

Chapter Thirty-Six

In this intense chapter, Nesta Archeron undergoes a transformative moment as she dons a mysterious golden Mask, granting her power over the dead. Submerged in a bog, she faces a kelpie—a malevolent creature—but the Mask's ancient magic renders her impervious to pain and suffocation. The kelpie recoils in fear as Nesta harnesses the Mask's chilling power, sensing the presence of thousands of long-dead warriors beneath the water. Embracing the Mask's whispers of "home," she commands the dead to rise, turning the tide against her predator with cold, calculated vengeance.

The kelpie's terror mounts as skeletal hands seize him, dragging him into a gruesome fate. Nesta, no longer a victim, revels in her newfound agency, directing the dead to tear the creature apart. The scene is visceral and triumphant, contrasting her past helplessness with her current dominance. Meanwhile, Cassian and Azriel frantically search for her, their panic palpable as they wade through the bog, unaware of the supernatural events unfolding beneath the water's surface. Their desperation underscores the stakes, heightening the tension.

As the dead emerge in a spectral legion—warriors, kings, and lords long forgotten—they kneel before Nesta, who rises from the water like a vengeful deity. The golden Mask glows with eerie power, and she holds the kelpie's severed head, mirroring her earlier victory over the King of Hybern. Cassian and Azriel witness the horrifying spectacle, stunned by the sheer force of her command over the undead. The chapter climaxes with Nesta's chilling control over the legion, her will their sole purpose.

The chapter concludes with Nesta releasing the kelpie's head, symbolizing her complete dominance. The Mask's silver fire and the dead's unwavering loyalty hint at a deeper, darker power within her. Cassian's whispered plea—"Nesta"—captures the awe and dread of the moment, leaving readers to ponder the consequences of her

unleashed potential. The scene sets the stage for Nesta's evolving role, blending horror, triumph, and foreshadowing in a gripping narrative turn.

