

# Chapter Fifteen

Nesta finds herself drawn to the unsettling darkness of the library's seventh level, standing at the railing of Level Six as she peers into the abyss below. The darkness feels alive, pulsing and breathing, reminiscent of the terrifying entity Bryaxis that once dwelled there. Though Bryaxis is gone, the darkness seems to retain a malevolent presence, stirring memories of Hybern's Ravens and the Cauldron that transformed her. Nesta becomes entranced, losing track of time and purpose, as the darkness whispers her name, pulling her deeper into its depths.

Gwyn interrupts Nesta's trance, startling her back to reality. When Nesta explains what she saw—pure, consuming darkness—Gwyn reacts with grave concern, revealing that others have experienced similar encounters. The darkness has been known to follow priestesses, a disturbing phenomenon that Gwyn takes seriously. She urges Nesta to leave the book she was shelving and guides her upward, using an Invoking Stone for protection. The stone's light wards off the unseen presence trailing them, and they retreat to the safety of the higher levels.

Back at her cart, Nesta questions Gwyn about the darkness and the stone. Gwyn explains that the Invoking Stone channels the Mother's power for healing and protection, unlike the Illyrians' Siphons. She speculates that remnants of Bryaxis may have altered the darkness, but Nesta insists it felt older, more primordial. Their conversation shifts to Nesta's past, as she reveals her transformation by the Cauldron and the lingering connection it forged between her and such dark forces. Gwyn listens intently, recognizing the danger of Nesta's affinity with the abyss.

Gwyn advises Nesta to avoid the lower levels, warning that the darkness seems drawn to her Cauldron-made nature. Though Nesta initially resists out of pride, she concedes when Gwyn emphasizes the potential risks. The chapter ends with Nesta grappling with her fear and the unsettling realization that the darkness may not be done with her.

yet. The encounter leaves both women shaken, hinting at deeper mysteries lurking within the library's shadows.

