

Chapter 20: Nassun, faceted

The chapter opens with an enigmatic narrator describing how they and others like them sense and influence the activation of obelisks, ancient and powerful artifacts. Nassun, a young girl with latent magical abilities, awakens at dawn, drawn by an unsettling sensation emanating from the north. She perceives a vast, interconnected network of obelisks resonating with immense power, which Steel, a stone eater, identifies as the opening of the Obelisk Gate. He reveals that Nassun's mother, Essun, is channeling this power for destructive purposes, echoing the misguided actions of the Gate's original creators.

Nassun reflects on the cyclical nature of oppression and violence, recognizing how the weak manipulate the strong until both are broken. She confronts the harsh reality that no one will save her—she must seize her own freedom. This realization coincides with the arrival of her father, Jija, who stands armed with a knife, his cold demeanor betraying his intent to harm her. Nassun, resigned to his hatred, expresses her sorrow that he could never love her despite her flaws, contrasting his cruelty with the unconditional love of her guardian, Schaffa.

As Jija lunges to attack, Nassun instinctively commands the sapphire obelisk, which transforms into a weapon and intervenes, crashing to the ground with thunderous force. The obelisk's power merges with Nassun, granting her a fleeting connection to the broader network of the Obelisk Gate. In this moment, she wavers, giving her father a final chance to retreat, but his hesitation is brief. The chapter ends on a cliffhanger, leaving Nassun's fate unresolved as she stands poised between survival and vengeance.

The chapter explores themes of power, betrayal, and the struggle for autonomy, juxtaposing Nassun's emotional turmoil with the cosmic scale of the Obelisk Gate's activation. Her confrontation with Jija underscores the destructive cycles of familial and

societal violence, while her connection to the obelisks hints at her potential to transcend these patterns. The narrative maintains a tense, introspective tone, blending personal drama with mythic stakes.

