

Chapter Sixty-Six

Nesryn, exhausted yet unable to rest, finds herself drawn to Kadara's minaret after the group's return to Antica. She deliberately avoids Chaol and Yrene's reunion, understanding their need for privacy after Chaol's near-death experience. As she contemplates finding new quarters for herself and her companions—including Borte and Falkan, who joined them—a page delivers a letter from her uncle. The message, dated two weeks prior, causes her hands to tremble before she races up the minaret stairs, urgency propelling her forward.

Upon reading the letter, Nesryn swiftly mounts her ruk, Salkhi, and flies to her uncle's home in the Runni Quarter. The ruk's dramatic arrival stirs awe and fear among the onlookers. When her family bursts through the gates—her father standing at the forefront—Nesryn collapses to her knees, overwhelmed with emotion. The reunion is tearful and joyous, with her family recounting their perilous journey to Antica and their decision to stay during the war. Nesryn's bond with Salkhi, whom she claimed as her own after his previous rider's death, symbolizes her newfound strength and identity.

Two hours later, Prince Sartaq arrives, drawn by the commotion caused by the ruks in the street. He greets Nesryn's father with respect, causing Sayed Faliq visible shock. The children's exuberant reaction to Kadara and Salkhi lightens the mood, with even Nesryn's sister, Delara, momentarily forgetting her embarrassment in the presence of the prince. Sartaq's unexpected visit and warm interaction with her family stir deep emotions in Nesryn, hinting at their growing connection. Delara's teasing glance and Nesryn's playful response underscore the familial bonds and Nesryn's personal growth.

The chapter culminates in a blend of personal and political significance. Nesryn's reunion with her family reaffirms her roots, while Sartaq's presence signals his support and the deepening alliance between them. The children's reverence for the ruks mirrors Nesryn's own journey from uncertainty to confidence. The scene captures a

moment of respite and joy amidst the looming war, highlighting themes of family, identity, and the bonds forged through shared trials. The chapter ends on a hopeful note, with Nesryn poised between her past and her future.

