

38. Rhythm of the Terrors

Navani arrives at the scene of a devastating explosion in the tower, which claimed the lives of two expert scholars, Nem and Talnah, and destroyed their laboratory. The blast also obliterated Szeth's mysterious Voidlight sphere, a relic Gavilar had deemed highly significant. Overwhelmed by guilt, Navani suspects her request to study the sphere may have triggered the catastrophe. As she surveys the wreckage, the gruesome aftermath—including dismembered bodies under five sheets—deepens her unease. She orders Rushu to meticulously document the scene, sensing the explosion's unnatural nature, as fabrials typically don't detonate.

Meanwhile, Navani's investigation leads her to question the voiceless prisoner who delivered the ruby, seeking possible links between the explosion and recent cryptic communications. Determined to uncover the truth, she summons Radiants for assistance, reflecting her growing frustration with the tower's unexplained disturbances. The chapter underscores Navani's resolve to confront the mounting mysteries, even as the weight of responsibility for the scholars' deaths weighs heavily on her.

The narrative shifts to Venli's perspective, detailing her grueling ascent with Raboniel's forces through Urithiru's tunnels. Exhausted but driven, Venli relies on Timbre's comforting rhythm to endure the march. The tension escalates as they near the tower's basement, where Deepest Ones have silently eliminated human guards. The glowing eyes of Voidspren-infused soldiers pierce the darkness, heightening the sense of impending invasion. Venli's internal conflict—balancing her Radiant identity with her deceptive role—adds layers to the scene.

The chapter culminates in a pivotal moment as Raboniel's forces prepare to breach Urithiru's heart. The door ahead opens, signaling the invasion's critical phase. Venli's anxiety mirrors the high stakes: if Radiants rally to defend the tower, the assault could

fail. The juxtaposition of Navani's investigative turmoil and Venli's physical and emotional strain creates a gripping parallel, emphasizing the converging threats to Urithiru's stability.

