

Chapter Fifty-Three

Nesta and Cassian embark on a perilous journey to the Prison, a desolate mountain fortress steeped in eerie silence and foreboding. Rhysand has armed Nesta with a sword she Made, hinting at the dangers ahead. The landscape feels abandoned, as if waiting for something long gone to return. Nesta's sharp wit masks her unease, while Cassian remains vigilant, aware of the horrors within. The bone-carved gates groan open, signaling their expected arrival, and they step into the darkness, bound by strict rules to avoid provoking the Prison's malevolent inhabitants.

Descending into the Prison's depths, Nesta clings to Cassian's hand as his Siphon casts a bloody glow on the black walls. The air is thick with whispers and the scraping of unseen claws, heightening the tension. Cassian's demeanor shifts when they pass a cell housing Blue Annis, a creature he once battled. Nesta's dread grows as she reflects on Amren's centuries-long imprisonment here, feeling guilt for how she treated her. The oppressive atmosphere and haunting sounds amplify her remorse, making the descent feel endless.

The pair finally reach a hidden chamber marked by an iron door bearing a single rune—Lanthys, a name that visibly unsettles Cassian. Nesta, guided by her scrying vision, locates the alcove leading to the Harp's chamber. Despite Cassian's hesitation, she steps through the illusory rock, pulling him into a smooth-walled hallway. The Harp sits innocently in the center of a circular room, surrounded by carved symbols. Its ordinary appearance belies its power, and Nesta senses the latent wards and spells protecting it.

Nesta and Cassian debate their next move, wary of triggering a trap. Nesta suggests the Harp might allow her passage, as the Mask did, due to their shared magical nature. Cassian refuses to let her face the danger alone, emphasizing the Harp's potential treachery. The chapter ends on a cliffhanger, their fate uncertain as they stand at the

threshold of the chamber, poised to retrieve the Harp—or confront whatever guardians lie in wait.

