

Carve the Mark Study Guide

Carve the Mark by Veronica Roth

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Contents

Carve the Mark Study Guide.....	1
Contents.....	2
Plot Summary.....	3
Part I.....	5
Part 2: Chapters 3-7.....	9
Part 2: Chapters 8-10.....	14
Part 2: Chapters 11-12.....	18
Part 2: Chapters 13-14.....	22
Part 3: Chapters 15-17.....	27
Part 3: Chapters 18-20.....	32
Part 3: Chapters 21-23.....	36
Part 3: Chapters 24-25.....	39
Part 4: Chapters 26-28.....	41
Part 4: Chapters 29-31.....	44
Part 4: Chapters 32-33.....	48
Part 4: Chapters 34-39.....	52
Part 4: Chapters 40-42.....	56
Characters.....	59
Symbols and Symbolism.....	67
Settings.....	69
Themes and Motifs.....	71
Styles.....	77
Quotes.....	78



Plot Summary

The following version of the novel was used to create this study guide: Roth, Victoria. *Carve the Mark*. Katherine Tegen Books, January 17, 2017.

NOTE: Words such as currentstream and currentgift are consistent with the spelling in the novel.

In the novel *Carve the Mark* by Victoria Roth, both Cyra and Akos are ashamed of the kill marks they have carved on their arms, marks considered honors by the rest of the Shotet community in which they reside. Akos does not like killing because he grew up in the more peaceful Thuvhe where violence was not celebrated. Cyra, on the other hand, is Shotet but has been manipulated into hurting so many people against her will that she longs for a different way of life. When their unusual circumstances bring them together, Cyra and Akos learn to love each other despite their differences. They band together in fighting against Ryzek, Cyra's cruel brother and leader of the Shotet, and attempting to free Akos' brother who was kidnapped and forced to work in Ryzek's service.

The Noaveks, the Benesits, and the Kereseths (the three fated families of the Shotet and Thuvhe regions of Urek) lived as prisoners to their fates. Ryzek Noavek, leader of the Shotet, had the unfortunate fate of falling to one of the Benesit sisters, a fate he tried to overcome. In an attempt to manipulate the future to overcome his fate, Ryzek had Eijeh (the rising oracle of Thuvhe) kidnapped. Ryzek planned to use Eijeh's ability to see the future to change his fate. During the kidnapping, Ryzek's men also took Akos (Eijeh's younger brother) who was fated to die in service to the Noavek family.

Meanwhile, Cyra Noavek, was getting tired of her older brother using her as an instrument of torture. Cyra's currentgift, a gift given to everyone in the fictional universe where this novel is set, caused currents to run under her skin, a source of constant pain. Her brother took advantage of her gift because Cyra's touch sent this painful current into other people. Cyra was almost incapacitated because no pain medication had been found to ease her pain that did not cause debilitating side effects. Hoping to make his sister more useful to him, Ryzek gave Akos to her because his touch interrupted the currents that flowed through her body, stopping her pain. Ryzek's plan backfired when Cyra fell in love with Akos and turned completely against her brother.

Cyra turned away from her brother in small steps by first agreeing to help Akos free his brother, Eijeh from Ryzek's service. After her brother forced her to participate in another interrogation by hurting Akos because she did not cooperate, Cyra turned completely away from her brother. She agreed to help a band of renegades in their plan to kill Ryzek. Unfortunately, Cyra was caught in the failed attempt. Ryzek publicly stripped Cyra of her rank and mutilated her face as a punishment. He informed the people that Cyra was responsible for killing their mother, the beloved Yilra, with her currentgift. He allowed anyone who wished to fight her in the arena. In her second day of fighting, Cyra was rescued by Akos.



Along with the renegades, Akos and Cyra planned an attack on Ryzek during a ceremony in which he said that he would be honoring his soldiers. Akos and Cyra knew he had kidnapped the sister of the chancellor of Thuvhe and intended to execute her in front of the people. The story reaches its climax when the chancellor's sister is killed. Akos, Cyra, and the others manage to rescue Eijeh and take Ryzek captive.

Ryzek dropped two surprises on his sister after he was taken captive. First, he told her that she was not of Noavek blood. Second, he told her that Lazmet, his father, was still alive. This shocking information opens a story line for a planned sequel. The novel ends on a positive note because Akos has fulfilled his promise to rescue his brother from the Shotet.



Part I

Summary

In Chapter 1, Akos Kereseth, his brother (Eijeh), sister (Cisi), mother (Sifa), and father (Aoseh) were dressed in warm clothes to face the frigid weather in their nation of Thuvhe. They were going to the annual celebration of the blooming of the hushflower at the temple. Akos felt the hum of the current from their planet in his body. This current flowed through everything and appeared in the sky in various colors.

As they rode in their floater toward the temple Akos' father asked his mother, who was the nation's oracle, if she had seen anything interesting that day. Since she was an oracle, Akos knew that the current gave information about the future to his mother.

When the floater passed the memorial that honored all of the Thuvhesits who had died in the Shotet invasion, Akos' brother blushed red. Akos knew by his brother' blushing that his brother had spotted his best friend, Ori Rednails. Inside, the Hall of Prophecy was decorated with lights. About a half dozen hushflowers were on the verge of blooming.

The children, Akos, Eijeh, and Ori were briefly distracted by the adults who were staring at them. They felt they were being stared at because they were part of the favored families of Thuvhe. Since they were from favored families, they had been given fates. These fates were told to the oracles when the children were born. Although Akos, Eijeh, and their sister Cisi all had fates, their mother had not told them what they were.

Later that night, when Akos and his mother were the only ones awake, Sifa taught him how to make poison from hushflower. As they worked, she admitted that she was thinking about the Noavek family. This was the family that ruled the Shotet, the enemies of the Thuve. Akos' mother told him that the members of the Noavek family was fate-favored, just like their family. She told him about the children Ryzek and Cyra of this violent family. At the end of their conversation, Sifa apologized to Akos. He was not sure for what she was apologizing.

In Chapter 2, before class started, one boy in Akos' class demonstrated the currentgift they had realized he had the night before. It was the ability to heal. The children were surprised when all of the lights in the school suddenly turned off. Akos walked to the door and saw Ori and her aunt in the hallway. Ori's aunt was explaining to her that she had been exposed and was in danger.

Cisi, Akos' sister found him in the hallway and said they had to go the headmaster's office because their father was coming for them. Akos recognized they must be in danger but could not find anyone who would tell him what was happening. In the floater as he took them home, Akos' father told them that the Assembly had announced publicly the fates of the favored families. These fates were generally not announced until after a



person died, but known only to that person and their families. Eijeh asked what their fates were and his father promised to tell them when they were safe.

When Akos asked where their mother was, his father got so angry that he swore. He said he did not know where she was, but was sure that she was fine. Because she was an oracle, all of the members of the family knew that Sifa knew what was happening. Their father said they had to trust that their mother was doing what was best.

Inside their house, Akos could tell by the smell that something was wrong before he even saw the three men standing in their living room. Akos realized these men were Shotet. He could understand what the men were saying in Shotet, but realized his father could not understand them. One of the men, who introduced himself as Vas Kuzar grabbed at Aoseh when Aoseh made a smart remark to him.

Akos tried to run through the door behind him but a Shotet man grabbed him and stopped him. Akos spoke to the man, seeming to surprise everyone. One of the men asked how Akos came to have Shotet blood, proved because he could speak Shotet. When Aoseh refused to tell the Shotet where his wife was and they fought with him. They killed him after Aoseh struck Vas with his knife, trying to keep them from knowing the identities of his children. Trying to protect his brother, Akos told Eijeh to run while he jumped at Vas. Akos was not match for Vas. Both Akos and Eijeh were cuffed. Vas said they would both be coming with them because of the nature of their fates. Before they took Akos out of the house, Akos made a promise to his father that he would bring his brother home.

Analysis

Much basic information about the characters who populate this novel is shared in the beginning two chapters of the novel. They are people with alien sounding names who populate a fictional planet called Thuvhe. The Thuvhesits and Shotets are enemies. Akos and his family are members of a rich family in an area where there is not much wealth. Akos' mother is also an oracle, a highly respected member of society.

The novel uses its own fictional language with an emphasis on currents, currentgifts and currentblades. The current is some sort of force that runs through all of the planets in the particular universe in which Thuvhe is located. The people believe the current connects every living person and can be felt by every living person. Each person is also given a gift by the current, called the currentgift. One boy's currentgift is his ability to heal quickly. Aoseh's father's gift allows him to fix things. Akos has not yet received his currentgift. The current is also important because it appears to power the weapons used by the Shotet who come to kidnap Akos and Eijeh.

The gifts and fates given to the favored families of both the Thuvhesits and the Shotets are not necessarily blessings. After the fates of the favored families are announced publicly, Akos, and his brother and sister, are rushed from school because they are in danger. Ori, one of Eijeh's friends, is also taken from school. When Akos and his



brother, Eijeh are taken from their home, the Shotet men who take them tell them that their fates indicate their futures lies with the Shotet people. Obviously, it is not ideal for these two young boys to be in the hands of their enemies.

As oracle, Akos' mother is able to see the future but it does not appear that she has any power to change the future. At the end of Chapter 1, after Sifa teaches Akos how to make poison from hushflower she tells him that she is sorry. At that time it is noted that Akos is not sure why his mother is telling him that she is sorry. He does not ask why she is apologizing to him. Perhaps she is teaching him how to make poison because she knows that he may be in a position where he may have to poison people. It may be her way of making his fates easier for him to handle because she cannot change it. Sifa also chooses to tell her children their fates even though she knows those as well. She believes they will soon enough learn them from the world in which they live. Because the fates of Akos and Eijeh are tied in some way to the Shotet, it could be that she chose not tell them their fates because they were negative in nature.

Sifa's children seemed to love her even though she would not tell them their fates but they are confused about her intentions when she does not tell that they are in danger. Aoseh tells his children: "Your mother has her reasons for everything she does. Sometimes we don't get to know them," Aoseh said, a little calmer now. 'But we have to trust her, even when it's difficult.'" (26). It is obvious that he is violently angry with his wife for not letting him and his children know in advance that they were in danger. Cisi tries to give her mother the benefit of the doubt, suggesting that perhaps she did not know what was going to happen. Despite his sister's belief that their mother might not have known what was going to happen, Akos reminded himself that his mother always knew what was about to happen.

The question that remains is that if Sifa knew that her children would be kidnapped and her husband killed, why did she not warn them? Perhaps by nature of being an oracle, she was allowed only to see the future, not to do anything to meddle with it. Perhaps she knew that even if she did try to meddle with the future, she would not be able to do anything to change it.

The hushflowers, the flower that the Thuvhesits pay homage to in the Blooming Ritual, is obviously significant in the novel. The hushflowers contain a very potent ingredient that is used in a variety of potions from sleeping potions to poisons. Akos notes at one point in the novel that some people run out into the hushflower fields unprotected as a way of committing suicide. These hushflowers are the lifeblood of the Thuvhe nation.

There are a few things mentioned in this section of the novel that will be important later in the novel. First, remember the mentions of Ori in these first chapters. The fact that she was in more danger even than Akos and Eijeh will be important because it means her fate is even more important to the people as a whole. Remember also that Vas cannot feel pain. A final important thing to keep in mind that will be important later on in the novel is the name of Ori's aunt, Aunt Badha.



Discussion Question 1

Why do you think Akos' mother does not warn him and the rest of his family about the Shotet coming to kidnap Eijeh and Akos, and kill her husband even though she would have known what was about to happen because she was an oracle?

Discussion Question 2

Why is it significant that Akos has the ability to speak the Shotet language?

Discussion Question 3

Discuss the idea of having a fate from birth and knowing what that fate was. What if your fate was not a good one, but a bad one? Why do you think that Akos' mother would not share her children's fates with them?

Vocabulary

oracle, refectory, apex, verge, milling, unison, sieve, teemed, roused, leverage, doling, disheveled, taut, wheedling, envied, hallucination, stance, tendrils, dalliance, revelatory, contorted, virtue



Part 2: Chapters 3-7

Summary

The point of view in Chapter 3 changes from that of a third person narrator to the first person point of view of Cyra. Cyra was six seasons old when she went on her first sojourn even though children did not generally go on these trips until they were eight. She describes how the ship onto which they boarded would follow the currentstream to the part where it turned the darkest blue and then they would scavenge from that planet.

As they boarded the ship for the first scavenge Cyra's father walked ahead of the rest of the family. Even though the people cheered loudly for him, Cyra noticed that the people cheered loudest for her mother and chanted her name, Ylira. Cyra's father called her and held her up, wanting her to see her people. He then passed the girl off to her brother, Ryzek, who was ten seasons older than she. Cyra got on his back as he ran toward the ship.

In Chapter 4, Cyra often explored the servants' tunnels that ran in the walls of Noavek Manor, the house in which the ruling family lived. On one visit to the wall outside her father's office, Cyra heard her father yelling at her brother for telling a servant that his fate was to fall to the Benesit family. Cyra knew that her father wanted to conquer Thuvhe so to have a son who was fated to be overthrown by one of that nation's families was offensive to Lazmet.

In Chapter 5, a year later, Ryzek came into Cyra's bedroom. He was obviously terrified as he asked Cyra if their father had ever taken her anyplace or shown her anything. Cyra said that he had not, and Ryzek responded it was unfair for him to treat his children differently. He put his hand on Cyra's face, and Cyra was transported out of her bedroom. She witnessed as their father forced Ryzek to call for the execution of an elderly man his father said was a traitor. Cyra then was able to see her favorite memory of her mother and herself. To her surprise the memory played backwards and then was gone.

Back in her room, Cyra could not bring to mind that images of that favorite memory. Instead, she saw her father forcing her to call for the execution of the elderly man. Cyra had known that Ryzek could trade someone's memory for one of his own, but it was the first time he had done so to her. Ryzek told her that he thought it was fair that they share the burden of their father's wrath together.

When Ryzek tried to touch Cyra to comfort her, inky veins spread beneath her skin. They brought heat and pain with them, and Cyra screamed. Even when Ryzek pulled his hand away from Cyra she still felt pain. Her mother came and tried to comfort Cyra. However, when she put her hands on her daughter, Cyra felt the pain as well. Because he could not stand the pain of Cyra's touches, Ryzek never again touched her.



In Chapter 6, a year later Cyra's pain was just part of her life. Pain medicines made her sick. As a result, she just learned to live with it. Her mother took her to doctors, trying to find one who could help her. One doctor, Dr. Dax Fadlan, said this sort of gift usually developed as a protective measure. Cyra's mother lied and told the doctor she did not know what had caused this pain, which the doctor said was Cyra's current gift to begin. The doctor suggested that there was something going on inside Cyra that had made her want to feel pain and give pain to others. The doctor went so far as to tell Cyra that if she were to change, her gift would change as well.

Cyra's mother died when Cyra was nine seasons old. Cyra indicated it was her fault that her mother was gone.

In Chapter 7 several seasons later, Cyra saw Akos and Eijeh Kereseth for the first time. Her father had died during a sojourn a few seasons after Cyra's mother died. After his death, Ryzek had become leader of the Shotet people.

Cyra's tutor, Otega, told Cyra that her brother had intended to capture the oldest oracle of the Thuvhe but she had killed herself to avoid capture. In her place, Ryzek had ordered that Akos and Eijeh be taken as captives. During the capture, Akos had stolen a knife and killed Kalmev Radix, one of the soldiers. Otega told Cyra the boys had been kidnapped because of their fates. Cyra thought of her own fate. It was said that she would cross the Divide, a dull fate for a favored daughter.

Cyra went into the walls of the house hoping for a glimpse of the brothers. She was not impressed when she saw Akos covered in bruises and Eijeh crying behind him. Cyra could see that her brother was displaying a line of kill marks on his arm. Cyra knew they were not real kills, but kills that had been ordered by their father to keep Ryzek from appearing weak.

Cyra remembered that Akos was a Shotet name. When Akos began talking to Ryzek in Shotet Ryzek commented that he wondered how Akos had gotten his Shotet blood. Ryzek told Akos the only reason he had survived killing the soldier was that his fate was to die serving the Noavek family. Cyra could tell by Akos' reaction to hearing his fate that he had not known what it was before that time. After Akos' came to terms with his fate, he told Ryzek that he had no reason to hold Eijeh.

Ryzek informed Akos that they had intended to bring Eijeh back because Eijeh was fated to be the planet's next oracle. Cyra knew that her brother had been looking for an oracle for some time. Eijeh told Ryzek that he had no visions of the future, but Ryzek told him that he would have to start having visions soon. Ryzek knew what he wanted of the future and wanted Eijeh to show him what he needed to do to get it.

Analysis

Because of the way he was raised, Ryzek turned from a loving boy to a mean adult. In Cyra's memories of her first sojourn, she remembers her brother as a kind boy who talked to her and held her hand, even though he was ten seasons older than she. Cyra



indicates that her father tormented Ryzek because Ryzek's fate was that he would be overthrown by a child from one of the most powerful families in Thuvhe. Cyra's description of her brother seems to paint Ryzek as a weak person. "I looked down at his pimple-spotted cheek, dimpled with a smile" (42). A pimple-faced, dimpled boy would not strike much fear into anyone's heart. Ryzek's father tries to toughen Ryzek up by having him be the one to command prisoners be executed. Notice that Cyra indicates that most of her brother's kill marks are not from kills he initiated, but kills his father forced upon him.

There is foreshadowing in Chapter 4 when Cyra indicates that she hurt for Ryzek "before I knew better" (45). This phrase indicates that there was a point in her life that Cyra felt sorry for her brother and the way their father treated him. She had overheard her father belittling Ryzek because Ryzek had told a person he believed was a trusted servant what his fate was. The fact that Cyra says she knew better at one point than the feel sorry for Ryzek indicates that Ryzek changed into a person for whom Cyra could not longer feel sorry.

Considering the circumstances surrounding the development of Cyra's current gift, it appears that the doctor to which her mother took her could be right in suggesting that the gift came from the situation in which Cyra found herself when it manifested itself. Ryzek had just finished changing one of his bad memories for one of Cyra's good memories. He had taken her favorite memory of her first sojourn, a memory of her with her mother. She was understandably angry with him for what he had done to her. Ryzek also mentions to Cyra that he did not think it was fair that their father treated them differently. Although he tries to make it appear that Cyra is getting the short end of the stick it is obvious that he wishes that she would get as much of their father's torture as he got. For this reason, after he trades memories with her he tells her that it is only fair that they share the burden of their father's anger. It is at this point that Cyra's pain begins. Although Cyra's mother denied any truth in what the doctor said, he indicated he believed the gift came from Cyra's belief that she deserved pain and that she believed others deserved pain as well.

Akos is distraught when his fate is told to him by Ryzek. Just like Ryzek has what one might consider a bad fate, so does Akos. Akos is fated to die in the service of the Noavek family. Ryzek is fated to be overthrown by a member of a Benesit family. Cyra can tell by Akos' posture that he had not before heard his fate and that he is surprised by it. Similarly, Eijeh is unaware that he is to be an oracle. He claims to have not yet had any visions.

Feathergrass is a type of vegetation planted between the Shotet and Thuvhe civilizations. Cyra understood from her tutor that the grass had been planted by the Shotet to keep the Thuvhesits from invading them. The feathergrass is important enough to the Shotet that Cyra's mother wears a dress made from it when she leaves for a sojourn.

Interest continues over the fact that Akos has some Shotet blood. Apparently, the Shotet language is one that anyone with Shotet blood in them can speak regardless if they



have been formally taught it or not. Akos has this ability, the first suggestion that he is not full blooded Thuvhe. Cyra also considers when she first sees Akos and hears his name that it is a name famous in Shotet history. She wonders why Akos' parents chose it.

The kill marks are an important symbol mentioned several times in this section of the novel. It is indicated that a kill mark, a scar, is cut into the arm of a Shotet after he has killed a man. The Shotet appear to take pride in their kill marks and show them off to intimidate others. Ryzek has several of these marks but Cyra does not seem to think her brother fully earned them. She indicates most of these kills were men whom Ryzek's father ordered his son to make. Notice that Akos, also, has been given a kill mark. At some point in the struggle to get Akos out of the house and on to their ship, Akos managed to kill one of the Shotet soldiers. Even though Akos has shown himself worthy of this mark, Cyra does not seem to think much of Akos as she watches him try to defend himself against her brother.

In a previous section, a question raised concerned whether or not Akos' mother could have warned her family that some of their members were to be captured by the Shotet. Because the older oracle from the town killed herself in order to avoid being captured by the Shotet, it is proved that the oracles did have some power to change the visions they see. This oracle changed her fate by killing herself, keeping the Shotet from taking advantage of her gift. The reader must still wonder why Akos' mother did not try to warn her family of what was about to happen to them if she had the power to change the future.

Another incident that points in favor of an oracle being able to change the future that he or she sees is Ryzek's act of kidnapping Eijeh. He tells Eijeh that he wants to boy to tell him how to change his future so that it will be the one he wants, the one in which he overcomes the Thuvhe instead of them overthrowing him. If Ryzek had not believed it was possible for the oracle and his visions to assist him in changing his future, why would he have bothered kidnapping one?

Note the mention that the death of Cyra's mother was her fault. This will be important in later chapters. Remember also the doctor's words to Cyra that as she changes her gift will also change.

Discussion Question 1

Discuss the onset of Cyra's gift. Do you think that Ryzek caused this gift to manifest itself? Why or why not? Use examples from the novel to support your answer.

Discussion Question 2

Why would an oracle be valuable to Ryzek? Is Eijeh any use to Ryzek as an oracle since his powers have not yet manifested themselves?



Discussion Question 3

Why was Ryzek's father so hard on him? Why did he put so much emphasis on making Ryzek appear tougher than he actually was?

Vocabulary

sojourn, masticated, singular, cacophony, eclectic, imbecile, conspires, frivolities, contradict, cursory, retorted, overindulged, counteract, defiant, preordained, collateral, pliable



Part 2: Chapters 8-10

Summary

In Chapter 8, Vas woke Cyra to tell her that her brother required her to attend a dinner that evening. Cyra did not want to go because she knew her brother planned to use her and her gift as a tool to intimidate others. Vas gave her a bottle of the only painkiller that worked on the current even though it made her so sick she knew she would not be able to eat.

Among the guests at dinner that night were Yma and Uzul Zetsyvis along with their daughter, Lety. Yma insulted Cyra by calling her a child even though Cyra was sixteen. She introduced her daughter, Lety, who made a snide comment about not being able to shake Cyra's hand.

When the dinner was over, Ryzek indicated he wanted Uzul and his family, as well as Cyra to stay. Ryzek informed Uzul that Uzul's wife had told him she had found information on her husband's computer about the exile colony. This was considered an act of treason. Ryzek ordered Uzul to sit and then called to Cyra. Cyra hesitated, but did as she was asked because she knew if she did not, her brother would tell everyone what she had done to their mother. As directed, she put her hands on Uzul's head. Uzul began to scream but Cyra kept her hands on his head until he asked her to stop and Ryzek told her to stop.

Uzul said that he had tried to contact the exiles because he wanted to leave that life and its tyranny. He said he had given up after a contact he found fell through. Ryzek noted Uzul's honesty and told Cyra to administer punishment. Even though she hesitated again, Cyra put her hands back on Uzul until Ryzek told her to stop.

In Chapter 9, on her hands and knees back in her room, Cyra thought about how much pain she had just given to a gentle man. Some time later, Ryzek entered Cyra's bedroom with Akos. She was still in pain on the floor. Cyra was in so much pain that she cried out and grabbed her head with both hands. She wished Akos was not witnessing her pain because it was this image of her crying on the floor that she did not want associated with her.

Cyra demanded to know why Akos was there and Ryzek said his current gift was be useful to Cyra. Akos offered Cyra his hand, when Cyra did touch his hand he did not scream as she expected but instead her pain disappeared. She felt better than she had before her gift had come. Akos told her that his gift was his ability to interrupt the current. After Ryzek left, Cyra performed a defensive move on Akos to show him that despite her pain, she was strong and could fight him if necessary. She ordered him to go into the next room where there was a bed for him.



In Chapter 10, Akos brought a vial of purple-red liquid to Cyra the following morning. He sarcastically called her “my lady” (87) and suggested she try to potion since neither one of them wanted to stay in constant physical contact in order to keep her pain at bay. He said it was made of hushflower, a remedy she probably had not tried because her people did not believe in using hushflower in medicines.

Cyra took the medicine. While they waited for it to take effect, Akos asked about the armor she wore to cover her kill marks. He also called her Ryzek’s Scourge, a name the soldiers had for Cyra. Cyra ordered him to never call her by that name again. As the medicine began to work, Cyra noticed the shadows were still under her skin but they were not as painful as before. Since the medicine worked, Akos offered a deal to Cyra. He would teach her how to make the potion if she would teach him how to fight. He told her he wanted to learn how to fight so that he could get his brother home.

Akos started that day teaching Cyra how to prepare the potion. The next morning Cyra woke early and went into Akos’ room and woke him with a currentblade to the throat. This first lesson for him to learn was to avoid having a fight if possible, by staying alert, and finding other ways to kill a person like poison.

During a break Cyra asked Akos to tell about his two kill marks. Akos said the first was from one of the men who invaded his house while the second was from an Armored One he had killed to earn his armor. Cyra remembered earning her armor, she had snuck up on a sleeping beast and cut it so it would bleed to death. Akos said he had fed his poison. As they continued to work together, they began to be more at ease with each other and even make jokes. It was at the point that Akos told Cyra one day she would thank him for teaching her to make the potion that she reminded him of their many differences.

Cyra learned later that Uzul had died. Even though news reports said the death was caused by the Thuvhe, Cyra received a letter from Lety telling her that her father’s death was Cyra’s fault.

Analysis

Although Cyra and Akos are very different people, they complement each other well. Each has things the other needs. Cyra is affected by pain because of her currentgift but Akos’ currentgift allows him to interrupt this pain and give Cyra needed relief. Cyra has the ability to fight, a skill that Akos believes he will need in order to free his brother from Ryzek. Because Akos can teach Cyra to make painkiller potions from hushflower, potions that take away her pain without the bad side effects of other drugs, he will give her the ability to control her pain by herself. This self reliance is the only reason that Cyra agrees to help Akos in his desire to free his brother.

There are other ways in which Akos and Cyra are different. Cyra is part of a noble family while Akos is a servant. Making Akos of even less standing than Cyra is that he is a captive from a people who are enemies of the Shotet. Akos loves his brother to the



point where he would do anything to rescue him while Cyra despises her brother who uses her as a weapon.

There are, however, ways in which Cyra and Akos are alike even though they do not recognize it at first. One of the reasons that Cyra is cold to Akos because he saw her right after her interaction with Uzul is because she was hurting because Ryzek forced her to hurt Ryzek. Against her will, she had given into Ryzek's demand that she hurt someone against whom she had no complaint. In fact, she remembered Uzul as being a gentle man. Akos also does not like the idea of killing people. He tells Cyra that he regretted killing the Armored One to earn his armor in the Shotet way even more than killing the man who had killed his father. Although Akos begins his career as Cyra's personal painkiller with a hard and sarcastic response to her, his gentleness shows through when he witnesses Cyra have her first nightmare after she learned that Uzul had died.

The dinner in which Cyra is called upon to punish Uzul gives the reader a picture of Cyra's life before Akos came into it. Her brother uses her as a weapon and a punishment. The soldiers call Cyra "Ryzek's Scourge" (84) a scourge being an instrument of punishment. It is clear this nickname bothers Cyra because when Akos mocks her by calling her this name she asks him to never do so again. At this particular dinner, Ryzek uses Cyra to punish Uzul for allegedly attempting to contact the members of an exile colony, an act considered treason. By placing her hands on a person, Cyra is able to allow that person to feel the same pain that she feels.

Cyra's inability to deal with the pain that her current gift causes her are evident both before and after the dinner to which Ryzek insists that she attend. She wakes at Vas' knocking in the afternoon but is able to move only slowly. After the dinner she is in so much pain that she is able to do nothing but lie on the ground and cry. Vas gives her a painkiller but it gives her a feeling of being drunk. She has difficulty walking and talking. She is unable to eat without getting sick. In other words, the pain killers that Cyra and her people know about do not really do a good job at controlling her pain.

The question raised in this section of the novel is whether or not a person can change his fate. At one point Cyra tells Akos: "'I didn't choose the blood that runs in my veins,' I replied. 'Any more than you chose your fate. You and I, we've become what we were made to become'" (94). At this point, Cyra's view of life follows the doctrine of fatalism. She believes she can do nothing to change the outcome of her life. She sees her life as a total of the things that have been done to her. Specifically, Cyra believes that her brother had molded her life by using her as his weapon. He has given her the reputation of being cruel and lacking in empathy.

Remember in the previous chapter that Cyra blamed herself for her mother's death. Although she gives no details about what happened, it is apparent that Cyra did something to her mother to cause her death. It is whatever happened to their mother that Ryzek holds over Cyra to make her comply with his demands. She fears that if she does not do what he says, he will tell the population of Shotet what she did to her



mother. Because her mother was so loved by the people Cyra believes she will be killed.

Discussion Question 1

Discuss Cyra's fatalistic point of view. Because the characters have their fates spelled out to them, do you think that they cannot avoid their fates? Why or why not?

Discussion Question 2

Discuss Cyra's decision to help Akos learn how to fight. How does this decision to teach an enemy how to fight count as being a traitor to Ryzek?

Discussion Question 3

Compare and contrast the relationships between Cyra and Ryzek, and Akos and Eijeh.

Vocabulary

enunciate, garish, tendrils, eschewing, treason, blasphemy, addled, incapacitates, terse, languid, competency, potency, meticulous, apothecary, exclude, misnomer, taut, aptitude



Part 2: Chapters 11-12

Summary

In Chapter 11, Akos, who had been awakened by the drums signaling the beginning of the festival, asked how the people knew where to go to scavenge. Cyra took him through the walls to show him the room where the examiners worked. There was a hologram of the solar system, complete with a rendering of the current. The workers there would study the flow of the current to decide which planet to scavenge. Even though the workers saw the most current activity around Orga, they said they did not think the current made any difference in this year's scavenge since Ryzek was asking specifically for information about Pitha. Cyra knew her brother was probably interested in that planet for the information he could get from them about weapons.

As they walked away from the examiner's room, Akos suggested they attend the festival. After Cyra had put on a disguise to go out safely, she was surprised by the way Akos stared at her. Having Akos stare at her was a nice change but she warned him to stop staring before he embarrassed himself.

When Cyra typed in the code to open the back gate she saw Akos watching her but reasoned it was only the back gate. In a marketplace, Akos looked as if he had never dreamed Shotet could be as civilized as this. Cyra bought a dagger from a marketer from Zold and gave it to Akos. He suggested he could use it against her but she said that she did not think he would do so.

Cyra next took Akos to the Storyteller. It was one of the places to which her tutor took her while her father was making Ryzek into a monster. It was a poorer part of town and Akos was surprised there were medicines for Q900X, a disease against which people in Thuvhe were inoculated. Cyra told Akos how poor her country was and explained that even though they were sent medical aid, it went to the people who did not need it. Akos suggested that Cyra could talk to her brother and encourage him to make changes. Cyra said the aid went to the wealthy and powerful in exchange for their loyalty. Without this loyalty to hold down uprisings, he would be killed and Cyra would probably be killed as well. Even though she thought she sounded angry, Cyra was really shamed that she did not do more.

The Storyteller, like others, was confused because Akos spoke Shotet but claimed to be Thuvhesit. He also questioned why Akos' parents would have given him a Shotet name. Cyra asked the Storyteller to tell them the story of the beginning of Shotet. He told about how the Thuvhesit had invaded Voa during a sojourn when children were still in their homes. These children had been kidnapped by the Thuvhesit. Even though the Shotet fought to get their children back, they were not successful in battle.

When the storm of blue rain started, the Storyteller told Cyra and Akos to go so they would not miss it. Cyra told Akos the rain was blue because it was the favorite color of



the Shotet. Akos admitted he loved that color when he was younger even though the other people in the place where he lived hated it. They played together in the rain.

In Chapter 12, the last thing Cyra remembered after she and Akos mixed up her sleeping potion was sitting on her bed to drink it. She woke the next morning realizing that Akos had drugged her. She was angry with herself for not being more suspicious of Akos' friendliness the day before.

In the hallway, Cyra met a soldier who told her that Akos had been captured trying to break Eijeh out of the house. She was asked to attend a private hearing later that day. For that hearing she dressed as a soldier. Ryzek was the only one there when Cyra first arrived. Ryzek criticized her for trusting Akos with a knife as well as instructions on how to get out of the house. He ordered her to stand and watch as he showed her how he dealt with disobedient servants.

Akos and Eijeh were brought into the Weapons Hall. Cyra noticed that Eijeh looked vacant though he told his brother when he asked that he was a rising oracle. Because Eijeh was not giving Ryzek the information he wanted, Ryzek was planning to take his gift from him.

Analysis

This section of chapters and the remainder of Part 2 of the novel are narrated from the first person point of view of Cyra.

Akos and Cyra struggle with their relationship as they try to feel each other out. At one point, when Cyra gives Akos a knife during the sojourn festival, Akos tells Cyra that he is not the person she thinks that he is. Cyra tells him that she does not think that he will try to attack her with it. He does not try to attack her but instead tries to sneak his brother out of the house. He uses the techniques she has taught him to try to get his brother free, an act that throws Cyra's kindness to him in the face. Cyra has to remember, of course, that Akos told her that he wanted to learn to fight so that he could free his brother. She should not be surprised when he carries through with his intention.

Before his escape attempt, Cyra and Akos are easy and friendly as they explore the town and sojourn festival together. Akos gives her the opportunity to be able to go out in public without pain and without the fear that she would hurt someone with her touch. She is also able to go out without people looking at her in fear. Because she benefits so much from their relationship she admits to herself "Sometimes it was too easy to forget that he was a prisoner in my house, and that when I was with him, I was serving as a kind of warden" (122).

Although Akos had always heard that the Shotet had initiated the rift between those people and the Thuvhesit people, the Storyteller to whom Cyra takes him tells a different tale. His story explains how Akos might have come to be a member of the Thuvhesit people even though he had some qualities of the Shotet, including his natural ability to speak the language and his Shotet name. According to the story that the Storyteller



tells, Akos could be a child of one of the children stolen from the Shotet during one of the sojourns. Cyra never asks Akos what she thinks of the Storyteller's story though she notices how tense he is while the story is being told. Another unusual quality the Akos has is that he admits to Cyra that he always loved the color blue, the favorite color of the Shotet people, even though the Thuvhesit people hated it.

Ryzek is very calculated in choosing the punishment that he doles out to Akos for trying to save his brother. Both Akos and his brother are actually punished by Ryzek. Eijeh had discovered that he is a rising oracle but so far has not given Ryzek any information that he can use in changing his future. For this reason, Ryzek has been trading memories with Eijeh, slowly taking Eijeh's personality and gift so that he does not have to depend on Eijeh and trust that he is being honest about his visions. This punishes Akos because it means the longer Eijeh stays with Ryzek, the less like himself he will become.

Even though Cyra pretends to be unsympathetic, like her brother, she is actually ashamed of herself because she does not fight against him. This is a sign that it would not take much to convince Cyra to stand up to her brother if there were a group who might support her efforts. When Akos learns about the way that medical aid given to the Shotet is abused, given to those who do not really need it so that Ryzek can keep the loyalty of the powerful, he suggests that Cyra do something about it. Even though she wishes things were different, Cyra believes that even if she were to stand up against Ryzek that she would be killed as well.

Notice how the literary techniques used in this section of the novel draw the reader's mind toward romantic relationships. For instance the part of town in which Cyra took Akos during the Sojourn festival is described in this way: "the buildings fell together like lovers" (118). This simile puts a romantic relationship in the reader's mind as they think about Cyra and Akos. Also, the soldier who approaches Cyra at one point in the novel, was "puffing up his chest like he was displaying mating feathers" (120). This quote also reminds the reader that Cyra is an attractive teen and that she is desirable.

Discussion Question 1

When Ryzek trades memories with people, it seems like he would begin to take on the personalities of the people whose memories he stole. For instance, with his plan to take Eijeh's gift it seems like Eijeh's personality would go along with that. Why is Ryzek able to retain his own personality when he takes memories for others?

Discussion Question 2

Discuss the relationship between Akos and Cyra. Do you think there is genuine attraction there, or is Cyra attracted to Akos only because he gives her relief from pain? Does Akos like Cyra only for the help she is able to give him in getting out of Voa?



Discussion Question 3

Discuss Cyra's reaction to being outside with no pain. How has chronic pain kept her isolated for so long?

Vocabulary

disheveled, deprive, hologram, distal, ethereal, discernible, cull, ulterior, paranoid, ascetic, simulate, colloquially, inoculate, apex, permanence, subsumed, strategic, relieve, contorted



Part 2: Chapters 13-14

Summary

In Chapter 13, Cyra stopped taking painkillers since she felt she could no longer trust Akos. Ryzek had left the dagger on her pillow as a warning. She spent her days overseeing the challenges that were part of the Sojourn Festival where anyone who had a grievance with another person could fight to the death or until one person surrendered.

The next time Cyra talked to Akos was when Vas delivered the armor that Akos had earned. Vas told Akos that since Ryzek was trading memories with Eijeh that Eijeh no longer had to be locked into his room but instead stayed of his own free will. After Vas left, Akos asked Cyra if there was any way what Ryzek was doing to his brother could be reversed. He also admitted to Cyra how badly he felt for using her to help him get his brother away from the Shotet.

As they began the sojourn, Cyra noticed during the walk to the transport vehicle that would take them to the sojourn ship that Eijeh had a smirk on his face like Ryzek's. In the transport ship Eijeh had a vision, that there would be an act of public defiance. He told Ryzek that he could use it to his advantage.

Inside the quarters where they would stay, Akos was surprised because there was nothing the color blue in his room and the bottles that held the iceflowers were labeled in Thuvhesit. Cyra told Akos she had sent the instructions on how his room was to be set up before he had betrayed her. When Akos asked her how she kept going when her life was horrible, she advised him to find a reason to live other than Eijeh.

At the celebration festivities that night, when Ryzek started to give his welcoming speech, Lety called out loud that the Ryzek's fate was to fall to the Benesit family. Vas apprehended Lety while Ryzek told the crowd that fate was a lie. Because Eijeh had forecast this outcry by Lety, Cyra believed that her brother had prepared what to say in response to her. He called her a traitor and suggested that she was working on the side of those who had murdered her father. Lety disagreed by telling the crowd that her father had killed himself because of the pain he suffered after Ryzek's punishment through Cyra. As a punishment for Lety speaking out against him, Ryzek claimed to offer the merciful option of allowing Lety to fight to save herself against Cyra in the arena.

As Cyra prepared for the challenge, Akos asked her what Ryzek was holding over her to make her do the things she was doing. Ryzek entered the room and told Cyra that she was not to take her knife with her to the fight. Akos protested but Cyra knew that her brother wanted her to use the current that traveled under her skin to kill Cyra. She felt as if she were being promoted from scourge to executioner.



Cyra asked Akos to help her remove her armor. Even though she had told no one else how her mother had died, she felt that she needed to tell Akos. She explained she had been angry because she had not wanted to go to another doctor. Cyra had touched her mother and pushed all her pain into her, killing her. She showed Akos the first kill mark that she had earned because of her mother's death. She hurled her armor across the room as she told Akos that it was her mother's death that Ryzek was holding against her. Even though she had expected Akos to be disgusted by her, he tried to reach out to her and offer relief but she would not allow it.

In the arena, Cyra stood with her arms at her sides as Lety inched toward her. Cyra dodged Lety's first attempt to attack. When Lety lunged again, Cyra grabbed her wrist. Lety screamed from the pain and dropped her weapon. Cyra pushed the current into Lety until she died. When she walked out of the arena, Akos met her and tried to hug her, telling her it was over.

That night, Cyra took off her wrist guard and revealed her bare arm so that Akos could help her carve the mark for Lety. Her arm was covered with kill marks but most had a diagonal line through them, negating them. She said that each mark represented a person that she had hurt because Ryzek had ordered her to do so. Cyra said she was ten when she was first asked to help with an interrogation. At that time it had been her father, not Ryzek, who had asked for her help.

In Chapter 14 Cyra was called to Ryzek's office and arrived to find him reading the text from the public announcement of the fates. He told Cyra that she was lucky because her fate was so ambiguous and indicated that was why she needed to help him overcome his own fate. He told Cyra that he had made a plan to kill the Benesit sister who would rule over Thuvhe before she had a chance to take her position. Cyra told Ryzek that was impossible but he contradicted that he did not think it was impossible, just that no one had ever done so before.

Cyra additionally told her brother that she was not going to help him in his attempt to change his fate. She had decided she wanted more of the relationship that she had with Akos and less of her brother's manipulation and abuse. She realized that he needed her because she was the way he demonstrated his power. As her current gift wrapped around her fingers like black threads, Cyra reminded what she could do to him if she were to touch him. She added that she would not allow herself to be used as his instrument of torture any longer.

Back in her room, Cyra told Akos that when her brother had threatened her, she had returned his threat with one of her own. She laughed for the first time in a long time because she had finally stood up to her brother. Meanwhile, Akos reminded Cyra of her challenge to him to find something to keep himself going. He told her that he had decided despite Ryzek's threat that he would turn Eijeh into something that Akos did not want to rescue, there was no form of his brother that Akos would not want to rescue.

Cyra thought Akos' ability to love his brother beyond reason was madness. But, she also knew it was the same quality in Akos that made him accept her. She referred to her



scarred arm and asked if he really did not hate her for what she had done. When he said that he did not, she told him they needed to get up early because they would have to train harder if he really wanted to get his brother free.

Analysis

These chapters complete Part 2 of the novel, the part that is narrated completely from the first person point of view of Cyra.

Cyra chooses to take an active role in her own life when she decides not to let her brother boss her around anymore. There are a couple of reasons Cyra decides to stand up to her brother. First, she knows that he counts on the people's fear of her in order to keep them under control. For this reason she knows that he will not kill her even if she refuses to torment people at his command any longer.

Another reason that Cyra turns against her brother is that he makes her publicly kill using her current gift. Without her permission, he arranges for her to compete in a challenge with Lety after Lety embarrasses him by reminding the population of his fate. Ryzek intends for Cyra to kill Lety using her bare hands. He allows her no weapon. She decides to wear no armor. After she is finished killing Lety, Cyra feels as if she has graduated from being her brother's scourge to being his executioner, a promotion that she did not want.

A third reason that Cyra decides to stand up to her brother is her new relationship with Akos. Ryzek thought he was doing himself a favor and making Cyra more useful to himself when he offered Akos to her as a means of pain relief. He did not realize his sister would be swayed by kindness that Akos showed to her as well. In a way, Ryzek has defeated his own intentions because he sees his sister as an object to be manipulated instead of a person. He had not counted on Akos and Cyra becoming friends.

Among the reasons that Cyra decides not only to trust Akos again but to actively agree to help him rescue his brother is the lack of hate and fear that Akos shows to her. Of course he really has nothing to fear from her because her touch does not bring him pain like it does for other people. Even after Cyra tells Akos that it was she who killed her mother and shows him the numerous people she has allowed her father and brother to manipulate her into hurting, Akos still does not hate her. Up to this point in her life, Cyra had only experienced hate or fear from other people. She has not experienced acceptance or understanding. "I didn't understand the tone of his voice, with all its softness. I had just shown him proof of my own monstrousness, and still his eyes fixed on mine with sympathy instead of judgment. He couldn't possibly understand what I was telling him, to look at me like that. Or he thought I was lying, or exaggerating" (162).

There is foreshadowing in this section of the novel through Eijeh's vision. He tells Ryzek that there will be an act of public defiance. Together, Eijeh and Ryzek put together a plan to deal with the defiant person, who turns out to be Lety. Ryzek cleverly turns her



complaint against her, claiming that she is a member of an uprising and was perhaps even responsible for her own father's murder. Cyra and Ryzek, of course, are among the few that know that Uzul's death was not a murder but a suicide. Lety claims "'My father was not murdered,' Lety said in a low voice. 'He took his own life, because you tortured him, you tortured him with that thing you call a sister, and the pain was driving him mad'" (154).

Ryzek studies the fates of the Benesit sisters because he believes that if he can kill the one who will rule Thuvhe, he will be able to change his own fate. As Cyra looks at the fates of the favored families that Ryzek has on his screen she sees: "Nine lines of nine families, spread across the galaxy, their members' paths predetermined and unalterable" (167). Even though they have both been told that a person's fate is not alterable, Ryzek believes that by using the information that he can get through Eijeh, he can manipulate the fates of the Benesit sisters, and in this way change his own fate.

Ryzek has been told all of his life that because he is fated to be overthrown, he is weak. He does his best to change his outward appearance so that he seems as strong and unfaltering as possible. His sister, who knows him best, knows his weaknesses as well as the role she plays in ensuring that his subjects continue to fear him.

Even though Ryzek is losing his hold on his sister, he leaves the dagger that Cyra gave to Akos on her pillow. It is the one that Akos took with him when he tried to free his brother from his room. Cyra believes Ryzek sees the dagger as a reminder of the power that Ryzek believes that he has over Cyra.

Discussion Question 1

What factors play into Cyra's decision to actively help Akos free his brother? Discuss how Ryzek's attempts to manipulate Cyra into helping him actually backfire on him.

Discussion Question 2

Compare the way Akos treats Cyra to the way she has been treated in the past. How does it make sense that she would rather help Akos than her own brother?

Discussion Question 3

Discuss Ryzek's attempt to control his own fate. Do you think even with the oracle's help that he will be able to do so? Why or why not?

Vocabulary

compulsory, hone, arbitrarily, patronize, dissonant, talismans, defiance, obscenely, buoyant, espouse, leverage, increments, contorted, negating, proximity, helmed, ambiguous, affinity, fixating, complicit, masochism, coerced



Part 3: Chapters 15-17

Summary

In Chapter 15, the point of view changes to a third person narrator with an emphasis on Akos. Akos thought about his attempt to save Eijeh. When his brother first saw him, Eijeh had asked him why their mother had allowed them to be kidnapped. Even though Akos had lied to his brother and said he did not know though he had known his mother knew what was going to happen to them.

Back on the sojourn ship Akos began going to the public gym to practice. One day he looked up to see Jorek Kuzar watching him. When Akos asked the man if he needed something, Jorek said that he needed someone with whom he could spar. Akos was shocked because this was the son of the man who had held Akos down with the heel of his boot when he was kidnapped from his home.

Akos beat Jorek quickly in their first practice round. Jorek admitted to Akos he wanted to know how efficient of a fighter Akos had become since he was kidnapped. Before Akos could get angry with Akos' comment about the kidnapping, Jorek told Akos that he did not have a positive opinion of his father and that he wanted Akos to help him kill his father. Even though Akos doubted Jorek's intentions, Jorek told him that his father's behavior was putting his mother and sister in danger. Jorek was not strong enough to kill his father himself. In return for his father's death, Jorek promised Akos his freedom. Akos turned him down when Jorek offered freedom for Akos alone but when Jorek said he could also get Eijeh out, Akos agreed.

Back at Cyra's room, Akos asked her how he could go about legally killing Jorek's father. She told him that he would have to provoke him so that he would challenge Akos to a fight in the arena. Then, he would have to make Suzao think that Akos was still the child he had been when he was kidnapped. As they talked Cyra mentioned that he needed to be sure that he won so that he would not become sour like her. He commented that her level of sourness could be changed.

In Chapter 16, the point of view returns to the first person point of view of Cyra. Cyra was walking back to her rooms from Ryzek's office when the lights in the ship went out. She heard a tapping sound in a pattern of one-three-one. When the person attacked Cyra, she was easily able to pin her to the ground. The girl wore a mask with one eye stitched closed. She would not tell Cyra who she was, but the backup announcement system crackled to life and repeated to those on board the fate of Ryzek, adding that truth could not be erased even though it could be suppressed. Cyra still held her attacker when the lights came back on. Cyra told her that she could have her arrested and tortured, but instead let her go free.

She put the knife the renegade had dropped into her pocket and went to see Ryzek. He was drinking hushflower extract and had a look of chaos in his eyes. He said that Vas



had killed the two renegades that had tried to enter his part of the ship. Since she had never tried to approach her brother with kindness before, Cyra decided to try and see if it would work. She reminded him that they were not always at odds with one another. He looked at her for a moment and then reminded her that she had killed their mother, he no longer wanted to be close to her.

The next day, Ryzek made a public announcement that people on the ship would be questioned at random about their participation in the attack or their knowledge of any participants in the attack. He said that they should use the rest of the sojourn to show the other planets “our might and our unity” (196). Cyra was disappointed by what Ryzek had made of the sojourn, that he had changed it from a celebration of the people’s dependency on the current. She explained to Akos it was a way to honor their ancestors.

Akos senses Cyra’s fear that Ryzek will try to force her to participate in the interrogations. When he asked her what the worst he could do was, she said that the people would tear her limb from limb if they learned that she had been responsible for the death of her mother. Cyra wondered how Akos felt about her death, especially since it was his fate to die in service to her family. She also felt uncomfortable standing so close to him.

At a gathering of Ryzek’s close associates on the observation deck of the ship, Cyra noticed that Yma Zetsyvis, Uzul’s widow and Lety’s mother, was among those in Ryzek’s following. When Cyra asked Vas why Yma was there, he said that she had begged forgiveness from Ryzek. Cyra noticed that Ryzek was allowing Yma to touch him. She wondered how the woman could even stand to look at him since he had ordered that both her husband and her daughter killed. Cyra was really surprised when Yma joined Ryzek in tormenting her because she was not helping out in the interrogations like she had in the past.

Yma later approached Cyra and suggested that if Ryzek did not find someone guilty of the uprising in time for the sojourn, he would pin the guilt on whomever was handy. When Cyra thought about someone, probably an innocent person, being killed just because Ryzek needed someone to take the fall for the attack, she was chilled, a feeling that she had never had before.

After her talk with Yma, Cyra made a visit to the kitchen to see her old tutor. She gave Otega the knife that the renegade who attacked her had dropped. Otega’s gift was her ability to find the person to whom any item belonged. Otega took the knife and promised to take Cyra to its owner the following evening.

In Chapter 17, which returns to a third person narrator, Cyra took Akos with her to the deck so that he could experience what happened when the ship passed through the currentstream. Back in Cyra’s room, Akos noticed the news feed from the Assembly was giving information about a meeting of the oracles. In the video he caught a glimpse of his mother. He was not sure how to feel because of the way she had not done anything when their home was attacked by the Shotet. He thought that she should have been



more faithful to her family than the fates. When Cyra came out of the bathroom, she asked if he had seen his mother. He replied as she went about her routine and Akos was surprised at how well he knew the things that she did, how well he knew her.

Analysis

Part 3 begins with a change in the point of view. It returns to the third person narrator employed in the beginning of the novel. The parts of the novel told in the third person are told with an emphasis on Akos. While Part 1 is told exclusively from the point of view of a narrator and Part 2 is told from Cyra's first person point of view, Part 3 includes both points of view. So far, Chapters 1 and 3 have focused on Akos. They are told from the third person point of view, while Chapter 2 is told from Cyra's first person point of view. From this point forward, the chapters will alternate between Cyra's first person point of view and the third person point of view with a focus on Akos.

Renegades successfully interrupt the sojourn when they attempt to attack both Ryzek and Cyra. Cyra does not tell her brother about the attempt on her life or the fact that she let her attacker go free. It appears being with Akos is affecting Cyra more than she realizes because killing people and having people killed, even if they might deserve it, is distasteful to Cyra. In order to try to get a person in charge of the renegades to step forward, Ryzek conducts interrogations and delays the sojourn until he can find someone to blame for the attack made against him.

Since Ryzek ordered the murder of both her husband and daughter, Yma's sudden close relationship with Ryzek is unusual. She appears to blame Cyra for their deaths while she butters Ryzek up. Cyra is unsure how Yma can even look at her brother since he was the one who ordered the deaths of Uzul and Lety. In fact, Yma has even gone so far as to join in with Ryzek when he taunts Cyra for not allowing her services to be used in the interrogations. Yma later confides to Cyra, almost as if she were aware of Cyra's new distaste for violence against the innocent, that if Ryzek were unable to find a person responsible for the uprising, he would use someone as a scapegoat just so they could move forward with the sojourn.

Because she had experienced the way that Akos' kindness had worked in her, Cyra decides to try kindness on her brother, to see if any of their old relationship still remains. She reminds him of the way they had once played together but he dwells on those memories only momentarily before reminding her that she killed their mother. He tells her that because their mother's death, they can never have that sort of relationship again. Even though Cyra had hoped that Ryzek would respond to her kindness, she thinks: "I shouldn't have been surprised, shouldn't have marveled at the way words could hit me like a hard punch to the stomach. But hope had made me a fool" (195). She indicates that hope had made her a fool when it came to her brother, just like she thought Akos was a fool for continuing to hope that he would get his brother back.

Meanwhile, Cyra sees the changes in herself. When Yma suggests to Cyra that if no one comes forward to confess playing the part of a renegade, Ryzek will pick a



scapegoat to sacrifice to make it look as if he is still in power. While the news of an innocent being killed might not have bothered Cyra before she knew Akos, hearing this might happen chills her. When she realizes her reaction is different Cyra thinks to herself “Maybe I could change. Maybe I was changing, just by believing I could” (203). For the first time, Cyra sees her move away from unnecessary violence as a positive.

Akos is put into an interesting position when Jorek Kuzar asks him to kill his father. Jorek wants his father dead because he is such a cruel man and has been hurting his mother and perhaps his sister. Akos does not trust Jorek at first and doubts his intentions. Akos decides to at least give Jorek a chance because he considers the fact that “a person didn’t choose their own blood” (182).

Whether or not the fates can be changed is a major topic of dispute for the characters. Ryzek, for instance, believes he can change his fate with Eijeh’s help even though it is said that the fates cannot be changed. The voice that speaks over the public address system on the ship indicates that while the truth could be suppressed, it could not be erased. Akos considers the fates when he thinks about the way that his mother did not attempt to interfere with or stop the murder of her husband and kidnapping of her children. He is angry with her because she allowed the fates to rule their lives instead of proving to them that she loved them and would do anything to save them. Eijeh also struggles with the same questions about their mother. When Akos tried to rescue him the first time, Eijeh had questioned their mother’s motivation in not having done anything to help her family.

The author continues to enliven her writing with literary devices, mostly in the form of simile. Cyra describes the atmosphere in the ship when the sojourn is delayed: “Impatience was like a humid cloud that had settled over the ship; I breathed it in whenever I left my isolated quarters” (198). Not only is impatience compared to humidity in this simile, it is also given a form. Any one familiar with humid air knows how difficult its presence is to ignore. In another simile, Cyra indicates that the people at a social gathering “had collected around Ryzek like debris around a drain hole” (199). This comparison of the people with whom Ryzek associates as being “debris” while Ryzek is compared to “a drain hole” is not a flattering description. It is almost as if Ryzek attracts this trash to him.

Discussion Question 1

Discuss the way that it is rumored that Ryzek will deal with the renegades if no one steps forward to take responsibility for what happened on the ship. Do you think he is correct in finding a scapegoat just to make himself look strong? Why or why not?

Discussion Question 2

How is the relationship between Akos and Cyra changing? How does the author use the changes in points of view to help the reader understand how these two characters are interested in one another?



Discussion Question 3

Forgiveness is a theme in this section of chapters. Ryzek is unable to forgive Cyra for killing their mother, just as Akos cannot forgive his mother for not letting her family know that they were going to be ambushed. How does the inability to forgive affect these relationships?

Vocabulary

addled, itinerary, cynical, renegade, deftness, compromised, eradicated, tyrannical, biased, exorbitant, ingratiate, regime, incinerator, amok



Part 3: Chapters 18-20

Summary

In Chapter 18, a chapter narrated by Cyra, Cyra followed Ortega to a door adorned with a spray of feathergrass and the name Surukta in the quarters where the engine room employees stayed. She said the woman who lived there was the one who had attacked Cyra. Cyra waited for her inside the room. When the girl came home and discovered Cyra there, she asked with more hate than Cyra had ever heard what she was doing there. The girl, who said her name was Teka, pretended not to know what Cyra was talking about when Cyra gave her back the makeshift knife she had used the night of the attack.

Cyra convinced the girl that she was not going to turn her in but that if someone did not step forward to take responsibility for the renegade action, Ryzek was going to pin the crime on an innocent person. Teka took Cyra to the loading bay where she instructed her to wait. The woman whom Teka brought back was Zosita Surukta, Teka's mother. Zosita told Cyra that Teka was not aware Zosita was going to turn herself in for the crime. Zosita said Ryzek would believe that she had been in charge of the revolt because she was an exile, she had once taught children how to speak Othyrian. Cyra warned Zosita that she would also be interrogated because she was a member of the exile colony.

Cyra asked Zosita if she thought that dying for the revolt was really worthwhile. Zosita explained to her that after she was exiled, Ryzek had called for her children before she had the opportunity to get them to a safe place. Ryzek had killed her son and blinded her daughter in one eye for what their mother had done. Zosita told Cyra that she could handle an interrogation and asked her if she knew how to tell lies. Cyra considered for just a moment that she would be helping the renegades before she told Zosita that she told lies better than she told the truth.

In Chapter 19, Akos prepared a second batch of poison for Jorek to administer to his father. The first dose had caused him to pass out during breakfast. Suzao was embarrassed and angry he had been drugged. Akos figured another embarrassment would rile him up even further. After the sojourn was finished, he planned to tell Suzao that he was the one who had poisoned him. He hoped Suzao would challenge him to a fight. As Jorek was leaving Akos' quarters Vas and Eijeh arrived. Eijeh wanted his brother to prepare a potion said to be good to clear thinking but Akos refused to do so. Vas then told Akos that he was needed at the interrogation of a renegade. Cyra had been asked to attend as well.

When Akos entered the room, Cyra was claiming she had recognized Zosita's voice as the voice that had come over the public announcement system the day of the attack. When Ryzek suggested to his sister that she help him with the interrogation she refused and threw herself at Ryzek. Vas pulled her off him and Ryzek motioned for Akos to



come to him. As Vas held Cyra, Ryzek got a metal rod. Akos realized the rod was Ryzek's means of getting Cyra to cooperate against her will. Ryzek hit Akos with the rod several times until Cyra went to Zosita. Akos noticed that Zosita nodded at Cyra as if she was giving her permission before Cyra put her hands on Zosita.

After Cyra was finished, she pulled Akos up and told him they were leaving. In her room, Cyra told Akos that Zosita had told Ryzek nothing. She was angry because neither of them would ever be safe again. She told Akos that he was the only person whom her brother could hold over her at that point. She bent and kissed him on the lips. After she was finished she promised him that she would not do that again.

In Chapter 20, Cyra attended Zosita's execution. Even though the crowd was happy at Zosita's death, Cyra wanted to cry because the death was so wrong. The remainder of the chapter describes the trip from the sojourn ship to the planet of Pitha. Even though Cyra had thought kissing Akos would decrease her desire for him but it instead just made her want him more. Before they left the ship, Cyra saw Teka working on the ship. Cyra approached Teka and requested a meeting with friends. Teka was hesitant but told Cyra she would see what she could do.

Analysis

When Cyra agrees with Zosita to lie to her brother, she realizes that she will be helping the renegades in their plan to overthrow his power. It is noted that Cyra does not consider her response long before agreeing to help the renegades. Because Cyra pretends to be helping Ryzek by turning in one of the people who tried to kill him, Ryzek pushes her to help in Zosita's interrogation. It is at this point that Ryzek responds in a way that probably cuts off his sister's desire to help him at all. He forces her to interrogate Zosita by using a current rod to hurt Akos. Cyra knows the only way that her brother will stop is if she complies with him.

Back in her quarters, Cyra expresses her affection for Akos by kissing him on the lips. It is a step in their budding relationship. She tells him that he is the only person whom he brother knew would have that sort of power over Cyra. Unlike the forms of power that Ryzek has held over his sister in the past, Cyra wants to protect Akos out of love, not out of fear. In her case, love is a stronger motivator than fear ever was.

Even the Shotet exiles are aware of Cyra's reputation as is proven by the way Teka responds to her. "I had never heard my name spoken with such venom before. Which was saying something" (219). Cyra is a person who does not hide from herself that fact that she is hated. Regardless of her reputation, Teka surprises Cyra by the depths of hate that her voice betrays. Consider the meeting from Teka's point of view. She has heard rumors about Cyra's abilities and knows she is not in a positive relationship with the ruling family simply because she is the daughter of an exile. To make matters worse, it was Cyra's brother who took one of Teka's eyes because of crimes her mother had committed. Ryzek had additionally killed Teka's brother. The Noavek family has not



been kind to Teka's family. She does not expect Cyra to be any different from her brother.

Teka seems to soften when she realizes that Cyra's intent is to keep an innocent person from being killed. After Cyra has said her piece, Teka's response "Well, shit" (221) indicates she has found herself between a rock and a hard place. She either can ask Cyra to leave and feel responsible for letting an innocent person die or she can refer Cyra to someone in a stronger leadership position to help her with the decision. Teka decides to let her mother talk to Cyra to decide what should be done.

Zosita explains to Cyra that all of the renegades had agreed to accept the responsibility for their actions. She models this decision by giving herself up for interrogation and execution. Even though Ryzek manipulates Cyra into helping with the interrogation, he is not able to get any information about the exile colony or the renegades from her. Out of respect, Cyra attends Zosita's execution. She describes the woman's death in a simile. "I felt the wrongness of her death like an ill-fitting shirt I could not remove" (241). Cyra is new to the feeling of grief and describes her feeling as one of a permanent uncomfortableness.

Akos, meanwhile, moves forward with his plans to kill Suzao for Jorek. He hopes to provoke the man to declaring a challenge in the area against him when he learns it has been Akos poisoning him, causing him to be embarrassed in public places. As a Shotet prisoner, Akos knows the only way he can legally kill Suzao is for that man to challenge him to a fight in the arena.

Discussion Question 1

How do the opinions of both Teka and Zosita change when they meet Cyra in person? What prompts these changes? Support your answer with examples from the novel.

Discussion Question 2

Why does Ryzek use Akos to manipulate Cyra into helping interrogate Zosita? How does this manipulation actually make Cyra even less willing to help her brother, possibly pushing her to side with the renegades?

Discussion Question 3

Discuss Akos plan to try to get Suzao to challenge him the arena. Do you think it will turn out as Akos hopes? Why or why not?

Vocabulary

collages, cohort, sadist, periphery, claustrophobic, horde, rampage, ornery, deluding, defames, hypothesis, liting, ostentatious, erratic, buoyant, monotonous, fluent, insinuation, utilitarian, synchronized, incredulous, reparations



Part 3: Chapters 21-23

Summary

In Chapter 21, Akos was unable to sleep because he was thinking about Cyra kissing him. He realized he had even liked the kiss. Later, he accompanied her while the group went out for the scavenge. After they were finished, Cyra gave Akos a vial of rainwater as a souvenir.

Back in their quarters, both Cyra and Akos were shocked to see the news that the fated chancellor of Thuvhe had come forward. He recognized the girl who appeared on the television, Ori, even though the lower part of her face was covered. But then there was another woman with her, her twin. He had not known that Ori had a twin. When Cyra asked, Akos explained how he had known her. Even though Cyra suggested it was probably not a good idea to tell anyone what he knew, Akos said he had told her because he trusted her. She admitted to him that she would not keep him there if he wanted to go, she would even help him. He asked her that if he were to go if she would consider coming with him. She said that she might consider it if Ryzek was dead.

Because the sojourn was coming to an end, Akos decided to finish his duty to Jorek. In the cafeteria, Jorek caused a commotion to cover Akos putting poison in Suzao's drink. As he watched him drink from his cup, Akos remembered the man being among those who had kidnapped him from his parents' house. Akos walked up to Suzao and asked if he remembered him. Suzao spoke of how he had beaten Akos up the day they broke into his house. Akos slammed the vial that had held the potion onto the table as he asked Suzao if he was getting sleepy. As Akos had hoped, Suzao challenged him to the arena.

In Chapter 22, a chapter narrated by Cyra, Teka motioned for Cyra to follow her, taking her to a small gathering of renegades. After some negotiation, they agreed to talk with mutual trust. Tos, the leader of the group which included Jorek, said they could get Akos off the planet if she could get them into Noavek manor. Since they would not tell Cyra what they wanted to do there, Cyra assumed they wanted to kill Ryzek. She told them that participating in killing Ryzek would not bother her.

At the challenge between Suzao and Akos, Cyra was pleased that Suzao was overconfident he would be able to beat Akos and did not even put on his armor. Akos chose to use the plain knife, the one Cyra had given him, instead of a currentblade. Akos beat Suzao quickly and easily. After the fight was finished, Cyra followed Akos back to the quarters. Even through the door she could hear him crying and sounds of crashing. Knowing that he was in pain, Cyra wanted to help him the best she could. After getting him undressed and tending to his wounds, Cyra prepared a potion to keep him from having nightmares.

In Chapter 23, a chapter narrated by the third person narrator, after Cyra let Akos mope for several days she went to his room and insisted that he get up. Cyra told him that she



knew what it was like to turn into a person that you did not want to be, but he had a bigger capacity for carrying that pain than what he thought he did. He had just spat out at Cyra that she had made him what he was by telling him that: "Honor has no place in survival" (287) when there was a knock on the door. Akos did not want Cyra to let Jorek in but she did anyway. Jorek was surprised when he saw Akos' condition. He apologized and said he did not know how badly the murder would affect Akos.

Jorek gave Akos a chain on which a ring was hanging, a gift from his mother. His mother sent her thanks because the family was finally safe. They wanted him to Suzao's mark on his arm. After Jorek left, Cyra carved the mark for Akos. Afterward, they touched and talked. Akos realized he wanted Cyra. He kissed her on the cheek and wondered what was wrong with him. She left quickly, telling him that she had something she had to do.

Analysis

The chapters in this section continue to alternate between first person narrator from Cyra and third person narration from the point of view of Akos. In this way both characters have a chance to tell their stories. This is particularly important in the scenes where Cyra deals with the renegades, dealings that Akos knows nothing about, and the scenes in which Akos keeps him promise to Jorek, scenes in which Cyra is not involved.

Through Akos' experience killing Suzao, Akos and Cyra become closer. Cyra believes that she understands how Akos feels about killing Suzao. She hurries after him to comfort him. It is one of the first times that she was able to comfort Akos, as Akos has offered her so much comfort.

Although Jorek is the son of a man loyal to Ryzek, Jorek is a member of the renegades trying to overthrow Ryzek. He had gotten the wrong idea about Akos. Jorek believed Akos was a man not affected by violence and killing, like the man who knew from the Shotet. When he sees the affect that killing Suzao had on Akos he feels badly because he had no idea Akos was so tenderhearted.

Akos is upset with himself for killing Suzao because of the mindset he had while killing the man. He did not kill him thinking about being able to save Eijeh, he was thinking about revenge. He was thinking about proving himself. He was angry because Suzao was so arrogant that he did not even bother to wear armor for their arena challenge. Akos is angry with himself because he has bought into the attitude of the Shotet so easily.

Meanwhile, Cyra makes her first admission that she is willing to aid in the murder of her brother. She meets with the renegades even though she is afraid they might try to harm her since Zosita was executed because of her. Even though the renegades were hesitant to show her their faces, she finally convinced them to do so. They told her they could get Akos off the planet and away from Ryzek if she could get them into Noavek manor. Even though they did not tell her what they planned to do in Noavek manor,



Cyra assumed they planned to try again to assassinate Ryzek. By agreeing to their plan, Cyra knows that she will be assisting the renegades in their cause but she hesitates only a moment before she agrees to help them.

Akos is shocked when he sees that Ori, a childhood friend, is actually a descendant of the Benesit line. During a newsfeed, he recognizes the girl who steps out when the new chancellor of Thuvhe is announced. He is confused because he did not realize that Ori had an identical twin and is not sure which one of the girls is the actual chancellor. Remember, on the same day that Akos and his siblings were rushed from the school to their house by their father, Ori was also escorted out of the school building by her aunt. Although she was not known by the surname Benesit, it had apparently been thought that it would be safer for her to go into hiding when the fates of the fated families were announced.

There are three objects of significance incorporated into this section of the novel. The first is the dagger that Cyra gave to Akos on the day they attended the sojourn festival. Akos chooses to use it to kill Suzao instead of a typical currentblade. After Cyra and Akos return from the scavenge together, Cyra presents Akos with a vial of rainwater from that planet. She says it is a souvenir to remind him of his first trip to another planet. A final object of significance is the ring that Jorek's mother gives to Akos. The ring is a symbol of her gratitude for her husband's death. Suzao had been such a cruel husband that she is happy that he is gone and honors Akos with a very personal gift, a ring that bears the seal of her family.

Discussion Question 1

Discuss Akos' reaction to killing Suzao. Why does he react this way? How does Cyra help him to feel better?

Discussion Question 2

Why is it significant that Jorek's mother gives Akos the ring bearing the seal of her family on it as a gift for having killed Suzao? How does this realization that he killed a man who was a monster seem to affect Akos?

Discussion Question 3

What does it mean that Cyra agrees to help the renegades with their plan to kill her brother? How does this decision set her up in a dangerous position?

Vocabulary

enamored, prophetic, secular, embargoes, vigilant, magnetism, articulating, ramifications, discretion, protruding, pyre, emphatic, permanence



Part 3: Chapters 24-25

Summary

In Chapter 24, narrated by Cyra, Cyra thought about Akos' kiss as she made her way toward Teka's quarters. Once there she advised Teka that whatever they were planning to do to Ryzek, they should do it on the following day because things would be so disorganized because of the move from the sojourn ship back to Voa. They discussed the plan, in which Cyra had agreed to get the renegades into the Noavek manor if they would get Akos out.

That night, the plan went well until Cyra got the Ryzek's room where the locks required Noavek blood. She tried the lock twice, but could not open it. When she realized what was happening, she sent Teka, Tos and Jorek out, hoping they could get Akos out and save their own lives. She knew it was too late for her but she tried to buy them time by killing the guards headed their direction.

In Chapter 25, also narrated by Cyra, Ryzek questioned Cyra in prison, asking her when she turned against him. He told her that he had learned that Akos knew one of the Benesit sisters and that the information he had could help Ryzek reach his goals. Ryzek told Cyra that Tos, the leader of the renegades, was dead. Ryzek would not tell Cyra what had happened to Akos but instead had Vas bring Akos into the jail. Ryzek told Cyra he planned to use Akos to find out what Cyra knew about the renegades and Cyra to find out what Akos knew about the Benesit twins.

Even though Cyra apologized to Akos for what was about to happen, Akos told her that he had always thought he would die a traitor to his own country but that she had made it so that would not happen. When Vas put Cyra's hand on Akos, he was so weak that he was affected by the currents. Cyra notices the currents seemed to be increasing between the two of them instead of decreasing like they usually did.

In her pain Cyra has an alternate vision of her doctor's appointment with Dr. Fadlan. In it her mother asked Cyra's opinion of why the current worked the way it did in her. In this vision her mother transformed into Akos, asking her what the gift of her curse was. She realized it was that her pain had given her strength. Back in the prison, Cyra willed herself to pull the current back into herself.

Analysis

In these last two chapters of Part 3, the novel is narrated from Cyra's first person point of view in both chapters. There is no switch to the third person point of view with Akos as a focus because Akos is not around when Cyra helps the renegades get into Noavek manor. He is also not with her in jail until several days later. The intent is the focus on Cyra and her willingness to cause her own death when Ryzek tries to get her to hurt Akos, even if it means that Cyra kills herself.



As Ryzek uses Cyra and Akos against one another in hopes of fulfilling his own desires, Cyra finally realizes that her current gift is not completely a curse. Although she had lied to others before and said that the positive part of her gift was that no one could hurt her, she knew this was not necessarily the case. People still hurt her easily. It was Akos who helped Cyra understand that her pain had given her strength. She is able to use this strength to save Akos from death and from the pain that Ryzek wants her to inflict on him.

The failed attempt to murder Ryzek has many negative consequences. Tos is killed. Akos is not rescued. Ryzek is now certain that his sister is working against him. Additionally, Ryzek also has a reason to torture Akos and try to get the truth out of him about the Benesit sisters. While Akos does have some information about the one girl that he knew, it is no different from any information that Eijeh might have had because he was closer to Ori than Akos. The reader must wonder if Eijeh is working so cooperatively with Ryzek why he has not given Ryzek the information that he has about Ori.

While Cyra believes that she has failed Akos, Akos tells her that what she has done is a blessing in his opinion. He has given her the opportunity to die with his loyalty to his country intact. He believes that whatever Ryzek plans to do to him will result in his death but does not plan to give any information about the Benesit sisters or his country that will help Ryzek in his plan to invade that country.

Discussion Question 1

Discuss Cyra's breakthrough about her current gift. How is the strength that her gift has given her a blessing?

Discussion Question 2

How does Cyra's foiled attempt to have Akos kidnapped from the Noavek manor give him the chance to prove that he is not a traitor to his own country? Why does this mean so much to Akos? Use examples from the book to support your answer.

Discussion Question 3

Why is it significant that Cyra's blood did not open the lock to Ryzek's room? What does this mean?

Vocabulary

leverage, passive, pretense, callous, lenient, cursory



Part 4: Chapters 26-28

Summary

In Chapter 26, a chapter narrated by a third person narrator, Akos awakened in the hospital. Ori was standing over him. She told him that he was dropped off at the Shissa Hospital. When Akos woke the next time, he worried about what had happened to Cyra. He opened his eyes to discover his sister, Cisi, standing there. She was surprised she was able to cry because her current gift was making people feel at ease. Akos determined his gift overshadowed everyone's gifts. Cisi explained to him that he was chained to the bed because he had been wearing Shotet armor when he arrived. The chancellor, Ori's sister, had asked them to take care with him. He assured Cisi that he was not going to hurt anyone.

As they were talking, Isae entered the room. Akos was surprised when Isae criticized Ori for revealing her face to Akos until Isae pulled away the veil and showed him that her face was marked with two distinct scars. Akos told Isae that even though he had information about Ori, he knew not to give it to Ryzek and did not believe that he had done so.

In Chapter 27, also narrated by a third person narrator, Akos awakened after dreaming of Cyra. Using his abilities, he opened his handcuffs and walked around the room. Out the window, he saw Shotet ships. In the hallway, Akos had to kill one of the Shotet soldiers in order to get Isae and Cisi to safety. Cisi cried at what she had seen her brother do but Isae told him that she still did not trust him. As they rode in a floater away from Shissa, Akos, Isae and Cisi listened to news footage that Ori had been captured by Shotet soldiers. Isae said of her sister that she would just have to go and get her.

In Chapter 28, narrated by a third person narrator, the floater landed in Hessa in front of the house where Akos had lived with his family. His mother was still not there. He surprised himself by washing his hands and then carving the mark in his arm for the soldier, a Shotet habit. He tried to refuse Isae's request for him to take her to Shotet to find Ori. She told him that if he helped her get her sister out, she would help him get his brother out. Akos was upset because it was the only thing that would motivate him to take the chancellor of Thuvhe to Shotet, an action he considered traitorous. Cisi insisted on going with them.

On the ride back to Shotet, Akos thought about Cyra. They traveled toward Voa in the floater until it began to run out of gas. After they landed they walked toward Voa and Jorek's house. In the village, Akos recognized Jorek's mother, Ara, when she stepped outside her house to greet them. She welcomed them to wait there for Jorek. Akos introduced his sister and Isae introduced herself as Badha. Ara asked about the ring she had given Akos as a gift and he pulled the chain out from under his armor to show that he was wearing it.



Ara told Akos that Cyra was alive, but Teka entered the room, warning him that he should not celebrate yet. Teka said they did not think that Cyra would live much longer in Ryzek's hands but that they were trying to get her out. She suggested that perhaps Akos could assist them. Akos was surprised to learn that Cyra had been helping the renegades. Jorek started a video when Akos asked what Cyra's brother had done to her.

The video showed Cyra in the amphitheater with Ryzek while he announced to the people that she was working with the renegade group. He also announced that it was Cyra who had killed their mother. For this reason, he announces his plans to execute her. While Vas held Cyra, Ryzek used his knife to slice the skin from her throat to her scalp. Akos suggested that if they had a fast ship, he knew how to get Cyra free.

Analysis

These first three chapters in Part 4 of the novel are entirely narrated by a third person narrator with an emphasis on Akos. This is necessary because Akos wakes from his ordeal in a hospital in Shissa. He has been separated from Cyra. There is no way that Cyra could tell of events she was not there to witness so the author must turn to the third person narrator to tell these portions of the story.

After being captive for years, Akos is reunited with his sister when he is dropped by some unknown people at a hospital in Shissa. Akos is unable to remember what he might have said to Ryzek about Ori but he knows that he had tried to steel himself not to give away any information that would cause him to be labeled as a traitor to his country. It is the first time that Akos has been around Cisi, his sister, since her current gift came into full power. She has the ability to make people feel at ease. It is only around Akos that she can cry because that act would keep people from feeling comfortable around her. She can cry when she is near Akos because his gift makes other people's gifts not work.

Since the Shotet invade Shissa soon after Akos is dropped there, one wonders if, perhaps, this was a setup. Ryzek may have arranged Akos to be dropped believing that the chancellor would want to visit him at the hospital, especially since Akos has been in the hands of the enemy for years. The chancellor would not only want to find out what Akos might know about the Shotet, but also what he might have told them about the Thuvhe as well as his relationship with Ori when they were children. The Shotet are successful in their invasion only because they are able to capture Ori. They are not able to capture Isae, who is the chancellor.

Each character has his own motivation for going to the land of the Shotet. Isae wants to get her sister back. She employs Akos to go with her and help her even though he believes that taking to chancellor of Thuvhe to the land of their enemies would surely earn him the status of a traitor if anything were to happen to her there. Isae convinces Akos to do as she wants by telling him that if they can get Isae out, she will also arrange for them to get Eijeh out. While that is a good reason for Akos to go to Shotet, that is not



his only reason for wanting to go back there. He also plans to rescue Cyra from her brother even though Isae is hesitant that rescue is worthwhile.

Meanwhile, Cyra's worst nightmare has come true. She was always afraid that her brother would tell the Shotet people that it was she who killed their mother. Now that information is out. He has ordered her to die, and has taken the skin from one side of her face extending from her neck to her scalp. In her weakened condition it is uncertain if Cyra would be able to withstand any attack made against her.

In order to help his cause, Akos calls in a favor from the renegades. He hopes they will help in rescuing Cyra and Ori since he did kill Jorek's father as promised. At Jorek's house, Ara is pleased to see that Akos is wearing the ring that she gave him for killing her husband on a chain around his neck.

Discussion Question 1

Why do Isae's priorities not involve rescuing Cyra from her brother?

Discussion Question 2

Why is Cisi able to cry around her brother? Why does Akos think his sister's gift is a curse?

Discussion Question 3

Why do you think Akos was dropped at the hospital in Shissa? Do you think it was a setup to try to capture the Benesit sisters? Why or why not?

Vocabulary

lurid, malice, insensible, collaborating, familial, inaudible, mutilator, angst, hypothetically



Part 4: Chapters 29-31

Summary

In Chapter 29, narrated by Cyra, Cyra felt she had survived the night only because a stitching cloth had been applied to the wound on her face. She looked at the way the current ran over her skin instead of under it. The soldiers had told her that her heart stopped during the investigation. When it started again, the currents were outside her body. The pain was slightly more bearable.

She was being prepared to fight a challenger in the arena. Eijeh had brought her breakfast and Ryzek had come to taunt her about the challenge she would face. As Eijeh prodded Cyra to get her out of her cell, she discovered that she could barely walk a straight line. In the arena, it was Vas who waited for Cyra. When Ryzek held out a currentblade for Cyra, Cyra instead took hold of Ryzek's bare arm. Ryzek screamed and Eijeh pulled Cyra off him. Ryzek sent her into the arena with no weapon. Cyra was pleased because she knew the people had witnessed the way in which her brother was not giving her a fair chance to beat Vas.

As Cyra was trying to defend herself against Vas and get her hands on him so that she could use the current to kill him she noticed a shadow pass over the arena. She heard someone call her name and knew the figure in black was Akos. A rope dropped and pulled both her and Akos to safety. Inside the transport vehicle, Cyra asked why Akos had not gotten his brother. He told her it was because he had come for her.

In Chapter 30, the narrator changes to the third person narrator, inside the transport vehicle, Cisi said she had medical training and offered to help Akos care for Cyra's wounds. After Akos gave Cisi a painkiller and Cyra was asleep, Cisi removed the stitching material and cleaned the wound on Cyra's face and neck. She applied silverskin, a material that would adhere to the flesh, acting like a replacement for Cyra's skin. After they finished treating the other, more minor injuries, Cisi told Akos they would just have to wait for Cyra to wake up. Cisi told Akos she could see why he liked Cyra.

Cyra apologized to him when she woke from the painkiller. She was crying asking if the memory of the pain she had caused him was seared into his mind. She told him that she had thought that getting Akos out of Shotet was the only good thing she had ever done but he had come back. Akos told her that it was not the only good thing she had ever done before he kissed her.

In Chapter 31, Cyra again narrates this section of the novel. Cyra finally admitted to herself that she liked the way that Akos looked. She allowed him to help her walk into the main deck of the transport vehicle. Teka was piloting the ship. She directed it to sink through the ceiling of an abandoned apartment building until it was resting on ground level. When Cyra first met Isae face-to-face she was surprised to see her face was scarred by a Shotet currentblade. Cyra thanked Teka for coming after her and told her



she assumed the renegades wanted something in return, which Teka said they could discuss later.

Akos helped Cyra walk to the point that he saw she was in too much pain to go on. He told her she was being ridiculous as he picked her up and carried her to an apartment on the second floor with an intact bathroom. Even though they both admitted it was awkward, Cyra allowed Akos to help her undress for her bath. He rubbed the knot from her neck and even washed the arm scarred by all her kill marks. It was meaningful to Cyra because he knew how much pain she had caused but still loved her.

After Cyra was dressed, she settled in to talk to Isae. She did not know where they were keeping Ori but suggested the best time to get her back would be when they were moving her. She said Ryzek would probably plan a public execution intended to lure Isae to her sister. Isae asked Cyra if she could trust her or not since it seemed many of the stories she had heard about her were true. Cyra thought to herself that it seemed like Isae wanted a world that was simple where people were either all good or all bad. Cyra indicated she was going to kill Ryzek regardless of what Isae thought of her.

Away from Isae and Cisi, Cyra demonstrated to Akos how his friendship had changed her, shown by the way her currentgift had changed. It now traveled on top of her skin and did not hurt her as much. He called Cyra his dearest friend and his beloved before he kissed her.

As they kissed, there was a commotion in the apartment building surrounding them. Cyra saw a floater had torn through the cover of the hole in the roof of the building and was descending. It bore the Thuvhesit words "Passenger Craft # 6734" (389) on its underside.

Analysis

In this section, with Akos and Cyra back together again, the narration alternates between Cyra's first person voice and the third person narrator who focuses on Akos.

Cyra and Akos finally acknowledge the relationship that has been growing between them since the first time they saw each other. Akos expresses his affection for Cyra in both actions and words. He goes back to the Shotet arena and rescues Cyra just as she is about to be killed by Vas. After he rescues her, he takes care of wounds and helps comfort her even though she is feeling a pain that his touch cannot take away. When they are safely on the craft, Cyra criticizes Akos for not having rescued Eijeh even though he was so close and asks why he did not rescue him that Akos tells her "Because I came for you, you idiot" (367).

Cyra's acknowledgement of her affection for Akos comes in a different way. She had fantasized about him before but did not realize how much he meant until she saw that their relationship had the power to change her. Her currentgift changed when she decided that she had the power to keep the current from Akos. Holding all the pain to herself stopped her heart. It had started again on its own but the current traveled over



her body instead of under her skin. It gives her less pain and she has discovered that she can control the current. Cyra credits this change to a change within herself, a change she believes was brought about by her relationship with Akos.

Cyra observes that Isae wants a world where people are either good or evil. This appears to be a fact about Isae because she questions Akos in the hospital if she can trust him. Later, she asks Cyra the same question. Cyra has lived long enough to realize that the world and its people are not that simple. She tells Isae that it does not matter if Isae believes she can trust her or not, Cyra intends to kill her brother one way or the other.

Isae's need to know if a person can be trusted or not seems to stem from an idea that if a person is good or trustworthy in her eyes, they will do what she wants. If not, they will work in opposition to her desires. Cyra's response to Isae that it does not matter if she is trustworthy or not, she still intends to pull Ryzek limb from limb indicates that Cyra's innate goodness or evilness does not matter in the case they are discussing, Cyra plans to kill her brother regardless if her motivation is to help Isae or if it to follow her own desires.

Cyra believes that Ryzek made a mistake when he set her to fight Vas with no weapon. She had embarrassed him by grabbing Ryzek's bare arm in front of an arena full of his supporters and making him scream from the pain it caused him. It was because Cyra embarrassed him that Ryzek set her to fight Vas with no weapon. Even though this lack of a weapon increases the certainty that Cyra will be killed since Vas is immune to the pain from her current gift, Cyra is pleased by Ryzek's actions. She knows she has uncovered her brother's weakness and has made him give Vas an unfair advantage over her. If nothing else, she knows the people have seen the way Ryzek has acted and the way he has treated her.

The author uses a variety of literary techniques to enliven this section of the novel. For instance Cyra describes how her brother "had Vas cut my skin away from my body like the rind from a fruit" (359) when he declared Cyra should die by "nemhalzak" (359) which requires the taking of skin as a trophy and allowing others to challenge Cyra in the arena until she dies. By describing Vas cutting her skin as being like cutting the rind from a fruit, Cyra makes a comment on the way that her brother sees her as an object, not a person.

In another simile, Akos describes Cyra in this way: "Cyra, jagged as a serrated blade, strong as Deadened ice" (371). Even though he adores Cyra, he recognizes that it is her trials that have made her strong. He associates her with fighting and describes her in terms of a serrated knife blade. He also indicates that she is as strong as "Deadened ice" (371). This is an indication that he recognized how strong her composition was even before she did.

Akos comments on how difficult it was to heal to wound made on the mind as he says "There was no stitching cloth for the mind's wounds, real though they were," (372). He refers to stitching cloth, a material made to help speed the healing of physical wounds.



While it was relatively easy to use the modern advances of medicine to heal these types of wounds, it was not as easy to heal the mental wounds given to Cyra by her brother and her people. He indicates that mental injuries are just as real and just as painful as physical ones.

Discussion Question 1

Discuss the ways that Cyra and Akos express their affection for one another in this section of the novel. How are their expressions of affection reflections of their personalities? Use examples from the novel to support your answer.

Discussion Question 2

How does the author legitimize both physical and emotional/mental pain?

Discussion Question 3

Why is Isae unable to determine if Cyra is good or evil? Why should it matter since they both have the same goal?

Vocabulary

innovation, addled, delusional, gallant, consent, precipice, coursing, turbulent, rotund



Part 4: Chapters 32-33

Summary

In Chapter 32, a chapter narrated in the third person, it is Sifa, Cisi's and Akos' mother, who has landed her floater in the middle of the renegades' hideout. Akos felt angry at seeing his mother again. She stood in front of him and told him that she wished she could explain. When she asked if she had lost him, Akos' anger broke and he hugged her. Jorek invited Sifa to stay to eat with them and she told him that she had information given to her in visions that she thought would interest them. Sifa walked to Cyra and introduced herself. Akos described how Cyra had helped him get back home despite what it had cost her.

As Cyra, Akos, and Sifa talked over dinner, Akos saw the look he often saw in his mother's eyes when she realized that prophecies were coming true. Sifa reminded Akos she always knew who he would become and that she still loved him. He asked if he managed to save Eijeh. She was unable to tell him without a doubt, but said in the various visions she had seen, he had never stopped trying to free him.

Sifa told the renegades that she had seen three visions. In the first they left their hiding place early in the morning so they would not be spotted through the hole she made in the roof when she broke through it with her floater. In her second vision she had seen Ryzek presiding over a public ceremony in an amphitheater. Jorek indicated there was to be a ceremony honoring soldiers the following day. Her final vision is of Ori struggling against Vas in a cell made of glass.

As Sifa talked about her visions, Akos noticed she has taken a button out of her pocket. It was a button from one of his father's jackets. He realized that his mother was trying to manipulate him with the button, reminding him that his father was not where he was supposed to be because of Vas. He knew that she had picked the version of the future that she wanted, because the future was malleable, and was trying to steer them toward that version.

Although the renegades did not seem interested in helping Isae, Cyra told them they should attack Ryzek while he was in the arena with Ori because he was holding the execution to prove that he could defy his fate. Killing him then would take away his triumph. She said she would take charge by challenging Ryzek to fight her in the arena. Cyra proposed that while she was distracting Ryzek, Akos and Isae would go to the jail to free Ori.

In Chapter 33, a chapter that returns to Cyra's first person point of view, Cyra cried when she saw herself in the mirror and realized that it was Ryzek, her brother, who had mutilated her. Akos walked up behind her. She asked him if she was ugly. He replied by asking her what she thought. Even though she was not completely sold, she decided her scar was a symbol of her strength.



Akos showed his concern because Cyra had told him that she planned to kill Ryzek. Even though he knew that he did not have the right, he asked Cyra to spare Ryzek's life for Eijeh's sake. He told Cyra that he felt Eijeh was the way he was because he had refused to let Ryzek kill him. Cyra had never thought that Akos believed he was responsible for what happened to Eijeh.

Later that night, when no one else was awake, Cyra noticed Sifa sneak out of the building. Cyra followed her. She said she wished that Sifa could just tell her what she should do. Sifa said it was not that easy. Even though fates were certain, the futures leading to them sometimes changed. She explained that when the oracles had last met, she had been told her job was to "ensure that Ryzek leads Shotet for as little time as possible" (412). She said that she had been tempted to sacrifice the greater good for her family's safety.

Cyra did learn from Sifa that Yma Zetsyvis' maiden name was Surukta, the same as Zosita and Teka. Cyra left Sifa and walked to Yma's house. She told Yma she realized she was part of the revolt because of her relationship to Teka and Zosita. Cyra had determined that the only reason that Yma was able to stay close to Ryzek was because she knew it was the only way she could participate in the revolt. Yma explained that Uzul had sacrificed himself. He suffered with Q900X and would not take the medicine for it because it violated his religious beliefs. Cyra shared with Yma that the renegades would be moving against Ryzek the next day. She gave Yma a vial to pour into Ryzek's calming tonic the following morning. Yma agreed to help.

Analysis

When Akos is reunited with his mother, he learns some things about her that help him understand why she acts as she does. He realizes that she uses the visions she sees to manipulate the future to become the one she wants. As she is telling the group, including Akos and Cyra, the visions that she has seen Akos notices that his mother is rubbing a button in her hand. He recognizes it as a button that came from his father's jacket. He recognizes that his mother is using the button as a way to manipulate her.

Cyra finally puts together why Yma has been trying to get close to Ryzek even though he ordered her husband and her daughter killed. Yma indicates that Uzul had known that he was going to die of a disease and sacrificed himself for the cause. Perhaps, they thought that it would work against Ryzek if people knew that he had died because of Ryzek's cruelty. Yma wanted to get close to Ryzek not because she liked him but because she despised him. It turns out she and Zosita were sisters. Teka, from whom Ryzek took an eye because her mother was teaching school children forbidden languages, is Yma's niece. When Cyra approaches Yma the night before the renegades are going to attack Ryzek, she convinces Yma to put a vial of poison in Ryzek's drink in the morning before the celebration in the arena.

Cyra works as a negotiator as she explains to the renegades why it would be a benefit to them to help free Ori, even though they do not seem interested in helping the Thuvhe



chancellor's sister. Cyra tells them that Ryzek will be attempting to make a big production of Ori's execution. By interrupting the ceremony, they could embarrass Ryzek in what he would think was going to be his proudest hour.

Later, Cyra and Akos discuss whether or not Ryzek should be killed. Akos wants him left alive to help restore Eijeh's memories but Cyra wants to kill him in the arena in front of his loyal subjects.

By allowing Cyra to decide for herself if she thinks she is ugly after Ryzek's mutilation of her, Akos keeps her from judging her worth based on her appearance. He makes her look at herself without prejudice by asking her what she thinks of herself. She realizes she does not think she is ugly and sees her scars as a new symbol of her strength. Akos agrees with her assessment. He tells her that his act of kissing her so often should show to her that he does not think she is unattractive.

These chapters give the reader greater insight into the differences between fates and futures and Sifa's role in both these prophecies. Sifa explains fates and futures to Cyra in this way: "A fate is something that happens no matter what version of the future I see," she said. "Your brother would not have wasted his time in trying to evade his fate if he had known that to be true, undoubtedly" (412). It has already been noted that Sifa's job, as told to her by the Assembly, was to make sure that Ryzek was the leader of the Shotet for the shortest amount of time possible. Cyra indicates to Sifa that she believes she should have thought of the futures of her sons more closely when deciding which version of the future should come true. Sifa describes herself as being "I am a servant of fate," she said. "I do not have the luxury of partiality" (412). She appears slightly less heartless when she tells Cyra that she has been tempted many times to follow her own heart instead of doing what was best for the greater good.

Discussion Question 1

Given the information that Sifa shares with Cyra about her job as an oracle in this section of the novel, do you feel any differently about how Sifa has treated her family? Explain your reasoning.

Discussion Question 2

Why do Akos and Cyra disagree whether Ryzek should be killed in the arena? Why does Akos want Ryzek alive? Why does Cyra want him dead?

Discussion Question 3

How does Cyra encourage the renegades to help rescue Ori? Why do they agree to do so only when it becomes a matter of being able to attack Ryzek at the same time?

Vocabulary

irrefutable, vestiges, fervor, ardent, amphitheater, rhetorical, placate, partiality, aberration, taunting, placid, leverage, vengeance, atonement



Part 4: Chapters 34-39

Summary

In Chapter 34, which is told from Akos' point of view, inside the amphitheater, Cyra disguised herself in a cloak with a hood to go into the arena. Cisi helped Akos and Teka take down the guard at the prison door quietly by using her gift of ease to make the man drink one of Akos' potions. Once inside, Isae ran along with corridor of cells when she came back, Akos knew she was going to tell him that Ori was not there.

In Chapter 35, told from Cyra's point of view, Cyra joined the group of soldiers walking into the arena. Inside, Ryzek stared at her when he recognized her. She told Ryzek she had come to challenge him to the arena. She accused him of taking her rank away because he did not want anyone to know how strong she actually was. She taunted him by telling him that by not accepting the challenge, people would realize how weak he was.

Ryzek said the he would fight Cyra but Cyra sensed by his smile that he had another plan. She noticed he took his time coming to the floor of the arena and commented on it. When pointed out that she was not meeting him, she told him she was waiting for the poison she had put in his drink to go into affect. Ryzek was obviously shocked. She told him that she knew that the people had not been gathered to witness the honoring of soldier, but the execution of Ori.

In Chapter 36, told from Akos' point of view, Ori and Isae both thought Sifa had made a mistake with her vision of Ori in the prison but Akos realized no mistake had been made. He told them he thought Ori was somewhere near the arena and that they had to find her. At that moment, Vas entered the jail. Cisi backed against the jail wall as she faced the man who had killed her father. Because Vas was so much strong than he, Vas had almost killed him when Akos put his hand on a sliver of Vas' skin exposed by his armor. While Vas was in shock from the pain Akos could deliver to him, Akos slipped his knife in. He stayed with the man until he was sure that he was dead.

In Chapter 37, told from Cyra's point of view, Ryzek spoke to Cyra using Eijeh's voice. Cyra realized the focus of the crowd had changed. She followed their glances to where Eijeh stood on the platform with Ori. Ryzek introduced her as the chancellor of Thuvhe. Cyra wondered if Ryzek really did not know Ori was the twin sister of the chancellor. Ryzek said he would let Cyra decide when Ori would die. If he were to fall because of the poison she had given him, Ori would die as well. Cyra knew that she could not save Ori and the rest of them as well. When Ryzek fell toward her, she shoved a knife in, at the same time, Eijeh pushed a currentblade into Ori's gut.

In Chapter 38, told from Akos' point of view, Ori said "Bye Eij" (446) just after they fell onto the platform together. Isae got her hands around Eijeh's throat but he did not fight against her. Akos asked her to stop. Isae did when she saw that her sister was reaching



toward her. The sky dimmed as the renegade ship hovered over them. Isae and Cisi carried Ori's body to the ship while Akos got Eijeh. Cyra called for his help in getting Ryzek as well. Akos indicated she should leave him but when Cyra showed him that her blade was clean, he realized Ryzek was not dead, just drugged. He knew that Cyra had saved Ryzek for him.

In Chapter 39, told from Cyra's point of view. Isae accused Akos of knowing that Eijeh had been brainwashed and was dangerous. Akos said he would never have dreamed Eijeh would have hurt Ori. Teka, meanwhile, noticed that Ryzek was alive. Everyone looked at Cyra. Isae was angry. Cyra said the last chance for Eijeh to be restored was for Ryzek to be alive. Cyra tried to convince Isae she had chosen the path that would save the most lives. Cyra warned Teka and the others that if Ryzek were killed before she was ready for him to be dead, she would stop helping the renegades. Teka admitted that Cyra had done the right thing, even though Isae did not believe it. Cisi went to talk to Isae. Both Eijeh and Ryzek were locked into cells in the ship's hold.

After they were locked up, Cyra went to talk to Sifa in the navigation deck. Sifa told Cyra that Eijeh was catatonic and that she had not idea what had caused the catatonia. Cyra told Sifa she suspected Sifa had known how things would really go, that Akos would have to face Vas and that they would not be able to save Ori. Sifa said her husband's death needed to be avenged. She thought Akos would understand that but Cyra suggested that Akos would only understand that his mother had made him kill again. She went to check on Akos but before she left, Sifa thanked her for showing mercy to Akos by keeping Eijeh alive.

Analysis

The point of view for each chapter in this section of the novel alternates between Cyra and Akos. The reader knows what is happening in the prison below the arena and in the arena as Cyra faces her brother.

Just as Akos had suspected, his mother has been manipulating her visions in order to bring about the version of the future that she wants. For Sifa, it is more important for her husband's death to be avenged than it is for Ori to be rescued. In fact, her need for her husband to be avenged surpasses even her compassion for her son. She puts him in a position where he might be killed in order to give her the revenge she desires.

As the action unfolds in this section it is apparent that each of the characters has different motivations for being in Shotet. Cyra wants to kill her brother. Isae wants to save her sister. Akos hopes to save his brother but cannot fully do so unless Ryzek is alive. The renegades, as a force, want Ryzek taken out of power. They all must depend on the versions of the visions that Sifa gives them to best know how to achieve their goals. Because Sifa is manipulating her visions, she does not give the renegades a clear picture of what they are up against in the arena. For this reason their attack on Ryzek does not go as planned.



Cyra is the one forced to make the decision about how things should go in the arena. She knows that if she tries to save Isae's sister, she will basically lose the cause for the renegades and perhaps Ori will be killed anyway. She chooses instead to hit the Shotet people where it will hurt most, by making them believe that their leader is dead.

There is misleading information given in Chapter 38, one of the chapters told from Akos' point of view. From where he stands, Cyra has made her attack on Ryzek look so real that he believed Ryzek was dead: "She had done it. She had killed her brother, and the last hope for Eijeh's restoration" (446). The reader believes Akos' point of view as well until Cyra shows him that her knife is not bloody. She did not actually use it on her brother.

The strength of the female characters is highlighted in this section of the novel as Cyra stands up to her brother and Ori bravely faces her own death. Akos describes the way that Cyra walks into the arena to face her brother. He knows what pain she has been through but he says "to watch her walk, with that straight spine, it was like nobody had ever tried to peel her apart" (421). Akos refers to the physical damage that Vas and Ryzek did to Cyra in the arena but he also refers to the emotional wounds her brother has given her over the years. Despite the abuse, Cyra is still strong and self assured. In the same way, Cyra notices the way that Ori bravely faces her own death: "when our eyes locked across that substantial distance, she didn't look like someone who was afraid for her life. She looked like someone who knew what was coming and intended to meet it with a straight back and a steady look" (444).

A mystery is introduced when Ryzek indicates that Ori is the chancellor of Thuvhe. Cyra is shocked when she hears Ryzek call Ori such and wonders if Ryzek really thinks she is the chancellor or if he is lying to make his people believe he has overcome the Thuvhe chancellor so easily.

The author continues to use literary devices in her writing. Personification, for instance, is used in Cyra's thoughts as she stood in the arena before her brother: "If my body ached, it didn't mention it" (434). Cyra describes her relationship with her body as if she is so close to it that it would tell her if she was hurting. In this case, however there is no suggestion that she is in pain despite the severe injury and beating she took the day before. Another literary device used in this section is the similes that are used to describe Vas when Akos faces off against him in the prison. "Vas's eyes were like stamped metal, his arms were like twisted rope" (441). Everything about Vas is hard and impenetrable. With eye "like stamped metal" (441) there is no room for compassion or mercy. His arms are like twisted rope, also an image that indicates that there is no softness or mercy in him.

Discussion Question 1

What does it mean if Ryzek really believed that Ori was the chancellor of Thuvhe? What does it say about him if he was lying about Ori's identity?



Discussion Question 2

Does it surprise you that Cyra finds a way to keep Ryzek alive so he can restore Eijeh's memories? Why or why not? Why are the others, including Isae, angry because Ryzek is still alive even though he has been captured?

Discussion Question 3

Discuss Eijeh's strange catatonia after he kills Ori. Why do you think this is significant?

Vocabulary

ruse, fortitude, sauntered, improvising, perpetual, adornments, antidote, implicit, catatonic



Part 4: Chapters 40-42

Summary

In Chapter 40, told from the third person point of view, Akos remembered how he had promised his brother he would get him out as they walked into Noavek manor together. He had kept his promise even though he'd had to drag his brother out.

In the present, Akos scrubbed himself at the sink in the hold of the ship and sobbed. Cyra found him hanging onto the sink by his armpits and asked if he was crying about Vas. He nodded and she did not try to comfort him, just told him they would get him some clean clothes. She recited to him a line of a poem that stated "The heavy heart knows that justice is done" (459) Akos indicated that was one way to look at it but Cyra suspected he was feeling guilty and loathing himself because he had wanted to kill Vas. He also knew that by allowing Ryzek to live, Cyra had to deal with her personal pain longer. She had also opened herself up to Isae's hate and the anger of the renegades. Akos told Cyra that he liked her the way she was, that she did not need to change. She kissed him until Teka hollered at them that they were not in a private place.

In Chapter 41, narrated by Cyra, Cyra went to check on her brother in the hold. Ryzek was awake and accused Cyra of being a coward. Cyra warned him that she had him in a position where she could be as unkind to him as he had been to her. Ryzek brought up the fact Cyra had been unable to unlock the door to his room and told Cyra it was because she did not have Noavek blood. Cyra was shocked and her emotions turbulent as Ryzek said he had other secrets he had not yet told her. She accused him of being desperate and pushed closed the vent through which they had been talking so that she could not longer see him. She heard his voice as he told her that Lazmet Noavek, the man she had believed was her father, was still alive.

In Chapter 42, which returns to a third person point of view, Akos learned that his brother was awake, but was staring blankly. She suggested Ori had done something to him before he killed her. Akos felt some peace because his family was back together and all of the men who had killed his father and kidnapped him and his brother were gone.

Isae came out of the galley, appearing more composed and asked Sifa to take them to Assembly headquarters. She said they were going there so they could see that she was still alive and so that Ryzek and Eijeh could be put into real jail cells. After Isae went back to the galley, Sifa told those gathered that she had seen war in every version of the future she had been shown. Cisi pointed out that for the moment, they were all together. Akos was happy to know that sometimes a person could get things back.



Analysis

Cyra's strength is shown in the way that she comforts Akos after she discovers how upset he is about killing Vas. She does not try to say anything that will belittle his pain or make him feel better about what he had done. He describes her as being a person who "fell on the hardest, surest truth, again and again, like a woman determined to crush her own bones, knowing they would heal stronger" (457-458). What Cyra does say to Akos, after she gets him dressed in fresh clothes is to recite a line of poetry she has translated into Thuvhe. "The heavy heart knows justice has been done" (458). In this line of poetry, Cyra both acknowledges that Akos is not proud of himself even though he has avenged his father's death, but also that Vas' death is a form of justice, even if it was one that Akos did not wish to have to do.

When Ryzek wakes, he gives Cyra two pieces of shocking information. First, he tells her that she does not have Noavek blood. They do not have the same father. This is why Cyra was unable to unlock the door to Noavek's personal quarters. Cyra has to wonder why she was passed off as a member of the Noavek family for so long and why she was never told about her bloodlines. Ryzek also tells Cyra that although they had been told that Lazmet had been killed during a scavenge, he was actually still alive. These bombshells work as a lead in to the second novel expected to follow *Carve the Mark*.

Eijeh's situation also leads the reader to wonder what will happen in the next novel in this series. He has become strangely catatonic after his time with Ori. Isae plans to have Eijeh locked up when they reach the Assembly. Because he is the one who physically killed Ori, regardless of his state of mind, Isae blames Eijeh for her death and apparently does not intend to go easy on him.

The story does end on a positive note as Akos realizes that he can get some things back that he thought had been taken away from him. In this case, Akos has gotten back his mother, sister, and brother. They are all together for a short while, even though there is uncertainty about what might happen when they reach Assembly headquarters. Despite all the pain he feels he has caused and the people he has killed, Akos has kept his promise to his father that he would bring Eijeh home. Even though he had to drag Eijeh out of Shotet, he did succeed in bringing him home.

Discussion Question 1

What does it mean that Lazmet Noavek is still alive? How is it significant that Cyra is not of the Noavek bloodline?

Discussion Question 2

How might Isae's desires to get revenge for Isae's death cause Akos and Cyra trouble in getting Eijeh's memories back to him?



Discussion Question 3

What is your opinion of Sifa's decision to force her son to avenge her husband's death? Do you think she was right in manipulating circumstances so that her son would have to kill? Why or why not?

Vocabulary

languid, volatile, turbulent, delusional, persistence



Characters

Cyra Noavek

Cyra is one of the main characters and the narrator for a good portion of this novel. She is the sister of Ryzek and daughter of Ylira. She had always believed she was the daughter of Lazmet but after Cyra and the renegades have kidnapped Ryzek, Ryzek tells Cyra that the reason her blood would not unlock the doors to his private room was because she did not have any Noavek blood. This would indicate that Cyra had a different father than Ryzek.

It is after Ryzek steals a memory from his sister that she develops her current gift. Ryzek had told her that she deserved to suffer just as much as he did before he took one of her favorite memories. After she developed the black currents running under her skin that gave her pain and hurt those who tried to touch her. Ryzek never came near his sister again.

Even though he never willingly touched his sister, he did use Cyra as an instrument of torture against his enemies and those he wished to interrogate. Even though Cyra was fed up with the way he treated her, she was afraid to disobey. She thought her brother would tell the people that she had caused her mother's death, even though that death had been accidental. Cyra had thrown a tantrum because she did not want to go to another doctor. She had put all of her force into pushing current toward her mother and had killed her. Cyra was chilled because her father had carved a kill mark in her arm after her mother's death. She knew he was angry but that he was also proud of her.

Cyra keeps a record on her arm of the people whom she has killed and those she has tortured while she was in service to her brother. She sees no way of escaping her life or the pain of her gift until Ryzek gives her Akos. Akos can interrupt the current; therefore, he can bring Cyra relief from her pain. Akos also teaches Cyra how to make sleeping potions and pain potions to help her quality of life.

It is after Cyra meets Akos that she begins to change. She is surprised that he accepts her and forgives her for letting her brother bully her into hurting others. He convinces her to stop letting Ryzek use her. Eventually Cyra turns completely away from her brother and helps a group of renegades trying to take him from power. When Cyra's actions are discovered Ryzek tells the Shotet people that Cyra is not only a traitor but also is the one who killed their mother. He orders Vas to take a slice of skin from Cyra's throat and scalp as a trophy. Ryzek then offers anyone who wishes to challenge Cyra in the arena. She has just begun a fight with Vas when Akos rescues her.

Cyra surprises herself with her ability to change. Just after she was identified as a traitor, Ryzek set her up with Akos, who had been weakened by hunger and tried to make Cyra kill him with her current. Instead of allowing the current to flow into Akos, Cyra held it back into herself, knowing that the pain she had endured all of her life had



given her the strength she needed to handle it. The pain was enough that it stopped her heart. When her heart began again on its own, the currents were running outside Cyra's skin instead of underneath. She believed this change in the currents was a sign of the way she had changed mentally and emotionally because of Akos.

Cyra is with the renegades when they go to Shotet to rescue Ori, the kidnapped sister of the new chancellor for Thuvhe. Although Ori is killed, Cyra manages to bring Ryzek with them alive. Even though she had wanted to kill her brother, she keeps him alive for Akos. Ryzek is the only way that Akos' brother, Eijeh can have his memories restored and returned to the brother that Akos remembers.

Akos Kereseth

Akos Kereseth is the youngest of the Kereseth children. He is the son of Aoseh and Sifa Kereseth, the younger brother of Eijeh and Cisi. He is fated to die in service to the Noavek family.

After the members of the Assembly announced the fates of the favored families, the Shotet attacked the Kereseth house. They killed Aoseh and kidnapped Akos and Eijeh. Because he could interrupt the current, Akos ended up serving Cyra. His touch could stop her pain.

With his gentle, forgiving nature, Akos soon endeared himself to Cyra. He realized that he, too, was falling in love with her. The first began working together when they realized they had things the other wanted. Cyra taught Akos how to fight so he could free his brother, Eijeh, while Akos taught Cyra how to make potions from hushflower that could help her sleep and ease her pain without having to have him with her all of the time.

Akos joined the ranks of a renegade faction in Shotet when Jorek Kuzar approached him and asked him to kill his father, a man who had participated in Akos' kidnapping and was hurting Jorek's mother. Akos agreed to do so because Jorek promised to help Akos in getting his brother free.

After Cyra was caught trying to help the renegades kill Ryzek, Akos was weakened by being forced to fast and then tortured with Cyra's currentgift. It was believed he would give Ryzek information about the chancellor who had been fated to rule Thuvhe. Akos does not remember if he gave Ryzek any information or not but he wakes up in a hospital in Shissa with his sister, his friend from Thuvhe and her twin sister, the new chancellor.

Akos convinces the renegades to help him rescue Cyra from Ryzek. Together, the two, along with the renegades, plot a plan to rescue Ori from the Shotet. Cyra wants to kill Ryzek but Akos begs her not to do so because he is the only one who can return Eijeh's memories to him.

In the melee in Shotet when the renegades try to rescue Ori, Akos comes face to face with Vas. He is forced to kill the man. His actions avenge his father's death, the



outcome that Sifa had wanted from the encounter. Akos is shocked that even though Cyra had the chance to kill her brother in the arena, she only pretended to do so. She kept Ryzek alive for Akos because she knew how much Akos wanted to see his brother restored to normal.

Even though Akos realizes that his mother has manipulated her versions of the future to bring about the future she wants, he is able to forgive her for the time being. He feels somewhat relieved all of the men who took part in killing his father, and kidnapping himself and Eijeh are dead. He is also pleased to discover that his family has been returned to him, if only for just a little while.

Ryzek Noavek

Ryzek Noavek is the leader of the Shotet nation after the death of his mother and father. He is thought to be the brother of Cyra Noavek. Although Ryzek was once a sensitive child, his father has ruined him by making him cruel and vicious.

Ryzek has the currentgift of being able to trade memories with other people. He brings out Cyra's currentgift, the current running beneath her skin that causes her pain, before its time. It was the last time that Ryzek ever touched Cyra willingly.

Ryzek is the one who ordered the capture of Akos and Eijeh, even though he did not go to help with the kidnapping. He wanted Akos because Akos was fated to die in the service of the Noavek family. He most wanted Eijeh because he was the rising oracle. He believed Eijeh could help him change his fate, which was that he would fall to one of the Benesit sisters, a member of one of the fated Thuvhe families. When Eijeh did not willingly tell Ryzek his visions, Ryzek began trading memories with him to make him more compliant.

Ryzek used his sister as a way to torture his enemies and then to kill people until she got tired of being used as a scourge and executioner. Ryzek had given Akos to Cyra as a gift because Akos had the ability to interrupt Cyra's pain. Ryzek had believed it would make Cyra more useful to him. Instead, Cyra was affected by Akos and his kindness.

After Ryzek learns that Cyra no longer wants to cooperate with him, he begins forcing her to cooperate with his attempts to use her as an interrogation tool by hurting Akos. When she is caught trying to help the renegades with their assassination attempt, Ryzek strips her of her title and has Vas use a knife to skin her from throat to scalp, mutilating her and almost causing her death.

Ryzek calls the people of Shotet together the next day under the cover of honoring his soldiers, but he really wants to have a crowd to witness his execution of Ori, whom he says is the chancellor of Thuvhe.

After Ryzek is captured by the renegades, he tells Cyra that she is not the daughter of Lazmet Noavek and that she has no Noavek blood. He also surprises her by telling her that Lazmet is still alive.



Sifa Kereseth

Sifa Kereseth is the mother of Akos, Cisi, and Eijeh. She was the wife of Aoseh Kereseth who was killed by the Shotet. Even though Sifa is the sitting oracle of Thuvhe, she does not warn her family of the coming attack by the Shotet. Akos spends many years angry with his mother for not warning her family members of the coming tragedy or trying to protect them from what was going to happen to them.

After Sifa reunites with Akos in the hollowed out apartment building with the renegades, Akos quickly loses his anger with his mother. He tries to ignore his anger but as he listens to her visions and sees what is happening, he realizes that she is picking and choosing her visions to reach the end she desires. Additionally, Sifa pulls out a button that Akos knows belonged to his father. He recognizes that she is using in an attempt to manipulate him and asks her to stop.

During a discussion between Sifa and Cyra after the failed attempt to rescue Ori from the Shotet, Cyra discovers that Sifa had directed Akos into the prison even though she knew that Ori might not be there at the same time because she wanted Akos to avenge his father's death. Cyra was critical of Sifa because she had forced her son to kill, an action Cyra knew that Akos hated more anything else.

Eijeh Kereseth

Eijeh Kereseth is the eldest son of Aoseh and Sifa Kereseth. He is kidnapped by the Shotet because he is fated to be the rising oracle for that planet. Ryzek wants to use Eijeh's gift as a way to change his own fate.

Because Eijeh is at first uncooperative with Ryzek's plans, Ryzek begins trading memories with Eijeh. Eventually Eijeh becomes cooperative with Ryzek and no longer has to be kept locked up. He stays with Ryzek willingly and tells him his visions willingly.

After Eijeh spends time with Ori in the jail, he is different. When Ori is killed, Eijeh falls unconscious. He is still unconscious, in some sort of catatonic state, at the end of the novel. It is uncertain what he caused his mental state or what it will take to wake him from it.

Orieve "Ori" Rednails aka Orieve Benesit

As a child, Orieve Benesit was known as Ori Rednails to the members of the Kereseth family. She is the twin sister of Isae, the fated chancellor of Thuvhe.

Ori and Eijeh were best friends as teens. On the same day that Akos and Eijeh were kidnapped from their home, Ori was taken from Thuvhe by her aunt. Akos did not see her again until the news announcement that the fated chancellor of Thuvhe had taken her place. It was not until that time that he knew Ori had a twin sister.



Ori and Akos are reunited when Akos is dropped off at the hospital in Shissa. When the Shotet storm this hospital, Ori is captured. She is killed by Eijeh in the arena when Cyra and Akos attempt to save her. It is suggested that Ori had some strange effect on Eijeh because he became unconscious when Ori died.

Isae Benesit

Isae Benesit is the younger of the Benesit twins. Ori is her older sister. Isae is the one fated to rule Thuvhe as chancellor. Isae's currentgift gives her the ability to know if a person is telling the truth. Isae is different from her twin because she bears scars from a Shotet currentblade.

When Isae's twin sister is kidnapped by the Shotet, Isae insists on being taken to Voa to help rescue her. When Ori is killed despite their efforts, Isae is grief stricken and lashes out at Cyra for allowing her sister to be killed. Isae directs Sifa to take them to Assembly headquarters where she would decide what to do with Eijeh, Ryzek, and Cyra. It is clear that Isae believes Eijeh is a traitor and that he killed her sister. Isae has no intention of allowing him to have his real memories restored. She also indicates she will not be kind to Cyra.

Ylira Noavek

Ylira Noavek is the mother of Cyra and Ryzek. Ylira was killed by Cyra when Cyra threw a fit of anger because she did not want to go to another doctor. In her temper tantrum, Cyra had shoved all of her current against her mother, probably not realizing that it would cause her mother's death.

Because Ylira was well loved by the people, Cyra lived in fear that her brother would tell that it was Cyra's fault that Ylira was dead. He had previously told Cyra they could have no relationship because of what she had done to their mother. After Cyra was caught trying to help the renegades kill Ryzek, Ryzek told the people that Cyra was responsible for Ylira's death.

Uzul Zetsyvis

Uzul Zetsyvis is the husband of Yma and father of Lety. Ryzek uses Cyra to interrogate Uzul after a dinner party at Noavek manor. During the interrogation, Uzul admits to having tried to contact the rumored exile colony of Shotet to get away from Ryzek's cruelty. Several days after the interrogation and being subjected to Cyra's currentgift, Uzul hangs himself. The next time Lety sees Cyra she makes it clear to Cyra that she believes it was Cyra who caused her father's death.

Cyra later learns from Yma that Uzul had contracted Q900X. Because of his religious beliefs, Uzul would not take the medicines to help the disease. Knowing he would die anyway, Uzul had acted as a sacrifice for the cause.



Yma Zetsyvis

Yma Zetsyvis is the wife of Uzul and mother of Lety. Yma is the sister of Zosita. After her husband and daughter are ordered executed by Ryzek, Yma woos Ryzek and becomes a trusted companion. However, Yma is working with the renegades and does not like Ryzek. She is angry with Ryzek because of what he did to her niece and nephew.

The day before the renegades plan to attack Ryzek Cyra goes to Yma asking for her assistance. She gives Yma a vial of liquid to put in Ryzek's drink that morning. Yma had believed the potion would kill Ryzek, but Cyra intended only for it to make him go to sleep.

Zosita Surukta

Zosita Surukta is Teka's mother. She is a Shotet exile. She is the one who agrees to take responsibility for the renegade attack against Ryzek on the Sojourn ship. Zosita explains to Cyra that it will be believable that she would have attacked Ryzek because she had been exiled for teaching school children how to speak Othyrian. Even though Zosita believes it is important for her to take responsibility for her actions, she lies and does not tell Ryzek any information about the rest of the renegades. Cyra is devastated when Ryzek makes her use her current on Zosita during the interrogation. Zosita is later executed in the arena.

Suzao Kuzar

Suzao Kuzar is one of the Shotet soldiers who kidnapped Akos and Eijeh from their home in Thuvhe after the fates of the fated families were announced by the Assembly. Because Suzao remembers Akos as being a weak boy on the day of the kidnapping, Suzao is not afraid to challenge Akos to a fight in the arena. He does not know that Akos and Jorek have set him up for a challenge that will prove deadly for Suzao. Jorek wants his father dead because he has been hurting his mother. In exchange for his father's life, Jorek offers Akos help in freeing Eijeh.

Vas Kuzar

Vas Kuzar is one of Ryzek's most trusted soldiers. Vas was one of the soldiers who helped with the kidnapping of Akos and Eijeh. Vas was responsible for killing Akos' father.

Vas has a currentgift that gives him the inability to feel pain. For this reason, he is the only one who can handle Cyra without being hurt by the currents that run through her body. Vas is killed by Akos when Akos comes face-to-face with him in the prison under the arena while Akos was looking for Ori.



Jorek Kuzar

Jorek Kuzar is the son of Suzao and Ara Kuzar. He surprises Akos by asking Akos to spar with him. After he has determined that Akos is a talented enough fighter that he might stand a chance against Suzao, Jorek asks Akos to kill his father. In exchange, Jorek promises to help Akos. The reader later learns that Jorek is a member of the renegade fighting against Ryzek. Jorek wanted his father dead because he was hurting his mother.

Lety Zetsyvis

Lety Zetsyvis is the daughter of Uzul and Yma. She is the one who calls out the fate of Ryzek in front of the crowds gathered to hear Ryzek's speech welcoming them to the sojourn. Pretending to be doing her a mercy, Ryzek allows Lety to fight for her life in the arena against Cyra. Instead of having the two fight with currentblades, Ryzek indicates to Cyra that he wants her to kill Lety using the power of the current inside her.

Teka Surukta

Teka Surukta is the daughter of Zosita. She is a member of the renegade force at work against Ryzek. Teka has only one eye because Ryzek took one of her eyes because of the crimes her mother committed. Teka is the one who tried to kill Cyra during the attack on the sojourn ship. She serves as Cyra's contact with the renegade group after Cyra's former tutor, Otega, identifies Teka as Cyra's would be killer.

Cisi Kereseth

Cisi is the only daughter of Aoseh and Sifa Kereseth. She has the currentgift of giving comfort to others. Cisi comes to visit Akos after he is dropped at the hospital in Shissa. During their time together Cisi and Isae become very close. Cisi is the only one whom Isae will allow to help her remove Ori from the arena after she is killed by Eijeh.

Lazmet Noavek

Lazmet Noavek is the father of Ryzek and is believed to be the father of Cyra. He works on hardening his son because Ryzek has a weak fate but mostly ignores Cyra. It is accepted that he was killed during a sojourn a short while after his wife died. After Cyra and the renegades have kidnapped Ryzek, Ryzek tells Cyra that Lazmet is still alive.

The Storyteller

During their trip outside Noavek manor during the opening days of the sojourn festival, Cyra takes Akos to visit a storyteller. The storyteller recognizes right away that Akos has



some Shotet blood in his ancestry. He then tells the story of the way the Thuvhe attacked Voa and kidnapped the children of Voa while the men were away.

Aoseh Kereseth

Aoseh Kereseth is the father of Cisi, Akos and Eijeh. He is the husband of Sifa. Aoseh's currentgift gives him the ability to break things as well as fix them. Aoseh is killed by Vas when the Shotet invade his house and kidnap both of his sons.

Otega

Otega is the woman who was once Cyra's tutor. After Cyra is attacked by a renegade, Cyra takes the knife of her attacker to Otega so that Otega can identify who tried to attack her. Otega takes Cyra to Teka's room and tells her that Teka was the woman who tried to kill her.

Dr. Dax Fadlan

Dr. Dax Fadlan is the Othyrian to whom Cyra's mother takes her for treatment for her currentgift. It is this doctor who suggests that Cyra's gift took the form that it did because Cyra believed that she should be punished and that others deserved to feel pain as well.

Kalmev Radix

Kalmev Radix is one of the Shotet soldiers who is waiting for Akos and his family on the day they return home after the fates are announced. He is the soldier whom Akos kills in the field behind his house on the same day as the kidnapping.

Tos

Tos works as the spokesperson for the renegades. Ryzek kills Tos when Tos is caught trying to free Akos from Noavek manor. Ryzek kills Tos on the same night the other renegades tried to kill Ryzek.

Ara Kuzar

Ara Kuzar is the wife of Suzao Kuzar and mother of Jorek. To thank Akos for killing her husband, a man who had been abusing her, Ara gave Akos the gift of a ring that bore her family's seal.



Symbols and Symbolism

Hushflower

The hushflower is the national flower of Thuvhe. The hushflower is a symbol of pain relief and calm because potions and teas brewed from this flower can be used as analgesics and sleeping medicines. Many of the religious Shotet, however, will not use hushflower because they believe it goes against their religious beliefs. It is not until Akos comes that Cyra is offered painkillers made with hushflower. She discovers the flower to be effective.

Currentstream

This currentstream is a symbol of the current, a power that gives the characters their currentgifts. This currentstream is visible in the sky as a stream that changes colors as it connects the planets in their universe. Although the Shotet people are supposed to follow the leading of the currentstream when deciding where they would go on their sojourn, Ryzek chooses to ignore this part of the ancient ritual and visits the planet he believes will best fulfill his needs in his quest to overcome his fate.

Feathergrass

The feathergrass is a symbol of the divide between the Shotet and Thuvhe. Both groups of people have stories about planting grass to protect themselves from the other group.

A Large Vial of Purple-Red Liquid

This vial of pain killer is symbolic of the beginnings of friendship between Cyra and Akos. Even though Cyra did not believe that Akos would be able to make her a pain killer that would help control her pain without undesirable side effects, Akos proves to her that he can do so. His promise to teach her how to brew the potion means that she would be able to provide her own pain relief without being so dependent on him.

Kill Mark

Kill marks are symbols of pain and suffering. It is a Shotet ritual that each individual keep a record of the lives they have taken as a series of slash mark scars on their arms. Cyra covers her kill marks with a wrist cuff because she is not proud of the kills she has committed while obeying the orders of her brother. Additionally, she had made marks on her arm for each of the people whom Ryzek had made her torture.



Cyra's Shadows

The shadows under Cyra's skin are symbolic of the currents there that cause her so much pain. Since Cyra's brother has used Cyra as a tool of torture for so many years, the shadows remind the Shotet people of what she is capable.

A Vial of Rainwater

Cyra gives this vial of rainwater to Akos after they finish the sojourn on Pitha. It is symbolic of his first trip to another planet.

A Ring

This ring that bears the crest of Ara Kuzar's family is given to Akos as a thank you for killing Suzao. It represents Ara's gratitude that Akos removed her life from danger because of her husband.

Shotet Armor

This Shotet armor symbolizes the might of a warrior. A person is allowed to wear this armor, made from the skin of an armored one, only if he is able to kill one of these huge beasts. Akos has earned a set of armor, unusual for a person not of Shotet lineage. He later admits to Cyra that he did not kill the beast in battle but instead came upon it sleeping and cut it so that it would bleed to death.

A Button

This button, that Sifa uses to try to manipulate Akos, is symbolic of Akos' father. Akos realizes his mother is drawing his attention to the button to remind him that his father was killed by Ryzek and his people.



Settings

The Kereseth House

It is from Akos Kereseth's home that he and his brother are kidnapped by the Shotet. Akos' father is killed there by the Shotet.

Hessa

The city of Hessa is where Akos lived until he was kidnapped by the Shotet.

Noavek Manor

Noavek manor is the house where Cyra grew up and lived with her family. It is to this mansion that Akos is brought to serve as a painkiller for Cyra.

The Weapons Hall

Ryzek uses the weapons hall of Noavek manor as a place to intimidate people and hold hearings for those who have disobeyed.

City of Voa

The city of Voa is the city in which Noavek manor is located. Cyra and Akos find themselves staying with renegades in the poorer part of the city of Voa after they have decided to actively take part in trying to overthrow Ryzek.

Urek

Urek is the Shotet name for the planet on which the Shotet and Thuvhe people live. It is on this planet that the bulk of the action takes place.

Shissa Hospital

Akos is dropped at the Shissa Hospital after Cyra is unsuccessful in getting any information about Isae, the new chancellor of Thuvhe, from Akos. Isae and her sister Ori meet with Akos at the Shissa Hospital to find out what he knows about the intents of the Shotet. While they are there, the Shotet invade the hospital and capture Ori.

Pitha

Pitha is the planet to which the Shotet travel for their scavenge.



Themes and Motifs

The Power of Fates

Since it is believed that the fates of the members of the fated families are unalterable, many of the characters live as prisoners to their fates. Akos' fate makes him believe that he will die a traitor to his country while Eijeh's left him open to manipulation by Ryzek. Ori and Isae also suffer because of their fates, though they bear them bravely. Ryzek is the character who is most oppressed by his fate. It is said that he will fall to one of the Benesit sisters, the chancellor of Thuvhe. However, Ryzek is willing to do whatever it takes to overcome his fate and prove that he is not weak.

Ryzek gives it his best try win over fate. He kidnaps Eijeh, the rising oracle of Thuvhe, in hopes that with Eijeh's visions of the future he can alter his fate. Ryzek even goes so far as to capture one of the Benesit sisters, believing she is the chancellor. He has her executed. However, the sisters are identical twins. To his misfortune, Ryzek has kidnapped and killed the wrong sister. He is unaware that the chancellor who willed his fate of being overthrown is still alive.

Akos is shocked when he hears his fate is to die in the service of the Noavek family. Even though his mother was an oracle and knew his fate, she had never told her son what lie in store for him. He learns his fate from Ryzek, the leader of the Shotet, after he is kidnapped from his home in Thuvhe and taken to that region. Because he has to ability to provide pain relief for Cyra, Ryzek's sister, Akos serves the family in that manner. The two become friends. At one point, Ryzek learns that Akos knew one of the Benesit sisters when they were children. He uses Cyra to try to get information out of Akos, but Akos refuses to help him. Akos believes that if he has to die in service to the Noaveks, he will at least not die as a traitor to his own country.

Like Akos, Eijeh had no idea what his fate held in store for him. He did not know that he was to follow his mother, the sitting oracle of Thuvhe, as the rising oracle of that region. When Ryzek kidnaps Eijeh because of his ability and tells him that he is fated to be an oracle, Eijeh has not yet begun seeing any visions. When he does begin to have visions, he is uncooperative with Ryzek until Ryzek begins trading memories with him, making Eijeh more like Ryzek than himself.

Ori and Isae Benesit live strange lives because of their fates. Because she is the sister of the chancellor, Ori is able to live a relatively normal life in Thuvhe where she is a friend of Eijeh until the Assembly announces the fates of the fated families. At this point she is whisked away to safety. Isae, meanwhile, who is fated to be the chancellor of Thuvhe is kept in hiding to keep her safe. Despite this attempt, Isae was attacked by the Shotet when the ship on which she was riding broke down on the same planet where the Shotet were scavenging. She was cut on her face by currentblades, leaving distinguishing scars on her face.



Both Ori and Isae are strong believers in their fates. When Cyra looks at Ori, who knows she is about to be killed by Eijeh in the arena, Ori is determined to face her death in a way that is strong and confident. In the same way, after Ori was first kidnapped, Isae's first reaction was that she would have to go to Shotet and retrieve her. She insists on going into Ryzek's territory, even though she knows how dangerous. She values her sister's life and is not afraid of what might happen to her in rescuing her sister.

Strong Female Characters

From Cyra and the strength that she realizes she gets from her current gift to Sifa and her dedication to the greater good despite the pain it brings to her family, Roth fills her novel with strong female characters. These characters are not only physically strong, but they demonstrate emotional and mental strength not seen in many of the male characters. Although these characters are strong, Roth presents them in a way that their strength does not overpower their femininity.

Cyra is a character who grows into her strength as the novel progresses. She at first sees herself as nothing but her brother's means of punishing the people of Shotet. Because her brother knows that Cyra accidentally used her gift to kill their mother, Ryzek holds Cyra in fear that he will tell the people of the country what happened if she does not cooperate with him. When Cyra meets Akos and realizes there is a different way of living available, she begins to flex her muscles against her brother. She first refuses to participate in hurting any more people against her will and then turns completely against her brother when she joins a group of renegades trying to murder him.

Cyra's recognition of her own strength comes when she is forced to help interrogate Akos after it is discovered he knew the sister of the chancellor of Thuvhe when they were children. She realizes the gift of pain has not just isolated her but has made her stronger, strong enough to bear the pain of the current and keep it away from Akos. Her heart stops as she draws all of the pain into herself. When it starts back on its own, Cyra's currents run on top of her skin instead of underneath it, a visible sign of the changes going on inside of her.

Another example of Cyra's strength comes when she faces her brother in the arena the day after he stripped her of her rank and mutilated her in that same place. She exposes him for what he is, a coward, and challenges him to fight her. Cyra's final show of strength comes when she keeps herself from killing Ryzek even though she has the opportunity to do so. She knows that it is important that he be kept alive so that there will be a chance that Eijeh's memories can be restored. Cyra has learned she has the strength to live a while longer with her nightmares if it helps Akos to overcome one of his.

Sifa is another strong female character though her strength makes her unpopular. As an oracle, Sifa sees visions of the future. She has been ordered by the Assembly to use her ability to ensure that Ryzek is the leader of the Shotet people for as little time as



possible. Sifa explains to Cyra that her fate requires her to be impartial and work for the greater good even if it hurts the members of her own family. It is because of Sifa's loyalty to her job that she allowed Akos and Eijeh to be kidnapped by the Shotet and her husband killed. Despite Sifa's strength, she does show a moment of weakness when she allows her son to go to the prison to rescue Ori too late. Instead of finding Ori in the prison Akos comes face-to-face with Vas, the man who killed his father. Sifa admits she did this because her husband's death needed to be avenged. In her quest for personal revenge, Sifa allowed Isae's sister to be killed, perhaps putting the lives of both Eijeh and Akos in danger.

Isae and Ori are additionally examples of strong female characters. They take their fates seriously and work together to protect each other. For instance, because Isae bears scars on her face, they each cover their faces in public so that it cannot be easily determined which of the sisters is the true chancellor. Despite their carefulness, Ori is kidnapped by the Shotet. She knows there is no hope that she will escape her situation alive and meets her death calmly. Isae shows her strength when she goes into territory ruled by Ryzek despite the danger this trip holds for her.

Teka and Zosita are final examples of strong female characters. They are both members of the renegade party organized against Ryzek. Zosita is an exile because she was caught teaching school children to speak forbidden languages. Even though she was not solely responsible for the attack on Ryzek's life, Zosita takes responsibility in order to keep an innocent person from getting killed. Teka, meanwhile, lives her life mutilated by Ryzek for no crime she committed. She is dedicated to taking the cruel leader out of power regardless of the cost to her.

The Art of Manipulation

Manipulation comes in a variety of forms. Ryzek manipulates his sister in order to get what he wants from her, and Sifa manipulates her visions of the future in order to get her way. If nothing else, Ryzek has learned to manipulate his circumstances to get what he wants from others. His manipulation eventually blows up in his face when Cyra decides she will no longer allow her brother to order her around. Ryzek is even audacious enough to believe that he can manipulate his fate, a circumstance said to be unavoidable. In addition to Ryzek's manipulations, Sifa, a sitting oracle, shows that she is not always as impartial in her job as she would like to be.

Instead of treating his sister like a person, Ryzek treats her like an instrument of punishment. He uses her to torture people whom he believes have betrayed him. He uses her ability to give pain to others as a way to torture people into answering his questions. Because Ryzek believes he can get more use out of Cyra if she is not so incapacitated by her chronic pain, he gives her Akos because he has the ability to relieve the currents that run under her skin. Although Ryzek believes this gift will make Cyra more indebted to him, it actually allows her to be more self sufficient and discover her own strength.



Ryzek tries to use his powers of manipulation to change his fate. In the Shotet and Thuvhe cultures, it is believed that one's fate is permanent and unchangeable. Ryzek believes that by kidnapping Eijeh, the rising oracle of Thuvhe, and forcing him to share his visions, Ryzek can alter his own fate. Although he does everything in his power to manipulate the future, it does not appear that Ryzek is having any luck changing his fate.

Akos' mother, Sifa is manipulative. She is the sitting oracle in Thuvhe and sees visions of the future. While she can choose among the visions of the future that she sees, she has no ability to change one's fate. While Sifa is telling Akos, Cyra and the renegades the visions that she has of the future, Akos notices that his mother is holding a button from his father's jacket in his hand. He believes that she is trying to remind him of the way his father was killed by the Shotet and manipulate him in that way. The next day when Akos and Isae discover that the prison where Sifa claimed to have seen Ori was empty, Akos knew his mother had not made a mistake in her vision but instead was manipulating the future to get what she wanted. It was little surprise that Akos came face-to-face with Vas, the man who had killed his father. Sifa had set up the meeting so that Akos would be forced to avenge his father's death.

The Effects of Chronic Pain

Chronic physical pain can have devastating effects on a person. However, as Cyra learns through her ordeal, it can also be a source of strength. Cyra's life of pain is unfulfilling and of low quality as demonstrated by the description of her lifestyle before she met Akos. After Akos helped her to realize that there were painkillers that could help her without causing debilitating side effects, Cyra's life became more positive she learns that her gift is not entirely a curse but also a blessing because of the way it has strengthened her. In addition to Cyra's physical pain, Akos also acknowledges her mental pain, pain that is unseen and harder to heal.

It was when Ryzek traded one of his memories with Cyra that her current gift was called into full force. Painful currents ran beneath her skin causing her constant pain. Anyone who touched her bare skin felt this pain as well. Cyra at first thought her gift was a curse because it kept people from getting close to her but then believed it was a gift for that same reason.

The night that Ryzek orders Cyra to attend a dinner party that the Zetsyvis family will also attend is an example of what Cyra's life is like with her level of pain. Without painkillers, she is in so much pain that she is unable to function in public. The only painkillers available to her are ones that make her sick, off balance and uncoordinated while only knocking the edge off her discomfort. Even with the painkiller, Cyra is unable to eat and barely able to talk at the dinner party.

After Cyra is introduced to Akos her life begins to improve. Not only is Akos able to completely take away Cyra's pain just with his touch, he is also able to make painkillers with hushflower, that relieve her pain without the terrible side effects.



Cyra's mother had taken Cyra as a child to a doctor who convinced Cyra that she had decided for herself that she wanted the gift of pain. He told her that she believed she deserved pain and that other people deserved to be hurt as well. For years Cyra bought into his belief. When she began to get to know Akos, she realized that he was a person who did not deserve pain. For this reason when her brother tries to force her to use her gift to interrogate Akos, Cyra holds all of the pain she can in herself. In the process, her heart stops. When it restarts, the currents that cause the pain are running on the outside of her skin instead of under her skin. Cyra believes this change in her currents is a sign that she has begun to change in her opinions of herself and others.

In addition to chronic physical pain, ongoing emotional/mental pain is addressed in the novel by Akos when he validates the emotional/mental pain that Cyra has been forced to endure. Not only has she had physical pain, Cyra has been emotionally tortured by her father and brother when they used her as a way to torture and hurt others. Cyra has a line of negated kill marks representing the people she has hurt against her will. As Akos and his sister tend to the area where Cyra's brother ordered the skin be removed from her throat and face, Akos thinks of the way that Cyra's physical wounds would heal more quickly than the emotional pain that her father had caused.

Akos and Cyra's Struggle to Overcome Differences

Although they are attracted to each other from the beginning, Akos and Cyra must work to overcome the differences they have because of the drastically different cultures in which they have been raised. Cyra has been raised to think of violence and cruelty as a way of life, while Akos' upbringing was much more peaceful. Akos, however, has come to a position where he must learn to fight and to kill in order to bring his brother home, a promise that he made to his father. Meanwhile, Cyra learns that she is a person worthy of love and respect, not just an instrument of torture.

In Cyra's Shotet culture, it is considered an honor to have multiple kill marks carved on one's arm. She believes that one cannot be honorable and still be allowed to survive. Although Cyra's arm does bear many kill marks, she keeps these marks hidden under a wrist cuff because she is not as proud of them as the other members of the Shotet people. Still, she has spent her life learning to fight and protect herself, abilities necessary for her way of life.

When Cyra first meets Akos, she recognizes right away that he is not well training in fighting but that he is not weak. He asks her to help him learn to fight in exchange for teaching her how to mix up pain relievers. She agrees and a tentative trust is begun between them. Akos betrays this trust when he tries to use Cyra against her will to get his brother out of Noavek manor. As he realizes the weight of the mistake he made, Akos slowly works to regain Cyra's trust. She comes to realize that even though he has been forced into a lifestyle he does not like, he is willing to live it in order to rescue his brother.



As the two become closer, Cyra realizes through Akos' forgiveness of her worst actions and his sympathy with the pain she feels when she kills or hurts someone that she is a person worthy of love and affection. She learns to embrace herself as a worthy person. At the same time, she stands up to her cruel brother because of the impression that Akos' has made on her life.



Styles

Point of View

There are two different points of view in this story. Parts of the story are told from the first person point of view of Cyra. Other parts of the story are told from the point of view of a third person narrator who focuses on Akos. It is important to have two different points of view in this novel because the lifestyles of the Shotet and Thuvhe are so different. In order for the reader to understand just how different the thoughts and motivations of these people are, there must be a representative from each of the two groups. The author may have decided to tell Cyra's part of the story from her first person point of view because she wants the focus to be on Cyra. Although Akos' viewpoints are needed for the story, it is not intended for his story to overshadow that of Cyra's. Roth intends for Cyra to be the heroine and focus of this novel.

Language and Meaning

Being a science fiction novel set in a fictional universe, there are a variety of terms used that are not typical. For instance, the people in both the Shotet and Thuvhe communities respect the currentstream as a form of mysterious power. Some worship it as a religious power. From this currentstream comes the current that gives each person a currentgift. These gifts vary, depending on the person's personality and constitution.

Both the Shotet and Thuvhe use different words to express measurement of time and distance. For instance, what we might describe as years are called seasons in these cultures. The characters discuss how many seasons old they are, not how many years old they are. Time is calculated by ticks instead of minutes or seconds. Izits, meanwhile, are a measurement of distance. Cyra explains that the izit "was slang for IZ, a measurement about the width of my smallest finger" (112).

Structure

Part 1 and Part 2 of the novel are the exposition portions of the story. Akos tells his story up to the time when he was kidnapped by the Shotet in Part 1. In Part 2, Cyra tells the story of her life up to the point that she saw Akos for the first time and then was given Akos as a way to relieve her pain. The action rises as Akos and Cyra develop trust and affection for one another. The climax begins when Ryzek discovers that Cyra is working with the renegades and has assisted in a plot to kill Ryzek. The falling action begins when Cyra and the renegades kidnap Ryzek and Eijeh from the Shotet. The denouement comes when Akos and Cyra recognize and acknowledge that they do love one another and want to be with each other. Akos also realizes, because he has his mother, sister, and brother all together, that it is possible to get some things back. There is a lead in to an expected sequel to this novel when Ryzek tells Cyra that his father is still alive.



Quotes

Everyone had a future, but not everyone had a fate — at least, that was what their mom liked to say. Only parts of certain ‘favored’ families got fates, witnessed at the moment of their births by every oracle on every planet.”

-- Narrator (Chapter 1)

Importance: Akos describes the differences between fates and futures as described to him by his mother. Although oracles, like his mother, can see the future for everyone, it is only the children of the fated families, like that Kereseth, Benesit and Noavek families, who received fates. It is believed that the future of a person can change, but their fate cannot be altered.

I screamed, louder than I had ever screamed in my life, and Ryz’s voice joined mine, almost in harmony. The dark veins had brought pain; the darkness was pain, and I was made of it, I was pain itself. / He yanked his hand away, but the skin-shadows and the agony stayed, my currentgift beckoned forward too soon.”

-- Narrator (Chapter 5)

Importance: Cyra describes the moment, after her brother stole her favorite memory of her mother, that her currentgift surfaced. Even though it caused her pain, it also caused Ryzek pain. It ensured that Ryzek would never steal another memory from her again.

But your fate is to die serving the family Noavek, to die serving me, and I’d rather get a few seasons out of you first, you see.”

-- Ryzek (Chapter 7)

Importance: When Ryzek tells Akos that his fate is to die serving the Noavek family, it is obvious that it is the first time that he has heard his fate. Akos is obviously shocked by his fate. Ryzek uses it as a way to explain to Akos why he did not kill him for murdering Kalmev Radix, he wants to get some service out of Akos before he kills him.

I knew what future Ryzek wanted: to rule Thuvhe, as well as Shotet, to conquer our enemies, to be recognized as a legitimate world leader by the Assembly.”

-- Narrator (Chapter 7)

Importance: Even though Ryzek’s fate is to fall to the Benesit family, one of the ruling families of Thuvhe, he intends to find some way to change his fate. Cyra knows that her brother intends to use Eijeh and his visions to try to manipulate his fate.

I would always do that, for as long as we both lived, or Ryzek would tell everyone what I had done to our mother. That knowledge was a stone in my stomach.”

-- Narrator (Chapter 8)

Importance: Even though Cyra does not want to use her current to help Ryzek interrogate she does so because she is afraid if she does not comply her brother will tell



the people that she had used her power to kill their mother, even though the murder was accidental. Ryzek had been holding this accident over Cyra's head for years as he manipulated her to cause pain on his behalf.

It was like he knew me, knew the one thing he could say that would tempt me the most. It wasn't relief from pain that I wanted above all, but self-reliance. And he was offering it to me in a glass vial, in a hushflower potion."

-- Narrator (Chapter 10)

Importance: Akos manipulates Cyra by telling her that he can help her control her own pain by teaching her how to make the hushflower potions. He hopes that she will take this information as a fair trade for teaching him how to fight so that he can free his brother from Ryzek.

I meant no offense,' the Storyteller said. 'But your name is Akos, which is a Shotet name, so you can see why I am confused. Thuvhesit parents would not give their child a name with such a hard sound in it without purpose.'"

-- The Storyteller (Chapter 11)

Importance: Right away, the Storyteller identifies that Akos has some Shotet blood in his lineage. Akos is angry with the Storyteller's frank comment that it is obvious that Akos is not fully Thuvhe.

Because you are the daughter of one of our most beloved families, and because you are clearly in pain after the loss of your father, I will give you a chance to fight for your life in the arena instead of simply losing it. And since you assign some of this supposed blame to my sister, it is she who will face you there,' Ryzek said. 'I hope you see this as the mercy it is.'"

-- Ryzek (Chapter 13)

Importance: Although Ryzek pretends to be merciful to Lety by allowing her to fight for her life in the arena with Cyra, Cyra realizes he intends for her to kill Lety. Cyra is shocked because her brother had not discussed using her as a murder weapon for him before he announced it publicly.

I didn't understand the tone of his voice, with all its softness. I had just shown him proof of my own monstrousness, and still his eyes fixed on mine with sympathy instead of judgment."

-- Narrator (Chapter 13)

Importance: This quote highlights the differences between Cyra and Akos. Akos understands what it is like to have to be cruel even if one does not have to be. For this reason he understands that Cyra does not think she has a choice but to do as her brother commands her to do. In her lifetime, however, the people with whom she lives have only thought of her as an instrument of pain. They have never seen her as an individual with her own feelings and desires. The idea of understanding is so foreign to



Cyra that she does not understand what Akos wants when he gives her a look that is sympathetic, not judgmental.

Ryzek had been weighing his life against mine since I was a child. That I was in constant pain, that I could not get close to anyone, that I had experienced deep loss just as he had, didn't seem to register in his mind."

-- Narrator (Chapter 14)

Importance: Ryzek calls Cyra into his office, trying to ensure that he had her cooperation in insuring that he could change his fate, she notes that he compares his life with hers. She thinks that his comparison of their lives is unfair because he does not take into consideration that Cyra's current gift causes her constant pain and does not allow her to be physically close to anyone. He had additionally used her as an instrument of torture so much that the people fear her and would not strike up a friendship even if she wanted one.

All my life I had been taught that every fate would be fulfilled, no matter what anyone tried to do to stop it. But that was exactly what he was proposing: he wanted to thwart his own fate by killing the one who was supposed to bring it about. And he had Eijeh to tell him how."

-- Narrator (Chapter 14)

Importance: Cyra is shocked by her brother's audacity when he tells her that he believes that he can change his fate. The idea is shocking because Cyra as well as the others in Shotet and Thuvhe have always been told that fates cannot be altered.

I want you to kill my father,' Jorek said plainly."

-- Jorek (Chapter 15)

Importance: Because Jorek has heard that Akos has improved as a fighter and because of what Suzao did to Akos' family, Jorek believes that Akos is the ideal person to kill his father. Akos is at first stunned by Jorek's proposition but is persuaded to do so because Jorek promises to help him get Eijeh free.

But it was also a glimpse of the woman who hadn't so much as warned her own family about what she knew was coming to them. Who hadn't shown up for it, even. She had let her husband die, let the falling oracle sacrifice herself, let a son — now Ryzek's very best weapon — be kidnapped, instead of offering herself in his place."

-- Narrator (Chapter 17)

Importance: Akos sees his mother for the first time since he was kidnapped on a newsfeed. He wonders how she could have known what would happen to her family and allow it to happen without interfering or even warning them what was to come.

If — when, when I get Eijeh out,' he said, 'would you ever go with me?' / 'You know, I think I would.' She sighed. 'But only if Ryzek was dead.'"

-- Akos / Cyra (Chapter 21)



Importance: It is after Akos sees the newsfeed of the new chancellor of Thuvhe that Cyra tells him that she would no longer force him to stay there if he wanted to go back home. When he asked if she would go with him, she agreed to go, but only if Ryzek were no longer in power because he was dead.

I always thought my fate meant I would die a traitor to my country.' Akos's voice was rough, like he had worn away at it by screaming. 'But you made it so I won't.'"
-- Akos (Chapter 25)

Importance: Akos believes he will not die a traitor to his country because he has information about the Benesit sisters that he will refuse to give Ryzek, even if he is tortured to do so.

But had he really just let something so Shotet become an instinct? Clean hands, clean blade, new mark?"
-- Narrator (Chapter 28)

Importance: Even when he is back home in Thuvhe, Akos is surprised that he carries through with the Shotet ritual of carving a mark in his arm for the soldier he killed in the hospital trying to keep Isae from getting captured by the Shotet.

When I woke up after the interrogation — a soldier had told me my heart stopped, then started again of its own accord — the shadows were traveling over the surface of my body instead. They still caused me pain, but it was more bearable."
-- Narrator (Chapter 29)

Importance: As Cyra narrates her story of her attempt to keep Akos from feeling her pain, she describes how her current shadows changed so that they moved over the surface of her skin instead of below it. This change came when her heart stopped and then started again on its own.

By not giving me a currentblade, Ryzek had just shown everyone in this arena that he wasn't giving me a fair chance. In his anger, he had shown fear, and that was enough for me."
-- Narrator (Chapter 29)

Importance: Even though Ryzek puts Cyra at a disadvantage by not giving her a currentblade to fight Vas, she knows that he has sent an important message to the Shotet people. He has shown that he is willing to be unfair to his sister because she embarrassed him.

She was not a rusty nail, as she had once told him, or a hot poker, or a blade in Ryzek's hand. She was a hushflower, all power and possibility. Capable of doing good and harm in equal measure."
-- Narrator (Chapter 30)



Importance: Akos opinion of Cyra had changed, show by the items to which he compares her. While she compares herself to things like a rusty nail, or instruments of torture, Akos believes that she is more like a hushflower. This is a very complimentary comparison for Akos to compare Cyra to a hushflower. It shows how much he treasures her, since he compares her to the most important symbol of his country.

If she was sharing visions, it wasn't because they were absolute, fixed in time like a fate was. It was because she had chosen a version of the future she wanted, and she was trying to push them all toward it."

-- Narrator (Chapter 32)

Importance: When Akos realizes that his mother has pulled out the button from his father's jacket, he knows that she is trying to manipulate him. He has come to realize that his mother has learned to use her visions to guide the future toward the version that she wanted to come to pass. He hopes to guard himself against her attempts to manipulate the futures of those around him in undesirable ways, as she had done for him.

All my life you've told me I have nothing to offer but the power that lives in my body,' I said. 'But I am not an instrument of torture and execution; I am the only person who knows the real Ryzek Noavek.' I stepped toward him. 'I know how you fear pain more than anything else in this world. I know that you gathered these people here today, not to celebrate a successful scavenge, but to witness the murder of Orieve Benesit.'"

-- Cyra (Chapter 35)

Importance: In the arena during a mock ceremony to honor the soldiers, Cyra takes the opportunity to stand up to her brother. She tells him that her power lies not only in the pain she can cause but also in her knowledge of Ryzek's real personality. He is fearful of pain and his desire to make a public showing of Ori's death.

Even though he knew Cyra was more than Ryzek's Scourge, or even Ryzek's Executioner — even though he had seen the better parts of her, getting stronger in the worst environment possible, like the hushflower that bloomed in the Deadening time — somehow, he'd never considered this possibility: Cyra had spared Ryzek. For him."

-- Narrator (Chapter 38)

Importance: Even though Akos had seen beyond Cyra's shell of pain and violence, he still did not expect her to let Ryzek remain alive. Therefore, there was hope that Eijeh's memory could be restored to normal. It is especially significant because he knew how much Cyra wanted to kill her brother.

You do not share my blood,' he said, pronouncing each word deliberately. 'You are not a Noavek. Why do you think I started using those locks? Because I knew only one person would be able to get through them: me.'"

-- Ryzek (Chapter 41)

Importance: Ryzek drops a bombshell on Cyra after she and the renegades kidnapped



him from the arena when he had Ori executed. He tells her that the reason she could not open the locks on his private rooms was because she did not have Noavek blood, that Lazmet was not her father. He also shocks her by telling her that Lazmet is still alive.