

29. A Cage without Bars

Adolin and his companions finally spot land after a tedious journey by barge, which he likens to a "cage without bars" due to its confinement. Eager to disembark, Adolin remains cautious, recalling past dangers in Shadesmar and insisting on scouting the obsidian-outlined town ahead. Despite assurances from their guide Ua'pam that the area is free of threats, Adolin organizes a disguised reconnaissance mission, highlighting his responsible leadership and wariness born of experience.

Shallan volunteers to scout, disguising herself and Vathah as cultivationspren. Meanwhile, Adolin reflects on the trip's rare moments of relaxation, including bonding with Shallan and her alternate personas, Veil and Radiant. However, concerns linger about their dwindling Stormlight reserves, as even larger gemstones are fading. The group's gifts for their destination—books, puzzles, and weapons—are chosen for their cultural value rather than practicality, underscoring their precarious resource situation.

Adolin ponders Jasnah's theories about near-flawless gemstones, which could retain Stormlight longer but are suspiciously absent in circulation. This leads him to suspect a deliberate hoarding scheme. As they wait for Shallan's return, Godeke prepares to trade their remaining Stormlight for supplies, emphasizing the group's strategic planning. The tension builds as Adolin grows increasingly anxious, sensing unseen dangers despite the apparent safety of the town.

The chapter blends introspection with action, showcasing Adolin's leadership and the group's resourcefulness in a hostile environment. Themes of confinement, trust, and preparation dominate, as the characters navigate both physical and metaphysical challenges. The unresolved tension foreshadows potential conflicts, leaving readers anticipating the next developments in their journey to Lasting Integrity.