

Children of Virtue and Vengeance



INTRODUCTION

BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF TOMI ADEYEMI

Adeyemi's parents immigrated to the U.S. from Nigeria before she was born. Though her father was a doctor in Nigeria, both her parents worked low-wage jobs when Adeyemi was a child. Adeyemi's parents didn't introduce her to much Nigerian culture when she was a child, but she later embraced her culture: after several prestigious scholarships and educational opportunities in high school and college, she studied West African mythology and culture on a fellowship opportunity in Brazil. Adeyemi has been writing stories since she was a child, but her parents weren't thrilled to hear that she was quitting a job at a Los Angeles-based film production company to write a novel. Though her first novel wasn't well-received (and was never published), she wrote her second, [Children of Blood and Bone](#), to submit to Pitch Wars, which pairs emerging writers with editors and other help before they submit their books to a publisher. The novel debuted at number 1 on the *New York Times* young adult list. It won several awards and the publishing deal and accompanying film deal were some of the biggest ever for a debut young adult novel. Adeyemi lives in San Diego, California.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

In [Children of Blood and Bone](#), Adeyemi made it very clear that she was inspired to write this series of novels to raise awareness about the issues of police violence, brutality, and discrimination that black people in America suffer. In particular, she was inspired by the Black Lives Matter movement, and *Children of Virtue and Vengeance* continues this project. Just as in its predecessor, maji children die in acts of senseless violence at the hands of a government that, in theory, should protect them, which Adeyemi equates to the way in which black people—children as well as adults—are killed during what should be non-violent interactions with (often white) police officers at alarming rates. It's also possible to see the rise of the tîtâns' magic as a parallel to cultural appropriation, or the practice of a dominant culture (in this case, the nobles) taking customs, practices, designs, or ideas of a non-dominant culture (the maji), often in a way that profits the dominant culture only.

RELATED LITERARY WORKS

In interviews, Adeyemi has stated that part of the reason she wanted to write a black female character like Zélie is so that young black readers have the opportunity to see themselves in a fantasy series. Though Adeyemi loves fantasy and adventure

and cites the *Harry Potter* series as a major influence on her work and desire to be a writer at all, she notes that most fantasy novels—including the *Chronicles of Narnia* series, the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy, the *Hunger Games* series, and even *Harry Potter*—focus on white characters almost exclusively. (Though it's also worth noting that in *Harry Potter and the Cursed Child*, the 2016 play picking up 10 years after the series' end, a black actress was cast to play Hermione in the London stage production.) This is part of a broader trend in young adult literature in particular to promote writing by diverse or minority authors (whether because of their race, sexuality, or disability status) presenting stories about increasingly diverse characters. Books that fall into this category include Jenny Han's *To All the Boys I've Loved Before*, Becky Albertalli's [Simon vs. the Homo Sapiens Agenda](#), and Angie Thomas's novels like [The Hate U Give](#) and [On the Come Up](#). Adeyemi's other stated goal with the Orïsha series is to shed light on police violence and racism experienced by black Americans, ideas that Angie Thomas's novels also tackle. *Children of Virtue and Vengeance* also shares thematic similarities with Cherie Dimaline's [The Marrow Thieves](#), which also sees a minority (Indigenous Canadians) attempting to save themselves, their language, and their history from eradication by the government.

KEY FACTS

- **Full Title:** Children of Virtue and Vengeance
- **When Written:** 2018-2019
- **Where Written:** California
- **When Published:** 2019
- **Literary Period:** Contemporary
- **Genre:** Young Adult Fantasy
- **Setting:** The fictional land of Orïsha
- **Climax:** Inan decides to dissolve the monarchy.
- **Antagonist:** The monarchy, especially Queen Nehanda
- **Point of View:** First Person, narrated alternately by Zélie, Amari, and Inan

EXTRA CREDIT

Future Writers. In addition to writing her own books, Adeyemi is a writing coach and runs a website full of free resources for aspiring writers.

Fantasy is Fun. In interviews, Adeyemi has said that while she appreciates books that take place in the real, nonmagical world, she loves writing fantasy because she can make anything happen. Though she recognizes the power fantasy has to offer

metaphors for things going on in the real world (as with the parallels to police brutality in the Orisha series), sometimes it's just pure fun: she created lionaires in part because she thinks lions are cool.



PLOT SUMMARY

Zélie and Tzain bury their father, Baba, at sea. Zélie struggles to use her magic during the ritual—she experiences flashbacks of the day Baba died, when Zélie inadvertently brought magic back to Orisha not just for maji like her, but for some nobles now known as tîtáns. Zélie and Tzain, with the help of the mercenary Roën, plan to install their co-conspirator Amari, a tîtán and the runaway princess, on the throne with her mother Queen Nehanda's blessing. Amari announces her rule when she learns that Nehanda is probably dead due to an attack on the capital city, Lagos, by a maji resistance group known as the lyika. During Amari's announcement, however, Nehanda arrives, calls for Amari's death, and reveals that she's a wildly powerful tîtán—she almost brings a domed building crashing down on Amari and her group. Roën leaves when Amari can't pay him for his help, and Zélie screeches that they have to leave the country. She mounts her lionaire, Nailah, and gallops away, but flies off into a tree.

Zélie wakes in a dreamscape belonging to Inan, Amari's brother whom they believed was dead. Inan's betrayal is the reason Baba died, so Zélie conjures black roots that choke Inan. Inan wakes up in the palace at Lagos and discovers that the monarchy is at war with the lyika, but that Nehanda is ruling as queen and Ojore, Inan's adoptive cousin, is at the palace. A few days later, Inan prepares to take the throne, wearing the robes of his violent and cruel father, King Saran, whom Amari killed. Ojore is openly upset that Inan is a tîtán—before the Raid, Ojore's parents were murdered by Burner maji. Inan takes his throne, fiddles with the **bronze coin** that Zélie gave him, and commands the monarchy to create rations for everyone. When Ojore catches a maji girl named Raifa stealing, Inan declares that any lyika who defect will get double rations.

Zélie wakes up in the real world and tells Amari that Inan is alive—and that she intends to kill him. Zélie, Amari, and Tzain prepare to free captured maji from a fort, but Roën appears on behalf of the lyika, which hired him to fetch Zélie. Zélie and the others meet the lyika a few days later and Zélie learns that her childhood mentor, Mama Agba, started the group. Mama Agba leads Zélie's group to a sanctuary called the Ile Ijosi. Zélie meets the elders of the other clans. The Tamer elder, Na'imah, has a note from Raifa about Inan's offer of rations. Zélie insists that Inan is a liar and when Amari tries to speak up in support of her brother, the Connector elder, Ramaya, spits that as a tîtán and a princess, Amari is unwelcome. A few days later, Raifa burns the food in Lagos. To retaliate, Inan and Ojore sneak out of Lagos to find the lyika hideout. Burners ambush them, but

Inan's magic bursts out, breaking his arm but saving his and Ojore's lives.

Amari begs Zélie to teach her to use her magic. Their session doesn't go well; Amari's ashê burns her. Zélie explains that when a maji channels their ashê using **Yoruba** spells it's like removing a tiny bit of a dam; but when tîtáns use magic, it's like taking away the entire dam. Amari asks to learn Yoruba, but Zélie insists that Yoruba is sacred to the maji. Zélie eventually relents. The next day, Mama Agba holds the ceremony in which Zélie ascends as the elder of the Reaper clan. The prior elder—a teen boy named Mâzeli—steps down to become Zélie's Second. During Zélie's isípayá—a god-granted vision—the god Oya shows her different ribbons of light twisting together. During the celebration, the lyika get news of what Inan did to Raifa's outpost. Amari offers to contact Inan, but Ramaya threatens Amari. Amari challenges Ramaya to be the Connector elder. As they battle, Amari loses control and puts Ramaya in a coma. Amari stays in her room for days, while Healers refuse to heal her bruises. Zélie visits Amari before an elder meeting and explains to her that magic isn't about power; it's the reason why the monarchy tries to kill maji, and it's not something tîtáns can just learn.

Amari agrees to attend the elder meeting, but the other elders are rude and don't want to listen. Zélie agrees with the other elders that they can't trust Inan, so suggests that they journey to the Chândomblé temple and retrieve scrolls containing spells. The elders set out immediately. Inan, Nehanda, and General Jokôye are initially concerned that the lyika are heading for Lagos, but Inan realizes that Chândomblé is their target and takes a force there. The Seer elder, Dakarai, realizes this, and Amari crafts a plan to tunnel into the temple. Though they make it into the temple, soldiers, including Inan, chase them, and they battle General Jokôye before Zélie discovers the incantation that allows them to enter the room with the scrolls and seal it. Amari insists that once they gather scrolls, they must burn the rest. Amari touches Zélie and the two suddenly rise into the air. A ribbon of navy light comes from Amari's chest. When they return to the ground, Zélie realizes what happened: Amari—and Nehanda—are what Zélie terms cênters, or tîtáns who can draw power from other tîtáns of the same clan. This, she believes, is what Oya showed her in her isípayá, and this is how they can beat Nehanda. The lyika fight their way out of the temple, though Zélie almost kills Inan. After the lyika are gone, Nehanda destroys Chândomblé. Later, Mama Agba explains that Zélie activated the moonstone, which is power given by the gods. It allows people to do things like join their lifeforces or create cênters, but it requires a sacrifice—which, she suggests, Saran's death at Amari's hand was; his death made Amari and Nehanda cênters. Amari wants to speak to Inan, but Zélie and the other elders forbid it.

On the first morning of training, Mama Agba visits Zélie. Zélie feels unworthy to lead her clan after putting Mâzeli in danger

at Chândomblé, but Mama Agba reassures her. Zélie asks if it's possible to use the moonstone to combine different types of magic, but Mama Agba says it yields disastrous results: previously joined maji created poisonous majacite. Zélie leads her three Reapers, Mâzeli, Bimpe, and Mâri, in summoning shadows. At the end of the day, Amari goes to Zélie for help translating the incantation for creating a dreamscape. Zélie destroys the scroll when she realizes Amari wants to use it to talk to Inan, spitting that Inan only does the right thing when it's easy and will betray them every other time. Mama Agba comforts Amari and insists that she has to understand that both Zélie and Inan are merely the most recent fighters in a centuries-long war. She also reminds Amari that as a cênter, Amari doesn't need incantations.

Inan struggles to stay awake for a council meeting and to talk to Ojore, who's incensed that Inan couldn't kill Zélie and Amari at Chândomblé. Inan falls asleep and wakes up in Amari's dreamscape. Inan offers to bring a treaty to the Iyika. The next day, while Zélie is out practicing with her Reapers, she sees Amari sneaking away. When she follows Amari, she discovers Inan. Though Zélie is incensed, she can see that the treaty is a good thing. Before she can agree to anything, they hear horns: Inan's armies are coming. Amari thinks that Zélie was right to not trust Inan, so she uses her abilities as a cênter to draw on his ashê and begins to attack the soldiers. Zélie and Mâzeli fight bravely, but General Jokôye, a Winder and a cênter, mounts a terrifying attack. Zélie and Mâzeli use the moonstone and connect. It allows them to win, but Mâzeli dies from the strain and Zélie only survives because Mama Agba breaks the connection. Amari believes she ruined everything, while Inan thinks that the Iyika have to die.

Three days later, Zélie panics every time she tries to wash off Mâzeli's blood. Roën lets himself in, helps her breathe and clean up, and shares new intelligence. Zélie races to the elder meeting going on downstairs to share the news: Inan and his forces are splitting up between Lagos and the village of Ibadan, so they have an opening to escape Orisha. Amari insists they have to fight instead, while Inan is an easy target in Ibadan and Lagos is mostly undefended. The elders agree with Amari and throw a celebratory party. Zélie tries to join in, but instead she and Roën dive and take a ride on a whale. Back at Zélie's quarters, she asks Roën to stay, but she panics when they start to remove each other's clothing. She insults him so she can protect her breaking heart and he leaves.

Zélie decides to join the elders in going to Ibadan while the other forces head for Lagos. She joins the Tider elder Nâo and Roën as they dive in underground caves, hoping to infiltrate the valley. However, Roën, angry at Zélie, shouts that she should stop playing the victim and barges ahead, setting off bombs that collapse the cave. As Zélie drowns, Mama, Baba, and Mâzeli show her that the monarchy planted the bombs. Suddenly intent on living, Zélie frees herself and then finds

Roën. He's close to death and trapped, so Zélie severs his stuck arm and tows him to the surface. As Roën dies, Zélie sees a flicker of gold and remembers her isípayá. She believes that Oya showed her Roën and so calls on the moonstone to bind her lifeforce to Roën's.

Meanwhile, in Ibadan, Nehanda admits to Inan that she's the reason that the Raid happened: she dissolved peace talks between maji and the monarchy by setting Burners on nobles. Inan is horrified, especially when he discovers that Ojore heard Nehanda's confession. Ojore reveals that he's a títán and tries to kill Inan, but Nehanda kills him first. They escape when the bombs go off, but Amari doesn't know this and has a plan to sacrifice the villagers of Ibadan to kill Inan and Nehanda. She and two maji, Jahi and Imani, unleash a tornado of cancer on Ibadan that hits as Zélie and Roën stumble into the village. Zélie saves as many people as she can in the well. When the clouds clear, Amari and Zélie see the monarchy's note: they have the other Iyika fighters in Lagos. The elders imprison Amari and Healers try to save Zélie and Roën. As Tzain and two other elders, Kâmarū and Khani, agree to join their life forces with Zélie, Zélie knows that *this* is what Oya showed her: that they can use the moonstone to come *all* the elders' lifeforces. Zélie and Khani, a Healer, are able to bring the dead villagers back to life.

Roën fires his mercenary crew and insists he's coming with Zélie. Later, Zélie goes to Amari's cell and explains what they're going to do with the moonstone. Amari realizes that they need a sacrifice and offers herself, but Zélie refuses. Mama Agba steps in and says that she'll be the sacrifice—she knows now that in her isípayá, she saw herself acting as such. Zélie and the elders perform the ceremony and their hearts beat as one. The elders sail to Lagos and pass Zélie and Tzain's burnt former village, Ilorin, but they see that Zélie's home has been rebuilt. Zélie finds that Inan rebuilt it and left her letters there, along with the bronze coin she gave him. He explains that he's dissolving the monarchy.

In Lagos, Inan sneaks a sedative into Nehanda's drink. As he begins to speak to the room of nobles, they hear explosions outside. Zélie and the elders combine their powers to destroy the monarchy's army and defenses. They quickly infiltrate the palace. Amari runs into Nehanda and though Nehanda insults her, Amari declares that she can choose to be a better queen. The elders find the captured Iyika in the cellars, and Inan finds Zélie. Zélie begins to draw the lifeforce out of Inan and kill him, but Roën races at her with a breathing mask, a moving cloud of white behind him. Roën and Zélie collapse when the cloud hits them and Zélie wakes some time later, chained in a ship at sea.



CHARACTERS

MAJOR CHARACTERS

Zélie – The novel's protagonist; a teenage Reaper. Zélie's life has been difficult and violent: her mother, Mama, was killed in King Saran's Raid when Zélie was little, and at the end of the previous novel, Zélie's father, Baba, died while Zélie performed the sacred ritual to bring magic back to Orïsha. In addition to Baba's death, Zélie also experienced betrayal by Inan, the man she loved and the current king of Orïsha. All this means that Zélie is severely traumatized. She often experiences flashbacks or panics when something reminds her of losing either of her parents—or of the torture that King Saran carried out. Despite this, Zélie is fiercely loyal to her older brother, Tzain, and once she meets up with the lyika forces, she finds a home and even more of a sense of family there. She quickly ascends to be the elder of the Reaper clan, which puts her in a mentorship role to the three other Reapers, Mâzeli, Bimpe, and Mâri. Zélie does everything in her power to help them be better and to celebrate their magic. Zélie struggles, however, to deal with her emotions surrounding her friend and ally Amari, the princess of Orïsha who recently gained magical powers. Though Zélie insists she wants to put Amari on the throne, she doesn't believe that Amari has any right to use magic and believes that Amari and other tîtans are stealing magic. Though Zélie is sometimes able to focus on the future and on the love she feels for her friends, Reapers, and family, Mâzeli's death after they connect using the moonstone shakes Zélie's belief that they can make Orïsha a safe place for maji. Her trauma leads her to push people away, such as the kind mercenary Roën, with whom Zélie is in love. Roën, however, tells Zélie that she should focus on the fact that she survived, which reinvigorates Zélie's desire to live—and helps her figure out what the god Oya showed her in her isípayá. With her will to live and fight restored (and with her mentor, Mama Agba's, help), Zélie figures out how to connect the lifeforces of all the elders so they can overthrow the monarchy.

Amari – One of the novel's protagonists. Amari is the princess of Orïsha and grew up in the palace. Here, her father, King Saran, brutally taught her to put duty before self, and the wellbeing of Orïsha before anything else. Amari killed Saran at the end of the last novel and, as she stares down becoming the queen of Orïsha, she vows to be better than him. She wants to do this by peacefully uniting maji, tîtans, and kosidán. A tîtán since Zélie brought magic back, Amari tries to use her own magic to sway others to her cause—but Amari's mother, Nehanda, thwarts Amari's attempts to take the throne. Amari joins Zélie in traveling to the lyika, where she gets a taste of what it's like to be hated: the maji don't trust or like her, and many of them are openly rude to her. Amari doesn't understand that she's a noble, or one of the people who's been trying to hunt and kill maji for years—and now she has power to rival theirs, and so is, in some ways, more powerful and therefore not safe to trust. Amari's goal of uniting Orïsha proves especially difficult when the lyika refuse to allow Amari to engage in peace talks with her brother, Inan, the current king of

Orïsha. Amari understands that talking is the only way to come to an agreement without killing people, which she sees as a noble goal, as well as something that would set her apart from Saran. Despite this, Amari struggles to understand the maji culture and so makes a number of mistakes, such as challenging Ramaya to be the Connector elder so that she can prove her power. Though Amari wins their duel, this doesn't win her respect or loyalty. Amari eventually begins to empathize more with Saran's behavior. This leads to Amari's fateful decision to kill the villagers of Ibadan in order to kill Nehanda and Inan, which backfires spectacularly. Amari begins to atone for this when the lyika storm the palace and she vows to Nehanda that she can choose to be better—and chooses to help her friends rather than kill her mother.

Inan – The current king of Orïsha; he rules alongside his mother, Queen Nehanda. At first, many believe that Inan is dead after his father, King Saran, stabbed him at the end of the last novel in the series, but Inan wakes up after he inadvertently calls Zélie (his former romantic interest) into his dreamscape and she tries to kill him. Though Inan has a good heart and wants to do the right thing, he struggles to trust the right people and he's unwilling and unable to trust what he knows is right, and so he ends up betraying the people he loves (like Zélie; she tries to kill him in the dreamscape because his betrayal resulted in Baba's death in the last novel). Part of Inan's trouble comes because he deeply loves his family members, especially Nehanda and Inan's sister, Amari. Particularly when it comes to Nehanda, this means that Inan ignores or looks past Nehanda's overt bloodlust to see the mother he loves, even when she proposes actions that would kill other people he loves deeply, like Amari and Zélie. Though Inan desperately wants to create lasting peace for everyone in Orïsha, including the maji, none of his attempts to engage in peace talks with the lyika are successful. Most of these attempts fail because Inan continues to rely on Nehanda and his head general, General Jokôye, for guidance, and they're of the belief that the maji must be eradicated. Inan also struggles to maintain his friendship with his adoptive cousin Ojore. Inan is a Connector tîtán and so can wield magic, but Ojore loathes magic like Nehanda and Jokôye do. Inan finally begins to see the real issue in Orïsha when Nehanda admits that she played an important role in inciting Saran's Raid, and when Ojore, overcome with hatred, tries to kill Inan. Inan finally understands that magic isn't the issue: the monarchy is. He takes steps to dissolve the monarchy and turn it over as peacefully as possible to Zélie, but mysterious white fog that knocks everyone out spoils his attempt.

Roën – A foreign mercenary with sandy skin. Though he's somewhat slippery and raises Zélie's alarm bells a little bit, he's also extremely attractive, kind, and gentle—and so they slowly fall in love over the course of the novel. He left his homeland some time before the series begins, and like Zélie, bears

physical scars of trauma: he has tally mark scars on his arm that torturers carved as they murdered his men one by one. Roën habitually calls Zélie *zītsōl*, a pet name that he says means various different things depending on his mood. He's sarcastic, funny, and quick thinking, but as a mercenary, he's also dangerous and knows he needs to think about if and when he's going to get paid. With his crew, Roën works for every imaginable side in the war: for Zélie, for Nehanda, and for the Iyika. However, Roën's love for Zélie gradually begins to pull him away from his work and he takes it upon himself to help Zélie recover and smile after Mâzeli's death. Though Zélie asks Roën to spend the night with her, she panics and insults him by calling him an unfeeling mercenary. Though this is an attempt to protect them both from heartache, Roën's genuine anger over this treatment results in going ahead and setting off the bombs in the underground caves surrounding Ibadan. As Zélie saves Roën, Roën admits that *zītsōl* means "home" in his native language—Zélie is, for him, his home. Zélie also sees that Roën's lifeforce is gold, which helps her figure out what her *isipayá* meant and helps her save his life by connecting their lifeforces via the moonstone. After their ordeal in the caves and in Ibadan is over, Roën fires the rest of his mercenary crew and insists that he's not going to leave Zélie again.

Mama Agba – An ancient Seer and the former elder of the clan; she was also Zélie's childhood mentor. Zélie believes in the beginning of the novel that Mama Agba is dead, but she discovers that Mama Agba started the Iyika rebel group and has been fighting for the maji since she said goodbye to Zélie in the last novel. Now, Mama Agba has the white hair that marks her as a maji (she had enchanted black hair in the last novel that allowed her to pass as a *kosidán*) and does everything in her power to instill a sense of pride in the young Iyika rebels. She functions as a voice of wisdom, reason, and experience—she's the only maji who survived the Raid, and so she's the only living maji who received a full education in **Yoruba** and in using incantations. Because of this, Mama Agba is the only one able to interpret for Zélie what the moonstone is and what it's capable of doing. Though Mama Agba is clearly and unwaveringly on the side of the maji, she still treats Amari with generosity and kindness that Amari gets nowhere else in the maji sanctuary. Mama Agba makes the point to Amari that the fight they're in now is just an iteration of a fight that's been going on for centuries—and she encourages this kind of understanding of historical context among her maji mentees as well. Because of Mama Agba's age, she's no longer a very powerful Seer, and so her contributions are mainly knowledge and wisdom. However, Mama Agba's final and most important contribution is herself: when Zélie realizes that she and the other elders are supposed to use the moonstone to combine their lifeforces, Mama Agba offers herself as the necessary blood sacrifice to stabilize the magic.

Queen Nehanda – The cruel and ruthless queen of Orisha;

Amari and Inan's mother. She's a beautiful woman who loves wearing gold and expensive things. She's also acutely aware of her power and how to use it. While Amari thinks most often of Nehanda's political and social power, it soon becomes clear that Nehanda has magical powers too: she's not just a Grounder *títán*, she's a *cênter*, and so can draw power from other Grounder *títáns*. She uses this power to act on her hatred of maji and of anyone who opposes her, including Amari. Though Inan understands that Nehanda is cruel and doesn't share his values, he loves her anyway and continues to draw on her for moral, emotional, and political support throughout the novel. She encourages Inan to buy into the idea that the maji are a scourge on Orisha and need to be eradicated, no matter the cost. Nehanda kills her own *títáns* to achieve this goal, as well as destroys the temple of Chândomblé despite its historical and spiritual significance. Inan only begins to question his loyalty to his mother when she reveals that she incited the Burners' attack on nobles in the years before the Raid. In this sense, she's responsible for the Raid itself, as well as for orphaning Ojore, whose parents died in the fires. The final straw for Inan comes when Nehanda kills Ojore and insists that Ojore wasn't grateful enough for her help. Nehanda is distraught and enraged when Inan announces that he's going to dissolve the monarchy, but she can't do anything in the face of the Iyika's attack on the same night as the announcement.

Ojore – Inan's adoptive cousin and an admiral in the monarchy's army. Ojore is large, bright, and charismatic; he brings warmth and happiness into any room he enters. However, Ojore has a dark and difficult past. When he was a child, Burners killed his parents when they attacked nobles. Ojore has burn scars on his neck from this experience, and he hates all magic because of what happened to his parents. This is true even when it comes to Inan. Though Ojore hates magic, he also believes that the *títáns* are acceptable (or at least, bearable) because their magical abilities means that the monarchy will be able to kill the maji once and for all. Even though Ojore doesn't understand Inan's feelings for Zélie or his desire to make peace with the maji, Ojore does his best to support Inan's wishes for much of the novel. However, he's ultimately responsible for tipping off Nehanda to the fact that Inan and Amari are going to meet near the Iyika's hideout, resulting in the bloody battle that kills General Jokôye and Mâzeli. In Ibadan, Ojore hears Nehanda admit that she's the one who incited the Burners' attack. Following this, Ojore's anger and hatred consumes him. He reveals that he's a Welder *títán*, and a skilled one at that. He attempts to kill Inan for his complicity in his parents' deaths, but Nehanda kills Ojore before he can finish the job. Ojore's transformation and death impresses upon Inan the necessity of dissolving the monarchy, which he believes is the real root of Orisha's problems, not magic.

Tzain – Zélie's older brother. He's tall, handsome, and

extremely devoted to Zélie. A kosidán, Tzain has little to gain by helping Zélie fight to preserve magic in Orïsha, but as a fundamentally loyal person, Tzain is driven by his love for Zélie and his love for Mama. Tzain is consistently empathetic and kind, and acts as an interpreter of some maji events and of Zélie's personal history for Amari. His romantic relationship with Amari, however, begins to complicate things, especially his close bond with Zélie. At times, Tzain chooses to save Amari rather than Zélie from dangerous situations—and though it appears that this is because Tzain can't hear Zélie yelling for help, Zélie interprets it as a betrayal. Even when they fight, however, the siblings consistently make up and reaffirm their love for and connection to each other. Tzain finally breaks off his relationship with Amari when Amari chooses to unleash Cancer gas in the village of Ibadan, knowing full well that Zélie might be in there.

Mâzeli – A young Reaper. He's tall, bright, and has large ears that stand out from his head. Mâzeli is enchanted by Zélie from their first meeting and is open about his desire to marry her one day, in addition to serving as her Second. Zélie loves him more as a brother and finds his exuberance charming. Mâzeli is very skilled at raising spirits that then coalesce into one giant spirit, but he struggles with other incantations—though he improves greatly under Zélie's tutelage. He dies, however, during a surprise attack by the monarchy on the Ijosin sanctuary. Though Zélie connects their life forces to try to save him and fight off the soldiers, Mama Agba severs the connection, killing the severely injured Mâzeli. Mâzeli's last words to Zélie are to not be sad for him, but Zélie feels singularly responsible for his death and even briefly considers leaving Orïsha altogether to save others from suffering Mâzeli's fate.

King Saran – The deceased former king of Orïsha; Inan and Amari's father. King Saran was a ruthless and cruel king who forced his children to spar with each other, which resulted in the scar on Amari's back—Inan brought a real sword down on her on Saran's order. Amari killed Saran during the ritual to bring back magic at the end of the last novel. Saran prized duty and the crown over anything else, especially love; his existence was defined by doing anything to carry out his political goals while abusing or ignoring people. He also loathed and feared magic and took drastic steps, such as conducting the Raid, to eradicate magic from Orïsha. Both Saran's children still hear his various catchphrases in their heads, speaking to the degree to which he warped how they think about duty, love, and morality.

Ramaya – The elder of the Connector clan. She has coiled white hair and a scar across her eye, and she's a few years older than Zélie and Amari. Amari recognizes her as the maji who snarled at her when Amari first tried to announce her claim to the throne. Ramaya is openly disdainful and threatening toward Amari and is the clear leader of the elders, so she encourages most other elders to treat Amari with the same cruel disdain.

She's disinterested in diplomacy and believes that the only way forward is to murder Inan and Nehanda. Her treatment of Amari culminates in Amari challenging her to be the Connector clan elder. Amari wins, but she loses control of her magic and puts Ramaya in a coma for the rest of the novel.

General Jokôye – The petite but formidable commander of the monarchy's army. She's also the oldest and most revered member of the royal council. Since magic returned, General Jokôye became a tîtán—and later, the Iyika discover that she's also a cênter. As a Winder, she works with Nehanda to recruit and train tîtáns. Despite being a tîtán, Jokôye despises magic and believes that the only way for her side to win is to brutally murder maji and squash the Iyika. Because of this, she finds Inan's attempts at peace and diplomacy infuriating, as she feels that there's no way for the maji to atone for their attack on Lagos that killed many nobles. She dies during the attack on the Iyika's sanctuary.

Khani – The elder of the Healers. Her twin, Imani, is her Second. Though she doesn't entirely approve of Amari now that Amari is a tîtán, she agrees to heal Amari and reiterates that it's not right for any Healer to refuse to help someone. As one of the first elders to connect her lifeforce with Zélie, she discovers that combining lifeforces means that they can do unheard of things—like bring the dead villagers of Ibadan back to life. She's in a relationship with Nâo.

Kâmarū – The Grounder elder of the Grounders and Welders; he's a tall young man with small freeform locs and a silver ring in his nose. One of his legs is made of iron. Kâmarū is levelheaded, quiet, and extremely skilled. Zélie learns that this is because Kâmarū's father was the elder of his clan and started training Kâmarū when Kâmarū was very little, so Kâmarū has a better foundation in **Yoruba** than many of his peers.

Kenyon – The elder of the Burner clan and a former Agbön opponent of Tzain's. The two young men are close friends. Kenyon is somewhat hotheaded, though he's extremely loyal to the Iyika cause. Most of the time, his temper has to do with having lost other Burners, or it flares because he's afraid. Kenyon is initially derisive of Amari, but he begins to respect her more when her plan to infiltrate Chândomblé relatively unnoticed is successful.

Jahi – A Winder maji and the Winder elder. Jahi is somewhat cruel and isn't interested in gaining any new perspectives, especially from those he deems enemies, such as Amari when she first arrives. Later, Jahi, Imani, and Amari work together to unleash a deadly illness on the village of Ibadan with the hope of killing Nehanda and Inan, but they fail to accomplish their goal and instead only kill innocent villagers.

Na'imah – The elder of the Tamer clan. She's a curvy young woman who always wears flowers in her hair and consistently has birds or butterflies swirling around her head. Though she's kind, she has a policy of not bowing to anyone—and she shows

that she and the maji are just as prejudiced as the nobles they hope to overthrow when she quips that killing monarchs is like killing roaches.

Baba – Zélie’s father. In the previous novel in the series, Baba died during the ritual to bring magic back to Orísha; Zélie and Tzain bury him at the beginning of the book. Zélie adored Baba and takes his death very hard, especially since Baba only died because Inan betrayed Zélie. Mama Agba reveals that Baba was extremely honorable and self-sacrificing; he’s the reason so many maji are still alive.

Binta – A deceased diviner who worked as Amari’s handmaid for years. King Saran killed her after awakening her powers with a special scroll in the last novel, which became the impetus Amari needed to escape the palace and work on behalf of the diviners and maji. Amari tells Binta’s story in speeches to rally support for her rule.

Bimpe – A young Reaper. She’s in her mid-teens and is extremely tall. Like Màri, Bimpe is very enthusiastic about being a Reaper, but her age means that she’s a little more mature and has a better sense of the gravity of what’s happening. She’s old enough that Zélie asks her to stand and fight during the monarchy’s surprise attack on the sanctuary.

Harun – Roën’s second-in-command mercenary. He’s hulking, menacing, and wants nothing more than to hurt, rape, or collect the bounty on Zélie’s head after she injured him in the last novel. He does, however, fear Roën and so agrees to leave both Roën and Zélie alone. He takes over Roën’s band of mercenaries when Roën decides to get out of the business.

Imani – The Second of the Healer and Cancer clan; her elder is her twin, Khani. Because Imani is a Cancer, Amari ropes Imani into joining in on her plan to unleash illness on Ibadan in order to sacrifice the villagers and kill Nehanda and Inan. Despite her involvement, Imani seemingly suffers no consequences.

Màri – The youngest Reaper maji at 13 years old. Màri is still short and looks like a child, with an adorable gap between her front teeth. Màri is enthusiastic about being a Reaper and adores Zélie, and she proves herself to be an adept student as Zélie teaches her how to manipulate her shadows.

MINOR CHARACTERS

Raifa – A young maji girl whom Inan’s guards catch stealing from the palace. Inan allows her to take food and asks her to spread the word among that Iyika that those who join his cause will receive double rations, but Raifa’s companions firebomb Lagos instead.

Lekan – A deceased sêntaro; he awakened Zélie’s connection to the gods in the last novel and died protecting Zélie, Tzain, and Amari from Inan. His memory motivates Zélie to work hard to protect the maji she has with her so that no one else needs to die like he did.

Mama – Zélie’s mother; a Reaper who was murdered in King Saran’s Raid more than a decade ago. Zélie idolized her mother and wants to be as much like her as possible. Zélie often thinks of Mama at times when she’s connecting with her Reaper history and faith.

Não – The Tider elder. She’s in a relationship with Khani and enjoys putting on a show as she summons her powers. Não is extremely supportive of Zélie, but when Amari insists that they conduct the attack on Ibadan, Não is quick to jump to Amari’s side.

Dakarai – The elder of the Seers. He’s plump and wears thin chains around his neck. Seeing for him is somewhat difficult, as he can see the past better than he can see the future—so seeing the future requires a lot of effort.

Tahir – The Iyika’s strongest Welder. Though he’s only 14, his skills are so exceptional that Kâmarū made him his Second. He’s responsible, along with Mama Agba, for the Iyika’s innovative and beautiful armor. Tahir is albino, with light brown eyes.

Safiyah – A Healer who stops to heal Zélie before resuming her journey to escape Nehanda’s forces.

Folake – The elder of the Lighter clan. She wears yellow kaftans and her bright eyes and thick locs remind Amari of Zu.

Zu – A charismatic young maji who died in [Children of Blood and Bone](#). Her horrific death motivates the Iyika to fight for a better, safer future.

Salim – A boy who died in [Children of Blood and Bone](#). His death motivates the Iyika to fight for the future.

Nailah – Zélie and Tzain’s lionaire.

Captain Kunle – The royal tax collector.

TERMS

Alâfia – The afterlife.

Ashê – A maji’s magic. Ashê glows different colors depending on which clan a maji is part of.

Burner – Maji who can create and manipulate fire.

Cênter – Magical individuals like **Nehanda** and **Amari** who can draw power from títáns who share the same magic type (i.e., Connector cênters can only draw from Connector títáns, while Tider cênters can only draw from Tider títáns). This makes cênters exceptionally powerful, depending on how many títáns they have to draw from.

Chândomblé – A massive temple up on a mountain, and until **Inan** and **Queen Nehanda** destroy it, the last temple standing in Orísha. It contains rooms full of scrolls with **Yoruba** spells on them, which the Iyika need to be able to effectively counteract the monarchy.

Cheetanaire – Massive horned cheetah-like ryders. **Nehanda**

designs a cheetanaire sigil as the mark of **Inan**'s rule.

Connector – Maji who can connect with others in dreamscapes they create in their own minds. Both **Inan** and **Amani** are Connectors.

Divîner – A person who has the potential to become a maji and use magic.

Grounder/Welder – Maji who can manipulate natural elements—Grounders can manipulate the earth and stone, while Welders can manipulate metal. Grounders and Welders serve the same god and are members of the same clan.

Healer/Cancer – Maji who have the power to heal or cure injury and illness, respectively. Both, however, serve the same god and are part of the same clan.

Ìsìpayá – A prophecy from an ascending elder's god that will help the elder lead their clan. They receive it during the ceremony in which they're named elder of their clan.

Iyika – The maji resistance group; the word translates to "resistance." **Zélie** learns that **Mama Agba** actually started the group. Its symbol is a red I and its goal is to overthrow the monarchy.

Kosidán – A non-magical person, as opposed to the maji. They make up a majority of Orïsha's population.

Lighter – Maji who can conjure light and darkness.

Lionaire – Lion-like ryders.

Majacite – A metal that burns the skin of maji and divîners, as well as neutralizes their powers. The monarchy uses it to capture, subdue, and torture captured maji. While it most often occurs in its solid form as chains, **Queen Nehanda** also figures out how to turn it into a gas that kills maji when they inhale it. It's also possible to inject liquid majacite into maji to torture and in some cases kill them.

Maji – A person with activated magical abilities. All maji are part of a clan, worship a specific clan god, and have corresponding powers. Reapers like **Zélie**, for instance, are part of the Reaper clan, worship the god Oya, and have power over the dead.

Moonstone – The moonstone, unlike its sister the sunstone, exists as power given to someone by the gods, not as an object. It allows maji to connect their lifeforces, which gives them significantly more power, but at a price—it requires a blood sacrifice to the moonstone for the connection to be tenable long-term. The nature of connecting via the moonstone also means that if one connected person dies, everyone else does too.

Oya – The god of the Reaper clan. She wears lush red and purple clothing.

The Raid – An event that took place years before the novel begins in which **King Saran** brutally murdered every divîner over the age of 13. He did this in response to peace talks with maji that failed when Burners murdered many noble families

and the then-king, Saran's father.

Reaper – Maji who have control over death. They can do things like save people from death, but they can also kill. Reapers can also connect with the spirits of the deceased and weaponize them. **Zélie** is a Reaper, as was **Mama**.

Ryder – Large animals—snow leopanaires, lionaires, and cheetanaires—that people in Orïsha ride. They have horns and resemble real-world big cats.

Seer – Maji who can see the future and the past, like **Mama Agba**.

Sêntaro – Divîner priests who, until they were wiped out in the Raid, lived in the temples like Chândomblé and kept the connections between maji and the gods alive. They were also instrumental in preserving the maji's history and the **Yoruba** language.

Sky Mother – The supreme deity. She created the 10 gods, who then shared their powers with humans and created the first maji.

Snow Leopanaire – Ryders that resemble snow leopards. They were the symbol of **King Saran**'s reign.

Sunstone – A massive stone that was one of the three magical objects needed to perform the ritual intended to restore magic in Orïsha. It shattered during the ritual. Its counterpart is the moonstone.

Tamer – Maji who can connect with animals.

Tider – Maji who can manipulate bodies of water, such as to create tidal waves, fog, or bubbles within the water so that humans can remain underwater for extended periods of time.

Títán – Nobles with maji ancestry who, after **Zélie** brought magic back at the end of *Children of Blood and Bone*, discovered that they could use their magic. Títáns differ from maji in that they're not bound by having to use spells—their magic is blood magic and so they can channel their magic without assistance. This does mean that títáns face danger as they use their magic, as having unchecked access makes it easy for them to lose control and hurt (or kill) themselves and others.

Winder – Maji who can control the winds and create things like tornados.



THEMES

In LitCharts literature guides, each theme gets its own color-coded icon. These icons make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. If you don't have a color printer, you can still use the icons to track themes in black and white.



POWER AND SYSTEMS OF OPPRESSION

Children of Virtue and Vengeance, the second installment of the Legacy of Orïsha trilogy, picks up a few weeks after the finale of [Children of Blood and](#)

[Bone](#). Zélie, the novel's protagonist, is a maji (a person with magical abilities). She and her kosidán (non-magical) brother, Tzain, bury their father, Baba, who died during Zélie's attempts to perform an ancient ritual that would ensure magic's continued existence in Orïsha. Rather than simply performing the ritual as written, Zélie unwittingly reestablished magic in Orïsha not just for maji, but for nobles of maji descent too. Thus, at the beginning of the novel, Zélie finds her world turned upside down. Before, nobles and the monarchy didn't have magic and were afraid of it, so they channeled those fears into brutally oppressing those with the potential to do magic (diviners). Now, those same nobles—now known as tîtans—begin to harness their newfound power and use it to fight the maji's magic with their own magic that seems, at times, to be even more powerful. With both sides now wielding comparable fighting power, fighters on both sides come to understand that the existence of magic isn't actually the problem plaguing Orïsha, as they once thought. Rather, the issue lies with the systems—like the monarchy—that give a select group of people disproportionate power to oppress others. Overwhelmingly, the book suggests that these corrupt systems ultimately allow people a dangerous level of influence over others and encourages those in power to violently oppress other people in order to maintain their station.

Throughout the novel, magic functions as a broad symbolic parallel for power—and specifically, it embodies the idea that the kind of power inherent to magic means that one who wields it also wields great responsibility. The novel illustrates this by showing maji from a variety of clans using their magic for good, as well as to cause major harm. Zélie, a Reaper, can use her magic to fly using summoned spirits, but she can also use her magic to kill others. Welders, meanwhile, can fashion exceptional armor, as well as use their powers to torture others with knives or molten metal of their own making. The fact that there is seemingly no maji or tîtán whose powers are exclusively good or bad begins to make the case that magic itself is a relatively neutral thing; what's *not* neutral is how someone chooses to use it. In this sense, magic can be thought of as an equivalent to something like wealth in the reader's world. Having wealth doesn't make a person good or bad, but it does mean that a person has far more power to influence their surroundings to their advantage.

Within the world of the novel, that influence and power manifests as the monarchy and noble class. Throughout Orïsha's recent history, it's the monarchy that has, for the most part, vilified magic—but in the novel's present, in which the monarchy suddenly has power to rival the maji, the power balance begins to shift. While in the last novel magic was almost

exclusively a power that rebels like Zélie possessed, tîtans now have access to a similar degree of power. However, tîtans must also reckon with the fact that their magic is something entirely different from that of the maji. While the maji can, with training and through the use of spells, control the flow of their magic (unless they're using dangerous blood magic), tîtans often experience pain and can even lose control and die while using their magic—this power isn't something that comes naturally or rightfully to them. In this sense, even though the tîtans are now on more equal footing with the maji in terms of magical abilities, it's the combination of magic and monarchical power that turns the tîtans into formidable adversaries.

Adeyemi illustrates the intersection of raw power (magic) with systemic power (the monarchy) through Queen Nehanda's actions. Queen Nehanda is the power-obsessed, ruthless queen of Orïsha; she'd like to see her son Inan on the throne and her daughter Amari, one of Zélie's allies, killed. Though Nehanda believes fully in the righteousness of the monarchy and the ills of magic, she's nevertheless willing to use her power to get her way when she needs it. Zélie and Amari eventually discover that Nehanda is what Zélie terms a *cênter*, or a tîtán who can draw power from tîtans around her and combine theirs with her own. Practically speaking, this means that in battle, Nehanda's tîtán soldiers surround her so she can take their power—and the soldiers die in the process. This continues to show that Nehanda and the monarchy she represents are ruthless and willing to hold onto power at any cost—even if it means embracing tools, like magic, that she once thought dirty and evil.

In the end, Inan is the one who comes to the conclusion that the real issue isn't magic—it's the monarchy. As king of Orïsha, Inan has the power to dissolve the monarchy and, in theory, create a country whose population will be able to reevaluate the purposes and appropriate roles of both the position of a monarch and of magic in general. Inan is unfortunately unsuccessful—a mysterious force sedates and captures everyone before he can formally dissolve the monarchy. However, his final leap sets the stage for the final installment of the trilogy in which Zélie, Inan, and their friends continue to challenge systems that boost some people at the expense of others.



CYCLES OF VIOLENCE

Orïsha is an extremely violent place. Years before the Legacy of Orïsha trilogy begins, the now-deceased King Saran conducted what's known as the Raid. During this time, Saran brutally murdered every diviner and maji over the age of 13 and instituted laws and taxes turning diviners and those who associate with them into second-class citizens liable to be raped, beaten, kidnapped, or killed at any time. The violence Saran espoused extended to his nuclear family too—he forced his young children, Amari and

Inan, to train with swords and hurt each other. In the present, even though Saran is now dead, both Amari and Inan still suffer the consequences of their father's violence, while Zélie and her fellow maji still live in fear of the monarchy and its violent, oppressive aims. Through characters' memories of and relationships to violence experienced in the past, the novel illustrates that violence is something learned—it passes from parents to children and from governments to the populace, thereby training everyone to believe that violence is the only answer to one's problems.

In considering the trauma that all the novel's characters have experienced, it's important to keep in mind that most of them, when they turn to violence, are reacting directly to their memories of past traumatic events and the damage caused by those events. Though this certainly doesn't help matters, this thought pattern is a normal response to triggering situations—and of not having the time or space to healthily heal from trauma. In this sense, everyone in the novel who has experienced past trauma is set up to fail in coming up with better, healthier solutions for how to deal with what's happening in their present. Their first reaction—and, they often believe, the only viable action—to violence or scary situations is to respond in kind. This means that in practice, even many acts of genuine kindness or attempts at intimacy are seen as tools to break down one's defenses and then commit more violence. As a result, Orisha's population is not just violent, but distrustful of everyone—even allies. Further, the widespread violence that King Saran carried out means that there are few or no people in Orisha without unresolved trauma, whether it's because they're maji whose families were murdered or because they're *kosidán* who won't be spared during brutal raids on settlements containing maji or *diviners*. Everyone, in this sense, is stuck in a cycle of fear, mistrust, and violence that seems unbreakable to many.

The maji, and especially the group of 10 clan elders that Zélie and Amari join, are uncomfortably aware of the trauma, death, and violence that their predecessors have experienced. This includes both the traumatic deaths of many of their parents during the Raid, as well as the deaths of children like Zu and Salim mere weeks before the novel begins—in addition to instances of abuse of power that have happened at various points throughout Orisha's history. The maji understand that they are simply the latest victims of a battle that's been going on for many years, and dealings with the current crop of monarchs have made it very clear to them that violence is the only way to make a point.

Zélie in particular is driven by the fact that Inan's betrayal led to her father, Baba's, death at the end of the last novel. In her mind, the only way to make things right and avenge the deaths of everyone who has died at the hands of the monarchy is to kill Inan, and in doing so, topple the current leadership. Similarly, while Amari spends much of the novel advocating for diplomacy

and peace talks with Inan, Inan's constant double-crossing, combined with his and Amari's mother Queen Nehanda's refusal to recognize Amari as her daughter—let alone the future ruler of Orisha—eventually transform Amari's point of view. She comes to agree with Zélie: killing Nehanda and Inan is the only way to make things right. Even Inan eventually comes to accept the inevitability of violence: when his peace talks and attempts to reason with both Nehanda and Amari fail, he concedes that the war is going to end with his death. All of these instances in which characters turn to violence tend only to lead to more violence—and as a result of the many people who die, characters like Zélie then spend much of their time mourning for those they lose. In this sense, while Zélie recognizes the need for a way to put an end to the bloodshed, she still cannot identify a way to end it—and so the bloodshed will continue.

The novel's most poignant way of illustrating the dangerous costs of violence is through the trajectory of Ojore, Inan's adoptive cousin. Ojore comes from a noble family that died in the lead-up to the Raid, supposedly at the hands of bloodthirsty Burners (maji who control fire). Because of this, he grew up hating magic, and began to loathe himself and hide it when he developed his own magical powers. When Ojore believes that Inan betrayed him and all they stand for, Ojore's rage and desire to lash out at the people he believes hurt him (in essence, his desire to perpetuate the cycle of violence) ends up backfiring. Ojore cannot control his emotions and so heartbreakingly tries to kill Inan, his childhood best friend—but Nehanda, a mother figure to him, heartlessly kills him instead. Though as the second in a series, *Children of Virtue and Vengeance* doesn't fully resolve these issues, its treatment of Ojore overwhelmingly shows that violence isn't a fruitful solution. Perpetuating the cycle of violence leads only to more pain, trauma, and heartbreak.



TRADITION AND HISTORY

For the maji, winning the war against the monarchy isn't just about establishing a government that allows them recognition under the law or freedom from violence and oppression. It is, at its heart, about preserving a belief system and a way of life that those in power would like to see wiped out of Orisha altogether. This demonstrates, first of all, the immense power of belief systems and history to educate, to soothe, and—especially in the case of the maji's ancient spells—to fight back. The flip side of this is also true, however: the novel shows clearly that one of the most effective ways to oppress, disempower, and dissolve a group is to cut them off from their history. Doing so denies people the tools and knowledge necessary to keeping their community and traditions alive.

In Orisha, legend holds that long ago, Sky Mother, the supreme deity, created 10 gods who then shared their powers with

humans—and in doing so, created the maji. This forms the basis of a belief system that, until the Raid, was alive and strong in Orisha. In that system, maji were beloved and revered members and leaders of their communities, using their powers to help in addition to keeping humans' connection to the gods open. For the most part, all of this disappeared with the Raid. King Saran murdered all maji over the age of 13 and temporarily severed humans' connection with the gods, effectively cutting the country off from its belief system—and cutting young diviners off from their elders, as well as from their ability to do magic. It's possible, then, to read the Raid as a successful bid to break down a group of people whom Saran saw as dangerous enemies. To do so, he took away everything meaningful to them, from their families and their elders to their language (he criminalized **Yoruba**, the language with which maji perform spells) and, quite literally, their gods.

Inan and Queen Nehanda take this oppression even further as they work to take down the lyika. Killing young maji is, for Nehanda, a good start, but she recognizes that killing isn't enough to take down her enemies. Rather, she must continue Saran's work and destroy the connections between living maji and their gods and history, which she does by destroying the ancient temple at Chândomblé. Chândomblé contains scrolls that hold Yoruba spells, which the lyika need if they want to be able to fully use their power. It's also, importantly, the last temple standing in Orisha, making it the final link between the young maji and their past. Destroying the temple and the scrolls with it thus effectively destroys not just any hope of learning the spells on the scrolls; it's another emotional strike that destroys the last place where maji could connect directly with the gods.

On the whole, then, Zélie and her fellow elders are working from a severe disadvantage. Zélie is only in her late teens, and she's only met two maji or diviners older than their early 20s (Mama Agba, Zélie's childhood mentor; and Lekan, a sêntaro (priest) who awakened Zélie's connection to the gods in the last novel). The lyika are, in this sense, a band of children struggling to reconnect with roots that are difficult or impossible to rediscover—all, for the most part, without adult guidance. These struggles manifest in multiple ways. Clan elders, like Zélie, are supposed to train other clan members. But as many elders only received an incomplete education in Yoruba and are self-taught in using magic, they sometimes struggle to teach skills that they're still developing themselves. They also lack a complete understanding of the extent of their powers or the constraints that should be on them, which leads to ill-advised attempts at magic that end, for the most part, in tragedy. Though Mama Agba lives with the lyika providing guidance, she's old, weak, and cannot draw on her powers without harming herself—putting the young lyika rebels in a situation where their only adult mentor cannot fully connect them to the past. Though this doesn't devalue the help that Mama Agba

does give, it does make it clear that the lyika are, to a degree, flying blind.

Despite the novel's clear insistence that severing these connections between present and past or humans and gods is a horrific crime, the novel's ending also suggests that a necessary (though not ideal, in this situation) element of these traditions is that young people will eventually take on the leadership roles once filled by the old. This is something that Mama Agba puts into practice when she offers herself as a sacrifice so the elders can connect their ashê. The practice of connecting one's ashê with another's is rare, dangerous, and can have disastrous results (the last time it happened, the resulting connection created majacite, a material that's poisonous to maji). It's also impossible to sustain a connection without a blood sacrifice. However, the lyika feel that the possible upsides outweigh the risks, and Mama Agba agrees. Mama Agba therefore becomes the blood sacrifice necessary to make the connection tenable for the 10 elders, which allows the elders to use their magic in tandem without the use of spells.

Again, though the novel doesn't excuse or condone the actions the monarchy takes to sever connections between the present and the past, Mama Agba's sacrifice adds nuance to this idea. While her death represents that of the last true maji who survived the Raid, it also enables the young maji now in power to more effectively channel their magic and overthrow the monarchy for good. Hopefully, the young maji will have the opportunity to become the elders they never had, and in doing so, recreate and strengthen their people's connections to the past and to the gods.



LOVE VS. DUTY

Loving bonds in the novel, whether between family members, friends, or lovers, are extremely powerful. Everyone, to some degree, is motivated by their love for others: Zélie both fights to avenge her parents and tries to call off the war because of love for her fellow maji; Inan and Amari try to orchestrate peace out of love for Zélie, each other, and their family; Mama Agba loves the young maji like children of her own and sacrifices herself for them because of this love. But however strong characters' love for each other might be, love often butts up against duty—to oneself, to one's people, or to one's cause. Though this tension between love and duty most often leads to heartache and tragedy, the characters eventually begin to discover that the two don't have to exist in opposition to each other. Love and duty can, in rare cases, essentially be the same thing. In those situations, the combination of the two can lead to an even stronger and more unified sense of community.

The goals of the lyika, the rebel maji group, are clear: overthrow the monarchy and establish their own ruler on the throne who will make sure the maji never suffer again the way they have under King Saran's family. Given how few maji there

are in Orisha, their goals also include preserving as many lives as possible. By default, however, fighting battles against the monarchy—whose goals are a total takedown of the maji by any means possible, including by sacrificing lives of their own—means that maji are in danger of losing their lives simply by existing, let alone entertaining the idea of fighting back. This makes it very clear that at times, one's loyalty to loved ones and one's duty to a cause are naturally going to be in opposition, and the goal for all the novel's characters on both sides will be to figure out how to balance the two.

Zélie and Inan struggle between love and duty many times throughout the novel. Inan must reconcile his love for his mother, the ruthless Queen Nehanda, and his love for Amari with the fact that Nehanda wants to kill Amari. Amari is also working with Inan's enemies—a twisted state of affairs that means for Inan, there's no way to please everyone. Inan is a people-pleaser and a person who has spent his life absorbing King Saran's message that he must put duty before self, so given that Inan deeply loves people whose actions he despises or who are against him, he finds his situation especially hard to stomach. Zélie, meanwhile, struggles more with the fact that people she loves continue to die for the cause of overthrowing the monarchy—something for which she feels responsible. She carries the weight and the grief of Baba's death throughout the novel. In addition, after a surprise attack kills her second-in-command Reaper, Mâzeli, Zélie comes to the conclusion that the only way she can balance her relationships and her need to protect those she loves isn't by fighting: it's by leaving the country and essentially admitting defeat. That Zélie, Inan, and the other elders continually fail to effectively balance their relationships with duty speaks to the difficulty of this task—especially since their cause will, in theory, save lives in the long run, but at the possible cost of loved ones dying in the short term.

In addition to illustrating the kind of failure that happens when people prioritize their relationships over their responsibilities, Amari and a maji named Jahi make a mistake in the opposite direction. During what the lyika believe will be an attack on a village where Nehanda and Inan are hiding, a variety of things go wrong—but worst of all, Amari and Jahi unleash a storm of deadly illness on the valley and essentially sacrifice the innocent villagers to kill Nehanda and Inan. Thanks to some of the other mishaps, Zélie is also in the village when Jahi unleashes his plague—something that Amari knows, but chooses not to acknowledge. To the other maji, this reads not just as unspeakably heartless, but ineffective and naïve as well: they learn that the monarchy set a trap for them and that Nehanda and Inan were never in danger, something that, had Amari waited, she would have known. Fortunately, the elders figure out how to reverse the villagers' deaths and Zélie survives the ordeal, but this doesn't change that Amari's willingness to act ruthlessly and alone seriously damages her

relationships and credibility with the other elders. However, like Inan, Amari grew up hearing Saran tell her to prioritize duty over her heart, something that colors even Amari's inner monologue (she continually hears Saran tell her, "Strike, Amari" in her head). She has learned, in essence, that it may be painful to lose relationships, but that they're always replaceable—whereas there's seldom a second chance to carry out one's duty.

The only person who successfully balances love with duty is Mama Agba, who sacrifices herself so that the elders can connect their lifeforces and take on the monarchy. Mama Agba chooses to do this because of the intense love she has for the elders and other maji, and she recognizes that her sacrifices gives those children the best chance at being able to carry out their plans. It's telling that there is only one person able to do this, as it suggests that on the whole, striking the perfect balance between love and duty is very rare—and it's not something that Zélie and her companions can rely on working out every time. However, while the novel doesn't come down forcefully in support of either entirely love or entirely duty, Amari's actions make the case that applying oneself to a cause without considering the human consequences is an unspeakable offense. Rather, individuals will come closer to emulating Mama Agba when they think of love first, and try to balance that with what they know needs to be done.



SYMBOLS

Symbols appear in **teal text** throughout the Summary and Analysis sections of this LitChart.



INAN'S COIN

Inan's bronze coin, which he fiddles with to calm his nerves, represents Inan's emotional connections with the lyika cause as a whole and specifically his unwillingness to buy into the idea that violence is the only way forward. He acquired the coin in the previous installment of the series, when Zélie gave it to him and pointed out that his last object that served this purpose (a majacite game piece that symbolized his connection with King Saran, Inan's ruthless father) was hurting him due to the fact that majacite is poisonous to maji. The bronze coin, meanwhile, is safe for Inan to handle. The fact that the coin came from Zélie—whom Inan still loves, despite the fact that he's not supposed to—points to his desire for peace. Broadly speaking, the fact that Inan continues to hang onto the coin and not replace it with something more expensive, more fitting of a king, or not connected to Zélie shows that he hasn't succumbed to the same thirst for power and glory that the rest of the monarchy has—he's still not sold on the idea that the monarchy has to be so violent and oppressive toward the people he loves on the

other side, like Amari and Zélie. Ultimately this manifests in Inan's attempt to dissolve the monarchy, a system that would put those people he loves, but doesn't agree with, in power.



YORUBA

The Yoruba language symbolizes the maji's connection to their gods and their history, as well as that connection's precarious state. After the Raid, King Saran criminalized the language, which is what maji and diviners use to cast spells and pray. This effectively kept many of Zélie's peers from learning the language much or at all—something they must remedy if they wish to be able to both understand their history and overthrow the monarchy. The Yoruba language itself, then, becomes both the connecting force between the maji and their gods—and between the maji and victory.

While this reaction isn't so surprising at this point—Baba has only been dead a few weeks, and Zélie's grief is still very new—it's worth keeping in mind that because of the way Orisha functions, few people, if any, ever have the time or the tools to effectively recover from past trauma. This means that Zélie could easily suffer flashbacks and panic like this every time she tries to call on her magic, something that's very dangerous given her precarious position as a maji who wants to topple the monarchy. If Zélie can't properly use her power, she's in danger of being overpowered by someone else.

Chapter Two Quotes

☞ “I can't be expected to carry the plight of my people forever.”

Related Characters: Zélie (speaker), Tzain, Roën, Amari

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 11

Explanation and Analysis

When Amari tries to convince Zélie to ask Roën for more help for the sake of the maji, Zélie insists that she can't carry the weight of the maji's oppression. With this, Zélie makes it abundantly clear that being a maji in Orisha is to live in a state of constant fear and oppression, given how much the monarchy and the nobles hate the maji. What Amari is essentially asking, in Zélie's mind, is for Zélie to once again take on the responsibility of rescuing her people when no one else in all of Orisha can do so.

Taking on this responsibility is understandably difficult and emotional for Zélie, who witnessed her mother, Mama's, brutal murder during the Raid as well as Baba's death, both of which happened because of magic and because Zélie and Mama are maji. In this moment, Zélie feels far more connected to her people's history of oppression than of any of the positive aspects, such as the community she could find among the maji or the uplifting rituals that give life meaning. As Zélie moves forward and connects with more maji, she gradually begins to refocus this idea and understand that she can redefine what it means to be a maji not just as the plight of oppression. Instead, it can be something beautiful.



QUOTES

Note: all page numbers for the quotes below refer to the Henry Holt edition of *Children of Virtue and Vengeance* published in 2019.

Chapter One Quotes


☞ The moment magic breathes under my skin, I can't find my voice. The purple light of my ashê glows around my hands, the divine power that fuels our sacred gifts. I haven't felt its heat since the ritual that brought magic back to Orisha. Since Baba's spirit tore through my veins.

I stumble back as magic bubbles inside me. My legs go numb. Magic shackles me to my past, dragging me under despite how hard I pull—

“No!” *The shout echoes against the ritual walls [...]*

Related Characters: Zélie (speaker), Baba, Tzain

Related Themes:   

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 3

Explanation and Analysis



As Zélie and Tzain attempt to bury Baba at sea, Zélie experiences a flashback to Baba's death when she calls on her ashê to perform a ritual for the dead. The fact that Zélie experiences this panicked flashback when she calls on her magic suggests that at this point, using her magic at all is a triggering experience since it reminds her of her trauma.

Chapter Four Quotes

“ I tuck away my white streak, wishing I could just chop the lock from my hair. Tzain may not notice the way Zélie looks at it, but I always catch the snarl it brings to her face. For so long, she had to suffer because of her gift. Now those that hurt her the most wield that magic themselves.

I can understand why she despises it, but at times it feels like she despises me.

Related Characters: Amari (speaker), Tzain, Zélie

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 22-23


Explanation and Analysis

Amari shares with the reader that Zélie despises that Amari is a títán—a noble who, after the ritual to bring magic back to Orísha, discovered that she could wield magic. Though Amari isn't always the best at understanding why Zélie is so upset about the títáns' power, she shows a surprising degree of understanding and compassion here. She recognizes that the white lock in her hair signifies that she has the very thing that Zélie and other maji have been killed or tortured for years—while Amari admittedly suffered at the hands of her abusive father, but otherwise grew up wealthy, comfortable, and spoiled as part of the royal family. She has never had to fear for her life because of who she is, as she was one of the most powerful people in all of Orísha. Amari's final note that it sometimes feels like Zélie despises her speaks to the human cost of the hatred that plagues Orísha. Just as Zélie knows that monarchs and nobles hate her, Amari now gets to taste how that hatred feels. Though all the hatred is understandable given Orísha's bloody and oppressive treatment of maji, it still divides people and makes peace even less likely.

Chapter Six Quotes

“ But the return of magic and the birth of títáns are living proof that we are finally returning to the Orísha the gods have always wanted for us! We're so full of hatred and fear, we've forgotten what blessings these abilities are. For centuries these powers have been the source of our strife, but the gods ordained us with magic so the people of Orísha could thrive!”

Related Characters: Amari (speaker), King Saran, Zélie, Tzain

Related Themes: 

Page Number: 33

Explanation and Analysis

In Amari's announcement speech announcing that she's the queen of Orísha, she reveals to nobles, commoners, and maji in the crowd that she's a títán and insists that the gods wanted magic to be a good thing in Orísha. This assertion goes directly against everything that King Saran said about magic: he was vocal about the fact that magic is dangerous and a scourge on Orísha. King Saran's view, however, represents fear—magic is its own kind of power that he feared others having, and so he did everything in his power to destroy magic outright. However, because Amari has close relationships with maji like Zélie, she can see that her father was misguided. Magic can be used for good or for evil, but if Amari is on the throne, she'll be able to shape policy and create a kingdom where magic overwhelmingly works for everyone and doesn't have to be a terrifying thing to power-hungry nobles.

Chapter Twenty-Three Quotes

“ For so long we've been defenseless against the havoc the maji wreak, but now the gods have blessed us as well. We're powerful enough to annihilate them, Inan. The only way to achieve lasting peace is to cleanse the maggots from this land.” Her words make my fingers grow cold. To cleanse Orísha of maji would be finishing Father's work. It would be another Raid.

Related Characters: Inan, Queen Nehanda (speaker), King Saran

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 111

Explanation and Analysis

In the moments before Inan meets with people who will hopefully be Iyika defectors, Nehanda encourages him to rethink his position and understand that his duty isn't to serve the maji: it's to kill them. Now that Nehanda and Inan are both títáns with magic of their own, they're on more equal footing with the maji in terms of physical power. Both sides can now fight with the same kind of fire and thus, in many ways, the playing field is more level than it was in the last book. However much that may have changed, Nehanda shows clearly what hasn't changed: the hatred, prejudice, and fear that nobles and monarchs feel toward the maji, even though at this point, the maji aren't as big of a threat as they once were given the threat that títáns pose on the

battlefield. This makes it clear that Nehanda's mission is to continue Saran's work, which is what Inan finds so disturbing. Inan enjoyed a brief romance with Zélie in the last novel, and so for him, the lyika and the maji have a face, feelings, and lives that Inan feels should matter. But because Inan insists on keeping Nehanda around as an advisor, he's not yet able to do anything but follow along with his mother's violent crusade.



Chapter Twenty-Four Quotes


☝☝ "Yoruba is sacred to our people. It's not just something you can learn."

"This is bigger than that," I wave my hand. "For skies' sake, we're at war—"

"Our magic isn't about the war!" Zélie shouts. "Our incantations are the history of our people. They're the very thing your father tried to destroy!" Her chest heaves up and down and she shakes her head. "Titans have already stolen our magic. You can't steal this, too."

Related Characters: Amari, Zélie (speaker), Queen Nehanda, King Saran

Related Themes:  

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 118

Explanation and Analysis

When Amari asks Zélie to teach her Yoruba incantations so she can control her magic, Zélie refuses. What Zélie wants Amari to see is that magic and the incantations that allow maji to control it are the history of the maji. They tell the maji's stories of oppression, survival, and resistance. Amari, however, grew up in the palace alongside the very person who not only criminalized Yoruba, but murdered all the living maji and did everything in his power to make sure that magic didn't exist at all in Orïsha. Even if Amari is sympathetic to and supportive of the lyika cause, in Zélie's eyes, she's still part of the problem and has no right to be as powerful as she is now as a títán. For Zélie, the Yoruba incantations are part of her history and identity—they make her who she is. For Amari, Yoruba incantations make her even more powerful and make it appear as though she and other títáns are trying to steal what's not theirs and use it for their own gain, as Nehanda is.

Chapter Twenty-Five Quotes


☝☝ *Do you accept these people as your own?*

Will you use your strength to protect them at all cost?

The burden of her questions expands in my chest as I look to the Reapers gathered around Mâzeli. Bimpe watches with fingers pressed to her lips. Mâri frantically waves her hand, almost immune to the gravity of the moment. Though I've only known them for a few hours, they already feel like blood. Like home. Being around them feels more right than anything has felt in years.

Related Characters: Zélie, Mama Agba (speaker), Mâri, Bimpe, Mâzeli

Related Themes:  

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 126

Explanation and Analysis

During Zélie's ascension as elder of the Reaper clan, she feels the weight of the vows and feels as though the other Reapers are already family. This shows that going forward, the family and the relationships that Zélie develops through being the Reaper elder are going to show her even more what she's fighting for: children like Mâri, who are too young to grasp the gravity of the situation but are still innocently, delightfully excited by the festivities. Becoming the clan elder means that Zélie can create a world in which young Reapers like Mâri, Bimpe, and Mâzeli can all grow and develop—and eventually, see someone else become the elder of the clan, or even take on the honor themselves. Taking this step to connect to their history is what allows Zélie to ensure that these children have a future, and that the culture and faith traditions of the maji don't die just because Mama Agba is the last adult maji. By connecting with these traditions, the children now in charge can become the elders that few of them had during their own developmental years.

Chapter Twenty-Seven Quotes

☞ “These rebels burned your city to the ground. They wanted you and your people to starve. They are the poison of Orisha! If you do not cut off the hand now, eventually you will be forced to sever the entire limb.”

I clamp my mouth shut, digesting her words. I know as long as these rebels terrorize us, every maji in Orisha will be seen as a criminal. The *lyika* have to go.

But despite knowing this, my insides twist as Ojore grabs the Burner by her hair.

Related Characters: Inan, Queen Nehanda (speaker), Raifa, Ojore

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 138

Explanation and Analysis

After *lyika* Burners fail to kill Ojore and Inan (who snuck out of Lagos to find the *lyika* hideout), Nehanda insists that these *lyika* have to die so that Inan doesn't have to take more drastic action later on. There are several things worth noting here. First, Inan's use of the word “terrorize,” which exaggerates and misconstrues the situation some. Inan and the monarchy have been violently harming the maji for years, and so the maji's violent acts in return don't seem unjustified or out of place. This is especially true given how violent Orisha is to begin with; few characters in the novels can sit down and have open conversations about what's going on and how to fix things. More often than not, characters end up unwilling to trust each other and so end up acting out violently instead, something that simply perpetuates the cycle of violence.

It's also significant that while Nehanda makes the case that taking on this one act of violence will mean that Inan doesn't have to be as violent later, her open hatred for the maji and her own violent actions suggest that this is more a tactic for her to push Inan into sanctioning cruelty rather than a genuine attempt to quell the violence. For Nehanda, violence is just how things are; she's very much a product of the cycle of violence in Orisha. Ultimately, it's clear that she's using the idea of peace to achieve her own violent ends.

Chapter Twenty-Eight Quotes

☞ Even before Mother interrupted my rally, the support of the Orishans didn't touch the boundless joy of these maji. I wonder what it would be like to be embraced like that. To actually have a place where you belong.

[...]

I nod, beginning to understand what it means to be an elder. All this time I assumed it was like occupying the throne, but now I realize that it's so much more. It isn't simply a position of power. An elder forms the foundation of their clan's home.

Related Characters: Amari (speaker), King Saran, Zélie, Tzain

Related Themes:    

Page Number: 140

Explanation and Analysis

During the party celebrating Zélie's ascension as elder of the Reaper clan, Amari begins to understand what it means to be an elder and how this role differs from being part of the monarchy. It's important to keep in mind that in Amari's has only ever seen Saran rule, and Saran acted cruelly and without any thought for how his actions might hurt people—even those he loved, including Amari. Because of this, Amari conceptualizes leadership positions as a whole as a state of loneliness, power, and the ability to perform violence without consequences. The joy of the maji, however, begins to offer another perspective. Their clear love for Zélie starts to make the case that power doesn't have to look like a dictatorship—it can be loving, generous, and compassionate. An elder can look more like a beloved parent than a ruler to others in the clan, which Saran never was to his children or to his subjects.

Chapter Thirty Quotes

☞ “If you're going to be an elder, you need to understand that true magic isn't about power,” I explain. “It's something that's a part of us, something that's literally in our blood. Our people have suffered for this. Died for this. It's not something you can just learn. You may have helped us get it back, but right now we're still being hunted and killed for the very magic tîtans like you use against us.”

Related Characters: Zélie (speaker), Ramaya, Amari

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 152

Explanation and Analysis

When Zélie understands that Amari has no idea why all the maji elders are upset with her for beating Ramaya for the honor of being the Connector clan leader, Zélie tries to explain where Amari went wrong. Here, Zélie lays out that magic doesn't equate to power in the way that Amari thinks about power. For Amari, power looks like King Saran: it's something people use to get their way and hurt others, even if it's in pursuit of the greater good. In other words, it's something people use to dominate others. Zélie, however, asks Amari to think about magic as an innate quality that gives maji something extra and special, but also something that makes them vulnerable targets of people who fear their magic. In their current situation, to make things worse, títáns now have magic—and títáns are overwhelmingly nobles, or some of the most powerful people who have been fighting to oppress the maji for centuries. Now, they have a similar amount of power, and understandably, the maji are wary about people with Amari's power-oriented perception of magic having access to magic.

maji. This helps Zélie to understand, crucially, that she's not the only one suffering in Orísha. Though it's understandable why she has a harder time empathizing with Amari, given Amari's upbringing as a monarch that looks comparatively cushy compared to Zélie's (despite the abuse she suffered at Saran's hands), Zélie has also struggled at this point to step outside her own wall of grief. Now, she can see that others feel much the same way she does—but rather than dwell in it and get stuck, Kámarū uses his grief to speak in Yoruba and connect with his memory of his father. This represents a far healthier way for him to deal with his grief, and it offers Zélie a roadmap as she moves forward and begins to reconceptualize her own experiences of grief.

Chapter Thirty-Four Quotes



☝☝ “After the Raid, practicing these incantations was the only part of him I had left.”


My heart sinks in the echo of his words. In my mind, Kámarū still whispers these incantations, but without the father he loves. Without the magic that was meant to run through his veins.

[...]

As we walk, I think of the other elders and maji, what their lives might've been like before the Raid. Mâzeli's already told me how the monarchy took both his parents away. How his sister Arunima perished from grief.

Related Characters: Zélie, Kámarū (speaker), Amari, King Saran, Mâzeli

Related Themes:  

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 174

Explanation and Analysis

While the Iyika tunnel in under the Chândomblé temple, Zélie has to reckon with the fact that all of the maji in the Iyika have suffered major losses, simply because they're

Chapter Thirty-Eight Quotes


☝☝ “Everyone, fill the bags with as many scrolls as you can. Kenyon, burn the rest.”

“Amari, you can't!” I whip around, blinking as the ringing sensation in my ears grows louder. [...]

“These are sacred incantations,” I explain. “Histories of our people that will be lost to time!”

Related Characters: Zélie, Amari (speaker), Queen Nehanda, Inan, Kenyon

Related Themes:   

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 188

Explanation and Analysis

In the scroll room at Chândomblé, Amari instructs the other elders to burn the scrolls they can't take, a suggestion that shocks Zélie. For Zélie, these scrolls are one of the few ways available to her to connect to her past and to read in Yoruba. Chândomblé is one of the last temples in Orísha after Saran destroyed many in the Raid, and so its significance is even greater than it might be otherwise.

Amari's willingness to suggest such a thing speaks to her status as a noble and a títán. She hasn't grown up immersed in the maji culture, which these scrolls are an important part of. Instead, she grew up actively rejecting spirituality, especially that of the maji (this is why she exclaims “skies” instead of something like “gods,” for instance—she's been taught to outright ignore anything that has to do with spirituality). In other words, Amari is able to see these scrolls simply as weapons that they don't want to end up in the wrong hands. For her, they're not one of the last

connections to her past and her history, as they are for the maji.

Chapter Forty-Two Quotes

☞ “No!” I jerk up, wincing at the pain that shoots up my side. “This temple may be the oldest Orisha has. It holds the stories of our past!”

Though Chândomblé wasn’t created for me, I feel its pulse like the beating heart of this land. I remember wandering its hallowed grounds in search of Zélie’s path moons ago. Kneeling before the portrait of Ori. This temple was the one place that could quiet the noise in my head.

Related Characters: Inan (speaker), Amari, Zélie, Queen Nehanda

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 203

Explanation and Analysis

Inan is shocked when Nehanda insists that they need to destroy the Chândomblé temple after Zélie and the other lyika escape. Like Amari, Inan lacks spiritual connection to the traditions and the history of the temple. However, this temple was one of the only places in the last novel where he was able to feel at peace with his magical powers and accept that they didn’t have to be something awful—Chândomblé could give him a sense of purpose and calm that he couldn’t find anywhere else in a world that despised anything to do with magic, including himself. In other words, Inan is able to feel this way about destroying Chândomblé because unlike Amari, he has more of a connection to the temple and the spirituality that exists there. Further, Inan’s compassion and desire for peace makes it clear to him that he can’t expect to win over the maji if he destroys their spiritual sites—one of the reasons that Nehanda wants to get rid of it in the first place. Nehanda recognizes, just like Inan does, that cutting a group off from their history, traditions, and spirituality can neutralize them very effectively.

☞ My chest falls as Mother marches forward with her tîtâns that still stand. As she walks past the carnage in her path, I know she’s right. Our enemies are gaining ground. We need to eliminate every asset they have. But how long can both sides keep going like this before we destroy Orisha?

Related Characters: Inan (speaker), Queen Nehanda

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 204

Explanation and Analysis

Inan watches as Nehanda steps up to destroy Chândomblé. The first thing to note here is that Inan makes special mention of Nehanda’s tîtâns that “still stand,” reminding the reader that in order to achieve her goals, Nehanda is more than willing to sacrifice her own people. This speaks to her ruthless nature, and her unwillingness to acknowledge magic as something to celebrate in others—as far as she’s concerned, when it occurs in others it’s either useful or dangerous. Then, Inan also recognizes exactly what Nehanda is doing by destroying the temple. Demolishing Chândomblé is a way to cut the maji off from their traditions and their histories contained in the temple. He’s also right when he starts to make the connection that this history is part of Orisha. Orisha has many faults, one of them being that it’s an extremely violent place that shows no signs of becoming less so. That violence is likely on record in this temple, while destroying it starts another record of destruction and violence. Destroying it effectively destroys the maji and makes it harder for them to keep their faith alive.

Chapter Forty-Five Quotes

☞ “I do not think you’ve gone far enough,” she says. “You speak of this war as if it is the start, but the maji and the monarchy have been fighting for decades. Centuries. Both sides have inflicted great pain on each other. Both sides are filled with mistrust.” [...] “You cannot blame Zélie for her actions any more than you can blame Inan for his past mistakes. You have to look beyond the surface if you truly want to achieve the peace you seek.”

Related Characters: Mama Agba (speaker), King Saran, Inan, Zélie, Amari

Related Themes:    

Page Number: 230

Explanation and Analysis



After Zélie destroys the scroll containing the incantation to create a dreamscape, Mama Agba asks Amari to think about the fact that the conflict they’re dealing with now isn’t a new one. With this, Mama Agba asks Zélie to look outside of the individual people involved and their individual conflicts to instead understand that they’re all part of a cycle of

violence that's been going on for decades and possibly, centuries. Putting the conflict in this perspective explains some of the reasons why Zélie feels so put-upon and downtrodden: she is carrying many, many years of oppression of her people. This isn't just about her—this is about the fact that everyone she's ever loved who's a maji, past and present, has been consistently oppressed by her government, which Inan heads. In Inan's case, Amari has to recognize that Inan is just one in a long line of rulers who has tried to consolidate power by putting others down. What Amari doesn't quite see, however, is her own role in all of this. She doesn't understand that she too is part of the aggressive, violent monarchy and behaves accordingly when she feels she has no other choice—and indeed, she feels she has no other choice exactly because she's a monarch.

Chapter Fifty-Nine Quotes

☝☝ All these years I thought Father was a monster, but what if ruling this kingdom forced him to act that way?

Related Characters: Amari (speaker), Inan, Queen Nehanda, King Saran

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 282

Explanation and Analysis

As Amari contemplates her plan to unleash Cancer on Ibadan, she begins to think more critically about Saran and why he behaved the way he did. Up to this point, Amari has mostly thought of her father as a cruel and unfeeling, if smart, dictator who made her life a living hell. She's always known that he was a monstrous human being who cared little for those around him, but as she faces down her own tough choices and potentially sacrificing innocent people, she has to wonder if being a monster is just part of being in power.

This reflects the way that Amari conceptualizes power in general: as something to wield and use to intimidate, kill, or assert dominance over others in some way. She doesn't have any conception of what benevolent power might look like, or how it might feel to have power and choose not to use it for destructive things. In terms of how Amari thinks of Saran's relationships to duty and love, she begins to suspect that being a ruler showed him that he couldn't love or be too emotional about anything—and as Amari prepares to step into her own power, she believes that she must move forward with the same ruthlessness and cold heart.



Chapter Sixty-Four Quotes

☝☝ “This war didn't start when magic came back, Inan. You are only seeing the end of a battle countless have given their lives for. By winter's dawn, we will have wiped the scourge of maji from this land. Even your wretched father couldn't achieve that.”

“Mother, what are you talking about?” I grab her arm. “We're fighting the *Iyika*. Not the maji.”

“We're fighting them all. We have been for decades. This war started long before the Raid. It began before you were even born.”

Related Characters: Inan, Queen Nehanda (speaker), Amari, Mama Agba, King Saran

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 306-07

Explanation and Analysis

While they wait for the *Iyika* to try to attack Ibadan, Queen Nehanda shares with Inan that this battle is part of a much larger conflict, and one in which she played a crucial part. In important ways, what Nehanda is very similar to what Mama Agba told Amari earlier in the novel. The attempt to place this in a larger historical context is, in general, a good thing, as it acknowledges the history of violence in Orisha and doesn't allow Inan to ignore his complicity in that violence.

However, Nehanda is telling Inan this so that she can continue to spew her prejudiced and hateful rhetoric at him, insisting that the maji are subhuman and that what Saran did in the Raid was a good and just thing. This is because what Nehanda wants is power, not peace—and though the conflict between the monarchy and the maji has been fought over magic in name, it's really being fought over who has the power to be treated as a person in Orisha, and who has the power to dictate what happens in the kingdom. Eliminating the maji means that there's no one else to oppose Nehanda; thus, eliminating them is essential for her to feel like she's won.

Chapter Sixty-Nine Quotes

☝☝ “No one ever asks, but you're here. You're here when so many people aren't!” Roën grabs his head as if he could pull out his hair. “You survived the Raid. The guards. You survived the wrath of a king. You're not a victim, Zélie. You're a survivor! Stop running away!”

Related Characters: Roën (speaker), Nào, King Saran, Zélie

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 326

Explanation and Analysis



In the underground caves on the way to Ibadan, Roën loses his temper with Zélie and yells at her, essentially for playing the victim. Though Roën's words are harsh, what he's trying to do is force Zélie to think of what she's experienced in a way that gives her power, rather than taking it away. In Zélie's current way of thinking, she's a victim constantly on the run—as are her people. Everything good that she experiences disappears promptly when her enemies find it. In Roën's understanding, however, Zélie has done countless amazing things just by managing to live this long. Some of this is luck—she only survived the Raid because she was young enough for Saran to spare her—but some of this happened because of Zélie's own ingenuity or that of other maji. If she chooses to focus on being a survivor rather than a victim, Roën believes that Zélie can find the will to fight and stop wasting everyone's time by wanting to leave the country and hide.

Chapter Seventy-One Quotes

☝☝ I look back, not recognizing the monster that wears Ojore's face. We did this to him. We poisoned him with all our hate.

Now we shall pay the price. I can't even pretend he isn't justified. He deserves retribution for all the blood on our hands. All of Orïsha does—

Related Characters: Inan (speaker), Queen Nehanda, Ojore

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 332-33

Explanation and Analysis

Inan watches, horrified, as Ojore reveals that he's a Welder títán and attempts to kill Inan using sharpened pieces of Ibadan's metal fort. In this moment, Inan is forced to accept his own complicity in what the monarchy does and has done by promoting violence against the maji and engaging in wars like this for years. By insisting over and over again that magic is evil and anyone who uses it is evil, Inan bears some responsibility for the fact that Ojore hates himself for possessing magic at all now—and for the fact that Ojore

hates Inan for some of the same reasons. This moment also makes it clear to Inan that Nehanda is poisonous. She's the one who caused Burners to murder Ojore's parents, and because Inan leans so heavily on his mother to advise him, he has to answer for her crimes to individuals like Ojore. Importantly, Inan also realizes that while Ojore is the one in front of him right now, he's not the only one in Orïsha who has suffered like this. This isn't an isolated problem—it's a widespread epidemic of hate, fear, and anger.

Chapter Seventy-Six Quotes

☝☝ Even from afar, I see the blackened corpses that lie in the streets. Corpses that lie there because of me.

I picture Inan and Mother among the dead.

I picture my best friend.

Strike, Amari.

Father's voice fills my mind as the tears fill my eyes. Though I breathe, my chest stays tight. It feels like I'm being buried alive. "Orïsha waits for no one," I whisper the words. "Orïsha waits for no one."

I will the words to be true as I ride through Ibadan's gate.

Related Characters: Amari (speaker), Imani, Jahi, King Saran, Zélie, Queen Nehanda, Inan

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 350



Explanation and Analysis

Following the plague of Cancer that Amari, Jahi, and Imani unleash on Ibadan, Amari attempts to convince herself that she did the right thing. However, it's important that what Amari does most here is think about her father, who was known for committing unspeakably cruel acts against people he didn't like or who opposed him—and even, at times, against people with whom he had no issue. Amari's choice to unleash the Cancer on Ibadan is a choice that bears a lot of resemblance to actions Saran took: she did it because she had two targets, and she did it without trying to preserve the lives of the villagers of Ibadan. She wants Saran's words to make these actions better, but what she starts to discover is that his catchphrases don't actually do anything but remind her of him. He instilled these phrases into Amari to encourage her to engage in actions like this, as he prized duty over love. In practice, however, choosing this path turns a person into an awful, unfeeling person—just like he was.

Chapter Seventy-Eight Quotes

“He attacked the king. That foolish boy killed himself.”
It’s the last sword in my gut. I’m surprised when I don’t feel blood. Ojore saved me more times than I could count. He needed me today.
But instead of backing him, I let him down.
I let Mother sacrifice him for the throne.
“He was right,” I whisper. “We’re poison.”

Related Characters: Inan, Queen Nehanda (speaker), Ojore

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 355

Explanation and Analysis



When Nehanda insists that Ojore essentially committed suicide by not controlling his anger (he discovered that Nehanda is responsible for his parents’ deaths), it’s the final straw for Inan. Nehanda’s insistence that Ojore’s death is his own fault shows Inan that Nehanda is entirely unwilling to take responsibility for her actions—and, for that matter, doesn’t understand the power of treating people with compassion, even if they don’t agree with her.

For all Inan’s faults, he does recognize the necessity of compassion; he just can’t usually finagle the situation so that he’s able to act compassionately. Here, he realizes that this is because of Nehanda; she won’t allow him to act in a compassionate way because compassion is wholly outside of her emotional vocabulary. This, however, is because Nehanda is so powerful thanks to her role as the queen of Orisha. This is why Inan begins to realize that the monarchy itself is poison, and why he goes on to attempt to dissolve it altogether.

Chapter Eighty-One Quotes

I feel the most sacred gift of Oya beneath my hands, the holy magic of life and death. When the last body breathes again, I stare at the glowing tattoos on my hands.
No Reaper or Healer in history has ever been able to do that.
In our magic, I see the answer. What Oya wanted me to understand all along. If we use the moonstone to bind our lifeforces, we can save the maji from the monarchy’s grasp.

Related Characters: Zélie (speaker), Roën, Khani

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 363

Explanation and Analysis

After Amari, Imani, and Jahi unleash a plague of Cancer gas on Ibadan, not long after Zélie joined her lifeforce to Roën’s to save him, Khani and others join to Zélie and Roën—and in doing so, gain powers they never thought possible. With this, Zélie finally understands what Oya tried to show her in her isipayá: that the elders must work together by combining their lifeforces to combat their enemies. Importantly, though this has never been done before, the fact that the order to do so comes from Oya makes it clear that this is still something that’s absolutely connected to the history of the maji. Rather, because they’re connected to the gods and the past, just like all the elders before them, they’re able to listen and utilize what the gods can tell them. Because they’re able to do this, the elders have a shot at preserving their traditions and way of life for generations to come, despite all the obstacles before them.

Chapter Eighty-Three Quotes

Strike, Amari.

I pull at my hair, wishing I could pull his claws out of me as well. His whispers are like the bars Kâmarū crafted from stone, a prison I can’t escape. For so long he was the scar on my back. The tyrant I had to vanquish.
How in the skies did I allow his ghost to become my guiding force?

Related Characters: Amari (speaker), Kâmarū, King Saran

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 372

Explanation and Analysis

Imprisoned for her heartless actions in Ibadan, Amari hears Saran in her head again and wonders why she relies on his “wisdom” so much. The answer, unfortunately, is that Amari is a victim of his abuse and has spent her entire life internalizing all the things her father told her as true and correct. It doesn’t matter that she doesn’t agree with what he stood for; he was still able to impress upon her that she must work for her duty or her cause before she even thinks about working for people she loves, or who may be innocent bystanders as the villagers of Ibadan were.



One of the reasons that Saran has become such a major voice in Amari’s head over the course of the novel is because, for the first time in her life, Amari has power that

comes somewhat close to what Saran had in life. She's the elder of the Connectors, and she's the future queen of Orïsha—and with those roles comes a great deal of power, and all the hard decisions that come with trying to win the war and give the maji a way forward. Because Amari has had no other role models to show her how she could rule, she turns to the one thing she knows all too well: cruelty and domination, as taught to her by Saran.

Chapter Eighty-Five Quotes

“I see the truth now. We pretend that magic is the root of our pain when everything rotten in this kingdom begins and ends with us. There's no helping it.” I clench my fist. “Amari proved that in Ibadan. This throne corrupts even the purest of hearts. As long as it exists, people will continue to tear this kingdom apart.”

Related Characters: Inan (speaker), Amari, Queen Nehanda

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 384

Explanation and Analysis

Before the celebration officially beginning Inan's reign as king of Orïsha, he gives Nehanda a sedative and reveals that he's going to dissolve the monarchy. At this point, Inan sees that while the war, thus far, has been fought over magic and who has the right to possess and use it, the real problem in Orïsha is that the monarchy is too powerful and abuses its power. He sees the consequences of the way his family teaches people to think about power in Amari, who is generally a kind person—but who, in Ibadan, unleashed a Cancer cloud on innocent and unsuspecting victims, something wholly reprehensible. Inan recognizes that Amari did this because she finally had a taste of the power that comes with being a monarch. The association with that power is also why Inan has been such an ineffective king: he's been trying to use that power to appease and please everyone, when he knows that just asserting his dominance over others, as Nehanda wants him to do, won't actually bring peace to Orïsha. In this moment, then, Inan finally becomes the king he wants to be: one who does the right thing for his kingdom, even when it's hard and even when he's going to suffer as a result.



SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS

The color-coded icons under each analysis entry make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. Each icon corresponds to one of the themes explained in the Themes section of this LitChart.

CHAPTER ONE

Zélie tries not to think of Baba, but when she does, she remembers seeing the ocean for the first time. It felt magical, as if they could survive after Mama's murder. Now, however, Zélie fixates on the ritual that killed Baba. Zélie's brother, Tzain, comforts her as they prepare to bury Baba at sea. Her hand shakes and she spills some of the burial oil as she begins to recite the **Yoruba** incantation. Zélie feels her ashê for the first time in weeks and stumbles as she relives Baba's death. This causes her to drop the lit torch in the water. Tzain momentarily loses his temper, but reminds Zélie why Baba died: so they could bring magic back. Zélie thinks her powers are useless when she can't protect her loved ones.

Tzain tells Zélie to stop blaming herself and hugs her. Amari races up and hands Tzain a torch from their ship and her own jar of oil. Zélie turns away when she sees the white streak in Amari's hair, the sign that she—and hundreds of nobles—now have magic too, thanks to Baba's death. Tzain lights the torch and they recite the sacraments. Zélie remembers burying Mama and thinks of everyone who died, like Lekan, Zu, Salim, Mama Agba, and Inan. Zélie thinks that the battle has just begun.

CHAPTER TWO

Amari watches Baba's casket burn and thinks of how her father, Saran, used to say that Orisha waits for no one. She remembers killing him and thinks that she couldn't bury him if she wanted to. She, Zélie, and Tzain head back to the warship, and Amari vows to herself to take the throne and fix Saran's mistakes. In the captain's quarters—the only place on the ship without majacite—Amari insists she's too nervous to eat. They sent word to Amari's mother, Queen Nehanda, a few weeks ago, asking for her support. They haven't heard back yet. Tzain reassures Amari and then goes to check on Zélie, which makes Amari's stomach clench. She's struggling to contain her grief for Saran and her brother, Inan.

When Zélie relives the trauma of Baba's death as she channels her magic, it shows that at this point in her grieving process, using magic at all is a trigger for her and is therefore bound up in grief, fear, and other negative emotions. Tzain's reminder that Baba died to bring magic back is an attempt to focus Zélie on her duty to protect magic in Orisha rather than wallow in her grief, but for Zélie, neither her duty nor her love for her family are enough right now.



Zélie's reaction to seeing the white streak in Amari's hair makes it clear that to her, it's not a great thing that Amari has magic. In the previous book in the series, Amari is a princess and a monarch, and so has been on the side of trying to squash magic for years. Thus, this shift to her suddenly having it is understandably uncomfortable.



Offering narration from Amari's perspective as well as Zélie's allows the reader to understand that Amari suffers pain and grief over her family, just like Zélie does. Notice how Amari continually thinks of Saran's various catchphrases even though she clearly doesn't think highly of his actions, given that she wants to fix his mistakes. However, her dislike of Saran doesn't mean that she can't grieve him, showing that knowing one's duty doesn't mean one can't experience difficult, possibly contrary emotions about fulfilling it.



The foreign mercenary Roën enters the room and offers fish to Nailah, Zélie's lionaire. Then, he tells Amari that there was an attack on the capital city, Lagos. The attackers are maji called the Iyika, and no one has heard from Queen Nehanda. People believe the royal line is dead. Roën explains that the Iyika are killing nobles, and the new admiral is hunting maji. Amari knows that if war breaks out again, Orïsha will fall apart. Amari says that she'll publically announce her rule. When she asks Roën for help, he points out that Amari owes him money and gives her one night to pay. Amari turns to Tzain and Zélie and points out that if Zélie asks Roën, he might help them save the maji, but Zélie insists she can't carry this weight forever. Zélie agrees to go when Amari points out that Baba died for this cause.

Amari is quick to identify that war will tear Orïsha apart. This detail is significant, as it shows that everyone knows violence is dangerous and isn't the right way to solve things—all it leads to is more death. Zélie's comment that she can't carry the weight of the maji forever speaks to the difficulty and outright trauma of having to consistently be the victim of all this violence and do the work to fix it. Being in that position is exhausting for Zélie, in addition to traumatizing and consistently disheartening.



CHAPTER THREE

Zélie rides Nailah through the streets of Jimeta. They pass a mural of a red I created out of dots, the sign of the Iyika. Zélie thinks the Iyika sound like an army, not just rebels. A young girl steps out, entranced by Nailah. Because of the white streak in the girl's hair and her beautiful doll, Zélie knows that this girl was once a noble and is now a tîtán, or able to use magic without using spells. Zélie feels resentful of the girl; she only has magic because Zélie made a mistake during the ritual—and she reminds Zélie of Inan. The girl's mother drags her away, disgusted by Zélie.

Keep in mind that Zélie grew up in a world where her potential to do magic marked her as a feared second-class citizen, liable to suffer at any moment because of her magic. Now, the very people who once kept her down have the ability to do magic too. Zélie's resentment, as well as the girl's mother's disgust, shows that leveling the playing field in terms of magic hasn't fixed the problems in Orïsha.



At the entrance of Roën's hideout, Roën's enforcer, Harun, menacingly calls Zélie a maggot. Zélie flinches; King Saran carved "maggot" into her back not long ago. Several other mercenaries corner Zélie, which makes her ashê bubble, but Roën disperses his crew with a menacing look. Roën leads Zélie up a narrow path and explains that Harun was so menacing because there's a price on Zélie's head now. He convinces her to join him in a rickety manual elevator. She looks down at the refugee camp below and at people boarding ships to leave Orïsha, and wonders what it would be like to leave. They reach Roën's home at the top of a cliff.

"Maggot" in the book is a horrendous slur. Its very existence speaks to the place in society that Zélie and other maji occupy: they're vilified, demeaned, and killing them can at times be profitable for others like Harun. Zélie's choice to not call on her magic to defend herself shows that she doesn't believe violence is the best or only answer. Rather, violence should be a last resort when talking—or Roën—can't help her out.



Roën isn't interested in helping Amari's cause, but allows Zélie to clean blood off of his face. Zélie admits that they have to win, or everyone's death—all to bring magic back—will have been pointless. She doesn't want this anymore. Roën pulls Zélie in close and asks what she *does* want. Zélie says she wants to be free, but reiterates that the only way forward is to put Amari on the throne. She studies the tally mark scars on Roën's arm: torturers carved a tally every time they killed one of his men. Zélie believes they're the reason Roën left his homeland. Roën agrees to help.

In this situation, the romantic feelings between Roën and Zélie allows Zélie to amass more supporters for her cause. It's important to note that Zélie understands the necessity of connecting emotionally with others and trusting them, as it's often hard for her to do so—which is understandable given the trauma she's experienced at the hands of many in Orïsha.



CHAPTER FOUR

The next morning, Amari struggles to write her speech and get dressed. Nothing seems right and she hears Nehanda's voice in her head telling her the clothes aren't good enough. As she practices her speech in the mirror, Amari catches sight of her new scar on her shoulder. Suddenly, her ashê flashês. She cries for help as her palms split and blood courses down her chest. Tzain's shout brings Amari back. She's not bleeding, but her palms are covered in blisters—and she doesn't tell Tzain that this is the fourth time this has happened in a week. Amari isn't sure how she feels about being a tîtán and a Connector, and she refuses to ask Zélie for help. Tzain tells Amari to wear her armor. It's time for her to give the terrifying snow leopanaire seal new meaning.

Again, Amari's magical attack—which seems clearly triggered by the trauma she suffered getting the scar, which came from Saran—shows that Amari is suffering from unresolved trauma, just like Zélie is. Even though she's a tîtán and grew up a princess, Orisha hasn't been kind to her. This begins to make the case that Orisha isn't set up to serve anyone, no matter how high up in society they might be. The snow leopanaire was Saran's sigil, and Tzain's suggestion that they essentially rewrite its meaning is a sign of hope that Orisha can begin to right some of its past wrongs.



CHAPTER FIVE

As they disembark, Zélie notices that the people of Zaria, maji, kosidán, and tîtáns included, just stare. Zélie assures Amari that the gods chose her for this, but thinks that also means the gods chose Zélie's suffering. Zélie thinks that it'll be all right once Amari is queen. Roën interrupts and reminds Amari to pay him once she's queen, and Zélie boosts Amari onto Nailah so she looks the part. Walking through the crowd, Amari looks magical. Roën quietly reminds Zélie to stay alert as Harun intercepts a guard. He explains that plenty of people want Amari dead. Zélie notices that the maji still cower at the back of the crowd, except for a young maji boy who looks at Zélie in awe. The group enters the dome.

Putting Amari on the throne is the only way for Zélie to make up for all the pain she's suffered throughout her life, as Amari ruling Orisha would represent a future that's open to treating maji as valued citizens. Roën's comments about the people who want Amari dead make it clear that taking the throne won't be a simple prospect; not everyone is on Amari's side—especially since she's aligned with the maji, a group that everyone in Orisha has been taught to hate and fear.



CHAPTER SIX

Amari marches to the platform at the center of the dome, taking in the dome's decorations. She feels as though Saran unwittingly prepared her for this and hears him say, "Strike, Amari," in her head. On the platform, Amari announces her name and many people bow. She continues her speech and tells the story of Binta, her divîner handmaid whom Saran killed for no reason. Amari says that that kind of violence must end as cheers erupt. However, Amari catches sight of an lyika girl snarling. Amari takes off her helmet, revealing her white streak. She shouts that the gods want magic to help people thrive, not to divide people. She lists how different maji and tîtáns can help and promises that under her, everyone will have what they need. People shout, "long live the Queen" in **Yoruba**. Queen Nehanda enters and hatefully shouts, "Lies!"

Feeling as though Saran prepared her for this and hearing his voice in her head does mean that Saran may have had more of an influence in Amari's development than she'd like to think—and readers familiar with the first book will remember that Saran was impossibly cruel and calculating. Though Amari removes her helmet to show solidarity with the maji and this angry lyika girl, she doesn't understand that for some—like the lyika girl—Amari's magical abilities means that she now has a weapon that, combined with her royal blood, makes her even more powerful than ever.



CHAPTER SEVEN

Nehanda wears a gold suit of armor. She insists that Amari is a power-hungry tyrant making silly promises. Nehanda accuses Amari of sending maji to kill her and points out that Amari killed Saran and Inan. Flustered, Amari admits that she killed Saran, but doesn't get to finish saying she *didn't* kill Inan before people begin calling her a traitor. Fury spreads through the dome as Nehanda insists that Amari is a dangerous child. Zélie sees Mama's corpse and Baba's casket as Nehanda announces Amari's arrest. Nehanda's guards smash black orbs as Tzain, Zélie, and Amari watch in horror.

Nehanda's speech is fundamentally accusatory and violent—so it makes far more sense to the people of Orisha. For the nobles in power, Nehanda would represent a return to normal for them, while Amari becoming queen could mean major upheaval and change in their lives and practices. For this reason alone, supporting Nehanda is in their best interests, as it preserves their power too.



CHAPTER EIGHT

The black liquid from the orbs froths and then becomes a gas. It does nothing to kosidán and makes títáns cough, but the maji scream in pain as their skin burns. It's majacite gas. Zélie shouts at Tzain and Amari to run; they need to get out before the gas hits them. Nehanda orders her guards to let no one escape as a group of personal guards surrounds her. Zélie realizes they're Grounder títáns as they raise sand pillars and trap maji in the earth. One títán cries for help as he loses control of his magic and dies. Zélie watches in horror, as she's felt the same strain that guard did: the strain of blood magic. Tzain dives after Amari as a noble tries to snatch her. Zélie struggles to find her way out and screams when the majacite hits her.

The new threat of majacite gas represents an even more powerful weapon for the monarchy, showing again that the monarchy may be on more equal footing in terms of magic—but they have more resources to come up with other ways to best their opponents. That the títán dies using his magic suggests that being a títán at all isn't a great state to be in; those títáns are only powerful because of their proximity to Nehanda, not because of their magic.



CHAPTER NINE

The majacite gas is excruciating. Zélie watches as Nehanda takes off her helmet to reveal a white streak marking her as a títán too. She summons her magic and her green ashê is so bright that Zélie can see her ribs in silhouette. Nehanda begins to draw ashê from her soldiers, killing them. Nehanda punches the ground, causing an earthquake that makes the dome start to crack. Zélie freezes, but Roën slaps a mask over her mouth and rolls with her under a fallen slab. Tzain and Amari gallop toward Zélie and Roën on Nailah, pull them up, and they gallop away.

Again, Nehanda's extreme power here shows that the monarchy may be working with the same resource of magic, but they have tools beyond what the maji do to amplify it and make it infinitely more deadly. Roën's choice to come back and save Zélie continues to develop their relationship and trust in each other, something that will be important as they work together in the future.



CHAPTER TEN

As they ride away, Amari thinks that she and Nehanda should be mourning Inan. They pull off the path into a clearing. Zélie tells Tzain about the majacite gas, which makes Amari wonder why the gas didn't hurt her. Amari reaches for Zélie, but Zélie recoils. Shattered, Amari sits across the clearing and Roën insists that it's time to pay up. He mocks Amari, but she insists that she just needs time. Amari thinks of Nehanda and knows that there's more to all of this, as Nehanda doesn't cause spectacles for fun. Roën threatens Amari for payment, but Amari calls on her ashê and Roën backs down. Harun and the men ride up and Roën announces that they're moving out. Zélie shouts after him and crumples. Roën comforts her and it seems like they're the only two people in the clearing. Then, Roën mounts a cheetanaire and rides off.

The revelation that the majacite gas didn't harm Amari makes it even clearer that the titâns in the novel have significant advantages, as they're more like their kosidân counterparts in distinct ways. Amari's thought that she and Nehanda should be grieving for Inan shows that she desperately wants to exist in a loving, trusting family, and this is the moment in which she realizes she doesn't have that—and probably can't with the family she has. Instead, she should focus her attention on figuring out how to best Nehanda so she can create that family for herself.



CHAPTER ELEVEN

Amari knows that they're in trouble: Roën and others like him could go to work for Queen Nehanda. She mutters that she'll figure it out, but Tzain tells her to calm down. Wanting to comfort Zélie, Amari kneels down and promises to figure out an appropriate counterattack, but Zélie hopelessly says they have no chance. Neither Zélie nor Tzain are convinced. Amari realizes that Nehanda is what stands between unity and chaos, and so Nehanda has to die. Amari vows to kill Nehanda, but Tzain and Zélie insist that the nobles won't fall into line. Zélie says that the issue is the monarchy, and the best thing to do is leave and find freedom elsewhere.

Zélie has a point about the nobles; it's in their best interest to not support a revolution, as a revolution could jeopardize their business interests or connections at court that give them power. When Amari's first thought is to kill Nehanda, it shows that she's learned thus far that violence and killing are the only ways to get anything done. She doesn't consider how to craft a peace treaty or engage in diplomacy—those things are foreign concepts in this violent world.



Amari counters that as queen, it's her duty to serve and protect, even if no one wants her. Zélie screeches that Baba died to bring magic back and now, with magic, Nehanda is stronger than any maji. Amari sees Zélie's point, but knows she can't just back down. Tzain tries to calm everyone down, but Zélie insists that she can't be on Amari's side when Baba died so the titâns could rise. Zélie continues that Amari's family is the reason her own is dead, and she insists that her scars are worse than Amari's. Amari shoots back that Zélie's parents loved her, while she had to kill Saran to survive. Tzain tries to intervene again, but stops when Zélie asks if he heard her screaming for him in the dome. She accuses him of choosing Amari and races off on Nailah.

Though Amari is right—both girls have suffered greatly at the hands of Amari's family and because of the society that her family created—it's still not fruitful for Zélie to essentially try to engage in this game of arguing over whose scars are worse. Both girls are victims, and both have a lot of work to do if they want to turn Orisha into a place where others don't have to suffer like this. However, Zélie takes the view she does because of continued loyalty to Baba. At this point, when Orisha seems lost, Zélie's relationships with dead family are seemingly all she has.



CHAPTER TWELVE

Nailah gallops wildly and Zélie feels stupid for trusting the gods' plan. She doesn't think she can trust them anymore. She begins to pray for Mama to take her back to alafia and screams the prayer. Zélie thinks that magic isn't enough anymore, but then she thinks of losing Tzain and Amari. Suddenly, Nailah bursts out of the forest. There's a sheer cliff straight ahead, and Zélie yanks Nailah to the side so they don't go over. Zélie flies off and slams into a tree. Nailah licks her face as Zélie feels her broken ribs and asks Mama to take her again. When she opens her eyes, she sees reeds.

Though in the last chapter magic made Zélie want to leave, now she realizes that dealing with magic is the price she has to pay if she wants to continue to live in the same world as Tzain and Amari. In other words, her love for and connection to her living family members is strong enough to begin to reinvigorate Zélie's will to live, even if she promptly loses that will again thanks to the pain of her fall.



CHAPTER THIRTEEN

The last time Zélie was in Inan's dreamscape, King Saran had just carved "maggot" into Zélie's back. She kissed Inan to help with the pain. Now, the landscape of reeds is wilted and dying, and Inan lies, thin and groaning, in the reeds. As he says Zélie's name, Zélie begins to cry. Inan insists that they weren't supposed to shoot and Zélie falls backwards into the memory of Inan shouting and Baba's body falling onto her, dead. Inan apologizes and promises to make it right, but he's promised Zélie things before. With a roar, Zélie's magic bleeds into the dreamscape. Trees shoot up and black roots coil around Inan, scraping and choking him. Zélie promises to make him wish he'd died that day. His collarbones snap and the dreamscape shatters as Inan loses consciousness.

Inan is apologizing for what happened in the last novel, when he orchestrated a handover of Baba to Zélie in exchange for the items to bring magic back, but Saran killed Baba anyway. Even though Inan didn't mean to double-cross Zélie, here he still has to deal with the consequences of trusting Saran to follow through when Zélie conjures the violent roots. Trying to strangle Inan in retaliation drives home again that Orisha is a fundamentally violent place. There's no culture of talking these things through—the wounds are too deep for that.



CHAPTER FOURTEEN

Inan's eyes fly open. He thinks of Zélie's hatred and thinks that he betrayed Zélie and Amari to kill magic, but he failed: magic is still alive. He remembers how Saran stabbed him and Amari took over the fight. Inan didn't expect to live. An earsplitting siren goes off. Inan struggles to get up, falls, and realizes he's in Saran's old quarters. He stumbles into the wall as Nehanda and soldiers race into the room looking for him. Guards lift Nehanda and Inan to carry them to the cellars, but when they reach the ground floor, Inan sees that it's just rubble. He escapes the guards and thinks that the last time the palace looked like this, Burners killed Saran's family and Saran went on to conduct the Raid.

Everything that Inan finds and knows once he wakes shows him that he's in an endless cycle of violence: he's in his father's room, for one, and his home looks like it did over a decade ago when Orisha was gripped by unspeakable violence. That Inan remembers that Amari killed Saran suggests that Amari and Inan's relationship, which was once warm, may have also changed because of this violence.



Inan reaches a window and sees that Lagos is gone. Corpses line the streets amid rubble from blasted buildings. Disbelievingly, Inan watches a sphere of fire rise in the distance and then break apart and explode on the ground. Someone pushes Inan down and when Inan sees the burn scars, he realizes it's his cousin Ojore. Ojore tells Inan that the Iyika are attacking—they're at war.

Having Ojore around after implied years of absence gives Inan someone else close to him to lean on. However, Ojore is a soldier, and so has been trained to value doing his job over everything else. Inan, on the other hand, wants to figure out how to combine both duty and love.



CHAPTER FIFTEEN

Zélie groans as she wakes up. She sees Tzain and remembers what happened, and then she notices a young maji touching her and chanting in **Yoruba**. Two more maji yell to the Healer, Safiyah, to hurry. Zélie's ribs knit together painfully and she remembers that Inan is still alive. She thanks Safiyah, who calls Zélie the Soldier of Death. The maji explain that Nehanda's títáns are rounding up maji and imprisoning them in the fortress at Gusau. Safiyah and her companions leave. Tzain and Zélie make up, and then Zélie apologizes to Amari. Amari says she still needs to kill Nehanda and Tzain tells Zélie that he'll help her escape if she wants. Zélie realizes that with Inan alive, she can't be free. She tells Amari that Inan is still alive, and that she needs to kill him.

Again, with Inan unexpectedly back in the mix—and in Zélie's mind, responsible for Baba's death—there's no choice for Zélie but to make him go away by killing him, not just imprisoning him for life or banishing him to another country. This is reflective of Zélie's understanding of how her world works, in which violence or cruelty undertaken by one person can only be answered by violence or cruelty by another. The novel eludes to the weight of this mindset when Zélie says she can't be free while Inan is still alive: essentially, she can't be happy or at peace without enacting violence.



CHAPTER SIXTEEN

As Amari, Zélie, and Tzain travel, Amari thinks often about Inan. She doesn't want to fight him; she wants to run to him. Tzain gently points out that Amari is thinking of Inan again, and Amari thinks that she doesn't know how to breathe without her brother—and she doesn't know what to do if he's alive. Zélie stops short, suspicious, but three maji children come around the corner asking for food. Amari pulls out dried meat for them and wonders if Saran or Nehanda are the reason they're alone. Zélie crouches and points to Gusau's fortress in the valley below. They watch as títán guards unload chained maji from a caravan and shove them inside. They discuss how to plan their attack, but Roën appears behind them and interrupts.

Amari has years of childhood with Inan to influence her thoughts of him, unlike Zélie (who only engaged in a brief, troubled romance with Inan in the last novel). Because of this history and connection, Amari is far more willing to believe that Inan is a good person who's trying to do the right thing than Zélie is, as Zélie has only experienced Inan's betrayal. Amari's question as to which of her parents orphaned the young maji shows that she understands the responsibility of rewriting what the monarchy means after her parents' cruel reigns.



Amari charges forward with her sword out and threatens Roën, but Roën smoothly knocks her sword away. He explains that the Iyika already attempted jailbreaks and now, every fortress in Orísha is armed with mines of majacite gas. If anyone does manage to get in, guards will kill every prisoner. Roën says that with Lagos under siege, the monarchy can't afford to lose another city or let the Iyika gain more soldiers. When Tzain asks, Roën says that he's come to take Zélie to the Iyika. Amari insists that they can't go as the Iyika want to kill her for being a monarch, but Zélie says they have no choice.

Zélie is likely willing to trust Roën here because he's shown himself to be far more trustworthy than Inan has. While Inan brought about Baba's death, Roën has, for the most part, been there for Zélie and her cause—and occasionally goes above and beyond, as when he saved her from the collapsing dome. Developing this trust now allows Zélie to practice trusting someone like Roën when the stakes are relatively low.



CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

Inan stares at his gaunt reflection in the mirror. Saran's red robes still smell of his cologne, and the smell makes Inan feel his father's hands on his throat, disowning him. It feels like Saran's sword is still in Inan's side. Joking and happy, Ojore lets himself in and compliments Inan's appearance. Ojore looks fantastic in his admiral's armor, but it doesn't cover the burn scars on his neck. It feels like Ojore is a brother, even though he hates Inan's magic—Burners killed his parents before the Raid. Inan points out that there are títáns in Ojore's ranks, but Ojore says they have to fight fire with fire to eradicate the "maggots." Inan knows there's no way to change his mind after what happened to his parents.

Quietly, Ojore says that he was afraid Inan was dead. Inan thinks back to his dreamscape and wonders if he wouldn't have woken up had Zélie not found him. Nehanda enters and announces that the assembly is ready in the throne room. She insists that they can't hold this audience in the cellar, as Inan needs to impress his council, specifically General Jokôye. Nehanda snaps her fingers and a servant carries in Saran's crown. Ojore excuses himself as Nehanda places the crown on Inan's head. She admits she'd burn the crown if she could and promises to get new robes for Inan soon. Through tears, she says that Saran was a bad man, but a good king. Inan must be the king Saran *couldn't* be.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

Roën calls the group to a halt in order to check what's up ahead. He discovers two young maji, clearly killed by majacite. Zélie recites the **Yoruba** incantation to lay their souls to rest. She pushes down painful memories of Baba's death. When Zélie stands, Roën points out that this is the first time he's seen her do magic since the ritual. They argue over the fact that Zélie called after him and he still left a week ago, and then Zélie says she decided to stay in Orísha to take care of something. Roën knows she's talking about Inan, which annoys Zélie—he seems to be able to read her mind. She asks why he didn't sell them out, and he jokes that he couldn't take the thought of Zélie throwing herself into a tree after he left.

Just like everyone else, Ojore is dealing with the unresolved trauma of losing his parents to Burners. Ojore thus speaks for many of Orísha's nobles when he says that he hates the maji and will do anything to get rid of them: many of the other nobles likely have suffered similar losses, or have potentially just bought Saran's insistence that all the maji are evil like these Burners. Having to wear Saran's clothing for this ceremony suggests that Inan won't be able to escape his father's violent legacy, no matter how hard he tries.



Here, it seems as though Nehanda has some compassion and insight when she suggests that Saran was a bad man—it suggests that she was aware of his cruelty and ruthlessness, as she was possibly a victim of some of that. However, allowing that Saran was a good king shows that Nehanda still prizes duty to the crown and all it stands for (including eradicating maji) above anything else. It also suggests that if Nehanda is advising, Inan will struggle to actually be a compassionate and kind ruler.



Pointing out that Zélie was able to swallow the memories of Baba's death shows that Roën sees that Zélie is beginning to heal—though the effectiveness and health of Zélie's healing seems questionable, given that she's only able to push down these flashbacks because she's so focused on killing Inan. As a mercenary, Roën understands that he has to put duty to his jobs over romance, but while he's working on this particular job, there's nothing stopping him from flirting with Zélie for the fun of it.



Tzain yells for Zélie. Up ahead, guards in golden armor look down at them. Titan Grounders slide down the mountain at them with impressive skill. Amari steps up to defend her group, but her magic flares back into her face. Zélie recites the **Yoruba** incantation and spirits rise from the earth. However, a gangly soldier repeats the incantation, but his spirits weave into a giant monster. Everyone is confused. The soldier pulls off his helmet to reveal white hair and recognizes Zélie. Another soldier removes her helmet and tells Zélie that her form needs work. It's Mama Agba.

Though these “títáns” have gold armor, they aren't actually títáns—they're the lyika and are Zélie's allies. Zélie's willingness to jump to conclusions here and launch an attack against them is understandable, given how dangerous her world is, but it also suggests that Zélie is potentially unable to take stock of more than one aspect of a given situation—and could make mistakes because of this.



CHAPTER NINETEEN

Zélie cries harder than she ever has in Mama Agba's arms. When Zélie calms down, Mama Agba greets Amari and Tzain. Zélie turns to the other maji. The young Reaper steps up and explains that everyone in his family can make animations that weave together. He kneels, bows, and begs for Zélie to take him as her Second. Another girl laughs and calls the boy Mâzeli. Mâzeli promises to serve Zélie and insists that they'll fall in love and have children. Mama Agba cuts in and leads everyone away. Zélie sees Roën accept a bag of gold and hold back. He explains that he's headed back to Lagos to make money. He whispers in Zélie's ear that they'll see each other again.

Roën has to chase money—his clear attraction to Zélie can't be pursued if he wants to continue being successful as a mercenary. Mâzeli's innocent youth and enthusiasm turn him into an immediately loveable and sympathetic character, which begins to shift Zélie's loyalties from exclusively Amari and Tzain to the larger family of Reapers she'll meet through the lyika.



As they walk, Mama Agba tells them the origins of the lyika. She founded the group; she had a vision of Zélie at the diviners' settlement and she and Baba found the survivors after the monarchy attacked. Baba sacrificed himself to the guards when the monarchy attacked again. Mâzeli picks up the story and says that they waited at Lagos's borders with other maji and as soon as magic returned, they all stormed the city with their newfound power. As the group approaches a steep cliff, a tall Grounder steps forward. Mama Agba introduces him as Kâmarū and then coaches him through opening up the mountainside.

The descriptions of the attack on Lagos indicate again that violence, within the world of Orísha, is cathartic and is something necessary for oppressed people like the maji to use if they want to be heard and make a difference. Their oppressed state has made it so that they have few or no other options except for violence—and, Zélie will see, except for cultivating community and remembering the history of their people.



CHAPTER TWENTY

At the end of a long tunnel, Amari sees three mountains covered in temples and towers. Mama Agba explains that the original elders created the Ile Ijosi sanctuary centuries ago. The landscape is lush; young diviners splash in a natural bath. Mama Agba gestures to a new infirmary and says they're converting old towers to dormitories. Amari whispers to Tzain to imagine cities across Orísha like this, but Tzain reminds Amari that when she's queen, she can build these cities. Mama Agba grabs Tzain and sends him to go find Kenyon, an old friend who's now the elder of the Burner clan. Khani and Imani are here too; Khani is the elder of the Healers.

It's worth noting that Tzain is embraced by the maji in the sanctuary. As a kosidán, Tzain doesn't pose a threat to them, and he's clearly not aligned with the monarchy in any way (except for his romance with Amari, which might not be obvious yet to the maji). Amari's desire to build cities that draw from the sanctuary's architecture reads as both innocently idealistic and potentially problematic: she wants to take architectural ideas from a culture that is in no way hers.



Mâzeli takes over the tour and Amari begins to count the sleek soldiers. A beautiful young maji woman walks up and introduces herself as Não. She tells Mâzeli that Zélie needs to meet Ramaya and the other elders and drags her away. Amari starts to follow, but Mâzeli holds her back and points out that the elders aren't fans of hers. Mâzeli explains that they run the lyika. Amari says she needs to meet them.

When Amari expresses interest in meeting the elders, it shows that she's aware that she's going to need to be diplomatic. She's in the minority as the only títán and is vulnerable as a hated monarch, so she'll have to demonstrate that she's trustworthy and not just a young, female version of Saran.



CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

Inan, Ojore, and Nehanda wait outside the throne room. Ojore cracks jokes, but Nehanda glares and reminds Inan that he must impress the advisors. Títán soldiers let her in. Ojore digs into his pocket and pulls out the **bronze coin** that Zélie gave Inan. He gives it to Inan and explains that he has no idea why Inan would have a coin, so it must be important. Inan thanks Ojore and the doors open. The throne room is full. In front of the throne, General Jokôye and the other four surviving members of the council bow to Inan. Where there were once 30 nobles in front, there are now 11. Inan notices that Jokôye is a títán.

Getting Zélie's coin back means that Inan will have a physical object to remind him of Zélie and the love they shared as he moves into a leadership role as king—a role that's fundamentally opposed to what Zélie wants to do. This suggests that Inan will be in a place where, at least emotionally or intellectually, he understands the human toll on the other side, as it is associated with Zélie.



Inan vows to win everyone's approval as he sits on the throne. He announces that he has a plan to liberate Lagos, beat the lyika, and bring peace to Orisha. He asks everyone to present their problems. A young woman with children steps up and says that there's no food. Nehanda whispers to Inan that the market is gone and with the roads closed, there's nothing for many to eat. Others raise their hands to show that they, too, are hungry. Inan turns to the tax collector, Captain Kunle, and commands him to create rations for every civilian from the palace stores. Inan insists that they'll be fine once the roads reopen and orders them to set up a distribution center in the marketplace.

Inan's desire for everyone to like him speaks to his nature as a people-pleaser, and his announcement of a plan to fix pretty much everything reflects the same. Being a people-pleaser, however, means that Inan may be far more interested in pleasing others than doing the right thing or pleasing himself, especially if those others are powerful or people he loves. He clearly wants to be benevolent though, which shows he's committed to being better than Saran.



Many people present their problems and with the draw of rations, they agree to collect the dead and nobles agree to take in orphans. General Jokôye steps up and declares that Inan's benevolence is admirable, but the lyika will soon retaliate. None of the scouts sent into the forest return, and Jokôye insists that they can't destroy the protective city walls to attack the lyika without knowing exactly where the group is. Nehanda insists they can discuss this in private, but Inan sweats and insists he'll come up with a plan.

General Jokôye reads as the voice of reason for her side: they must preserve manpower and rations for their fighters, and focus on winning the war rather than lifting up strategically useless civilians by feeding them. She represents loyalty to duty rather than love, and so finds herself in opposition to Inan as he tries to do both and leans more toward love.



Inan hears a crash in the entryway and people duck for cover. Inan makes his way out and discovers Ojore holding an Iyika girl. There are stale bread loaves around her. General Jokôye insists that child maji are as dangerous as adults, but Inan kneels next to the girl and asks her name. The girl, Raifa, says she wants a maji sitting on the throne. Inan gathers her loaves, gives them to her, and asks her to tell the Iyika that any maji who volunteer to help with reconstruction will receive double rations. He asks Ojore to take Raifa to the forest safely. Jokôye roars in anger, but Inan insists that the maji are fighting because they've been abused—with his kindness, they can create lasting peace. No one seems convinced, but Inan says that any maji who oppose him will die.

Jokôye and her allies likely see Inan as weak and misguided, as they fully believe that the maji are subhuman and need to be eradicated because of the danger they pose to society. Inan is right, however, that the maji are fighting so hard and so violently because of years of abuse. Like Amari, Inan recognizes that the situation they're in now has been brewing for a long time and is the consequence of years of subjugation and oppression. Now that he's king, Inan believes that he can combine love and duty by making peace like this.



CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

Amari braces herself as Não and Mâzeli lead them through the growing crowd. People look at Zélie like she's a goddess, but look at Amari like she's a bug. They approach the table of elders at the back of the cafeteria. Não introduces Zélie but ignores Amari. Amari recognizes the snarling girl from the dome; she introduces herself as Ramaya, elder of the Connector clan. She's the clear leader of the elders. Ramaya greets Zélie, and when Zélie insists she's just here to win the war, Ramaya says this isn't enough: Zélie is their future queen. Zélie looks wildly at Amari but before Amari can say anything, the elder of the Tamer clan, Na'imah, races in with a note from Lagos. Ramaya reads that Inan is alive and offering food to maji who leave the Iyika.

The way the Iyika elders treat Amari makes it very clear that despite the prejudice and discrimination they've experienced—and perhaps, because of it—they're unwilling to look at Amari as a full human being or ally. Though hurtful for Amari, this does give her the opportunity to temporarily put herself in her companions' shoes and understand a little of what it was like to grow up as a maji in a kingdom that didn't want them.



Na'imah quips that killing royals is like killing roaches, as Amari snatches the note and reads Inan's bold promises. She shoves it at Zélie, thinking that Inan is going to be a great king and bring peace. Zélie, however, roughly says that they can't believe Inan. She suggests they burn Inan's offered food and starve Lagos. Amari bursts that that will just escalate the war and then attempts to backtrack and introduce herself. Coldly, Ramaya says she knows who Amari is: her parents have caused more than enough trouble, and Amari's magic is an abomination. Ramaya gives the order to burn Inan's food. Quietly, Zélie tells Amari that they can still put Amari on the throne. Amari asks Zélie to help her with her magic.

Given the various first-person perspectives of the novel, the reader understands that Inan's offer of peace was genuine. Because of this, it's easy to see that Amari is in the right here—there is the possibility for peace if both sides are willing to trust each other enough to sit down and have a conversation. Because of what Zélie has experienced, however, she's learned that trusting Inan—and monarchs in general—is silly, and so the clear answer for her is to treat Inan's peace offering as a trap.



CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

Inan and Nehanda ride through Lagos to welcome Iyika defectors. The streets are clear now, and villagers line up to receive food from the ration carts. Nehanda assures Inan that he can still change his mind as they stop in front of what used to be divîner shacks. Nehanda admits ferociously and proudly that she destroyed them. She explains that she can absorb power and because of this, they're blessed and powerful enough to annihilate the maji. Inan realizes that what Nehanda talks about doing is conducting another Raid. With a sigh, Inan tells Nehanda that they have to try to make peace with the maji. Both Jokôye and Ojore mutter their disapproval as Nehanda draws from her tîtâns and carves a hole in Lagos's wall.

Seven Iyika members stand at the top of the hill. Inan calls to Raifa and the two step toward each other. Both extend their hands, but Inan catches sight of sparks on Raifa's hand. Soldiers drag Inan back and throw majacite bombs. When Inan stands up again, six Iyika are burned beyond recognition. He trembles, realizing that Ojore was right: the Iyika don't want peace; they want victory at any cost. Ojore realizes that Raifa is missing and they spot her running through the ruins. She races toward the ration cart and sends embers flying toward it. The cart bursts into flames. Raifa screams that the Soldier of Death is coming as Ojore stabs her. Inan thinks that he underestimated Zélie's resources and shouts that he'll fix this.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

Amari vomits from the pain that she feels when she tries to use her magic. Zélie catches sight of Amari's blistered palms and points out that Amari could die if they keep trying, but Amari thinks of Ramaya and knows that the Iyika won't respect her unless she can prove herself. With a sigh, Zélie leads Amari to a river. At a small dam of rocks, she asks Amari to think of the water as ashê and explains that when maji use incantations, it's like lifting one rock. When tîtâns use magic, it's always powerful blood magic, so it's uncontrollable—it's like removing the dam altogether. If Amari releases too much ashê, it she'll die. Zélie admits that she has no idea how Nehanda wields her ashê.

The way that Nehanda talks here—specifically her pride at destroying the former divîner shacks—suggests that while she may be outwardly supporting Inan, she, like Zélie, believes that the only way forward is violence. Because this is the way she's been taught to think about problems with the maji, what she would like to do most is conduct a second round of the Raid. Such violence, in her mind, is only necessary in such a situation.



This is a heartbreaking moment for Inan, as he finally sees that the Iyika are willing to play the same way they interpret him as playing: violently, and with many tricks. This begins to transform Inan from an idealistic and naïve young king into a king who understands that violence, self-interest, and suspicion are the only things he can rely on—which would turn him into a ruler much like Saran. In this moment, Inan also realizes that he can't count on his former love with Zélie to help things at all.



Zélie's explanation of the differences between how ashê works in maji versus tîtâns shows again that the tîtâns may have a lot of potential, but magic isn't something that comes naturally to them. It's something they got by accident when Zélie messed up a ritual in the last book, and in Zélie's eyes, she likely sees tîtâns' magic as something they got without doing anything to earn it. Clearly there are ways to wield it more successfully, given that Nehanda does so, but the Iyika's relative weakness means they don't have that information yet.



Amari insists that she can gain control by using an incantation, but Zélie tersely insists that **Yoruba** is sacred to the maji and not something Amari can just learn. When Amari insists that they're at war, Zélie shouts that Yoruba is the history of the maji and exactly what Saran tried to destroy. She won't let Amari steal it too; Amari just shouldn't use magic. When Zélie ascertains that Amari wants to trust Inan, she says that she still wants to crown Amari, but she won't trust Inan. Amari believes that Inan is genuine, but says nothing. She says that she has to fight back and save those Nehanda is killing, especially if Inan won't. Zélie sighs and agrees to teach Amari an incantation if she promises not to use it against maji. Amari agrees.

Here, Zélie introduces the idea that magic isn't just power. For the maji, magic and everything connected to it—especially Yoruba—are how they build their identities, both as individuals and as a community. Allowing Amari to learn Yoruba represents letting Amari into that community, but it likely remains in Zélie's mind that Amari doesn't have any right to really do so. All the Yoruba does is make Amari even more powerful and give her even more control, something that Zélie surely doesn't want to see happen.



CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

After a full night of training, Zélie struggles to keep her eyes open as two young Reapers, Bimpe and M̀ari, prepare Zélie for her ascension as elder. Both are young teenagers and their borrowed s̀entaro robes fit them poorly. M̀ari, who's only 13, enthusiastically offers herself as Zélie's Second. She and Bimpe help Zélie into the costume of red silk and glittering beads. When Zélie is dressed, she thinks she looks like Mama and like Oya come to life. The girls leave Zélie alone. Though she knows being the elder will help her take out Inan, she feels like her freedom is disappearing. Tzain appears and comforts Zélie. He reminds her that she's wanted this since she was a child, when she and Mama watched a Reaper receive his is̀ipayá and ascend.

Ascending as the elder of the Reaper clan is one way for Zélie to build community and make herself an important part of the maji world, even if at this point it feels like losing freedom. At this point Zélie is still very focused on Baba and her grief, so it's hard for her to focus on the family of Reapers she'll gain by becoming their elder. When Tzain reminds Zélie of how she watched an is̀ipayá as a child, it reminds Zélie that this is part of her past and is something she shared with those she loved—even if those she loved, like Mama, are now dead.



At the base of the third mountain, Mama Agba steps into the stone circle and shares the history of the elders: the elder of a clan is the most powerful maji, and the title can transfer through challenges or simply passing the title along. Mama Agba asks M̀azeli if he wants to challenge or concede. He concedes as Zélie enters the circle and kneels. In **Yoruba**, Mama Agba asks if Zélie accepts her clan as her own and promises to protect them at all costs. Zélie looks at Bimpe, M̀ari, and M̀azeli and thinks they already feel like family. She agrees to protect them. Mama Agba paints symbols on Zélie's face and then slices Zélie's palm and slams it onto the stone.

This ritual is sacred and is likely something that elders have been undergoing for as long as maji and magic have existed in Orisha. In this sense, Zélie is taking her place among generations of Reaper elders as she does this, which helps her connect to her history and keep them alive for this generation. She can now be an example for young Bimpe and M̀ari, and channel M̀azeli's enthusiasm to make it more useful as he grows into a mature adult.



Zélie's hand bonds to the stone as purple smoke surrounds her. Everything else disappears and Zélie sees a teardrop of ash̀e appear on Oya's hand—Zélie's is̀ipayá. The teardrop hits Zélie's palms and she sees a purple ribbon of light, then a gold one, and then other colors. The ribbons weave together like tree roots and create roaring power. Zélie snaps back to her body. Mama Agba proudly helps Zélie up as everyone cheers.

Though Zélie doesn't understand the meaning of her is̀ipayá now, it's worth considering the symbolism of the different ribbons. As Zélie will learn, the ribbons symbolize many people joining together to create something far more powerful than any individual—which supports the novel's assertion that communities like the maji community are extremely important.



CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX

In the evening, Inan decides to sneak out and figure out where the Lyika camp is. He covers his white streak in his hair, dresses in simple clothes, and feels haunted by Raifa's threats. Ojore interrupts and teases Inan about meeting a girl, but he grows somber when Inan shares that he's going to find the Lyika. Ojore takes off his breastplate and insists on going too. It takes them an hour to sneak out of Lagos. Inan repeats that if they can find the Lyika, Nehanda can take care of them. He reaches for his power, but it burns him. Ojore watches with disdain.

They hear a rustle in the bushes. It's just an animal, but Ojore trembles and then turns away in shame. In a pained voice, he says he doesn't know why the Lyika attacked with Burners when they have Reapers and Cancers too. Inan looks at Ojore's burns and sees how much pain he's in, but a look of hatred comes over Ojore's face and they push on. After another hour, they find the Lyika camp. There are only nine rebels. Ojore and Inan turn to head back, but two Burners order them to drop their swords. When one Burner suggests they send Inan's head to the elders, Ojore spins into life. He kills two Burners as another creates a wall of fire. Magic swells in Inan and bursts out of his body. The force breaks bones in his arm.

CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN

The military finds Inan and Ojore an hour later. Nehanda forces Inan to take sedatives and as they take effect, he relaxes on sweaty sheets. She chastises him for acting alone and asks if he's used magic like this before. Inan has. Nehanda tells him to not use it again. Ojore and Jokôye enter, thankful for and thrilled by what Inan did. Inan peeks out and sees Lyika kneeling in the dirt, bound in majacite chains. Jokôye marches to them and asks for information on where the rest of the Lyika are. When no one answers, she pulls out vials of majacite. Inan flashês on Saran torturing Zélie, but Nehanda insists that this is the only way to win. Jokôye injects the majacite into a girl's veins. The girl seizes and dies.

The fact that Ojore cannot get over that Inan, one of his best friends, has access to magic—even if it literally causes Inan pain—speaks to the success of the previous monarchs' messaging that maji and magic are evil and bad. Ojore is unable to separate the thing he hates from the person he loves, and so is more likely to betray Inan or push Inan to do things that Inan doesn't want to do.



Again, Ojore is dealing with intense trauma as a result of what his parents experienced—and unlike Reapers and Cancers, whose powers manifest in ways distinctly supernatural in the novel, Burners control fire, which exists and can be scary even in the reader's world. The Burners, in essence, have turned something that should be normal into a terrifying trigger for Ojore, which is one of the reasons he hates magic so much: he can't even get through the day-to-day without fear.



Jokôye's preferred method of torturing the Lyika is especially difficult for Inan, given that he had to watch Saran torture Zélie with liquid majacite when Inan and Zélie were in love in the last book. Though this is painful for Inan, the fact that he flashês on Zélie here shows that in his mind, the Lyika still have faces and are still people, all because he briefly was in love with Zélie. Love, then, can shift someone's perspective in regards to what their duty is, and who they must protect to fulfill that duty.



CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHT

During Zélie's celebration, Amari realizes that being an elder isn't like being a monarch: it's like being the foundation of the clan's home. Amari wonders what it would be like to be embraced like Zélie is, especially as she watches Ramaya sit amongst her other Connectors. A sharp bell rings and a Burner runs over a bridge. She says that their fighters in Lagos are gone; Inan struck back. The monarchy will open their roads by morning. Amari thinks that this is the Iyika's fault; if they'd listened to her, this wouldn't have happened. The elders gather and discuss whether they're strong enough to take on Nehanda, but Amari butts in. She says that attacking would be a mistake and offers to contact Inan, but Ramaya pushes and threatens Amari. Amari steels herself and challenges Ramaya to be the new Connector elder.

What Amari begins to understand is that the maji don't have rulers and hierarchies that mean the same thing as the monarchy. This is a set culture with its own traditions, in which elders are more like beloved patriarchs or matriarchs than dictators—which is why Amari is so curious as to what that might feel like. Amari has no concept of power that isn't governed by cruelty or ruthlessness, for all her talk about diplomacy, which is why she chooses to challenge Ramaya to be the Connector elder. It's how she knows how to get her way, and it's fundamentally violent.



CHAPTER TWENTY-NINE

Ramaya snarls that Amari has no right to even be in the sanctuary, since she's not a maji. Amari's ashê glows hot and blue; she knows that because of Ramaya and the current elders, they lost their leverage in this war. Amari insists that tîtâns have magic too and will be useful to the cause, and she reminds Ramaya that she's been fighting for the maji as long as Zélie has. Mama Agba steps between the girls and clears the stone area. Zélie runs to Amari and insists that this isn't about the war. Being an elder is about leading the clan, and Amari knows nothing about the maji. Amari says that she must do this as queen of Orisha. Mama Agba warns the girls that they shouldn't kill each other and starts the fight.

Again, though Amari makes good points—the tîtâns could be useful to the maji—she misses or ignores the fact that tîtâns are nobles who have spent centuries oppressing the maji. Because of this, they're not the maji's first choice of allies. When Amari insists that she has to do this as the queen of Orisha, it shows that she's putting what she thinks is best for her country (unity and peace) ahead of what might be more correct in this situation: accepting a structure and a way of life that she doesn't understand.



Amari strikes first with a **Yoruba** incantation, but Ramaya dodges a ball of ashê and sends her own ashê into Amari's skull. It takes a minute before Amari can see again. Amari hears "Strike, Amari" in her head and tries several more incantations, but Ramaya laughs and again sends excruciating pain into Amari's chest. People cheer for Ramaya. Ramaya whispers in Amari's ear that Orisha and the maji will be better off with Amari dead. Energized, Amari grabs Ramaya and unleashes all of her magic. Ramaya screams. Amari can hear Zélie shouting at her to stop, but Amari can't stop. Someone pulls Amari off and Khani checks Ramaya, who's barely alive. Zélie pulls Amari close and comforts her. Amari whispers that she didn't mean to do this.

The lack of control, as well as the wild amount of power, that Amari has are extremely disturbing, for the reader as well as for the gathered Iyika. Amari demonstrates that by coopting the language of the maji, she can turn herself into a formidable foe—which shows the Iyika that they must keep their language from the monarchy, for one. This also likely makes the Iyika believe that Amari cannot be trusted, since her powers are unstable and she's willing to turn them all the way up on a member of her own clan after specifically being told not to.



CHAPTER THIRTY

Zélie walks to Amari's room in the elder quarters, thinking of the almost 200 maji and diviners they have to feed. The new arrivals all bring stories of the monarchy's power. Zélie can hear Amari crying inside, but Tzain opens the door. Zélie breezes in and says that they have an elder meeting. She finds Amari in front of the mirror, trying to dab pigment onto her face to conceal bruises with her left hand. Her right arm is in a sling. Zélie points out that a Healer could help, but Amari says that five Healers refused. This is against the Healer code. Zélie sits down to help with the concealer. Amari looks sad and alone. She says that she tried to visit Ramaya and apologize, but Ramaya hasn't woken up yet. She asks in a small voice if Zélie hates her.

Zélie hates the question, but feels responsible for Ramaya's fate since she's the one who taught Amari an incantation. She reminds Amari that Amari promised to not use the **Yoruba** against the maji, but Amari insists she had no choice. Zélie spits that Amari *always* has a choice, and she chose to win at any cost like Saran and Inan. Amari sobs and says she doesn't know how to fix this, which makes Zélie sigh. She knows that Amari doesn't get it because she's not a maji. Zélie explains that magic isn't about power. It's an intrinsic part of the maji, and maji have suffered and died for it. It's not something Amari can just learn, and now, maji are still suffering—while títans use magic against them. Amari agrees to apologize and make things right.

For Zélie, duty calls—she and Amari are elders, so they naturally must attend the meetings and deal with business. Amari, however, doesn't understand how she got here and why everyone is so angry with her, so the prospect of sitting down with a bunch of people who seem to hate her is understandably unappealing. That five Healers refused to help Amari shows just how entrenched the prejudice and hatred is between maji and the monarchy, especially since they're not supposed to refuse anyone the help they need.



It's still debatable whether Amari fully comprehends what Zélie is telling her, as it seems that truly understanding where she went wrong would likely mean respectfully turning over the title of elder to a maji and figuring out how to help in other ways. Zélie's explanation is still an admirable attempt, and is especially commendable given how little open communication there is between characters in the novel. This is one of the few times when people who are upset and fighting sit down and try to understand, showing that it is indeed possible to do so.



CHAPTER THIRTY-ONE

The elders are silent as Amari enters the sacred council room. She ignores them and takes in the 10 bronze statues depicting the original elders. Zélie falls into conversation with Nâo and Kâmarū while Na'imah and Dakarai, the Seer elder, play with Na'imah's butterflies. With a frown, Khani invites Amari to her quarters to be healed later. She insists it's wrong to refuse to help, but Kenyon mutters that it's the fault of people like Amari that maji are dying. Amari apologizes as Folake, the elder of the Lighter clan, enters. She's the final elder to arrive. To begin the meeting, Jahi, the elder of the Winders who's supposedly seeing Ramaya, suggests they all ignore Amari since she's not a maji.

The bitterness and rudeness on the part of the maji is, again, understandable given the maji's history of oppression under Amari's family—but given their circumstances, cutting Amari off denies them the possibility of drawing on any of Amari's gifts or knowledge that might help their cause. The sense of awe that Amari feels in this sacred space indicates that the history of the maji is something beautiful and awe-inspiring for anyone, even if they're not a maji themselves—the power of the history shines through.



Amari rises, thinking of how Nehanda can always command a room. She apologizes and says that what happened during her battle with Ramaya is why they must make peace with the monarchy. Zélie hisses for Amari to stop, but Amari persists. Jahi suggests that Amari wants to sell them to Inan, but Amari insists that if they'd listened to her, they wouldn't have lost in Lagos—and points out that she managed to put Ramaya in a coma with little knowledge of her power, and everyone they're fighting has that kind of power.

The other elders turn to Zélie, who says that Amari is right, but Nehanda is something more. Amari suggests that to achieve peace, she needs to be able to talk to Inan and work out a deal. Zélie looks at the table and says that Inan isn't trustworthy and tîtâns' magic is reckless. She suggests they go to the temple of Chândomblé and retrieve the scrolls stored there so they have an arsenal of spells. The other elders plan in excitement as Zélie whispers to Amari that they need backup in case peace doesn't work.

CHAPTER THIRTY-TWO

Inan heads for the war room, thrilled at Lagos's positive transformation. He sees Nehanda sneakily moving toward the cellars and follows her. Inan remembers sparring with Amari here under Saran's rule and wonders where Amari is. He doesn't believe she's with the lyika. Around the corner, Inan watches Nehanda give money to two masked men, one of whom has sandy skin and looks familiar. The mercenary notices Inan and refuses to bow to him, and then he and his companion leave. Nehanda reveals that the mercenaries have worked with Amari, but she won't share anything else.

In the war room, Inan gives a rundown of their successes and Jokôye says that they're getting closer to discovering the lyika's hideout. They have discovered that some are heading south, presumably to Lagos. Ojore shows wanted posters of Amari and Zélie as Inan realizes that they're not heading for Lagos: they're headed for Chândomblé. If the army leaves tonight, they could catch the maji. Ojore asks if Inan can face Amari. Inan says that he won't hurt Amari, but that he will arrest her.

Amari continues to make good points, but by insisting on making her voice heard like this and speaking over others, the maji will be even less likely to listen to her or take her seriously. Standing up and channeling her inner Nehanda may give Amari strength, but it also makes her look like her mother, which isn't a good thing in this instance.



Though Zélie tries to convince Amari that this is just a backup plan, Zélie also seems very intent on never trusting Inan—and along with that, never taking Amari's desire for peace talks seriously. Zélie is essentially trying to combine love and duty here by attempting to appease Amari, while still doing what she wants to do in terms of this fight.



The sandy skin is a clue that this mercenary is Roën, which makes it very clear that of all the people Zélie shouldn't trust right now, Roën is at the top of the list. However, it's also worth keeping in mind that Roën is clearly in love with Zélie and she returns his feelings, which means that it's possible that Roën will get to the point where caring for Zélie is more important than doing his job and getting money.



Even though Inan is using his intelligence to hurt people he loves, the fact that he knows of Chândomblé and why it's important to the maji supports the idea that it's essential to treat everyone as the human beings they are, with a culture and sacred spaces all their own—if Inan hadn't briefly flirted with joining Zélie in the last novel, he wouldn't have this information.



CHAPTER THIRTY-THREE

Amari follows the elders through the forest on her cheetanaire, lost in thinking about how things might work out. Na'imah stops Amari's cheetanaire when Amari doesn't notice the others stopped. They all dismount and Dakarai says he's having a vision. He turns away for privacy and then struggles to make the window of stars between his palms focus. With effort, Dakarai conjures a vision of Chândomblé surrounded by soldiers, including Nehanda. Kenyon threatens to burn them all, but Amari insists that they can't let the soldiers know they're coming. Amari sketches out an idea in the dirt and Kenyon leans down to listen.

Amari is able to do much the same thing here as Inan was able to do in the last chapter. Because Amari grew up royal and knows how the military works (and knows Inan better than anyone in the Iyika), she has the skills and knowledge to formulate a plan to thwart the other side. The soldiers surrounding Chândomblé are especially troubling, as Chândomblé is one of the last temples in Orisha and their goal is to destroy things like this temple.



CHAPTER THIRTY-FOUR

Zélie fixates on the fact that Inan might be on the mountain. Tahir calls out to Zélie and offers her new and improved fighting staff. A button extends daggers on either end and she imagines stabbing one into Inan's heart. Mâzeli asks why Zélie needs such a weapon and Zélie says she wants to stab her betrayer in the back. Mâzeli apologizes for never having killed anyone and insists that he can't help because he's so afraid, but Zélie shares that everyone, including her, is terrified. She promises to protect Mâzeli. Não kisses Khani and then summons a cloud of fog. She moves it over their enemies.

Mâzeli gives Zélie the opportunity to remember that what they're doing isn't just about murdering Inan and destroying the monarchy. They're doing this so that Zélie can continue to be around for Mâzeli and other young Reapers like him, while paving the way for this kind of mentorship to flourish in the years to come. What they have now is tenuous, given that the monarchy wants to kill all maji.



Kenyon lights a path forward and Zélie tries to act brave for Mâzeli. At the edge of the ravine, Kâmarū and Tahir separate the ledge the group stands on from the mountain and they slide down the mountainside. Kâmarū then begins to summon dirt to create steps so he can cross the ravine. Amari goes next, followed by the others. Zélie and Mâzeli go together. Zélie makes the mistake of looking down and sees Inan's decomposing snow leopanaire, and remembers Lekan's sacrifice. She vows to not let anything like that happen.

Seeing Inan's former ryder (who died in the last novel as Zélie escaped Inan's grasp) is a sobering reminder of what's at stake, as it reminds Zélie of Lekan. Lekan is one of the biggest reasons Zélie is here now at all, so remembering him and honoring his sacrifice means that Zélie needs to do everything in her power to make her world a better place for Mâzeli and others.



On the other side, Amari thanks Tahir and sends him back to destroy the bridge if something goes wrong. Kenyon begins to tunnel into the mountainside. He tells Zélie that his father was the clan elder and trained him. After the Raid, he practiced the incantations to remember his father. Zélie thinks of how the other elders lived before the raid and of Mâzeli's losses. Kâmarū catches her eye and says that the fear of being responsible for others pushes him to be better. They reach the wall of the temple.

Thinking about the other maji and elders reminds Zélie that she's a part of a community that has, overwhelmingly, suffered at the hands of the people they're trying to thwart here. Focusing on her community and their collective grief and loss enables Zélie to better channel her grief into something productive: getting the scrolls.



CHAPTER THIRTY-FIVE

Kâmarū tunnels through the wall and the group enters Chândomblé. The mountain seems to shake and Amari mentally thanks Lekan for sacrificing himself for magic. Dakarai begins an incantation and conjures a huge field of stars. A sêntaro's spirit agrees to guide them to the scroll room. As they come to a staircase, they hear soldiers. They try to hide, but Mâzeli trips loudly. Amari leads the maji in running away, thinking that she can't lead Nehanda to the scrolls. They run right into a wall. Amari unleashes magic on soldiers that try to trap them and feels stronger, but she's not sure why. Dakarai leads them up more stairs until they're standing outside the scroll room. Kâmarū tries to break through the wall as Amari prepares to unleash magic at the approaching soldiers, but she stops when the first soldier is Inan.

Dakarai is able to so successfully speak with the sêntaro's spirit because at Chândomblé, a holy site, he and the other maji are able to physically connect to their past and their history. This makes it even clearer that the lyika must triumph. If they don't, sites like Chândomblé might be lost—and there may not be any more maji to visit them. That this skirmish with Inan and his army happens at a place like Chândomblé makes the lyika's need for victory even more acute, as in their minds, non-maji don't belong here. They're an affront to this sacred space, since they wish to destroy it and what it means.



CHAPTER THIRTY-SIX

Zélie feels like she's breathing mud as she looks at Inan. She tries to summon her rage as Inan commands his soldiers to stand down. However, General Jokôye appears behind him with Nehanda. Jokôye releases majacite gas and blows it toward the lyika. Jahi creates a cyclone in response and blows Inan and the soldiers off their feet. Amari slams Zélie's hand onto the door and Zélie asks Lekan for help in Yoruba. As Jahi struggles to maintain his wind and Nehanda's tîtâns arrive, Zélie discovers the right incantation and the wall opens. She pushes everyone through and the soldiers charge. The wall closes on the arm of the soldier in front.

Though Zélie does experience a potentially dangerous emotional reaction to seeing Inan here, it's important to commend her for reacting as well as she does—feeling like she's having trouble breathing doesn't stop her from being able to enter the scroll room. This suggests that Zélie is beginning to heal some from the trauma Inan put her through. Importantly, she's able to do this because she's now part of a community that she knows needs her support.



CHAPTER THIRTY-SEVEN

Seeing Zélie seems to stop time for Inan. He can't organize his thoughts and burns with shame when he thinks that Zélie and Amari make him a useless fighter. As Jokôye, Nehanda, and Ojore approach, Inan isn't sure whom to protect. Jokôye gives the order to surround the room and summons the other tîtâns from outside. Inan says he wants the lyika alive, but Jokôye says they can't hold back. Painfully, Inan knows they're right and hears Saran's words, "Duty over self," in his head. He tells Jokôye that if they kill the lyika, the war will escalate.

Seeing Zélie and remembering the love they shared forces Inan to reckon with the human cost of what he's doing. This isn't some abstract concept, and the lyika aren't subhuman animals: they're people he loved and still loves, and in the case of Amari, they're his blood. When Inan, like Amari, hears Saran's words in his head, it again suggests that neither of them can truly escape the horrible things their father taught them as children.



CHAPTER THIRTY-EIGHT

Kenyon punches the walls in fear and terror as Dakarai comforts Jahi, exhausted from the effort of fighting. Zélie gently turns Mâzeli away from the soldier's severed arm as Amari notes that Inan called his soldiers off. Kenyon snaps that Inan brought the military; he's not being peaceful. Mâzeli announces that they have to work together to get out, but only after they collect scrolls. Everyone looks around the domed room, which is filled with scrolls. When Kâmarū says he's not sure if he can tunnel out, Amari orders everyone to collect as many scrolls as they can and burn the rest. Zélie insists they can't, since the scrolls are the history of the maji, but Amari coldly says that they're weapons in the monarchy's hands. Everyone knows Amari is right.

Amari tells Zélie not to act on her feelings for Inan. Zélie ignores her and thinks of stabbing Inan, but Amari touches Zélie. Zélie begins to sweat, falls, and flies forward in pain. Her body shakes and light pours from her mouth. Everyone else flies backward and Zélie begins to rise to the ceiling. Amari reaches for Zélie but when they touch, blue light ignites in Amari's chest. Amari rises too, and they hear hundreds of voices chanting. Zélie sees navy ribbons of light coming from Amari and thinks of her isípayá. Suddenly, the vision disappears and the girls fall. The scroll room is back to normal, but Zélie's gold tattoos now stretch down her back. Zélie realizes she can see ashê glowing in each maji, but Amari radiates waves of blue, especially when they touch. Zélie says that Oya showed her this during her ascension: this is how to beat Nehanda.

Whether Inan called his soldiers off or not, Kenyon still has a point: Inan has surrounded himself with people like Nehanda and General Jokôye, who are very powerful and aren't at all interested in standing down just because Inan loves Zélie and Amari. Amari is able to insist that they burn the rest because as a títán, she hasn't spent her life understanding the importance of these scrolls and the Yoruba language they contain. Even if they are a weapon in the hands of the military, they're still an essential aspect of the maji culture.



Trying to decipher what Oya showed Zélie during her isípayá is an opportunity for Zélie to connect even more deeply and meaningfully with her traditions and her culture. By trying to interpret her isípayá, she's walking a path that every elder before her also has. This situates the events of the novel as part of a longer history, both in the sense of the Orísha's history of struggle and the history of the maji and what it means to lead one's clan. The new tattoos inscribe this history onto Zélie's skin, literally making her a part of the culture and the history. She is like the scrolls now in that one can read her and learn about what's happening.



CHAPTER THIRTY-NINE

Confused, Mâzeli touches Zélie. Nothing happens. When Zélie touches Amari again, the blue glow swells in Amari's chest. Zélie says that Amari can absorb títán magic like Nehanda and reminds Amari of how Nehanda drew magic from her soldiers. Amari is skeptical, but then she realizes she can feel heartbeats of títáns outside the door. She concentrates and summons blue light between her fingers. It doesn't hurt. Zélie explains that Amari and Nehanda aren't títáns; they're something else that can absorb powers of títáns of the same magic type. She decides to call them cênters and says that with enough Connector títáns, Amari could overpower Nehanda. Amari comes up with a new plan. At the signal, Kenyon creates a ball of fire and Zélie opens the wall.

Zélie is literally writing history as she creates the term "cênter," as she gets to dictate how future generations will talk about this kind of magical person. Understanding what Nehanda and Amari are, and specifically realizing that they can connect to others, begins to offer hope that Amari can use being a cênter to build community rather than kill títáns she draws from, as Nehanda does. In other words, she now has even more of a choice as to how to use her magic and whether or not to use it for good or evil.



CHAPTER FORTY

The explosion when Jokôye's wind meets Kenyon's fire shakes the entire temple. Ojore drags Inan back as Nehanda summons her magic. Amari, however, summons blue magic and sends pain into Nehanda and the other soldiers. She locks eyes with Inan but doesn't hurt him. Ojore drags Inan into a room and they hear the lyika thunder past. Inan tries to pull Zélie into his dreamscape, but the attempt hurts. Ojore tells Inan to stay put. Inan fingers his **bronze coin** and then races after Zélie.

Here, Inan's coin reminds him of Zélie and again, of the human cost of what Nehanda and Jokôye want to do to the maji. Choosing to run after her makes it clear that Inan is far more interested in coming up with a peace plan than fighting, which shows growth and recognition that violence shouldn't be the answer—but given who surrounds him, it's unsure if Inan can succeed.



CHAPTER FORTY-ONE

Zélie tenses as Inan yells for her. He throws off his armor and says he wants to talk. Zélie snaps and flies at him with her staff. If it weren't for him, she wouldn't have scars and would still have Baba. As Zélie strikes at Inan, she feels Baba's blood as well as Inan's kiss. She thinks of the kingdom they were going to rule together as she twists Inan's sword away and extends the blades in her staff, slicing his side. Zélie pins him to the ground and Inan apologizes. Zélie thinks that with him gone, she'll be free and able to breathe again. Mâzeli calls for Zélie's attention as Ojore arrives and slices at Zélie. Inan blocks him and Zélie grabs Mâzeli. The maji run.

Zélie's belief that she'll be free once Inan is gone reflects her understanding of how violence works: it's essential, she believes, to respond in kind and make others feel the same kind of pain as she did. Talking doesn't bring back Baba or erase the brutal scars on her back, but killing Inan will give Zélie some sense of satisfaction. What Zélie doesn't entirely understand, however, is that this war won't end just because she kills Inan. This conflict is bigger than just him.



CHAPTER FORTY-TWO

Ojore and another soldier bandage Inan's side and carry him on a stretcher. Inan squeezes his **bronze coin**. Nehanda greets Inan outside and reprimands Ojore, but Inan says that Ojore saved his life. Nehanda says they have to destroy Chândomblé. Inan refuses and says that the temple contains Orisha's history, but Nehanda points to the bodies and says that Inan doesn't serve the maji. Inan knows Nehanda is right and gives the order to destroy the temple. Nehanda pulls ashê from her tîtans and blows up Chândomblé. Inan knows he has to end the war, as everything is out of control.

Nehanda's statement that Inan doesn't serve the maji shows clearly what she'd like Orisha to look like: kosidán and tîtans only. It also reflects her view that maji are subhuman. This is why she has no qualms about destroying Chândomblé, as in her mind, there's no reason to preserve something that's beloved by individuals who don't elicit any compassion from her. Further, doing this cuts the lyika off from their history, weakening them.



CHAPTER FORTY-THREE

It takes four days for the lyika to make it back to the sanctuary. Não kisses the sanctuary's grass when they arrive, but Amari falls into Tzain's arms. Amari squeezes him, hoping that being a cênter won't distance them even further from each other. She fills Tzain in on what happened and then asks if he'll carry her to a bath. Jahi stops them and says they have work to do. Amari asks Jahi to wake Mama Agba.

Especially given the amount of power Amari now knows she has, it's essential that she put duty over her love for Tzain in this instance. However, this doesn't detract from the fact that choosing duty right now means that Amari gives up on this opportunity to deepen her relationship with Tzain. There are still major tradeoffs.



In the council room, Mama Agba studies Zélie's new tattoos. She scribbles translations and finally says that the tattoos are the mark of the moonstone, the sister of the sunstone. It's a power that the gods give, rather than a physical stone, and the gods likely gave it to Zélie during the solstice. She explains that it ignites on command and has the ability to bind life forces, so it likely explains why Nehanda and Amari are cênters. It's possible to make more cênters, but Mama Agba says that there's a price. She confirms that Amari and Nehanda sacrificed Saran for this and says that a sacrifice is necessary. Without one, the magic is volatile and people bound together are bound to each other's death. Mama Agba says that there are weapons too great to use and leaves.

Amari says that this is their answer: they can build an army of cênters and force the monarchy to concede. She asks to go to Lagos to speak with Inan. Kenyon and Nâo refuse and point out that they'd have to sacrifice people. Amari begs Zélie to let her speak to Inan and points out that he let her and Mâzeli escape, but Zélie snaps that she still wants to kill Inan to keep the maji safe. Amari refuses to fight if Zélie insists on killing Inan. Amari realizes that their plans for how to win are very different, and something changes between them. Zélie tells the others that they have the scrolls and they should be enough. Amari runs outside, thinking that she must fight for the kingdom.

CHAPTER FORTY-FOUR

Chimes startle Zélie awake and call her to training before dawn. Zélie stays in bed. She doesn't feel fit to lead the Reapers after putting Mâzeli in danger at Chândomblé. Mama Agba knocks and enters. She wears the ceremonial clothing of past clan elders and Zélie gets up to bow to her. Mama Agba pulls out a beautiful metal collar. Zélie says she doesn't feel like she deserves to wear it, but Mama Agba says that elders can make mistakes. Zélie allows Mama Agba to fasten the collar and thinks that this feels like the day Mama Agba gave her the staff. Mama Agba says that if Zélie weren't meant to be an elder, Oya would've rejected her.

Zélie thinks about the ribbons of light she saw in her isipayá. She thinks that she initially thought her isipayá showed cênters, but she realizes that Amari's magic is only blue and Nehanda's is only green. She asks Mama Agba if it's possible to combine different types of magic. Mama Agba says that it's only happened once before: the Grounder and Cancer died, but created majacite. It's possible, but dangerous and unpredictable. From the balcony, Zélie asks what Mama Agba's isipayá was like. Mama Agba says that Sky Mother welcomed her as she kneeled on a mountaintop.

What Mama Agba has to say about the moonstone makes it clear that connections and relationships formed through it come with a price, while relationships like those among the maji as a whole are almost exclusively positive. Especially since the moonstone can be so volatile, it shows that violence and pain are baked into even the maji traditions and customs—there's violence and pain either way, whether it's because of volatile magic or having to sacrifice a loved one to make it less volatile.



Amari's insistence that they can build an army of cênters is a red flag that she's still far too comfortable thinking ruthlessly like Saran: creating any cênters requires sacrifices, so she's essentially suggesting they murder lots of their own or other innocent people in order to win. Though Zélie expresses sentiments that are similarly violent, notice that her targets are people who, in her mind, deserve to die. This is the difference that Amari picks up on here.



Mama Agba makes the case here that being a leader doesn't mean that a person needs to be entirely flawless; mistakes are normal for everyone. What Zélie does need to do is consistently work toward being better and serving her Reapers to the best of her abilities, while also trusting in Oya and the maji traditions to guide her as she does this. Sharing wisdom like this is one of the most meaningful ways that Mama Agba can help the lyika.



Majacite's origins make it clear that deviating from accepted norms of behavior and of channeling magic can have disastrous consequences—but given what Zélie saw in her isipayá, it's possible that Oya tried to show her that in order to win this war, Zélie will need to think outside the box and start to write the history and customs of this new age.



Zélie walks to her Reapers, passing the other clans training on the way. The other elders are skilled and Zélie hopes to be as good as they are. Mâzeli, Bimpe, and Mâri conjure animations and greet Zélie when she arrives. Zélie realizes that they can practice incantations and celebrate their powers. She demonstrates by bringing a shadow to life. Mâri asks if it's true that Zélie's shadows can turn armies to ash, but Zélie explains she could only do that because she was using Baba's lifeforce on sacred grounds at a sacred time. She knows she needs to demonstrate something, however, and remembers an incantation Mama used once. Zélie leaps off a cliff over the baths and then conjures a shadow to break her fall. She calls Mâzeli to go next.

CHAPTER FORTY-FIVE

When dinner chimes ring, Amari is relieved. None of her Connectors acknowledge her. She closes the temple and struggles to pronounce the **Yoruba** that is supposed to create a dreamscape. Amari knows she can use it to reach Inan. With a sigh, she goes to Zélie and watches Mâzeli attempt and Mâri succeed at breaking their falls with shadows. When the young Reapers run off, Amari gives Zélie the scroll. Zélie's smile fades and she says that Inan took her into a dreamscape a few times. She suddenly becomes angry when she realizes that Amari wants to talk to Inan using the dreamscape. Zélie snarls that Inan only does the right thing when it's easy; otherwise, he'll hurt them. Amari asks if this is about loving Inan or wanting to kill him. Zélie stomps the scroll into the water and forbids Amari from contact Inan.

Enraged, Amari asks if Zélie *wants* to steal her throne, but Zélie angrily stalks off. Mama Agba appears and offers to help Amari. She leads Amari to a mossy spot in the gardens and says she used to meditate here. Amari waits for a scolding, but realizes that Mama Agba wants to listen. Amari asks if it's wrong to fight for peace, but Mama Agba says it's more complicated than just right and wrong. Amari sighs that Inan has made mistakes, but he was raised by Saran and bore the brunt of Saran's torture. Inan wants to be a great king and is probably fighting for the same thing Amari is—but the lyika won't listen.

Mama Agba suggests that Amari isn't thinking big enough. The monarchy and the maji have been fighting for centuries, and both Inan and Zélie are products of that fight. Amari *must* understand the history if she wants peace. Mama Agba points out that Amari's name means "possesses great strength," and now, she's an elder *and* a queen. Mama Agba looks at Amari warmly, hugs her, and says that this spot was the best place to explore her powers. She reminds Amari that as a *cênter*, she doesn't need an incantation—it doesn't matter that Zélie destroyed it. Amari settles in and calls to Inan.

What Mâri and Zélie are referring to here is the extremely powerful magic Zélie was able to use during the ceremony to bring back magic in the last novel. Mâri's interest suggests that Zélie's abilities are already beginning to rewrite what maji can do with their powers. Further, Zélie's realization that they can and should celebrate their powers by connecting to their past drives home the importance of honoring old traditions and customs. By doing both, Zélie and the lyika can try to save their culture.



Amari reads as distinctly unprepared to lead here, as she barely knows Yoruba and yet has to teach her Connectors incantations in the language. She doesn't know the language because she hasn't grown up in the culture, which further cements Amari's outsider status. Zélie is even more aware that Amari is an outsider as Amari admits that she wants to contact Inan, as her desire for diplomacy goes against everything the lyika are fighting for right now.



Again, Amari understands what Saran has done to her and Inan far better than the lyika do, but notice that she still frames her fight with Zélie as being for the throne. This suggests that for Amari, the end goal is the throne, not necessarily peace or what might come after—an indicator that she's still suffering from what Saran has taught her to be too, even if she is advocating for diplomacy here.



With this, Mama Agba seeks to make Amari see that this argument between her and Zélie is bigger than just this current fight for the throne. This is the product and the current iteration of centuries of conflict and violence on both sides. Now, neither side trusts each other, so diplomacy isn't as easy as Amari wants to think it is. Mama Agba also recognizes that reminding Amari of her power is the most effective way to get through to her, as this is what Amari is focused on.



CHAPTER FORTY-SIX

Inan struggles to stay awake in the war room. Jokôye reports on her progress training killer tîtâns, but her words make Inan feel cold. He knows they're headed for a bloodbath. Jokôye says that she's getting closer to figure out where the lyika are thanks to tîtân Seers. Inan rubs his **bronze coin** and dismisses the council. He almost falls asleep, but Ojore wakes him up. Ojore has been overseeing a project and Inan didn't expect him back yet. Inan starts to assign him elsewhere, but Ojore says they have to talk about Zélie. Carefully, Inan says that she taught him to consider others' perspectives and made him want to be a better king. Ojore seems distant. He says that in battle, Amari and Zélie need to die and leaves. Inan falls asleep and wakes in a field of blue lilies.

Inan's reaction to what Jokôye says about her killer tîtâns shows again that he is, as Amari believes, interested in avoiding bloodshed at all costs and finding a peaceful solution instead—but given that no one trusts him and he's only barely in control of his own council, it's unlikely that Inan will ever be able to follow through with those desires. Ojore's unwillingness to consider Inan's perspective about Zélie is a product of his own history with maji, as for him, maji are nothing but dangerous, violent trouble.



CHAPTER FORTY-SEVEN

Amari calls for Inan and they admire her dreamscape. He shakily asks if she wants to kill him or talk. Tears in her eyes, Amari runs to him and they cry together. They sit down and Inan asks about Zélie. Amari says she's intent on killing Inan, but she's happy caring for the other Reapers. She says that the lyika are training to kill Inan and put Zélie on the throne. Inan asks what they want. Amari says they want power and a say in government, and Inan insists that he wants the same. He offers to send a treaty to the lyika. Amari flashês on Zélie's insistence that Inan only does the right thing when it's easy, but she believes Inan when he says that after peace, they can rule together.

Through this conversation, both Amari and Inan are able to believe that they might be able to combine love for each other with duty to their country. Achieving peace would represent a major shift in Orîsha, as it would require both Inan and the lyika to sit down and agree to trust each other for the first time ever. When Amari flashês on what Zélie said about Inan, it shows that she is trying to see all sides of this—but at this point, she's too idealistic and trusting of her brother to understand why Zélie feels this way.



CHAPTER FORTY-EIGHT

Zélie and her Reapers watch the sunset and then, Zélie says that her charges are going to race to a hill three kilometers away to test their mastery of new incantations. She sends them off. Mâri's shadows let her surf the wind, while Bimpe's shadows guide her to a river and then turn into a board under her feet. Mâzeli still hasn't fully mastered the incantation, but he conjures more shadows as the first ones flicker. They swing him through the trees and surprisingly, he wins. He bickers with Mâri, but Zélie thinks that if Roën saw how Mâzeli moves, he'd try to get him to join the mercenaries. Bimpe trudges up the hill as Zélie spots Amari down below. Zélie sends the Reapers back and follows Amari until she sees Inan.

Seeing all her Reapers use the same incantation in such wildly different ways shows Zélie the richness that she gains by becoming a part of the family of Reapers. Her shadows don't look like any of her Reapers', and that makes them all far more powerful as they turn to fighting other foes. This race is also a way for the Reapers to celebrate themselves and their abilities in a way that's entirely disconnected from the war. As such, it allows them to look forward to the future rather than dwelling on the present.



CHAPTER FORTY-NINE

Once Zélie finds her voice, she accuses Amari of betraying the Lyika. She doesn't believe Inan when he says he came alone, since he's betrayed her so many times before. Amari pleadingly says that Inan brought a treaty, but Zélie insists that the maji won't be free until the monarchs are all dead, including Amari—Zélie doesn't trust Amari anymore. Zélie begins to conjure shadows, but Amari asks Zélie to think of the Reapers that will die. When Amari begins to conjure her own ashê, Zélie backs down. Inan steps toward Zélie and says that he knows she's terrified. Zélie thinks he's right: now, she's afraid of losing her Reapers and Mama Agba. Inan promises he's genuine and steps forward until they're touching.

Inan insists that he's king now, so he has the power to make good on his promises. Zélie thinks of Mâri and Mâzeli and remembers how she used to love Inan. Inan offers Zélie the treaty and Zélie desperately wants to think that this is the right thing to do. She skims it and says it'll be enough to open negotiations, but a horn blares from the Lyika sanctuary. Zélie lifts herself on shadows and sees Nehanda and her army marching toward them.

CHAPTER FIFTY

Zélie shrieks at Inan, but runs back to the sanctuary. Amari collapses; she can't believe that Inan did this. Inan insists that this wasn't his plan and that he only told Ojore, but Amari remembers Zélie saying that Inan will only do the right thing when it's easy. Amari knows now that Inan and Nehanda are just like Saran: monsters that need to die. Amari begins to suck Inan's ashê and she thinks of how easy it'd be to kill him. She hears "Strike, Amari" in her head and begins to feel the ashê of other Connector tîtâns. Amari tells Inan that he's not her brother anymore, throws him down, and sends an attack at the soldiers.

CHAPTER FIFTY-ONE

Zélie shoves thoughts of Inan and Amari's betrayal away as she reaches Mâzeli, Bimpe, and Mâri, all of whom are terrified. She sends Mâri to find the elders and then leads Mâzeli and Bimpe in sending deadly shadows at the army. Their first attack is successful.

Because Zélie has seen little from Inan that's believable or trustworthy, it's even more unthinkable to her that Amari would betray them—it seems, to Zélie, that Amari is prioritizing love for Inan over the responsibility she has to the maji as the Connector elder. Zélie's hatred and fear of Inan, however, is magnified because, like Amari, she's focusing on her love for and duty to her Reapers, who are just as important to her as her remaining blood family.



Inan's insistence that he can do what he wants because he's the king now reads as naïve, given that he's not been able to do anything he really wants to do thanks to Nehanda and Jokôye's villainy and constant insertions into his plans. Further, the arrival of Inan's army makes it clear that Inan isn't trustworthy, no matter what he says.



Now, Amari has to face the fact that her love for Inan clouded her judgment and led her to betray the Lyika, even if she did so unintentionally. However, when she again hears Saran's words in her head and begins to suck Inan's ashê—something that could kill him—it indicates that Amari may have switched sides, but she's still a product of the abuse and training she received as a child, which taught her to prioritize duty over everything else.



Here, Zélie can combine love and duty to put on a brave face to rally her young Reapers. This ability to bridge the gap makes their attack far more successful, as they're united and believe in each other.



CHAPTER FIFTY-TWO

Inan tries to shout the order to stop the attack, but he can barely whisper. The lyika overpower everything Nehanda's army tries. Ojore finds Inan as Na'imah turns the soldiers' ryders rabid. Ojore insists he couldn't lie to Nehanda; she ordered this attack. A títán pulls Inan onto his ryder and races for the back of the lines. They meet Nehanda, who brushes off Inan's insistence that they need to call off the attack. She motions to Jokôye's force getting close and says the lyika will be finished soon.

Even if Inan could actually speak here, it's unlikely that Nehanda would call off her soldiers just because Inan said so—this war, for her, is much bigger than anything Inan wants, especially when it seems silly and misguided from the start. Ojore's betrayal shows that his hatred of maji makes him focus on his duty more than his friendship with Inan.



CHAPTER FIFTY-THREE

Zélie and Mâzeli are thrilled as their shadows destroy soldiers. A siren blares and the monarchy's forces retreat. The lyika celebrate while Zélie raises herself into the air. From there, she can see a single cart holding Jokôye and two-dozen soldiers coming toward them. Zélie screams at the lyika to retreat as Jokôye raises her hands: Jokôye is a cênter and is harnessing the wind. Na'imah captures ryders so the lyika can get back to the sanctuary faster, but Zélie and Mâzeli take cover. A tornado explodes the forest and Jokôye prepares for a second attack. Titans lie dead around her, but more run to take their places. Mâzeli tells Zélie that they have to connect in order to fight her, and Zélie knows he's right. She whispers the incantation and violet light shoots from their eyes.

The fact that Jokôye (and Nehanda, for that matter) kill their títáns as they harness their powers speaks to their ruthlessness and their lack of compassion for any life that's not their own. They're even willing to kill their own people in order to win and gain more power, something that situates them as direct products of Saran's teachings. The only love they experience seems to be for power, and they only value people who might be useful to them (as when Nehanda turned on Amari when Amari proved herself unwilling to play along).



CHAPTER FIFTY-FOUR

Zélie and Mâzeli's incantation brings hundreds of monstrous animations out of the dirt. Though Jokôye's wind takes out some of the animations, Zélie and Mâzeli keep going. Zélie can feel Mâzeli's heartbeat and her body burns with the strain. Mâzeli begins to scream as strips of skin peel off of him, but Zélie summons more animations. It's excruciating, but the animations kill Jokôye. Zélie triumphantly turns to Mâzeli, but he stands limply, blood dripping from his mouth. He collapses and Zélie does too.

Mâzeli's fate makes the violence and sacrifice inherent to using the moonstone very clear for Zélie: if Zélie is going to use this power, she has to be willing to hurt the people she loves. In some ways, this makes her not so different from Jokôye as she kills her títán soldiers, except Zélie believes she is fulfilling both duty and love by joining with Mâzeli.



CHAPTER FIFTY-FIVE

Kâmarū carries Zélie into the infirmary. Zélie holds tight to Mâzeli's hand as Khani and the other Healers circle. Zélie and Mâzeli's heartbeats slow; they need a blood sacrifice to maintain the connection. Mâzeli asks to break the connection, but Zélie resists. Khani calls for Mama Agba, who breaks the connection. Zélie flies out of her hammock to Mâzeli and tries to reignite the connection, but she's too weak. She takes Mâzeli's hand and assures him that everyone else is safe, trying hard not to cry. Zélie assures him that he'll see Oya and his family on the other side. He asks Zélie to not be sad as he dies.

For Zélie, losing Mâzeli, her Second, is like losing a family member as well as a member of her spiritual and cultural community. Being some of the only Reapers bound them together in a way unlike any other, and so seeing him die so brutally for the cause is especially heartbreaking for Zélie. Mâzeli's final words show that he understands the weight of focusing on grief and wants to try to save Zélie from that pain.



CHAPTER FIFTY-SIX

Amari rushes up the stairs of the sanctuary, horrified. Healers work on injured maji on the grass. When Amari asks a Healer for Zélie, the Healer sends her to the infirmary and says that Zélie and Mâzeli weren't breathing. Amari enters the infirmary in time to hear Zélie howl with grief as Mâzeli dies. She remembers again that Zélie said Inan only does the right thing when it's easy. Mama Agba tries to comfort Zélie, but Zélie pushes Mama Agba and shrieks that she should've died. Zélie claws at her skin and screams as Khani and the Healers sedate her. Amari thinks she's ruined everything.

Amari has had to witness several episodes of Zélie's grief at this point, so she's well acquainted with how hard losing people hits Zélie in particular. This makes Amari feel even worse about what she's done, as it makes it clear that she's just piling more grief and injustice upon a person who has already experienced so much loss. This is the plight that Zélie spoke about earlier in the novel: as a maji, she's many of her loved ones and will lose many more.



CHAPTER FIFTY-SEVEN

Inan holds his **bronze coin** and thinks that trying for peace is never enough. He flashês on Jokôye's insistence that her forces would be ready to kill the Iyika. They haven't found her body yet. Nehanda comforts Ojore and says they must attack now, before the Iyika have a chance to regroup and unleash this kind of horror on Lagos. Inan whispers Saran's vow, "duty before self," and thinks that there are no more options: the Iyika must die, even if that means killing Amari and Zélie. Nehanda asks Ojore to summon more soldiers, but Inan says they need to divide and weaken the Iyika so they'll surrender.

All that Inan and Nehanda see of the moonstone's power is that it's very powerful; they don't see the destruction it causes those using it and so they don't understand that at this point, Zélie probably won't try to use it on them again unless she acquires new information. Inan's acceptance that violence is the only way forward is a consequence of the mistrust and fear that both he and the Iyika have for each other.



CHAPTER FIFTY-EIGHT

Zélie sits on the edge of the bathtub, thinking of Mâzeli. It's been three days since he died, but she can't bring herself to wash his blood off. Tzain enters and invites Zélie to the assembly downstairs, but she refuses. She tries to step into the bathtub, but the room spins. Zélie hears another knock and yells at Tzain to leave, but Roën steps in, takes Zélie's face in his hands, and tells her to breathe. He helps her sit on the edge of the tub and says the elders sent for his help. As he washes Zélie's face, he said the day he lost his partner was the worst day of his life. He smiles as he tells Zélie how he met her. Zélie whispers that she has to get out of Orïsha. Roën says that if she's serious, now is the time. She demands to know more.

Zélie's moments of panic illustrate how raw and damaging her grief is. However, in this moment, Roën's appearance allows them to connect over some of their shared trauma, which in turn helps them build intimacy. Roën's success at getting Zélie to open up and bathe begins to show that if Zélie can bring herself to trust Roën more, intimacy and love might be able to help her heal—but doing this would require a major reversal of everything Zélie knows to be true, given how violent Orïsha is.



CHAPTER FIFTY-NINE

The maji and diviners gather. Amari anxiously waits for someone to realize that it's her fault the monarchy attacked as arguments break out over what to do and who's suffered more. Amari thinks that she can hear Saran in her head. She has the power to end this, but up until now, she hasn't wanted to use it on those she loves. Now, there's no choice. She tells Tzain that with enough Connector titans, she could take Nehanda down. Amari closes her eyes and wonders if Saran was a monster because ruling the kingdom made him that way. Before Amari can say anything, Zélie sprints in, still covered in blood. She says that there's another way to end this other than fighting.

Though compassion wouldn't normally be a bad thing, Amari's question of why Saran was a monster doesn't bode well for her future as queen. It suggests that she's learning that being queen means that she too will inevitably become a monster, something that, if she really wants to do better than Saran, she needs to fight. Especially since Amari says she knows she has the power to end this, it shows that she's now willing to go to drastic measures to win.



CHAPTER SIXTY

Zélie shouts that Inan isn't in Lagos: he's in Ibadan, waiting for the Iyika to march on Lagos. They plan to destroy the Iyika while they're divided. Zélie says they have to take the opening and leave Orisha. The maji are furious. Kenyon roars that he doesn't care if the monarchy catches him, but Zélie rips her kaftan over her head to reveal "maggot" etched into her back. She says that the monarchy will destroy them, and she can't keep losing people she loves. Kâmarū says that this is their home, but Zélie says they can build a home elsewhere as long as they're together. People seem open to this until Amari stands and says this is their chance to win. In **Yoruba**, she shouts that they should take back what's theirs. The maji join her chant.

For Zélie, the only way out of the cycle of violence is to leave it altogether; in her experience, there's no fixing what's gone wrong. Given how distrustful everyone is and how slim the chances of a peace treaty seem at this point, Zélie might not be wrong about that. Amari's rallying cry to the elders, however, shows that she's far more interested in embodying Saran and doing whatever it takes to win, even if what she has to do isn't morally right. Using the Yoruba, she can also make it appear as if she's on the side of the maji.



CHAPTER SIXTY-ONE

Over the next few hours Amari steps into a leadership role, since Zélie opposes her plan. Amari and the other elders consider their attack. They decide to go to Ibadan and send the Seconds with everyone else to Lagos. The elders then discuss the question of the villagers in Ibadan, whom Nehanda and Inan might use as shields. Carefully, Jahi points out that since Ibadan is surrounded by mountains they don't need to be especially specific with their attacks, but Amari cuts him off and says they must keep the villagers safe. She waves Tzain over to help since he and Zélie grew up in Ibadan. He shares that there are underwater caves that run from outside the mountains to lakes just north of Ibadan. With the plans finalized, Amari and the elders organize a party. Mama Agba raises a toast to their future.

Jahi demonstrates here that he can be just as ruthless as Amari, since he basically suggests that the Iyika kill the villagers if it means also getting to kill Nehanda and Inan. That Amari opposes him at this point shows that she's trying hard to do better than Saran, who would likely have no problem sacrificing villagers to achieve his goals. It's important that Amari make this effort to look kind and compassionate now, since she's the de facto leader of the Iyika at this point—and while they want to win, they also want to be better than Saran.



CHAPTER SIXTY-TWO

Amari stands and watches the party. Nâo hands her a cup of wine and tells Amari that if she becomes queen, she has to throw more parties like this. Amari puts her cup down, thinking that Saran wouldn't drink before battle. She wanders through the crowd until she reaches Mama Agba, who plays the role of a fortuneteller. Seeing Amari, Mama Agba mysteriously predicts that Amari will see great victories and great romance. Tzain comes up behind Amari and leads her away to dance. Then, Amari takes Tzain with her to get some fresh air.

Tzain laughs when Amari leads him to her chambers. They sit on her balcony and stare out at the sanctuary. Tzain tells Amari that he's proud of her and Amari attempts a kiss, but bumps into Tzain's chin. They kiss, but Amari flashês on Zélie's grief and pulls away. She asks if Zélie will forgive her. With a sigh, Tzain says that Zélie needs space, but Amari is doing the right thing. They kiss again and Amari starts to take Tzain's tunic off. He tells Amari that they can't have sex just because she's afraid of dying. Amari shouts that she loves him.

Even if Amari is making the effort to be the compassionate queen of Orisha she wants to be, thinking so much about what Saran would do in her position does raise more questions about whether Amari is truly genuine in all of this. It suggests that deep down, Amari is still suffering by following what Saran taught her: to prize duty over everything else, including the fun she could have tonight.



Here, Amari is finally able to connect with Tzain in a situation where her being a cênter doesn't matter much, if at all. She's able to be just a person to him, and a person he loves at that. This gives Amari a taste of what it feels like to be intimate with someone on her terms, and how that kind of intimacy might influence her decisions going forward—especially if her love for Tzain goes against what she believes is her duty.



CHAPTER SIXTY-THREE

Zélie watches the party and regrets leaving her room. She can almost hear Mâzeli's giggle and remembers him asking her to not be sad. Mama Agba appears and begs Zélie to join the party for the Reapers. She invites Zélie to join her in the garden and apologizes for breaking the connection between Zélie and Mâzeli, but Zélie insists she can't forgive Mama Agba. Zélie asks Mama Agba to pretend she died and runs from Mama Agba's sobs. Upstairs, Zélie finds Roën outside her door with big bags. He says that he needs Zélie to come and help him and calls her "zitsô!" as he teases her. They ride for hours on a cheetanaire and Roën refuses to answer any questions.

Roën stops his cheetanaire at the coast and leads Zélie to a small boat. He steers the boat out to sea, drops the anchor, and undresses. Zélie leaves her wrap on as Roën fastens a mask around her face and tells her to not let go of him. He pulls on his own mask, throws a bag overboard, and pulls Zélie into the water. It's freezing, and the bag pulls them deeper down. Zélie holds onto the anchor's chain as Roën opens the bag.

Now, Zélie is so overcome with grief that she can't even engage in effective, open communication with someone she loves and trusts more than most. This shows how the violence inherent to the way that Orisha works can stop or damage communication even between allies, thereby not allowing Zélie or Mama Agba to heal from their grief. Choosing to trust Roën with this shows that Zélie does, however, have the capacity to trust others—she just chooses not to.



This experience with Roën shines as one of the few spots of genuine delight and intimacy in the novel. Zélie isn't entirely sure if she should trust Roën with her life or her emotions, but she's willing to play along for the thrill of doing so and because Roën's affection probably makes Zélie momentarily forget her trauma.



The bag contains orbs of light that illuminate thousands of fish. It almost takes Zélie's breath away, but Roën fixates on something huge rapidly swimming closer to them. It's a whale. When the whale gets close, Roën shoots a rope and a hook so the hook loops around the whale's flipper and grabs Zélie. The whale pulls them through the water until they reach the surface. Roën lets go of the whale and Zélie laughs and screams with joy. She asks why Roën did this. He says it's been too long since he's seen Zélie smile.

Taking Zélie for a ride on a whale shows Zélie that even though her world is falling to pieces in a lot of ways, there's still magic in it—and she can still find joy and laugh, if only she chooses to look for things like this. Roën's insistence that he did this just to make her smile suggests that he's pulling away from his mercenary crew and now, his goals are different: he's focused on the girl he loves, not his jobs.



CHAPTER SIXTY-FOUR

In Ibadan, Inan stares at the plans detailing their trap. He knows he should feel satisfied, but he feels numb. Nehanda asks the military officers if they're clear and then sends them away. Ojore asks to go to Lagos and fight, but Inan snarls that he needs Ojore here. Nehanda sends Ojore away. Alone with Inan, Nehanda reassures Ojore that he's doing the right thing. She says that this battle didn't start when magic returned; it's been years in the making. Inan insists that they're fighting the *lyika*, not all *maji*, but Nehanda says that this war started before the Raid and before Inan's birth. Nehanda asks if Inan heard Saran talk about almost unifying the monarchy with the *maji*. Inan nods. Nehanda hisses that she knew that the *maji* would usurp the throne, so she took matters into her own hands.

*Like Mama Agba, Nehanda understands that this battle didn't start brewing a decade ago with the Raid; it's the result of years and years of prejudice, oppression, and violence. However, while Mama Agba looks much farther back in history, Nehanda implies that the start of this conflict is much more recent: the years before the Raid, when the monarchy and the *maji* nearly reached a peace agreement. The similarities between then and now, simply in terms of almost reaching peace agreements, means that Inan and the reader should pay close attention to what Nehanda says here.*



Delicately, Inan points out that Burners assassinated the king and killed the peace talks, but Nehanda says that she had to protect the throne. Inan realizes that Nehanda incited the Burners' attack. Nehanda says she didn't command the Burners, but she did show the nobles what would happen if they joined with *maji*. Inan's world spins; Saran was the only monarch to survive the attack and if it hadn't happened, Saran wouldn't have led the Raid. Orisha might have peace now. Inan leaps up and asks Nehanda how she can live with herself given how many have died, including Ojore's parents. Nehanda says without remorse that she sacrificed those people to get rid of the *maji*, and that no cost is too high if it gets rid of the *maji*.

Again, Inan can see the human toll of Nehanda's actions and of the Raid, while Nehanda believes that it's worth it to kill people she hates—as well as some she might love or need to respect, like Ojore's parents—in order to get her way and keep the people most useful to her in power. This makes it very clear that Nehanda is interested only in gaining and maintaining power, and is willing to do anything to do so. Because of this, Inan should also evaluate his relationship with her—she could turn on him.



CHAPTER SIXTY-FIVE

Zélie and Roën make it back to the sanctuary in the early morning. In his native language he tells Zélie she's home. His eyes widen when Zélie clumsily repeats the phrase. Zélie tells herself to let Roën go as they discuss Zélie's decision to go with Roën and the elders tomorrow. Roën fingers Zélie's hair and touches her neck. Zélie tells him that he's not really so heartless. Roën insists this isn't true. Zélie says she mistakenly fell for a monster—Inan—before, but Roën says she just fell for the wrong one. He kisses her forehead and walks away.

Roën conceptualizes himself as a monster because he's a mercenary, which requires him to unfeelingly kill others or do other unsavory acts for money. Zélie is right; Roën isn't entirely heartless, as evidenced by taking Zélie to ride the whale and his desire to make her laugh. Being able to see that Roën can be both tender and a monster makes him more human to Zélie, and makes him look more like a viable romantic partner.



Zélie asks Roën to stay with her. They kiss as they enter Zélie's room. As Roën gently touches the scars on Zélie's back, Zélie hears herself scream, sees Saran's face, and feels shooting pain in her back. She pushes Roën away. Roën steps away, insisting that they don't have to do anything, but Zélie spits that she doesn't care about Roën: he's just a mercenary for hire, while Inan was a king with a purpose. It's the only way she knows to keep Roën away and protect herself. Roën leaves, hurt. Zélie sobs and thinks that the silence hurts more than her scars.

Zélie's experience of panic here happens because her only experiences of intimacy have led to intense trauma—in the case of Inan, being close to him led to Saran carving “maggot” into her back. While this reaction is normal to a triggering situation, it doesn't make it any less painful for Zélie or Roën: she's still done major damage to their relationship and their trust in each other, but this is all she knows.



CHAPTER SIXTY-SIX

Amari wakes surrounded by reeds. She reaches for Tzain, but hears Inan. Inan says they need to talk about Nehanda, but Amari says she's not foolish enough to fall for this. Inan insists that he didn't sanction the attack and Amari can see that he's telling the truth. Inan says that he doesn't want this war anymore. Amari knows he means it, but she thinks of Baba and Mâzeli. Amari declares that this will only end when Inan and Nehanda are dead, but Inan says that no sacrifice is too great for Nehanda. Amari growls that she'll win and tells Inan to let her go. He crumbles. Amari wakes up next to Tzain and knows she must be ruthless like Nehanda. She thinks of Ibadan's villagers and of what the Iyika could do with the villagers gone. She gets up and wakes Jahi.

Even if Amari can tell that Inan is being truthful about not wanting this war anymore, she nevertheless cannot bring herself to trust that what he says is true. This is, of course, a direct consequence of Inan's actions, and specifically his choice to continue to trust Nehanda. He can't expect Amari to trust him after all the times Nehanda has ruined attempts at diplomacy. Amari's realization that she needs to be ruthless like her mother suggests once again that her parents have taught her that violence is the only answer—and that winning is more important than anything else.



CHAPTER SIXTY-SEVEN

The elders tunnel through the mountains around Ibadan for four days until Kâmarū hits on the underground caves. Dakarai summons stars and can see that Nehanda and Inan are in Ibadan, along with the villagers. Não asks who's going to dive with her. Roën and Tzain offer to go, but Amari says they need someone with magic. Zélie offers to take Tzain's place. The elders disperse, but Jahi approaches Amari and quietly asks what their plan is. Amari whispers that they'll head for the mountains when everyone's asleep. Jahi relays the plan to Imani, who nods. Amari tells herself it won't come to that as she thanks Zélie for going. Zélie says she won't let Tzain get hurt. Não kisses Khani and conjures a bubble. Roën and Zélie jump in with her and begin to walk away.

Amari clearly has something planned here that she doesn't want to have to carry out. It's likely violent and questionable in more than one way, but the fact that Amari doesn't want it to be the first line of attack suggests that she's still trying to act in a way opposite of Nehanda. She's still trying to look for peace in non-violent ways—or at least, in ways that are minimally violent, which presumably, digging in through the underground caves will be.



CHAPTER SIXTY-EIGHT

Inan plays with his **bronze coin**. He can't look at Nehanda. A general brings word that the Iyika are outside Lagos and Nehanda smiles at Ojore. Inan stares at Ojore's burns. Inan excuses himself and shuts himself inside the fortress. He can't escape the thought of Nehanda's crimes and wonders how many will die. Inan knows he has to end this as Ojore lets himself in. Inan tells Ojore they need to call off the attack, but Ojore says that Inan doesn't have to feel bad, since Nehanda clearly doesn't. He reveals that he heard Nehanda's confession. Ojore seems far away as he says that now he knows that Nehanda is the true enemy. He vows to kill her and strikes at Inan when Inan won't let him past. Inan throws a dagger at Ojore, but Ojore stops the dagger in midair. Ashe surrounds Ojore's fingers.

In this moment, Inan sees the true consequences of his and Nehanda's hatred of magic, and specifically, of Nehanda's heartlessness: his best friend is turning against him, and less than a month has passed since Amari and Zélie turned away from him too. This should show Inan that he's inevitably going to alienate everyone he loves if he continues on this path and continues to take advice from Nehanda, but Inan's love for his mother means that instead of distancing himself from her politically, he's just avoiding her and hoping it all goes away.



CHAPTER SIXTY-NINE

Não chants for hours as they hike through the caves. She marvels that they're almost victorious and Zélie tries to feel her joy, but she feels as empty as when Baba died. Não reassures Zélie that nobody blames her for wanting to run, but Roën spits that Zélie is a coward. He snarls that the Iyika die for Zélie, and all she wants to do is run. Zélie points out that Roën left his home, but Roën says he had nothing left—he won't feel sorry for Zélie since she still has people she loves. Roën shouts that Zélie is a survivor, not a victim, and that she should stop running. He pushes past the girls and Não desperately expands their tunnel further. Zélie sees a red spark above Roën's head and smells oil. She throws Não back.

What Roën gets at here is essentially that in his eyes, Zélie is leaning so far into her victimhood that she's unable to celebrate that she's alive and has lots of people, including him, that love her and want to see her succeed at this quest. This asks Zélie to completely rethink the way she considers herself and the maji and rather than seeing them as an oppressed people, to see them as a people who have, against all the odds, survived.



CHAPTER SEVENTY

Dozens of bombs explode and the cave collapses. Zélie tries to shout for Roën, but water fills her lungs. Boulders fall onto her legs and Zélie realizes that no one can save her. She can almost see Sky Mother when Mama and Baba appear in front of her with Mâzeli. Mâzeli and Zélie reach for each other. Zélie is ready to die, but Mâzeli gives her a vision. She sees the explosion happen and realizes that it was a trap. There are probably more traps aboveground and in Lagos. Zélie but fixates on Mâri, Bimpe, and other Reapers to come. She realizes that her pain means she's still alive and whispers an incantation. Her leg pulls free. Shadows pull Zélie up and all her pain and scars seem to fall away. Her head breaks the surface and she vows to live.

In this life-or-death moment, Zélie is able to put Roën's angry request to act like a survivor and not a victim into practice. Though dying and going to the alafia with Mama, Baba, and Mâzeli might represent connecting with her past and with her loved ones, Zélie now understands the importance of not wallowing in her grief. If she does, she won't be able to most effectively fight for the Reapers yet to come. It's her responsibility to make sure that they have a world to live in that treats them with dignity, and only Zélie can make that happen.



CHAPTER SEVENTY-ONE

Inan's arms go limp with shock as Ojore snarls that he's a títán. He sends Inan's dagger back at Inan. It lands in the iron wall. The metal floor transforms and columns shoot up, hitting Inan. Ojore shakes with anger and says he hated himself and his magic, but Inan and Nehanda are the real problem. Ojore says that Inan doesn't deserve the throne as he conjures more metal to restrain and torture Inan. Inan shouts for help, thinking that he and Nehanda poisoned Ojore with their hate. He knows that Ojore is justified in his anger. Nehanda appears, kills Ojore with a column of earth, and screams that they need to leave.

What Ojore implies here is that the throne itself—and the power that comes with it—corrupts even people whom the reader can see are kind and generous, but misguided and surrounded by the wrong people. That Inan recognizes the truth of what Ojore says speaks to Inan's ability to go on and fix some of what he now realizes is wrong: that he's hoping to rule on a platform that's fundamentally hateful and violent.



CHAPTER SEVENTY-TWO

Zélie wheezes and coughs. She thinks that Nâo was probably safe from the blast, but the bombs exploded right above Roën. She calls on the moonstone and dives for Roën's fading lifeforce. He wears a diving mask. Zélie discovers a heavy stone pinning Roën's arm. Roën reaches for Zélie and Zélie knows he's telling her to leave him. Zélie tries to make her shadows move the slab, but they're too weak. She prays to Oya and conjures shadows that slice Roën's arm at the shoulder.

Now that Zélie found the will to live and keep on surviving, she's not going to let Roën die without a fight. This kind of insistence that everyone try hard to live is likely one of the reasons why Roën stuck with Zélie for so long; now, their roles have reversed and Zélie knows she needs to figure out the equivalent of Roën's speech so she can convince him to live too.



CHAPTER SEVENTY-THREE

Zélie tows Roën's body to the surface and onto land. Roën struggles to hum a song his mother used to sing to him as Zélie uses Roën's belt as a tourniquet. She yells at him to keep talking and picks up the tune when he falters. Zélie can see his lifeforce slipping away. He gasps that his pet name for Zélie, *zītsōl*, means "home." Roën dies. Zélie sobs as her tattoos begin to shine. In Roën's heart, she sees a flicker of gold. She thinks back to her *isípayá* and wonders if the purple and gold Oya showed her was herself and Roën. Zélie prays to Oya and her tattoos glow violet as she recites the **Yoruba** incantation. She can hear Roën's heart connected to her own.

Even though connecting via the moonstone will have major, possibly deadly consequences, in this situation, it seems like the only thing Zélie can do to save the person she loves most right now—and so she feels she has no choice but to take it. Especially since it seems like Oya guided her to making this choice, Zélie can feel more assured that she's doing the right thing, at least according to the gods. Choosing to have faith in Oya also reconnects Zélie spiritually with her faith.



CHAPTER SEVENTY-FOUR

Amari wishes that Saran were still alive, chained up so she could talk to him. The sun rises and anxiety rises among the elders. Amari realizes that Inan is right: she has to play Nehanda's games if she wants to win. She thinks of the villagers in Ibadan and wonders what she'll sacrifice to win. Nâo suddenly rises out of the water, bloody and bruised. She gasps that there were explosions. Tzain and other elders race for the entrance to the village, but Amari stops Tzain with her magic. She says that no one can go into the village. Khani shouts for Imani and Kâmarū shouts for Jahi. Amari sees Saran's face and knows that he'd follow through, even if it killed everyone he loved. She remembers her vow to be a better queen, apologizes, and blows a signal horn.

In this moment, Amari chooses to be like Saran and Nehanda, whatever it is she's doing. It's guaranteed to be violent and deadly, since she wonders what she'll sacrifice and thinks of the villagers. This shows that the fight has gotten to the point where extreme violence that doesn't seem called for appears to be the only way forward. That Amari is clearly going against the wishes of everyone else (other than Jahi and Imani) also shows that violence like this can split even allies apart from each other.



CHAPTER SEVENTY-FIVE

Zélie tows Roën to Ibadan. She expects to feel pain but instead, she remembers all the happiness she experienced here with Mama and Baba. She's not sure how long she can keep herself and Roën alive with the connection, but she wants to live and fight. Zélie hears an Iyika signal horn and puts Roën down. She drags herself over the top of a cliff and watches with horror as a dome of wind descends over the valley of Ibadan. A second horn sends a Cancer's rusty clouds into the rotating wind of the dome. Birds die instantly as the wall of gas starts to close in.

Because Zélie has vowed to live and focus on surviving, it's easier for her to remember happy childhood times with her parents—as well as focus on the future she might have with Roën. The cloud of Cancer gas, however, means that Zélie is also an unintended target of what Amari planned with Jahi and Imani (who's a Cancer maji). This shows that there are always unintended consequences of ruthlessness like Amari exhibits.



Thinking of Mâzeli, Zélie grabs Roën and summons shadows to carry them quickly to the center of Ibadan, the last place where the gas will hit. Zélie focuses on the well and screams to the villagers to climb in. She hands Roën's body to those inside and waves as many people in as she can. A woman screams and pushes her baby toward Zélie. The gas hits the back of the woman's head, so Zélie conjures a spirit to catch the falling baby and pull it close to her chest. Spirits seal off the top of the well.

Saving as many villagers as she can means that Zélie can do everything in her power to make sure that she helps create as many survivors of this disaster as she can, which would then give her more allies—and begin to build a culture of survivorship, rather than suffering and oppression.



CHAPTER SEVENTY-SIX

Amari thinks of the morning after the Raid. Everything seemed normal except that she couldn't find Binta. A new, unsmiling handmaiden arrived to scrub and dress Amari, and Amari eventually escaped. She ran through the palace, shrieking for Saran, and discovered him on his throne. Amari has wondered what Saran was feeling then but now, she feels like she knows. Tzain thrashês wildly as the Cancer gas dissipates. Amari ignores the hollowness in her chest and thinks she won the war. She wonders what it cost, especially since she knows that the elders and Tzain won't forgive this. Amari mounts her cheetanaire. No one follows. She thinks of those who died and reasons that Zélie must've died in the explosions. She pictures the bodies of Inan, Nehanda, and Zélie whispers that Orïsha waits for no one.

Amari has no concept of the possibility that she might not have won the war. This unwillingness to consider every angle of what happened and what might happen shows that Amari is too focused on winning and amassing power to consider other options—much like Saran or Nehanda. Even if Amari doesn't like the idea, this makes it clear, especially to those watching, that she may be fighting for the right side—but she's not doing so in a way that makes their side seem any better than their opponents.



CHAPTER SEVENTY-SEVEN

Zélie's eyes open. She doesn't know where she is. People pull her over the edge of the well and someone takes the baby from her. An old woman re-bandages Zélie's leg and thanks Zélie for saving them. Zélie asks for Roën. The woman points Zélie to a dwelling. Healers surround him. Zélie tries to toss off the woman, but the woman says that Zélie is just like Mama. Zélie is surprised the woman knew Mama. She looks around and sees the survivors grieving over bodies. She wonders why Amari would do this. Amari walks into the square and crumples. Zélie follows Amari's gaze to a message reading that the monarchy has the rest of the Lyika forces. The Lyika will die if the elders don't surrender.

Even if this woman is unnamed, she's still an important person for Zélie to meet: she shows Zélie that Zélie still has a home here and a community. Because of this, Zélie's main family may be with the Lyika right now, but she has even more people to call on who celebrate the maji and Zélie's family specifically. The realization that Nehanda and Inan tricked the Lyika drives home the consequences of Amari's quest for power: innocent people died for no reason.



CHAPTER SEVENTY-EIGHT

Inan wakes slowly in a moving caravan. Physical pain hits him, as well as the emotional pain of Ojore's hatred. Nehanda soothes Inan and says they did it: they captured the main Lyika force at Lagos. She encourages Inan to not grieve for Ojore, since he was a traitor who couldn't handle his emotions. Inan sits up and says that *Nehanda* killed Ojore's family and by extension, Ojore himself. Inan thinks he should've been there for Ojore. Inan whispers that Ojore was right—he and Nehanda are poison. Nehanda says they're victors and can spread peace, but Inan realizes that he hasn't been the king that Saran couldn't be. He just finished Saran's work.

Accusing Nehanda of killing Ojore because she pretty much murdered his parents shows that Inan finally understands how the cycle of violence in Orïsha works. Children have to deal with the grief of their parents' deaths, which they can never recover from because they must continually face their parents' killers—and so those children feel they have no choice but to become violent. The realization that Inan finished Saran's work shows that Inan has undergone this cycle too, as his name is on all of this violence.



CHAPTER SEVENTY-NINE

Denial grips Amari as she looks at the monarchy's message and the corpses. She and the elders discover Inan and Nehanda's escape route. Dakarai summons a vision of the rest of the Iyika, chained in the palace cellars. Amari feels as though Saran's words, "Strike, Amari," are taunting her. The villagers' deaths don't mean anything; the Iyika lost. Tzain sprints toward Zélie and Amari is relieved that Zélie is alive. Amari goes cold when Zélie turns on her and sends shadows to choke her, but as the shadows reach Amari, Zélie collapses and convulses. Kâmarū carries Zélie away and Na'imah shouts to lock up Amari. Kenyon binds Amari's hands and Tzain turns away. Amari knows she'll never feel Tzain's love again.

In addition to killing the innocent villagers, Amari has also showed her friends and allies that they can't trust her to do the right thing and protect the innocent—which makes her a poor choice to be queen. In this sense, Amari gives up any hope of ruling here, since she's just shown her potential future subjects and herself that she's not able to make the decisions she'd need to as the ruler of Orisha. This also shows that being so cruel is lonely, something that Amari likely doesn't want.



CHAPTER EIGHTY

Tzain, Kâmarū, and Khani worriedly wonder what's going on as Zélie tries to say Roën's name. She can't speak to say that the moonstone joined her lifeforce to Roën's, but they can't survive without a blood sacrifice. Tzain figures it out and tells Zélie to break it, but she's too weak and doesn't want to give up. Zélie grabs Tzain's wrist and he seems to understand: her isipayá showed many life forces of different colors; she needs to connect to him and others. Kâmarū extends his hand, and Khani puts hers out too. Zélie whispers the **Yoruba** incantation and hears five pulses thundering. Tzain, Khani, and Kâmarū rise off the ground and ribbons of light twist from their hearts, weaving toward Zélie's. The pain is too much, but Tzain, Kâmarū, and Khani fly into the walls.

Now, everything begins to make sense to Zélie: in her isipayá, Oya showed her that she must lean into her community and work together with the moonstone if they want to win. The difficulty of joining together, however, does remind Zélie and the reader that this isn't an easy or simple process. Deviating from history and tradition means making sacrifices—in this case, a literal blood sacrifice—if they want to continue to harness this power and not kill themselves in the meantime.



Zélie sits up and breathes, feeling five hearts in her chest. Khani heals Zélie without an incantation and then heals Roën. Kâmarū lifts metal tables without an incantation and crushes them, even though he's never worked metal before. He crafts a metal arm modeled after his own metal leg for Roën. Khani helps Kâmarū and Zélie realizes that *this* was Oya's vision. Khani leads Zélie outside and they bring a blackened corpse back to life. Zélie understands that with magic like this, they can get their people back.

Kâmarū's ability to fashion Roën's metal arm suggests that the possible upsides of this are major; remember that Kâmarū is a Grounder, so he shouldn't necessarily be able to work metal like a Welder. Not having to use incantations also suggests that this makes the maji's power more like that of the tîtâns—it can be as strong as a river, not just a rivulet.



CHAPTER EIGHTY-ONE

Zélie realizes that Oya wanted her to understand that by using the moonstone to combine their lifeforces, they can save the maji from the monarchy and win the war. She climbs onto the well's edge and addresses the crowd. Zélie apologizes to the elders and thinks of all the pain that monarchs have caused. She realizes that magic isn't the problem: the monarchy is. Loudly, Zélie says that she was here when Saran's Raid took Mama. Today, not much has changed despite Saran being dead. A villager shouts, "Down with the monarchy" in **Yoruba**. Zélie says that the maji are Orisha's future. The chant grows among the villagers, but Zélie feels cold. She remembers Mama Agba's words and realizes that they'll have to sacrifice someone to maintain the connection.

The villagers chanting in Yoruba, reinforces the language's role as a connecting force among the maji—but also among the monarchy's other subjects who have been inadvertent victims of the monarchy's cruel policies. They're the ones who benefitted from having Healer maji around, and thanks to the Raid, they no longer have that kind of person in their communities. This makes it clear that the Raid dissolved communities that were strong and united, and that united around specific maji traditions.



CHAPTER EIGHTY-TWO

Zélie thinks of all the maji who dedicated themselves to this fight and of whom they'll need to sacrifice. Zélie can't give up Tzain or Roën, and there's only one other person Zélie loves: Amari. Even though everyone Amari killed is alive, Zélie thinks that she can't forgive her—she killed indiscriminately so she could rule. Zélie's thoughts are interrupted by Harun's voice. She peers around the corner and sees Roën tell five members of his crew that it's over. Harun spits that Roën can't just bow out, but Roën grabs a flint and a cigarette from two mercenaries and struggles to light it. Harun knocks the cigarette to the ground, asks if Zélie neutered Roën, and admits that *he* knew Nehanda was lying. Harun gives Roën a lit cigar and says that they're done.

Harun's admission that he was aware Nehanda lied to them suggests that Roën has been failing in his work as a mercenary because of his love for Zélie. As a mercenary, it's necessary for him to pick up on this sort of double-crossing—and normally, he can do so just fine. The fact that Zélie is considering sacrificing Amari shows that she's beginning to see the necessity of combining love and duty, which by virtue of what it is, the blood sacrifice for the moonstone is.



Roën seems to accept the cigar and nods. Harun nods too, but suddenly, Roën tackles Harun to the ground and presses the lit end of the cigar to Harun's neck. Roën takes another puff and then touches the cigar to Harun's skin again. As Harun screams, Roën says that Harun will stand down. Harun agrees and Roën tells him to take the crew—but if Roën catches Harun going against these parting orders, he'll kill him. Zélie sees no sign of the kind man connected to her heart as the mercenaries retreat. Once his men are gone, Roën falls in pain and tells Zélie she doesn't have to hide—he always knows where she is now that their hearts are connected.

Violence may be the only way that Roën can control his mercenaries and scare them into playing right, but this doesn't mean that behaving so violently and cruelly is easy for Roën, emotionally or physically. Roën's choice to end his career as a mercenary in general shows that it is possible to break the cycle of violence—but it's necessary to leave the violent situation altogether to do so. Importantly, though, he's turning toward love, suggesting that love can help people make this transition.



Zélie sits with Roën and asks what happened. She asks if Roën is really giving up on his crew, but Roën says he's been a terrible leader since he fell in love with her. He says that he doesn't expect Zélie to still love him after witnessing this; even if Zélie knew he was a mercenary, she never had to face what that actually meant. Zélie thinks that now, she knows the truth and the monster is in the open. She puts her hand in Roën's and asked why he thought of his mother's song as he was dying. He says she was worth remembering. Zélie sees that Roën *does* have a heart. They kiss and only stop when she realizes she's crying. Roën asks when Zélie is leaving to finish the war and says he's coming too—Zélie is his *zītsōl*, his home, and he's not staying behind.

Though Zélie's life has been full of violence, she's never had to grapple with the knowledge that someone close to her whom she loves is violent by choice—she did some with Inan, but his betrayal made it more of a useless exercise than a real attempt at building community and intimacy. Choosing to accompany Zélie to finish the war shows that Roën is committed to her now that his crew is gone. Duty in the form of the mercenaries can't get in the way anymore; he can focus on love, which means supporting Zélie's duty.



CHAPTER EIGHTY-THREE

Amari sits in the stone prison Kâmarū crafted and thinks of Saran. She told him she'd be a better queen but thinks that now, she's just like him. Amari wonders when Saran became the guiding voice in her head. As Amari vomits, Zélie appears and asks if Amari would've attacked the village had she known that Zélie was there. Amari admits she would've. Amari realizes that she's the daughter of Saran and Nehanda; she was taught to win at all costs. Zélie shares that they brought the victims back to life using the magic of the moonstone and now, they're going to destroy the monarchy using their combined magic. Amari warns that Nehanda will slaughter them and feels conflicted at the thought of dissolving the monarchy.

Realizing that she's just like Saran is a shocking proposition for Amari, as she's worked so hard to be anything but this. However, the emotional scars he left on her and his training to focus on winning and duty were too much, and Amari's love for Zélie couldn't overpower years of training. Zélie's insistence that the Lyika are going to destroy the monarchy shows that she understands now that the system itself the root of the problem. It doesn't matter so much who the ruler is, especially after someone as kind as Amari has shown herself to be ruthless due to years of royal training.



Amari warns that the attack will throw Orisha into chaos, but Zélie insists that it'll be better than a corrupt crown. Amari realizes that she's lost the right to lead at all and realizes that Zélie is here to ask for a sacrifice. For a moment Amari is terrified, but then she realizes that being the sacrifice will allow her to make things right and save Orisha. She agrees. Zélie tries to insist that they can't, but Amari begs Zélie to let her fix this. Mama Agba interrupts the girls and says it's not time for Amari to die—Mama Agba will be the sacrifice instead.

Amari's willingness to agree to the sacrifice shows how much she too has bought into the necessity of violence—in her mind, allowing Zélie to kill her in this way will make things right and atone for some of the horrible things she's done. Mama Agba, however, suggests that there's more to sacrificing than just righting wrongs. Her death will allow Amari to continue to grow and work for a better future.



CHAPTER EIGHTY-FOUR

Zélie refuses to take Mama Agba, but Mama Agba says they have to move quickly: Nehanda will execute the other maji within days. Mama Agba silences Zélie's protests, promises to forgive anything, and pulls Zélie into her arms. Zélie thinks of everything Mama Agba has done for the maji and for Zélie's family as Mama Agba leads Zélie away from Amari's cell. Mama Agba says that she knows now that during her *isipayá*, she wasn't looking into the beyond: she was with Zélie and meeting Sky Mother. As Zélie cries, Mama Agba reminds her that Zélie will carry everyone with her in heart. She's a child of the gods and will never be alone.

This moment situates Mama Agba as a true leader of the Lyika and a mentor to the young elders: she's able to show them that by sacrificing her, they won't lose one of their most powerful (if questionably loyal) fighters at a very young age. As a Seer Mama Agba can't do much now anyway except provide wisdom and intelligence that the young, disconnected elders don't have, but since they have the scrolls and the knowledge of what the moonstone means, they don't need her as much anymore.



The elders stand in a circle, waiting for Mama Agba. Zélie thinks of how Mama is now a part of her and soon, Mama Agba will be too. Mama Agba enters the circle and Na'imah begins to sing. Mama Agba speaks every elder and Tzain. She tells Amari to not let one moment define or destroy her and then turns to Zélie. She tells Zélie to remember everything. Finally, she tells Zélie to go ahead. Zélie slices Mama Agba's palm, puts it on her own chest, and whispers the **Yoruba** incantation. Bright white light spreads and Zélie listens to the ten heartbeats. They all rise as Mama Agba grows black and then bright white. As the maji's hearts fall into sync, Mama Agba lights up the sky. The maji fall back to the ground.

Allowing Mama Agba to sacrifice herself also means that Mama Agba gets a far more dignified death than she might have otherwise, something that may help the young elders cope with her grief. They can now focus on the fact that she willingly died so that they could make Orisha a better place for future generations, rather than grieve a horrific or unexpected death at the hands of the monarchy.



CHAPTER EIGHTY-FIVE

Inan stares at his reflection in Saran's mirror, sure that he's doing the right thing. Nehanda knocks and lets herself in, dressed in gold and already flushed from the wine at the celebration. She asks if Inan has finally come to his senses, and Inan says he has. Pleased, Nehanda hugs Inan, says that all their enemies will be gone by dawn, and fills flutes with wine. She toasts to the kingdom and drinks half her flute before taking issue with Inan's clothing choices. Inan says his clothes don't matter: he's dissolving the monarchy tonight. Nehanda is shocked, but Inan says that magic isn't the problem—the monarchy is. He insists that Amari's actions in Ibadan prove that the throne corrupts even pure hearts. Nehanda turns to go, but she collapses and slurs her words. Inan reveals that he sedated her, carries her to bed, and leaves the room.

This is a major moment for Inan, as this is the only time in the entire novel that he actually takes matters into his own hands and goes against Nehanda's wishes. By doing this, Inan becomes the only monarch who truly figures out how to thwart the horrific messaging he's gotten all his life. Importantly, dissolving the monarchy altogether doesn't represent a win, and it isn't ruthless. It means that Inan and the nobles are choosing to take a loss, but they're doing so for the greater good—and hopefully, this loss will lead to greater prosperity, and less bloodshed, for everyone.



CHAPTER EIGHTY-SIX

No one speaks as Não powers their boat. There's no need to speak now that they're connected. As the boat gets close to Ilorin, Zélie's old home, she thinks of Baba and Mama Agba. Zélie announces that they can hide here until sunrise, when they'll free the captive Iyika. Tzain calls for Zélie and points to the distance, where a single reed dwelling stands above the waves. It's Zélie and Tzain's old home. Tzain and Zélie climb down to it and discover everything back the way it was before Ilorin burnt. The only thing different is a parcel and a folded note on Zélie's cot. They're from Inan. The note says that he's sorry, while the packet is full of dozens of letters he wrote to her. Angry, Zélie throws the packet to the ground, but picks up a letter that clunks.

Rebuilding Zélie's home—which may have been the construction project he sent Ojore to oversee—shows again that Inan genuinely wants to make things right, even if he understands that rebuilding one hut doesn't bring back the hundreds of Ilorin's villagers who died when the village burnt. It does, however, have the desired effect of attracting Zélie and Tzain's attention and giving Zélie more information about what exactly they're going to find when they reach Lagos in the morning.



That letter contains the **bronze coin** Zélie gave Inan, now fashioned into a pendant. She cries as she reads the accompanying letter. Inan writes that he's sorry for everything, but it's clear to him that the *monarchy* is the problem plaguing Orisha, not magic. He says he's going to dissolve the monarchy. Inan writes that if he runs into Zélie again, he's prepared to die. Zélie hands Tzain the letter and hates herself for wanting to believe Inan. She tells Tzain that they still have to free the captive Iyika and asks what Tzain is going to do about Amari. Tzain winces and says they can't be together after Amari almost killed Zélie. He suggests that next time, they fall for siblings who aren't royalty.

Now that the bronze coin is back in Zélie's possession, it can go on to function for her much as it has for Inan: as a reminder of the human cost of this war and the violence, as well as the power of love to try to make things right. Inan's understanding that the monarchy is the problem indicates that he now understands the power structures that keep him in such a powerful position—and he recognizes that those structures are predicated on violence. Getting rid of them, in theory, means ending the violence.



CHAPTER EIGHTY-SEVEN

Zélie, Roën, Tzain, and the elders stand on the hill overlooking Lagos. Kâmarū releases Amari's bindings and the elders name those the monarchy killed, including Zu, Baba, Mama, and Mâzeli. Zélie whispers the incantation and the elders unite. A rainbow of light flows around them. Kâmarū and Kenyon pull up the earth and send lava rushing toward Lagos, destroying majacite mines as it goes. Jahi and Amari transform the majacite into Cancer clouds and send it rushing back at the soldiers. Kâmarū, Jahi, and Kenyon deflect cannonballs and explosive. Finally, Zélie reaches for the life in the titán soldiers and takes it from them.

Remembering those who have died for this cause allows the Iyika to honor the dead and think of them as important fighters in this battle—even if they're no longer around to fight it. Those who are still fighting, meanwhile, are the survivors who are intent on living, just as Roën encouraged Zélie to be. Their connections to each other are a physical representation of love, and thanks to Mama Agba's sacrifice, they can weaponize that to fulfill their goals.



CHAPTER EIGHTY-EIGHT

Inan shakes. All that's left is to tell the nobles and other celebrants in the throne room his decision. He looks up at the new cheetanaire seals that Nehanda designed for his rule. Inan thinks of his **bronze coin**. He takes in the palace for the last time and thinks that Orisha will never be the same after today, but it might have a chance to be better. Finally, Inan stands to address the crowd.

Even if Inan is doing the right thing, it doesn't mean that it's easy—and so this becomes a major turning point for him in terms of maturity. This is the one time in which Inan does the difficult, hard thing instead of just taking the easy way out, which allows him to finally break the cycle of violence.



To begin, he recites the story of how Sky Mother gave birth to the gods, which led to the maji. He says the first rulers came about when maji abused their gifts. They lost their ability to perform magic, but they established the monarchy. The mood in the room begins to shift as Inan says that Orisha's downfall is linked to its throne, and now, he plans to end the monarchy. As Inan tries to quell angry nobles, booms shake the palace and alarms blare. He shouts for everyone to run as the windows shatter.

By situating his announcement in terms of the long history of maji and monarchy, Inan insists that this isn't something he's doing for kicks: he's doing this because this has been going on for years, and it's time to stop it. This also makes the nobles present face up to their own complicity in this violent history, though their anger suggests they're not interested in doing this.



CHAPTER EIGHTY-NINE

Amari feels like she's in a nightmare. The maji wreak havoc on the palace as Zélie runs for the cellars and the captive Iyika. Amari starts to follow, but Nehanda stumbles down the stairs behind and shrieks, "No." Amari feels trapped and thinks of all Nehanda has taken from her. Nehanda hatefully sends marble chunks flying into Amari's stomach, but she stops when Amari sends pain shooting into Nehanda's head. Amari hears Saran's words, "Strike, Amari," but then she hears another voice in her head say no. Amari stops. Nehanda taunts her, but Amari realizes that while she thought killing Saran was the answer, it just turned her into a monster. Nehanda hurls insults at Amari, but Amari insists that she's capable of great things and can choose to be better. Amari runs after Zélie, feeling lighter than ever.

Finally, Amari can begin to stand up to Saran's messaging and Nehanda, just like Inan did by choosing to dissolve the monarchy. When she chooses not to kill Nehanda—that is, chooses compassion and life, rather than violence—it shows that she learned from her mistakes in Ibadan and doesn't want to kill people needlessly anymore. Further, she understands that killing people because it makes her feel better isn't the answer; doing so just leads to more violence. Instead, Amari knows now that she always has a choice and can always choose to be better, just like Zélie made clear earlier.



CHAPTER NINETY

Zélie hears muffled screams for help as she and the elders reach the cellar. She finally sees M̀ari at the end of a hall. K̀amar̀u, Imani, and Khani free the maji and Zélie gathers Bimpe and M̀ari close. She soothes them, but then sees Inan run past. Zélie tells the girls to follow Imani and chases after Inan. She thinks of what he wrote in his letters and shouts for him. He stops and sends his soldiers on, and then raises his hands in surrender. Inan's **bronze coin** burns around Zélie's neck as she approaches.

The burning bronze coin around Zélie's neck is doing what it's supposed to: it's reminding her that Inan is a human who's trying to do the right thing, even if they find themselves on opposite sides and even if he's done horrific things in the past. This will allow Zélie to draw on her own compassion as she finally speaks to Inan.



Quickly, Inan tells Zélie where the treasuries are and reveals that there are majacite stockpiles in each fortress, which soldiers will try to use against Zélie if she doesn't destroy them first. Zélie asks why Inan is saying this, but Inan says that he and everyone else who know these secrets will be dead soon. He almost smiles as Zélie approaches. Zélie puts her hand on his chest, trembling. She begins to pull on his life force and watches everything they shared. He apologizes and chokes. Roën shouts for Zélie and races for her with a mask. A wall of white chases him. He throws her the mask and falls, but before Zélie can put it on, the cloud of white arrives and she faints.

What Inan is doing here is very smart—he wants Zélie to be able to rule as effectively and non-violently as possible, so she needs this information. Regardless, Zélie still feels as though killing Inan and getting revenge for Baba's death is absolutely necessary, given his crimes. It's impossible to tell, however, if she finishes killing him here or not, given the white cloud's mysterious approach.



EPILOGUE

Zélie wakes in excruciating pain to the smell of vomit and urine. When she tries to stand, she trips over chains and tumbles. An unfamiliar metal binds her ankles and wrists. She remembers the cloud of white and realizes that she didn't kill Inan, and the Iyika didn't win: the monarchy captured them somehow. Zélie roars for Inan and tries to figure out who else is with her in the darkness, and how many escaped. As the floor rocks, Zélie pulls herself up and climbs onto Amari's unconscious body. Through the window, she sees nothing but sea.

Finding herself chained on a ship implies that there will be new villains and opponents for the next novel in the series, but it also suggests that going forward, things in Orisha are going to remain violent and oppressive—the chains make it clear that Zélie and her companions aren't honored guests. Especially since these conditions mirror those of real-life historical slave ships, it's clear that Zélie isn't going to find peace right away in the final installment of the series.





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