

Chapter Thirty-Three

Nesryn and Sartaq approach the Watchtower of Eidolon, a crumbling structure nestled among mist-covered pines and overshadowed by the imposing Dagul Fells. The tower, once a vantage point for spotting threats from the mountains, now stands in ruins. As they fly closer on Kadara, Sartaq explains the significance of the Fells, marking the territory of the kharankui. Nesryn observes the barren, lifeless slopes, marveling at the idea of Houlun flying over such treacherous terrain. Their banter lightens the mood, though the gravity of their mission lingers beneath the surface.

The pair had departed in secrecy, armed and prepared for potential danger despite planning to return by sunset. Borte, though irritated at being excluded, braided Nesryn's hair tightly—a practical gesture for their flight. Kadara circles the watchtower, revealing no signs of life or the rumored library. The ruins, weathered and broken, suggest a long-abandoned past. Sartaq directs Kadara to land nearby, trusting the tower's unstable walls too little to support the ruk. The whistling communication system of the rukhin is highlighted, emphasizing their preparedness for emergencies.

As they ascend toward the tower, Sartaq's tracking skills reassure Nesryn of their safety, though the looming Fells remain unnerving. The chilly air and scattered stone blocks hint at the harsh conditions that may have driven the tower's occupants away. Upon reaching the archway, they discover weathered owl statues—symbols of Silba—flanking the entrance. Sartaq urges haste, sensing the need to avoid lingering. Nesryn, ever vigilant, takes up her rearguard position, scanning the forest for threats before following him inside.

Inside the tower, the ruins are exposed to the sky, with a crumbling staircase and archer slits hinting at its former purpose. Nesryn's trained eye assesses the space for exits and dangers, but the structure offers little of note. When Sartaq moves toward a dark stairwell, she stops him, wary of unseen threats. Their dynamic—her caution

balancing his boldness—underscores the tension of their mission as they stand on the brink of uncovering whatever secrets the watchtower holds.

