

27. Banners

The chapter opens with Navani reflecting on the symbolic and practical nature of war banners as they flutter in the cold wind of Urithiru. The banners, emblazoned with Dalinar's glyph, serve both as markers of organization and as glaring targets for the enemy. Navani muses on the paradox of banners: they instill discipline and unity but also draw attention to key leaders, making them vulnerable. This introspection sets the tone for the chapter's exploration of symbolism and strategy in warfare.

Dalinar and Navani share a tender moment amidst the preparations for battle, highlighting their personal connection despite the stoic Alethi culture that discourages public displays of affection. Their conversation shifts to concerns about Taravangian, a cunning adversary whose motives remain unclear. Dalinar has taken precautions, including stationing Taravangian's forces away from the command post and secretly assigning Szeth, disguised as a soldier, to guard him. Navani, however, worries they might still be falling into Taravangian's traps.

The focus then turns to Gav, a young boy eager to join Dalinar in war, though Dalinar assures him he will only be involved in strategy, not combat. Navani expresses her anxiety over Gav's youth, but Dalinar insists it's important to include him, reflecting on his past mistakes of distancing himself from his own children. This subplot underscores themes of mentorship, legacy, and the emotional burdens of leadership.

The chapter concludes with Navani bidding farewell to her daughter and observing the contrasting behaviors of Jasnah and Taravangian. Jasnah's use of a palanquin projects strength, while Taravangian's refusal of one masks his vulnerability. Navani recognizes these as calculated displays, reinforcing the chapter's emphasis on perception and manipulation in politics and war. The scene leaves readers pondering the blurred lines between appearance and reality in the struggle for power.