

Chapter 25: Syenite, fractured

The chapter opens with the aftermath of a celebratory party thrown by the Meovites to honor the Clalsu's return with valuable goods, including rare stones, aromatic woods, and luxurious fabrics. Despite the festivities, Syenite is haunted by the recent violence she has caused—shutting down a volcano that destroyed a city and killing two ships of people to protect her family's secrecy. While the community revels, she remains in bed, burdened by guilt, and avoids joining the celebrations. Alabaster stays with her, offering comfort and forcing her to engage, though she resists his efforts.

Syenite expresses her reluctance to embrace her past identity as an orogene, rejecting the symbolic rings Alabaster offers her as a marker of her growing power. She insists they are free from the Fulcrum's control and no longer need to conform to its traditions. Alabaster counters that their son, Corundum, will need training to harness his abilities, arguing that Syenite's strength is essential for his future. Their conversation highlights Syenite's internal conflict—she feels unworthy of praise for averting disaster, as she was also the cause of it.

Alabaster shifts the conversation to a historical allegory, recounting the story of Misalem, a figure vilified in Fulcrum teachings. He reveals that Misalem's actions were driven by revenge against the Sanzed Empire, which had committed atrocities during the Season of Teeth, including cannibalizing lesser races. Syenite is shocked by this hidden history, which contradicts the sanitized version taught in the Fulcrum. Alabaster's knowledge comes from his unrestricted access to senior libraries and conversations with an archeomest, hinting at his own complex past.

The chapter concludes with Syenite grappling with the implications of Alabaster's revelations. The Sanzed Empire's brutal history and the Fulcrum's manipulation of truth deepen her disillusionment. Alabaster's attempt to contextualize their struggles within a broader historical framework offers Syenite a new perspective, though she

remains emotionally withdrawn. The chapter underscores themes of guilt, identity, and the weight of hidden histories, as Syenite struggles to reconcile her actions with her sense of self.

