

# **Glass Sword Study Guide**

**Glass Sword by Victoria Aveyard**

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# Plot Summary

The kingdom of Norta is divided between Red bloods, the downtrodden lower class, and Silvers, the power-hungry royalty with superhuman abilities. Mare Barrow--a Red with the Silver ability to control electricity--and Tiberius Calore--the exiled prince and rightful heir to the throne--have just escaped imprisonment by Maven, the new king. They ride on an underground train to Naercey with Captain Diana Farley and her team of Scarlet Guardsmen, an underground Red resistance. Mare's brother Shade, another "newblood" with the power to teleport, and her childhood friend Kilorn accompany them. They fight against Maven and a Silver army in the ruined city. Mare realizes that the Scarlet Guard is much more extensive than she had assumed. They narrowly escape to a submarine, called a Mersive, and they depart for a remote island called Tuck.

Mare arrives on Tuck and is greeted by another of her brothers, Bree. A man with a bloody eye and an unfamiliar uniform takes Cal and imprisons him, and Mare goes to the bunkers to find her family. She has a tense reunion with her mother, father, brother Tramy, and sister Gisa. The next day, Gisa tells Mare that the man with the bloody eye and his soldiers are from Lakeland, a country warring with Norta to the North. They have joined the Scarlet Guard to overthrow Maven and are keeping Cal in the seemingly non-existent Barracks 1. Determined to find Cal, Mare goes to see Shade in the infirmary. As she talks to him and Farley, the Colonel enters and strips Farley of her command. She tells him that Mare wants to find other newbloods with the aid of "the list" -- a notebook of names given to Mare by Silver-blooded Julian Jacos. The Colonel denies the request and leaves, and Farley gives Mare the key to Barracks 1.

Kilorn agrees to help Mare find Cal and they enter Barracks 1 through a moon pool under the surface of the ocean. They see a family picture of the Colonel with Farley, but continue before exploring further. They find Cal in his cell, surrounded by Silent Stone -- a stone with the power to "silence" Silver abilities. While Mare tries to free Cal, the Colonel and several soldiers lock Mare in the cell with Cal. Betrayed, Mare and Cal discuss plans to escape the cell until the Colonel returns with Kilorn and Farley. Kilorn injects Farley with a sedating drug before placing her in a cell of her own, then enters Mare's cell with the Colonel. The Colonel tells them that he is going to return Cal to Maven, but before he finishes, Kilorn knocks him out. Shade teleports into the cell and they escape to the surface with Farley, who is unaffected by the drug.

Farley, Shade, Cal, Kilorn, and Mare steal a large jet called a Blackrun from the Tuck hangar and escape the island. They fly to Coraunt to rescue the first of the newbloods -- Nix Marsten. Nix joins them, but threatens Cal, blaming him for the death of his daughters. They fly to Harbor Bay next and meet up with a smuggler named Crance. Crance leads them through the tunnels below the city before revealing that he plans on betraying them for a bounty. Mare uses her power to collapse the tunnel, killing Crance's accomplices. Crance escapes with her, Farley, Shade, and Cal, and promises to help them. They walk to the Security Center, losing Shade and Crance to a gang fight. Farley, Cal, and Mare break in and collect information and addresses for the rest of the newbloods in the list before escaping and continuing to find their next rescue.



They find the newblood dead, hung from a statue. Before they can remove his body or leave, Maven ambushes them again, using a sounder device to block Mare's abilities and branding her with his fire. Mare goes unconscious.

Mare wakes up in a small safe house called the Notch, hidden far in the wilderness, four days later. She continues to rescue newbloods over the following weeks using the Blackrun, and Cal trains them at the camp. During a rescue in Templyn, Mare and her team find a dead infant with a note from Maven attached, demanding that Mare returns to him. Mare keeps the note a secret and begins to sleep in Cal's quarters. Another newblood notifies her that they discovered a military order to send 5,000 children to death in "The Choke". Mare decides that rescuing newbloods must remain their mission, and they continue to Pitarus the next day. While they walk through Rosen to their destination, they meet a newblood named Jon with the ability to see the future. He tells them about a prison where many newbloods and Silver dissenters are being kept, and Mare decides to trust him. They plan to raid Corros Prison three days later, after stopping at a lake to find a tool by Jon's suggestion.

Mare follows Jon's advice and goes to the Lake. She finds Cameron Cole, a young newblood with the ability to silence Silver powers. Cameron does not want to join Mare and instead wants to save the soldiers at the Choke. Mare brings her to the Notch against her will. Cameron explains the layout of the prison to the others at the Notch and tries to convince them to go to the Choke instead. Many at the camp choose to follow Mare. Three days later, Mare, Cal, Kilorn, Shade, Farley, Cameron, and several newbloods fly to Corros. With the help of Nanny, who can impersonate Maven, they enter the prison and release the prisoners, including Julian and Sara Skonos, a Silver healer. As they escape, Shade jumps in front of Mare to protect her from an incoming projectile and dies. Mare kills Queen Elara with her lightning.

Mare and the survivors of the raid return to Tuck. She shows the Colonel Queen Elara's body and he agrees to harbor the newbloods. They record a message to the Kingdom that reveals Maven's deception and shows Elara's dead body. Mare meets Rash and Tahir, two newbloods, or Ardents, from a distant nation called the Republic of Montfort. They offer the newbloods safe haven in exchange for her military leadership and she declines. As her message broadcasts across Nortia, Mare and several volunteers fly for the Choke to rescue the child soldiers. The plane is shot down by Maven and the Silver army and Mare is captured. She is taken to Archeon where Maven puts a collar on her in front of a crowd of Silvers.



# Chapters 1 - 3

## Summary

The novel is narrated in the first person point of view in the present tense. Chapter 1 begins as a character named Farley hands the narrator, whose identity is unknown, a rag to clean up the blood on her clothes. The red blood is hers, and the silver blood is from several other characters: Evangeline, Ptolemus, and Cal. The narrator is delighted by her own wounds because they will heal naturally, rather than by the hand of a healer that signifies her captivity in the world of the “Silvers”. She, Cal, Farley, and several others pull red cloth over their faces as they ride an underground train, or “Undertrain”. The narrator reminisces on the events leading up to now: A character named Maven, the new king, had killed his own father and blamed Cal, his own brother. The narrator once trusted him, but was betrayed. The train travels towards a sanctuary built by Farley and the other members of the Scarlet Guard, and the narrator worries that it may no longer be safe.

The narrator’s brother, Shade, embraces her from behind. The narrator asks Farley what they are going to do as she watches her guard, Kilorn. Farley replies that there is always somewhere to run to and directs Shade to keep a close watch on her because “she cannot be lost” (3). The narrator thinks that she is valuable because of the narrator power over lightning. Cal asks Farley if she plans to fight, and despite her callous response, he tells her that their enemy will have Snapdragons – assault jets that carry missiles. He tells her that they will not give up until he and Mare, the narrator, are dead. Farley dismisses him and Mare realizes that she has information she is not yet willing to share. Mare wants to believe in the Guard, but her trust has been destroyed by Maven, and she is unsure of what to believe. Still, she feels an alliance with Cal, even though he is a Silver, because they were both betrayed by Maven.

The train arrives in Naercey, a city in ruins, and the Guard marches towards the waterfront. Mare thinks that Maven and his soldiers could be hiding, ready to kill the members of the Guard one by one. She thinks that, despite his lies, she knows a small piece of the king – how he could not save a boy named Thomas from death. Snapping back to the present, Mare realizes that the refugees that once inhabited Naercey are now gone. Shade tells her that Farley evacuated the city the night before, worried that Mare or Maven would tell the queen about the city when tortured. Maven had instead given information willingly, about “the Undertrain, the secret city, the list” (8), although the reader does not know what “the list” is. The entourage suddenly stops as they hear an inhuman scream. Twelve air jets, the Snapdragons Cal warned of, circle overhead. One fires a missile into an abandoned building and it collapses, blocking their route forward. Farley orders the Scarlet Guard to scatter and take cover.

As the jets fire more missiles, Mare thinks for a moment that she should stand against them and use her lightning to take some down. Instead, she runs with Shade, thinking that her survival is ultimately more important for the survival of others. She and Shade



run into an overgrown grove of trees, followed by Kilorn. Kilorn asks Shade if he can take them to the ocean, alluding to his ability to travel long distances in an instant. Shade declines, but as the trio runs farther into the forest, he teleports himself and Mare a short distance. As they emerge on the other side of the grove, Mare asks about Cal. Shade promises that he is coming with them, but Mare tells him that she does not trust him. As more missiles fall, she hears the marching of soldiers.

Chapter 2 begins as Mare sees the silhouettes of soldiers coming down the street towards her, Shade, and Kilorn. Mare watches them approach at an odd, shuffling pace and realizes that Maven has enslaved Reds to serve as the front line for Silver soldiers. The three of them look on, horrified, but they realize that there is nothing they can do to save the enslaved Reds, so they continue towards the ocean. Shade teleports them closer to their destination, becoming more exhausted with every teleportation. They stop at the base of a massive structure as it tips over, and he shields Mare from gunfire with his powers. They continue on disguised as magnetrons, members of the Silver House Samos. They clear away the rubble with their powers, directed by Ptolemus and Evangeline. They dive into an impact crater to plan their next move, and Mare sees Silver warriors from the “High Houses”, their most powerful soldiers, approaching.

Mare thinks of Cal and tells Shade and Kilorn to go towards the river. She waits for the Silver army to stop before her and, to her surprise, Maven emerges from the crowd. He tells Mare to surrender herself and the Scarlet Guard, but she refuses. A jet flies close overhead, and Mare uses her powers to turn it off. As it crashes into the Silver army, she runs, summoning a shield of lightning behind her. The Silvers pursue her and use a variety of powers to defeat her. After several failed attacks, an explosion knocks her down. Farley appears and helps her to her feet while Cal wards off the soldiers with a storm of summoned fire. Farley pulls her away from Cal, but she breaks away and goes to help Cal. They alternate using their fire and lightning to retreat from the army. When they reach the water’s edge, Farley tells them to jump. They do so just as Maven emerges from the fire and land on a hard metal surface, instead of soft water. Farley directs them to a cylindrical opening and they seal the door behind them. Mare and Cal realize they are in a submarine.

In Chapter 3, Mare reminisces on her recent past, in which Queen Elara made her relive her most traumatic memories. Characters named Tristan and Walsh died protecting the Scarlet Guard, as well as several Silvers who befriended her. In the present, she rests on a hard bunk in the boat and thinks that she must find “the list”, a ledger of those who have both Red blood and Silver powers, before Maven and his mother do. She finds a set of ill-fitting clothes on the floor, and Kilorn enters the room while she is still dressing. He examines her for injuries and tells her she is lucky that the banshee scream that knocked her down did not do worse damage. She asks him about Shade and he tells her that his leg is injured but that he is safe.

As Mare walks, with Kilorn’s support, to the medical station, she learns that the underwater boat is called a “mersive”. They pass Guardsmen who seem afraid of Mare and lower their eyes when she passes. When they reach the door to the medical station, two guards tease Kilorn for flirting with a nurse named Lena before they open



the door for Mare. She finds Shade pretending to sleep while he eavesdrops on the nurses. He tells her and Kilorn that they are heading to an island called Tuck, where his and Mare's parents and siblings are waiting along with many others. He tells Mare that the Scarlet Guard chooses to appear weak, but they actually have a vast infrastructure. Mare retorts that feigning weakness will not defeat Maven, and Farley interjects into the conversation from behind. Mare tells her that there are hundreds of other "newbloods" like her that are stronger than the Silvers, and Farley smiles.

## Analysis

Mare's reactions to the events of the first three chapters sets a tone of anxiety and uncertainty in the novel. Her thoughts are interspersed with words that indicate anticipation – for instance, she thinks that "nothing haunts the sky yet" (7) when she arrives in Naercey. She expects disaster, and her fear is explicit. Throughout the section, she mentions her fear of capture by Maven, her fear of dying before she apologizes to Shade, her fear of the mersive, her fear of isolating on Tuck, and her fear of Maven's new power over the world. Her fears are so numerous that she finds no comfort even with her own brother and best friend. Her extreme anxiety creates anxiety for the reader, and her use of leading phrases in the narration creates anticipation of an uncertain, and dangerous, future.

Mare struggles to understand who she is, introducing a theme of identity to the novel. When she wakes up on the mersive, Mare thinks that she has figuratively died. She thinks that her original identity, as a girl from a place called the Stilts, disappeared when she discovered her powers, and that the identity that was given to her by the Silvers, Mareena, died when she left them. She thinks that the only thing she knows about herself is "what she has been and what she has lost" (31). She also knows, however, that she holds immense power. She realizes that she is invaluable to the Scarlet Guard and to the protection of not only the Reds, but to the other newbloods like her. Her unique identity as a newblood creates conflict as she attempts to reconcile her Red loyalty and upbringing with the new power she holds. Other Reds, who once saw her as an equal, step away from her as she passes and refer to her as "lightning girl". She feels isolated by their deliberate attempts at separation, further inhibiting her ability to understand and embrace her new identity.

In this section, Aveyard introduces the symbolic theme of blood, which is connected to Mare's innermost desires, loyalties, and powers. Blood is a central plot device in the novel. The division between characters with red and silver blood is the primary source of conflict for the characters, as the Silvers control and enslave Reds using their inborn powers. However, blood functions as more than a literal device in this section. Mare's narrative references blood several times, figuratively and literally. As she rides the Undertrain, she notes that the electricity "sets my blood on fire, reminding me of the pulsing, screeching Undertrain" (2). During the attack in Naercey, she refers to the flooding by the nymphs as reminiscent of bleeding. These descriptions draw a parallel between the powerful forces like that of the train or the floods and blood, painting blood as a powerful force of its own.



Distrust is introduced as a theme in this first section as the characters struggle to trust and cooperate with one another. In the first chapter, Kilorn makes his distrust for Cal clear as Mare argues for his release. Later, Kilorn explains that even among the Scarlet Guard, few secrets are shared. Mare especially struggles with trust, and finds it difficult to believe in even her closest companions. She tells Shade that she does not believe his word, and when she finds him and Kilorn keeping secrets from her, she fears she has lost the trust of her best friend as well. The characters' explicit lack of trust coupled with the tone of anxiety in the opening chapters builds a theme of distrust and uncertainty in the novel.

## Discussion Question 1

Mare stops herself from saying “thank you for your service” to the Guardsmen. What does this phrase imply in the context of the novel? How is it used in the context of real-world militarism?

## Discussion Question 2

How does Mare feel about the Silvers? Does she believe that they are all bad? Why or why not?

## Discussion Question 3

How does Aveyard introduce a theme of guilt into the novel? What does Mare feel guilty for?

## Vocabulary

inexorably, betrothed, conscription, tactician, brazen, lieutenants, careens, shrapnel, pneumatically





# Chapters 4 - 6

## Summary

In Chapter 4, Mare follows Farley through the mersive to Cal's room. Cal opens the door, annoyed at Farley's presence, and Farley turns to leave. Now alone with Cal, Mare reminisces on dancing with and kissing him when she was acting as Mareena, the lost Silver princess. In the present she asks him about Tuck, but he knows little about it. She feels the generator in the mersive shift, indicating that they are close to their destination. The mersive tips upwards towards the surface, and Cal and Mare fall against each other. Pained by her fresh wounds, Mare mentions Sara Skonos, a Silver healer who could mend injuries in an instant. Sara had her tongue cut out for claiming that Queen Elara murdered Coriane, the true Queen and Cal's mother. Cal is obviously upset by the memory.

Mare and Cal exit his room and head towards the middle of the mersive. Kilorn meets them and tells Mare that they are surfacing. Kilorn purposely ignores Cal. Mare deflects Kilorn's posturing by asking him about Lena, and he loosens his stance. They watch as Farley and the other nurses hoist the injured Guardsmen, including Shade, to the open hatch on stretchers. Cal and Mare climb to the hatch soon after, and Farley nods to them both. Mare emerges into a storm and finds her brother, Bree. They step onto land and walk up a dirt road towards a hanger filled with mismatched equipment. Cal stops suddenly as the hangar opens behind him, revealing several armed soldiers. Bree holds Mare as she realizes they are coming to take Cal. She reminisces on Cal's past; he was partly responsible for Tristan and Walshe's deaths and Farley's torture. The leader of the soldiers, a man with a bloody eye, steps forwards and calls Cal "Tiberius", his birth name. After some coaxing from Mare, Cal surrenders to him.

Chapter 5 begins as Kilorn and Bree try to convince Mare that Cal must be kept as a prisoner. They give her several reasons, none of which she believes, but she chooses to act as if she agrees. She, Bree, and Kilorn head to the barracks on the hill ahead. They enter a doorway marked "3" and Mare tries to appear strong, although she feels newly uncomfortable with Bree and Kilorn. They walk through the maze-like barracks until they arrive at an open door with a piece of purple fabric tied to it, embroidered with lightning bolts. She walks in the room and finds her mother, father, sister Gisa, and brother Tramy. Bree and Tramy leave to go see Shade in the infirmary and Mare's mother tucks her into bed. She falls asleep and wakes later in the night with her father holding her hand. He tells her he knows what it is like to kill someone.

Mare wakes up the next morning and Gisa teases her before taking her to eat at the mess hall. Mare observes Barracks 3 as she walks, spotting several open family rooms and a room for orphans. Gisa asks her what having the power of electricity is like, and Mare responds that it is "power" (66). They exit the barracks and walk through Tuck past groups of tall blond soldiers wearing a dark blue color. Gisa hurries Mare away and once they are out of earshot tells her that they are Lakelanders, soldiers under another



king. Lakeland has been at war with Nortia, Mare's homeland, for a hundred years, but they have now joined forces. Gisa tells Mare that the blood-eyed man is the Colonel of their army and has taken command of the Scarlet Guard as well. Gisa tells Mare that he is keeping Cal in Barracks 1, but as she looks around she realizes that Barracks 1 does not exist.

In Chapter 6, Mare eats at the mess hall with Kilorn, Gisa, and her parents. Her father tells her about two days before when Shade teleported to their home, and how they were shocked both that he could teleport and that he was alive. They left for Tuck in a cargo boat, hidden in a crate of apples. As they finish their meal, Mare reminisces on the last time she ate – an elaborate meal with Maven. She asks Kilorn if they can go see Shade. As they walk, she fakes a limp to appear weak. She notices a hallway with perfect wiring, in contrast to the frayed wires of the other halls, and asks Kilorn where it leads. He answers honestly that he does not know.

When they arrive in the infirmary, Shade is speaking quickly and quietly to the person in the bed next to him, but he stops when he sees Mare approach. Shade notices her faked limp and they nod at each other furtively. Farley interrupts them from the adjacent bed and asks Mare how she likes the Colonel. Mare asks her what he has done with Cal, and although Farley seems apologetic, she does not get a chance to answer before they hear soldiers march into the infirmary. The Colonel comes around the bed curtain and stares at Farley. He scolds her for failing to defeat Maven and losing so many soldiers in the process. He strips her of her command, and Mare tells him about the plan to find and train the other newbloods. The Colonel rejects her plan and threatens Cal before walking out. While Mare fumes with anger, Farley pulls out a key to Barracks 1 and gives it to her.

## Analysis

Aveyard explores the fluidity of identity in this section with the use of characters' names and situational changes. The characters in the novel have had to adjust to extremely difficult circumstances in the wake of Maven's rise to power. These changes are accompanied by changes in not only lifestyle, but also core identity. For instance, Cal, once a boy who obsessed over manuals and circuitry, is now a soldier and a prisoner. Mare remarks that the boy Cal was is now dead, in a figurative sense. Shade also experiences a major character shift to adapt to his new lifestyle. Mare comments that, "like me, Shade had merely become someone – something – else to survive" (71). Mare's identity is perhaps the most fluid of all. When she asks Kilorn to go to the infirmary, she phrases her request in a way that makes her seem more like the girl she was before she was taken by the Silvers. She has had to adapt to several radically different identities to survive, and the constant shifts have created multiple facets of her character that she shifts between fluidly, depending on her situation. Aveyard also uses characters' names to highlight the fluidity of identity. Many of the characters have multiple names or nicknames, and their chosen names reflect their chosen identity in their current situation. For instance, when the Colonel calls Cal "Tiberius", his birth name, he is obviously upset. His birth name ties him to a family legacy that he mourns



and rejects, while his chosen name reflects his autonomy. The Colonel also refers to Farley by her birth name, drawing a similar reaction. The characters' names signify autonomy as well as their ability to shift their identities.

Aveyard uses the recurring theme of hidden power in this section to foreshadow conflict and shed light on characters' motivations. Shade tells Mare that "we seem weak because we want to" (43), referring to the Scarlet Guard. His words carry a much deeper meaning, however. When Cal is captured by the Colonel, Mare comes to realize that his words are not simply a description of the Scarlet Guard, but a warning to her. She learns that she must act weak herself, despite her immense power, to avoid persecution by the Colonel and ostracizing by her peers. Although she is troubled by Cal's imprisonment, she pretends to agree with the decision for the others' safety. When she wants to go to the infirmary, she asks Kilorn for permission to appear weak and uncertain. Shade's message and her actions to hide her power foreshadow events to come, in which Mare will release her true potential.

Aveyard uses unanswered questions and unexplained interpersonal dynamics to build tension in the narrative. This section is marked by several mysterious locations and interactions that leave both Mare and the reader with a sense of uncertainty about her situation. When Mare first sees Tuck in the daylight, she realizes that, "like Naercey, Tuck is far more than it seems" (59). She notices unmarked hallways, the absence of Barracks 1, the Lakelander soldiers, and the stolen goods on the island, but no one can or will answer her questions about them. Her list of questions about the Scarlet Guard and the Colonel grows steadily throughout the chapters, but few of these questions are resolved. Her interactions with other characters create a sense of unease as well. When she and Cal emerge from the mersive, Farley nods at them both. This unprecedented act of respect leaves Mare confused and wary, and the reader is left to question Farley's intentions. The lack of explanation for her uncharacteristic actions and the mysteries of Tuck create tension in the novel as the reader comes to expect revelations.

## Discussion Question 1

Mare describes being cold throughout this section. What does the cold refer to beyond her physical state?

## Discussion Question 2

Why does Mare trust Cal, even over Shade? What does her trust say about her relationship to Cal?

## Discussion Question 3

In the bunk, Mare reflects on her father's saying, "the war never leaves" (58). What does this phrase refer to?

## Vocabulary

indecipherable, jibe, synchronizing, brethren, exasperated, stoic, vicious, chagrin,  
decipher, infinitesimally



## Chapters 7 - 9

### Summary

Chapter 7 begins as Mare and Kilorn leave the infirmary. Mare stops in her tracks when she hears Kilorn muttering angrily, and she confronts him. He tells her that the Colonel is not “entirely wrong” (84) that Mare is dangerous, and Mare storms away. Kilorn grabs her by the arm and tells her that she can trust him. She tells him she cannot and apologizes. With directions from Farley, Mare finds Barracks 1 located underground beneath the dock. It also serves as the island’s armory and the housing for the Lakelanders, including the Colonel, so Mare and Kilorn must circumvent the main tunnel entrance and enter through the ocean. They sit at the dock with Mare’s family and Mare’s father notices that they are preparing to do something. He takes her hand and tells her to be quiet before she stands up and announces she is going to see Shade.

Mare and Kilorn follow the white line painted down the middle of the road, and she notes an offshoot towards a large structure protected by Lakelanders. They continue past the barracks to the beach beyond the settlement and review Farley’s instructions to break into an abandoned marine research lab that leads to the underground bunker. As they swim towards their destination, Mare watches the soldiers unload guns and ammunition at the dock ahead. They reach the edge of the lab and Kilorn dives down, Mare holding his leg. They reach the moon pool twenty-five feet down and emerge into the Colonel’s quarters. They discover a photograph on the wall that shows the Colonel standing with his family – revealing that Farley is his daughter. They continue on and find Cal beating his fists against the door of his cell. Kilorn opens the door just as the Colonel rounds the corner with several soldiers, and Kilorn pushes her into the cell. The Colonel puts his hand on Kilorn’s shoulder and laughs, and Cal tells Mare that the cell has embedded Silent Stone – a stone that prevents Silvers from using their powers.

In Chapter 8, Cal paces around the cell before accusing Mare of letting her heart dictate her decisions. She reminisces painfully on Maven before asking Cal what they should do. He suggests that they break the glass because the Silent Stone is too strong. He wonders where it came from and Mare tells him that the Colonel and his soldiers are Lakelanders. Cal tells her that they would have to have aircraft to be able to transport soldiers, and Mare realizes that the mysterious structure must house planes. Several hours pass, and Mare suddenly tells Cal that Julian is alive. She tells him about the list and he explains that Maven will try to kill them to secure his reign. Before they can finish their conversation, the Colonel approaches with Kilorn and several soldiers. He gestures at his soldiers and they come forward with Farley, fighting the guards who restrain her. Kilorn takes a syringe from a box and injects her with a sedating drug, and the guards lock her in a cell across from Mare.

The Colonel and Kilorn enter Cal and Mare’s cell next, and the Colonel pulls a pistol from his coat. Cal asks what he plans to trade him for, and the Colonel tells him that Maven has agreed to raise the age of conscription from fifteen-years-old to eighteen in



exchange for his brother. Although Maven will likely betray his bargain, denying it will cause thousands to die. The Colonel tells Cal that he will be transported the next day and that Mare will be held and watched. Kilorn lets the box of syringes fall from his jacket, and as the Colonel goes to pick them up he injects him with one hidden in his fist. Cal jumps up and knocks the Colonel to the ground. With the Colonel unconscious, Mare punches Kilorn in the face and then embraces him. Still locked in the cell, Cal, Mare, and Kilorn watch as Shade jumps behind the soldiers outside and knocks them unconscious. He unlocks the door, and Farley joins them – apparently having faked her reaction to a harmless drug in the syringe. The four of them hold Shade's arm and prepare to jump out of the bunker.

Chapter 9 begins as Shade jumps Cal, Mare, Kilorn, and Farley out of the bunker and to the mysterious hangar. They land in the hanger below a Snapdragon and a large black jet called a Blackrun. A mechanic steps out and asks what they are doing there, but Farley orders him to open the hangar door. As she argues with him, the rest get on the jet and Mare starts the engine with her lightning. The hangar door remains closed and Mare uses her power to open it, revealing two dozen Lakeland soldiers and Guardsmen. Farley climbs aboard and Cal directs the jet forward, taking flight off the island amid gunfire. Once in the air, Kilorn gives Cal maps and Farley tells him to land at Nine-Five Field, a ruin. Cal tells her that it is impossible, but since Mare can recharge the batteries they can fly wherever they want to. Kilorn pulls the list of newbloods from his jacket – stolen from the Colonel – and Farley asks which one is closest to Nine-Five. When Cal and Mare protest, Shade reveals that Farley had the ruin repaved. Farley tells them that the Scarlet Guard has a presence in not only Norta and Lakeland, but a nation called Piedmont as well. Mare looks through the list and finds a newblood named Nix Marsten in Coraunt, a town near the field.

## Analysis

Kilorn's plea for Mare's trust and subsequent betrayal further diminish Mare's ability to trust others and create a sense of isolation. Already, Mare has isolated herself from her brother, Farley, and the rest of the Scarlet Guard. Despite her long history with Kilorn, she struggles to believe him when he offers his word. He promises her that he will help her and pleads for her trust. His words are convincing at face value, but Mare refuses to accept them. Her refusal is later justified when he betrays her and locks her in the cell with Cal. Although he apologizes, both Mare and the reader feel anger towards Kilorn. Betrayal by her closest friend and confidante confirms that Mare is unable to trust anyone, and leaves her isolated, unable to rely on those closest to her.

Mare's fear of water symbolizes her faith in Cal and her protective attitude towards him. When Mare learns that Cal is being kept in an underwater cell, she thinks that it is the best place to stifle his power. That he might fear water is understandable, given his power over fire. Mare's ability is not limited by moisture – in fact, it is conducive to it – but she still feels anxiety when she dives below the surface with Kilorn. She describes it as “the plunge through suffocating, drowning darkness” (93), indicating that she is not afraid of only the water, but the silencing effect of it. Her fear is reiterated when she is



locked in the cell, which is itself damp. Her fear of water, although it threatens her little harm, reflects her dedication to Cal and her vicarious fear for him. She feels threatened by the one thing that threatens him, indicating a deeply-rooted protective attitude for him.

Ability and strength serve as a source of confidence and security for Mare, implying that her identity and relationships are founded on power and little else. While she is in the cell with Cal, surrounded by Silent Stone, Mare reflects on the ways that their identities change. For Cal, the loss of his power forces him to rely on his mind alone, a feature he uses infrequently on its own. While her background has provided her a somewhat stronger identity, the loss of her power returns her to an uncomfortable state as a girl motivated by selfishness. She feels little attachment to this identity, emphasizing the value of her power to her self-perception. When Shade and Kilorn rescue them, she thinks that “even if I can’t trust Kilorn, Cal, or anyone else, I can trust in ability. In strength. In power” (114). Mare believes that her relationships and identity are constantly changing and are therefore untrustworthy. Power, however, remains constant, giving her something stable to hold onto as a beacon of trust.

The division between the blood types is challenged in this section as Mare questions her relationships with Reds and Silvers alike. The primary division in the Glass Sword world exists between Reds and Silvers, but this division blurs at many points. Although Mare is technically a Red, she is ostracized by many of the Reds around her. The Colonel does not hide his distaste for her, and even Kilorn agrees that she is dangerous. Although many Silvers still hate her, Cal and Julian appear to be more sympathetic to her than even her closest Red companions. Similarly, Mare starts to feel closer bonds with Silvers despite her lifelong belief that they are her enemies. She longs for Cal and defends Julian, despite their Silver blood, and she trusts them more than Shade and Kilorn. Mare begins to dismantle the strict division and competition between Silvers and Reds with her relationships, but her presence alone blurs the distinction. Her and Shade’s existence shows that there is not as clear of a dividing line as many assume. When her and Cal’s blood mixes on the cell door, it symbolizes the potential end to the division between blood types.

## Discussion Question 1

Why does Kilorn wince when Mare mentions Julian before they go to find Cal? What does this reaction indicate about his relationship to Julian?

## Discussion Question 2

What is Kilorn referring to when he says that the Colonel is not entirely wrong? Which of the Colonel’s beliefs does he agree with?



## Discussion Question 3

Mare thinks that she needs Cal “in more ways than one” (110). What ways might she be referring to?

## Vocabulary

persona, visceral, incapacitated, façade, gloat, saunters, disparaging, conniving, trove





# Chapters 10 - 12

## Summary

Chapter 10 begins as Farley and Kilorn divide up the stores on the Blackrun, which Mare learns is the Colonel's jet, into piles of food, guns, and bandages. Mare suddenly remembers her parents and siblings and becomes upset for leaving them behind. Cal comforts her until she calms down, but she feels that she is alone nonetheless. The jet passes over several navy ships and Mare asks how they will pass undetected. Cal explains that when they reach Fort Patriot's sensor range, he will send out a fake call sign to trick them. Mare remarks that "no one expects rebels to know how to fly" (133), and Cal stiffens and walks to the back of the jet. Mare retrieves two food and looks up to see Cal changing into a flight suit. He grabs the Burning Crown badge on the chest, the emblem of Norta, and rips it off.

Mare sits with Shade and they talk about their family. Because they are Reds and not newbloods, they hope they will be safe back in Tuck. Shade tells her that, although he and she are different, they are not better or worse than others. Cal returns to the cockpit and announces that they will be in range of Fort Patriot soon. The rest of the passengers take seats, and Kilorn notes Mare's earrings – four stones given to her by him and each of her brothers when they were conscripted into the military. Cal gives the fake call sign over the radio to Fort Patriot and they warn him of storms ahead. Twenty minutes later, they land in the forest at Nine-Five. Farley and Shade go to scout the rest of the runway and Cal starts to leave with a backpack before Mare catches his arm. She convinces him to stay with her instead of seeking out Maven himself.

In Chapter 11, Mare, Kilorn, Farley, Shade, and Cal travel the four miles from the landing strip to Coraunt. The town sits at the intersection between the Regent's River and Port Road – a major byway for traders and military. While the rest travel effortlessly through the forest, Cal struggles to make his way, tripping over boulders and branches. They reach a stream and Kilorn and Mare swim across. Cal is hesitant, clearly afraid of water, but makes it across. Shade jumps himself and Farley over. They reach a rise that overlooks Coraunt and see a small town with a watchtower ahead. Cal suggests that he and Mare hide out and take out security officers. Mare reluctantly agrees and suggests that Kilorn remains behind with them – if anyone hears of their presence, Maven will come to the town. Shade and Farley depart for the town and Mare, Kilorn, and Cal head towards a patch of tall grass. Mare tells them that she will give Nix a choice to join them or stay behind, because no one gave her that choice.

After an hour of waiting, Mare, Cal, and Kilorn hear someone approaching their hiding spot. The approaching figures make a bird call, and Kilorn responds in kind. Farley steps forward with Shade and Nix. Kilorn blocks Mare from view as she talks to Nix and tells him that there is something different about him. He agrees, and she steps out from behind Kilorn. He recognizes her, and then spots Cal. He tackles him and punches him in the face. Mare warns him and then shocks him, but Nix is unfazed. Cal throws a



fireball at him, but his flamemaker bracelet breaks on impact. Shade appears behind Nix and jumps him ten feet away. Nix climbs back to his feet and tells Cal that he killed his daughters, Dara and Jenny, by leading them in an attack across the river where they drowned. Cal looks at him and apologizes, and then tells him that there are other newbloods like him. Mare offers him the choice to join or go back to Coraunt. He agrees to join, if Cal stays away from him.

Chapter 12 begins as the group starts their journey back through the forest towards the Blackrun. Mare feels that recruiting Nix was too easy, and decides to close her heart to him. As they walk, she daydreams about victory over Maven and reminisces on her past with the king. Nix asks if Mare seduced Cal into killing the king, as Maven had told the kingdom. Kilorn tells him that it was Maven and Elara's fault, and Cal tells him how he was mind controlled into killing his own father by Elara, the false queen who killed his mother. Cal and Mare both agree to kill Elara.

The cohort reaches the Blackrun and approaches cautiously, looking for traps. Mare lights the compartment and they climb inside. She powers on the jet, and Nix looks at her with disbelief. He asks Kilorn what his power is, and he responds that he catches fish, upset by the question. Nix tells him he is a crabber and Kilorn appears to feel better. Mare tells Cal to go to Harbor Bay, and Farley tells them that she has enough friends to get them through the protective walls. Mare falls asleep and wakes some time later to a conversation between Farley and Cal. He tells Farley that he is circling over the ocean to give Mare time to sleep. He apologizes to Farley for torturing her in the Hall of the Sun and she accepts his apology. Mare wakes up as the jet touches down, and Farley tells the group that there is an Undertrain that will take them closer to Harbor Bay. She and Cal argue about whether he and Mare should go into the city, and Mare slips the city map from Farley's grasp. She studies the map and the network of tunnels and alleys in the city before telling Cal that she is going with Farley.

## Analysis

Mare experiences internal conflict in this section because she fears being alone, yet she craves independence. As she escapes Tuck on the Blackrun, Mare is overwhelmed with thoughts about her own isolation and failure. She thinks that she is alone, and that although there are others with her, there is no one "beside" her. She feels as though others fear and misunderstand her, preventing her from forming close, trusting bonds. Her anxiety over being alone is overwhelming and ever-present, but it stands in conflict with her simultaneous desire for independence. When they land on Nine-Five field, Mare is relieved that she is no longer being watched and she feels that "I belong to myself again" (142). Her relief is short-lived, and she finds herself craving isolation while she, Kilorn, and Cal wait for Shade and Farley's return from Coraunt. Although being alone by choice and forced isolation are not equivalent, Mare does not distinguish them clearly. This creates a conflict in her character as she struggles to balance her desire for independence with her fear of being alone.



Aveyard uses Shade and Mare's differing opinions on their status as well as Kilorn and Nix's relationship to draw attention to the way that difference is portrayed in the novel. Although Mare believes that her power separates and isolates her from others, she places great value on her ability. She believes that newbloods, particularly herself, are rightfully feared by others and that they possess power far beyond that of those around them. Shade questions her belief, telling her that, not only are they not wrong, they are "certainly not better" (136) than other Reds. Mare disagrees, highlighting that while she may value some Reds, like Kilorn, she still believes that they are weaker than her. Kilorn is aware of this dynamic, and his jealousy over the newbloods' powers is obvious. However, his relationship with Nix questions the belief that newbloods are superior. Nix is unaffected by Kilorn's statement that he "catches fish" (168) when asked about his power. In fact, Nix bonds with Kilorn more closely than Mare or Shade. As they talk about fishing knots on the Blackrun, Mare wishes that she could have "normal" conversations like them. Nix, by her definition, is not normal. However, his identity is not limited to his blood or his ability and instead centralizes on his upbringing as a poor Red. This interaction emphasizes that, contrary to Mare's belief, the newbloods are less separate from Reds than she assumes.

Aveyard repeats specific phrases to build tension and highlight themes in this section, particularly the theme of betrayal. Throughout the section, the phrase "anyone can betray anyone" is repeated in Mare's narration. She dwells on the idea of betrayal, first in regards to Cal, then Nix. Her lack of trust, particularly in characters who ultimately prove trustworthy, builds the tone of unease and anxiety in the novel. The explicit attention to betrayal is accompanied by several mentions of lies. For instance, Mare notes the lies that the Nortan Kingdom tells its people to distract them from Maven's terror. At the end of Chapter 12, Mare herself lies, and even takes pride in it. The repetitive mention of betrayal and lies centralizes dishonesty to the plot and highlights Mare's anxiety about trust. This, in turn, creates a sense of anxiety for the reader, as they can no longer trust the narrator herself.

## Discussion Question 1

Why is Cal upset by Mare's comments about the stolen jets?

## Discussion Question 2

How does Kilorn and Nix's relationship challenge Mare's beliefs about difference? How does their similarity challenge the idea that newbloods are better or worse than Reds?

## Discussion Question 3

Why does Nix back down when Cal explains that Elara forced him to kill his father? Is his response empathetic? Why or why not?

## Vocabulary

archipelago, incense, begrudgingly, emblazoned, feign, momentum, traipse



# Chapters 13 - 15

## Summary

In Chapter 13, Kilorn gives Mare words of encouragement as she, Farley, Cal, and Shade leave the Blackrun for Harbor Bay, while he and Nix stay behind. While they walk through the forest, Mare feels the electricity of a watch or radio up ahead. They hide and Farley makes a birdcall. The person ahead returns it and a boy named Crance approaches. Farley asks him about another Guard member, Melody, and their leader, Egan, and he tells her that she is welcome with The Mariners, their branch of the Scarlet Guard. Mare notices that Crance is not wearing a watch and comes forward with Cal. He shakes Mare's hand and tells her that she looks better on the wanted posters in town. She asks him if he has other people with him and two women and one man step forward. The entire group departs for the city and Shade whispers to Mare to trust no one.

The group follows a series of underground tunnels into Harbor Bay. Shade and Crance converse about Shade's escape, feigning friendliness. Crance is a thief, and Mare reminisces on her own days as a thief in the Stilts. She thinks that if Crance was not outnumbered and overpowered, he would turn her over to authorities. Crance tells the group that Maven has sealed parts of the tunnels, and that they will have to surface at the Fish Market. Shade encourages Mare to tell Crance the names of the newbloods, Ada Wallace and Wolliver Galt, and Crance tells them that Wolliver is part of a family that makes ale. He does not admit to know Ada. He explains that the Mariners are a group of smugglers who answer to the Scarlet Guard. Mare begins to question him about his motivations, and it becomes clear that he is hiding something from her. The conversation turns to conflict and Crance reveals that he is leading them into a trap for a bounty on Mare. The Mariners fire their guns at Shade and Mare shoots lightning at a nearby beam, crushing them in the tunnel. Crance tells them to run.

Chapter 14 begins as Mare, Shade, Farley, Cal, and Crance run through the tunnels to avoid the growing collapse. They reach a metal service door and Cal melts it, allowing them to escape the tunnel. Crance tells them to exit at Paltry Place, where the Mariners will not be waiting because it is Seaskull, a rival gang's territory. He tells Mare that by helping them he is protecting his blood, and steps to the surface. Mare and the rest follow and emerge into a bustling market. Mare steals two shawls for herself and Cal and they put them on just before passing a large signboard with their wanted posters displayed. Cal's posters are covered in graffiti declaring him a "kingkiller" and exile, while Mare's display more hopeful messages like "she lives" and "rise" (196). They climb a staircase to the main level of the Paltry and Shade tells Mare that they are being followed. She looks back to see a group of Seaskulls working through the crowd towards them. A Seaskull woman steps in front of them and grabs Crance with her cane, knocking him to the ground along with Shade. She starts beating them both and, although she is reluctant to leave her brother, Mare realizes that the fight will provide an appropriate distraction for her to reach the Security Center with Cal and find Ada.



Mare, Farley, and Cal continue towards the Security Center and smell a strong odor on the street. Cal tries to prevent Mare from following the smell but she ducks past his arm and discovers a burnt square with several corpses hanging from trees, adorned with red medallions. Farley explains that they are the Red Watch – a group of Reds that act as the police in bigger Red cities to protect each other when the Silver Security will not. They continue walking until a large palace comes into view – Ocean Hill, one of the royal family's residences and Cal's old home.

In Chapter 15, Cal, Mare, and Farley continue walking towards the Security Center. They connect with a busy road off Port Road and Mare watches several army and civilian transports flying Silver flags, looking for Maven's family colors. Mare asks how much farther they have to go and Cal gestures to the top of Ocean Hill ahead, with a well-guarded plaza extending below. The Security Center stands at the corner of the square, adorned with flags of the Burning Crown and Maven's image. They stand in the road and try to come up with a plan. Mare suggests that they break in and take what they need, since Maven will know their plan as soon as Nix is discovered missing. Cal reluctantly agrees, and they approach the back door of the security center. Mare short circuits the security cameras and then tells the four Silver security guards, a banshee, shiver, strongarm, and one unidentified, that she would like to file a complaint. They laugh at her, and she drops her hood, as does Cal. The soldiers scramble for their guns, but Mare, Cal, and Farley quickly defeat them and step into the Security Center.

Cal leads Mare and Farley to the records room while they fight off incoming soldiers. He blocks the door with a wall of flame while they look up Ada Wallace, Wolliver Galt, and several other newbloods outside of Harbor Bay on a large, computerized machine. While they work, a stonewall Silver breaks through the wall and hits Farley's head into the far window, knocking her unconscious. Cal pushes her back and Mare short circuits the records machine. Farley awakens and stumbles forward, and Cal burns a hole in the floor, dropping them into the room below. They run into the Ocean Hill palace, into the palace library. Mare collapses the bridge where soldiers are gathering and Cal opens a hidden passageway behind a bookshelf. They descend into a tunnel and emerge at the front of the palace. They exit to find themselves surrounded by guards, but Shade appears and jumps them to an alley. They walk to Battle Garden to find Wolliver, but when they arrive they find his corpse hanging from a statue.

## Analysis

Mare continues to distrust those around her in this section, but she unwittingly forms a trusting bond with her brother, creating a conflict in her character. When she, Farley, Cal, and Shade meet Crance and the Mariners, Mare is characteristically vigilant. She notes that Crance is a thief, and reflects on her own motivations as a thief years prior. Her understanding of Crance's lifestyle and willingness to sacrifice others for financial gain causes her to become suspicious in the tunnels, a feeling bolstered by Shade's ominous warning: "trust no one" (181). Crance does betray their trust, but Mare's feelings of unease are not limited to him. She thinks that she can only trust Farley to find her way out of traps, not to help her avoid them and certainly not to be true in her





motivations. However, Mare's distrust is paradoxically informed by her trust in Shade. She follows his instincts and his messages throughout the novel, even though she claims that she does not trust him. She believes in him and his loyalty more than any other character, even if she does not consciously believe this to be true. Her belief that she trusts no one while she continually trusts Shade's judgement creates a conflict in her character and emphasizes that she is less alone than she considers herself to be.

Mare and Cal's relationship deepens in this section as they both struggle with their link to Maven. However, Mare struggles to develop closeness with Cal due to their differing backgrounds, classes, and blood, creating conflict in the novel. Mare finds it difficult to form relationships with anyone in the novel for a variety of reasons. She struggles to trust others, and she is fearful that she will lose anyone she befriends. She feels a special bond to Cal, however, and attributes it to their shared pain over Maven. She feels that Cal keeps her from being alone in her suffering because he understands Maven's betrayal as well as she does. She views him as a crutch – a source of personal comfort that she desires to let go of but cannot. While her bond to Cal deepens, she begins to notice the divisions between them more heavily. For instance, in the Paltry, Cal knows his way around because as a prince he would leave Ocean Hill to go to taverns and blend in with the Red crowds. Mare realizes that, while he may sympathize with the Reds, "he saw hunger and injustice, but not enough to warrant change. Not enough to be worth his worry. That is until his world chewed him up and spit him out" (202). Cal only acts with her and the Scarlet Guard because the comfort of Silver life is no longer available to him – he did not care enough about the struggles of Reds to make a change when he had the power to do so. When he tells Mare he will not kill Silvers, it becomes clear to her that despite his affection, he still holds deeply rooted beliefs about the superiority of Silvers. Mare's draw towards Cal is interrupted by his upper-class Silver identity, creating a conflict between them.

Mare experiences a major shift in this section between an unsure, shifting identity to one rooted in values and ideals. Up until this point, Mare has felt insecure in her identity. She fluctuates between faith in her power and fear, between a sense of powerlessness and guilt and a sense of pride and strength. When she realizes Crance's betrayal, however, she becomes empowered in her identity. She thinks that she is no longer a thief and betrayer, and that "I am the lightning girl, and now I have too many ideals to count. Freedom, revenge, liberty, everything that fuels the sparks within me, and the resolve that keeps me going" (188). Later, she thinks that although she appears unassuming, she is nonetheless powerful. She fully embraces the term "lightning girl" for the first time, and begins to identify positively with her power, background, and ambitions. This shift marks a major shift in the novel as a whole as Mare's power takes on new meaning for her.

## Discussion Question 1

How do names and nicknames function in this section? When Crance initially calls Shade "Rabbit", what does it indicate about their relationship? How does it change later in the section?



## Discussion Question 2

What parallels does Aveyard draw between discrimination in Glass Sword and discrimination in the real world?

## Discussion Question 3

Crance joins Mare because he does not want to betray his “blood”. What does blood refer to in this context? What does Crance’s change of heart signify about the power of blood in the novel?

## Vocabulary

ebb, scrutinizing, petulant, exorbitant, thwarts, vermin, subterranean, haggard, haphazard, permeates, meticulously, palatial, inexorably, debacle





# Chapters 16 - 18

## Summary

Chapter 16 begins with Mare reflecting on those who have died in her name. Farley, Shade, and Mare start towards Wolliver's hanging body to take it down but Cal stops them and warns them that it may be a trap. He and Mare see Maven's crown in the shadows and two swifts pull Shade away from them before he can jump them away. Mare shoots lightning at them, but a persistent clicking sound dulls her vision and focus. Ptolemus grabs her arm and kicks her to the ground. She looks up to see Maven crouching above her, and he tightens his grip on her arm. The clicking continues and Mare feels herself being shocked with lightning. Mare believes that she is dying.

In Chapter 17, Mare wakes up with Kilorn holding her in a packed dirt house. She sees the worried expressions on his and Cal's faces and begins to remember the events of the previous night. Cal tells her that they had to land the Blackrun after leaving Harbor Bay because she overloaded the jet in her unconscious state. Cal runs his hand down Mare's neck and she discovers lightning scars along her skin. He tells her that Maven came to Harbor Bay unannounced to catch them, but Shade saved them from capture after she had already gone unconscious. Mare learns that she was asleep for four days and that they have rescued other newbloods, including Ada Wallace thanks to Crance, who has joined them. Ada's ability is to memorize and retain information, and she has already learned to fly the Blackrun.

Cal explains to Mare that the clicking sound came from a modified sounder device. The device interrupts electrical signals and can disrupt Mare's power. Mare is overwhelmed with memories and leans into Cal's arms. She shows him an M that Maven burned into her neck, and he tells her that Maven wants to destroy the newbloods to get to her. He tells her that he will not let Maven hurt her again and she kisses him.

In Chapter 18, Kilorn confronts Mare about kissing Cal. She tells him that he does not know what he is talking about, and he sardonically agrees it this statement. He tells her that he knows she does not love him, and asks her to not let Cal control her. She tells him that she and Cal are going to kill Maven and Elara, but that Cal does not want to be king. Kilorn is not convinced, and walks away after warning Mare that she will soon "get lost" (256). The group of fugitives continue to rescue newbloods across Nort, evading Maven's attempts to catch them. In a city called Haven, they find an eight-year-old newblood named Luther Carver. His father asks Mare why his son is different, and she tells him that she does not truly know. Luther pulls his hand away from Mare when she tries to touch him, and Cal crouches down to talk to him. He creates a ball of fire in his hand to calm him, and his father brings him a potted plant. Luther touches the plant and it dies. His father gives him a pair of gloves and sends him with Mare.

The recruitment process continues over several weeks. Luther practices controlling his power while other newbloods, like Nanny, who can change her appearance, take



lessons and train with Cal, Mare, and the others. Mare is exhausted by the process and feels that she is a bad teacher. She works closely with a woman named Ketha, who can blow up objects with her gaze. As she works to train the others, Kilorn spends his time fishing and hunting to feed the camp. Mare notes his distance, but does not have the time or energy to reach out to him. The number in the camp climbs to twenty-six, and they keep track of Maven's whereabouts via newspaper headlines. They know that there are many newbloods dying by his hand each day.

## Analysis

The tone of the novel shifts twice in this section, first from empowered to weak, and then back to a hopeful tone. Although Mare has just discovered strength in her own identity, her encounter with Maven in Harbor Bay shakes her. When she wakes up in the Notch, she feels fearful, weak, and broken, as Maven was able to rob her of her power with the sounder device. She thinks that "I am nothing but a single bolt of lightning in the blackness of a lonely storm. If I am a sword, I am a sword made of glass, and I feel myself beginning to shatter" (250). Her newfound strength is questioned, and the tone of the novel changes from empowerment to instability. As she, Cal, Farley, and Shade continue to rescue newbloods, however, the tone shifts back to one of tentative hope. She watches the newbloods grow in number and learn to control their abilities, and her hope for a better future is somewhat restored. This second shift, so soon after her experience with Maven, is still tinged with insecurity about the future – there is hope, but it is hesitant.

Mare's fear of being alone continues to be a driving factor in this section, and while she finds comfort in Cal's presence, she struggles to believe in his stability. This creates tension in their relationship and in Mare's character, as she tries to bond with those around her. As Mare goes unconscious from the sounder device, she worries that she will die alone. Her dying though revolves around isolation, emphasizing to the reader the importance of this fear to her character. Despite this fear, she still struggles to become close with those around her. Cal begins to bridge this gap. When she wakes up in the Notch, Cal holds her, and she fights the urge to push him away. She thinks, "Cal is still here. He will never leave me" (248), an unprecedented thought for a character who is usually consumed with the fear that her loved ones will abandon or betray her. Her comfort with him soon fades, however, and a short time later she thinks that "one day he will leave, or die, or betray me like so many others have. One day, he will hurt me" (251). Her shift between trust and distrust, closeness and isolation, is difficult for her and causes her to feel that something is inherently wrong with her. Further, it is difficult for Cal. He desires to be close to Mare and is willing to dedicate himself to her, but his attempts at closeness are rejected. This creates significant tension in their relationship.

Maven's branding of Mare acts as a form of both symbolic and physical control over her, one that complements the control he already holds over her relationships and identity. Throughout the novel, Mare recognizes that her relationships, trust, and identity have been significantly damaged by Maven's betrayal. She struggles to get close to Cal, to



maintain her friendship with Kilorn, believe in her own self-worth, and even trust her own brother because she fears the fallout of another betrayal like that of Maven's. Although not direct, Maven operates control over almost every aspect of Mare's life. When he brands her with an "M", he creates a symbolic reminder of this control that she must see daily. The brand represents his complete domination over her life symbolically, but it also controls her physically. When she tries to smile, the brand and its accompanying scars cause her pain – while his psychological marks have taken away much of her ability to feel happiness, his physical mark has taken away her ability to express it.

## Discussion Question 1

What does Mare mean by "I can't trust the colors I see" (251)? What is the symbolism of the word "colors" in this context?

## Discussion Question 2

When Mare thinks she is dying, she thinks that "at least this will end" (236). What is she referring to?

## Discussion Question 3

Why does Maven want Mare to return to him? Are his motivations political, personal, or both?

## Vocabulary

obliterated, frayed, sod, peculiarity, undaunted, reverberating, smarmy, tussle, languid, ingratiates, concussive



# Chapters 19 - 21

## Summary

Chapter 19 begins as Mare and her team travel to a town called Templyn after three days of failed rescues. Shade is injured and Cal stays at the Notch to teach, leaving Mare to lead by herself. She is accompanied by Farley, Crance, Nix, and a newblood named Harrick who can create mirages. Crance brings them into the town in a horse drawn cart and Harrick hides them from the security guard's eyes. They navigate the town to a Scarlet Guard safe house and are greeted by a woman named Ellie Whistle. Ellie helps them stock supplies without question and tells them that Scarlet Guard Command has given her orders to "help Captain Farley and the lightning girl, no matter the cost" (271). Harrick disguises Mare, Farley, and Nix as poor Reds and they walk to the home of the Marcher family for their next rescue.

The group enters the Marcher's house after their knock receives no response. The house is empty, but Mare spots a small spark in the corner under a rag. She moves the rag to find a baby's corpse and an alarm. Harrick hides them again as soldiers surround the house. They search the home, but do not find the invisible fugitives. They decide the alarm has malfunctioned and leave. Mare covers the baby with her jacket and takes a small note clenched in her fist. The note is from Maven, declaring that if she surrenders the rest of the newbloods will be spared. They return to the Notch and she spends the night in Cals room.

In Chapter 20, Mare begins to spend every night with Cal. Kilorn stops speaking to them both, even though they do not do anything more than sleep. Mare continues to find notes from Maven during rescues, promising to see her on her birthday. She wakes up next to Cal on his birthday and goes for a walk. She comes across Ada and Ketha teaching Kilorn to write. When he sees her approach, he quickly stands and walks into the woods. Ketha leaves for the house and Mare sits with Ada. Ada tells Mare that she killed one of her previous employer's sons, Ryker. She then shows Mare a piece of paper that Shade stole from a soldier during a rescue. It shows a plan to replace nine legions of soldiers with ten in the Choke trenches. Ada tells Mare that she thinks the tenth legion is made up of child soldiers and is being sent to die. Mare tells her that there is nothing she can do. As she turns to leave, Ada tells her that Maven will be an hour away from their rescue mission for the day.

In the Blackrun, Mare passes over the Rift – a wilderness section of Nortia where the city of Pitarus is located. She is accompanied by Cal, Shade, Farley, Nanny, and a newblood named Gareth Baument who can manipulate gravity. They land in a valley and Nanny disguises herself as a Silver officer so that Gareth can fly her into the city. When everyone else has left the jet, Cal tells Mare that she should talk to Kilorn. He tells her that he asks to come on their rescues and that he is angry at her for refusing to let him help, not because she is with a different man. She walks away to help Nanny and Gareth prepare for their flight. The pair take off and the rest of the team walk



through the woods towards the abandoned mining town of Rosen. As they search the abandoned buildings, a man emerges from the ash and greets them by their full names. He tells them that the newbloods in Pitarus are dead and that Maven is waiting. Mare realizes that the man is a newblood with the ability to see the future.

In Chapter 21, the man tells the rescue team that his name is Jon. He tells Mare that he will not join them at the Notch, and that Gareth and Nanny will return soon needing medical attention. He tells Cal that Julian and Sara are awaiting execution at Corros Prison. The prison also contains several newbloods, and Queen Elara plans to use them to her advantage. Mare announces that she believes the man and that she is going to find the prison. They walk back to the Blackrun and meet Gareth and Nanny, who were ambushed as Jon predicted. The team walks back onto the jet, but Jon remains behind. He tells Mare that he is not coming, but that they will meet again. He gives her flight instructions and tells her to tell Farley that if she has doubts, the answer to her question is “yes”. Cal takes the jet into flight and Mare tells him to fly to Little Sword Lake per Jon’s instructions. They touch down a mile away, and as Mare heads towards the lake she hears the click of a gun.

## Analysis

Mare continues to feel isolated from those around her, and her encounter with Jon foreshadows further isolation in the novel. At the Notch, Mare is surrounded by other newbloods who, like her, have been put in danger and forced to leave their homes and families. Many of them possess significant power, and many of them also feel estranged from the Red world because of their abilities. However, Mare still feels as though she stands apart from them. She thinks that “no matter how much I try to be one of them, they see me as something apart. Either a leader or a leper, but always an outsider” (272). She grows closer to Cal because she feels that he is the only one who does not fear her. Her isolation is partially due to others, and partially self-inflicted, but it nonetheless creates an immense feeling of loneliness for Mare. When she meets Jon, Mare places her trust in him and is hopeful that he will give her word of a brighter future. While Jon does offer some useful advice, his parting words to Mare leave her frustrated. He tells her that her fate is to rise alone, confirming her belief that she must stand alone against Maven. Jon’s message foreshadows an important, yet solitary role in overpowering Maven.

Maven’s notes build on the theme of trust in the novel and foreshadow conflict. The first note that Mare finds in Templyn sets a threatening tone for the remainder of the section, as Maven’s words, “until we meet again” (276), suggest another ambush is imminent. The letter she finds in Corvium expands on this threat, giving concrete details about her and Maven’s next encounter. It suggests that Cal will be killed before his next birthday and that Mare will be in Maven’s company by hers. As Maven’s threats become more concrete, the reader begins to believe that he has a plan to capture Mare, creating a sense of anxiety and foreshadowing future encounters. The notes also explore the theme of trust, as Maven assures Mare that he is a man of his word. His words, while manipulative, contain no outright lies that Mare can detect. Although she cannot trust



others' good intentions, she does trust Maven's cruelty, making his notes appear reliable. Maven is responsible for destroying Mare's trust initially, but in his new position of power he no longer relies on deception.

Throughout the novel, Mare fluctuates between trust and closeness with Cal and distrust of him. When he approaches her about Kilorn, he discusses this conflict openly, bringing the tension in her character and their relationship to the surface. Mare believes that by refusing to let Kilorn go on missions she is protecting him, and she also believes that he is upset with her because of her relationship with Cal. When Cal tells her that this is not the case, she does not initially believe him. Cal tells her that he knows she does not trust him or Kilorn. He tells her, "you can't go through this alone. And don't say you have me, because we both know you don't believe that either" (291). Up until now, Mare has believed that she hid her distrust well. She considers herself a good liar, but Cal's attention to her distrust in him and her tendency towards isolation shows the reader that she is more transparent than she believes. Cal is well aware of Mare's feelings, despite her attempts to hide them, and the tension in her character now rises to the surface of their relationship.

## Discussion Question 1

Why does Mare trust Jon, while her companions do not?

## Discussion Question 2

What is the significance of the thunderstorm in this section? What does it symbolize?

## Discussion Question 3

Maven tells Mare that "I am a man of my word" (276) in his notes. Is he reliable? Why or why not?

## Vocabulary

clapboard, sidling, leper, rabble, eaves, ferocious, intrigue, jettisoning, jerry-rigged, volatile, rankles, ramrod, placid, harbinger



# Chapters 22 - 24

## Summary

At the beginning of Chapter 22, Mare and her companions realize they have been ambushed by a group of Silvers wielding weapons. They manage to disarm the Silvers. One of the Silvers tells Shade that she is from New Town, and Mare notices a tattooed serial number on her neck. Cal asks her how she got the gun and she tells him that she took it from a Silver guard at Corros Prison with the power to see the future. She identifies herself as Cameron Cole, and Mare explains to her that she is a newblood. Cameron tells her that she is going to the Choke to find her brother and runs into the woods. Shade jumps and grabs her. The narration skips forward to some time later, as Cameron is restrained in a seat in the Blackrun. She refuses to tell Mare anything about her ability or about Corros. She tells Mare that she is doing exactly what the Silvers did an age ago, finding them and separating them from everyone else. Mare becomes enraged and punches Cameron, who has escaped her restraints, in the jaw. Mare falls to the ground as Cameron unintentionally silences her ability and smothers her. Cal calms her down until Mare recovers. She tells Cameron that she will help her control her ability.

Chapter 23 begins with Mare gathering all the adults of the Notch together amidst a storm. She tells them about Jon and his premonitions, and that they must raid Corros in three days despite their lack of preparedness. Crance speaks up and tells her that the task is impossible, and she tells him that Cameron escaped. After a long silence, Cameron tells the room that the prison is in a place called Wash. The cells are equipped with Silent Stone. As she describes the prison, Harrick creates an image of it in the room. It is a deep pit with several cell blocks. Cal asks where the imprisoned Silvers are kept and Nix scoffs, telling him they should stay in prison to rot. Cal responds that they must be imprisoned for defying Maven and Elara and, if released, will create a perfect distraction to rescue the others. Cameron goes on to explain that they walk the prisoners once a week to keep the Silent Stone from killing them, but since it does not affect her she was able to run. She used her skills as a mechanic to open the door.

Cameron changes the subject and tells the room that, even though she had a job in New Town, she and her brother were both conscripted to fight. She tells the group that five thousand child soldiers are being sent to die, her brother included, and that they should not follow Mare and Cal to the prison. Kilorn interjects and states that Mare is responsible for saving all of their lives. He tells them that, although Mare is not perfect, her motivation is honorable. Gareth, Nix, Ada, Ketha, and two other newbloods pledge to raid the prison, while the others stay silent. She tells them that they can stay behind to protect the children if anything happens. Mare leaves the house and casts lightning from the sky in the storm. Kilorn approaches behind her and asks if she will allow him to go to Corros. She will, and they joke together for the first time in weeks.





In Chapter 24, Mare and the others prepare to raid Corros. Cal becomes distant while Mare trains Cameron. Cameron tells Mare she is done training two hours before they are scheduled to be done. Mare offers her a thirty minute break and tells her to return. Mare goes back into the house and runs into Shade and Farley. Farley keeps walking, but Mare stops her brother and realizes that he and Farley are in a relationship. She continues on and finds Cal studying maps in his room. He jokes with Mare sarcastically and squeezes her knee hard. When he answers her concerned questions with jokes, she knocks him to the floor. She tells him that she is afraid and that she misses Maven. Cal tells her that if Maven and Elara are at Corros, the queen will use his anger to turn him against Mare. He tells her that the prison is a death trap and that they will not survive. Mare reminds him that the newbloods have powers that Maven cannot plan for, and he smiles.

## Analysis

As a character, Cameron draws attention to the division between Reds, Silvers, and newbloods, building on the theme of division in the novel and causing Mare to question her actions. Throughout the novel, Mare acts to protect herself and, more importantly, other newbloods. While many of the newbloods are unhappy to leave their normal life for the Notch, they are nonetheless grateful for an opportunity to hone their powers or avoid Maven's persecution. Cameron is the first newblood that openly disagrees with Mare's plan, accusing her of being narcissistic and upholding the divisions between blood types. She tells Mare that she is seeking out newbloods "not because they want to, but because you need them. What about those kids going to fight? You don't care about them at all" (318). Mare is taken aback by this accusation, but her actions thus far have ignored the protection of Reds in favor of newbloods. In fact, her actions even favor some Silvers over Reds, like Julian and Sara. Cameron's viewpoint brings the theme of division to the forefront of the novel, and causes Mare to re-evaluate her plans.

Mare's decision to take Cameron to the Notch against her will builds a comparison between her and Mare and causes the reader to question the nature of value and choice. When Mare was dubbed Mareena by the Silvers, she was given no choice but to embrace and use her powers. She was put into a position of power that she did not want, but nonetheless permanently altered her relationships and identity. As she rescues the newbloods, she vows to never put another in the same situation. However, she forces Cameron to join her against her will. She justifies this act because of Cameron's potential value, thinking "she doesn't know how important she is, no matter her ability" (314), and uses her to get into Corros. Like Mare, Cameron is forced to participate in actions she does not want to because others view her as valuable. Mare's decision raises an ethical question in the novel of whether a person's value to a certain end overpowers their individual autonomy.

Several of the characters experience shifts in their identity in this section, highlighting the effects of adversity on identity formation. Mare experiences a sense of closeness with Kilorn, accompanied by a longing for the people they were before she left the Stilts.





She feels a deep longing to be with Kilorn back in their home, when their biggest concerns were hiding out from a passing storm. She realizes, however, that neither she nor Kilorn are the people they once were: “his childish ways are disappearing. Once I hated them. Now I mourn them” (335). She also experiences a shift, hiding her fear from the other newbloods to instill confidence before their raid on Corros. Their changes in behavior and personality show the ways that stress and adversity have changed and matured them, forcing them to hide parts of their personality that were once taken for granted.

## Discussion Question 1

Is Mare responsible for saving the Little Legion? Why or why not?

## Discussion Question 2

What does Cameron’s tattoo symbolize? What historical comparisons is Aveyard drawing with the tattoo?

## Discussion Question 3

When Kilorn stands up for Mare during the meeting, what does it indicate about their relationship?

## Vocabulary

regaling, rapt, dissenters, maelstrom, poring, insubordination, thrumming



# Chapters 25 - 27

## Summary

Chapter 25 begins with Harrick hiding the Notch, as well as the children and adult newbloods who stay behind as the rest leave for Corros. Mare, Cal, Kilorn, Nix, Nanny, Farley, Crance, and the other newbloods wear flight suits as uniforms and prepare their weapons on the Blackrun as they fly. Cal reminds Mare that they have the advantage as Nanny transforms into Maven. Cal tells the Corros flight command that they are Fleet Prime, Maven's personal flight team, and that they are preparing to land. Mare prepares Nanny, giving her advice on how to act convincingly as Maven. They land at Corros and the newbloods put on flight helmets to obscure their faces. They exit the jet and march past the Corros soldiers, who salute to Nanny. The soldier's captain tells the imposter Maven that his specifications for the prison are complete – to individually seal the cells and bring in more silent stone. He asks Cal to identify himself, but Nanny commands him to open the door without identification. They enter the prison and the captain asks if they would like to see Queen Elara. When Cal appears surprised, the captain becomes suspicious and once again asks him to identify himself. Mare tells him no and shorts out the lights and cameras in the prison.

The newbloods begin to fight the Corros soldiers. Cameron silences the Silver "eye" from seeing into the future, and Mare watches as she kills him. Only one newblood, Lory, is injured, but all the soldiers lay dead or dying. Nanny shifts into the captain's image and they continue to the command center. They enter a cell block and Nanny commands the two magnetron guards to open the cells for a walk. The soldiers open the cells and drag the newbloods out onto the walks they have constructed with their abilities. Cal takes off his helmet and Gareth kills the guards. Mare takes off her helmet and goes to help the newbloods to stand, telling them to follow and fight.

In Chapter 26, Mare's team works to help the released prisoners while she, Cal, and Cameron go to the command room. The room is protected by diamondglass and the soldiers inside refuse to open the door. Mare causes the computers and monitors in the room to explode and Cameron silences one of the soldiers until they tell them that Julian and Sara are in Block G. They beg for mercy from Cal, and Mare kills them with her lightning. They make their way to Block G and Cal ignores Mare's requests for help as she fights the guards. They find Julian and he goes to the one guard still alive. He uses his ability to control the guard and tells him to open all the cells. They continue through the prison and find Kilorn and Gareth in Block J, contrary to their plan. Gareth manipulates gravity back and forth, causing Mare to fall. She tells him to stop and hears Queen Elara's voice in her head. Before Elara takes full control of her mind, Mare runs into a cell with Silent Stone, blocking both of their abilities. She approaches Mare and pulls out a gun, but Shade jumps her to a tiled room.

Sara runs to Mare's side and heals her wounds. Cal tells her to run as he helps Julian out of the prison. Mare does as she is told, and rounds a corner to see Ara, the head of



House Iral. Ara throws Mare out of the path of incoming blades, thrown by Ptolemus. Ara fights him and breaks his jaw, and Mare continues to run for the prison's exit. Shade joins her and jumps Cal, Julian, and Sara to the Blackrun. Mare turns to see Queen Elara approaching, and waits for her to get close enough to kill. Ptolemus throws a metal needle through Ara's neck and towards Mare. Shade jumps in front of her and is hit. He dies instantly, and Mare loses her focus.

Chapter 27 begins as Mare regains focus on a cargo jet with three hundred escaped prisoners. She sits with Farley and Shade's body, as well as Queen Elara's corpse. Mare asks Kilorn to tell Cal to change course and fly to Tuck instead of the Notch. Farley asks Mare if she knew that Shade was going to die. Mare slaps her, and Cal and Kilorn interrupt their escalating fight. Mare tells her that the answer to her question is yes, and follows Cal to the cockpit. He confronts her about killing the Silver soldiers in the command room. He tells her that she is still holding on to Maven and that he knows about the notes. She thinks about her guilt, but does not tell Cal.

The cargo plane lands on Tuck and Mare steps out to greet the Colonel. She tells him about Corros and shows him Elara's corpse. The narrative jumps forward to Mare recording a message with the Colonel. She shows her blood and explains her story, encouraging newbloods to seek out the Scarlet Guard. She shows Elara's severed head, and explains that she imprisoned Reds and Silvers both. She turns to leave and the Colonel follows her. He tells her that Command wants to meet her.

## Analysis

Aveyard uses the metaphors of storms and electricity to foreshadow events in the novel and emphasize Mare's power. As the newbloods hike to the Blackrun before going to Corros, Mare thinks that there is "no snow, no storms—yet. For a storm is certainly coming" (353). When they arrive, she feels as if the air is electrified. These metaphors are combined with Mare's anticipation with the raid, for which she is both hopeful and anxious, knowing that several of the newbloods will not survive. The tension rises for the climax of the novel, creating a sense of suspense for the reader. Storms and electricity are central to this rising tension, indicating that Mare, and in particular her power, will be central to the climax.

Mare's identity once again takes a fluid form in this section, continuing to build the theme of identity in the novel. As she flies on the Blackrun for Corros, Mare reflects on how her identity has changed since leaving the Stilts. She thinks, "the girl I see is both familiar and foreign, Mare, Mareena, the lightning girl, the Red Queen, and no one at all... She is seventeen, but ageless, Silver but not, Red but not, human—but not" (354). She feels as though her identity has shifted between several different forms, and all of them feel like facades. However, she still feels a connection to her past that helps to define her now. As she watches Cal fly the jet, she admits that she cannot understand the complicated machinery because she was, and still is, a poor person from the Stilts. Once again, Mare's identity is built off of her past, but not defined by it. She shifts



between identities according to which are most appropriate to her situation, highlighting the fluidity of identity and her ability to adapt.

Trust continues to be a theme in this section, but Mare begins to develop a new understanding of lies, changing the way that dishonesty functions in the novel. As she and her team kill the first group of soldiers in Corros, Cal looks distraught taking the key from Captain Iral. Mare realizes that he promised to not kill Silvers, and has no broken his promise to himself. Her view of betrayal shifts from believing that people can only betray others to recognizing that people, including herself, can betray their own values. Mare also comes to recognize in this section that lies may hold utility that outweighs the value of honesty. As she tells the prisoners that they will survive, she thinks, “by now, I should know better than to lie. But a lie is what they need to carry on, and if my deceit saves even one of them, it is worth the cost to my soul” (371). Her belief in the value of honesty comes into question because it could have life or death consequences – not for her, as in the past, but for others. These shifting views of honesty build depth in Mare’s character and create new thematic questions.

## Discussion Question 1

Are the guards in Corros justified in their actions because they are following orders? Why or why not?

## Discussion Question 2

When Mare lies to the prisoners in Corros, she justifies it as necessary. Do the ends justify the means, even if it means lying? Why or why not?

## Discussion Question 3

Cal asks Mare why she wants to go back to Tuck without going to the Notch and accuses her of being too vengeful. What are her motivations?

## Vocabulary

harried, cache, roiling, rapt, scrutiny, donning, masquerading, sovereign, languid, languishing, festering, tendrils



# Chapters 28 - Epilogue

## Summary

In Chapter 28, Mare and the Colonel walk to Barracks 1 and into the control room. The Colonel asks the Nortan and Lakelander soldiers to leave, but two identical men in green uniforms remain. They introduce themselves as Rash and Tahir and tell her that they have traveled far to meet her and make an offer. They speak in unison and offer her the Free Republic of Montfort. Mare realizes that they are newbloods, and they explain that in Montfort, a distant nation ruled by Silver princes, they are called Ardents. They tell her that the Republic is a haven for Ardents, and they will offer asylum to them in exchange for Mare's military leadership. Mare denies their offer, wary of their militaristic demands, and leaves the room. The Colonel follows Mare and offers his condolences for Shade. She tells him about the child soldiers sent to the Choke and he offers to help her.

The narrative skips forward to Mare lying in the infirmary by herself, reminiscing on Shade's death. Julian approaches her and scolds her for avoiding her family. He tells her that he is afraid that she will make the wrong choices and offers to walk her to her family's bunk. He escorts her to the door and she enters. Bree, Gisa, Tramy, and Mare's parents wait inside, obviously upset by her decision to avoid them. She tells them about Queen Elara and their broadcast, planned for the next day. Bree and Tramy are excited, but Gisa is hesitant. Mare tells them that she is going to the Choke to rescue the Red soldiers, and her father pleads for her to not go. Bree and Tramy offer to go with her and begin to pack their bags.

Chapter 29 begins with a meeting at the mess hall with the Lakelanders and Nortans who have volunteered to help Mare and the Colonel. Mare enters the room to applause from the newbloods, including Cameron, but she notices that Nix, Ketha, and Gareth are missing. Kilorn enters and sits next to her, then forgives her for fighting Farley. Cal, Julian, and Sara enter to jeers by the Reds. The Colonel stands and quiets the room, and he and Mare explain their plan to save the child soldiers by infiltrating their army. Cal calls the plan impossible, but the Colonel reassures him that the Lakelander forces have retreated enough to allow safe passage. Mare asks for volunteers and many stand, including Cal.

The narrative jumps forward to Mare and her family burying Shade. Gisa comforts Farley and Kilorn watches from afar, crying. The funeral ends and Mare and Farley are left alone at the gravesite. Farley tells Mare that she is not going to the Choke and that she has lost her entire family already. The narrative shifts forward again to Mare saying goodbye to her family. Gisa gives her an embroidered silk and ties it around her wrist. Mare gives her an earring and boards the Blackrun. Her team consists of Cameron, Bree, Tramy, Cal, Nanny, and eighteen Guardsmen. As they fly, Mare's message broadcasts across Norta. They quickly learn of rioting in Corvium, their destination, and exchange hopeful cheers. Mare is overwhelmed by anxiety and Cal goes to comfort her.



Suddenly, the tail of the jet explodes. The occupants scream while the jet falls and morphs into a cage that surrounds Mare and Cal. The cage stops before hitting the ground and Mare sees several Silver magnetrons around them. The Silvers restrain them and the other survivors and Maven approaches. Helpless, Mare tells him that she will surrender in exchange for the other's freedom. He holds her chin and agrees to the trade.

In the Epilogue, Mare finds herself restrained in an armored transport, kept semi-conscious by the sounder device. When the device turns off, two Silvers silence her ability. They march her from the transport through a jeering crowd in Archeon to a bridge. She sees Evangeline in the crowd, as well as Jon. The Silvers march her to a throne where Maven attaches a collar to her neck. He points at his feet and she kneels.

## Analysis

When Mare returns to Tuck and connects with the Colonel and Rash and Tahir, her sense of isolation is broke, resolving a major point of tension in the novel. After the raid, Mare is disillusioned. She has lost her brother, her relationship with Cal, and her friendships with Farley and Kilorn. Her sense of isolation is so strong that she even avoids seeing her family when she returns to the island. When she meets Rash and Tahir, however, this isolation is broken. She learns that not only are there other newbloods in the world, but that in some places they live free of persecution, embraced by their communities instead of rejected. Although she denies their offer, she leaves feeling a restored sense of community. The Colonel, surprisingly, reaffirms this feeling. He sympathizes with Mare over Shade's death, and expresses understanding for the difficult position she now finds herself in as a leader. A man who once despised her shows her humanity that she did not expect, highlighting that even those she believes reject her still have the capacity to accept. Finally, Kilorn sits with her in the mess hall during the recruitment meeting and offers her an apple. He tells her that he forgives her and jokes with her, restoring their friendship. Although she has suffered many losses throughout the novel, Mare finds herself supported by her friends and those she thought were her enemies.

Mare rethinks her stance on blood divisions in the section, using Cameron's attitude to challenge her own. When she meets Rash and Tahir, she thinks that they have a common enemy – Silvers. However, she soon remembers that Julian and Cal, sympathetic loved ones, are Silver and her attitude shifts. She remembers Cameron's words of warning, "a newblood king will sit the throne you built him" (407), and thinks that perhaps Montfort is not the haven that Rash and Tahir portray. Her skepticism at newblood rule continues when she tells her father that she is going to the Choke. She thinks that "Cameron was right all along. The divisions of blood are still very real, and they can't be tolerated any longer" (416). Although her enemy, Maven, is Silver, she is no longer determined to overthrow Silver rule in favor for Red or newblood replacement. Her goal shifts to uniting the people of Norta across blood lines, allowing for a peaceful future free of blood-based oppression.



The last section of the novel builds a sense of hope before ending on an uncertain and hopeless tone, causing the reader to anticipate future events in the third novel. Several positive events occur in the last two chapters. Mare returns to Tuck and restores her relationship with Kilorn, sees her family again, gains hope for community and safety in Montfort. Rash and Tahir indicate that they are capable of killing Maven, further building a hopeful tone. Other characters experience this restored sense of hope as well, like Farley, whom Mare is shocked to see look hopeful at Shade's funeral. In addition to the positive events, Mare comes to terms with some of her own inner conflicts. After talking with Julian, she feels confident with herself. She thinks, "I've done things, terrible things, and I don't deserve forgiveness for them. But I see it in Julian's eyes all the same. And it fills me with such hope" (412). She vows that no matter how difficult her future is, she will not turn into a monster. Her newfound faith in herself gives the reader a sense of security, one which is quashed as Maven downs the Blackrun and cages her. The sudden shift from hope to hopelessness builds anticipation for the reader, as well as a desire to continue to follow Mare's story in the following novel.

## Discussion Question 1

What does Farley's conversation with Mare at Shade's funeral foreshadow? What does her gesture, a hand on her stomach, imply?

## Discussion Question 2

Why does Mare reject Rash and Tahir's offer? Is her decision selfish? Why or why not?

## Discussion Question 3

Mare decides to keep her brand, even though Sara can remove it, as "a reminder to us all" (412). What is the brand a reminder of?

## Vocabulary

junction, deterred, underfed, quelling, labyrinthine, forlorn, ludicrous, impeccable, semblance, acclimatize





# Characters

## Mare Barrow

Mare is the narrator of the novel. She is a teenage newblood with brown hair from the Stilts. She grew up in a poor Red family and relied on thievery to provide for them. She escaped conscription by working for the Silver royalty as a maid, where her powers were discovered and she was dubbed Mareena, the lost Silver princess. After an execution attempt by Maven, she escaped and joined forces with Farley and the Scarlet Guard. Mare's identity shifts throughout the novel as she tries to fill different roles. She feels that "Mare of the Stilts died the day she fell onto a lightning shield. Mareena, the lost Silver princess, died in the Bowl of Bones" (31) and that her current identity is still forming.

Mare possesses the ability to control lightning. Her power is unique and stronger than many Silver abilities, which causes others to both fear and revere her. Her power forms a central part of her identity, but it also forms a sense of isolation and loneliness. Initially, she feels uncomfortable with the nickname "lightning girl", but as the novel progresses she embraces it. She comes to accept that while others may fear her, her power is too valuable to hide.

Mare has several important relationships throughout the novel, but she struggles to trust even those closest to her. Although Shade remains close and loyal to her, Mare tells him that she does not trust his word. She also fails to trust Kilorn, despite their history and his act of redemption in Tuck. She feels that she is responsible for protecting him, and he becomes angry and grows distant from her. Her most significant relationship in the novel is with Cal. They form a romantic, but non-sexual relationship while at the Notch, despite her fears of his abandonment. Their relationship grows tense, however, as she realizes that he is still loyal to the Silvers and her trust diminishes. When he confronts her about her lack of trust and her brutality in Corros, she becomes angry with him. By the end of the novel, their relationship is strained and they are no longer on speaking terms.

## Tiberius Calore

Tiberius Calore, or Cal, is Silver royalty and the prince of Nortia. He was forced to kill his father by Queen Elara and then exiled by Maven, and now sides with Mare and the Scarlet Guard. He is tall and strong with dark hair. Like Maven, he possesses the ability to control fire, and is subsequently afraid of water. He is strategically-minded with a love for manuals, circuitry, and tactical planning. Like Mare, he must adapt to a new identity as Maven casts him away from his previous life. He is forced to adjust to combat and constant fear, which changes his personality from well-mannered and thoughtful to brutal, angry, and withdrawn.





Cal forms a close relationship with Mare throughout the novel. At the Notch, Mare sleeps in his quarters with him, and although their relationship is not sexual, it is closer than any other in the novel. As Mare becomes more distraught over Maven's notes, tension in their relationship builds. He confronts her about the notes and her lack of trust after the raid on Corros Prison, and she becomes defensive. Their relationship is strained for the remainder of the novel, as Mare thinks poorly of him and he avoids interacting with her.

Throughout the novel, Cal struggles to work with the Scarlet Guard against Silvers. Although he was sympathetic to the Reds before his exile, he did not feel strongly enough to make significant change in the kingdom. He remains with Mare primarily to help overthrow Maven, and expresses that he does not wish to be a part of a Red revolution. He still remains loyal to the Silvers, although he feels conflicted about it. Initially, he refuses to kill Silvers during rescue missions, but he is soon forced to. As he witnesses more of Maven and the other Silver's cruelty, his loyalties become more conflicted. At the end of the novel, he volunteers to fly to the Choke to rescue the Little Legion.

## **Kilorn Warren**

Kilorn is Mare's closest friend from the Stilts. He is a Red and was a fisherman before joining the Scarlet Guard. He is tall and strong with golden-blond hair and green eyes. He assists Mare in freeing Cal from Tuck and rescuing Nix. He spends his time at the Notch hunting and providing for others. Although he has a teasing personality and many "childlike ways" (335), the stress of his role with the Scarlet Guard and Mare's rescues mature him throughout the novel. He gains many new physical and emotional scars as the novel progresses, and becomes increasingly more withdrawn.

Although Kilorn and Mare are close friends, their relationship is tense throughout the novel. Mare struggles to trust him until he turns on the Colonel and helps her and Cal escape, redeeming his apparent betrayal. At the Notch, Mare refuses to allow Kilorn to participate in rescues. Kilorn becomes withdrawn and stops talking to her, and Mare believes that he is upset over her relationship with Cal. He respects Mare's choices, but feels upset over her protective feelings. The tension in their relationship continues to escalate until they return to Tuck, and he sits beside her at the recruitment meeting.

## **Diana Farley**

Farley is a Red and a captain of the Scarlet Guard. She is blonde with a prominent scar that runs from her cheek down to the side of her neck. She is tough and aggressive, and speaks bluntly with those around her. She is dedicated to the Scarlet Guard, but when the Colonel strips her of her command she sides with Mare to help rescue the newbloods. Despite her loss of command, several members of the Scarlet Guard she encounters throughout Nortia continue to acknowledge her leadership. She is loyal, but



Mare thinks that “despite her tough exterior, she’s... afraid of the lightning girl” (44) and struggles to form a close relationship with Farley.

Farley feels a sense of loneliness, much like Mare. Her mother and sister are deceased, and she states that even though her father, the Colonel, is alive, “I lost him too” (424). She forms a romantic relationship with Shade towards the end of the novel, which alleviates some of her isolation. When he dies, however, she becomes disillusioned and chooses not to accompany Mare to the Choke. Aveyard implies that Farley is pregnant at the end of the novel.

## Shade Barrow

Shade is Mare’s brother and a newblood. He has honey-colored eyes and possesses the ability to teleport. He forms a romantic relationship with Farley towards the end of the novel. Mare believed him to be dead prior to the events of *Glass Sword*, and is very protective of him as a result. He is protective over her as well, and dies trying to protect her from Ptolemus’s attack. His dialogue to her is filled with subtle warnings about their situations and companions. He is sneaky and quick both in his communication and demeanor, and is able to communicate with Mare with subtle, nearly unseen gestures.

Although he and Mare are close throughout the novel, Mare does not completely trust him.

Unlike Mare, Shade believes that the newbloods are equal to their Red counterparts. He believes that while they are different, they are no better or worse than their friends and family who possess no special abilities. This disagreement creates conflict between him and his sister that does not fully resolve before his death.

## Maven Calore

Maven is Cal’s brother and the King of Norta. He is tall with dark hair and blue eyes and wears the Burning Crown everywhere he goes. Like Cal, Maven possesses the ability to control fire. While Mare primarily describes Cal in terms of bright flame, she refers to Maven in terms of shadows. During several of his appearances throughout the novel, he emerges from shadows during ambushes, indicating that his character is cunning and secretive. He is manipulative and deceitful, and tries to convince Mare to surrender by threatening the lives of others. He desires Mare, and tells her that he will spare the other newbloods in exchange for her devotion. He asserts his possession over her by branding an “M” into her neck with his flame and eventually placing a collar on her in Archeon.

## Colonel Farley

takes command of Tuck, Lakelander (54, 56, 59, 76, 409) Colonel Farley is a Lakelander soldier, leader of the Scarlet Guard, and Farley’s father. He has “almost



white-blond hair and an icy disposition” (54), with one eye permanently red from bleeding. He is power-hungry and exerts his control over Mare, Farley, and Cal with glee. He imprisons Cal upon arrival on Tuck, and Mare notes that he appears to enjoy the experience. He derives similar joy denying Mare’s requests and later stripping Farley of her power. Despite the fact that Farley is his daughter, he imprisons her without question. He shows no remorse for his actions, and shows little emotion whatsoever save for slight pain when Mare uses his last name. He dislikes the newbloods, and believes that the Scarlet Guard should remain dedicated to the Reds only. He experiences a change of heart when Mare returns to Tuck at the end of the Novel with Queen Elara’s body, and begins to show her respect.

## Cameron Cole

Cameron is a teenage newblood that Mare finds by following Jon’s premonition. She is from New Town, a slum outside of Harbor Bay, and has a tattoo on her neck that designates her a “techie” – one of the mechanics of the town. She possesses the ability to silence Silver abilities, to the point that it kills them. She is defiant and rude towards Mare, claiming that she is no better than their Silver dictators. She is the only newblood that Mare takes to the Notch against her will, and she eventually agrees to stay there in exchange for training. She tries convince the other newbloods to follow her to the Choke to save the child soldiers, where her brother is part of the Little Legion, but fails. She eventually comes to ally herself with Mare, but their relationship remains strained through the end of the novel.

## Jon

Jon is a newblood that Mare meets in Rosen. He appears old in age with gray skin, hair, and clothes and eyes that are “a luminous, horrifying blood red” (295). He possesses the ability to see into the future, although he describes his ability as more advanced than those of the Silver eyes. He tells Mare about Corros Prison and helps her to find Cameron. Although he refuses to join her and the others at the Notch, he is present when she arrives in Archeon in the Epilogue.

## Queen Elara Merandus

Elara is the Queen of Norta and Maven’s mother. She is part of the Silver elite and possesses the power to read and control minds. She hates the newbloods and especially Mare, and tries to destroy them throughout the novel. She is responsible for the death of Coriane. Mare kills her in the raid on Corros Prison and displays her severed head over a broadcast to Norta.



## **Nix Marsten**

Nix is the first newblood that Mare rescues from Coraunt. He is invulnerable and can withstand significant damage. Mare describes him as squat, muscled, and gruff, with hollow eyes that indicate a tragic history. While he joins Mare's cause, he distrusts Cal, blaming him for the death of his two daughters. He dies in the raid on Corros Prison.

## **Crance**

Crance is a smuggler from Harbor Bay and part of the Mariners. He is a thief by trade and betrays Mare, Farley, Shade, and Cal after offering to help them get into Harbor Bay. When he loses his Mariner companions, he joins Mare to help rescue newbloods.

## **Julian Jacos**

Julian is a Silver and Coriane's brother. He was Mare's teacher while she lived with the Silvers, and is sympathetic to the Reds and the newbloods. He created the list and is imprisoned by Maven for betraying the throne in Corros Prison.

## **Ellie Whistle**

Ellie Whistle is a smuggler in Templyn and member of the Scarlet Guard. She is older than the other characters, with graying hair and scarred hands. She helps Farley and Mare obtain supplies for the Notch.

## **Gareth Baument**

Gareth is one of the newbloods that Mare rescues. He has the ability to manipulate gravity and fly, and uses his power to aid Mare on many rescue missions. He dies during the raid on Corros Prison.

## **Ada Wallace**

Ada is one of the newbloods that Mare rescues. She was a maid for the House Rhambos before her rescue and refers to Mare as "miss" out of habit. Her ability consists of superhuman intelligence and memory.

## **Harrick**

Harrick is one of the newbloods that Mare rescues. He has the power to manipulate images and create mirages, and uses his power on the rescue mission to Templyn.



## **Ketha**

Ketha is one of the newbloods that Mare rescues. She is an ex-schoolteacher from a humble background with “tanned skin and gray-tipped hair” (264). She has the ability to induce explosions with her thoughts. She dies in the raid on Corros Prison.

## **Luther Carver**

Luther Carver is an eight-year-old newblood from Haven. He possesses the ability to kill any living thing with a single touch. He leaves his father to join Mare at the Notch.

## **Evangeline Samos**

Evangeline is a Silver magnetron and part of the Silver elite. She pursues Mare with Maven throughout the novel.

## **Sara Skonos**

Sara is a Silver healer and Julian’s ex-lover. Her tongue was cut out for speaking against Queen Elara and she spends the bulk of the novel as a prisoner in Corros Prison. She escapes during the raid and returns to Tuck, where she uses her abilities to heal injured Reds and newbloods.

## **Daniel Barrow**

Daniel is Mare’s father. He is wheelchair-bound and missing a lung from his days serving in the Red army in the Choke. Mare describes him as having once been a tall, strong man who, despite his physical disabilities, has not lost his wit. He is protective of his children and extremely observant. He communicates with Mare largely through non-verbal gestures.

## **Ruth Barrow**

Ruth is Mare’s mother. She is protective of Mare, but not as observant as Shade or Daniel. She stays in Tuck to take care of Daniel, Gisa, Bree, and Tramy throughout the novel.

## **Gisa Barrow**

Gisa is Mare’s younger sister. She is a seamstress for the Scarlet Guard in Tuck, and her work is limited by a permanently injured hand. She is ladylike and wise for her age.



## **Bree Barrow**

Bree is one of Mare's brothers. She describes him as "brute strength, a rolling boulder" (60) and he is considerably large for his young age. He is unintelligent but highly dedicated to the Scarlet Guard. He remains in Tuck during Mare's absence and volunteers to go to the Choke to rescue the child soldiers.

## **Tramy Barrow**

Tramy is Mare's brother. He is loyal to the Scarlet Guard and remains in Tuck with the Colonel throughout the novel. He offers to help Mare and accompanies rescue the child soldiers from the Choke.

## **Rash and Tahir**

Rash and Tahir are two identical newbloods, or Ardents, from the Republic of Montfort. They have "curly black hair... mud-colored eyes, brown skin, and immaculate beards" (404), and speak either in unison or finishing each other's sentences. They are ambassadors between Montfort and the Scarlet Guard. They offer Mare and the other newbloods safe haven in Montfort in exchange for Mare's military leadership, but she declines.

## **Coriane Jacos**

Coriane Jacos is Cal's mother and Julian's sister. She is the "Singer Queen" and the true heir to the Nortan throne. She was killed by Queen Elara for the throne.



# Symbols and Symbolism

## Cold

Mare feels cold throughout the novel, beginning in Tuck. The cold begins as a feeling that dulls her emotions, and becomes a constant feeling that “spreads like rot” (341) and leaves her fearful of losing her ability to feel altogether. After the raid on Corros Prison, Mare embraces the cold, feeling that it wakes her up. Cold symbolizes Mare’s feelings of fear and dread over her future and the future of the newbloods, as well as her isolation from those around her. After Corros, it comes to symbolize her resilience and a motivating force to create change.

## Purple Fabric

The purple fabric is a cloth embroidered with lightning that hangs from the Barrow’s door in Tuck. The fabric helps Mare identify her family’s bunk, but it also represents their willingness to accept her as she is. As she states, it is “neither Red nor Silver, but mine” (61), indicating that, despite her difference, her family welcomes and loves her.

## Fire and Water

Fire is representative of Cal and his power. Throughout the novel, he is associated with fiery imagery which displays his strength and the force of his power. Water, on the other hand, represents the one thing that can stop Cal’s power. He is afraid of water, as is Mare, because it symbolizes the drowning of his seemingly-unstoppable strength.

## The Burning Crown

The Burning Crown is the Nortan royalty’s insignia. It represents those loyal to Maven, and literally resembles the crown he wears everywhere he goes. It visually represents royalty forged in flame, and symbolizes the throne that Maven took by force from Cal by murdering his mother.

## Mare's Earrings

Mare’s earrings are a set of gemstone earrings that she wears throughout the novel. They consist of four stones, one from each of her brothers and one from Kilorn. She wore them through her experience as Mareena, and keeps them when she returns to them in Tuck. They represent her bond to her family as well as to Kilorn, and emphasize that even when she is expected to act as someone else, she stays true to them.





## The List

The list is a list of newbloods in Norta, compiled by Julian Jacos. Mare and Farley use the list to identify newbloods for rescue. The list contains many names, and symbolizes the large hidden existence of the newbloods. It represents a community, one that Mare believes she does not have, and offers hope for a new, more united Norta.

## The Hanging Square

The hanging square is a burned garden in Harbor Bay where Mare, Cal, and Farley find several dead members of the Red Watch, the Red civilian police force. The Red Watch members were killed by Silvers and left to hang publicly. The hanging bodies symbolize Silver's complete dominance over the Reds, who are killed for their attempts to better their own communities and protect themselves.

## Mare's Brand

Maven brands Mare with an "M" in Harbor Bay. The brand represents his desire for domination over her life, as well as the control he already holds over her ability to trust others and believe in herself. The brand, and its accompanying scars, also prevent Mare from smiling without experiencing pain, symbolizing Maven's control over her emotional life as well.

## Cameron's Tatoo

Cameron's tattoo is a numerical marker that designates her a "techie" – a worker in one of the manufacturing slums of Norta. The tattoo symbolizes the oppression Reds face in the kingdom, as they are considered branded property by the Silvers. The tattoo holds historical symbolism as well, referencing concentration camp workers during the Holocaust who were tattooed to enforce the idea of human ownership.

## The Embroidered Silk

The embroidered silk is a piece of cloth that Gisa gives to Mare before she departs for the Choke. Gisa had hand-decorated it with red and gold flowers before her hand was broken, leaving it unfinished. The silk represents the bond of family and Gisa's continuing love for her sister, as well as the shared history of struggle between them.



# Settings

## Naercey

Naercey is the opening location of the novel. It is largely ruins, and the refugees that once lived there now reside in Tuck. Mare describes it as gray and damp. Mare, Farley, Shade, Kilorn, and Cal arrive here via the Undertrain at the beginning of the novel and they are ambushed by Maven and his soldiers.

## Tuck

Tuck is a small island and Scarlet Guard base. It consists of several hangars and barracks that house the Scarlet Guard, Lakelander soldiers, and Nortan refugees, as well as several miles of wild coast. Although Mare finds Tuck ominous when she arrives in a storm, she later describes the island as sunny and warm. The settlement is sparsely populated, but there is significant tension between the Lakelander and Nortan inhabitants, particularly Mare.

## Coraunt

Coraunt is a small trading village and Nix's hometown. It sits at the crossroads of Port Road and the Regent's River, both major trading and travel routes for Silvers. Mare, Cal, Farley, Kilorn, and Shade come here to rescue Nix after stealing the Blackrun.

## Harbor Bay

Harbor Bay is a large city built on top of ruins in an artificial bay. It is bustling with Reds and Silvers, largely segregated into poor and wealthy neighborhoods. It is home to Ocean Hill, a royal palace which Cal once inhabited. Mare and her team come here to rescue several newbloods, as well as to obtain records from the Security Center. They are first betrayed by Crance in the tunnels under the city, then nearly caught by the Seaskull gang before escaping the Security Center. They find Wolliver Galt's body here hanging from a statue, just before being ambushed by Maven.

## The Notch

The Notch is the safe house in which Mare, Cal, Farley, Shade, Kilorn, and the newbloods hide after rescues. It is isolated in the woods, and its specific location is unknown. The house is made primarily of dirt and surrounded by a vast wilderness. It serves as an alternative home for the newbloods for a large portion of the novel.



## Templyn

Templyn is a residential village “consisting of vast Silver estates and cramped Red row houses along the river” (266) near Delphie. Ellie Whistle resides here and helps Mare obtain supplies for the Notch. Mare finds the first note from Maven here on the corpse of an infant being used as a trap.

## Rosen

Rosen is a mining town that was destroyed by a coal fire several years prior to the narrative. It is still on fire when Mare and her team march through it on their way to Pitarus, and she describes it as “the grayest place I’ve ever seen” with ash “floating on the air in flurries, hugging the buildings in waist-high drifts” (393). Mare meets Jon here, and he gives her his warnings and advice about the future.

## Corros

Corros is a Silver-designed prison used to hold newbloods and Silver traitors. The cells are built with Silent Stone to keep the prisoners weak, and the walkways are constantly rearranged by magnetrons to prevent escape. Mare, Cal, Farley, Kilorn, Shade, Crance, and several newbloods raid the prison to release Red and Silver prisoners and kill Queen Elara.



# Themes and Motifs

## Identity

Identity serves as a point of tension for Mare throughout the novel, and her journey to find stability and faith in herself highlights the fluidity of identity. This fluidity is marked by how her identity changes according to circumstance. Starting at the very beginning of the novel, Mare struggles to understand her identity. When she wakes up on the mersive, she thinks to herself that her previous identities have died: “Mare of the Stilts died the day she fell into a lightning shield. Mareena, the lost Silver princess, died in the Bowl of Bones. And I don’t know what new person opened her eyes on the Undertrain” (31). This sentiment continues throughout the events of the novel, as she tries to discover what things do define the new person she has become. Her identity is remarkably fluid throughout much of the novel, and she shifts between personalities depending on which of her faces is best suited to her surroundings. For instance, she deliberately uses polite language and simple requests when she wants to appear weak on Tuck. At the Notch, she speaks with more authority, despite her insecurity, because she knows she must appear to be a leader. Her constant shifts and adaptations highlight the fluidity of all identities and how we may inhabit several identities depending on our social surroundings.

Averyard also uses names to draw attention to the fluidity of identity, particularly the character’s ability (and sometimes inability) to separate themselves from who they were in the past. Several characters have multiple names or nicknames that encapsulate their current identities. Cal uses a nickname instead of his birth name to distance from his family. Farley uses her last name instead of her first name to indicate her authority, as well as her own separation from her father. Mare goes by several names throughout the novel, all of which carry drastically different meanings. She often identifies as just Mare, choosing to align herself with her unremarkable upbringing in the Stilts. As the novel progresses, she comes to identify with the name “lightning girl”, because it distinguishes her as remarkable and powerful. Other names include Mareena, which refers to her forced role as a Silver princess, and “my lady”. It also represents a time in Mare’s life where she was forced to fake being Silver. These names in particular represent an uncomfortable part of her history, and she chooses to reject them as parts of her current identity.

## Trust

Mare struggles to form trust with other characters throughout the novel, highlighting her fear of deception and the emotional damage done to her by Maven. Although she is surrounded by her closest and oldest friends, Mare is unable to trust anyone for fear of abandonment and betrayal – as Maven had done in the events of the previous novel. She is overwhelmed by fear of being hurt, and her relationships suffer for it. In Naercey, she tells Shade that she does not trust him. In Tuck, she thinks that she distrusts both



Farley and Kilorn, particularly after Kilorn seemingly betrays her by locking her in a cell. Perhaps her most strained relationship is with Cal. Throughout the novel, she fluctuates between trust and distrust of him. She tries to resist her feelings towards him because she worries that he cannot be trusted or will leave her, but by the time they settle into rescue missions at the Notch, she feels close to and dependent on him anyway. When she awakens at the Notch for the first time, Cal holds her hand and she thinks, “Cal is still here. He will never leave me” (248). However, by the time they return to Tuck after the raid on Corros, she feels that she does not know him – and never truly has. Her lack of trust in his motivations causes their relationship to end, drawing attention to the value of trust in relationships as well as the power of a singular betrayal to affect the remainder of a person’s interactions.

Even though lies and betrayal create stress and tension in Mare’s life, towards the end of the novel, she comes to believe that dishonesty still has its proper uses. For instance, she hides her anxiety about Corros from the others at the Notch because she believes that they will fail without a strong leader. When the prisoners in Corros are released from their cells, she tells them that “we are leaving this prison tonight, together, and alive” (371). She knows her words are a lie, but she believes that the lie is necessary to motivate, and potentially save, others. She finds utility in lies despite that fact that Maven’s betrayal has all but shattered her life, and this causes the reader to question the ethics of dishonesty. This also creates unresolved tension within the character of Mare, which possibly sets up inner conflict for the final book of the trilogy.

## Individual Power

Mare’s identity fluctuates throughout the novel, as do her relationships, but her power remains constant, serving as perhaps the most valuable and stable aspect of her life. Mare has been unwillingly defined by her power after she was discovered to have control over lightning by Silver royalty. Silvers have come to despise her and even other Reds appear to feel uncomfortable in her presence. Despite this, she feels a strong connection to her abilities and eventually comes to feel empowered by them. At first, the nickname “lightning girl” makes her uncomfortable. As she finds more faith in her power, however, she embraces the term, and ultimately identifies herself with it. Her power, although isolating at times, are the one thing that she feels empowered by and the only constant in her life that brings her a sense of security. This dynamic acts as a comment on inner strength, showing how a person can rely on themselves in times of fear and uncertainty.

However, strength and ability appear to be the only thing in the world of Glass Sword that Mare truly trusts and relies on, creating an unsettling disparity between Mare’s sense of trust and her sense of distrust. In regards to others, she defines people by their powers more often than not. While escaping Tuck with Shade, she thinks that “even if I can’t trust Kilorn, Cal, or anyone else, I can trust in ability. In strength. In power” (114). Later, she thinks that she does not trust Farley, only Farley’s ability to get them out of a trap. Her attention to power creates tension in her relationship with Kilorn, as he possesses no special ability and she tries to protect him from threats against his wishes.



She does not trust his mind, physical strength, or their history and instead feels he cannot take care of himself because he lacks true power. This harsh judgment of people outside of their powers creates a disconcerting dichotomy in the novel – while her strength is empowering for her, it creates tension in her relationships. This is somewhat paradoxical when taken into account with the idea that Mare’s power is what gives herself strength. Her trust in her own power elevates her faith in herself, but the fact that she only trusts power outside of herself creates problematic tension in her relationships with others.

## Isolation versus Independence

Throughout the novel, Mare strives for independence and autonomy, and she struggles to balance this desire with her fear of being alone. Mare’s history has led her to a point where she is both stripped of choice and independence and is isolated from those around her. Maven’s portrayal of Mare to the kingdom has left Mare hated by Silvers, ostracized by many Reds, and feared by nearly everyone – even her friends and family. At the same time, her actions have caused others to distrust her, resulting in nearly constant surveillance and decisions being made for her. Her desire to find a balance between the two becomes apparent after she escapes Tuck. On Nine-Five field, she thinks that finally “I belong to myself again” (142). In the same section, however, she nearly downs the plane when she becomes distressed over leaving her family. This demonstrates the conflict between Mare’s desire to be independent with the destructive effects of isolation. Mare struggles to find the balance between being alone and being autonomous, and this conflict remains intense for her throughout the novel.

Mare’s fear of isolation is perhaps most obvious in her relationship with Cal, which takes on a semi-romantic dynamic and thereby causes unique problems with regards to Mare’s inner struggle. Mare fluctuates between trust and closeness with him, as well as between self-isolation and fear. For instance, when she wakes up at the Notch, she is comforted by his presence, thinking that he will never leave her. Only a few pages later, however, she thinks that she cannot grow close to Cal because “one day he will leave, or die, or betray me like so many others have. One day, he will hurt me” (251). She fears betrayal and abandonment by Cal, along with several others in her life who have turned against her or died, and feels that experiencing betrayal again will rob her of her ability to function. As a result, she deliberately isolates herself, creating a cycle of loneliness and isolation that she does not have the skills to break. Mare continues to struggle with the balance between independence and isolation up until the end of the novel, destroying several relationships along the way. In this way, the story shows how giving up some degree of independence is necessary for the creation of stable, healthy relationships.

## Division and Conflict

Division between bloodlines is a central part of the Glass Sword world, and it represents the human tendency towards tribalism and inter-tribal conflict. The battle for power by



Silvers and the resistance to oppression by Reds creates a central conflict in *Norta* that is fueled by the need for tribal dominance. However, this conflict is challenged by Mare's very existence as a newblood because the protection of newbloods creates an entirely new goal within the conflict. Initially, Mare holds a belief that she is better than both Reds and Silvers, and that newbloods are more valuable than anyone else. Shade is the first to challenge this notion, telling her that "there's nothing wrong with us. We're different, yes, but not wrong. And certainly not better" (136). Mare's attitude remains unchanged by Shade's statement, but when she meets Cameron her viewpoint shifts. Cameron is the first character in the novel to challenge the value that Mare puts on rescuing the newbloods. She accuses Mare of upholding the same blood divisions that already exist, simply replacing Silvers with a new ruling class. These divisions between groups emphasize the sense of loyalty and obligation that arises between people that share traits and ideas. Using these dynamics, the novel seems to attempt to demonstrate how these loyalties fuel the conflict that forms between these factions.

By the end of the novel, Mare rethinks her stance on not only newbloods, but blood divisions in general, thereby deconstructing the idea of conflict between differing groups of people. Although she was raised to hate Silvers, she has formed close bonds with many of them, like Julian, Sara, and Cal. With prompting from Julian, she comes to believe that people in *Norta* are not inherently bad based on their blood type, but they can become corrupted by difficult circumstances and mistaken steps down the wrong paths. She asserts her new stance on blood divisions in her interaction with Rash and Tahir. She is wary of their offer and convinced that they, per Cameron's warning, simply desire to replace cruel Silver leaders with newblood ones. She thinks, "Cameron was right all along. The divisions of blood are still very real, and they can't be tolerated any longer" (416), indicating a shift from her belief that division is unavoidable to the belief that division is constructed by social circumstances.



# Styles

## Point of View

The novel is narrated in the first person present tense by Mare. Although her narration is exclusively present tense, she often reminisces on events of the past. The narration consists of dialogue and internal monologue, interspersed with individual thoughts marked with italics. Mare's thoughts offer descriptions of events, settings, and characters, as well as insights into novel background that are not clear from dialogue. While the novel is very much focused on the meaning of events at large in Norta, it the novel focuses on Mare's story and the significance of her own internal and external changes. Therefore, the consistent use of Mare's perspective is integral to exploring the themes of Mare's story.

## Language and Meaning

Language in the novel is straightforward and consistent between characters. The narrative contains several words specific to the Glass Sword universe, particularly those describing Silver abilities – including magnetron, eye, nymph, strongarm, swift, and telkie. These words, as well as newblood, contain meanings specific to the novel. The characters use very little slang or profanity. Aveyard uses recurrent phrases to mark important concepts in the novel. These phrases include, “don't lie to a liar” (18, 21), “we seem weak because we want to” (72, 89), and “anyone can betray anyone” (80, 98, 137, 162, 411). The repetitive use of these phrases signifies their importance to the themes in the novel.

## Structure

The novel consists of 29 chapters and an epilogue, all narrated by Mare. The chapters take place chronologically, and although the narration occasionally jumps forward in time, it is largely comprehensive of the entire period of the novel. The chapters are untitled and are all roughly the same length. Because the novel is the second installment in a trilogy, it does not have a stand-alone beginning or a conclusive ending. It serves to expand upon the narrative laid out in the first installment and to set up the events of the final installment while still creating its own narrative and themes.



## Quotes

Of course I know others have died, for the cause and for me. But I've died too. Mare of the Stilts died the day she fell onto a lightning shield. Mareena, the lost Silver princess, died in the Bowl of Bones. And I don't know what new person opened her eyes on the Undertrain. I only know what she has been and what she has lost, and the weight of it is almost crushing.

-- Mare (chapter 3)

**Importance:** This quote introduces Mare's struggle to find her identity. She is no longer certain of who she is, and the identities she has been given by others have been destroyed. The quote also centralizes loss to her character – she feels as though her suffering is now all that defines her.

I have become more, more than we could ever have dreamed. It frightens me.

-- Mare (chapter 5)

**Importance:** This quote further highlights Mare's inner conflict. She has discovered that she has power much greater than those around her, and while that power gives her strength, it has caused great turmoil in her life. At this point in the novel, her strength is more frightening than it is empowering.

My ability is my most prized possession, even though it separates me from everyone else. But for power, for my own power, it is a price I am willing to pay.

-- Mare (chapter 5)

**Importance:** In this quote, Mare reflects on her powers as she walks through the barracks with Gisa. She recognizes that her power separates her from her community and even her own family, but she also believes that her power has come to define her. While she struggles to understand herself, this quote highlights that she does believe that her power is a central part of her identity.

The damp of the barracks sets in, joining the cold still deep in my bones. Normally I would shiver, but I'm getting used to this feeling. I suppose I should get used to being alone too. Not in the world, but in here. In my heart.

-- Mare (chapter 8)

**Importance:** This quote, in which Mare reflects on her situation after being locked in the cell with Cal, highlights the feeling of isolation she feels. She is unable to trust even those she considers close friends, and feels alone in her suffering.

I don't like it when you call them normal... There's nothing wrong with us. We're different, yes, but not wrong. And certainly not better.

-- Shade (chapter 10)

**Importance:** This quote, in which Shade expresses his discomfort with Mare's view on



their power, emphasizes their differing attitudes. His belief that newbloods are different, but not better or worse, than their Red families and friends stands in contrast to Mare's belief that she is more valuable than those around her.

I know the life all too well. But I turned from that path. I'm not a rat anymore. I'm the lightning girl, and now I have too many ideals to count. Freedom, revenge, liberty, everything that fuels the sparks within me, and the resolve that keeps me going.  
-- Mare (chapter 13)

**Importance:** In this quote, Mare experiences a major shift in her identity. She watches Crance act for selfish reasons and realizes that she once would have done the same. Now, however, her actions are motivated by far more. Her sense of self, which until now has been unstable, is defined by her ideals and her dedication to them.

I cling to Cal, Kilorn, Shade, to saving all the newbloods I can, because I am afraid of waking up to emptiness, to a place where my friends and family are gone and I am nothing but a single bolt of lightning in the blackness of a lonely storm. If I am a sword, I am a sword made of glass, and I feel myself beginning to shatter.  
-- Mare (chapter 17)

**Importance:** This quote highlights Mare's fear of being alone, as well as her diminishing strength. She feels as though the support she has is being slowly taken away and that she will soon be left alone with her power – rendering her essentially powerless. The quote emphasizes her dependence on her friends and family for her strength.

'Attend to your own fate, Mare Barrow.' 'And that is?' 'To rise. And rise alone.' It echoes like the howl of a wolf. 'I see you as you become, no longer the lightning, but the storm. The storm that will swallow the world entire.'  
-- Jon and Mare (chapter 21)

**Importance:** This quote, in which Jon gives Mare parting advice after they meet in Rosen, confirms Mare's fear that she must stand alone. Jon's wisdom, although encouraging of her strength, allows her to see that in order to reach her potential, she must empower herself.

Division. Favoring one over the other. You're on the hunt for people like you, to protect them, to train them, to make them fight your war. Not because they want to, but because you need them. What about those kids going to fight? You don't care about them at all. You'd trade all for another walking, whining spark plug.  
-- Cameron (chapter 22)

**Importance:** This quote from Cameron when Mare first discovers her in the woods offers a new perspective to Mare's mission. Mare operates under the belief that finding and hiding the newbloods is the most important task, but Cameron points out that she is creating division along blood lines, just as the Silvers have. This is the first time this perspective is explicitly expressed in the novel.



The others in the yard watch her go, their eyes following her as she defies the lightning girl, but I don't care a bit for what they think. I'm not their captain, I'm not their queen. I'm not better or worse than any of them, and it's time they started to see me as I am. Another newblood, another fighter, and nothing more.

-- Mare (chapter 24)

**Importance:** In this quote, Cameron has just defied Mare's orders during training and walks away. Her it highlights her continuing difficulty to fit in with her peers due to her power. Although others see her as a leader, she sees herself as an equal in this context. This attitude contrasts with her attitude in other situations, in which she sees herself as more valuable than those around her.

Half the time you run away from leadership, and the other half you act like some untouchable martyr, crowned in guilt, the only person who's really giving herself to the cause. Look around you, Mare Barrow. Shade's not the only one who died in Corros. You are not the only one to make sacrifices. Farley betrayed her father. You forced Cameron to join us against her will, you chose to ignore everything but Julian's lift, and now you want to abandon the kids back at the Notch. For what? To step on the Colonel's neck? To take a throne?

-- Cal (chapter 27)

**Importance:** In this quote, Cal draws attention to the duality in Mare's identity. She shifts between the belief that she is above others and the belief that she is less than them, and Cal's dialogue brings these shifts to the surface for the first time in the novel. The quote also allows the reader to see her inconsistent character as an intentional narrative device by Aveyard.

I've done things, terrible things, and I don't deserve forgiveness. But I see it in Julian's eyes all the same. And it fills me with such hope. I will not become a monster, no matter what I must do in the days ahead. I will not lose who I am, even if it kills me.

-- Mare (chapter 28)

**Importance:** This quote, in which Mare reflects on Julian's warning, creates a sense of stability and hope in the novel. Although she has suffered much, Mare believes that her identity is strong enough to prevent her from becoming a "monster". Her newfound faith in herself creates hope for reader.