her resilience and tactical acumen in a perilous world of political intrigue and covert operations.

Chapter Seven

In Chapter Seven, Celaena demonstrates her formidable combat skills as she fights off several guards in a tense, dark room. Trained in desert combat techniques, she swiftly dispatches her enemies using a combination of knife strikes and agile maneuvers. Her training is evident in her quick reflexes and strategic fighting style, highlighting her resourcefulness and resilience. Despite her success in neutralizing the guards, she is soon overpowered and knocked unconscious, illustrating the peril she faces even when she appears to have the upper hand. This intense action scene underscores her combat prowess and the danger inherent in her clandestine activities.

Upon awakening, Celaena finds herself bound and submerged in a sewer, a grim and hazardous environment. Her surroundings are filthy and ominous, yet she remains calm and observant. She listens carefully to the voices of her captors, recognizing them as Doneval’s bodyguard and other guards. Her goal is clear: gather information and stay alert while she is in captivity. Her mental acuity and composed demeanor in such a dire situation reveal her experience and determination to survive, even when faced with physical and psychological threats.

The captors, led by Philip, reveal their dismissive attitude towards her as a spy. They mock her attempts at espionage, asserting that they have dealt with many such threats and that she is expendable. Philip’s taunts and the threat of flooding the sewer demonstrate their cruelty and confidence in their control. Celaena’s sharp wit and defiant attitude persist as she taunts her captors, refusing to show fear or submission. Her cunning and quick thinking are her best defenses against the brutal interrogation tactics they threaten to employ.

In a daring act of self-preservation, Celaena uses her hidden blades to free herself from her restraints amid the rising water. Her quick reflexes and ingenuity enable her to cut free just in time before the sewer floods completely. She fights her way out of

captivity, plunging into the icy water with resilience and resolve. Her escape underscores her resourcefulness and unyielding spirit, emphasizing her ability to adapt and survive even the most perilous situations. This chapter highlights her strength, intelligence, and unwavering determination to evade her enemies and continue her mission.



Chapter Eight

The chapter opens with a visceral scene where the protagonist, Celaena, is rescued from a dire situation in a sewer, highlighting her vulnerability and the immediate aftermath of her ordeal. She is overwhelmed by physical and emotional trauma, experiencing vomiting and a desperate attempt to cleanse herself through multiple baths and alcohol. Her body is coated with grime, and despite her efforts to feel clean, she remains haunted by the violence she endured. The scene emphasizes her physical suffering and the emotional toll of her experiences, setting a tone of raw vulnerability and the brutal reality of her circumstances.

As she grapples with her trauma, Sam appears at her door, revealing he has been searching for her after her disappearance. Their interaction is charged with unspoken emotions, blending gratitude, guilt, and complex feelings of dependency. Sam’s presence offers a moment of solace, yet her initial dismissiveness reveals her inner conflict. Their exchange underscores the deep connection between them, built on mutual respect and the recognition of the life-threatening danger she faced. This interaction also hints at underlying tensions and the unspoken acknowledgment of their shared history.

The narrative then shifts to a more intimate moment where Celaena confesses her gratitude and remorse. She admits her involvement in dangerous events and her regret over her past actions, particularly involving her friend Ansel. As she recounts her final act of mercy, the emotional weight of her choices becomes evident. Sam listens with sorrow and understanding, and their conversation deepens, revealing her vulnerability and her struggle to reconcile her past deeds with her desire for redemption. Her scars and her story symbolize the pain she bears both physically and emotionally.

In the concluding scenes, Celaena and Sam share a poignant moment of understanding, with her acknowledging the complexity of her situation. She hints at a new, more dangerous mission—one that now includes a personal vendetta—by adding a new name to her list of targets. The chapter ends on a note of foreboding, emphasizing that her journey toward vengeance and self-acceptance is far from over. Her wicked smile and the mention of her expanding list of enemies underscore the ongoing peril and the relentless nature of her quest for justice and survival.



Chapter Nine

In Chapter Nine, Celaena begins her day with a sense of liberation, having paid off her debt to Arobynn and reclaimed her independence. She reflects on her recent experiences, including her time in the Red Desert, which rekindles her desire to forge her own path. Her confrontation with Arobynn is tense but ultimately empowering; she asserts her newfound freedom by presenting him with the money she earned, which she claims covers her debt and more. Despite her desire to maintain their working relationship, she firmly states that she no longer belongs to him, signaling her resolve to move forward on her own terms. Arobynn's response is bittersweet, acknowledging her departure with a hint of regret, yet he respects her decision, which marks a pivotal shift in their dynamic.

Later, Celaena prepares for her covert mission into Doneval’s house, returning to the sewer tunnels she despises. Alongside Sam, she meticulously plans their infiltration, recognizing that the front entrance is too heavily guarded. Their strategy involves waiting for the right moment when the servants are likely to discard trash, creating an opportunity to slip inside unnoticed. The sewer setting underscores the danger and the clandestine nature of her quest, emphasizing her determination to take control of her circumstances despite the risks. Sam’s lighthearted banter contrasts with the tension of their plan, highlighting their camaraderie and shared understanding of the peril involved. Celaena’s strategic thinking and resolve are evident as she envisions the best way to outsmart her enemies.

The chapter also explores Celaena's emotional state as she grapples with her recent victory and the lingering sense of unease. Her reflection on the money she paid Arobynn reveals her complex feelings about her newfound independence—it feels both empowering and hollow, given the circumstances. Her thoughts about her upcoming infiltration are tinged with anticipation and a desire for retribution, especially targeting

Philip, whom she intends to confront. The sewer tunnels symbolize both the literal and metaphorical darkness she navigates, representing her ongoing struggle to reclaim her agency in a hostile environment. Her cautious optimism is tempered by the understanding that her journey toward true freedom is far from over.

In closing, Celaena and Sam leave the sewer, their plan set in motion. They share a quiet moment about her recent financial independence and his concern for her safety. Celaena admits that her sense of freedom is not quite what she envisioned, hinting at the emotional and physical toll her actions have taken. Their conversation underscores the fragile balance between her determination and the dangers she faces. As they walk away from the dangerous house, Celaena’s resolve remains strong, knowing that her next steps will be critical. The chapter ends with a sense of anticipation, emphasizing her readiness to confront her enemies and carve out her future, no matter the cost.

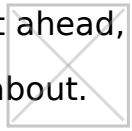
Chapter Ten

The chapter opens with an emotionally charged scene where Celaena experiences her first kiss, revealing her vulnerability and the intensity of her feelings for Sam. As their lips meet and their bodies respond passionately, she is overwhelmed by the rush of desire, momentarily forgetting her surroundings and the dangers they face. The physical connection underscores her internal conflict—her longing for intimacy contrasted with the chaos of her life and the perilous circumstances they are embroiled in. This moment marks a significant shift in her emotional state, highlighting her vulnerability and the deepening of her relationship with Sam amidst the backdrop of their dangerous environment.

Following their intimate encounter, Celaena reflects on the significance of what just transpired. She is haunted by her feelings—Sam’s unwavering love and the sacrifices he’s made for her—despite her own harsh treatment of him over the years. Her insomnia and introspection reveal her internal struggle, questioning her past hostility and her current feelings, which have begun to shift towards genuine affection. Her thoughts are muddled with guilt, confusion, and a sense of impending change, emphasizing her complex emotional landscape and hinting at her evolving perception of love and loyalty.

The narrative then shifts to the tense planning of a covert infiltration. Celaena waits in the shadows outside a sewer entrance, preparing for a critical mission to breach Doneval’s house. Her meticulous attention to timing and stealth reflects her experience and resolve. As she observes a servant entering the sewer, she seizes her opportunity to slip inside unnoticed, using her skills to avoid detection. Her focus on the details—such as the layout of the cellar and the timing of her movements—illustrates her professionalism and determination to succeed in her dangerous task, emphasizing the stakes involved in their covert operation.

In the final scene, Celaena positions herself within the cellar, waiting for Sam to arrive with supplies for their planned distraction. Her patience and careful preparation underscore the high-risk nature of their plan, with the extensive alcohol stockpiled as a potential tool for chaos. Her cautious movements and strategic thinking highlight her commitment to the mission, as she monitors her surroundings and ensures her escape route remains secure. Her silent vigil is a testament to her resolve, as she prepares for the perilous night ahead, driven by a desire to thwart Doneval’s plans and protect those she cares about.



Chapter Eleven

The chapter opens with a tense scene where Celaena, engaged in a covert mission, swiftly hides crucial documents in her suit and takes cover in an armoire as she prepares to evade detection. She plans to use a distraction—a fire set in the cellar—to divert the guards' attention long enough to accomplish her objective. Her focus is on ensuring she can retrieve and escape with the documents before Doneval and his partner realize they’re missing. The urgency and precision of her actions highlight her skill and determination to complete her mission under extreme pressure, emphasizing the high stakes involved in this clandestine operation.

As the scene unfolds, Doneval and a mysterious man enter the study, engaged in a tense exchange. Doneval exhibits a mix of charm and nervousness, eager to exchange documents and secure a quick escape. The stranger, calm and composed, is cautious and observant, hinting at his familiarity with dangerous dealings. Their interaction suggests a clandestine transaction involving sensitive information, with Doneval eager to conceal his dealings and the stranger wary of revealing too much. This tense dialogue sets the stage for a confrontation and underscores the dangerous world of espionage and treachery that the characters navigate.

Suddenly, Celaena intervenes with lethal precision, emerging from her hiding spot and killing Doneval instantly. Her swift action is triggered by the chaos of an explosion—likely caused by Sam—disrupting the scene further. In the chaos, the stranger manages to escape, demonstrating remarkable agility and speed. Celaena’s pursuit through the house is intense, marked by a violent confrontation with Philip, a bodyguard. Her combat skills are on full display as she fights Philip, ultimately killing him with calculated efficiency. Her focus remains on capturing the fleeing man, highlighting her relentless determination and combat prowess amidst the chaos.

In the aftermath, Celaena quickly escapes the burning house, taking down additional guards and navigating the frightened city streets. Her objective is clear: to track the man who fled, suspecting he holds vital information. She deduces his likely route and sprints through the alleys, her senses sharp and her swords hidden away. Her concern about Sam’s fate underscores the ongoing danger and uncertainty surrounding her mission. The chapter concludes with her spotting the man in an alley, emphasizing her unwavering resolve to pursue her target despite the perilous circumstances, setting the stage for the next phase of her quest.



Chapter Twelve

In Chapter Twelve, Celaena confronts Arobynn in his study after a tumultuous night filled with deception and violence. She reports that Doneval's partner has destroyed his documents before dying by poisoning, and she has burned Doneval's house, leaving his fate ambiguous. Despite her efforts, Arobynn remains stoic, revealing that the documents she obtained were sent to Leighfer rather than being part of a legitimate trade agreement. This indicates a deeper conspiracy involving the king and Leighfer, centered around negotiations in the glass castle, which threaten to entangle Celaena in political and moral conflicts.

The chapter exposes the intricate web of lies and betrayal orchestrated by Arobynn, who confesses that the supposed trade deal was a fabrication. Instead, the real negotiations about slavery and political influence are happening at the highest levels, with the king and Leighfer in secret talks. Celaena's moral outrage grows as she realizes she has been manipulated into killing Doneval, a man who genuinely sought to help slaves and oppose the corrupt system. Her actions, driven by Arobynn's schemes, have inadvertently supported the very forces she despises.

Celaena's sense of shame deepens as she reflects on her choices, including selling Kasida to Leighfer Bardingale and paying her debts through her actions. She recognizes that her efforts to undermine the corrupt dealings have been compromised, and her moral clarity is challenged by the realization that her sacrifices may have been exploited. Arobynn's manipulation becomes clear, as he reveals that her money was used to fund his personal pursuits, including his victory at Lysandra's Bidding, further emphasizing her powerlessness within this treacherous game of political and personal betrayal.

In the closing moments, Celaena prepares to leave Arobynn's influence behind, announcing her move to an apartment to escape his control. Arobynn's cruel smile and

cryptic remarks underscore his ongoing dominance and the manipulative nature of their relationship. Her final act of defiance—declaring that Sam’s debt is paid and that she and Sam are now free—underscores her desire for independence. However, the chapter ends with her realization of how deeply Arobynn has manipulated her, using her funds for his own gains and leaving her to grapple with feelings of betrayal, shame, and a faint glimmer of hope for her own future.

