

Red Queen



INTRODUCTION

BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF VICTORIA AVEYARD

Victoria Aveyard became interested in writing at a very young age. During her childhood in Massachusetts, she read and watched a wide variety of fantasy works; she cites *Harry Potter*, *Star Wars*, *Indiana Jones*, *The Lord of the Rings*, and *Lost* as works that have influenced her. She eventually decided to obtain a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in screenwriting from the University of Southern California. Soon after graduating, she published *Red Queen*, which is the first in a quartet of novels all set in the same fantasy universe.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Aveyard began writing *Red Queen* in 2012, at the end of the Arab Spring, a revolutionary wave in North Africa and the Middle East. The wave was led by protestors advocating for more democratic governments in their respective countries. Many longstanding regimes throughout the region were toppled between 2010 and 2012. The uncertainty of what will come after revolution that characterizes *Red Queen* has thus played out in the real world in the wake of the Arab Spring. Most of the involved countries have since been engaged in ongoing struggles to implement democratic governments. Some refer to these struggles as the “Arab Winter.” Although Aveyard published her novel in 2015, the anxieties of her characters also dovetail with the national anxieties in the United States in the wake of the 2016 presidential election. Mare’s refrain of “anyone can betray anyone” seems apt to describe the specter of mistrust and corruption that looms over the shift in power from the Obama administration to the Trump administration.

RELATED LITERARY WORKS

Red Queen bears some resemblance to Suzanne Collins’ *Hunger Games* trilogy, not least because both works are contemporary young adult fantasy novels narrated by their talented, unique female protagonists. Like *Red Queen*, Collins’ trilogy uses a fantasy setting and to interrogate questions of politics, power, and social injustice. Similarly, George R. R. Martin’s fantasy series *A Song of Ice and Fire* (and its hugely successful TV adaptation, *Game of Thrones*) also features a fantastical setting and a plot of duplicitous power-plays, violent manipulations, and severe social inequality. Also relevant to Aveyard’s novel is Charles Darwin’s 1859 book, *On the Origin of Species*. Darwin’s work is widely considered the foundation of evolutionary biology, but it also gave widespread rise to the attitude that

people’s abilities and fitness for prosperity are determined by their biology. Darwin’s work was used throughout the Victorian era and beyond to justify social inequality and projects of ethnic cleansing, the likes of which Aveyard depicts occurring also in the Kingdom of Norta.

KEY FACTS

- **Full Title:** Red Queen
- **When Written:** 2012
- **Where Written:** Western Massachusetts
- **When Published:** 2015
- **Literary Period:** Contemporary
- **Genre:** Fantasy Novel, Young Adult Fiction
- **Setting:** The fantasy kingdom of Norta
- **Climax:** Maven turns against Cal and their father, revealing that he has been scheming with the queen to stage a coup. Mare realizes that by pretending to want justice for the Reds, Maven has used her in order to gain power for himself.
- **Antagonist:** Maven Calore, Queen Elara
- **Point of View:** First-person present, from Mare Barrow’s perspective

EXTRA CREDIT

Revolution on the big screen. Universal Pictures has optioned the novel as of 2018 and plans to produce a film version directed by Elizabeth Banks—who, incidentally, also starred in the movie adaptations of the *Hunger Games* trilogy.

Social media citizen. Victoria Aveyard has an active Twitter presence, through which she corresponds with fans. She also shares and comments on political news, emphasizing not only her characters’ investment but also her own investment in politics and social justice.



PLOT SUMMARY

Mare Barrow is born and raised in the Kingdom of Norta, which is characterized by a sharp class divide: the Silvers, who have silver **blood**, live lives of glamor and riches. Reds, who have red blood, live in poverty in villages like the Stilts. Mare, a Red who has grown up in the Stilts, must pick pockets to support her family. She brings stolen goods home every day to her mother, who disapproves of her daughter’s quasi-profession, her younger sister, Gisa, who has an actual job as an apprentice to a seamstress, and her father, who uses a wheelchair and an iron lung because he came home injured from war. Mare’s three

older brothers, Bree, Tramy, and Shade, are absent because they, too, have been conscripted to act as faceless bodies in the ongoing war. The war has been raging on the border of Norta for over a hundred years, and Reds have no stake in it—except insofar as they provide the Silvers with the human fuel to keep their war going. Any Red who is not apprenticed or employed by the age of eighteen (which is most Reds, because jobs are few and far between, and the school system does not teach many skills that could win an apprenticeship) is sent to the war front. Most of them either do not come back, or come back severely injured. The Silvers have the resources to treat many of these injuries, but they choose not to invest in doing so, because there is a steady supply of fresh Reds from which to draw.

The Silvers are able to use the Reds in this way because the Silvers' special gifts to manipulate fire, metal, earth, water, and more has given them enough of an edge over the gift-less Reds to force them into poverty. The Silvers stage Feats every month in giant arenas in Red villages, at which Silver champions fight one another. The spectacle is entertaining, but Mare knows that it doubles as a reminder to the Reds that they are powerless in the face of this fantastically gifted ruling class. Still, when Mare's best friend, Kilorn, finds out that he is about to be conscripted, she decides that she will do everything she can to fight back. She goes to Will Whistle, the man who usually buys her stolen goods to sell on the black market, and asks if he can smuggle her and Kilorn out of the Stilts so that they might go on the run from the Silvers. Will refuses at first, but then introduces Mare to Farley, a woman who claims to be a first-rate smuggler. Farley accepts the task of smuggling Mare and Kilorn out of town, but only if Mare pays her two thousand crowns in the next two days. This sum is a veritable fortune to Mare, but she accepts Farley's offer, resolving to steal the money.

Mare gets Gisa, who works in the Silver metropolis where the king lives during the summer, to help her sneak into the city. While Mare is attempting to pick pockets in a bar there, a broadcast comes on the television. Mare sees Farley claiming credit for a terrorist attack on the Silvers, on behalf of a group called the Scarlet Guard. The Guard is allegedly working to advance Red rights. Chaos breaks out in the bar and all over the city as Reds try to flee and Silvers capture them, torturing them for information they do not have on the Scarlet Guard. Mare finds Gisa and has almost managed to make it out of the city with her when Gisa decides to pick a pocket. Less adept than Mare, she is caught. As punishment, a Silver security officer smashes Gisa's sewing hand.

That night, feeling that she has betrayed her family by getting Gisa into this mess, Mare sneaks off to some bars on the edges of the Stilts. She does not go to drink, but rather to steal from the patrons. The last person whose pocket she picks catches her. Instead of getting angry, he gives her a silver coin, walks

her home, and gives her a second silver coin. He introduces himself as Cal, and says that he works at the palace. Mare does not think she will ever hear anything from him again, but in the morning, security officers and a royal servant show up at the Barrow house to escort Mare to the palace. At first, she is terrified that she is about to be tortured for information on Farley. However, she soon finds that Cal has arranged for her to have a serving job at the palace.

Mare's first task as a royal servant is to serve the Silver crowd at an event called Queenstrial, at which the eligible young Silver noblewomen compete for the two princes' hands in marriage. Mare runs around a stadium similar to, but far more ornate than, that in which she has seen the Feats every month in the Stilts. When the royal family enters, Mare feels shocked and betrayed to find that the crown prince is Cal. As she reels from this discovery, she observes the young women competing in the depressed arena below, separated from the crowd by a vast electric shield. It strikes her that the Silvers are more powerful than she ever thought. The last contestant, Evangeline Samos, seems favored to win, although her power of manipulating metal does not impress Mare as much as some of the others' powers. Evangeline then makes the entire arena begin to collapse in on itself. Mare falls over the edge and has resigned herself to dying upon collision with the electric shield. When she collides with it, however, it is not Mare but rather the shield that suffers the most damage. She seems to burn through it. Before all the Silvers' eyes, she falls through the shield to the arena below. Evangeline, terrified, goes on the offensive. Mare deflects her shards of metal with some sort of electric shield of her own. King Tiberias yells for sentinels to seize Mare, and she runs. However, Cal catches her by using his own gift: manipulating flames.

Mare wakes to find that Queen Elara has invaded her head using her talents as a "whisper" who can read and control minds. Elara and the king seem threatened by Mare. They tell her that from now on, they will conceal her identity as a Red by peddling the story that she is a Silver whose parents died in the war during her infancy; she was raised by Reds who concealed her identity from her until now. She will marry the second-born prince, Maven, and live the rest of her life as a Silver.

Mare does not feel like she is living a fairy tale, but rather like she is a prisoner. As she learns the ropes of life at the royal court, she constantly looks over her shoulder, sure that she is going to be betrayed by someone close to her. Despite her mistrust of them, she feels alternately drawn to both the princes. She eventually decides to trust Maven, who claims to work with the Scarlet Guard and desire equality for Reds and Silvers. Mare herself joins the Scarlet Guard and becomes party to a terrorist attack at the palace. In the aftermath of the attack, however, she feels unsure that she should have trusted Maven. Cal, by contrast, is willing to maintain the unjust status quo, but his objections to murder seem more in line with Mare's

views. Throughout the novel, as Mare attempts to learn who she is and what her values are, she remains unsure of who her actual friends are, apart from the direct family members she is no longer allowed to see.

Finally, Mare decides that Maven's radical views are the only pathway to true justice. She chooses him over Cal, both politically and romantically. Mare makes one final appeal to Cal to convince his father to be a more just ruler, but Cal declines. Just when Mare feels sure that she has chosen the right brother, Maven reveals that he has been in league with his mother, Queen Elara, the whole time. They have been planning a coup, not to instate a more just regime that treats Reds as equal citizens, but rather to put Maven on the throne for personal gain. Queen Elara controls Cal's mind, forcing him to kill the king, his father. She then immediately yells out in shock and grief so that sentinels rush in and believe that Cal and Mare are the traitors.

The novel ends with Cal and Mare on a train with members from the Scarlet Guard, who have snuck them out of the capital. Mare finds out that the Silvers have kept from her an additional secret about her identity: she is not the only Red who displays Silver talents. Silvers have been keeping on lockdown that there is an entire subset of citizens with red blood who also have the genetic markers of these magical gifts. Mare finds out that her brother Shade, who she thought was executed for involvement with the Scarlet Guard, is in fact alive and one of them. Mare decides that she should not trust any one person, but that the work the Scarlet Guard is doing to organize a Red resistance underground is the work she wants to do as well. She could never be romantically involved with Cal, she decides, because they have betrayed one another too many times. However, she knows that they share a goal moving forward: both of them have a vendetta against Maven. If they ever get close to him, they will kill him.



CHARACTERS

MAJOR CHARACTERS

Mare Barrow – The protagonist and narrator of the novel, Mare Barrow is a seventeen-year-old Red (meaning her **blood** is red, not silver) who has grown up in poverty in the poor village of the Stilts. Unlike most of the Reds, she wears her hair long to show off the ends, which are bleached white by the stress of living in the Stilts. Mare is not particularly apt in school and does not have any skills through which she can gain an apprenticeship or job; she thus has resigned herself to a future in the army, fighting and probably dying for the ruling class of the Silvers. When she is caught trying to pickpocket Cal, a Silver not much older than her, he gives her some money and gets her a job serving at the palace. Mare then astonishes everyone, including herself, by revealing at the palace that she has the

power to wield lightning. Such a power should be possible only for a Silver, so the Silvers, worried that word will get out that a Red has this special ability, imprison Mare. As Mare learns to grapple with her newfound ability, she must masquerade as a long-lost Silver who has been raised by Reds. Innately distrustful, Mare becomes increasingly so over the course of the novel. She comes to doubt not only herself and everyone around her but also the fundamental truths that have always dictated her life. Mare begins her life at the palace worried that her tendency to talk back to Silvers will get her into trouble. However, as she sees the extent of the corruption at the palace, she and other dissatisfied Reds realize that her willingness to stand up to power might make her the perfect candidate to lead a revolution. Although Mare is extremely skeptical of people and institutions by the end of the novel, she also grows more hopeful for the future as she realizes the power she has to resist injustice.

Cal (Tiberias Calore) – The crown prince, Tiberias the Seventh. He is a Silver with the power to control heat and flames. As the eldest son, Cal stands to inherit the throne, and he is also one of Mare's love interests. Mare is drawn to Cal's loyalty and sense of duty, which leads him both to do good deeds for her and to try to get to know his subjects. However, she is disgusted when his loyalty leads him to deploy the military tactics in which he has been well-educated. Mare first meets Cal before she knows his identity, when she attempts to pickpocket him, and he gives her some silver and a job in return. Mare then feels betrayed when she learns that Cal is actually the prince—he represents the political apparatus oppressing her family, and now she is beholden to him for his charity. He continues to be kind to her individually, but she is upset that he walks the line with his father, choosing to uphold the tenets of the crown rather than strive to overturn unjust laws against the Reds. Mare ultimately decides that Cal is more trustworthy than Maven, but she and Cal have schemed against one another enough throughout the novel that she concludes they could never be a romantic match.

Maven Calore – Cal's younger brother and romantic rival for Mare. Like his brother and father, he has the power to control heat and flames. Initially Maven does not stand to inherit the throne, even though he is the son of King Tiberias and the current queen, Queen Elara, because he is not the king's firstborn. He is betrothed to Mare against both of their wills. Maven is surly at times and reveals that he is upset that he did not get to choose his wife, which is standard for a second-born son. Although Maven often acts immature because he is bitter that Cal gets all the privileges of a first-born prince, Mare identifies with his jealousy because of her own jealousy of Gisa, who her mother favors. Maven further impresses Mare by revealing that he is working with the Scarlet Guard and fighting for Red rights, and she begins to trust him. However, he eventually reveals that he has duped her and used her as a

pawn in his scheme with Queen Elara to take the throne for himself.

Farley – A Red not much older than Mare. Mare first meets Farley when Will Whistle introduces them. Farley agrees to smuggle Mare and Kilorn out of the Stilts and away from a sure fate of conscription, in exchange for a massive fortune. The next day, Mare sees Farley on a kingdom-wide broadcast, claiming credit on behalf of the Scarlet Guard for a terrorist attack on the Silvers. Throughout the novel, it is not clear the extent to which Mare ought to trust Farley. Farley is often abrasive and combative in her interactions with Mare, but they nonetheless seem to share the goal of equality. In the end, Farley introduces Mare to a large network of Reds who have been working underground to amass the power to overthrow the Silvers.

Daniel Barrow / Mare's Father – Mare's father. Daniel Barrow is a Red who has been unable to work or leave the house much ever since coming home from the army with a missing leg and a collapsed lung. He uses a wheelchair and a sort of iron lung that he had to obtain on the black market. While the technology to treat his injuries is readily available, the Silvers do not invest resources in caring for wounded Red soldiers. Mare's father has a pessimistic outlook on the future, and feels that the Silvers' tyranny is insurmountable.

Ruth Barrow / Mare's Mother – Mare's mother. Ruth Barrow often must hold back tears over the fates of her husband and children. She has hope for them despite the fact that one by one, they seem to be conscripted and taken from her. She is especially brokenhearted when her son Shade is reported dead. Mare's relationship with her mother is tortured because Ruth disapproves of theft, which is also the only way Mare knows how to help her family.

Kilorn Warren – Mare's best friend and possible romantic interest. Kilorn is a Red fisherman's apprentice whose master dies at the beginning of the novel, dooming him to conscription and all the horrors of a military life. Unbeknownst to Mare, Kilorn joins the Scarlet Guard with the hope of carrying out a Red revolution. Because Kilorn's father died when he was a child, and his mother was unable to support him, Mare sees Kilorn as someone to take care of. His decision to join the Scarlet Guard seems to be at least in part motivated by a desire to prove that he is not only self-sufficient but also able to help Mare while she is imprisoned in the palace.

Gisa Barrow – Mare's younger sister. Gisa has a crush on Kilorn. Unlike Mare, Gisa has a particular talent that makes her employable: sewing. Gisa attempts to help Mare steal money from the Silvers, hoping to buy Kilorn's passage out of the Stilts so that he will not be conscripted, but she is caught with her hand in someone's pocket. As punishment, a security officer crushes her sewing hand, and Gisa is left unable to work. Gisa loves Mare, but she becomes somewhat cold toward her sister in the wake of her injury. Mare has always sensed that Gisa is her mother's favorite child because she is able to work a real,

legal job. It seems that Gisa's frustration over her injury is in part because by emulating Mare's pickpocketing, she has lost the thing that sets her apart as the favorite child.

Queen Elara – King Tiberias's second wife and Maven's mother. Queen Elara is a "whisper," meaning that she can read and control minds. She is known for using her power to her own advantage, and it is an ill-kept secret that she is extraordinarily ambitious and may have killed Queen Coriane in order to gain a position as queen. She intrudes on Mare's mind after Mare reveals her own abilities to generate and control electricity. Mare never trusts her because of this intrusion, and because Elara seems power-hungry and uninterested in helping Reds. Elara eventually reveals herself to be in league with Maven in a plot to overthrow her own husband.

King Tiberias – The king of Norta, and Cal and Maven's father. Like all the kings, Tiberias is a "burner," meaning that he can control heat and flames. Tiberias upholds the longstanding Norta tradition of privileging Silvers and enforcing unjust laws against the Reds. Tiberias used to be married to Queen Coriane, but after her mysterious death, he married Queen Elara. The king's prioritization of the Silvers over the Reds parallels his treatment of his sons. He is proud of and protective of Cal but displays much less interest in Maven. This unequal treatment comes back to destroy him when, in the end of the novel, Queen Elara forces Cal to kill King Tiberias in order to make room for Maven on the throne.

Queen Coriane – The deceased former Queen of Norta, King Tiberias's first wife, Cal's mother, and Julian's sister. There is a good deal of mystery surrounding her death. The public story is that she died from suicide, but Julian is convinced that something else happened. There is good reason to suspect that Elara killed her or had her killed. Sara Skonos, Coriane's best friend, may know something. However, her tongue was cut out by Elara so that she could not reveal anything.

Shade Barrow – Mare's older brother, who has been conscripted and sends a coded message home indicating that he has joined the Scarlet Guard. Mare thinks of Shade as the smart one among her brothers. Mare and her family receive word that Shade is dead, but at the end of the novel, he is revealed to be still alive and as deeply embroiled in the revolution as Mare herself.

Ann Walsh – The royal servant who comes to summon Mare to the palace at Summertown. She goes by her last name, Walsh, and tells Mare that she once had her heart broken by Mare's brother Bree. Walsh is later revealed to be part of the Scarlet Guard. She helps orchestrate Mare's communication with the rebel group while she is living in the palace.

MINOR CHARACTERS

Tramy Barrow – Mare's older brother. He has been away in the army for some time, but he is brought home when the Barrows

win a “lottery.” Mare knows that there is no actual lottery. Rather, she has bargained with the Silvers for her brothers’ homecoming.

Bree Barrow – Mare’s older brother. He has been away in the army for some time, but he is brought home when the Barrows win a “lottery.” Mare knows that there is no actual lottery. Rather, she has bargained with the Silvers for her brothers’ homecoming.

Will Whistle – A black market trader in the Stilts who always buys the stolen items that regular shopkeepers are too reluctant to buy from Mare.

Evangeline Samos – Cal’s fiancé. Evangeline is a ruthless Silver who can manipulate metal. She constantly tries to provoke Mare, and Mare worries that Evangeline is plotting against her.

Julian Jacos – Mare’s tutor. Julian’s sister was Queen Coriane, Cal’s deceased mother. Julian teaches Mare her motto: “anyone can betray anyone.”

Sara Skonos – Mare’s skin healer. Sara was the best friend of the deceased Queen Coriane. She was forced by Queen Elara to mutilate her own tongue and is unable to heal her own wounds. She is thus unable to speak.

Lady Blonos – Mare’s etiquette trainer when Mare is forced to join the Silver court. Lady Blonos is a “blood healer.”

Colonel Macanthos – A Silver army leader who is targeted for assassination by the Scarlet Guard.

Lucas Evangeline’s cousin, who acts as a guard for Mare in the Silver court. Though Lucas is kind, his presence is a constant reminder that she is essentially a prisoner.

citizens, but she nevertheless accepts that this is simply the way of things until she discovers that she has both red blood and special abilities that a Silver might have. This discovery destabilizes the dichotomy between Reds and Silvers. Throughout the novel, the biological distinction between Reds and Silvers is revealed to be more complicated than Mare used to think; eventually, Mare’s own position between Silver and Red leads Mare to believe, and the novel to suggest, that regardless of biological differences, social inequality among Silvers and Reds is unjust and worth combatting.

Early on in the novel, Mare is resigned to a life of poverty. Her assumption that there is no room for her social mobility is not only because she is a Red but also because her family has long ago lost hope of a better life. Mare, and the community of Reds in which she has grown up, live in the Stilts. Jobs there are scarce. Children must nevertheless find ways to support their families because older siblings are drafted into the army at age eighteen, and most of them either die on the front lines or return home severely injured. Mare’s younger sister, Gisa, has a job sewing for the Silvers, but Mare must support her family by picking the pockets of other Reds who are doubtless struggling to make ends meet as well. Mare’s father, meanwhile, is permanently disabled from his own time in the Silver king’s army. He is now very pessimistic and rarely leaves the house. One night, Mare finds him outside working on the fuse box; on going back inside, he asks her not to tell her mother about the outing in case it gives her a false sense of hope for the future.

Having Red blood in a society that treats Reds as second-class citizens and free wartime labor determines the fate of each individual in Mare’s family. All these individual fates compound into the family history Mare inherits, making her feel even more pessimistic about her outlook than she otherwise might. When Mare discovers that she can produce electricity despite her red blood, her newfound power is twofold: first, she can overpower some of the Silvers’ special abilities, and second, she can reveal to the rest of Norta that it is possible for a Red to have Silver powers. The Silvers do their utmost to keep Mare from revealing the latter publicly because the notion that Silvers are biologically more powerful than Reds allows the Silvers to maintain political power. However, in their attempt to keep Mare’s identity secret, they bring Mare into their community, and she begins to understand that it is not blood so much as an imbalance of wealth and power that divide the Reds and Silvers.

The royal family hides Mare as one of their own when they discover her powers. This tactic prevents the public from knowing that a Red has the ability to produce electricity, but it also allows Mare to interact with Silvers. Observing firsthand the luxurious lifestyle of the Silvers, the poverty in which Mare’s family lives seems even more exaggerated. While effectively imprisoned at the palace, Mare also realizes that the only reason she always defers to Silvers is that she has been



THEMES

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BIOLOGICAL DETERMINISM AND SOCIAL INEQUALITY

In the Kingdom of Norta, where Mare Barrow lives, everyone’s destiny is determined by the color of their **blood**. Those with silver blood, called “Silvers,” live a life of luxury that is made possible by the hard work of the “Reds,” who are conditioned to believe that their red blood makes them suited to poverty and grueling labor in the service of the Silvers. The Silvers are able to keep the Reds in their service because Silvers have special abilities, such as manipulating minds or producing flames out of thin air. Mare does not like the fact that she and her family are treated as second-class

taught to do so for her own safety. When asked to act like one of them, she feels disgust for her own actions, realizing how deplorably the Silvers treat her community.

Mare eventually finds out that there are other Reds like her, all of whom seem to carry a genetic marker suggesting that they are gifted with Silver powers. By that time, however, her insider-view of how little regard the Silvers have for Red lives has led her to cast off her pessimistic resignation to a life of poverty. She believes that Reds, irrespective of their potential to wield Silver gifts, should be treated as equal citizens whose lives carry the same value as those of Silvers. She commits herself to making a more just world, however high the odds are stacked against that goal.

The biological difference between Reds and Silvers is less clear at the end of the novel than at the beginning, begging further investigation by Mare and her fellow revolutionaries. There is no outright rejection in the novel of the idea that biological factors might influence a person's aptitudes, but Mare's shift from a pessimistic to a visionary worldview, regardless of the idea that it might not be possible for most Reds to have the talents of a Silver, shows that she has rejected the idea that biology should determine social status and opportunity. The novel ends with the sense that whatever influences a person's biology has over that person's innate abilities, everyone should be afforded the same opportunities, political representation, and access to wealth.



TRUST AND BETRAYAL

Throughout *Red Queen*, Mare Barrow often feels backed into a corner, forced to lie to her family and others. Others also lie to Mare throughout the

novel, and she becomes increasingly distrustful of everyone, including herself. While Mare hardly trusts anyone at the end of the novel, the experience of mutual betrayal nevertheless creates another kind of powerful bond between Mare and other characters. The novel ultimately takes a complex view of the concept of trust: sometimes it is necessary to break one's trust for the sake of a greater goal, and sometimes there is no choice in the matter, but the victims of betrayal and broken trust can still find solidarity with each other.

Mare does not feel particularly trustworthy herself, especially with regard to her family. While some of her lies have negative consequences, she nevertheless tries to protect her family and friends by, in her mind, betraying them. For example, Mare thinks that Gisa's broken hand, broken as punishment for picking a Silver's pocket, is her fault for bringing her younger sister to help her steal in the first place. Gisa trusted Mare to keep her safe, and Mare failed to do so. The consequences of this instance of broken trust do not fall back only on Gisa but also on Mare's entire family, because Gisa is now unable to bring in money by sewing. Although the consequences seem to suggest that Mare would have done better not to bring Gisa to

the robbery, Mare's reason for doing so to begin with is selfless, not self-serving: she is attempting to get money to buy her friend Kilorn's passage out of town to keep him safe from the army draft. What Mare sees as a betrayal of Gisa's trust thus doubles as an attempt to fulfill the trusting relationship she has with Kilorn.

Mare also breaks the trust of her community and of her mother by secretly picking pockets for a living. Mare knows that her mother thinks of this activity as immoral, and Mare is ashamed of it, yet she persists not out of self-interest but because it is the only way she knows how to provide for her family. In order to spare her mother the shame, Mare withholds the information about where the goods she brings home come from. She thus betrays her family's trust in order to benefit them.

Mare's lies to her family grow in magnitude across the novel as the Silvers force her to tell them that she is staying at the palace by choice, not as a captive. Mare is unhappy that she must both abandon and lie to her family, but she does so as part of a bargain with the Silvers to bring her brothers home from the war. Once again, her lies bring about an ultimately positive outcome for her family members, even if her relationship with her family is irreparably damaged by her dishonesty.

Mare's relationships outside of her family are damaged by dishonesty and betrayal as well. The result is that Mare becomes emotionally isolated, but she nevertheless finds herself in a kind of a tactical union with others who have been betrayed alongside her. Julian, Mare's tutor at the palace, tells her in one memorable instance, "Anyone can betray anyone." This phrase becomes Mare's mantra throughout the novel, showing her increasing wariness of trusting anyone.

Mare eventually uses the phrase with regard to both Cal and Maven. She was once close to each of them, but distances herself emotionally from them when she realizes that they have been working against her. Mare decides that her relationship with Cal can never be romantic because of all the ways they have betrayed one another. However, the novel ends with Mare's realization that they share the desire to kill Maven for the betrayal he has inflicted on both of them. The phrase "anyone can betray anyone" ostensibly narrates the way relationships are torn apart, but it also describes how a relationship might be formed: Mare and Cal are forged into the "anyone" Maven has betrayed.

Mare also feels a lack of trust at the end of the novel for the Scarlet Guard. It may not be responsible for all of the terrorist activities she once supposed it had perpetrated, but she is nevertheless unsure of exactly its core tenets. However, because Maven and Queen Elara have betrayed both Mare and the Scarlet Guard, Mare feels the same kind of alliance with the Scarlet Guard that she feels with Cal.

While Mare desires trusting relationships, it seems that

betrayal and broken trust are inevitable in the crisis situations and power plays of the novel's world. The outlook is not entirely sinister, however. In fact, Mare learns that betrayal can result in strong political alliances amongst those who have been betrayed. Everyone must vigilantly look over their shoulder, but there is nonetheless hope for cooperation.



POWER AND DEGRADATION

The premise of the novel is that in the Kingdom of Northa, those with silver **blood** live in luxury while those with red blood live in poverty. Mare Barrow, a Red, accepts that poverty is her lot in life until she is forced to masquerade as a Silver—and realizes that the Silvers want her to believe this lie so that she will not question their relative affluence. Although the Silvers have supernatural powers to which most Reds cannot lay claim, the novel suggests that their true power relies on degrading the Reds to such an extent that they no longer question their position as second-class citizens and instead compete with one another for the scraps tossed aside by the Silvers. The class conflict in the novel reflects real-world situations in which social groups are pitted against one another in order to make room for a small group to amass disproportionate wealth and power.

Reds not only live in poverty, but are also conditioned to accept that the kind of wealth the Silvers enjoy is so far out of reach that they might as well not try to grasp it. For example, Mare has not learned any valuable skills in the Reds' poor school system. Because she does not have inherently marketable talents like her younger sister Gisa does for sewing, Mare works as a pickpocket. She steals very small sums of money and goods from other Reds, who are left out in the cold when they find their property missing. It is only out of desperation that Mare decides to try robbing Silvers. Her best friend, Kilorn, is being drafted into the army and must either accept his conscription (a certain death or mutilation warrant) or come up with an extravagant sum of money to pay smugglers to help him escape. Mare resorts to stealing the money, but only because it is already a life-or-death matter.

Mare brings Gisa to help her steal from the Silvers. When Gisa is caught picking a Silver's pocket, the guards tell her that she knows what the consequences are before they crush her sewing hand. This scene demonstrates that the Silvers use scare tactics—the threat of a crushed hand—to keep Reds from even thinking about robbing Silvers, even though doing so surely has far less impact on its victims than the effectively permissible act of robbing Reds.

The way in which Reds are all but forced into criminal acts in order to survive, then set at the mercy of an imbalanced legal system, reflects the way underprivileged groups throughout the colonized world have been excluded from access to wealth. In the United States, for example, the end of chattel slavery was succeeded by a barrage of legal and cultural roadblocks to

Black Americans' success. Today, American prisons are extremely overpopulated with Black inmates because Black communities have been left very few options for economic survival and are unfairly targeted by drug laws. The novel follows the conventions of Suzanne Collins' *Hunger Games* trilogy, George Orwell's [1984](#), and other dystopian fiction in order to address real political and cultural inequality through the use of fictional worlds.

Mare understands that the Silvers hold double standards for Reds. However, when she begins living as a Silver in the capital, she realizes that these double standards are more fragile than she previously thought. Ultimately, the Silvers' ability to exact so much power over the Reds relies on the Reds' concession to compete with one another instead of with the Silvers.

Mare shocks the Silver court by revealing that she has supernatural abilities, which only the Silvers are supposed to have. The Silver royals react by taking Mare captive and concocting a story about her. According to the official account released to the kingdom, Mare is a long-lost Silver royal whose parents died when she was a baby and who has been raised by an adoptive family of Reds. Mare is puzzled throughout the novel about why the Silvers do not simply kill her. Their insistence instead upon spreading the false story of Mare's parentage demonstrates that they are less threatened by Mare herself than by the possibility that the Reds collectively could realize that magical abilities, which the Silvers have used to argue their superiority, might also be available to Reds.

Mare's adversarial relationship to Evangeline further demonstrates that the Silvers are anxious about marking themselves as superior to Reds. Evangeline goes out of her way to publicly prove herself mentally and physically more powerful than Mare. Although Evangeline is somewhat stronger than Mare, her power does not so far exceed Mare's that it is clear Mare could never best her given the proper training. Mare's abilities do not threaten to weaken Evangeline's abilities, but in order to feel powerful, Evangeline must dominate and degrade Mare. Silver power, as royals like Evangeline imagine it, thus exists only in relation to Reds' comparative weakness. Again, this formulation of Silver power parallels the power of elite, wealthy white people in the United States. The white American ruling class depended first on slave labor and then on the working class in order to produce the wealth it controls. Still today, the disproportionately Black prison class is forced to do physical labor (such as fighting wildfires) for no pay, meaning that by funneling Black people into prison, the white ruling class acquires an ever-growing source of free labor.

Sensing the potential power of a collective Red movement like the Scarlet Guard, power-hungry Maven and Queen Elara commit terrorist acts and blame the Scarlet Guard for perpetrating them. By doing so, they help divide the general population of Reds, who are either for or against the tactics of the Scarlet Guard. The Reds' disagreements over revolutionary

tactics prevent them from becoming better organized against the Silvers, leaving ample room for Maven and the queen to grab even more power for themselves. Similar divisionary tactics have been used not only in the United States but throughout the world by power-seeking groups—as could be seen with the rise of the extreme right across Europe and in the United States during the second decade of the twenty-first century.

By the end of the novel, Mare has realized that the key to bettering life for her family and fellow Reds is not accepting jobs and handouts from the Silvers wherever they are available, or competing with other Reds for limited resources while the Silvers live in affluence. Instead, she resolves to collaborate with other Reds and even Silvers who want to see the world made fairer. The supernatural powers of the Silvers will have to stand up to the supernatural powers that Mare and a few of the other Reds are revealed to wield. More than this, however, the tyrannical Silvers will have to deal with the power of a coordinated movement of Reds who recognize that they are most powerful not as adversaries but as allies against injustice. The novel leaves the reader with the impression that the key to social uplift lies in collaboration among otherwise powerless groups.



REVOLUTION VS. STABILITY

Not all of the Silvers in *Red Queen* want to oppress the Reds. Cal, for example, sees that the Reds live in terrible conditions, but he does not find these conditions so unacceptable that he wants to upset political order in order to effect change. Maven, on the other hand, tells Mare that the change he wants to see is worth disorder and even violence. Mare, faced with the opportunity to involve herself in a Red resistance effort, must evaluate how much social stability and how many lives she is willing to put on the line in the short-term in order to bring about a more just world in the long-term. She is then drawn into an assassination plot that she thinks will serve the greater good of liberating the Reds. When she eventually realizes that she has been duped by a power-hungry subset of the royal family, she must grapple with the fact that she is implicated in several murders that have not even changed the world for the better. Revolution thus proves to be trickier than it first seems. It requires Mare to sacrifice a known (if imperfect) status quo in order to empower political groups that have yet to prove how they will govern. Perhaps even more than this political uncertainty, Mare must come to grips with the moral uncertainty and compromise that both revolution and political stability entail.

Mare's relationships with Cal and Maven respectively symbolize the attractiveness of stability and the attractiveness of revolution. But as she discovers more about each of them, she discovers that she may have been quick to judge both. Mare's greatest disagreement with Cal for most of the novel is

over his unwillingness to pioneer the same kind of political upheaval as Maven. Whereas Maven advocates revolution, Cal advocates keeping the status quo.

Mare initially thinks that Cal's willingness to go along with the political regime in place makes him an inherently violent person, willing to strongarm Reds into their "rightful" place as the Silvers have designated. Still, she finds him attractive and likes him in part because he got her a job at the palace. If Mare operates within the confines of the system Cal upholds, she knows that she can occupy a comfortable position relative to the members of the Scarlet Guard, who are fugitives now that they have publicly revealed their plot to overthrow the Silver government.

Maven, meanwhile, tells Mare that he is secretly part of the Scarlet Guard because he wants to see Reds treated as equal citizens. This attitude makes Mare feel worthy and respected, and she begins to fall for him. Because of her resistance to violence, however, Mare is at first hesitant to be party to an assassination plot in order to bring about the change she wants to see. Maven convinces her that because the Silvers are already killing far more Reds than the number of elite Silvers the Scarlet Guard is proposing to kill, the assassination will amount to a net moral positive. Maven's commitment to the ideal of social equality is ultimately more attractive to Mare than the individual comfort and security Cal has offered to her.

Yet just when Mare has decided to reject Cal and fully trust Maven, she discovers that Maven has been working the whole time to put himself on the throne. This discovery makes her realize that she has been party to murder without knowing that she was simply enabling a coup by yet another power-hungry individual. Maven, as it turns out, does represent a kind of revolution, but not the kind Mare wants. She realizes that she may have had more luck effecting change had she trusted Cal and convinced him to treat Reds more fairly upon ascending to the throne.

This realization helps Mare understand that overthrowing a government is a complex process that can easily backfire. Now that it has, she and Cal have no choice but to accept Maven's new, unjust regime, or engage in revolution in order to either restore the status quo or bring about a brighter future for the Reds. What they decide will not determine whether or not people die but, rather, *which* people will die. Mare and Cal, as potential leaders of a new revolution, will have to accept some of the responsibility for the moral atrocities that are sure to occur in the process.

The novel's exploration of revolution and its moral ambiguity also connects its fantasy world to the real world in a sometimes-explicit way. History has framed many of the real world's successful revolutions as inevitable and for the best, but the political thinkers who were active during these revolutions did not necessarily see things in such a clear light. By dramatizing Mare and Cal's moral dilemmas, Aveyard

demonstrates that social justice in any situation can be tricky and requires both risk and care in order to implement.

In the 1790s, for example, British politicians who had seen the bloody but successful French revolution disagreed on how to proceed with social reform in their own country. Radical reformers such as William Godwin and Thomas Paine advocated empowering the masses and divesting the monarchy of its power. Conservatives such as Edmund Burke worried that doing so would so disregard the precedents set by the long-standing Magna Carta, England's foundational political document, that it would become dangerously impossible to control the course of the revolution. Like Mare and Cal's disagreement, the disagreement between conservative and radical thinkers during this period was due not to inherent good on one side and inherent evil on the other, but rather to a difference of opinion on what course of political action would do the most good.

The political questions of the novel have a unique context, but they are not far off from the questions posed by Burke, Godwin, Paine, and their contemporaries—or revolutionaries and reformers throughout history and the present day. Imagining the experience of Mare and her fellow fictional characters draws the reader into engagement with the broader questions of revolution beyond the confines of fiction. By creating sympathetic and morally good characters on both sides of the revolution in the novel, Aveyard helps the reader to understand that responsible political reform requires engagement from all perspectives.

In the novel, Mare and Cal both strive for what they think is best, and they both make mistakes that have a high cost. Mare jumps at the chance for change without knowing everything about the revolutionary group she is joining, whereas Cal is too afraid of the unknown to attempt to make real change happen. They eventually learn that they need a happy medium of their two strategies, taking care to research and plan before acting, but accepting that they will need to surrender some control in order to pursue justice.



SYMBOLS

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



EARRINGS

Mare wears mismatched earrings throughout the course of the novel. Even as her life changes dramatically, the earrings anchor her to her past, symbolizing her background growing up in the Stilts with a poor Red family. The earrings are significant to Mare not because they are valuable but because they were given to her by her three brothers, Bree, Tramy, and Shade. All three have been

conscripted for army service by the time the novel begins. It has become a family tradition for each to give a set of cheap earrings to Mare and her younger sister, Gisa, by which to remember them. Three times now, Mare has pierced her and Gisa's ears so that they each have one earring from each brother. Significantly, Mare's poor piercing ability usually causes their ears to drip red **blood** afterwards, visibly marking Mare and Gisa as members of the lower class. Even after the bleeding has stopped, the earrings linger to represent the fact that Mare and Gisa bleed red.

When Mare leaves her home and goes to live at Summerton, she does not have any earrings to give Gisa. She has been saving up for a set to give her sister when she is conscripted at age eighteen, but her move to the royal palace happens a year earlier than this. Instead, Mare must simply tell Gisa that she loves her and hope that her sister remembers her. Mare's anxiety about the tenuousness of her relationship with her family manifests in her refusal to let the royal maids take her earrings; she allows them to otherwise make her over entirely, but she retains this symbol of her true background. Her desperate clinging to the earrings offsets her inability to provide such a tangible symbol of her relationship with Gisa. By adopting the role of a Silver and living in the royal palace, Mare is risking not only her life but also her connection to her sister and the life they have shared.



BLOOD

Citizens of the Kingdom of Norta lead drastically different lives, depending on the color of their blood. Blood thus represents not only life and death but also social stratification. Those with silver blood have special talents of manipulating elements, and they use their power to denigrate and oppress those with red blood. Silvers live in the lap of luxury, and Reds live in extreme poverty. Mare Barrow is a Red who, as the novel's plot unfolds, must come to masquerade as a Silver, and her life depends on concealing her true identity. This means that bleeding, or even a blush, could give her away. Her source of life, blood, thus becomes also a threat to her life.

Over the course of the novel, Mare discovers her own talent of manipulating and even generating electricity—a power that supposedly would be impossible for someone with red blood. As her case shows, blood is far more complicated than anyone in Norta thought, and there might be an entire subset of Reds with special abilities to overpower those of the Silvers. Paradoxically, then, Mare's blood is both highly determinative of her life and not at all determinative of who she actually is as a person. Socially it has decided how she is viewed and treated by others, but biologically it hasn't decided anything about her.

The discoveries Mare makes about her blood are illuminating to her and play an important part of her journey to

understanding her own identity. However, even though the generally accepted truths about blood prove to be scientifically false, powerful authorities have colluded in order to conceal from the public that Reds might be just as powerful as Silvers. Mare might understand individually that her Red blood does not make her a lesser being than a Silver, but the rest of the world continues to operate under the false assumption that it does. Blood's role in the novel thus demonstrates that power often depends on the manipulation and concealment of information. Even science is subject to political manipulation.



QUOTES


Note: all page numbers for the quotes below refer to the Orion Books edition of *Red Queen* published in 2015.

Chapter 1 Quotes

☞ Families can go years without hearing a thing, only to find their sons and daughters waiting on the front doorstep, home on leave or sometimes blissfully discharged. But usually you receive a letter made of heavy paper, stamped with the king's crown seal below a short thank-you for your child's life. Maybe you even get a few buttons from their torn, obliterated uniforms.

Related Characters: Mare Barrow (speaker), Tramy Barrow, Bree Barrow, Shade Barrow

Related Themes:   

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 2

Explanation and Analysis

Reflecting on the lack of news from her brothers, who are away at war, Mare decides that it is probably a good thing that her family has not received any status updates on their whereabouts or wellbeing. Most of the time, and uncomfortably often, families in the Stilts receive news from the warfront only when their child or sibling has been killed.

This passage shows not only the uneven power dynamic between Reds and the Silvers who rule them, but it also shows that death and grief are integral parts of the life Mare has always known. Silvers have the power to force Reds from the Stilts to go to war at the young age of eighteen. Being drafted is next-to a death sentence; at the very least, it means a long separation from loved ones, and often it means a lifetime of physical disability due to injury. Mare's tone in the passage is blasé, indicating that even


though she does not like the reality of the draft, it nonetheless would not shock her were she to receive bad news about her brothers.

The fact that the Silvers send a thank-you note to the families of deceased soldiers, and the fact that this occurrence is common, additionally shows that Silvers greatly undervalue the lives of Reds. Rather than make some kind of concrete change to their wartime practices to preserve Red lives, Silvers think it is a balanced exchange to give families official notes and buttons of deceased children. In fact, Reds are largely overlooked by Silvers except in the event that their children die at war, so there is a sense in which it seems the Silvers expect the Reds to be grateful that they are being acknowledged at all.

☞ This is the true division between Silvers and Reds: the color of our blood. This simple difference somehow makes them stronger, smarter, *better* than us.

Related Characters: Mare Barrow (speaker)

Related Themes:   

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 9

Explanation and Analysis

As Mare watches the Feat of August, this month's staged fight at the arena in town, one of the two contestants starts to bleed. His blood is silver in color, reminding Mare and the other Reds watching the fight that there is a biological difference between them and the Silvers.

This passage illuminates the reason the Feats are mandatory events for the Reds. The contestants are always Silvers, whose special abilities allow for spectacular fights in which they inflict much more damage than two Reds would be able to do. The Silvers, Mare understands, want the Reds to witness their own bloodshed because it will remind them both of their own mortality and of the fact that they could never withstand the kind of physical trials the Silvers are able to endure. The feats are all about making the Reds acutely aware of their bodily weakness. If they feel that for each Red citizen there is a much stronger Silver citizen, they stand little chance of forming a united, organized front to dismantle the Silvers' class rule.

☞ In school, we learned about the world before ours, about the angels and gods that lived in the sky, ruling the earth with kind and loving hands. Some say those are just stories, but I don't believe that.

The gods rule us still. They have come down from the stars. And they are no longer kind.

Related Characters: Mare Barrow (speaker)

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 11

Explanation and Analysis

The August Feat, which should be a routine if spectacularly violent event, has taken a surprising turn of events: one of the Silver champions has struck a blow that might actually kill the other. Silvers are supposed to shed blood at the Feats, but only enough to make clear to the Reds that they, with their red blood rather than silver, are not the superhuman creatures who make up the ruling class. Mare is struck by how empty and unapologetic the eyes of the winning champion are when looking upon the body of the person he has wounded. As the Silver officers rush the Reds out of the arena, Mare realizes that the champion has a blatant disregard for humanity. The officers also are less concerned about anyone's wellbeing than about the political implications of allowing a crowd of Reds to witness the mortality of a Silver champion.

Mare's reflection on gods and their cruelty helps build the fictional world Aveyard is creating. This world has a polytheistic (meaning multiple gods) mythology that, for many, is part of a cultural past. Mare, by contrast, seems to believe that the Silvers have supplanted the kind gods with cruelty. The Silvers are like "gods" because of their supernatural powers, but they are very human in the way they have been corrupted by their absolute power over Reds.

Chapter 2 Quotes

☞ I've always wanted her hair, though I'd never tell her that. Where hers is like fire, my hair is what we call river brown. Dark at the root, pale at the ends, as the color leeches from our hair with the stress of Stilts life. Most keep their hair short to hide their gray ends but I don't. I like the reminder that even my hair knows life shouldn't be this way.

Related Characters: Mare Barrow (speaker), Gisa Barrow

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 13-14

Explanation and Analysis

Watching Gisa put her hair up in a bun, Mare thinks about how she wishes she had her sister's hair. The passage serves the purpose of exposition, explaining what Mare looks like and giving more context to the world in which she exists, but it also demonstrates Mare's complicated relationship to her sister and to herself.

Mare is jealous of Gisa, not only because of her hair but because she is gainfully employed as a seamstress's apprentice. Gisa's fiery hair seems to have more life in it than Mare's brown, fading hair does. This greater sense of life is emblematic of the way Gisa, in Mare's eyes, is better able to blend in with the lively Silver court than Mare would ever be able to do.

At the same time, Mare is proud of her color-leeching hair. She wears it long to show to herself and to the world that she is continually surviving an oppressive existence. Mare wishes that her life were better, but she nonetheless strongly identifies herself as a young woman who has grown up in the bleak environment of the Stilts. She has no desire to hide that fact from herself or from others.

Chapter 3 Quotes

☞ He's right. It's cruel to give hope where none should be. It only turns into disappointment, resentment, rage—all the things that make this life more difficult than it already is.

Related Characters: Mare Barrow (speaker), Farley, Kilorn Warren

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 26

Explanation and Analysis

When Mare tells Kilorn that she has made a deal with Farley to smuggle them out of the Stilts for the price of two thousand crowns, Kilorn urges her not to take the offer seriously. Both of them know that the operation is highly risky to begin with, and finding two thousand crowns seems beyond impossible. Mare agrees that going through the motions to meet Farley's terms is a bad idea, but she nonetheless holds to the plan.

Mare's reflection on the dangers of having too much hope in a hopeless situation demonstrates that even when it seems as though there is nothing to lose, the stakes of rebelling against systems of inequality can be very high. Should Mare


and Kilorn attempt to find the two thousand crowns, it is nearly inevitable that they will fail. The worst-case scenario is punishment, but the best-case scenario is not just that nothing will happen to them. Rather, the best seemingly-possible outcome is that their hopes will be dashed. As Mare states, this disappointment will probably turn to much darker emotions, making the oppressive conditions in which they live seem not only insurmountable but also unacceptable. Living in resignation does not offer the hope of a better life, but it does prevent the pain of repeated disappointment.

Chapter 4 Quotes

☞ As more and more footage rolls, showing the marble façade of the courthouse explode into dust or a diamondglass wall withstanding a fireball, part of me feels happy. The Silvers are not invincible. They have enemies, enemies who can hurt them, and for once, they aren't hiding behind a Red shield.

Related Characters: Mare Barrow (speaker)

Related Themes:   

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 35

Explanation and Analysis

Mare is in Summertown, surrounded by Silvers, watching a newscast about a terrorist attack on the capital. Mare does not yet know that the Scarlet Guard is responsible for the attack; all she sees is the televised destruction of the main city where Nortá's wealth and political power are consolidated, and to which a Red like her could scarcely ever hope to gain access.

Mare's reflection that "part of me" feels happy demonstrates that she has reservations over celebrating the destruction she is witnessing. Although to do so seems morally dubious, she cannot help but feel hopeful because for once, she is witnessing a spectacle that confirms the Silvers' weakness rather than their strength. Mare understands that, in the society the Silvers have constructed, Silver and Red prosperity are antithetical to one another. In order for Reds to thrive, Silvers must suffer.



Mare is hopeful because the Silvers' defenses are breached, but it is important to note that it is diamondglass and marble that the bombs are beating down, not Silvers themselves. Mare's comparison of these defenses to the Silvers' usual "Red shield" makes clear not only that the

Silvers think of the Reds' bodies as just another inanimate line of defense, but also that only the Silvers' buildings are suffering, whereas the Reds regularly spill blood to maintain the Silvers' power. There is still a long way to go before power dynamics will truly be upended.

Chapter 5 Quotes

☞ There are worse lives to live. Don't feel sorry for me.

Related Characters: Mare Barrow (speaker), Gisa Barrow, Cal (Tiberias Calore)

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 47

Explanation and Analysis

Upset because she feels responsible for the fact that a soldier has crushed Gisa's hand as punishment for stealing, Mare sneaks away from home to pickpocket bargoers at the edge of town. When she tries to steal from Cal, he catches her but gives her money. She reluctantly accepts the money and ends up telling him about many of her woes. He tells her that he is sorry for her, and she rejects his pity.

Cal's pity leads him to offer Mare money, but pity is largely unhelpful to Mare. Rather than feel sorry for her, she wishes that those with greater means would invest their money and energy into social reform. Cal's pity is also dehumanizing, reinforcing the notion that Mare is doomed to be excluded from prosperity simply because of the circumstances into which she was born. To reject Cal's money would be to reject his pity, but Mare also cannot deny that she and her family would benefit from the money. She thus decides to take the coin while making clear to Cal that she is only accepting its monetary value, not the emotional value he is trying to attach to it.

Chapter 6 Quotes

☞ I don't know who hired you or what they told you about the job, but it starts to wear on you. It's not all changing bedsheets and cleaning plates. You have to look without seeing, hear without listening. We're objects up there, living statues meant to serve....Especially now, with this Scarlet Guard business. It's never a good time to be a Red, but this is very bad.

Related Characters: Ann Walsh (speaker), Mare Barrow

Related Themes:    

Page Number: 54

Explanation and Analysis

Walsh and some sentinels have taken an unsuspecting Mare out of her home and are transporting her to the royal palace at Summerton. Mare still does not know that she has been selected (at Cal's urging) to be a royal servant. Walsh assumes that Mare is looking forward to being gainfully employed at the palace and begins to warn her that the lifestyle comes with its own difficulties.

Walsh's advice offers an insider look into what it is like to work for the Silvers. Mare has indeed romanticized the notion of having a Silver-sanctioned job to bring money to her family, but she began to be disillusioned when she visited Summerton with Gisa. Walsh's advice confirms what Mare suspected then: working for the Silvers is lucrative, but it is also lonely and dehumanizing.

Walsh's concern about maintaining the safe façade of a "living statue" in the time of the Scarlet Guard demonstrates that revolution is not without risk. By demanding increased power for Reds, the Scarlet Guard has endangered Reds who survive on the Silvers' misperception of them as weak. On the other hand, to reinforce such notions of class roles might be said by some to work against the prosperity of Reds as a whole, even if it is advantageous for the Red individuals who work for the Silvers.

☝ From my vantage point, hidden behind the flowers, I'm level with the king's box and slightly behind it. Mare Barrow, a few yards from the king. What would my family think, or Kilorn for that matter? This man sends us to die, and I've willingly become his servant. It makes me sick.

Related Characters: Mare Barrow (speaker), King Tiberias, Kilorn Warren

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 59

Explanation and Analysis

Mare has just reached the capital and is carrying out her first assignment as a royal servant: serving Silvers at Queenstrial. She is bringing food and drink to the spectators seated around a huge arena that looks like a much more extravagant version of the arena in which Silvers fight each other before Reds who are forced to

watch. Among the spectators is the royal family, including the king who is responsible for the discriminatory policies against Reds.

Although the king is behind such practices as forcing Reds to go to war and to watch Silvers fight each other, the king himself does not stoop to be physically present at any events that are primarily attended by Reds. This absence makes his presence before Mare all the more striking. There is an irony in her realization that she is exactly level with the king's box, because he is so clearly ranked an immeasurable distance above her both politically and socially. This irony registers to Mare as a betrayal of her ideals. By working for the king in order to serve her own self-interest, Mare is propping up the system that keeps her friends and family oppressed.

Mare does not fully realize that her position at the level of the king emblemizes the artificiality of the gap between them. She is about to demonstrate that she has special powers to rival those of the king, and over the course of the novel, the hierarchical distance between Mare and the king will grow less and less stable. This moment anticipates the leveling of the field between them.

Chapter 7 Quotes

☝☝ So this is a pageant.

A violent one, meant to showcase a girl's beauty, splendor—and strength. *The most talented daughter*. This is a display of power, to pair the prince with the most powerful girl, so that their children might be the strongest of all. And this has been going on for hundreds of years.

I shudder to think of the strength in Cal's pinkie finger.

Related Characters: Mare Barrow (speaker), Cal (Tiberias Calore)

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 66

Explanation and Analysis

As Queenstrial begins, Mare witnesses a small girl smash apart the ground in the arena below. She realizes that the eligible Silver bachelorettes are demonstrating their suitability to marry the princes not only by showing off their beauty and grace but also by showing off their lethal power. The event serves as a public reminder of the Silvers' strength, but it also serves as a breeding ritual by which the royal family can select the strongest genes to graft onto its ever-stronger family tree.

Mare sees through the celebratory tone of the event to its sinister underpinnings. Although she is savvy in this respect, she does not outsmart the ritual because it still makes her feel hopeless against the power of the royal family. Queenstrial is an ingenious political ploy because it results in either increased love and admiration for the royal family, paralyzing fear of the royal family, or both.

Chapter 8 Quotes

“I’d bow, but I might fall over,” I say to Queen Elara, and immediately I wish I could call back the words. She’s a *Silver*, I can’t talk to her that way. She could put me in the stocks, take away my rations, punish me, punish my family. *No*, I realize in my growing horror. *She’s the queen. She could just kill me. She could kill us all.*

Related Characters: Mare Barrow (speaker), Queen Elara

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 77



Explanation and Analysis

After accidentally demonstrating before the entire Silver court that she has the power to manipulate electricity, Mare tries to run away and is caught. She wakes up in a cell, having dreamt of her past and of events she could not possibly recall. Outside her cell stands Queen Elara. Mare speaks sarcastically and flippantly to her before realizing that she is taking a great risk by doing so.

Mare’s instinct to speak critically to a powerful figure shows that she is instinctually brave in the face of injustice. Only after she has spoken does she realize that self-preservation might dictate an alternative course of action. Mare is realizing in this moment that dismantling power takes not only bravery and critical thinking but also strategy and, possibly, a certain amount of manipulation. Outright defiance of power plays an important role in revolution, but Mare can only remain useful to her community as long as she stays alive. Faced so immediately with the power she seeks to dismantle, Mare begins to understand just how dangerous it can be to work against that power.

“You have no occupation and are scheduled for conscription on your next birthday. You attend school sparingly, your academic test scores are low, and you have a list of offenses that would land you in prison in most cities. Thievery, smuggling, resisting arrest, to name but a few. All together you are poor, rude, immoral, unintelligent, impoverished, bitter, stubborn, and a blight upon your village and my kingdom.”

Related Characters: King Tiberias (speaker), Mare Barrow

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 83

Explanation and Analysis

After Mare wakes up in a cell inside the palace following Queenstrial, she is brought before the king in the throne room. He recites the information he has found on her identity card, which the kingdom uses to keep tabs on her. Tiberias finds everything he has read about Mare to indicate that she is worthless and a detriment to the world.


The existence of identity cards that contain so much data about each citizen is an invasion of privacy by the government. Nothing Mare does seems to go undocumented, meaning that everything she does happens only because the government allows her to go on existing as she is. Additionally, the way Tiberias quantifies Mare’s worth demonstrates that in Norta, individuals’ worth is determined according to an inflexible rubric that is very much in line with capitalistic notions of human value. If Mare does not contribute in a specific set of ways to her community, the king (the ultimate figurehead of the prevailing power structures in Norta) deems her undeserving of a place in society.

Chapter 9 Quotes

“Remember the person you’re supposed to be, and remember well...You are pretending to be raised Red, but you’re Silver by blood. You are now Red in the head, Silver in the heart...From now until the end of your days, you must lie. Your life depends on it, little lightning girl.”

Related Characters: Queen Elara (speaker), Maven Calore, King Tiberias, Mare Barrow

Related Themes:   

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 95

Explanation and Analysis

The king and queen have decided together that they will deal with Mare's demonstration of power at Queenstrial by telling the kingdom that she is the long-lost daughter of a deceased Silver war hero and that she only appeared as a servant because she was raised by a Red family after her parents died. Mare will marry Maven and pretend that she has come home to court to learn about her "true" identity as a Silver. The queen uses her power as a whisper to speak this threat directly into Mare's mind.



The queen tells Mare to remember her identity when in reality, Mare must forget her true identity in order to pull off the masquerade into which she is being plunged. The queen's language threatens to destabilize even this reality, making it extremely difficult for Mare to maintain perspective on who she truly is. The queen could say these words aloud to Mare, but she chooses to reinforce the power dynamic by forcing her thoughts directly into Mare's mind. Her threat is all the more terrifying because it is true: Mare's life does depend on her lying. The lie, in return, depends on her life because should Mare bleed, everyone will be able to see that she is not truly Silver.

There is also a question of just how long "until the end of your days" will last. The queen reminds Mare with her diminutive nickname, "little lightning girl," that no matter Mare's power, the queen will stop at nothing to manipulate her. Mare is a "little girl" who must do as the queen says.

Chapter 11 Quotes

☝☝ After a moment of tense silence, the queen turns on her heel. "Very well." Like any wife, she hates her husband for challenging her, and like any queen, she hates the power the king holds over her. *A bad combination.*

Related Characters: Queen Elara, Mare Barrow (speaker), Evangeline Samos, Maven Calore, Cal (Tiberias Calore), King Tiberias

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 110

Explanation and Analysis

After the feast at which the royal family announces Cal's engagement to Evangeline and Maven's engagement to Mare, the princes offer to escort Evangeline and Mare back to their respective rooms. Elara protests that this would be

inappropriate. When Cal proposes that he escort Mare while Maven escorts Evangeline, King Tiberias intervenes in the disagreement, telling Elara to allow Cal's plan. Elara is unhappy but recognizes that she has been overruled.


Mare's remark that Elara hates being challenged by her husband, "like any wife," shows that Mare is recognizing universal power struggles. It is not only Silver-Red relations that are governed by struggles for power, but also domestic relationships. Even the queen, who has more power than almost anyone in Norta, can find moments to be dissatisfied with the amount of influence she is able to exact over a situation. Mare notes that Elara's wifely dissatisfaction with being challenged by her husband combines badly with her queenly dissatisfaction of being overruled by the king. It seems that Elara's position of power actually heightens her desire for *more* power and the ruthlessness with which she might try to obtain it.

Chapter 13 Quotes

☝☝ Thinking all Silvers are evil is just as wrong as thinking all Reds are inferior....What my people are doing to you and yours is wrong to the deepest levels of humanity. Oppressing you, trapping you in an endless cycle of poverty and death, just because we think you are *different* from us? That is not *right*. And as any student of history can tell you, it will end poorly.

Related Characters: Mare Barrow

Related Themes:    

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 131

Explanation and Analysis

Mare goes to her private lesson with Julian to learn about her power of electricity and how to use it. She begins to wonder if Julian is not like other Silvers she has met because he has turned the security cameras off in his classroom, seemingly to allow Mare to feel more comfortable. Julian speaks critically of the royal agenda to use Mare to destroy the Scarlet Guard. When Mare asks him why he does not hate the Scarlet Guard if he is a Silver, he responds by imploring Mare to see the greater complexities within the categories of Red and Silver.

The fact that Julian thinks that the Silvers' oppression is both wrong and politically untenable allows him to build a rapport with Mare. More-so than his words, it is this rapport that leads her to consider the idea that she contributes to

the unfair caste system by thinking of Silvers as categorically evil. Even as Mare begins to see that Reds and Silvers may not be as biologically distinct as she thought, Julian articulates the injustice of mistreating groups of people regardless of their biological difference. His words give Mare permission to think of herself and her people as deserving of greater prosperity, whether or not they are as biologically advanced as the Silvers.

Chapter 14 Quotes

☞☞ The rage rises again, and I don't even *want* to control it. But what can I do about it? What can I do to avenge my brother, or even try to save the others?

Related Characters: Mare Barrow (speaker), Shade Barrow, Cal (Tiberias Calore)

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 161

Explanation and Analysis



Cal has just helped Mare sneak out of the palace to visit her family. While there, she has learned that her brother, Shade, was executed for desertion on the warfront. Mare is positive that Shade did not desert and is angry when Cal expresses sympathy for Mare in response to the bad news.


Cal's remark heightens Mare's anger because he cannot possibly understand what it is like to lose a brother to the draft the way she has. Silvers are not compulsorily conscripted in the way Reds are, despite the fact that the war is being waged primarily to protect Silver interests. Mare does not want to control her anger because, in a sense, it is the only tool she has to fight back against the forces that have taken her brother away from her. Mare feels an increasing sense of despair, and she wants nothing more than to find a way to harness that despair for revolutionary ends. This moment is what leads her to join the Scarlet Guard, officially mounting an attack on the Silver regime.

Chapter 17 Quotes

☞☞ My legs move on their own, swinging out in a maneuver I've used in the back alleys of the Stilts a hundred times. Even on Kilorn once or twice. My foot connects with her leg, sweeping it out from under her, and she crashes to the floor next to me. I'm on her in a second, despite the exploding pain in my back. My hands crackle with hot energy, even as they collide against her face. Pain sears through my knuckle-bones but I keep going, wanting to see sweet silverblood.

Related Characters: Mare Barrow (speaker), Maven Calore, Cal (Tiberias Calore), Kilorn Warren, Evangeline Samos

Related Themes:  

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 205

Explanation and Analysis

During Mare's first Training session with the young Silver nobles, she watches several duels. Maven loses his duel, and Mare speaks up in his favor when Cal speaks to him patronizingly. Mare feels confident in her defense of Maven until Evangeline challenges her to a duel, and Mare realizes that Cal's tips on survival might be technically correct. The stakes are high for Mare to do well in this duel because if she bleeds in front of the Silvers, her secret will be out. Evangeline is stronger than Mare, so the moment that Mare finds a way to use fighting tactics she learned back home in the Stilts, she fixates on the goal of maintaining the upper hand and destroying Evangeline.

Mare's decision to try to rival Evangeline's strength rather than outsmart her is in direct contradiction with Cal's advice to Maven, so it is clear that Mare is unlikely to succeed. Her determination shows how tempting it is to relish the upper hand to the point of "wanting to see sweet silverblood." Mare's desire is neither ethically nor strategically sound. It resembles the Silvers' desire to rule the Reds with force and demonstrates that the Silvers might be blind to both the ethical pitfalls of their regime and also to the weaknesses they expose in themselves by determining to best the Reds at every corner.

Chapter 18 Quotes

☞☞ ...[Y]ou're in danger, from everyone. Even Maven. Even me. *Anyone can betray anyone.*

Related Characters: Julian Jacos (speaker), Maven Calore, Mare Barrow

Related Themes: 

Page Number: 225

Explanation and Analysis

After Maven convinces Mare to join the Scarlet Guard's scheme to get the kingdom's attention by assassinating several highly-ranked Silvers, Mare finds herself defending her attachment to Maven in her lesson with Julian. She is inwardly worried that she is risking too much by involving herself in the terrorist plot, but as she argues with Julian about the wisdom of trusting Maven, Mare tries to convince herself that Maven is risking even more than she is. Julian insists that Mare is being naïve by forgetting that she is caught up in a game in which she is the target of everyone, including Maven and even Julian.

Julian's warning demonstrates that he cares about Mare enough to want her to stay safe. However, he also warns her away from him and Maven, the two people Mare feels the closest to trusting. He thus encourages her sense of isolation. Julian's words, "Anyone can betray anyone," become a mantra to Mare. In a strange way, by repeating this directive not to form close relationships with those surrounding her, Mare retains Julian's friendship and advice even after they are no longer living in the same place. "Anyone can betray anyone" is ultimately the only statement Mare knows she can trust.

Chapter 19 Quotes

💬 Think what their lives will buy, what their deaths will accomplish. How many of your people could be saved?

Related Characters: Maven Calore (speaker), Mare Barrow

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 236

Explanation and Analysis

Mare is at the ball where the Scarlet Guard is planning to assassinate several important members of the Silver court. Mare is slated to help carry out the plan and is having trouble maintaining her composure as she interacts with the assassination targets. She realizes that she will be helping not only to kill the individual targets but also to drastically affect the lives of all the people who love them, including children. She tells Maven about her concern, and

he urges her to go forward with the plan anyway.

Mare hesitates because as a Red who has lost family members to the Silvers' war and tyranny, she knows what it is like for a family member to be killed for political reason. She ultimately agrees with Maven that the assassination plan has potential to create change that outweighs the damage it will do. However, the fact that Mare must think of lives in terms of how much they will buy demonstrates that revolution does not come without sacrifice.

Chapter 21 Quotes

💬 Walsh hugs me, taking me by surprise. "I don't know how," she mutters, "but I hope you become queen one day. Imagine what you could do then? The Red queen."

Related Characters: Mare Barrow, Ann Walsh (speaker)

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 269

Explanation and Analysis



In the aftermath of the assassination plot in which Mare has played a role, several of her co-conspirators are arrested. Mare sneaks into the prisoners' cell by performing the role of Lady Mareena Titanos, her Silver identity, and claiming that she wants to interrogate them by herself. The sentinels discover what she is doing, but she and the released prisoners manage to thwart them. As the now-fugitives are finally sneaking out of the palace, Walsh tells Mare that she hopes she will be queen one day.

Walsh is the first one to say the phrase, "Red queen." Although this is the title of the novel, no one in Norta has yet imagined a reality in which someone might be publicly recognized as both Red and the queen. Mare has certainly never imagined herself in such a position, so Walsh's statement is pivotal in making Mare see the role she might play both during the revolution and in a new regime. In order for Mare to become the first Red queen, she would also have to reveal the fact that she is not a Silver. Imagining a world order in which she could do so and still rise to power gives Mare a glimmer of hope for a future that usually seems bleak.

Chapter 22 Quotes

☞ It's not long before I find myself standing in the doorway of Julian's old classroom, and the sight shocks me. The stacks of books, the desk, even the maps are gone. The room looks larger but feels smaller. It once held whole worlds but now holds only dust and crumpled paper. My eyes linger on the wall where the huge map used to be. Once I couldn't understand it; now I remember it like an old friend.

Related Characters: Mare Barrow (speaker), Julian Jacos

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 276

Explanation and Analysis

The court is relocating from Summerton to the capital following the terrorist attacks in which Mare was involved. She walks through the halls of the palace and sees servants packing things up. Wanting to avoid the family members of those for whose deaths she is partially responsible, Mare goes to Julian's classroom and finds that it, too, has been mostly packed up to leave.

Julian's classroom has turned into a sort of refuge for Mare, away from the rest of court and away from the cameras that are always watching her. To find it barren of its usual contents is to realize that not even her refuge is safe from the aftereffects of the assassination plot. She may bring about political change that benefits Reds on the whole, but in destabilizing the Silver court, she has also destabilized her own life. This is also the last time Mare will see Julian, though she does not yet know it. The way Mare thinks about the old books and maps foreshadows the way Julian (the closest thing Mare has to an old friend among the Silvers) will be physically absent from Mare's life but will maintain a friendly presence there by leaving her a secret message in a book.

Chapter 24 Quotes

☞ Trees and bushes grow over concrete, reclaiming little pockets and corners, but even more have been cleared away. Shattered glass crunches under my feet and clouds of dust drift in the wind, but somehow this place, the picture of neglect, doesn't feel abandoned. I know this place from the histories, from the books and old maps.

Related Characters: Mare Barrow (speaker), Maven Calore, Farley

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 310

Explanation and Analysis

After receiving a secret message from Farley to meet her at the theater, Mare brings Maven along to see what the Scarlet Guard's next task for her will be. She and Maven find a trapdoor in the ceiling of their box at the theater. When they go through it, they are led underground to a train the Silvers must not realize is operating. Farley takes them on the train to the remains of a ruined city, thought to be uninhabitable because of radiation, where some Reds are making a new life for themselves and manipulating radiation detectors so that they will be left alone.


The fact that the Reds are using an old city to start anew builds the case that they are not trying to completely destroy the only social order Norta has ever known but, rather, that they are trying to reinstate an older social order in which they lived with greater freedom. Like the trees and bushes, the Reds are "reclaiming little pockets and corners" in which they might grow and thrive. The ruined city has a balance of plant life and space that has been cleared away for development. It represents a hybrid of old and new, a peaceful kingdom in which everyone can have a little of the life they crave.

Chapter 26 Quotes

☞ The king's corpse lands with a thud, his head rolling to a stop a few feet away. Silverblood splashes across the floor in a mirrored puddle, lapping at Cal's toes. He drops the melting sword, letting it clang against stone, before falling to his knees, his head in his hands. The crown clatters across the floor, circling through the blood, until it stops to rest at Maven's feet, sharp points bright with liquid silver.

Related Characters: Mare Barrow (speaker), Queen Elara, King Tiberias, Maven Calore, Cal (Tiberias Calore)

Related Themes:    

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 341

Explanation and Analysis

Mare and Maven have just blown up a bridge, and Mare has pleaded with Cal to end the violence by taking her side and calling upon the king to treat the Reds better. Cal brings

Mare and Maven to the throne room, where it is revealed that Elara and Maven have been in league the entire time. They have planned to use Mare and Cal as scapegoats when they stage a coup to put Maven on the throne. Elara controls Cal's mind and body, forcing him to cut off his own father's head.

By forcing Cal to kill the king, Elara protects herself and Maven from becoming direct murderers and also damages the relationship between Cal and his father—and because the king dies, there is no chance to repair that damage. In Elara and Maven's mind, Cal has been toppled from the position of favorite son even as the crown has been toppled from the king's head. The king's blood reaches Cal's feet, whereas the crown reaches Maven's feet: Cal inherits the evidence of his father's violent death, whereas Maven inherits the power of the king. Read another way, however, Cal inherits the essence of his father, whereas Maven inherits only the public, tyrannical image the king projected to the world.

Epilogue Quotes

☛☛ A strange warmth falls over me, a warmth like the sun though we are deep underground. It's as familiar to me as my own lightning, reaching out to envelop me in an embrace we can't have. Even though they call Cal my enemy, even though they fear him, I let his warmth fall on my skin, and I let his eyes burn into mine.

Related Characters: Mare Barrow (speaker), Cal (Tiberias Calore)

Related Themes: 

Page Number: 383

Explanation and Analysis

After fighting for her life in the arena before the entire Silver court, Mare wakes to find herself on a train with several members of the Scarlet Guard who she previously thought dead. Cal is also on the train, wearing restraints. Mare tries to convince the Guard members to release Cal, but they refuse, insisting that just because Cal helped Mare in the arena, it does not mean that he is now on the side of the Guard.

Although Cal is excluded from being fully involved in the strategizing that takes place in the scene, Mare privately allows herself to be open to his presence. She is not trusting enough of everyone present to openly declare a friendship with Cal, nor does she feel that their relationship is precisely that of friends. Nevertheless, her willingness to be vulnerable to someone whose motivations she cannot know in full marks a shift for Mare. She knows that she cannot fully rely on anyone but herself, but she has also come to realize that she must allow herself to lean tentatively on others because, like it or not, there are other people in her life.



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 1

The protagonist and narrator, Mare Barrow, walks through the marketplace of her hometown, the Stilts, picking pockets. It is the first Friday of the month, which means everyone is out of school and work early. It is swelteringly hot, and Mare would rather be in school even though she learns nothing there. Soon, she will no longer be eligible to go to school: at eighteen, everyone who is not apprenticed or employed is drafted into the army.

Mare's three older brothers, Shade, Bree, and Tramy, have all been drafted. Upon leaving, each of them left Mare and her younger sister, Gisa, a set of **earrings** to split to remember them. Mare is saving up to give Gisa a set of earrings next year upon her own conscription. Mare's family may never be reunited. Her mother always tells her, "Don't think about it."

Mare's "only real friend," Kilorn Warren, catches up with Mare and shuffles her along to "the show." Attendance is mandatory for everyone except "essential laborers," like Gisa, who embroiders silk. Mare and Kilorn enter a massive arena, the largest structure in the Stilts, which is staffed by security guards. The guards are "Silvers," and Mare reflects that, "We are not their equals, though you wouldn't know it from looking at us," except that the Silvers do not stoop under the pressure of hard labor and disappointment.

Kilorn, a fisherman's apprentice whose father died at war (unlike Mare's father, who came home missing a leg and a lung), wonders what kind of creatures will fight in the arena today. A "strongarm?" A "telky?" These super-powered creatures are all Silvers. While Kilorn enjoys watching them rip each other apart, Mare knows the fights are reminders that her people could never survive conflict with Silvers.

The fact that Mare is picking pockets suggests that she is among those who are not apprenticed or employed, and who are thus doomed to conscription in her society. This fate awaits her "soon," meaning that she is near the age of eighteen. Although school is not as fulfilling as Mare would like, she seems to resent that the opportunity to go to school or not will soon be taken away from her by the governmental agency of the army.



Mare's age is confirmed to be seventeen by the fact that she will be conscripted next year. Mare and her family have undergone significant trauma every time a child is conscripted. There is tension between Mare's mother's approach, which is to live in avoidance of reality, and the children's approach, which is to give each other tokens of quiet resistance to the idea that they should be okay with their family's forced separation.



Mare leads an isolated existence, without many friends. She feels "unessential" both to the government and to her peers. A sense of competition between Mare and Gisa appears here. This section also draws a divide between Silvers and the class to which Mare belongs. Silvers enforce power, whereas Mare's people labor to produce the riches the Silvers control.



Kilorn has in some ways suffered more than Mare at the hands of the ruling class, but he seems less resentful than Mare of being forced into the arena. Kilorn demonstrates the effectiveness of the Silvers' means of reminding the lower class that they are inferior: he not only witnesses the fights but also enjoys and even anticipates them eagerly.



The fights, called “Feats,” began as the executions of enemies of the state. Silvers found the Feats entertaining. Eventually, Reds were granted admission, and then arenas were built all over, and Reds’ attendance at the Feats became mandatory. Today’s match is between an incredibly muscular “strongarm” and a weak-looking aristocrat of the type who governs a region, like that of the Stilts, without ever setting foot there.

The Feats serve a sinister double purpose of violence and entertainment. While the original executions seem to have been rebranded as entertainment for Silvers and Reds alike, the fact that Reds must go to them suggests that now it is not captive enemies of the state against which the violence is directed but, rather, captive Reds. The visible mismatching of the opponents shows that administrative aristocratic power can be as dangerous as physical power.



Silver security officers toss bread and electricity rations into the crowd as Mare seethes about how the match is clearly meant to scare the Reds into submission. Kilorn cheers as the match gets underway. Mare knows that he wants to see silver **blood**. This is what marks Silvers and Reds apart: Silvers have silver blood, while Reds have red blood. “This simple difference,” Mare states, “somehow makes them stronger, smarter, *better* than us.”

The Silvers act benevolent by handing out bread and electricity rations to the crowd, but Mare’s anger seems in part due to the fact that it is only because of the Silvers’ domineering that the Reds need these things in the first place. Kilorn’s eagerness to see Silver blood upsets Mare because he is buying into the Silvers’ scheme not only to debase Reds but also to make them grateful for that debasement.



It appears that the aristocrat is going to lose soundly to the strongarm. Suddenly, however, it seems that the strongarm begins doing the bidding of the aristocrat. Everyone grows quiet, and Mare speaks what everyone is realizing: the aristocrat is a “whisper,” a person whose power is to control minds. “Whispers,” Mare reflects, “are rare, dangerous, and powerful, even among Silvers, even in the *capital*.” The whisper makes the strongarm plunge his sword into his own stomach.

The quiet dangers of administrative aristocracy are personified in the apparently weak man who gets his opponent to run himself through with a sword. Everyone is in disbelief because such a power is supposed to be rare, but Mare is willing to accept what she sees before her eyes. Unlike many of her fellow citizens, Mare recognizes the threat of the ruling class.



The crowd, including Silver officers, is shocked because Silvers never die in the arena. “After all,” Mare states, “they aren’t Reds.” The whisper walks out of the arena, unfeeling. Mare contemplates the stories she has learned in school about the kind and loving gods who used to exist. She thinks they still do, only now, “They have come down from the stars. And they are no longer kind.”

The Silvers reveal their own weakness: their sense of infallibility. Still, it would require an organized rebellion on the part of the Reds to take advantage of this weakness, and the Reds seem far from such a rebellion. Mare thus assesses the Silvers as essentially cruel gods who can do whatever they wish to one another and to the Reds.



CHAPTER 2

Mare returns to her family’s small house on stilts. From the ladder, Mare can see the private boats of rich Silvers heading to the king’s summer residence in Summerton, where Gisa apprentices to a seamstress. Mare looks at the porch flag on the way inside. It has a star for each of Mare’s brothers, with room left for her and Gisa.

Mare’s family, which consists of Mare, her parents, her sister, and her three brothers, has historically existed in the confines of this small house. The Silvers, meanwhile, have their own private boats, and the king has multiple residences. The power differential between the Silvers and Reds thus manifests in (and is no doubt supported by) a grand division of wealth.



Inside, Mare's mother cooks while fourteen-year-old Gisa embroiders. Her red hair contrasts Mare's, which is brown at the root and light at the ends from stress of Stilts life. Mare keeps her hair long as a "reminder that even my hair knows life shouldn't be this way." Mare's father, who sits in a wheelchair and uses a black-market contraption to breathe despite his collapsed lung, rejects Mare's offer to buy a cake for his upcoming birthday. Mare's mother disapproves of Mare's subsequent offers of gifts that would surely be stolen, just like everything Mare brings home.

Mare's family relationships all appear to be strained as a direct effect of the poor conditions under which Reds are forced to live. Mare is jealous of Gisa because Gisa has a legitimate job that makes her mother proud. Mare feels that her efforts to support her family through theft are rejected by her mother, despite everyone's reliance on the goods Mare brings home. Mare's father is probably unable to leave the house much because it would require climbing down a ladder, and his physical movement is restricted by injuries from his forced military service.



Mare protests that she is contributing what she can before she goes away. Her reference to the war makes everyone fall silent, until Gisa remembers a letter from Shade that she got from the post on the way back from Summerton today. After everyone touches the letter, Mare reads her brother's words aloud because her parents cannot read. Shade describes his new encampment as "Red as the dawn," with barely any Silver officers. He assures them that he is safe and that he has heard similar news of his brother Tramy. There is no word of Bree, but Shade says he is not worried about "the best" of his siblings. As Mare finishes reading the letter, the lights flicker because no one turned in the electricity rations Mare brought home yesterday. Everyone goes to bed, "too tired to fight."

Just as Mare is more willing than most of her fellow citizens to accept that she has seen a whisper in action, she is more willing than the rest of her family to discuss the brutality and injustice of the draft. Gisa seems to be family peacekeeper, as does Shade even in his absence. Although the reader has not met Shade, the tone of his letter seems oddly upbeat given his circumstances. The fact that Mare is able to read the note when her parents cannot indicates that despite the bleak political landscape Mare has been laying out in her narration, there has been some generational progress in recent years.



Lying in her cot, Mare hears a birdcall that she knows to be Kilorn. She tries to ignore the call, but it persists. Mare reluctantly climbs down the ladder out of the house. Her annoyance fades when she sees that Kilorn has been crying, which is out of character for him. He tells her that his master died and that he is no longer an apprentice. He is eighteen, there are no vacant fisherman's apprenticeships, and there is no hope for Kilorn to find a job. Kilorn says what Mare already knows to be true: "They're going to send me to the war."

Kilorn's tears provide a contrast to his giddy excitement in the arena. It is only when Kilorn himself faces the harsh reality of conscription that he feels the full weight of the Reds' oppression. Not only does this moment set the plot of the novel in motion, but it also demonstrates that Mare is better equipped than many others to understand political injustice, even when it is affecting her personally in subtle ways.



CHAPTER 3

The war has been going on for most of the past century. It started over land and the questions of which Silvers got to control what land, but it is always Red bodies on the line at the warfront. In school, Mare and her peers have been taught that they are lucky to live in Norta, "a nation made great by our technology and power." The word "lucky" makes Mare angry. She has always imagined that she will end up in the army, but the thought of Kilorn there is too much for her to handle. She resolves to find a way for both of them to escape conscription. Mare is used to operating within the black market for smuggled goods; she decides that it ought to work just as well for people.

The Silvers might think of the war as an abstract political conflict, and because few people were alive when the war started, they also might see it as something that is out of their hands and at the mercy of history. Mare, on the other hand, is keenly aware of how the conflict ripples out over the lives and the very bodies of the Reds. Mare is resistant to the nationalist propaganda she has been fed in school; the nation may be great for Silvers, but it is only great for them because of the labor and sacrifice of the Reds. In this way the book offers a critique of unchecked capitalism and colonialism—a ruling class is kept wealthy and comfortable through the labor and competition of a large working class.



Will Whistle is an old man with many footholds in the black market. Mare goes to him when she has stolen goods that she can't sell to regular shopkeepers. He has never before declined one of her offers, but he does now. When Mare insists, he introduces her to a woman scarcely older than Mare, who is too fair to be from the Stilts and who is clearly an outlaw. This woman, named Farley, says that "The Scarlet Guard" accepts the task of smuggling Mare and Kilorn out of the reach of conscription for the price of one thousand crowns each.

Two thousand crowns is enough money to feed Mare's family for years, and Mare will have to come up with it by the day after tomorrow. Mare feels she has no other choice, however. As she accepts the impossible terms, Mare notices that Farley smells like gunpowder.

When Mare tells Kilorn about the deal she has made, he gracefully accepts that there is no way he and Mare can come up with the money. He hopes that she can save up to avoid her own conscription in a year. Mare does not give up on Kilorn so easily. Back at home, she lies awake thinking of how the decorative stockings Gisa embroiders must be worth the fortune she and Kilorn need. Mare shakes Gisa awake. She mentions Kilorn, and Gisa blushes and giggles. She sobers immediately, however, when Mare tells her that Kilorn is going to be conscripted. Mare says that she has found a way to get him out of it, but that she needs Gisa's help. Gisa immediately agrees.

The next day, Mare accompanies Gisa into Summerton. Mare marvels at how upright everyone walks and how slowly they move, children delighting in spectacles and Silvers showing off their powers by levitating apples and making flowers grow instantaneously. The palace and the walls around the city are made of a special kind of diamond. When Gisa makes a derisive comment about the Silvers' luxurious lifestyle, it hits Mare that for all her jealousy of her employable sister, Gisa has not had the opportunity to make friends in school the way Mare has.

It is Mare's lawbreaking that has allowed her to build the small safety net she has in the Stilts, further demonstrating that the government does not have Mare's best interests at heart. It is significant that Farley appears to be around Mare's age: this might be the first time Mare sees someone similar to her who is wielding power within an organized effort to resist the oppressive regime. What's more, Farley seems to be paid handsomely for her leadership.



Mare's acceptance of Farley's impossible terms demonstrates both Mare's desperation and her determination to beat the odds that are stacked against her and her loved ones. When she notices that Farley smells like gunpowder, she shows that she is willing to choke down her aversion to the kind of violence demonstrated at the Feats if it means she can keep Kilorn safe.



Kilorn's resignation to conscription is far more realistic than Mare's determination to find the payment for the Scarlet Guard, underscoring Mare's remarkably strong will and resourcefulness when it comes to her loved ones' safety. Gisa's immediate agreement to help Mare save Kilorn betrays Gisa's crush on Kilorn, but it also shows that she implicitly trusts Mare to keep her safe and to do what is right.



This seems to be one of the first times Mare sees the luxury of Silver life up close. Before, she has always thought of Summerton as a space to which Gisa has access and she does not. Now that she is in the space next to Gisa, she realizes that physical access to Summerton does not necessarily mean that Gisa participates in Silver lifestyle. In fact, Gisa seems alienated from both the Silvers and the Reds because of her apprenticeship. Postcolonial theorist Homi Bhabha calls this kind of alienation "mimicry." By trying to assimilate with the colonist culture (the Silvers), the colonized individual (Gisa) distances herself from her community of origin (the Reds) at the same time as all her differences from the colonist culture come into sharper focus.



A security officer asks Gisa and Mare for identification. Gisa says that Mare is helping her today with her apprenticeship. Each of them is shackled with a red band around the wrist, and the guard sends them on their way. As Gisa enters her mistress's shop, Mare repeats to herself, "ten miles to home."

The shackles the guard places on Mare and Gisa demonstrate the extent to which the Silvers control the Reds: the Silvers reserve the right to seize the Reds' bodies any time they wish. The Silvers' need to shackle Red visitors also shows that the Silvers do not trust Reds to remain docile without continuous reinforcement of the power differential.



CHAPTER 4

Mare is aware that theft is highly risky now that she is targeting Silvers, who might be able to read her mind or beat her. No one seems to pay her any attention, but Mare does notice surveillance cameras scattered about the city. They make her uncomfortable, along with the video screens she sees everywhere. As Mare passes a bar, she sees a newscast announcing a terrorist attack on the Silvers in the capital.

Mare's feeling of being watched from all angles recalls works of science fiction such as George Orwell's [1984](#), which depicts a dystopian society in which every citizen is under constant surveillance. In the contemporary political and technological landscape, many people worry about the way surveillance is being used to prop up unjust political regimes. By making surveillance cameras part of the world in which Mare lives, Aveyard reinforces the parallels between the fictional world and the real world.



People assume the culprits are the Lakelanders, Norta's opposing army, until the newscaster announces that a group called the Scarlet Guard has claimed credit for the attack. A video airs, showing a woman whose face is partially obscured. She claims to be from the Scarlet Guard and says, "We stand for the freedom and equality of all people, starting with the Reds...And we will rise up, Red as the dawn." Bewildered, Mare recognizes the woman as Farley.

Farley preaches freedom and equality, which are core tenets of democracy. Mare has not explicitly stated her allegiance to these ideals, but she has expressed a sense of injustice at the mistreatment of Reds at the hands of Silvers. The fact that Mare's ideals (and by extension the ideals of the reader who is meant to sympathize with her) align with those of a terrorist group raises the question of what political ends justify what means, and also the question of what is the difference between a "terrorist" and a "freedom fighter." Farley's language also echoes Shade's letter, suggesting that not only Mare but also her brother are now mixed up with the Guard.



Mare backs out of the bar quietly to make her escape. Reds everywhere are doing the same. The red band around Mare's wrist will not come off, but she manages to slip away. She looks back and witnesses a Silver "nymph" with water streaming from his hands, drowning a Red man who clearly has no answers as to who the Scarlet Guard is.

The red band signals Mare's social status and heritage in a way that parallels discriminatory practices throughout history, such as the way Jewish people were forced to wear the Star of David during the Nazi regime in Germany. The fact that Reds are targeted by Silvers simply because of these bands demonstrates how dangerous it can be to classify huge groups of people and pit them against one another.



Mare knows she must set aside Kilorn and the two thousand crowns in the interest of finding Gisa and escaping the city before the gates close. Mare worries because she sees what the Silvers are doing to other Reds, who (unlike Mare) have no doubt heard nothing of the Scarlet Guard until today. When Gisa finds Mare and discovers that she failed to get the money to save Kilorn, she impulsively tries to pick a Silver's pocket. The Silver turns out to be a cloner, able to multiply himself. He multiplies to surround her and Mare. A security officer intervenes. When it becomes clear that Gisa has tried to steal money, the guard tells her, "You know the law, girl." Mare protests that the theft was her idea. The officer ignores her, bringing the butt of his gun down to smash Gisa's sewing hand.

Mare and Gisa have their differences, but they also prioritize one another over themselves. Gisa also prioritizes Kilorn over her own safety, in a move that parallels Mare's. The fact that Gisa's hand is smashed as a result of this fierce loyalty suggests that Mare's own sense of loyalty might bring her to harm one day. The guard's deadpan citation of the law as his reason for smashing Gisa's hand makes clear that the law may be a written standard to govern justice, but it is not infallible or even necessarily moral. It should be questioned and must be carried out with sensitivity in order to truly uphold justice.



CHAPTER 5

After bringing an injured Gisa home, Mare takes off running so that no one can find her, not even Kilorn. She goes to an inn on the northern road, where seasonal workers who follow the royal court are drinking. She steals from them every summer, and she decides to spend the night picking their pockets.

Mare's desire to avoid people suggests that she feels she has let everyone down. She thinks she led Gisa to her hand injury, which will impact not only Gisa but also the rest of the family, because Gisa will no longer be able to sew for money. Mare has also failed to get the money to save Kilorn. The only way she knows to help those she loves is to steal more, even though she knows her mother would disapprove.



At the end of the night, one of the seasonal workers closes a hand on Mare's wrist when she tries to get into his pocket. Mare registers his hand as strangely hot. When she admits to being a thief, he lets her go and gives her a silver coin worth a crown—more than any of her other earnings from the night. This mysterious person is only a couple years older than Mare. He tells her that she needs the coin more than he does. Mare is offended, but forces a cautious "thank you."

*Mare's surprise shows that she is unaccustomed to generosity, because money is so tight for most of the people in the Stilts. Economic inequality thus has a detrimental effect on interpersonal relationships. The decision on the part of Mare's target to give her the money she has tried to steal recalls the beginning of Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables*, in which Jean Valjean is set on the path to moral reform after a bishop, who Valjean is caught robbing, tells the authorities that he gave the spoils to Valjean, and even gives Valjean additional riches. This pinpoints this moment as a possible turning point for Mare.*



The person who has given Mare the coin introduces himself as Cal. He decides to walk her back to the village so that she can't steal anymore. Mare finds Cal's presence comforting, even though she should be scared of him. Cal realizes over the course of his conversation with Mare that she steals because there are no jobs and no ways to avoid conscription. Mare tells Cal that her sister has a job, before remembering that Gisa is not unemployed anymore. "Because of you," she tells herself.

The conversation between Mare and Cal demonstrates that people in positions of privilege, like Cal, often do not realize all of the roadblocks between poverty and prosperity. Consequently, they often attribute inequality to laziness on the part of the poor instead of recognizing their own complicity in the problem. This passage also confirms that Mare feels responsible for Gisa's injury and the financial straits it will mean for their family.



Cal asks if Mare was present for the riots; she ends up confessing all her pent-up shame, telling Cal all about her family. She spares only the details about Farley, the Scarlet Guard, and Kilorn. Cal gives Mare another silver coin. She accepts it but tells him, “There are worse lives to live. Don’t feel sorry for me.”

Mare is proud and does not want to be pitied by Cal. She does not want to be pitied by her family or friends either, which is why she confesses her feelings to a stranger rather than to someone she’s close to. Cal offers a friendly ear, and Mare does not have to feel like she is burdening him with her tortured feelings.



Outside her house, Mare runs into her father attempting to fix the utility box. Mare asks why he doesn’t just use the electricity ration papers she brought home. He feeds a paper into the box, which usually would turn the power back on, but nothing happens. Mare touches the electricity box, and it comes back to life.

Mare and her father have both been doing their utmost to make sure that their family has electricity, but the proper channels still do not work. It seems to be by ironic chance that Mare is able to bring back power by simply touching the electricity box after all the effort she has already exerted to acquire the electricity rations—but the moment also foreshadows Mare’s ability to produce electricity.



Mare and her father stand in silence. Mare reflects that they have both run from the house in which her mother is surely weeping over Gisa’s hand. Mare remembers remarks her father has made about the unfairness of the world, in which the Reds are “Red ants burning in the light of a Silver sun.” Mare’s father asks her not to tell her mother that he was out of the house, lest it give her hope.

Mare feels a certain connection to her father because they are both avoiding the people they feel they have hurt. Adversity thus both drives Mare and her family members apart and draws them together. Mare seems to have inherited her cynicism from her father, and this cynicism seems motivated by a desire to protect loved ones from what seems like inevitable disappointment.



Inside, Mare watches Gisa sleep, restless but holding her injured arm still. “Even in sleep, it hurts her,” Mare reflects. Mare pulls out Shade’s most recent letter from the box where she keeps all his letters. She fixates on the phrase, “Red as the dawn.” She realizes that Shade would never use such a phrase coincidentally. He must be part of the Scarlet Guard, and he tried to tell their family about the bombing weeks before Farley’s broadcast.

In some senses, Mare’s strongest sibling relationship seems not to be with her sister but rather with her absent brother, Shade. Mare must confront the fact that one of the things that draws her and Shade together is their sympathy with a political group that has committed at least one terrorist act.



CHAPTER 6

Mare wakes to what she assumes is a routine security search. She is surprised to see a Red royal servant with the officers. The young woman tells Mare that she has been summoned to Summerton. Mare is sure that she is going to be killed for her connection to Farley. Having nothing to give Gisa, Mare whispers, “I love you” as she departs.

The notion of “routine” security searches, in which officers of the government invade private homes, demonstrates how easily fascism can become normalized. Mare is completely at the mercy of the royal servant and officers and must face the fact that she is being taken away from Gisa before they can repair their relationship.



After a ride in a gleaming transport, Mare and the royal servant pass through the diamondglass walls into Summertown. The servant introduces herself as Ann Walsh, a Stilts native who once dated Bree. Mare, Walsh says, has been selected for a serving post. Mare thinks Cal must have gotten her the job, and is elated that she is being neither killed nor conscripted. She plans to convince Cal to do the same for Kilorn. Mare sobers when Walsh tells her they must enter the royal palace because, “You serve the king now.”

Walsh tells Mare she is to be on duty for an event called Queenstrial, when all the young Silver noblewomen compete for the crown prince’s hand in marriage. Queenstrial is to take place in the Spiral Garden. When Walsh shuffles Mare inside, Mare is struck by the Spiral Garden’s resemblance to the arena back home, except it is much more ornate. She sets to work responding to serving requests from Silver lords, who are seated at tables with buttons that illuminate lights to call servants.

When King Tiberias and Queen Elara enter the arena, Mare cannot believe she is this close to the man who tyrannically oppresses Reds. She observes the crown on his head, which is crafted to look like flames to reflect his gift. Like all the previous kings, he is a “burner” who is able to control heat and fire. The kings used to burn dissenters. The crowd greets the king with the royal motto: “Strength. Power.” The king introduces his sons: Queen Elara’s son, Maven, and the crown prince from the king’s previous marriage to Queen Coriane, Tiberias the Seventh. Mare looks up and is stunned to see that the crown prince is Cal.

CHAPTER 7

Mare feels betrayed by the sight of Cal, who now looks “every inch a future king, Silver to the bone.” As Mare seethes, the king calls for Queenstrial to begin. A man named Lord Provos uses his *telky* powers to move the entire structure of the Spiral Garden until the center is a deep cylinder open to the sky, all the lords elevated high above it to look down upon whatever sinister spectacle is to take place below. A shield of electricity forms between the onlookers and the arena below.

For one of the first times in the novel, Mare allows herself to be overtaken by optimism. This fresh outlook seems to have something to do with her earlier conversation with Cal, in which she was able to confess the feelings that have been weighing on her. When Walsh tells her that she serves the king now, Mare realizes that upward mobility within the existing social hierarchy is impossible without serving unjust systems of power.



Everything about the Spiral Garden demonstrates the excess wealth of the Silvers. Rather than distribute wealth fairly across the kingdom, the Silvers hoard their riches. The fact that the Spiral Garden is similar to the “Feats” arena, however, suggests that the royal family is asserting the same kind of dominance over the Silver lords that the Silvers assert over the Reds. Hoarding wealth and disbursing it unequally may be key to maintaining the loyalty of the lords as well.



The king has the crowd trained to parrot the motto, “Strength. Power,” back to him upon seeing him. The lords seem to have the sense that they are part of the strength and power they are invoking. However, the king’s crown makes a visual statement that the strength and power is consolidated in his body. He only welcomes his subjects into the fold as long as they do not dissent; otherwise, he could easily burn them. Mare notices the tyranny inherent in this arrangement in a way that the crowd seems not to observe.



Mare is upset because she has accepted charity from Cal, which disrupts her vision of the royal family as an unjust enemy to blame for all of her woes. She has also poured out all her troubles to him, and he has hidden from her the most basic aspect of his identity. True to his Silver upbringing, he has hoarded intimacy and given her nothing in return. Even when it comes to the Feats and the arenas, the Silvers save the more entertaining and spectacular events for themselves.



Mare wonders what could possibly appear below that would require such a shield. A tiny girl runs out, stares at Cal, and then knocks the head off a statue with one slap. House Rhambos, her family, shouts, “Strongarm,” and the girl whirls around, wreaking destruction in the arena. Mare thinks, “So this is a pageant.”

As Mare watches Silver noble after Silver noble—a greeny who grows plants instantly, a nymph who shoots water, an oblivion who explodes everything she touches, and more—showcase their talents with the hope of winning the prince’s hand, Mare realizes that the Silvers have been doing this for hundreds of years. They are stronger than she ever feared.

Finally, a noble girl named Evangeline, of House Samos, enters the arena. She appears to be a favorite to win even though she does not look very impressive. Mare realizes that she is witnessing “A hierarchy within the hierarchy,” and that the Queenstrial is meant to show the Silver subjects their place: the king can handpick anyone he wants to win the tournament.

As Evangeline demonstrates her power as a magnetron who can control metal, she brings metal pipes up through the floor of the arena and then makes the entire box tip toward the center. Plates and glasses fall over the rail onto the lightning shield. Suddenly, something crashes into Mare and sends her, too, over the rail. She is sure she is about to be killed upon contact with the shield, but she only sees sparks. She feels them too, but they do not feel bad. Even as Mare’s clothes burn away, the shield seems unable to harm her. It begins to splinter and give off black smoke. Finally, she falls through.

Evangeline, scared, sends “a flurry of metal shards” toward Mare. Without knowing what she is doing, Mare shoots back lightning and makes the shards fall to the ground. Everyone, including Evangeline and Cal, stares at Mare, agape.

In the wake of Cal’s betrayal, the tiny girl’s extreme strength underscores to Mare the risk of trusting people to be as they appear. There is an ironic tension between Mare’s pessimistic mistrust of appearances and the central tenet of equality: Reds and Silvers do not possess unequal claims to humanity simply because of the color of their blood.



The pageant is having the effect on Mare that the Feats are supposed to have. She watches the events below and feels that to rebel against the Silvers would be a hopeless and suicidal act. The fact that the pageant parallels the Feats suggests that the pageant may not be intended to empower the Silver audience so much as placate them into reverence for a king who has the power to make fiercely powerful people do his bidding.



Mare, as the narrator, explicitly states the parallels between the pageant and the Feats, observing that even among the high-ranking Silver nobles, some are ranked higher than others. All of them are subject to the king, and the entire event is an affirmation of the king’s power over all.



Mare is the only human who falls over the rail along with the table settings. This reinforces the idea that in the Silvers’ space, Mare is nothing but an object meant to serve them. It is only at the moment of her near-death that she becomes a spectacle that the Silvers notice. Whether she lives or dies, she will still serve as their entertainment. The fact that Mare is convinced she will die but cannot be harmed by the shield demonstrates that in more ways than one, Mare is more powerful than she thinks.



This is the first time Mare sees a Silver who is scared of her. Evangeline is not just any Silver, either: objectively, she is a dangerous opponent, and Mare has managed to intimidate her. This shift in power takes everyone aback.



The king yells for the sentinels to seize Mare. Her years of experience as a thief tell her that now is the time to run. She finds an antechamber into the palace hall, but there are cameras all over the walls that thwart her slipping away into a hiding place. She keeps running from the sentinels. As she stares out a window of diamondglass at the inaccessible forest beyond, she feels a blast of heat from behind. “Strong arms” capture her. She tries to use her newfound powers to shock her captor, but nothing happens. Flames and smoke press in on her. Just before she passes out, she hears Cal’s voice say, “I’m sorry.”

Again, the presence of cameras all over hints at the power of tyrannical leaders to abuse technology, using it against their own citizens. The cameras are also in the palace, suggesting that the king turns surveillance on Silvers at least as much as Reds: the Silvers are not the free and powerful subjects they might think they are. Still, the fact that Cal captures Mare by using his power to wield fire demonstrates that Silvers are still elevated above Reds in the hierarchy of power. When Cal becomes Mare’s captor, he breaks the trust she once had in him.



CHAPTER 8

Mare remembers each of her brothers’ departures when they were conscripted. She remembers her mother and Gisa’s tears, and her father and her own silence. She also remembers red **blood** dripping onto Shade’s shirt from the poor ear-piercing job she did with the **earrings** Shade gave to her and Gisa. Mare’s memories fade to images of the Choke, where she has never been but where her father was injured in the war. She imagines her brothers there. Then her mind goes back to her worst memories: “Gisa’s hand, Kilorn’s conscription, Dad coming home half-dead.” Even events that happened before Mare was old enough to remember them flash before her eyes. Finally, she comes to and realizes she is in a cage, kneeling before Queen Elara.

It is not immediately clear whether Mare is remembering or dreaming. She seems to be experiencing the trope in which a character’s life flashes before her eyes when she is on the brink of death, except that instead of remembering fond moments, her memories of the people she loves are tied up in guilt, shame, fear, and other negative emotions. When Mare begins to see events that happened before she could have remembered them, it is clear that there is something more complicated going on. Mare awakes in an extremely dehumanized state, kneeling and in a cage, showing Queen Elara’s power at her expense.



Mare tells Queen Elara, “I’d bow, but I might fall over,” then immediately regrets her words because, “She’s the queen. She could just kill me. She could kill us all.” The queen reaches through the bars to touch Mare’s temple, demonstrating that she can increase Mare’s pain at will. The queen reminds Mare that despite her ability of electrocution, she has red **blood**, not silver. The queen reveals that she has been sorting through Mare’s memories and nightmares in order to understand her.

Mare’s initial instinct is to be defiant, which shows that she is more likely than she might think to get involved in rebellion against the unjust regime. Mare backtracks when she realizes how much power Elara has in the situation, but this realization is itself a recognition of how unjust the situation is. The queen is torturing Mare, but also sees Mare as a potential threat. Elara tries to curtail the threat by manipulating Mare’s mind and reinforcing the idea, which the reader now begins to see is a myth, that Mare’s biology makes her necessarily weak.



As Queen Elara toys with Mare by paralyzing her legs, Mare realizes that the queen is a “whisper.” Queen Elara tells Mare that she is only alive because hundreds of powerful and curious Silvers witnessed her display. Mare tries but fails to call up more lightning. She realizes that the red band is gone from her wrist and wonders what it means. “What am I?” she wonders.

During the “Feat” of chapter one, Mare saw that a whisper has the power to make an opponent commit suicide. Mare, who is unsure of her own identity in this moment, realizes that she is in extreme danger because she is up against an adversary who could make her do anything. Mare is not even sure that she can trust her own mind and body to be on her side.



The next time Mare wakes, a guard stands outside her cell, telling her to get dressed. Mare wonders why there is no red on the clothing she has been given. The guard turns out to be another magnetron, Evangeline's cousin Lucas. He is calm and stoic, seemingly less severe than Evangeline. He leads Mare to the throne room, where the king, queen, and princes await. Mare refuses to kneel before them. The king glares at her but chuckles when Mare says she is not sorry that he can't kill her.

The king pulls out Mare's identification card, on which her red **blood** was rubbed at birth. It contains all the information there is about her, including her mediocre school performance. The king cannot make sense of how such an unremarkable person could be an anomaly, both Red and Silver. He does not know what to do with her.

Mare suggests that the king let her go. Queen Elara laughs, saying that the nobles will never forget "the little lightning girl" and alluding to but not naming a sinister idea for what to do with Mare. Cal becomes defensive and must be calmed by his brother. The king tells Mare that instead of killing her, they will pretend that she is no longer Mare Barrow of the Stilts but, rather, the daughter of Ethan Titanos, a Silver general killed when she was an infant. They will say that she was raised by a Red soldier and has only just discovered her identity as a Silver lady. She will marry Prince Maven. The king attempts to be dismissive, but Mare can tell that he is afraid of the Scarlet Guard when he says that she will finally have a purpose: placating the Reds with the promise of a rags-to-riches fairytale.

Mare thinks that the fairytale is more like a nightmare. She tries to plead silently with Cal to help her, but he shakes his head. The king makes it clear that Mare cannot refuse her fate, referring to her as "Lady Titanos." Queen Elara tells Mare that she will live at the palace from now on, "as is the custom for royal brides," and that she will be scheduled as Elara sees fit. "One false step," she says, "one wrong word, and you will suffer for it."

Mare is likely interacting with more Silvers than she ever has in her life, at least one-on-one. She realizes that even among a family such as Evangeline's, Silvers' personalities can range as much as Reds' do. Nonetheless, despite few personal interactions with them, she has reason to hate the king and queen. The king's mocking reaction to Mare's attempts at defiance show how little power Mare has here.



Mare here embodies a counterexample to the logic that governs the power structure of Norta. As she has shown, those with Red blood evidently can have some of the powers on which the Silvers base their claim to superiority. This revelation also demonstrates to Mare that she has more to discover about herself, and that she should not trust government documents to supply her with defining information. As is the case in many young adult novels, Mare's role as a political player is thus also tied up in her personal coming of age and self-discovery.



There is a two-way power dynamic going on in this scene. The royal family's petty disagreements over what to do with Mare demonstrate that she is less a person to them than an inconvenience, or a pawn. Simultaneously, Mare sees that she has destabilized the king's sense that he has absolute control over his realm. Mare still does not have the power to determine her own fate, but her existence is politicized against the stagnant power dynamic that has existed in Norta all her life. The king reacts by trying to use the same tactics he has always used: performatively placating the masses.



Mare has not only lost control over the direction of her life, but she is no longer allowed to use her own name or identity, under pain of death. Cal's refusal to help Mare shows the extent to which a powerless person can live at the mercy of more powerful people who might choose to help them or not.



When Mare asks about her family, the king says he will give them an allowance to keep them quiet. Mare bargains for her brothers and Kilorn to be brought home from the war. The king agrees, but Mare thinks that, “It sounds less like a pardon and more like a death sentence.”

Mare reveals to the reader that she is a skilled negotiator, and that she is more likely to use her negotiating skills to help others than to help herself. The king's assuredness that money will quiet Mare's family shows that political power and wealth often beget one another.



CHAPTER 9

Mare tries to get used to her new name, Lady Mareena Titanos, as Red maids dress her and apply makeup to cover the red flush of her skin. She feels like she is “a corpse being dressed for her funeral” because she is sure that some accident will be staged so that she will never actually take the throne. The maids try to take Mare's **earrings**, but she refuses to let them.

Pretending to be a long-lost Silver, Mare must immediately get used to being waited upon by Reds for the first time in her life. She feels both powerless in contrast to the royal family and uncomfortably positioned above the Red maids. Mare tries to retain claim to some aspect of her identity by keeping the earrings from her brothers.



Cal stops by Mare's new room to apologize for getting her involved with the palace. He insists on calling her “Mare.” He suggests that he has arranged for Mare to have a kind guard in Lucas, and he insists that stopping her escape from the palace was in her and her family's best interest; had he let her go, the queen would have hunted her down. He emphasizes that the queen is Maven's mother, not his. Cal tells Mare that she must learn to accept her new life and talent, because a slip-up could be her end. He produces sparks and then stops them, “leaving only Cal's encouraging smile and the humming of cameras hidden somewhere, watching over everything.”

Cal recognizes that Mare is a person in her own right, but his insistence on demonstrating this despite his refusal to help her shows that Cal is not willing to sacrifice much for his convictions. The idea that giving Mare a kind guard is a “favor” emphasizes that Cal is entrenched in an ideology that is fundamentally unjust. Meanwhile, his emphasis that Elara is not his mother shows that Cal is eager to distance himself from the mindset that relishes the power differential between Silvers and Reds. The reader now knows that Mare is attuned to the cameras because of her ability to manipulate electricity. She seems similarly attuned to Cal's smile.



After Cal leaves, Mare's guards escort her to the Queenstrial feast. Although Lucas is kind enough, Mare can only think of how the guards are there to imprison her “in my own skin, red behind a silver curtain.” Mare rehearses the backstory she has been given. The guards lead her onto an elevator, which is unfamiliar and disconcerting to Mare as it descends.

Mare is at once in an entirely unfamiliar place and expected to behave as though showing up at the court is a kind of homecoming. No matter how kind Lucas is, he is still a guard who represents Mare's lack of freedom. The elevator represents the ground dropping from beneath Mare's feet and parallels her fall into the stadium at Queenstrial. Although this falling is uncomfortable to Mare, the elevator functions mechanically and exactly as it is supposed to function.



Queen Elara meets Mare when she gets off the elevator. The queen tells Mare telepathically that the Titanos family were oblivions who could explode objects upon touching them, while Mare's fictitious Silver mother controlled weather. Mare is to tell people that her control of electricity stems from the union of these abilities. “You are now Red in the head, Silver in the heart,” Elara says. “From now until the end of your days, you must lie. Your life depends on it, little lightning girl.”

Queen Elara is careful to tell Mare not only that she must lie now, but also that she must lie for the rest of her life. Mare is doomed either to a long lifetime of deceiving everyone, including herself, or to a very short life of telling the truth. Mare has departed from her family on strained terms, and now she must betray them by pretending that they are not her family at all.



CHAPTER 10

Elara leaves Mare. Mare goes through some doors at the end of the hall, which lead down a flight of stairs into a huge room with nobles from all the Silver houses. King Tiberias and Elara stand elevated above the others. Cal and Maven are there too, and it strikes Mare that Maven is not as good as Cal at hiding his emotions.

The king and queen announce that following the incident at Queenstrial, they have discovered Mare's (fabricated) long lost parentage. They announce her engagement to Maven, and Mare realizes that the other girls from Queenstrial are envious of her. Evangeline looks livid. Maven, unhappy also, steps forward and proposes formally to Mare. She thinks briefly of the life she might have had: "Conscription. Survival. Green-eyed children with my quick feet and Kilorn's last name." She resigns herself to that future's impossibility and accepts the proposal.

Next Cal steps forward and, as expected, proposes to Evangeline, who accepts. It strikes Mare that Cal seems to truly believe that he will be a good king, "or die trying." Evangeline seems smug. She continues smiling as she surreptitiously grasps Mare's arm, digging her fingers into it just short of breaking the skin and spilling Mare's red **blood**. Evangeline threatens to kill Mare, who she calls, "little lightning girl," if Mare gets in her way. Mare keeps her composure.

The king announces that the two marriages will stabilize the kingdom in the face of the Scarlet Guard, which represents "a dangerous turn for our Red brothers." Although the Silvers scoff at the word "brothers," Mare can tell that the king is concealing real fear. She hates herself as, along with the rest of the crowd, she choruses back to the king, "Strength and power."

Everything about the room Mare is led into is performative. The king and queen are positioned physically above the others, posturing their superiority. The maintenance of power in the court depends on spectacle and performance. Maven's inability to hide his emotions thus registers as a weakness, but it also humanizes Maven: he is a person as well as a prince.



This is the first time Mare has explicitly alluded to the fact that she has been envisioning a future in which she is married to Kilorn. Her forced betrothal to Maven thus represents not only a future she does not want but also the death of the future she has imagined. Mare feels isolated in her grief over this change of plans because if she stays in character as a Silver princess, she must show delight at how lucky she is to have won Maven's hand.



Mare has already noted that Cal is good at hiding his emotions. He seems to be so good at performing his role that he has fooled even himself into thinking that the monarchy as-is is good for the kingdom. It may be that Cal wants to be a good king, but he does not seem to realize that the kingdom itself is designed to be unjust and hierarchical. Evangeline reminds Mare that no matter how well she performs her role as a Silver princess, hiding her true identity is not entirely up to her. Even a little spilled blood could be the death of her.



The Silvers are disgusted by the notion that the Reds are analogous to them as citizens, but the king's fear shows that he, for one, understands that the kingdom's mistreatment of the Reds invited the terrorist attack. His choice to double down on the unjust elevation of Silvers over Reds, even using a Red girl as a pawn in his marriage plot, is analogous to the way many real-world tyrannical leaders try to maintain power.



During the feast, Mare cannot enjoy her food because she is thinking about her family. She worries, after her one-day transformation from thief to princess, how much more she will change. Next to her, Maven switches out Mare's drink for water, telling her she will thank him later. He apologizes for his attitude earlier and explains that usually, younger princes are allowed to choose their wives. He supposes he is getting a taste of Cal's life. Mare tells Maven that she feels sorry for neither of them because they have everything. Still, as Mare watches Maven stare at his older brother, laughing with their father, she begins to pity him. She reminds herself that Maven is a burner, and, "I'm a Red girl in a sea of Silvers, and I can't afford to feel sorry for anyone, least of all the son of a snake."

Mare is determined to maintain her convictions about the unfair distribution of wealth in the kingdom, but she nevertheless cannot help but identify with Maven because he, too, is losing control over his life. She also identifies with his jealousy of his brother because of her own jealousy of Gisa. Mare reminds herself that this identification is dangerous because if she starts trusting Silvers, she could easily lose track of herself and her commitment to her family and friends. Mare fears that she will forget her Red background due to the imperative to act like a Silver.



CHAPTER 11

Maven tries to teach Mare the names of all the lords and ladies at the feast. Evangeline's father stands to toast his daughter, and he strikes Mare as dangerous. Mare makes it through the feast, at the end of which Maven leads her from the hall. She can feel Silver eyes on her, and she can sense the eyes of all the electric cameras staring at her as well.

Maven seems to be trying to help Mare in her performance. Mare is beginning to trust that he is telling her the truth, and she is less wary of Maven than of other Silvers. Mare's connection to electricity helps her remain vigilant because it makes her hyper-aware of the surveillance cameras everywhere.



Mare worries about what the powerful king and queen could possibly fear, and about who the Scarlet Guard will target next. Will they target her? As Mare's mind spirals, the queen orders some sentinels to take Mare and Evangeline to their rooms. Cal volunteers instead, but Elara claims that it would be inappropriate. The king decides that Cal will take Mare and Maven will take Evangeline. Elara is visibly angry that her husband has used his power to overrule her.

Mare has been thinking about the king and queen as a united front and has been worried about what they, as a unit, are fearing from the Scarlet Guard. When she witnesses the conflict between the two over how the young couples should perform propriety on the way back to their rooms, Mare realizes that there is also a struggle for power within the marriage itself.



Alone with Cal after Maven and a scowling Evangeline depart, Mare comments sarcastically that Cal "picked a real winner." Cal retorts that he did not pick anyone. Mare is again resistant to sympathizing with Cal, but she cannot help but feel some of his sadness at having no say in his own life. Cal senses that Mare is thinking of her family, and he tells her that he has sent the order for her brothers to be released and that an officer is going to tell her family that she must now live at the palace as a servant. For now, they cannot know the truth "for your own protection." Mare asks if the cameras are for her protection too. Cal says there are no cameras in her room, and Mare learns that being able to feel the cameras is not normal.

Mare begins to sympathize with Cal as well as Maven. She starts to wonder whether, despite their wealth, the princes have less control over their lives than she thought. By talking to Mare about her family, Cal once again demonstrates recognition of Mare as a person outside of her role as Lady Mareena Titanos. Mare remains somewhat adversarial toward Cal, but she nonetheless trusts him enough to ask about the cameras. Mare realizes in this moment that her gift with electricity might have wider ranging uses than she thought.



CHAPTER 12

In the morning, Mare finds a curt note from Elara on her nightstand, detailing her schedule. Maids dress her again. Lucas accompanies Mare to breakfast, where Mare must eat with Elara and Evangeline. Evangeline scoffs that Mare is still going to a class called “Protocol,” but Mare is simply glad to hear that Evangeline will not be in class with her.

Mare is surprised when Elara defends her, telling Evangeline that Mare’s circumstances growing up have left her in need of training in Silver customs. Elara tells Mare and Evangeline that they will take luncheon with the other ladies from Queenstrial, after which they will return with them to the capital at Archeon. This, Mare realizes, will be the moment her new reality entirely replaces the old life to which she can never return.

After breakfast, Lucas tells Mare that she is next to meet with her etiquette trainer, Lady Blonos. Lady Blonos is a blood healer, meaning that anything Mare’s gift does, Lady Blonos will be able to instantly heal herself. Mare enters the empty room to which Lucas has led her. Mare crosses to a window that looks out onto a courtyard. At first, she thinks she is seeing sentinels in training, but then she realizes that it is Cal, Maven, and Evangeline below, playing war games. She realizes that Cal and Maven “are deadly creatures, soldiers” both on the lines and in the palace.

Lady Blonos interrupts Mare’s thoughts. She looks old, but she has artificially altered her face to look younger and prettier. She tells Mare that she is going to save her from acting “like a savage.” Mare reluctantly agrees to the training because she knows she needs it.

After three and a half hours of physical and mental exercises with Lady Blonos, Mare goes to the queen’s luncheon. The Glass Terrace strikes Mare as “beautiful in an artificial way, like everything else in this Silver world.” Mare makes small talk with the other ladies from Queenstrial. One of them introduces Mare to her grandmother, who turns out not to be a kindly old lady but, rather, a former spy. This woman tells Mare that she knew her parents. Mare says she misses them, and must cover when she realizes she is not supposed to remember her parents.

Mare is shuffled physically from one place to another by maids, guards, and courtiers. There is a certain irony in the fact that Evangeline, who has been groomed to have perfect manners during social engagements at court, is more outwardly rude at breakfast than Mare is.



By defending Mare against Evangeline, Elara creates a tenuous alliance between them. Even if Elara remains an adversary at other times, this scene complicates their relationship. This moment of being defended by the queen foreshadows the way Mare’s relationships will remain unpredictable and will shift throughout the novel.



The idea that a Silver etiquette trainer would need to have defenses against Mare’s gift is an indication of how much more powerful Mare is than she thought. However, rather than dwell on her own newfound strength, Mare dwells on how dangerous Cal, Maven, and Evangeline are. There is a sense in which these young Silvers have been sculpted into weapons; they have been dehumanized in a different way from the Reds.



The phrase “like a savage” recalls the language of real-world imperialism. European writers have historically referred both to native peoples in colonies and to uneducated people in Europe as “savages,” meaning that they are less sophisticated than “civilized” (meaning white and upper-class) people. The Silvers think of the Reds as inferior because they are uneducated in the ways of upper-class life, but that exclusion has happened at the hands of the same upper class.



Mare is realizing how difficult it will be to pretend in everyday conversation that she is emotionally invested in Lady Mareena Titanos’s life instead of her own. The stakes of forgetting to do so are high, but the stakes of forgetting her own life story are high as well. Like the Glass Terrace, Mare must learn to be “beautiful in an artificial way.” If she so much as cracks, she will crumble.



Mare survives the luncheon, aided by Evangeline's willingness to lead the conversation. Mare runs into Maven in the corridor on her way to Lessons. He tells her he will talk to his mother about the spy who was trying to catch Mare in a lie about her parents. Maven offers to show Mare around. She must refuse, and she tells him that she has Lessons, "hoping to soften the blow." She is not sure why she wants to protect his feelings. He takes her hand for a moment before parting, and she notices that his skin has "a delightful heat." After a moment, Lucas interrupts Mare's thoughts to hurry her along.

Mare might prefer to be self-sufficient, but she must rely on Evangeline in order to get through the luncheon. She is thus forced to play into the court dynamic of cultivating relationships with people she does not like or respect. Mare is especially confused by the fact that she actually does feel a certain liking and respect for Maven. Her betrothal to Maven seems to be resulting in some actual romantic interest that Mare does not welcome but nonetheless will need to consider.



CHAPTER 13

For Mare's next lesson, she enters a room full of books and maps. Her instructor asks her to read a map on the wall. He tells her to look beyond the words, which are written in an unfamiliar language, because, "words can lie." Mare manages to read the map passably well. She realizes that for the first time, she cannot sense any cameras in the room. The instructor, who calls Mare by her actual name instead of "Mareena," is intrigued to find that she can sense the lack of cameras. He tells her that he is going to teach her to be a Silver and to be useful, and that he is also going to study how she, Mare Barrow (not Mareena Titanos), came to exist. He tells her never to forget who she actually is.

This is the first time someone has explicitly stated that Mare's distrust of those around her in the court is wise. This is also the first time since she arrived in the capital that Mare has not felt the constant surveillance of cameras. What the instructor tells Mare makes it seem as though he is on her side and wants to help her through her process of self-discovery, rather than simply help her more effectively perform her assigned role. However, knowing little about this person, it is unclear if Mare should trust him.



The tutor tells Mare that he will not reveal her identity. She asks if there are no cameras so that there is no record of his "examining" her. He replies that there are no cameras because he has turned them off. He introduces himself as Julian Jacos, brother of the former queen (Coriane) and Cal's uncle. Julian, unlike Elara, wants to help Mare understand herself. However, he also must do as he has been instructed: train her to be the figurehead to stop a rebellion.

Julian has connections to many people at court. He may be on Mare's side, but he also must contribute to the effort to groom her as a figurehead for maintaining the status quo. Like Mare, he thus has two faces. Even if he wants to be on her side, there is no telling when he might be carrying out his allegiance to others at court.



Julian says that Mare has the power to bring about slower but less violent change than that represented by the Scarlet Guard. The oppression of the Reds, Julian argues, is wrong, but so is the categorical condemnation of Silvers. Mare is proof that Silvers and Reds are equal. Realizing that he might help her, Mare agrees to let him train her to effect change.

Julian speaks what Mare has been realizing during her short time at court: Silvers and Reds alike are more complicated than they allow each other to be. Julian wants change, but shares Mare's reservations about the ethics of terrorist tactics. However, he sees her as a pawn in a scheme just like the royal family does. Mare chooses to submit to his using her because he represents her best chance at life.



At meals, Mare sits next to Evangeline, who uses her utensils like weapons. Mare tries to remember the names of all the nobles. At one gathering, some of the ladies begin asking Mare how it feels to live in the palace, insulting her home village. Mare tries to hold her tongue. Eventually, she breaks and defends the Reds, saying that, "Being forced to live such lives, with no respite, no reprieve, and no escape, would make servants of anyone." Elara rushes in to say that Mare is still learning proper etiquette.

Another woman, a colonel, shocks the company by demanding to know what the king is going to do about the Scarlet Guard terrorist attacks. Mare is surprised to learn that there have been more. Elara says it is unwise to give the attacks more weight than they deserve. Everyone agrees except Mare and the colonel, who remain quiet.

Mare is lonely. She does not see Cal often, and she remains wary of Maven, who she fears might be hiding something. She enjoys Julian's lessons because they allow her to discover her talents outside the view of Elara or the cameras. Still, progress comes slowly.

At one lesson, Julian tries to get Mare to harness electricity from a large electrical contraption. When Mare jokes that maybe she needs to be in mortal danger for it to work, Julian suggests that like a child whose abilities have yet to manifest, Mare might need a trigger. Mare remembers that when she fell onto the electrical shield, she was not afraid but peaceful, resigned to death. When she attempts to recreate this mood, electricity arcs between her hands. Julian tells her to try moving it. She throws a fireball of electricity that smashes apart a bookshelf. Mare and Julian feel triumphant.

Julian and Mare find a larger space to allow more room for Mare to practice aiming bolts of electricity. Julian measures the electricity in the room before and after Mare throws a bolt. He discovers that she generates electricity. He explains that this makes her something more than either Silver or Red: all other Silvers can only manipulate elements, not produce them. Cal and Maven, for example, wear bracelets that produce sparks, without which they would be talentless.

Mare must balance her own safety, which requires the performance of her role as Lady Mareena Titanos, with her convictions and allegiance to the Reds. Although her outburst is framed as a loss of control, she manages to put Elara in a defensive position without putting herself in true danger. Mare thus demonstrates an instinctual adeptness at political maneuvers.



On the same page as the colonel, Mare demonstrates a certain political and military savviness. Because Elara must make Mare believable as her son's fiancée, Mare must be invited to gatherings that make her privy to the kind of political news that might help her scheme against the royal family.



Mare has bonded with Cal and, to an extent, Maven. She wants to trust Maven because she feels lonely, but she is worried about the consequences. Julian's lessons are a respite from her constant worries of breaking character, but they are not the amazing breakthrough of self-discovery and empowerment that might help her escape her all-but imprisonment.



Mare and Julian are excited by the newfound understanding about how she can wield her gift. However, the fact that Mare needs to feel peacefully resigned to death in order to use her power means that Mare is at her strongest when she is least attached to her own life. This notion ties into ideologies that historically have justified institutions like slavery: oppressors justify oppressing people by saying that those they oppress will be free in death.



Julian's excitement might be on Mare's behalf, but he also seems excited that he might be able to use her as proof that Silvers and Reds are not as biologically distinct from one another as the nation has been led to believe. Still, the idea that Mare's talent exceeds the talent of most Silvers, including Cal and Maven, is a big turn from Mare's habitual assumption of her own powerlessness.



Mare, feeling there is something wrong with her, runs from practice. Sentinels grab her to escort her to her next lesson. Maven intervenes, telling them to leave her be. He says he understands Mare's feelings because he often feels out of place under his mother's watch and as the "shadow" of Cal's "flame." He warns Mare that she should learn to hide her heart. He also tells her he can fix her homesickness.

Mare feels isolated when she runs from the room. She is both far more powerful than she ever thought and also powerless to be herself in the court. Maven strengthens his bond with Mare with this opportunity to help her feel less isolated. Again, Mare and Maven empathize with one another over their respective sibling rivalries.



CHAPTER 14

Mare follows Maven through the hallways, not worried that she will be questioned in his presence. She thinks he might not be "so bad" if he is going to take her home. He leads her to Cal's room. Cal is bruised, unshaven, and wearing dented armor. He is surprised to see Mare. Mare realizes that Cal, who has snuck out of the palace himself, can surely sneak her out too.

This is the first time since Mare discovered Cal's identity that she has seen him with his guard down. She is also letting her own guard down with Maven and Cal because they are helping her see her family.



Once Cal agrees to help Mare sneak out of the palace, Maven leaves. As Cal changes clothes, Mare looks around at his suits of armor and books on warfare. The books contain upsetting notes from Cal on war tactics, and Mare imagines her brothers and Kilorn in the diagrams. When Cal emerges in the plainclothes outfit he wore when Mare met him in the tavern, she thinks of him as "a wolf in sheep's clothing. And now," she thinks, "I'm the sheep pretending to be a wolf."

Mare felt betrayed when she found out Cal's identity in part because she felt there was an unfair exchange of intimacy between them. Now, she is seeing Cal in his room and learning more about him as a person. This balances their exchange of intimacy, but Mare is also disturbed by the fact that the authentic version of Cal makes battle strategies, as though he is playing games with the bodies of real people she knows and loves.



Cal leads Mare to what she thinks is a dead end full of hanging sheets concealing some sort of metal. Mare asks if it is more armor and suggests that Cal wear some armor to defend himself against her brothers. He declines, saying that he will be playing the part of a fellow servant. He will also be her ride. He throws back a curtain to reveal a wheeled contraption that he calls a cycle. The king and Colonel Macanthos will not mass produce it for the army yet, but Cal says it is better than a regular transport because it is faster and can go more places. Mare is wary of it. Still, the promise of home is enough to make her don the helmet Cal hands her and climb on with him as the engine roars to life.

Because of his rank, Cal is able to access top-of-the-line equipment so that he can go wherever he likes in the kingdom. Mare does not fully trust Cal or the cycle, but she nonetheless decides to take Cal up on his offer. Mare is thus consenting to use the connections she is building at the court for her personal gain. Mare realizes that despite the dubious ethics of exploiting unjust privilege, it is difficult and not always worth the ethical posturing to turn down opportunities when presented with them.



Mare feels free on the cycle. When she and Cal arrive at the village, Cal stashes the cycle in some woods. It is well concealed, and Mare says Cal must sneak out often. He tells her he does not sneak out for himself but, rather, because he will be king one day and wants to know his people.

Mare's sense of freedom on the cycle is something to which, she believes, Cal always has access. He answers her indirect challenge by stating that he feels an obligation to use the freedom of movement the cycle offers him in order to carry out the duties of a job that has been foisted upon him.



Mare is surprised at Cal's expression of goodness. She asks what he sees. He says the world is on the edge of ruin; she challenges him, stating that her world is already in ruin. Although Cal protests that his father is doing everything he can to keep everyone safe, Mare insists that, "Your father keeps *your* people safe, not mine." Cal says that the bigger picture shows that change would have a great cost, because the other kingdoms would not stand for equality in Norta. Mare says Norta could be the beginning.

Cal offers to stay outside when Mare goes into her house, in case her brothers recognize him. Wanting Cal to see his future subjects, Mare tells him that her brothers would not recognize him, even though she knows Shade might. Inside, everyone is slow to wake and realize that Mare has come to visit. All Mare's family members are there except for Shade, who she assumes is out.

Mare's father explains the lottery that supposedly led to the entire Barrow family discharge. Mare can tell that her father does not believe the lottery story, but her mother does. Her mother is proud of Mare's new fictitious job as she has never been proud of any of Mare's actual accomplishments. Gisa seems bitter still because of her broken hand. Mare's brothers tease her, assuming Cal is her new love interest.

Mare's mother begins to cry. Mare thinks it is because she is worried Mare will leave again, and she will forget her daughter. No one is looking at Mare's mother, though, and Mare realizes that Shade's absence must not be incidental. Gisa tells her that Shade died before the discharge, beheaded for trying to run away. Mare knows Shade did not try to run away, but, rather, must have been discovered as part of the Scarlet Guard. Mare is unable to control her power and makes the lightbulbs, fridge, and walls buzz with electricity. The lightbulbs explode.

Someone gets Mare's attention: Kilorn, she realizes. He looks angry and wants to know if Mare is one of the Silvers now. Mare's mother comes to her defense, saying that Mare is her daughter. Mare offers to cut herself to show her red **blood**. Bree says that they all know who Mare is. Having gotten Cal's silent permission to tell the truth, Mare tells her family and Kilorn everything except the part about the Scarlet Guard and Julian's discovery that she can generate electricity.

Mare and Cal both want what is best for the country, but they disagree about what is best. In particular, Cal wishes that there were more equality in Norta, but he worries that bringing about that change would not be worth the sacrifices it would entail. Mare does not think Cal is daring enough, and she also thinks that he considers inequality too abstractly. He may think it is distasteful, but he is ultimately able to go home to the palace and forget what he saw. Reds, on the other hand, have no respite from inequality.



Mare hopes that by increasing Cal's network of interpersonal relationships with Reds, she will make concrete for him the suffering that Reds endure. This approach is reflective of a common critique of politicians: that they are "out of touch" with their constituents. Mare once again reveals her instincts for political strategy.



Mare seems to get her political skepticism from her father. Mare's mother is so tired of the injustices her family has endured that she is willing to believe even a far-fetched story. Mare's relationship with Gisa remains strained, which provides a foil for the ongoing tension between Cal and Maven. The assumption that Cal is Mare's love interest also plays into this tension, because Mare is engaged to Maven.



Despite her personal sacrifice, Mare has been unable to save all her family members. Shade has been killed because of his involvement with the Scarlet Guard, but he never would have been involved if not for the Reds' oppression at the hands of the Silvers. The news thus exacerbates Mare's anger at the Silvers as well as her feeling that there is no perfect way to overhaul the ruling system of oppression. The feeling that she has no control manifests in her loss of control over her electrical power.



The fact that Mare's mother defends her as her daughter demonstrates that despite Mare's feelings about her mother's disapproval, Mare still belongs to her family. This sense of belonging is difficult because beyond this moment, Mare must continue pretending that she does not belong to her family. Mare needs Cal's permission in order to tell her family some of the truth about herself, indicating that Mare does not have sole proprietary claim over her own life story.



Mare's mother thinks the turn of events is a miracle for the family and that Mare will finally be someone "special." When Mare's mother begins asking questions about Maven, Cal says it is time to leave. Everyone agrees not to say anything, although Kilorn is angry about it. Mare promises that she will try to come back, which she knows is a lie.

Full of rage that won't be assuaged by Cal's attempt at an apology, Mare convinces Cal to make a stop at Will Whistle's wagon. There, Mare meets one of Farley's lieutenants, who wants to assassinate Cal while he waits in the woods. Mare defends Cal. Still, unbeknownst to him, she decides to join the Scarlet Guard. When she returns to Cal in the woods, she feels as though she has betrayed him, even though she is not exactly sure that she owes him anything. He is friendly to her, telling her that she will have to join him and Maven for training now that her gift has proven so powerful.

Something rustles in the woods, and Kilorn steps out. He accuses Mare again of joining the Silvers and says that she has a bad habit of trying to save him, referring to his release from conscription. Mare holds her tongue rather than tell him in front of Cal that she has joined the Scarlet Guard. As Mare leaves with Cal, Kilorn hints that he is about to do the same. Mare worries for him.

CHAPTER 15

Mare wakes to Walsh standing over her. Walsh goes about the business of a servant but mouths at Mare, "Rise, Red as the dawn," signaling her own involvement with the Guard. There is a piece of paper in the teacup Walsh hands Mare. It says, "midnight." Mare also has a note from Elara with an updated schedule to accommodate Training along with Protocol and Lessons.

Mare is excited for Training because she will have someone to talk to. Lucas advises her to be careful not to antagonize the instructors. Lucas says his military service wore on him because he began at the age of nine, and "men are not meant to be at war for long." Mare challenges him, asking whether Reds can last longer than Silvers at war. Mare realizes that Lucas knows she is hiding something when he tells her they would both do best to keep their heads down.

Mare must choose whether to be truthful with her family or whether to betray their trust in order to keep them and herself safe. She chooses to go along with what Cal wants her to do because it will result in the most safety for everyone. Mare's family and even Kilorn understand this impulse: they agree to keep the secret.



Mare is not fully truthful with anyone. Forced to make difficult decisions in order to protect herself, her family, and her friends, Mare decides that it is preferable to alienate herself from a possible friend at the court (Cal) in the interest of her stronger loyalties. However, Mare's loyalties are also in question. For example, is she still loyal to family members if she does not disclose the whole truth to them? She has also now signed on to be loyal to the Scarlet Guard, and may be asked to act in ways that conflict with her other loyalties.



Mare's interaction with Kilorn demonstrates that she has a hypocritical way of putting herself in danger in order to protect others. She thinks that it would be rash of Kilorn to join the Scarlet Guard, but she is content with her decision to do so herself.



Walsh's message to Mare indicates that signing up with the Scarlet Guard is not only symbolic but will also affect Mare's day-to-day life. It also indicates that the Scarlet Guard may be wider-ranging than Mare thought, and that people she has already been interacting with might have unknown political allegiances. Mare is now officially caught up in this tangle of allegiances.



Mare is frustrated with Lucas's comment because she sees that military service was something he could end when he pleased, whereas her father and brothers have been at the mercy of the military draft. Like the note from Walsh, Lucas's comment that they should both keep their heads down leads Mare to see that the people she has been interacting with all have secrets, and many of them assume that others do as well.



At Training, Mare must endure the jealous glances of the other noble women who were in the contest for Maven's hand. It is Evangeline, however, who looks the most threatening. Mare seeks out Maven. He tells her that soon, when they all part for the capital, Evangeline will have too much to do with Cal to pay attention to Mare. They joke about Mare's struggle learning to dance and about the attention Cal will have to endure at the Parting Ball from girls who want to dance with him.

Maven asks about Mare's visit home, and she realizes Cal did not tell him how it went. Mare tells Maven about Shade, and he expresses sympathy. Although Maven is a burner, Mare almost gets the feeling that like his mother Elara, he can read her mind.

As practice commences, Mare loses hope because all the Silvers appear so powerful, and these are only the untrained teenagers. The instructor enters. Mare recognizes him as the man who oversees broadcasted executions in the capital. He has the power to turn Silvers' abilities off. He sets everyone to do laps. Mare starts off in the lead. However, part of the wall suddenly juts out, tripping her. Evangeline smirks. Only Maven slows down to wait for Mare. Parts of the wall continue to move into the runners' path. Everyone else seems used to it. Mare manages to keep up but does not give a remarkable performance compared to the others.

Next, Mare is asked to demonstrate her power by shooting down a ball target with electricity. She misses. The second time, she hits. She receives no congratulations and must reflect only privately on what Julian told her about being special.

Mare goes to her lesson with Julian sore and sweating. She struggles to focus because she keeps thinking ahead to midnight, when she will take "control of my fate." Julian shows Mare the death lists from the war, and Mare knows that Shade will not be listed because deserters do not get lines in the books. Julian tells Mare that he heard what happened when she got the news of Shade and that she will need more help than he can give her.

Although Mare may not entirely trust Maven, he has become the person she seeks out in a crowd of unfriendly faces. Evangeline remains a threat. There is a tension between the building hints about Mare and Cal's attraction to one another and the hope that Evangeline will be distracted by a partnership with Cal. There is also a tension between Mare's attraction to Cal and her attraction to Maven.



The fact that Cal has not told Maven about their trip to the Stilts allows Mare to bond with Maven over the news of her brother's death. This closeness makes Mare uncomfortable, because it seems as though Maven is more aware of her feelings than he ought to be.



There is a juxtaposition between the casual, everyday routine of going to class with a group of teenagers and the horrific idea of broadcasted executions. Mare has always been good at running, and has been looking forward to Training because she thinks she will excel at it. She learns immediately that she is up against strong competition and should not take the Silvers' physical abilities lightly. Maven cultivates Mare's trust by waiting for her.



As soon as Mare does demonstrate her excellence in Training, the affirmation she hopes for does not come. That her excellence is counted as unremarkable shows that she is in competition with a host of remarkable classmates.



Mare is excited about her work with the Scarlet Guard not only because she believes in the Guard's politics but also because it is a way to stage a personal rebellion, acting of her own accord against the wishes of her captors. Julian recognizes how important it is for Mare to control her own powers, and seems to be asking her to trust him.



Julian tells Mare that he saw her training session, and she looked very good. He then demonstrates his power: he is a singer, meaning that although he is not as powerful as Elara, he can make anyone do as he wishes as long as he can look into their eyes and be heard by them.

As Mare backs away, horrified, Julian tells her that she is right not to trust him. He says that he is friends only with books because no one trusts him. However, he emphasizes that he has never tried to use his power to gain the throne. Nor did his sister, Coriane, who was chosen by King Tiberias to be queen not because of any power demonstration but because he loved her. The Silvers did not like Coriane because she promised to raise Cal to be a just king rather than one who would simply stand for Silver interests. Julian tells Mare that, like Shade, his sister was killed under suspicious circumstances. Julian warns Mare not to get in too deep because “they’ll do it again, to anyone they have to. Even Cal, even Maven, and especially you.” Mare reflects internally, “Too late.”

CHAPTER 16

A week of midnights go by. Finally, one night, Mare suddenly feels an absence of cameras and electricity for the first time since Queenstrial. Walsh pulls Mare out of bed and into the dark conservatory. Farley is there, and Mare is shocked when Maven appears a moment later. Mare can tell that he is terrified of Farley, but he is there to join the Guard.

Maven says that the three years he spent following Cal around on the war front taught him that the war is a foolish waste that unfairly preys on Red **blood**. His first real friend was a Red seventeen-year-old who he had to watch die. Maven says that Cal is “a good person, and he’ll be a just ruler, but he doesn’t think change is worth the cost.” Mare wonders if she should start to trust Maven precisely because of this secret pain he has hidden.

Julian’s demonstration of his own gift marks an exchange of trust. So far, they have discussed only Mare’s talent. Now, Julian reveals to Mare that he has the power to control people’s volition. By revealing this power to Mare, Julian makes it more difficult for himself to use his talent on her.



Julian reveals that he feels isolated, just like Mare. On some level, he feels he deserves that isolation because he could so easily abuse his gift—but he also insists that he has not done so. Mare also learns here that the royal family has a history littered with mysterious deaths and struggles for power. Julian’s insinuation that “They’ll do it again” raises the question of who “they” are. Someone seems to have been plotting over a long period of time to gain power. Mare is wise not to trust people, but she now must face the dilemma of whether or not to trust Julian.



Mare has joined the Scarlet Guard to gain control over her life, but she has no control over when she will truly be inducted into their ranks. The fact that Mare notices the absence of the cameras indicates that she has grown accustomed to being watched at all times. The presence of Maven at the meeting with Farley further demonstrates that Mare has grown accustomed to certain rituals and performances in the court and does not always see what is truly going on.



Trust, for Mare, is growing more complicated. She has berated herself for being untrustworthy by hiding the truth from her family, but now she is inspired to trust Maven because of a secret he has kept. Her interest in trusting him, notably, is motivated not by the fact that he is revealing a secret but by the fact that he is making statements with which she agrees.



After Maven swears his loyalty on his colors, an ancient binding oath, Farley welcomes him to the Scarlet Guard. "Thank you," Mare whispers to him. Farley then pressures Maven into giving her names of assassination targets. He says he would prefer a "less hostile path," but Farley convinces him that getting the attention of the kingdom will be the fastest way to change.

Maven seems to want the same kind of change that Mare wants. However, by being easily persuaded to take a "hostile path" to this change, Maven demonstrates that either he is easily persuaded out of his convictions, or he does not have particularly strong convictions in the first place.



Maven turns to try to convince Mare to join him as the face of the revolution. She is resistant as Maven backs Farley's plan to orchestrate a terrorist attack on the Parting Ball, which the king will surely not be able to keep quiet as he has other terrorist attacks. Mare realizes that Shade has been one of Farley's pawns. However, Maven reminds her what Julian has told her about revolutions needing sparks.

Mare wants change, but she does not want to engage in terrorism. She is worried that she, like Shade, is being used by Farley. She ultimately decides that the potential political payoff is worth being used. However, it is important to note that it is not only Farley but also Maven who does his utmost to persuade Mare.



Mare reluctantly agrees to involvement in the terrorist plan, but she tries to bargain with Farley not to let Kilorn get involved. Kilorn then steps out of the shadows, and Mare realizes that she is too late. He asks her to stop trying to save him, but she refuses. He insists that it is his turn to do what he can to save her. Mare remembers all the times she has protected Kilorn, ever since the day his mother left him an orphan. "Do what you want, Kilorn," she says. She refuses to say goodbye as she turns to go back to bed, dwelling on how he has betrayed her lifelong efforts to help him.

Mare's interaction with Kilorn demonstrates that for all Mare's high standards for herself as a friend and family member, she also holds double standards for her friendships. She is eager to sacrifice herself to help others, but does not let others do the same for her. She thinks of Kilorn's insistence on joining the Scarlet Guard as a betrayal of all her help to him, but Mare is actually betraying the tenets of equitable friendship by being angry with Kilorn for trying to help her in return.



The ball approaches much faster than Mare would like. She continues to struggle with her dancing lessons and pours her energy into Training. Mare wonders one day why everyone suddenly seems far more focused on their warm-ups in Training. Cal tells her she will see in a moment. Then the training floor shifts, like the Queenstrial stadium, to form an arena. There is to be a practice fight. Cal assures Mare that the instructor will stop the contestants before they hurt each other.

Mare struggles with the performative aspects of being a Silver, such as dancing. However, she fails to realize just how performative other aspects are as well. Training turns out to be preparation not only for serving in the military but also for fighting in performance pieces such as Queenstrial or the Feats, in order to maintain "Strength. Power" in the kingdom.



Mare is terrified as she watches a nymph and Maven gear up to fight. The instructor asks the class who has the advantage and confirms that the nymph, with more experience and control of water to quench Maven's fire, has a leg up. As the fight begins, it first looks like Maven will win. However, the tables turn at the last minute, and Maven must yield.

Mare witnesses how regardless of the strength of her gift, she can always be made vulnerable because she can be pitted against those who are stronger than her. Like the pageants and the Feats, Training itself is a reminder that anyone can be killed at any time.



As the next fight begins, Cal advises Maven not to corner a stronger opponent because “it makes them more dangerous.” Cal congratulates Maven on his improvement, which strikes Mare as patronizing. She speaks up for Maven, but then tells Maven privately that Cal is right—he needs to outsmart opponents who are stronger than him. Maven bitterly reflects that Cal is always right when it comes to fighting.

Mare does not want to agree with Cal—not because she thinks he has said something particularly offensive, but because she sees in him the more perfect sibling against whom she always feels she is being measured in her own family. Mare wants to have a stronger bond with Maven because she identifies with his plight as the overshadowed brother. However, she reluctantly trusts Cal’s military opinions.



Mare sees Evangeline smiling across the arena and wonders how it does not bother her to see her friends bleeding. She reminds herself that Silvers, with their constant access to healers, do not have to worry over spilled blood the way Reds do. Mare watches Cal mercilessly defeat two opponents. She reflects that, “Cal is more dangerous than all of them put together. I cannot forget that.” Mare’s thoughts are interrupted when Evangeline challenges her to a fight in the arena.

Mare tries not to allow horror to become normalized in the way it has been for Silvers like Evangeline. She wants to maintain as much distance as she can from Silver customs because she is inherently in more danger than they are by virtue of the color of her blood. Evangeline’s challenge demonstrates that Mare only has so much control over how ingratiated she becomes in Silver customs.



CHAPTER 17

Mare tries to refuse, which Maven agrees is a good idea. However, everyone pushes Mare into the arena, arguing that there are healers nearby to help should her minimal training prove no match for Evangeline. Mare, wondering if she was always supposed to die in a staged accident during Training, resolves not to die here. As they fight, she summons extraordinary power and seems to be fighting Evangeline off. However, Evangeline gets the upper hand and has metal spiders she has summoned out of the earth slice Mare’s face open. Cal and Maven rush to Mare’s aid, helping to hide her red **blood** from everyone, including the healer who tries to help her.

Mare and Maven think it is a bad idea for Mare to fight Evangeline, because if she bleeds, everyone will see that she is not, in fact, a Silver. Maven and Cal’s concern might be for Mare’s wellbeing, or it might be for the wellbeing of the royal family’s cover story. Mare is in particular danger not only because Elara has promised that she will be killed if her identity is revealed, but also because she must refuse the medical attention of healers who might find out her secret.



Mare convinces Maven to take her to Julian. When they meet, Mare learns that there is animosity between Julian and Maven. Julian says he cannot do much of anything for Mare’s wound and sends Maven to find Sara Skonos, a skin healer and “a discreet friend.” Maven returns with her shortly. Unlike a blood healer, Sara has not artificially concealed her age. Silently, she heals Mare. Mare can tell that Julian used to be in love with Sara. Julian makes no comment but urges Maven and Mare to leave so as not to be missed.

Mare is once again finding that the royal court has a deep and convoluted history. She does not know who trusts who, much less who she ought to trust. In particular, Mare has felt the urge to trust both Julian and Maven. She needs both of their help, and it does seem that in this instance, they are able to put aside their differences to help her. However, it is unclear whether she will be able to reconcile their differences in the long term.



In the hall, Mare and Maven run into Elara, and Mare witnesses the queen read her son's mind. When Elara turns to Mare and says to be careful not to give herself away with her blood again, Mare challenges her for killing Shade. Elara takes control of Mare, throwing her back against the wall. She tells Mare never to speak to her that way again. Mare wonders why Elara doesn't just kill her. Maven breaks up the confrontation, telling Mare to get back to her schedule and staring his mother down like "two pieces squaring off in a game I don't understand."

Mare realizes that she does not understand the dynamic between Maven and Elara. She wants to trust Maven, but Elara is her enemy. Mare also realizes that there must be aspects of Elara's plan for her that she does not understand, because she is an inconvenience to Elara, and court gossip would suggest that it is not difficult to have inconvenient people killed. decides to continue tentatively trusting Maven with the understanding that he might be aware of ways in which she is a pawn in a scheme.



Mare must dress for the send-off of a legion of soldiers. Mare is disgusted that Silvers have chosen to go to the war front on what appears to her as a vacation. When she tells this to Cal, he says that choosing to go does not reduce the soldiers' bravery. In fact, they are to go dressed as Reds to fight alongside Reds already at the front. Cal tells Mare she gave him this idea by causing such disorientation when she fell at Queesntrial. He hopes that the enemy will feel the same about Silvers dressed as Reds.

Cal demonstrates that although he may not be the most radical thinker in terms of social reform, he is a creative tactician and uses all the resources he can to bring about victory on the warfront. This creativity contrasts with the single-mindedness of Maven, who has decided that terrorism is the only way to effect change. Cal's plan also involves placing Silvers alongside Reds at the warfront. It is not a perfect plan, and Reds might be upset that Silvers are donning their uniforms as costumes that they can ultimately take off. However, Cal is at least thinking about Red and Silver collaboration.



One new soldier praises Cal for leading the legion as the youngest general in history. Mare finds out that Cal will depart for the war front when she departs for the capital. Mare worries that unlike Kilorn, Cal is not equipped with the basic survival skills to make it home alive.

Mare's concern for Cal demonstrates that she has grown to care for him. She is also continuing her pattern of worrying about others more than about herself. Mare does not yet respect either Kilorn or Cal's ability to thrive or make good decisions without her.



That evening, Cal stops by Mare's room to give her dance lessons. Mare knows she should refuse because of her engagement to Maven, but the thought that Cal might die on the war front convinces Mare to go with him.

The imminent danger Cal faces has softened Mare's feelings toward him. She once again demonstrates that for all her concern over trustworthiness, she is drawn to people because of their vulnerability more than because she finds them trustworthy. She herself might be betraying her commitment to Maven by going with Cal.



CHAPTER 18

Cal takes Mare to an empty sitting room to practice dancing. The cameras are still on, but no one stops them. Mare enjoys dancing with Cal to the upbeat music he plays on a speaker. She tells Cal that she is not sure she is supposed to be dancing with him in a dark room. Cal says he is doing Maven a favor, helping Mare avoid stepping on his feet.

Cal appears to have the privilege of moving freely before the cameras, even when he is violating propriety. As when she was riding on the cycle, Mare again feels an increased sense of freedom when she is with Cal. She is able to enjoy the luxury of listening to dance music over a speaker only because of him. Spending time with him feels like a betrayal both to Maven and to her family, but she nevertheless remains with him because she gets to feel freer.



Cal sounds bitter when he comments that Maven fixed up Mare's face well. Mare tells him it was Sara Skonos, and Cal grows tense. Mare learns from him that Sara was Queen Coriane's best friend. Cal doesn't remember his mother, and Sara can't tell him about her because her tongue was cut out for telling "terrible lies." Cal declines to say more about why he and Maven do not get along with Sara. He says they will continue tomorrow.

Mare returns to her room to find that the cameras have been shut off. Maven appears out of the darkness and says he called in a favor from some of Mare's guards. He tells her that Farley has visited again and convinced him to give up more information than he wanted to: four names of Silver elites to be assassination targets. If all goes well, the king will be too afraid to send Cal to the front.

Mare thinks of how Shade died for the Guard and decides that his mission is hers now. Besides, she can stomach trading the Silver elites for Cal's life. Maven says that Kilorn is mixed up in the plan too. Mare asks what will happen if they fail. Maven says that this won't happen, but that if they do, they will be tried, convicted, and killed for treason.

At Mare's next lesson, Julian warns Mare about getting too attached to Maven, because he is his mother's son. Mare tells Julian that it is unfair to saddle Maven with his vendetta against Elara. Julian calls Mare "little lightning girl" as he tells her not to be fooled. He warns her that "Anyone can betray anyone" and that she is someone's pawn in whatever game is afoot. Silently, Mare thinks, "Think what you want, Julian. I'm no one's fool."

Sara's punishment for lying demonstrates that Mare could risk serious bodily harm by lying in the Silver court. It seems that even more pain has been created by Sara's inability to tell Cal and Maven what she knows, indicating that the withholding of information can be as harmful as lying. What Mare learns from Cal in this instant helps her see the royal family as even more complex: like her own family, theirs is also rife with unspoken feelings and undertones of betrayal.



Whereas Cal is illicitly helping Mare perform the role of Lady Mareena Titanos by giving her dancing lessons, Maven is illicitly helping her work against the very underpinnings of the performative court. There is a greater sense of romance in Cal's tactics. However, the insult of being asked to perform the role of a person who does not exist but who matters more than Mare herself heightens the stakes of Mare's choices. Maven thus competes with his brother by appealing to Mare's desire for widespread equality.



Mare is uncomfortable with terrorism but agrees to the plan because of her loyalty to her brother, her feelings for Cal, and her commitment to the Scarlet Guard. Mare risks her life for treason, but she has less to lose than a true Silver. Mare's dilemma is at the crossroads of a debate that has engaged activists for centuries: do oppressed peoples have lives so desolate that it is worth risking them for the prospect of progress, or does such logic further devalue the lives of oppressed peoples?



Julian calls Mare the diminutive nickname Elara has been using, making Mare more resistant to his advice. Mare does not want to feel alone, so she is inclined to defend Maven by insisting that she is politically savvy enough to assess Maven's intentions toward her. Julian's warning that "Anyone can betray anyone," however, sticks with Mare.



The night before the ball, Mare is distracted in her dance practice with Cal by the thought of the violence but also the potential change to come. The Scarlet Guard is going to demand “Equality, liberty, freedom.” Cal thinks Mare is worrying about dancing. He tells Mare about his own insecurities and wishes that Maven were the crown prince, not him. Mare begins to realize that she has feelings for Cal and weakly tries to convince him not to go off to war for Evangeline’s sake.

Cal tries to bond with Mare by revealing more of his own vulnerability. It works, but Mare’s feelings are more complicated than Cal realizes. The demands, “equality, liberty, freedom,” are very similar to the demands of the French Revolution: “equality, liberty, brotherhood.” Although Mare lives in a different world than that of the French Revolution, the words give the sense that though the revolution may be effective at demolishing the monarchy, it will also be very bloody.



Cal, Mare reminds herself, is forbidden. Then Cal kisses Mare. She thinks about how she is betraying “my cause, Maven, and myself, but I don’t want to stop.” She thinks again of Julian’s warning that “Anyone can betray anyone.” She knows she and Cal are doomed to be enemies, but for now she enjoys the moment.

Mare is conflicted between her political convictions and her personal desires. She also has warring personal desires because for her, more-so than for many of the Silvers, the political is personal. Mare’s difficulty refusing Cal’s advances show that it is exhausting and sometimes impossible to at once remain faithful to one’s political convictions and manage one’s desires.



CHAPTER 19

In an elaborate ballgown, Mare meets Maven. She can only think of how she kissed Cal last night. She wishes everything were over, and Maven says that it is just getting started. They confess their mutual fear. Maven says that more than dying, he is afraid of failing to change the world.

Mare is performing the role of Lady Mareena Titanos in the ballgown. Whereas in past interactions, Cal has been helping her perform this role, she now meets Maven with a greater sense of performativity than she had the previous night with Cal. She is not fully herself with either brother, but both appeal to aspects of her personality.



They see the rest of Maven’s family. As Elara fusses over Maven, Mare realizes that the evil queen is redeemed by her love for her son. The king tells Maven he needs a cause, like Cal. Mare remembers all the times she felt inadequate compared to Gisa. Mare suggests that reforming her is Maven’s cause. She pretends cordiality with the king despite knowing that he must still want to kill her. Cal enters, and Mare notices his resemblance to the king. He barely meets Mare’s eyes, and she reflects that “it’s the only greeting I deserve.”

Mare had a very personal interaction with Cal the previous evening, but they both must now pretend that they are indifferent toward one another. What is more, Mare now identifies more strongly with Maven because he is the “disappointing” son to the king. Mare, who feels a great sense of animosity toward the king, is demoralized by having to fake friendship with both him and the prince who reminds her of him. With Maven, Mare is able to be more unapologetically Red.



Mare looks around at the four people she knows will be assassinated tonight. One of them is Evangeline’s brother. Mare thinks that she ought to feel sympathy for Evangeline, having recently lost a brother herself, but what with the way Evangeline hangs on Cal, Mare can only think, “I want to kill her, I want to be her.”

Mare’s conflicted feelings toward Evangeline betray that Mare has trouble distinguishing the boundaries between personal and political desires. Her feelings for Cal help her justify the killings in which she is about to participate, suggesting that she may not have thought through the moral and political consequences of her actions.



One of the targets, Colonel Macanthos, wishes Mare happiness and remarks that Evangeline will “make a sad queen.” Mare reminds herself that the colonel’s life will be worth the outcome of the plot. After greeting the next target, a father, Mare reminds herself of Kilorn crying after his father died. Maven takes Mare aside. She tries to back out of the plan, but he talks her back into it.

Mare has put herself in the position of trading some lives for others. She realizes that she has signed onto a political strategy with which she is not entirely comfortable and attempts to back out of it. However, there is no time to deliberate further, because the opportunity is here. Maven reveals that when it comes down to it, his loyalties lie with political schemes ahead of Mare’s comfort.



Maven and Mare return to the crowd. They take the dance floor along with Cal and Evangeline. Mare watches Cal and remembers dancing with him. She thinks of the juxtaposition between the future the crowd sees in the four of them dancing and the future she is trying to bring about tonight. She thanks Maven for his bravery to do what is right. She thinks that Julian must be wrong about Maven being “his mother’s son.”

Mare tries to quickly think through the logic that justifies her decision to help the Scarlet Guard with the assassination. Because Maven is the one who has assured her that the morally dubious plan will bring about the desired outcome, Mare has no choice but to believe Maven and trust that he is leading her to the right decision.



Maven and Mare inch to the edge of the dance floor, where they communicate with Kilorn under the guise of a servant. The assassination plot is ready to go. Kilorn runs to give the rest of the Guard Maven and Mare’s go-ahead. Mare finds awareness of all the lights and cameras. Just as Cal is smiling and coming toward her, four shots and four flashes of light go off. People begin screaming.

Mare does not directly assassinate anyone, but cuts the lights so that the assassins have a chance of getting away. She thus indirectly participates in the murder attempt. The fact that Cal walks toward Mare as she cuts the lights foreshadows the fact that Mare will have to reckon with the extent to which she has betrayed the targets, and also Cal, by helping the assassins.



CHAPTER 20

Mare screams along with the crowd as she makes the lights go out so that her friends can escape. In the chaos, Mare stumbles upon the murdered bodies and notices the silver **blood** trickling from their bullet wounds. Mare cannot hold the lights off any longer and apologizes to the person dragging her away from one of the bodies. She realizes that it is Cal, trying to make sure she is all right. Cal tells Lucas to take Mare out of the ballroom, but he refuses to run away himself.

Because they do not yet know of her involvement in the assassination, Cal and Lucas try to protect Mare. She thus feels her betrayal of them even more acutely. She must sink deeper into her performance in order to avoid their suspicions, leading to another lie. Mare’s observation of the silver blood helps anchor her to the feeling that the murders were politically motivated: after all, there have been countless Red bodies left to bleed on the warfront.



Mare sees one of the dead bodies as she leaves, posed in the middle of the ballroom with a lance sticking out of him. On the lance is a red sash stamped with a torn sun. As soon as Mare and Lucas leave the hall, there is an explosion behind them. Lucas says that it is a bomb, and based on the sash, it was set by the Scarlet Guard. He assures Mare that she needn’t worry about Cal being hurt by a bomb. However, Mare is more preoccupied by her confusion: a bomb was not part of the plan. She feels betrayed.

Now that the plot has exceeded Mare’s expectations of violence, she feels that she has been used. She already knew she was a pawn, but now she realizes that she may not have been as capable of assessing people as she thought she was. She is now not sure of her allegiance to the Scarlet Guard but also knows that she is, at least in part, answerable for their actions.



Lucas leads Mare underground, where the rest of the royal family except Cal lies in wait. The king rages about the attack and wants to know about “my son.” Mare notices that Maven appears used to being overlooked this way. Mare tells the king that Cal went after the shooters and that the Scarlet Guard left behind a banner. The king and queen fight over which of them is responsible for letting the Scarlet Guard become such a danger. Elara leaves to question the servants.

Evangeline comes in, obviously crying for her brother, followed by Cal, who is soaked in Red **blood**. They bring Mare with them to a prison cell containing four people, including Farley, Walsh, Kilorn, and a third lieutenant named Tristan. Cal, who remembers Kilorn from the Stilts, demands that Mare explain his presence. She feigns ignorance at his involvement in the Scarlet Guard, claiming only to have helped him get a job. The rest of the royal family enters as well and watches as Cal directs the torture of Farley by a sentinel to get information out of her. The sentinel freezes Farley’s blood until Cal finally cannot take it and calls a halt.

Someone bursts in, calling for Evangeline. Mare and Farley are both surprised to see Evangeline’s brother, healed from the attack. Mare must force herself not to react. Evangeline’s brother, also a magnetron, detaches one of the bars of the cell and plunges it into Tristan’s chest. Mare grabs Evangeline’s brother around the neck and shocks him until he drops to the floor. Mare realizes that everyone is looking at her, afraid. Cal looks ashamed, either because he tortured Farley or because his torture failed to extract information from her. Maven and Mare play for time, convincing Cal and the king to address the kingdom. Evangeline tells Cal that he is weak. Mare renews her resolve to protect Kilorn.

On the way back to the throne room, Mare drips silver **blood** while Cal drips red. Mare asks Cal how many casualties there have been, and she is struck by his casual tone when he lists off the ten dead and fifteen wounded. Mare thinks, “I never wanted this” as Maven takes her hands in their usual spot in the throne room. King Tiberias speaks, vowing to avenge the fallen against the ungrateful Reds. Mare notices the smell of blood as the court yells, “Strength. Power! Death!” Mare meets Maven’s eyes and knows that they are both thinking, “What have we done?”

One of the king’s sons is present, but he is focused only on the one who is absent. Mare may be uncomfortable with what Maven has convinced her to do, but he regains her sympathies in this moment because she knows what it is like to be overlooked by a parent in favor of another child. Again, the king and queen reveal that their marriage is strained by a struggle for political power.



Cal’s demand of Mare that she explain what is going on drives home the fact that she bears at least some personal responsibility for the terrorist attack. It also demonstrates that for all the feelings of betrayal she has had toward Cal, Mare has now also betrayed Cal’s trust. Mare’s loyalties are in conflict, because to do right by Cal would be to betray Kilorn. Cal further complicates Mare’s feelings toward him by torturing Farley in a way that is horrifying to Mare, but then showing humanity by backing down from the torture.



There is a complex power dynamic going on in this scene. Mare, Evangeline’s brother, Cal, and Maven are all attempting to control the situation, but none of them can quite tell what the others are thinking. Mare’s inability to tell why Cal is ashamed demonstrates that Mare’s own double-crossing is making her increasingly distrustful of others. Unsure what exactly her goals or allegiances should be in the grand scheme of things, Mare doubles down on the commitment to Kilorn that led her into the capital in the first place.



Mare and Cal are not wounded, but are each soaked in the blood of the other’s people. The blood symbolizes both their mutual guilt and the violence that is to come should class warfare continue. Mare’s attempt to bring about equality, she realizes, has inspired the Silvers to even more violence. The addition of “death” to the king’s mantra of “Strength. Power,” makes explicit that the Silvers are out not just for Reds but, specifically, for Red blood.



CHAPTER 21

Mare goes back to her room and wonders how she will save Kilorn. She thinks of Julian. She goes to him and pleads with him to help stage the prisoners' escape. He is unsympathetic with the prisoners, who he bluntly calls terrorists, until Mare tells him that she was part of the plan. She calls the bomb "unexpected" but reflects internally that it was "a horror."

Julian is horrified that Mare is implicated in this scheme. Julian knows that the queen will pluck out his eyes to prevent his ever reading again should he get involved too. Still, Julian decides that helping Mare will be a good place to start his revenge for Queen Coriane's death, which Elara and others falsely claimed to be a suicide.

Back in her room, Mare convinces Lucas to accompany her to the kitchen, because dinner never happened in the aftermath of the bomb. She feels bad using him but cannot think of a better plan. Mare shuts off the cameras in the hall. Julian, who lies in wait, uses his power as a singer to convince Lucas to lead them to the prisoners. Julian and Mare continue to use their powers as they pass cameras and guards. Mare convinces the guards outside the cell to let them past by insinuating that she and Julian want to torture the prisoners, unsupervised.

Alone with the prisoners, Mare and Julian ask them about the bomb. Farley swears that it was not the Scarlet Guard's doing and that the Guard does not kill senselessly. Besides, as Kilorn tells Mare, it would have been a bad idea to kill "our greatest hope," which Mare interprets to mean her. At Mare's urging, Julian uses his power to get Lucas to bend the bars of the cell open to allow the prisoners to escape. Julian then manipulates the sentinel so that she will not remember seeing anyone help the prisoners out of the cell.

Mare, who feels extremely isolated and distrustful, must be desperate for help if she is willing to confess to Julian her involvement in the assassination plot. Her admission also demonstrates that of all her acquaintances, Julian seems to her the most trustworthy. Mare makes herself vulnerable by telling him not only of her involvement but also of how she lost control over the plan.



Julian is willing to risk the loss of reading, which he has characterized as a substitute for human companionship, in order to help Mare. However, he is motivated not solely by a desire to help her, but also a desire to avenge his sister's death. This demonstrates that while individuals' objectives might line up, rarely do two people share exactly the same motivations. Should the situation change, Julian might be persuaded to work against Mare.



Mare is uncomfortable with the idea of using someone who has not wronged her in order to achieve her objectives, but she is not uncomfortable enough not to use Lucas as a pawn. Mare is beginning to operate like the aristocrats at the court who have used her in the service of their broader schemes. She thus blurs the boundaries between Silvers and Reds not by valorizing Reds but by using the same rubric of dubious morality that Silvers have used in the past.



Given that she and Julian are manipulating Lucas to do what they need him to do, Mare has no real reason to trust that she represents anything to the Scarlet Guard or even to Kilorn beyond their "greatest hope" for revolution. Her personhood might very well be irrelevant to them. Still, if she can continue to promise them hope, she can keep them on her side.



Julian must also manipulate the memories of the other sentinels who saw him, Mare, and Lucas go down to the cell. His gift is not strong enough to handle two sentinels at once, so Mare tries to intervene by acting the part of a commanding lady, as she has seen Evangeline do. One of the sentinels becomes suspicious and shoots Mare in the stomach just as she sends a bolt of lightning at him. A bullet from the other sentinel nearly misses Mare. She knocks out both sentinels with a ball of sparks, then she falls into Kilorn's arms. She notices his green eyes.

Julian snaps to attention, using his gift to order one of the sentinels, a skin healer, to wake up. He has the skin healer heal Mare and Farley, who has a dislocated shoulder. Julian tells the prisoners that they have a few hours before the sentinels wake up. Mare, Lucas, and Julian lead the party to Cal's garage, where Walsh hugs Mare and tells her that she hopes she will be the Red queen one day. Farley says they will meet again soon, and Kilorn hopelessly pleads with Mare to come with him. She refuses, saying the cause needs her at the palace. As the escapees leave, Kilorn tells Mare, "Red queen. Has a nice ring to it."

CHAPTER 22

Mare dreams of Shade that night, then remembers that he is dead. Her maids wake her early. When Lucas does not meet her at the door on the way to Protocol, Mare worries that he is being interrogated about the previous night. She runs into Maven. He tells her that she is up early after such a late night, and she feigns surprise for the cameras when he tells her that the prisoners escaped. He says that Elara has questioned the sentinels and that he has "directed" his mother to people of interest. Mare takes this to mean that Maven has directed Elara away from her.

Maven whispers to Mare that there was no bomb. The explosion was caused by a bullet-punctured gas line, but Elara spread the story of the bomb to make the Scarlet Guard look more merciless. Mare is angry that the queen can make such dangerous use of lies alone.

Mare attempts to weaponize the performance skills she has been forced to use for her survival. She does better in the conflict with the sentinels when she drops the performance and takes ownership over her powers. When Kilorn catches Mare, he is physically there for her in a time of distress. She cannot depend on many people in this way. The fact that Mare notices Kilorn's eyes suggests that she is pulled in a third romantic direction.



Mare is exploiting not only Lucas but also the trust Cal has placed in her by showing her the garage. She does so in order to help the prisoners, to whom she also feels a loyalty. She is thus forced into betrayal by conflicting loyalties. Walsh and Kilorn are the first to speak the phrase "Red Queen," showing that they are beginning to look to Mare as a possible leader. The phrase echoes the title of the novel and suggests that Mare will one day ascend to the throne.



Mare's dream about Shade shows that as much as her role at the court has become politicized, all the actions she has taken have been motivated by personal loyalties. She thus feels regretful that she had to betray Lucas, as well as worried that he might be forced to betray her. Maven and Mare do not speak in explicit terms because of the cameras. However, it is important to keep in mind that neither one of them is saying everything they think.



Mare is realizing that the truth and fiction can be extremely powerful weapons in themselves. This means that Mare's very existence as Lady Mareena Titanos might be used as a weapon. She also does not know what false beliefs she and the rest of the kingdom are laboring under.



Mare dreads becoming more deeply embroiled in the court when she goes with the royal family to the capital, leaving her family behind. Maven confirms that they will be leaving this afternoon. He thinks it will be nice for Mare to see the Stilts in passing from the ship. Mare is not looking forward to this moment, but she reflects that leaving the valley early is worth helping Kilorn and the others escape.

The fact that Maven thinks it will be a treat for Mare to see her family in passing demonstrates that he does not understand her feelings of isolation at court. Mare is being held captive, not spending time away from her family because she chooses to do so. Mare's separation from her family is not a sacrifice she has made in order to live her life. Rather, it is a disruption of her life.



Cal crashes into the hallway in full armor. Mare is disgusted at the sight of him, remembering the torture he inflicted on the prisoners. Cal bitterly says that his legion is not going to the war front because his father has decided it is too dangerous. Maven reasons with Cal, saying that of course the king cannot afford to lose his heir. Cal insists that he is a soldier and does not want others to fight while he sits back. Mare is disgusted by Cal's childishness and impulse to kill. She is then afraid of him when he reveals that his new cause is going to be hunting down the Scarlet Guard to kill them.

Mare has just been thinking about how she's been forced away from her family, so Cal's anger that he will not have the privilege of going to war seems to her an oversight of his privilege to remain with his family. She is also afraid because she and several of her friends are part of the group Cal has now vowed to kill. Meanwhile, Maven downplays the king's love for Cal by emphasizing that it is a tactical decision to keep him behind.



Mare watches the Silvers from the entrance hall as they disperse to teach and train. It looks like they are fleeing. Mare reflects that the Silvers are afraid of the Reds because their sense of security has been shattered. She compares them to "lions running from mice." Even Cal, seemingly perfect, is "a torturous, terrible enemy." Mare returns to the mantra, "Anyone can betray anyone."

Mare watches from above, as though she is removed from the fray below. However, because she is a Red inhabiting the role of a Silver (and because she has Red blood but some of the attributes of a Silver), Mare is even more in the fray than anyone else: she is both a lion and a mouse.



Mare watches Cal and Maven say their goodbyes in preparation for their departure to the capital. Not wanting to learn the names of the twelve people who died in the blast, Mare wanders alone to Julian's classroom. She is shocked to see it empty, packed up for the court's move. Julian tells her that they will not continue their lessons because he has accepted a position in the Delphie archives. Mare blames herself for forcing Julian to go on the run. She is sure they will never see each other again, but they pretend otherwise. Julian tells Mare she reminds him of "her," who Mare takes to be Coriane.

Mare and Julian have both felt isolated throughout the novel. They finally succeeded in putting some trust in one another, but that interaction has led directly to Julian's need to go on the run. They do not speak this truth aloud because they are protecting one another's feelings. The fact that Julian is becoming a political fugitive because of his involvement with Mare reveals how corrupt and dangerous the government is, as well as the depth of Julian's commitment to Mare and to his sister.



On the ship later, Mare reflects that she has always wondered why the king's flag was red. She realizes now that it is "like his flame, like the destruction—and the people—he controls." Maven tells Mare that the sentinels from the previous night have been sent to the warfront, probably to die. Lucas is traveling with his family.

Mare realizes how much pageantry goes into the oppression of the Reds. She also realizes that the Silvers are not only blind to injustice but actively enjoy destruction and death. By rebelling against the government, she is dealing in many people's lives.



Mare is relieved until Maven tells her that answers are coming soon because red **blood** was found in the cell from which the prisoners escaped. The blood will be run against the “bloodbase,” a database (which Mare did not know about) used to track Reds “like animals.” The blood will be used to determine the identity of one of the prisoners. Mare tells Maven that it is her blood. He says nothing but looks scared.

The idea that the government keeps samples of everyone’s blood is disturbing because it means that free bodily movement is virtually impossible without government tracking. Particularly because it does not seem to be public knowledge that the government keeps this bloodbase, this is yet another example of the ways a fascist government can pose mortal threats to its citizens.



Mare reflects that it would have been better to stay near the Stilts so she could die close to home. Maven kisses her, more desperately than Cal did, and says he won’t let anyone hurt her. He says he will get someone more powerful to help her. Mare is trying to assess what this means when Cal walks in to summon Maven to a meeting with the queen. Mare remembers her kiss with Cal and feels as though, “I hurt everyone, especially myself.” Maven tells Mare that neither Cal nor he likes to lose. Mare lies, telling Maven he won’t lose her.

Now that Mare has established nascent romantic relationships with both princes, she also has betrayed both of them. She furthers her betrayal by lying to Maven. Meanwhile, Maven is setting up a contest between himself and Cal in which only one of them can win, and the object of the contest is Mare. While Mare is chastising herself for her betrayal, she is being further dehumanized by Elara.



Mare sees her house in the distance as they pass it. She notices that her parents have rebelled quietly by leaving Shade’s star on their flag rather than removing it, as is customary when families lose a child. Mare sees all the Reds looking poverty-stricken, as she used to be. She feels their anger and wonders why they are watching. The queen comments on the onlookers to the parade down the river, and Mare realizes that this is another mandatory event. Even sick elders have been physically forced to show up with the threat of whips.

It is becoming more and more difficult for Reds to rebel against Silvers as their lives are micromanaged and surveilled. A minor act such as leaving a star on the flag has become a noticeable rebellion. The queen wants Mare to notice that the Reds are required to attend the parade. Now, Mare is a part of the spectacle that the Reds are forced to observe. She sees her people and must feel lucky that she is not among them, being whipped.



Mare demands of the queen why the Reds are being forced to watch the parade. Cal, avoiding eye contact with Mare, explains that after the attack, the Reds need to see that the Silvers are still strong. After another whip crack, Mare asks if Cal ordered for the Reds to be beaten. Cal does not answer, but closes his eyes against the cries of a villager. The king tells Mare to “stand back” because the Reds must be taught not to harbor terrorists or become terrorists themselves. The queen tells Mare to be quiet unless she knows any Reds “who should be made an example of.”

The requirement that Reds observe the parade creates a mirror for the pageantry of the parade itself. If Reds all attend the parade, they appear visually to have submitted to the Silvers. This makes it easier for both the Silvers and the Reds to believe that this is the truth. Cal does not seem very comfortable with the arrangement, but he is nonetheless going along with it, because he has been told he must. Mare realizes that she will only make things worse by speaking up.



As the ships draw nearer to the capital, the crowded villages give way to luxurious homes that appear to be empty. Mare learns that these are second homes of Silver aristocrats, and they are uninhabited most of the year. The ships then enter an eerily quiet forest that Maven tells Mare exists to prevent pollution from getting to the aristocrats’ estates from Gray Town, the factory slum they enter next.

There is a stark contrast between the poverty of a place like the Stilts, where Mare and her large family all lived in a tiny house, and these vast estates that sit unoccupied most of the year. Aristocrats are only able to have these beautiful extra residences because of the poverty and labor of Reds in the Stilts and in factory slums.



Mare realizes that the workers she sees are the “techies” who make the lights, cameras, and video screens employed throughout the kingdom. Maven tells her that they also make military supplies, keep the power grid up, and keep the water clean. Mare realizes that they probably never see daylight for all the smoke in the air. They do not leave because, as Mare reflects, “They are broken from birth.” Maven tells Mare that they are not even allowed to conscript: war would be a better alternative than the lives they lead.

Mare next sees Archeon, the capital itself. There is a huge bridge linking two sections of the city, both ends of which are fortified. Archeon is surrounded with diamondglass, just like Summertown. Mare realizes that, “Archeon was built to endure war, not peace.” The city is extremely impressive, but Mare cannot find it beautiful when she has just seen the Red slum next door. Mare states, “Now I truly see what I’m fighting against and how difficult, how impossible, it will be to win. I’ve never felt smaller than I do now, with the great bridge looming above us. It looks ready to swallow me whole.” She decides to try for the sake of “the ones who have never seen the sun.”

Mare realizes for the first time that privilege is not simply hoarded by the Silvers and kept from the Reds. Rather, there is a gradation of privilege. For all the hardships Mare endured growing up, she had a better life than the techies, whose futures are bleaker even than conscription. Mare realizes that when she uses technology, she is benefitting from the labor of these oppressed citizens.



Now that Mare has seen not only the luxury of a palace but also the squalor of a slum, she realizes that she is fighting against not just excessive wealth but also against the systemic maintenance of brutal poverty. She wants to even out the distribution of wealth so that the bridge into the capital gives not only wealthy Silvers but also Reds access to power. In order to do this, she must walk into a city that has been constructed as a war zone. The Silvers hide here, at the heart of the kingdom, from the atrocities that happen on the warfront. However, Mare realizes that the city represents the class warfare that is central to the kingdom.



CHAPTER 23

Whereas nightfall in the Stilts means it is time to shut down the power and sleep, Archeon becomes brighter at night as people celebrate the king’s return to the throne. Maven and Mare share a transport from the docks. Maven points out his favorite places and explains that the Bridge and East Archeon are for “common” Silvers, such as merchants and intellectuals, while West Archeon is for the aristocrats. Mare remembers Lucas telling her that “Not everyone is special.” She can’t believe his statement applies to Silvers.

Mare is struck by how much the organization of West Archeon seems to reflect the fact that it is the seat of the military. There are soldiers everywhere to defend Whitefire Palace. Because the king is giving a speech next to the barracks, the transport heads there. Cameras turn on Mare and Maven as they exit the transport. Mare realizes that she is being broadcast to millions of people. Maven tells her just to stand and look stern.

Mare and Maven joke about how Cal looks stern enough for everyone. Maven says that Cal does not like speeches because he prefers action. Mare privately agrees, but does not want to admit commonalities with Cal in front of Maven.

Whereas Mare only managed to see her home in passing, Maven is able to bring Mare directly into his home because he was born into wealth and status. Mare’s earlier realization, that there are gradations of privilege among the Reds, is stretched further by the realization that some Silvers are not as wealthy or powerful as others. Still, all of them are better off than the Reds.



Even more so than when she was in Summertown, Mare is under public surveillance. Not only does the military presence indicate that the king uses force to maintain power, but also it serves as a reminder that Mare and the Scarlet Guard could be overpowered any time, either by Elara or by a whole army. To Maven, the militarization of the capital is a normal part of life.



Mare is not completely in line with either one of the princes. However, by performing allegiance to Maven, she places an extra impetus on herself not to betray him.



Mare tries not to think about whether the aristocrat shuffling her and Maven to the correct place knew any of the assassination victims. She notices that Evangeline, standing beside Cal, is shaking from nerves despite having what she has always wanted.

Even Evangeline, who always seems fearsome, is nervous now that she is standing next to Cal in front of the entire kingdom. This anxiety might be comforting to Mare because Evangeline is her adversary, but it also makes Mare more keenly aware of the danger of high-profile existence.



Everyone walks into a building and into a room with a plaque that says, “War Command.” Mare is handed a piece of paper. She then realizes how she will be useful to the crown and hears Elara’s voice in her head, whispering, “Earn your keep.” Maven holds Mare’s hand supportively and whispers to her, “You must.”

Elara could speak to Mare out loud, but she instead chooses to demonstrate her power by speaking into Mare’s head. Mare is being used in the “war command” room, suggesting that she is being weaponized within the kingdom.



After a gap in time, Mare sits in her new bedroom, watching the recording of the broadcast that has just aired. She sees herself on the screen, telling the false story of Lady Mareena Titanos and laying out the king’s punishments for the terrorist act. There will be a curfew for all Reds, security in Red villages will be doubled, Reds will be more closely monitored, all Red crimes will be punishable by execution, and conscription age will be lowered to age fifteen. Conscription waivers and release will be available to those who give up members or plans of the Scarlet Guard. Mare watches her eyes try to convey her lie as she says on screen, “Long live the king.”

Mare has been forced to read aloud from the paper Elara handed her as if she were sincerely urging the Reds to submit to the will of the king. Mare is not only the messenger of the new, oppressive security measures but also functions as a face that the Reds are more likely to trust. Because the address was broadcast, Mare is able to watch herself on television. She thus witnesses herself betraying not only her people but also herself.



Knowing that her words will drive Reds to work against one another, Mare doubles down on her determination to fight until she is killed. Mare misses Lucas and Julian. She picks up Julian’s parting gift, a framed map, and something falls out. She hopes for a secret note, but instead finds a book. Julian, knowing that the cameras would be watching, has interspersed a note between lines of the book.

Mare is politically savvy. She knows that one tool for those in power to remain in power is to pit marginalized groups against one another, so that they will not see the grander wrongs being inflicted on them from above. She thus fights back by turning to those who have been her political allies, strengthening bonds rather than weakening them.



Mare assembles all the lines of the note. Julian has given her the names of 27 soldiers, including Shade, whose bodies have been neither buried nor cremated, but rather “misplaced” upon their execution. This misplacement is unheard of. Julian asks for Mare’s forgiveness for comparing her **blood** to the blood of the missing soldiers. He found the same genetic mutation in all of them. He tells her that there are others like her, who are Red and Silver, “stronger than both.” He writes, “I think you are the new dawn.” He includes a list of all the others he has found in the blood bank with the same mutation.

Mare’s loneliness throughout the novel has been exacerbated by her feeling that there is something wrong with her because of the anomaly of her blood. The news that there are others like her instantly gives Mare a community that she might use to fight back against the Silvers. Julian’s phrase, “new dawn,” echoes the Scarlet Guard’s motto, “Rise, Red as the Dawn.” Mare’s sense of optimism is thus further enmeshed with her work with the Scarlet Guard. More than ever, the work of rebellion is a way of carrying out her loyalty to Shade.



Mare tucks the book in her jacket to go show Maven, but Cal finds her first. He confronts her about the fact that she won't look at him even though they kissed three days ago. They argue over whether the Scarlet Guard is a "terrorist" group or a "rebel" group. Cal insists that their methods are unacceptable, and Mare insists that the treatment of the Reds is unacceptable. She says the only reason he treats her well is because she has an unexplainable gift. She wants Cal to use his power to change things.

Mare watches as "Something breaks in Cal." He tells her that he used to think he could change things, but it seems hopeless now. All he can hope to do is uphold his loyalty to his father's legacy. Mare tells him that the **blood** the Scarlet Guard will spill is on his hands, privately thinking that it is also on Maven's hands and hers.

As Mare walks away, Cal calls out to her, "Julian's disappeared, hasn't he?" He reveals to Mare that he knows Julian was involved in the prisoners' escape. He gave his uncle time to slip away but will not be able to intervene in his execution when the queen finds him. Mare worries that Cal will allow her to be executed too. She must hide her relief when he tells her that, at Maven's proposal, all records of Mare's Red **blood** have been destroyed.

CHAPTER 24

Mare begins the next morning by exploring Whitefire, which is older than the Hall at Summerton and contains more offices, ballrooms, and other rooms than Mare will ever be able to find. She must cut her exploring short in order to fulfill her duties as a future princess, "on parade like a goat at auction." In the transport on the way to her first appearance of the day, Mare wants to tell Maven about Julian's secret message and to thank him for taking her **blood** out of the bloodbase, but there are too many people who might overhear.

Mare is disgusted throughout the day by sights of Silvers mistreating Red servants. In an art gallery she and Maven visit, all the art depicts "Silver strength and Red weakness." Mare is impressed by the way Maven handles the people staring at him and Mare at every stop. She reflects that, "Cal might be born to rule, but Maven was meant for it." She finds Maven the preferable prince because he wants to effect change and treat Reds better.

Mare and Cal do not have fundamentally opposed beliefs as to how an ideal kingdom would look. However, Cal does not think the ends justify the means of violence. For Mare, the current state of affairs simply involves acceptance of a different kind of violence. People have become inured to violence against Reds, so it is not shocking in the way that violence against Silvers is. Mare is uncomfortable with the fact that Cal cannot see this.



Cal's hopelessness demonstrates that he has tried to believe in a better future, but he has encountered so many obstacles that he no longer thinks it's possible. This is a mindset that reflects that of many longtime politicians who report losing hope in a sea of bureaucracy. For Mare, who suffers under the unjust status quo in a way Cal does not, hopeless acceptance of things as they are is not an option.



Mare is perplexed by the way Cal shows loyalty only to a certain extent. His lack of follow-through with Julian offends her and scares her, but Mare might be hypercritical of Cal because she herself has had to make choices about how far to carry her loyalties. The fact that Mare hides her relief demonstrates that Mare does not trust Cal, but she seems not to trust him on account of behaviors that she is also guilty of performing.



Mare feels more than ever that she must perform for the court. The language of "a goat at auction" further suggests that Mare feels that the Silvers see her as an animal to buy, slaughter, and consume. Mare's impulse to tell Maven about Julian's message shows that she trusts him more than she trusts Cal. Rather than any reservations about Maven, she chooses not to tell him because she is afraid of the other Silvers in the background.



Mare hates the fact that she feels she is constantly performing, but she also admires Maven's ability to perform the role of the prince. She believes that part of his performance is his concealment of his revolutionary tendencies. This makes his performance palatable to her, and even attractive.



Thinking of the future makes Mare think of Shade and how he was killed before he saw a better future. Mare thinks of all the others she might be able to save from this fate. She tells Maven that they need to find Farley. Maven says it will be difficult, but suggests that any of the Red servants in the crowd might be Farley's agents.

Mare slips away to try to scout out the right Red to ask about Farley. A child tells her she dropped a piece of paper. Although she does not remember having it, she takes it anyway. A sentinel then sees her and leads her back to the royal party. Seated in the transport, Mare unfurls the note. It says, "Hexaprin Theater. Afternoon play. The best seats." Mare smiles and hands the note to Maven.

Maven is easily able to get himself and Mare into the theater. He must explain to Mare what a play is because in the Stilts, no one had time for such frivolities. Mare notices that although there are Reds in the crowd, their seats are much less luxurious than those of the Silvers. Mare and Maven sit alone in a plush, enclosed balcony, and Maven tells the Sentinels not to disturb them. Mare wants to kiss Maven but restrains herself, instead taking the opportunity to thank him for the **bloodbase**.

The ceiling panel above Maven and Mare opens. No one appears, but Mare hoists herself and then Maven up into the ceiling. The panel closes on its own. Will Whistle comes into focus in the darkness. He leads Mare and Maven through a series of ladders and trapdoors into an underground passage. Maven jokes that "You people sure like to be dramatic." Will tells him, "Just you wait."

Will leads Mare and Maven to a platform in a tunnel where, after some alarming screeching noises and the feel of building electricity, "A metal worm appears." Farley is seated inside and calls everyone aboard. She tells them that the metal worm is called the Undertrain. It is very fast and runs on old, abandoned tracks that the Silvers never tried to find. Mare is surprised to learn that the Scarlet Guard employs "techies" the Silvers do not know about.

Mare has generally thought of surveillance as something that is employed by the Silvers in order to control the Reds. She has not thought of the fact that Farley might employ the same tactics on a low-technology scale. This notion helps her see how Silver power structures might be inverted to bring about the future she wants.



Mare succeeds in corresponding with the Scarlet Guard, which increases her confidence that she will be able to successfully collaborate with them in order to take down the Silver regime. Mare's unquestioning confidence in Maven with such a secret note demonstrates her continued trust in him.



Mare benefits from Maven's privileged movement through the capital. She allows herself to be okay with Maven's privilege because she is exploiting it. In some ways, she is benefitting from her position at court. However, the fact that she does not even know what a play is demonstrates that there is still a vast difference between her and the Silvers.



Although there is a certain drama to the secret operation, Maven's joke demonstrates that he fails to see how dramatic and performative his own life is. He also trivializes the lengths to which the Scarlet Guard must go in order to organize and consolidate Red power.



Mare's description of the train as a "metal worm" indicates that trains are not a common sight in Norta—at least not anymore. The abandoned tracks suggest that there is an old infrastructure on top of which Norta has been built. The fact that the Scarlet Guard is making use of these tracks suggests that there is an entire civilization's worth of resources that the Reds might use in secret.



Mare tries to calm her nausea as the train speeds on. Maven realizes that the train is going south, toward land that is radiated, and he tells Mare to use her power to stop the train before the radiation kills them. The train lurches to a stop anyway, and Farley motions for everyone to get off the train. “How do you know the south, the Ruins, are still radiated?” she asks Maven. She implies that the machines that detect the radiation are built by Red techies who work for the Scarlet Guard. Maven realizes that, “The detectors lie.”

Maven remains wary but allows Farley to lead him and Mare off the train. Mare sees trees and bushes growing amidst the ruins of an old city. It is “the picture of neglect,” but “doesn’t feel abandoned.” Farley welcomes Mare and Maven to “The City of Ruins, to Naercey,” which is what the city was called long ago.

Mare sees special markers around the borders of the city, used to trick the Silvers’ radiation detectors. She wonders how the Scarlet Guard protects its bases in other parts of the country besides Nortá. Mare notices more and more signs of Reds quietly carrying on with their lives, hidden in the ruins. In a half-collapsed café, Mare is delighted to see Kilorn. Farley tells them they do not have time for greetings, and she opens the floor for a tactical meeting.

Maven keeps insisting that Farley has painted a target on her back and that Cal will find all of them before long. Farley tells him that she does not care about herself but, rather, about the Reds who are being oppressed in their villages and put on the warfront at age fifteen.

Maven offers to stall the process of putting children on the warfront by proposing extra training. Mare, sure that this will not be enough, pulls out the book from Julian and tells Farley that she must track down the people who are both Red and Silver in order to form an army. Kilorn and Maven insist that this will take far too long to be an effective strategy. Maven slaps the table, saying that they already have an army. He suggests instead that they organize a coup in Archeon.

Maven, along with the rest of the Silvers, take their technology for granted, not accounting for the fact that Red laborers are part of the apparatus of that technology. They believe the Reds are so perfectly dehumanized and exploited that they could not possibly use their positions to manipulate the Silvers. The revelation that the Reds have been doing exactly that shows that the Scarlet Guard is more powerful than Mare realized.



Farley’s use of the ancient name of the city demonstrates a connection to history. The city is underground, meaning that it is a site of excavation. By coming to this ancient city, Farley is leading Mare and Maven on a national archaeology expedition, in which they can connect to a past in which Reds were not so terribly treated.



The Scarlet Guard is clearly running its own shadow city beneath the capital. The fact that the city is not newly constructed but, rather, ancient, suggests that the Reds’ revolution would not be a rejection of what has always been, but instead an embrace of a past version of Nortá. Kilorn clearly knows about the city already, demonstrating that he might be a more independent revolutionary than Mare generally allows.



Maven is concerned with individual wellbeing, whereas Farley is concerned with the collective wellbeing of people she does not know personally. This difference demonstrates that Maven, growing up in the lap of luxury, has been taught to think of how policies will affect him personally rather than how they will affect the whole kingdom.



Maven is more resistant than Mare would have expected to tracking down the people on the list. He passes off his opposition as purely tactical, but his violent slapping of the table suggests that there is more behind his opposition than he makes clear. Kilorn, for example, simply objects because he thinks that the strategy will be ineffective. Maven is also suspiciously ready to offer an alternative plan.



Maven's proposal gives Mare and Farley hope, but Kilorn argues that it will be near-impossible to get enough Reds into the capital to fight all the Silver soldiers who have pledged their loyalty to Cal. Mare is about to concede to the impossibility of the plan when Maven suggests that she use Cal's feelings for her to win him over to their side. She doubts that Cal would choose her over his loyalty to his father and the crown, but Maven insists, "He will always choose you." Farley says she cannot believe that the fate of the revolution will depend on "some teenaged love story." Kilorn stares and Mare and whispers, "I can."

Maven's suggestion that Mare manipulate Cal is politically savvy, but it also demonstrates that Maven tends toward manipulation as a strategy to get what he wants. Mare does not immediately notice this and become suspicious of Maven because she is caught up in her disbelief that Maven, Cal, and even Kilorn could possibly have feelings for her strong enough to affect the outcome of the revolution. Somewhat humorously, this scene also encapsulates the principal drama of the book (and of many young adult books)—that vast political or military events depend on "some teenaged love story."



CHAPTER 25

Back in the capital, Mare can see why the Silvers want to keep their lifestyle. It is beautiful. However, she also feels ready for revolution. Because of the terrorist attacks, the usual revelry of the king's return to Archeon is muted. Maven recounts to Mare some of the glitzy celebration that usually takes place this time of year. As they exit the transport, Mare tells Maven, "I feel nothing for Cal" and tries to convince herself that she is not lying.

Mare recognizes the beauty of Archeon but sees that it is only possible because of the oppression of Reds. Maven, on the other hand, fails to see past his excitement at the pageantry of the capital. Mare might ordinarily notice this difference between them, but she is preoccupied by assuring herself and Maven that she has allegiance only to Maven.



As soon as Mare and Maven are inside, they hear a shrill scream. They run along the hall until they come to a crowd of Silvers, all watching as Cal, Evengeline, Evengeline's brother, and the king torture Walsh. Mare realizes that Walsh must have been one of the lookouts for her and Maven to get back to the palace. Elara is about to force Walsh to spill her secrets. To protect everyone who would be implicated, Walsh bites down on a pill that kills her.

Mare realizes, once again, that despite all of the wrongs that have been committed against her, she still remains insulated from many dangers. In this instance, it is Walsh who has served as that insulation. Walsh's willingness to sacrifice her life to protect Mare and the rest of the Scarlet Guard shows Mare that people's lives are imminently dependent upon her success in manipulating Cal.



Mare talks to Cal later, and he tells her that the suicide pill was like the ones given to the soldiers on the warfront. Cal argues that this was a better fate for Walsh than what would have happened to her: public execution. Although the practice of broadcasting executions has stopped, an exception might be made in the interest of stopping the Scarlet Guard.

The fact that Cal sees Walsh's fate as preferable to what it might have been shows that he is a trained soldier, used to thinking about the worst possible outcomes. Although Cal's comfort with the idea of suicide pills may be disturbing to Mare, his perspective seems to be colored by the fact that he knows the inner workings of the military to a greater extent than Mare does.



Mare suggests to Cal that something might have happened between the two of them if politics had not come between them. She tries to put on an air of longing, "Giving him hope where none should be." He tries to kiss her, but she denies him. As she leaves, he says that he wishes things were different. The words remind Mare of her father. Cal then says that Julian finds similarities between Mare and Coriane. "As much as I hate to admit it," Mare reflects, "I can't blame Cal for feeling caught between two worlds. After all, so am I."

That night in bed, Mare stares at Julian's map, eager for the coup that will happen in the morning. The map, which is old and shows a different world, is "proof the world can change." Mare falls asleep and dreams of Shade, who tells her that she must find the others who are both Red and Silver. She promises that she will.

At four in the morning, Mare walks down the hall to Maven's room, shutting down the cameras as she goes. Together, they go to the place by the tunnel where they have agreed to meet Farley. Mare's legs shake with nerves. Farley gives her an **earring** from Kilorn. Mare pierces her ear with the earring, letting it draw **blood**. The earring reminds her of Kilorn before he was a warrior, and the blood reminds Mare who she is.

Mare and the others watch from their place at the tunnel entrance as the last section of the Bridge, which connects the royal part of Archeon to the rest of the city, explodes. Mare feels heat surge not from the explosion but from Maven. Mare watches the soldiers she hopes to win over as they swarm out to the square. Maven points out Cal, dressed in nightclothes but looking every bit the general.

Knowing that she is the one who must persuade Cal to the side of the Scarlet Guard, Mare calls out to him. She tries to think of him not as the general or the prince, but as the boy. She tells him that if he comes around to the Guard's side, the single explosion could be the entire cost of revolution. "You hold the power right now," she tells him. She implores him to use his control of the soldiers to make his father do what Cal knows is right.

Mare is performing feelings for Cal, but it is not clear the extent to which that performance is a false representation and the extent to which it is a genuine exploration of her feelings for him. Mare does identify with Cal because he, like her, has been given a lot in life that he is not allowed to refuse. Cal is drawn to Mare for this reason and because he is intrigued by the idea that she might be like the mother he never knew.



Like the ancient city, the map represents the fact that the kingdom of Norta has not always been stratified in the way it is now. For Mare, the impulse to restore a more just world order is both a political commitment and a personal commitment to her brother. In fact, these two commitments are almost one and the same, contrasting Maven's earlier inability to reconcile his commitment to himself with the idea of a greater political commitment.



Mare is working with a group of Revolutionary Reds as well as with Maven, but she nonetheless worries that the violence and manipulation in which she is about to engage will be a betrayal of who she is. She relies on the earring and on her own blood to ground her and help her remember that she is fighting for Red lives.



Maven seems to be excited by the explosion. This excitement might be because of the political change that is about to happen, or because Maven is nervous about the plan, but it also could demonstrate a genuine love of destruction. Cal's appearance in his pajamas shows both his vulnerability and his inability to stop being a leader at any time.



Mare is engaging in manipulative tactics, but she draws on every bit of genuine feeling she can muster. This demonstrates that unlike Maven, Mare is not a natural manipulator. She may be a natural diplomat, but she does not excel at lying to get what she wants. Mare's argument is persuasive because she is truly trying to help Cal make the right decision.



Mare feels that Cal will choose her. She confesses to him that it was her **blood** in the prison cell the night the prisoners escaped and tells him that if he does not save her, she will be killed. Cal then realizes that Mare has been involved with the Scarlet Guard all along. She tries to explain, but he keeps demanding how many people she has killed and betrayed.

As Mare and Cal stare at each other, Mare feeling the fire rise behind Cal's eyes, Maven yells for the Guard to storm out of the drains. Mare is aware that Kilorn is probably being killed by an onslaught of bullets, but she continues to stare at Cal. She asks him how many people he has had killed by enforcing so-called order. Realizing that Cal is not going to choose her, she begins listing her own loved ones who the Silvers have killed.

Cal whispers, again, that he wishes things were different. He then lets the Training instructor with the power to mute Silvers' abilities take hold of Mare. Maven pleads with Cal not to let the Sentinels kill him or Mare. Mare shuts her eyes against the sight of Cal, realizing that she was a fool to hope he would choose his commitment to her.

In Mare's attempt to be forthcoming with Cal and to trust in his good nature and loyalty, she makes him see her as a traitor. Because Mare has had such trouble trusting Cal all along, she has destroyed her own trustworthiness in his eyes.



Because Mare knows the political stakes of her relationship with Cal, she prioritizes her loyalty to him even over her loyalty to Kilorn, who she has always protected. When she realizes that Cal does not feel that she is worth changing political sides, she tries to make him understand how much she has sacrificed in the hope that he will understand why she has betrayed him.



Cal is not happy to betray Mare, but he feels that his commitment to the crown is greater. This is in large part because Mare and Maven have also betrayed him. However, Cal's willingness to let Mare and Maven's gifts be taken away shows that Cal, like his father, is still resorting to disempowering others in order to maintain order.



CHAPTER 26

Cal and the Sentinels march Mare and Maven to the throne room, where the king and queen await, away from the fray of the battle outside. The king has his ceremonial sword. Elara goes through Mare's mind, seeing all her secrets. Elara pushes Maven's face aside, not wanting to know what Mare knows about her son. The queen then orders the Sentinels to leave the throne room. Cal confirms her order, and all depart except the one who is muting Mare's gift.

King Tiberias demands that his sons tell him what is going on. Maven confesses that he chose the assassination targets. Mare notices that although Maven and Elara look at each other, Elara refuses to look at Maven's thoughts. Maven tells his father that he should be proud—after all, Maven has finally found a cause. The king then turns on Mare, telling her that she is responsible for Maven's actions. Elara comes to Maven's defense, and Mare is surprised to find herself mentally pleading with Elara to save Maven.

The king and queen are insulated from the actual dangers of all the political strife in the capital. For them, this is a game rather than a fight for life or death. The king's ceremonial sword represents the fact that he thinks of himself as a ceremonial figurehead rather than a leader who must make sacrifices.



The king's unwillingness to accept that Maven is responsible for his own actions shows blind parental loyalty, but his misplaced blame on Mare shows that the king is quick to use Reds as scapegoats for problems in his kingdom. This tendency is part of why the king has turned the Silvers so virulently against the Scarlet Guard. However, Mare's hope that Elara can save Maven serves as a reminder that Elara is another powerful unit in the royal couple who has had something to do with this outcry against the Guard.



The king says that Maven has committed grave crimes that must be punished. Cal pleads with his father to spare Maven, but Tiberias tells Cal, "When you wear my crown, you will understand." Elara then says that will never happen, and Mare notices that her eyes are the same as Maven's. Tiberias tries to question Elara but seems unable to move. Mare realizes that she is seeing Elara control the king's body, just as the whisper controlled the strongarm in the arena at the Feast of August.

Mare has heard many rumors of Elara's power hungriness, but she now sees that Elara is willing to resort to actual mind and body control in order to manipulate the king. Mare is not sure yet what to make of this realization, but she does notice similarities between Elara and Maven in the moment when Elara takes control of the king's body. Mare is also unsure what Elara means when she says that Cal will never wear the king's crown.



Mare, shocked, thinks that Elara is saving her and Maven where Cal failed to do so. Cal tells Elara that he never believed Julian before when he said that Elara was responsible for hurting Coriane and Sara Skonos. Mare pleads with Elara not to be distracted and to get Maven out. Elara releases Maven, but neither of them does anything to release Mare from the shackles that are preventing her from using her gift.

Mare trusts Maven and Elara with her life even while Cal seems to be realizing something damning about Elara. Mare continues to hope that the queen is trustworthy until, in one fell swoop, Elara and a newly released Maven both fail to come to her aid. Mare's slow realization of the betrayal demonstrates that despite her cynicism, Mare is a naturally trusting person.



Julian's words, "Anyone can betray anyone," crescendo in Mare's head as she pleads with Maven to help her, and he refuses. Elara now has control of Cal, but he manages to shout for help from outside the throne room. Mare realizes that Maven is "truly his mother's son" as he allows Elara to manipulate Cal's body to turn toward the king.

Maven and Elara have created a situation in which Mare has no choice but to continue hoping for Maven's help, even when he is demonstrating that he is not interested in helping her. Mare feels betrayed not only by Maven but also by herself because she placed so much blind trust in the wrong brother.



Mare realizes that Elara did not care about Maven's presence in her memories because she knew about his involvement with the Scarlet Guard. Maven chose the assassination targets not because they were the Guard's enemies, but, rather, because they were *his* enemies. Maven and Elara then confess that they have been using Mare and the Guard all along. For all Mare's attempts at secrecy, Elara has known all along about her subterfuge and has been covering her tracks. Elara tells Mare, "But you are Red, and like all the others, you were doomed to fail."

Mare had been gaining confidence in her ability to revolt against Silver tyranny by getting away with small rebellious acts. The revelation that she has not gotten away with these acts at all, and that some of her opportunities for rebellion were handed to her by those she thought she was working against, shakes her confidence deeply. However, Elara's statement that Mare is doomed to fail because she is Red is a reminder that Mare's biology does not, in fact, confine her to any one fate.



Mare feels foolish for trusting Maven and realizes that Elara must have used her knowledge of the inner workings of Mare's mind to tell Maven what to say to win her over. Even Maven's story of his fallen comrade was a lie.

Elara's use of Mare's thoughts to manipulate her is entirely unethical. It is also not far off from what many see as the unethical prying of governments and corporations into citizens' private lives for the use of propaganda or advertisements.



Elara tells Maven to say his goodbyes to Mare. He says he does not have any, and instead confronts his father for only loving Cal. King Tiberias insists that he loves Maven too, and that not even Elara's actions can change that. Elara says she is not doing anything. Cal, on the other hand, moves toward Tiberias like a puppet. Insisting that Tiberias does not love Maven like he loves Cal, Elara forces Cal to take the king's ceremonial sword. Mare is powerless to intervene, and Maven chooses to stand by. Tiberias tells Cal that he knows it is not him as Cal raises the sword and beheads the king.

The king's silver **blood** pools on the floor, and the crown rolls to a stop at Maven's feet. Elara begins screaming over the king's body as the cameras turn back on. She acts as though Cal has cruelly murdered his own father. Mare finally understands what Julian once tried to teach her: what people believe matters more than the truth. Mare and Cal try to run, but resisting is futile. Realizing that the bond of loyalty has been broken between Cal and his soldiers, Cal and Mare allow themselves to be arrested.

CHAPTER 27

Mare and Cal sit in dark cells back to back, both contemplating Maven's betrayal and the depth of their former trust in him. Cal talks about the great traitors who have been imprisoned in this cell before. He realizes he will now be counted among them. Cal tells Mare that he was almost a traitor: he almost chose her this morning.

Cal and Mare speculate as to how the king (Maven) will have them executed. Cal is not sure what the method will be, but he is sure that it will hurt and that it will be slow. Mare hopes that she will **bleed** so the world can see that she is a Red. Cal does not think that will change anything—Maven and Elara will simply explain it with another lie.

Mare tells Cal that there are more like her, and that she foolishly gave the list to Maven. She laments that Maven used her. Cal looks at Mare through the bars and demands, angrily, how it feels to be used. Mare reflects that she was stupid for thinking she was using both Cal and Maven. She apologizes to Cal, telling him that she never wanted to hurt him. "It wasn't all a lie," she says quietly.

Elara and Maven clearly want the king dead. By taking control of Cal's body and forcing him to do the dirty work of beheading the king, Elara and Maven can maintain some semblance of their innocence. Additionally, forcing Cal to kill his father is an attempt to destroy the relationship that Elara and Maven see as such a threat. Maven's refusal to say anything to Mare makes Mare realize that she apparently means nothing to Maven.



The crown's rolling to Maven's feet symbolizes that as much as a family drama, this murder has been a grab for power. Through performative tactics, Elara is able to fabricate a reality in which she and Maven are innocent and in which Cal and Mare are responsible for the king's death. In this way, Mare learns that it is folly to trust that which seems to be true.



By acting with as much integrity as he could muster, Cal has landed himself in history amongst the traitors. He thus learns that blind loyalty to the crown is not always recognized as loyalty at all.



Cal and Mare are resigned to death. The only power Mare has left is the fact of her Red blood. That which once disempowered her has become her only hope at changing the world: her blood does not, in fact, damn her.



Mare realizes now that she entrusted the list of names with the wrong brother. Had she entrusted it with Cal earlier, they might have avoided their mutual betrayal. It is difficult for Mare to confess her feelings to Cal, but in the interest of repairing trust, she does so. It is unclear whether she is talking to Cal or herself.



Cal lets his head thud against the bars but does not seem to notice the pain. Mare asks if Cal thinks Maven will kill her parents. She is glad that Shade is dead, because Maven will not be able to hurt him. Mare knows that Cal is lying to her out of human sympathy when he says that Maven has more important things to think about. Cal is quiet while Mare cries about everyone she has endangered. She is glad that she has her **earrings** with her until the end.

After a while, Maven appears outside the bars. He has taken Tiberias's medals and "stands with the air of a terrible king." Mare notices that he looks better rested now that he has participated in the murder of his father. Cal asks Maven if he will be Cal's opponent in the arena for his execution. Maven admits that he could never best Cal in terms of ability, but he revels in the fact that he has out-schemed Cal, finally managing to step out of his older brother's shadow.

Maven accuses Cal of taking "everything" from him, including Mare. Mare stands to tell Maven that, "I was never yours, and you were *never* mine, Maven." She tells him that she once thought he was better than Cal. Mare realizes that Maven never thought he would hear those words. However, she also knows that the boy she thought she knew does not exist.

Maven grabs Mare and pleads with her to let him save her. She accuses him of betraying a father and brother who loved him. Mare says that she is about to die because she loved Maven. Maven insists that he is king, and that Mare will live or die according to his wishes. Mare calls Maven a liar, uses her sheer physical strength to ram him into the bars of her cell, and tells him that she will never make the mistake of loving him again. Maven demands to know whether Mare has chosen Cal. She realizes that the entire tragedy is over jealous sibling rivalry.

Mare explains to Maven that because she, Cal, and Maven have all betrayed one another in countless ways, she chooses no one. Maven stumbles back, and Mare feels powerful for once. She asks Maven how he will explain her Red **blood** to the kingdom. He insists that the truth is what he makes of it. He will kill anyone who questions his story. Some, including Mare's maids, have already been killed. Lucas is next: Maven lied when he told Mare that Lucas was safe. Maven promises that Mare will witness his execution. She will not be able to witness Julian's execution, though, because it has already taken place.

Cal's lack of feeling seems to stem from the desperation of his situation. Nothing could be much worse than where he is, or so it seems. Still, Mare and Cal make the best of their situation by finding ways to behave compassionately to one another. This is one of the first times since Mare's first conversation with Cal that she has felt she could speak candidly about her relationships.



Whereas Mare and Cal thrive on compassion, Maven thrives on power and murder. He is also excited to gloat that he has taken Cal's advice: outsmarting his opponents. However, for Maven, the ultimate victory is not the simple survival Cal wanted to help him achieve. Rather, victory is the domination and destruction of all his opponents.



Mare now understands that Maven does not care about her as a person, only as a thing. Whereas in the past she has been validated by the feeling that Maven, Cal, and Kilorn are all attracted to her, she now feels empowered to reject the notion that her importance depends on any of these boys.



Mare's understanding of sibling rivalry as the basis of everything that has happened does not reduce the scale of the events. Rather, it underscores the importance of familial relationships, the stakes of excessive strain upon these relationships, and the fact that Mare herself has come very near to playing Maven's role in her own family. Naming the problem for what it is helps Mare understand that a family ought to be a support network in the political resistance.



Mare foregrounds trust as foundational to a relationship. Maven senses that the feeling of betrayal is Mare's weak point, so he lashes back at her by promising to spread lies and to kill those who Mare might trust to tell the truth. In this way, Mare realizes that the depth of Maven's betrayal is even greater than she previously thought. Telling Mare that Julian has already been executed reinforces Mare's feelings of loneliness.



Maven promises to make Mare watch the execution of every person on the list of those who are both Red and Silver. "I am the king and you could've been my Red queen," Maven says. "Now you are *nothing*." Mare says goodbye to Maven and spits in his eye. Mare and Cal settle back down in silence, reflecting on the tragedy that has unfolded.

Sentinels fetch Mare and Cal from the cells, bringing them up to the arena where they will be executed. Mare knows that it is difficult for Cal to have his own men believe that he has killed his father. Arena attendants dress Mare in rags. This is more pageantry for the crowd, Mare understands. "A Red girl in rags," she reflects, "is easier for them to understand, and to kill." When Mare emerges, she sees that Cal, too, has been dressed in rags. However, they are told that Cal will be allowed use of his power over fire in order to die with glory. Mare will be allowed nothing. She realizes that they are going to pretend that her powers were somehow faked all along.

Despite all the betrayal between them, Cal promises to protect Mare as long as he can. They walk up to the arena entrance, and Mare sees that Lucas, too, is waiting to die. Mare tries to apologize to him for using him. Lucas tells her to stop, because he does not believe that she is sincere. Mare realizes that she would use Lucas again to help her friends.

Mare hears Maven enter the arena and address the crowd. He sounds like a monster. He promises that he is not weak, and that he will punish those responsible for his father's death. Mare and Cal follow Lucas into the arena. The crowd, entirely composed of Silvers, is jeering. This is entertainment to them. Video screens show that the event is being broadcast. The screens flicker and begin playing back footage of Mare and Cal dancing, kissing, and talking privately. Maven makes it seem as though Mare and Cal plotted the murder and the terrorist attacks. He sentences them both to death.

Mare and Cal face their five executioners. Mare knows all their abilities. Among them are Evangeline and her brother, staring them down. Mare realizes she has very little time left alive. "Let them die," Maven says from above.

Maven fails to understand that Mare has stopped seeing herself as defined entirely in relation to him. He also feels the need to build his own power by making her feel powerless. By spitting in Maven's eye, Mare refuses to allow Maven to gain that power.



Even as they walk to their executions, the Silver prince retains privilege over the Red commoner. Mare realizes that pageantry does not always have to be flashy: in fact, the Reds' dingy lives function as a kind of pageantry, aesthetically reminding everyone of the Reds' place in the political hierarchy. Although she is still ranked below Cal at the moment of their execution, Mare sympathizes with him because she understands what it is like to have everyone believe a false and damning story.



Mare truly does wish that she did not hurt Lucas, but her conversation with him makes her realize that sometimes, she can accept betraying people if it means that she is acting in the interest of the greater good.



Mare is not surprised that she is going to die as the plaything of Silvers. This death is even an aggrandizing one for a Red girl. For Cal, though, it must be shockingly debasing. The video screens do not show anything that did not happen between Mare and Cal, making it clear that actual events might be rearranged and reinterpreted to serve many versions of the truth. In this case, the truth has been manipulated to empower Maven and make Mare and Cal look deserving of death.



Mare, not allowed to use her powers, stands almost no chance against five Silvers. Mare's earlier fight against Evangeline ended with Mare bleeding. It seems that Mare might get her wish of having her Red blood exposed to the world.



CHAPTER 28

Mare watches a lightning shield come to life above her, Cal, and the executioners, protecting the crowd from what they are about to do. Mare would ordinarily be able to control the shield, but her abilities are still being held at bay. Cal tells Mare to stay behind him as long as possible and then to try outrunning their adversaries. He tells Mare to let him worry about his own strategy.

Evangeline tells Mare that tricks can't save her now. Although Evangeline has seen Mare's abilities at work, Mare realizes that, "She ignores the truth for something easier to understand." Cal should be able to make spectacular use of his power over fire, but he soon finds that Maven has bewitched the sand to be flame resistant. Mare watches as Cal uses his gift as creatively as possible to defend himself. Mare cannot help him and must use evasion tactics.

When one of her adversaries catches Mare from behind, she summons the strength within herself to physically fight back, digging her fingers into his eyes. Having fought free, Mare sees Evangeline poised over Cal, ready for the kill. Without thinking, Mare charges Evangeline and collides into her. Mare's body scrapes along Evangeline's armor and **bleeds** red for everyone to see, in person and over the broadcast.

Mare and Cal continue trying to fend off the Silvers. Cal does remarkably well until a nymph attacks him with water. Mare allows herself to be cornered by one of her executioners, attempting to use her fear to summon her lightning. Nothing happens. She sees Cal caught in an orb of boiling water. He is going to drown. Deciding to embrace the labels of "liar" and "trickster," Mare ducks to the ground just as her opponent charges at her, leaving the man who his stifling her abilities exposed behind her. The plan works: the man is killed, and Mare can wield lightning again.

Maven screams for Mare to be killed, but the crowd has already seen her red **blood** and her lightning. She takes control of the shield to protect herself. Remembering how Julian described her and the other genetically mutated individuals as "Silver and Red, and stronger than both," Mare begins to kill the executioners, one by one. The nymph almost bests her, but the promise of winning has made her so afraid to lose that she summons the strength to electrocute him through his water.

Cal uses his military training to his and Mare's advantage. Although they believe they cannot be in a relationship because they have betrayed one another, they still demonstrate an ability to work as a team to help each other stay alive.



Maven is attempting not only to make Cal and Mare easier to kill, but also to make them look weak to the onlookers so that, by contrast, he and his cronies will appear strong. However, by making it more difficult or impossible for Cal and Mare to use their gifts, Maven forces them to think more creatively and, consequently, less predictably.



Just as Mare used her bare physical strength to slam Maven into the bars of her cell, she realizes that her body itself is stronger than some might expect. This time, when she cuts herself on Evangeline's armor, it is advantageous for everyone to see her blood. Regardless of Mare's life or death, the nation now knows that she has Red blood. The moment echoes that in the Feat of August when silver blood spilled in the arena, to everyone's shock.



Mare is drawing on Julian's lessons, in which she learned that she draws power from acceptance of death. Mare has long been resistant to the identities that have been foisted upon her since she got to the capital. However, just as she allowed Julian to call her "little lightning girl" because he seemed to say it to empower her, Mare realizes that she might use her labels to her advantage.



Whereas Mare has previously felt trapped because of her position between Red and Silver, she now feels free to be unapologetically both. By rejecting the rubric that states that Red and Silver are mutually exclusive, Mare manages to become more powerful than she would be as one or the other. Her drive to survive comes directly out of this strength.



Only Mare, Cal, Evangeline, and Evangeline's brother remain alive in the arena. Cal refuses to kill anyone. Mare realizes that the arena has emptied out. Only Maven remains above, ordering Sentinels onto the field. Mare is angry, feeling that she and Cal have won the battle but are being denied victory. She refuses to cry in her last moment, though. She apologizes to Cal, grabs his hand, and looks up at the gathering storm, thinking of all the people she loves. She resigns herself to death.

Suddenly, Cal throws himself and Mare back from a huge bolt of lightning. Mare realizes that the storm is of her own making. She feels it sapping her energy because it is too large. She needs another bolt of lightning to allow her and Cal to escape, but she cannot summon it. Maven watches happily as gunmen close around Cal and Mare, and gunshots begin ringing out. Mare, however, does not feel anything. In fact, the gunmen begin falling. Mare looks down and sees a line of guns shooting, seemingly of their own accord, at the gunmen. Someone grabs Mare and pulls her down into water in a chasm below.

EPILOGUE

Mare wakes and realizes that she is on the Undertrain. She realizes that she is lying across from Cal, who is handcuffed in metal he could easily melt away. He is still, and Farley and several guards have guns pointed at him. Mare is lying on someone's lap, but this person will not let her sit up to see who it is. Mare asks for Kilorn, and he emerges from the crowd of Farley's Guardsmen. Mare turns her head sharply to see who is above her, and immediately asks if everyone is dead. Shade assures her that neither of them is dead.

Shade reveals to Mare that he was reported dead, but, as he demonstrates, he has the power to teleport instantly anywhere he wishes. His executioners were consequently unable to kill him. Shade assures Mare that their parents are also safe.

Mare looks at everyone and tells Farley and the guards to let Cal go. No one answers, and Cal says that he is too much of a danger. Mare begins to say that Cal saved her after the atrocities Maven committed upon him. Cal bristles at Maven's name. Farley insists that Cal's saving Mare does not prove his loyalty to the Scarlet Guard. Farley then insults their "romance." Mare and Cal both flinch, knowing that they desire each other but that their chance of romance is ruined after everything that has happened.

Cal's refusal to kill demonstrates that unlike Maven, he kills only when he absolutely must and when it seems that it will bring about a positive outcome. Mare has been determined to fight, but Cal's militaristic resignation to defeat actually seems braver and more powerful in this instance.



Deliberately resigning herself to death gives Mare an extra boost of power. In fact, it gives her so much power that she loses control of it. Whereas much power throughout the novel has been won through the degradation of others, in this instance, it becomes possible to gain power by admitting one's own helplessness. The guns seem to be bolts of electricity originating from Mare, protecting her and Cal from certain death.



It is clear from Mare's question that she legitimately believed she was going to die in the arena. The world seemed so hopeless that it is more plausible to her that all of her friends are dead than that Shade has somehow, magically, turned up alive. Cal's restraints represent another inversion in the novel: the Reds have now taken a Silver prince prisoner.



Not only is Mare's brother alive, but he also has a power like hers. She now has someone else in her life with whom she can share this new, strange Silver-and-Red ability.



Mare wants to trust Cal, but she must come to the understanding that even if he is loyal to her, he will not necessarily be loyal to the Scarlet Guard. After everything that has happened, both she and Cal should see that conflicting and limited loyalties happen all the time. Their feelings for each other remain, but they have already demonstrated that they cannot promise loyalty to one another. Both of them are loyal first and foremost to their political convictions.



Kilorn tells Mare that the Guard cannot afford to trust Silvers again. He also says that Cal might be a valuable prisoner. Mare does not say that Cal could easily escape if he wanted to, but she realizes that Cal is too tired and broken to try escaping. Mare wishes she had the luxury of choosing not to fight anymore. She knows that Kilorn and Farley will not stop fighting either. She tells Farley that Maven has the list of the others like her and Shade, and will use the **bloodbase** to track them down.

Mare stands and resolves to find the others before Maven does. Kilorn steps forward, determined to join her in that mission. Quietly, Cal radiates warmth over Mare. She thinks back over her friendship with Cal and realizes that they are no longer friends. Still, they are united by a single thought about Maven: "I will kill him."

Even as a prisoner, Cal has some privilege over Mare. His personhood is not in question, whereas Reds' basic human rights are not being met. Knowing that the other Reds are much closer to her in their experience of political despair and political hope, Mare turns to them to begin strategizing for the next step in the revolution.



Mare's relationships are complex, and no two are quite alike. Although in the past she has had a distaste for manipulation, she realizes that it might be advantageous to use the connections she has with people rather than rejecting those she does not consider true friends. In some senses, her bond with Cal is the strongest and most personal bond she has because Maven has taken so much from both of them.





HOW TO CITE

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