

Chapter 21: I, AT THE END OF DAYS

The chapter depicts a poignant reunion between a mother and her daughter, Nassun, after two years of separation. The mother, physically weathered by hardship—thin, scarred, and missing an arm—stands before Nassun with anguish, while Nassun appears taller, stronger, and markedly changed. The daughter's orogeny, a powerful ability, is palpable to the mother, who senses the weight of their shared traits. Their interaction is strained; the mother's desperate plea for connection is met with Nassun's guarded detachment, as she prioritizes helping her guardian, Schaffa, over reconnecting with her mother.

Nassun's loyalty to Schaffa is unwavering, contrasting sharply with her mother's fraught history. Schaffa, who protected and nurtured Nassun, represents safety and love, while the mother's past failures loom large. Nassun understands her mother's trauma—particularly her fear of burgundy, tied to the Fulcrum's abuses—but this knowledge doesn't bridge the emotional divide. The mother grapples with the realization that their relationship may be irreparably broken, echoing Alabaster's belief that some things are beyond repair. Nassun's weariness and resignation underscore this chasm.

The tension escalates as the mother tries to stop Nassun from pursuing her goal of using the Obelisk Gate, a dangerous endeavor. Nassun's determination is unshakable, and her mother's hesitation only reinforces her resolve. The daughter's hardened demeanor reflects her upbringing under Schaffa's influence, where hesitation equates to refusal. The mother's desperate attempts to connect—mentioning Nassun's father, Jija, and offering help—only provoke anger and further alienation. Nassun's focus remains fixed on saving Schaffa, leaving no room for reconciliation.

The chapter culminates in a stark power dynamic shift. Nassun, now assertive and independent, dismisses her mother's pleas, embodying the consequences of their

fractured bond. The mother's helplessness is palpable as she watches Nassun walk away, symbolizing the irreversible rift between them. The narrative underscores themes of broken trust, the weight of past trauma, and the inevitability of change, leaving the mother to confront the painful truth that she has lost her daughter to the forces that shaped them both.

