**Conflict:**

**‘The Fallout from the Gathering and the Hunt Lord choosing’**

**POV Focus: Arhan Stoutrider**

The first conflict of our story is focused around the unexpected events that occur at the called Gathering of chieftains. What was initially predicted to be a routing pledge of a new Hunt Lord, namely Kane Redfear, is turned on its head when of the nominated possible Hunt Lords, Arhan is chosen by the wise men. Let’s break it down.

First, we have Arhan, our protagonist and new Hunt Lord. Well regarded by his peers, Arhan is bemused when he is nominated for Hunt Lord, rolling his eyes and laughing to the cheers and jeers as he heads up to join the other nominated, which include esteemed hunters like Kane Redfear, Analya Windwisp and Plumply Rozane, all with about 20 years on him. Regardless, Kane, like most present, are sure that Kane Redfear will be chosen. After all, ever since Sig Sorno stepped down, Kane had been the acting Hunt Lord. It was assumed that the gathering was just to make it official.

Arhan’s amusement turns to horror when, after a brief conversation between the wise men, he is called back. The dead silence of the gathered, and the glower he can feel on his back from Kane Redfear follow him into the spirit font cave. Thought he at first tries to question the wisemen, he is constantly interrupted by queries from the assembled ones: Would you ever turn your back on the Southern Tribes? Would you betray your fellow Hunters? *Do you fear the lost ones?* Almost reluctantly, Arhan answers appropriately to every question. Finally, he realizes that this is happening whether he likes it or not, and when they finally ask *Will you lead us on this eternal hunt, into the depths of darkness, through the mires of evil, will you be the light for others to follow?* He answers yes, not without conviction, but with some degree of exhaustion. Finally, the ceremony is over and the attunement is broken: Artura Artright turns to him and tells him that ‘now, it is time to talk.’

Second, we have Kane Redfear. He does not have POV role in this portion of the book – or in any part of this book really – but his presence is felt all over this part. Refer to Kane’s character bio to learn more about him but the only relevant parts are: he’s a legendary hunter who retired to fulfill his duties as the Redfear chieftain (not long after Sig Sorno became Hunt Lord) but returned when Sorno reneged on his duties to assume temporary Hunt Lord status. Kane is a vegeta-like character – the Redfears are a storied tribe with an ancient and secret cultivation technique that is rumored to involve ‘consuming the flesh of demon.’ – and he is one of their strongest practitioners in history. Raised from birth to believe in their tribes superiority as they were one of the first two tribes to band together and form the southern tribes territory, Kane has consistently lived up to the tribes name, a prodigy from a young age. His only setback was the emergence of Sig Sorno, whose rise to prominence led to him becoming Hunt Lord instead of Kane – but more importantly, more unforgiveable in Kane’s mind, Sig was *stronger*.

Anyway, when Sig Sorno mysteriously stepped down from his Hunt Lord status, Kane knew that it was finally his time. He came out of retirement and started acting like Hunt Lord. People know the name Kane Redfear, and with his power, intelligence and commanding aura, the Hunt was quick to accept him as their new leader.

Not so for the Wise men, the village council/leader/day to day decision makers. They thought Kane’s umption in just *assuming* the role. However, they were willing to accept him as long as he worked with them to correct some things they thought were going poorly with Sig as the Hunt Lord; Kane proved however, to be, combative, arrogant, impossible to control, and quick to anger – all things they thought he had grown out. However, since the death of his wife, Kane had reverted back to his youthful state, to when he was last somewhat happy, as a hunter of demons. He was using the prospect of becoming Hunt Lord as a validation of his life choices.

The wise men tell Arhan a summarized version of these events and go on to say that they had planned to nominate Arhan from the start and that they truly believe he can grow into a good Hunt Lord, with time. Arhan states that he hasn’t gone on Hunts regularly in a few years, since the birth of his son, but the wise men wave away his concerns, pointing out how Kane easily stepped back into the role, Artura (a former Hunter herself) even going as far as to wistfully say that ‘one never truly forgets.’

Now, the fallout. Arhan being pledged in causes almost a civil war between what amounts to Kane’s faction (the old heads) who think the wise men are being ridiculous and that they are not leading the southern tribes in a good direction, and Arhan’s faction, which include his contemporaries and the wise men, who think Arhan represents their vision of the tribes well, and that Kane would have led them down a dark path. The wise men quickly move to legitimize Arhan’s Hunt Lord status by having him call a Hunt Festival, to bolster the Hunt with new young Hunters. However, this idea is waylaid when a rider arrives from the North, with word from the Northern Tribes Hunt Lord calling tabling of all the Hunt Lords, to tell them something. The conflicts arising from these events will be covered in the 2nd conflict.