

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

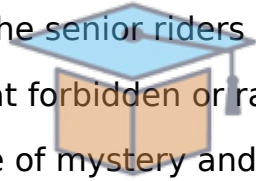
The chapter opens with a reflection on the mysterious and hierarchical nature of dragon governance, highlighting the protagonist's uncertainty about how dragons create laws or decide their bonding practices. Despite an officer's confidence in their expertise, there remains a significant gap in understanding the true social and political structures among dragons. This sets a tone of intrigue and complexity surrounding dragon society, emphasizing that much about their inner workings remains concealed from human observers. The narrative introduces a sense of curiosity and respect for the dragons' ancient customs, suggesting that their internal hierarchy and decision-making processes are more intricate than they appear on the surface.

The scene shifts to a tense battlefield setting where chaos reigns after a confrontation. A general's loud protest indicates disagreement over a critical issue, while the protagonist, injured and in pain, observes the aftermath of a fierce skirmish involving dragons and riders. The medical station is modest but functional, providing pain relief and treatment for the protagonist's injuries. Amidst the chaos, the protagonist reflects on the fact that they now have two dragons—a significant and rare development—while also witnessing the aftermath of the combat, including injuries and the ongoing tension among the fighters. The scene underscores the physical and emotional toll of dragon training and combat.

As the chapter progresses, the focus shifts to the protagonist's personal resilience and determination. Despite a painful ankle sprain, they insist on healing quickly to maintain their strength and readiness for upcoming challenges. The dialogue with Professor Kaori reveals concerns about the severity of the injury and the importance of not appearing weak in front of others, especially given the high stakes and the eyes of the valley upon them. The protagonist's resolve is further demonstrated through their questions about the fate of their squad members, revealing underlying fears for their

friends' safety. The narrative emphasizes themes of perseverance, pride, and the pressure to succeed in a brutal, competitive environment.

In the final scenes, tensions escalate as the protagonist faces Jack, whose anger and rivalry surface amid the chaos. The instructor's intervention prevents violence, and the dialogue reveals underlying tensions about recent events and the protagonist's surprising bond with a powerful dragon. The scene concludes with a sense of unresolved conflict, as Jack's envy and fear become apparent and the chapter ends with the arrival of the senior riders and dragons. The closing question about bonding two dragons hints at forbidden or rare practices within dragon society, leaving the reader with a sense of mystery and anticipation for future revelations.



Summary