

I-6. A Boon and a Curse

The chapter delves into Taravangian's internal conflict as he grapples with his fluctuating intelligence and compassion. Isolated in a stormwagon, he reflects on his dual nature: his brilliant but emotionally detached self and his current, more empathetic but intellectually limited state. He hesitates to execute Odium's orders to betray the coalition, clinging to the faint hope that his intervention might not be needed. His physical frailty mirrors his emotional turmoil, as he struggles with the weight of his past decisions, particularly his failed attempt to break Dalinar Kholin.

Taravangian retrieves a hidden fragment of the Diagram, a cryptic plan he created during a rare moment of intelligence. As he reviews the notes, he confronts the moral ambiguity of his actions—preserving Kharbranth at the expense of humanity. The document, intended to dismantle Dalinar, now fills him with shame and regret. He questions whether his brilliance was truly a boon, as it lacked the compassion to understand the human cost of his schemes. The exhaustionspren and shamespren surrounding him symbolize his inner exhaustion and guilt.

The chapter highlights Taravangian's paradoxical existence: his intelligent self sees solutions but lacks empathy, while his compassionate self feels the pain of his choices but lacks the intellect to change them. He mourns the lives sacrificed for his pragmatic, yet flawed, vision of salvation. His earlier confidence in Odium's inevitability wavers as he confronts the limitations of his own genius. The fragment of the Diagram, once a source of pride, now serves as a painful reminder of his moral compromises.

In a moment of introspection, Taravangian fixates on a cryptic note about Renarin Kholin, whom the Diagram could not foresee. This anomaly, dismissed by his intelligent self, now intrigues his more emotional counterpart. The chapter ends with Taravangian's unresolved tension between his roles as a strategist and a remorseful

leader, hinting at deeper mysteries surrounding Renarin and Odium's plans. His struggle epitomizes the tragic duality of his existence—caught between brilliance and compassion, neither fully reconciling the other.

