

CHAPTER THIRTY-THREE

The chapter opens with a reflection on the dangers associated with controlling a powerful signet, emphasizing that both the inability to manifest one and the reckless use of it pose significant risks to riders and those around them. This sets a tone of caution and highlights the importance of mastery over magical abilities within the military hierarchy. The narrative then shifts to a tense morning where the protagonist, hurriedly preparing for an urgent formation, grapples with the reality of an impending attack. The urgency underscores the deteriorating security in the quadrant, and the protagonist's concern for fallen comrades underscores the stakes of this conflict.

As the scene progresses, the protagonist quickly dresses in her formal uniform, aware of her limited time before deployment. Her interaction with Xaden reveals a deep connection, with him offering protective warmth in the form of his flight jacket. Their exchange is charged with emotion, hinting at the looming separation as Xaden is expected to be sent on a dangerous mission. Their brief but intense moment underscores the personal toll of the ongoing war, contrasting their feelings against the backdrop of military duty and imminent danger.

The chapter also captures the chaos and adrenaline of the war college environment. The protagonist slips away from her room unnoticed, blending into the crowd of riders heading to formation. She observes her peers, including Rhiannon and Liam, and engages in lighthearted banter that masks underlying tension. The discovery that she is wearing Xaden's flight jacket sparks playful teasing among her friends, which momentarily distracts from the seriousness of the situation. The camaraderie and layered interactions reveal the complex emotional landscape of the characters amidst the chaos.

Finally, the chapter culminates with the revelation that the morning's gathering is part of a larger, orchestrated event—War Games. The protagonist's shock and Rhiannon's

teasing highlight the unpredictable nature of their training and the deceptive calm before more intense battles. The chapter ends with a sense of foreboding, as the characters brace for the upcoming challenge while managing personal conflicts and relationships. The mix of humor, tension, and camaraderie paints a vivid picture of life within the war college during a period of crisis.

