

44. Tinder Waiting for the Spark

Kaladin carries an unconscious Teft through the dark tunnels of Urithiru, fleeing from his past decisions and the consequences of defying the queen's orders. Each step feels like a fracture in his life, leaving behind metaphorical stains of guilt and failure. Despite his exhaustion, he pushes forward, relying on Stormlight to sustain him, though he worries about running out of energy. Syl, his spren companion, scouts ahead, guiding him through the labyrinthine tower, now an enemy stronghold rather than a sanctuary. Kaladin's thoughts oscillate between determination and despair as he grapples with the weight of his choices.

As they navigate the unfamiliar floors, Kaladin reflects on his past as a soldier, drawing parallels between carrying Teft and the burdens of bridge runs. The physical strain is familiar, but the emotional toll is heavier, haunted by memories of lost comrades and his recent failures. Syl suggests moving to higher, less inhabited floors for safety, though she admits her limited knowledge of this section of the tower. Kaladin's resilience is tested as he alternates between relying on Stormlight and his own strength, clinging to the hope of finding refuge.

Their journey takes a dangerous turn when Kaladin senses an unseen threat and instinctively hides, covering his sphere's light to avoid detection. A Fused, a deadly enemy he had previously defeated, appears in the hallway, its crimson glow illuminating its terrifying form. Kaladin remains motionless, praying Teft's murmurs don't betray their hiding spot. The Fused pauses but moves on, leaving Kaladin to confront the reality of being hunted by a vengeful foe. He knows a direct confrontation would be perilous, especially without the element of surprise.

The chapter captures Kaladin's internal struggle as he balances duty, guilt, and survival. His physical journey through Urithiru mirrors his emotional turmoil, with each step deepening his isolation. Syl's presence provides guidance, but the looming threat

of the Fused underscores the precariousness of their situation. Kaladin's resolve is tempered by fear and regret, yet he presses on, driven by loyalty to Teft and the need to escape the consequences of his rebellion. The chapter ends with tension unresolved, leaving readers anticipating the next confrontation.

