

# Chapter Thirty-Five

The chapter opens with Nesta trapped in a perilous underwater nightmare, reminiscent of her previous ordeal in the Cauldron. Darkness surrounds her, and she is helpless against the icy waters and the relentless grip of a kelpie. Her instinct to survive awakens her latent combativeness, prompting her to fight back with a dagger despite the overwhelming darkness and fear. Her struggle is intense, with her bones groaning under the kelpie's hold as she fights to free herself, highlighting her resilience and determination to resist death even in the face of seemingly insurmountable odds.

As the kelpie's grip tightens and disarms her, Nesta endures a series of brutal assaults, both physical and psychological. The creature's malicious touches and the invasive acts symbolize her vulnerability and the deep trauma she has endured. The kelpie's disturbing kiss, which mimics Tomas's earlier assault, underscores the recurring themes of violation and powerlessness. Despite her terror and suffering, Nesta's inner strength flickers as she tries to resist and find a way to turn her circumstances around, even as the kelpie's cruelty escalates.

In a pivotal moment, Nesta's internal plea for her ancient, dormant power becomes her only hope. She visualizes the golden disk of her magic, reaching out to it amid the chaos and darkness. As she is dragged through the submerged wreckage and bones, she desperately seeks to reconnect with her true strength. The golden glow symbolizes her inner power, which she recognizes as her last chance for survival. The connection to her magic intensifies her resolve, and she grips the disk tightly, understanding that she must risk everything to escape her tormentor.

In the climax, Nesta's desperation culminates in her decisive act of slamming the Mask onto her face. This act signifies her acceptance of the danger and her willingness to embrace her power, even if it means risking her life. The kelpie's slowed movements indicate that her actions have shifted the balance, and her focus on the mask reveals

her recognition that her salvation lies in confronting her inner darkness. The chapter ends with a tense anticipation, emphasizing her resilience and the pivotal moment of reclaiming her agency amid overwhelming peril.

