

Chapter Fifty

The chapter opens with Nesryn and Prince Sartaq trapped in a dire situation, bound by the webbing of the monstrous *kharankui* spiders. Their ally, the shifter Falkan, disguised as one of the spiders, aids their escape by cutting their bindings with his claws, despite his own pain. As they free themselves, they retrieve their weapons and learn of Maeve's involvement, hinting at a larger conflict. The group flees through a starlit mountain pass, pursued by the spiders, and Falkan guides them toward a precarious slope, their only hope of reaching higher ground and potential safety.

Nesryn devises a plan to use fire against the spiders, recalling their vulnerability to flames. With limited arrows and time, she and Sartaq hastily fashion flaming projectiles using fabric from their clothing and pieces of his braid. As the spiders close in, Nesryn fires the first arrow, causing chaos among their ranks. The spiders hesitate, distracted by the fire, but the group remains trapped on the narrow peak. The tension escalates as they prepare a second arrow, aware that their resources are dwindling and the spiders are regrouping.

Falkan, sensing the direness of their situation, reveals a personal mission to Nesryn: his long search for a lost niece, the only family he has left. He implores Nesryn to find her and ensure she inherits his fortune, should he perish. This heartfelt moment is cut short as the spiders advance, and Falkan makes the sacrificial decision to hold them off, buying time for Nesryn and Sartaq. His bravery underscores the chapter's themes of loyalty and sacrifice, even as the odds seem insurmountable.

The chapter climaxes with Sartaq and Nesryn attempting a desperate escape down the steep slope, their fate uncertain. As Falkan confronts the spiders, Sartaq suddenly reacts to an unseen threat, shoving Nesryn to safety. The chapter ends on a cliffhanger, leaving the reader in suspense about the trio's survival and the consequences of Falkan's sacrifice. The action-packed sequence, combined with

emotional depth, drives the narrative forward while setting the stage for the next confrontation.

