

# Chapter Thirty

In this chapter, Nesryn awakens in the Hall of Altun, uncertain of how long she has slept or the time of day. She spends a restless morning listening for signs of activity beyond her door, eventually noticing shadows indicating someone is awake in the hall. After dressing and a brief wash, she joins Sartaq, who is already saddling Kadara, and they head out into the early dawn. The scene sets a tone of quiet anticipation, emphasizing Nesryn's discomfort and curiosity about her surroundings and the people she is now with, highlighting her transition into a new environment filled with unfamiliar customs and expectations.

The narrative then shifts to their journey through the mountains, where Sartaq demonstrates the skills of riding and training ruks, the winged creatures crucial to their culture. Sartaq explains the traditional age for starting to ride, the process of raising hatchlings, and the discipline involved in learning to ride from a young age. Nesryn reflects on her own life, finding it hard to imagine children as young as four undertaking such responsibilities. The discussion provides insight into the nomadic, warrior-based culture of the steppes, emphasizing their deep-rooted traditions of horsemanship and combat training that date back to their history of conquest and expansion.

Sartaq elaborates on the military prowess of their people, describing how their ancestors used swift, strategic cavalry tactics to conquer neighboring regions. He recounts stories of their ancestors crossing natural barriers like the Kyzultum Desert and employing unconventional strategies to outmaneuver larger armies. The narrative underscores their history of innovation, adaptability, and strategic brilliance, which allowed them to dominate vast territories. Sartaq's pride in his heritage and the achievements of his ancestors reflects the importance of military skill and ingenuity in their culture, shaping their identity and reputation.

The chapter concludes with a discussion of the tactics of the khagan, emphasizing his use of fear and psychological warfare to subdue enemies without prolonged combat. Sartaq explains how the khagan's use of his legendary sulde weapons—one for peace and one for war—symbolizes their strategic approach. The story highlights the importance of reputation, diplomacy, and psychological dominance in maintaining power. Sartaq's recounting of these military stories provides a broader context for understanding the culture's emphasis on strength, strategy, and the legacy of their ancestors, framing their history as one of resilience and cunning.



Summaryer