

**The door was the last one in the corridor.**

**As the flames flickered over it, they showed it was barred; a hefty iron chain hung across it, and the mud floor beneath was red with rust that had flaked off in the long years of locking and unlocking.**

The keeper hung his lantern on a nail, took the key from a dirty string around his neck, and fitted it into the keyhole. Then he looked behind him.

'Get on with it!' the big man growled. 'Let me see what she keeps in there!'

The keeper grinned; he knew fear when he heard it. With both hands he turned the key, then tugged out the red chain in a shower of rust and pushed the door. It opened, just a fraction. Darkness and a damp smell oozed through the black slit.

He stepped well back, handed the stranger the lantern, and jerked his head. He had no tongue to speak with; she'd made sure he kept her secrets.

The stranger hesitated; a draught moved his hair and he gazed back up the stone passageway as if he longed suddenly for warmth and light. And from what I've heard, the keeper thought, you won't be seeing much of those ever again.

Then the man held up the lantern and pushed the door. The keeper watched his face intently in the red glow, and his great hand, as it clutched a luck-stone that swung at his neck. The man went in, slowly. The door closed.

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**1. *The door was the last one in the corridor.***

What is the significance of the word *last*? Can you think of another context where the word *last* has a significant meaning? e.g. *the last chance*.

**2. How do the opening lines (highlighted above) set the mood of the story? What are your immediate impressions?**

**3. Having spent a great deal of time reflecting on the significance of doors and their appearance, what does this description suggest to you?**

**4. Why has Fisher described the iron chain as being 'hefty'? What could the significance of this word be in the context of the story?**

**5. *Darkness and a damp smell oozed through the black slit.***

How does this make you feel as a reader? What is the relevance of both darkness and a damp smell? Do either of these surprise you; if so, why?