

Chapter 27

The chapter begins with Gregor and the Underlanders debating whether to banish Ares, the bat he bonded with during his journey. Despite initial anger and legal arguments, the bond between Gregor and Ares proves too significant to ignore, and Ares vows loyalty to Gregor. The scene shifts to Gregor visiting his father in the hospital, where he finds him recovering and laughing with Boots. Their emotional reunion highlights the relief of being reunited, though both acknowledge their lives will never be the same. Gregor avoids discussing his own hardships, focusing instead on lighter topics to preserve the moment.

Gregor's father shares his ordeal of being trapped in the Underland, explaining how he survived by tricking the rats into believing he could create weapons. His ingenuity and unwavering hope of returning home kept him alive. Gregor listens intently, cherishing the chance to reconnect. The conversation turns to Gregor's mother, and though his father worries, Gregor reassures him she will recover once they return. The afternoon is spent in simple joy, with Gregor and his father savoring each other's presence and playing with Boots, a stark contrast to their recent struggles.

Later, Gregor encounters Vikus, who updates him on the war's progress, noting the rats are in retreat and Ripred is attempting to unite a faction for peace. Vikus presents Gregor with a jeweled sword belonging to Bartholomew of Sandwich, a gift from the council. Gregor hesitates, reluctant to accept both due to his mother's disapproval and his aversion to violence. He confesses to Vikus that he doesn't want to be a warrior but aspires to emulate Vikus's diplomatic approach to conflict, seeking peaceful resolutions over battle.

Vikus acknowledges Gregor's perspective and offers him a different gift: the ability to hope. He emphasizes that hope is essential for peace, even in the face of adversity. Gregor's journey has left him questioning the necessity of violence, and Vikus

encourages him to hold onto hope as a guiding principle. The chapter closes with Gregor reflecting on this wisdom, signaling his growth and readiness to embrace a future where peace, though challenging, remains a possibility.

