

43. Men and Monsters

The chapter opens with Kaladin and his family exhausted after a grueling night tending to patients in the clinic, as news arrives of Queen Navani's surrender to the Fused. The messenger, Alili, reveals the queen's failed attempt to restore the Radiants, resulting in the deaths of those involved. The surrender means living under singer rule, a prospect met with mixed reactions—Kaladin's father, Lirin, downplays the impact, while his mother, Hesina, worries about the tower's collapsing infrastructure without functional fabrials. Kaladin, however, is visibly agitated, recognizing the dire implications of losing control of the Oathgates and the Radiants' diminished powers.

Kaladin's frustration grows as he grapples with the war's sudden turn. He argues that the surrender isolates their forces and questions whether the enemy can replicate their suppression of Radiant abilities elsewhere. The messenger points out that Kaladin is the only Radiant still standing, a fact that surprises him. His thoughts drift to his patients, particularly those suffering from battle shock, who now face renewed trauma. The weight of the night's events and his concern for others leave him emotionally and physically drained, though he resists his mother's urging to rest.

The conversation shifts to the broader strategic implications of the surrender. Kaladin reflects on how warfare has evolved, with traditional tactics rendered obsolete by the Fused's abilities. The messenger suggests Kaladin might help other Radiants recover, but he is uncertain what sets him apart. His anxiety peaks as he anticipates the inevitable consequences of the enemy's victory, comparing it to waiting for the thunder after a lightning strike. The tension is palpable as the group struggles to reconcile their new reality.

The chapter closes with a moment of unease as a Regal-form singer briefly inspects the clinic, hinting at the increasing surveillance under the new regime. Syl's warning of the approaching enemy soldier underscores the loss of freedom they now face.

Kaladin's family realizes their open discussions may soon be impossible as the singers tighten their control. The chapter ends on a somber note, emphasizing the uncertainty and fear gripping the tower's inhabitants as they brace for the fallout of the surrender.

