

70. Highmarshal Azure

The chapter opens with a reflection on the internal struggles within the Knights Radiant, emphasizing that divisions are not solely due to perceived worthiness but are rooted in deeper issues. A fragment from a secretive drawer hints at the ongoing tensions and hidden truths among the Knights, setting a tone of underlying conflict. This theme of internal discord contrasts with the external chaos in Kholinar, where the city faces siege and upheaval. The narrative then shifts to Kaladin's arrival at the Wall Guard's barracks, which feels like a homecoming. The familiar sights, smells, and sounds evoke a sense of stability and order amid the chaos, highlighting the importance of military discipline and camaraderie.

Kaladin's observations of the barracks reveal a well-maintained and organized military environment. The presence of soldiers, armorers, and the communal atmosphere suggest a unit that is cohesive and resilient despite recent hardships. Kaladin admires Highmarshal Azure's leadership, recognizing his critical role in securing the city and managing the chaos caused by riots. The interactions with the soldiers, including Syl's playful movements and the casual conversations, humanize the soldiers and reinforce the idea that effective leadership has fostered a sense of normalcy and trust within the ranks. Kaladin's appreciation for the structure and discipline of the military underscores his longing for purpose and belonging.

As the soldiers share stories, Kaladin learns about their backgrounds and current circumstances. The mention of the Shash brand and the story of Sadeas's mark introduces a layer of political and social tension, hinting at the complex hierarchy and loyalties within the army. The soldiers' casual demeanor masks underlying wounds, as evidenced by their chipped weapons and empty seats—signs of recent losses and ongoing tension. Kaladin's questions reveal his curiosity and skepticism about the political dynamics, particularly regarding the treatment of lighteyes and the rules

surrounding slavery and branding, illustrating the layered conflicts shaping their society.

In the final part, the narrative emphasizes Azure's heroic reputation, especially his leadership during the riots. The soldiers' admiration for Azure's bravery and strategic acumen contrasts with Kaladin's initial outsider perspective. The chapter concludes with a sense of hope and respect for Azure's command, underscoring his ability to inspire and rally his troops even in the face of chaos. Kaladin's desire to learn more about the highmarshal and his contemplation of rejoining the military reflect his ongoing search for purpose and his recognition of the importance of strong leadership in turbulent times. The chapter ends on a note of cautious optimism, hinting at Kaladin's potential future role in this fractured but resilient military environment.