

Excerpt from The White Death

Suddenly, Sultressa went quiet. Relieved, most of the others didn't question why the change. Only Alexcia understood that something was wrong. "What is it, Sultressa?" she asked. "What do you see?"

At first, Sultressa didn't answer, but continued to stare ahead downstream.

"Sultressa, what's wrong?" Alexcia asked a second time, this time a little louder.

Sultressa's response was so soft that only Alexcia could hear her, but Alexcia's second inquiry had alerted Raven. *Something is wrong*, she realized. *What is it? What is out of place?* Raven faced the same general direction as Sultressa, and her eyes scanned the whole sector.

Isabella echoed Alexcia's question, but this time to Raven. "What is it? What do you see?"

"I don't know yet," answered Raven, "but something is out of place."

Hearing Raven's confession of ignorance, Sultressa's vanity was touched. She turned around to face the whole group and said out loud, "It's the birds. The carrion birds gather up ahead like a wisp of smoke. There has been a big battle ahead."

(c) 2008 by John Holland