

Chapter Five

In this chapter, Celaena Sardothien endures a harsh desert journey, lying on her cloak and trying to imagine comfort amidst the sand and exposure. Her discomfort is compounded by the relentless sun, insufficient food, and the pervasive grit of the environment. Despite her roughing-it attitude, she expresses her frustration at the lack of luxury, highlighting her familiarity with hardship but also her desire for comfort. Her interactions with Ansel reveal her curiosity about the desert's history and the land's cursed past, setting a tone of tension between her resilience and her longing for normalcy.

The conversation with Ansel delves into the region's dark history, particularly the rise and fall of the Crochan Kingdom and the destructive Ironteeth Clans. Ansel recounts tales of the once-beautiful Crochan land, overrun by witches with ethereal beauty and dangerous iron teeth. She explains how the Ironteeth Clans overthrew the Crochan Dynasty, leaving a land cursed with barren, muddy, and lifeless terrain, until the land regained fertility after their departure eastward. This history underscores the perilous relationship between the land, its witches, and the ongoing conflicts that have shaped the region.

Ansel shares a chilling story from her childhood about her sister and a mysterious tower where a witch with metal teeth appeared. Her tale recounts a summer solstice event where her sister and friends encountered an otherworldly portal and a sinister old woman who abducted a girl named Maddy. The story culminates in the discovery of a child's bones and the terrifying realization of the witch's presence. This narrative emphasizes the danger and mystery surrounding witches and their dark magic, leaving Celaena haunted by the possibility of similar threats lurking in the shadows.

As the chapter concludes, Ansel expresses her desire to hunt witches and build an army of assassins to defend the realm, criticizing the current passivity of her people

and their reliance on foreign courts. Celaena's sarcastic response underscores her skepticism, but the underlying tone reveals her acknowledgment of the dangerous power witches possess. Ansel's dreams of glory contrast with her reality, and her conviction that witches can be defeated by decapitation offers a grim but hopeful perspective. Meanwhile, Celaena remains awake, haunted by the stories, contemplating the lurking darkness of magic and the perilous landscape they traverse.

