

Chapter Thirty-Five

The chapter opens with a tense scene where Falkan, wounded and bleeding, drops to his knees amidst scattering pine needles, revealing his vulnerability and pain. Nesryn quickly moves to aid him, but Sartaq's cautious warning indicates the danger surrounding Falkan. Despite his injury, Falkan admits to following them, having overheard their conversation at the fire. His presence raises suspicion, especially given Sartaq's mistrust of his motives, rooted in Falkan's past as a merchant and his hidden magical heritage. Falkan's attempt to explain his innocence highlights the complex interplay of trust and suspicion among the characters.

Falkan's revelations deepen as he confesses his desire to regain lost years through magic, which he discovered he possessed but never fully harnessed. His bitterness about his lost youth and the fact that his brother's and father's magic ran in his family adds layers of personal regret. Nesryn's insistence on helping him, despite Sartaq's hostility, underscores her compassion and the importance of loyalty. Falkan's frustrated admission that he could change forms at will illustrates his concealed magical ability, which he views as both a gift and a curse, further complicating perceptions of his character.

The narrative quickly shifts to their perilous return flight to the aerie, with Nesryn tending to Falkan's wound as they soar through the sky. The flight is tense, with Falkan's weight making the journey difficult and Sartaq's pragmatic decision to prioritize safety over sentiment. The imagery of the mountains glowing with fires as the sun sets emphasizes the dramatic and dangerous environment. Kadara's frantic scream signals their arrival and sets the stage for the tense arrival at the Mountain-Hall of Altun, where allies are gathered in anticipation, yet the fate of Falkan remains uncertain.

Upon landing, the scene reveals a complex web of political tension and unspoken concerns. Sartaq's focus on questioning Kadara's condition and the black blood on her talons hints at a deeper conflict involving her and possibly other supernatural elements. Nesryn and Borte's observations suggest underlying guilt and unease among the characters, as they assess Kadara's injuries and the mysterious circumstances surrounding her. The chapter ends with an atmosphere charged with suspicion and unresolved questions, setting the stage for further revelations about the characters' motives and the unfolding conflict.

