

# **A Sea of Shields Study Guide**

**A Sea of Shields by Morgan Rice**

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## Plot Summary

A Sea of Shields by Morgan Rice is the tenth book in The Sorcerer's Ring series. As the story opens, Gwen is giving birth to a baby boy who will later be named Guwayne. There are magical omens as the boy is born and later as he goes through the first formal ceremony. His parents can feel the tremendous power in his tiny body from their first encounters with him. However, the source or reason for this power is not revealed in this book. Gwen is taken home by Ralibar and wakes days later to discover that her mother is near death, offering final words of advice for Gwen, who is now queen of their kingdom. Meanwhile, Gwen is preparing for the double wedding in which she will marry Guwayne's father, Thorgrin. Also to be wed are Gwen's brother Reece with his betrothed, Selese. But, while Reece is in the Upper Island he encounters a childhood love, Stara. She is also his cousin. Their union is forbidden. However, while they are there, Reece pledges to stop his wedding and to return for Stara.

Stara's father is Tirus, now in prison but formerly the king of the Upper Island. Tirus discovers the situation between Stara and Reece and he sends his son Falus to make sure Selese knows of the love between Stara and Reece. Falus presents Selese with some scrolls written between Stara and Reece when they were children and she doesn't realize the scrolls are old. In despair, she goes to the Sorrows Lake where she wades in and drowns herself.

Meanwhile, Reece arrives home and visits his mother on her deathbed. His mother already knows of Reece's plans to call off the wedding, and she makes him see that his actions affect everyone in the kingdom. Reece realizes she's right and rushes to find Selese. When he finds her, she is already dead. Reece is devastated. He finds Falus and kills him aboard his own ship, prompting a revolt among the Upper Islanders. When Glen makes this discovery, she insists that Reece go to Tirus and apologize, hoping that will smooth things over between the warring MacGils and McClouds. Reece intends to do as she asks; but, his honor cries out that an apology is wrong. He kills Tirus instead.

While this is going on, Gwen's sister, Luanda, is living in exile in the mountains. She hates her situation and blames Gwen for it though her beloved husband, Bronson, pledges his allegiance and obedience to Gwen. Luanda wants a baby in the worst possible way but fears it will never happen. She's briefly allowed home but is heartbroken when she's again sent away. Back in exile, she discovers she's expecting a baby and rushes home to share the news with Bronson, only to discover that he has been murdered by the revolting McClouds. She blames Gwen who had recently released hundreds of captured McClouds in an effort to create a peace between the clans. Luanda knows that she holds the key to the shield that protects the entire kingdom from invasion. She goes to the shield and is preparing to break it open just as Romulus is trying to break in from the outside with his army of dragons.

As this attack is taking place, the McClouds have joined to attack the King's Court, where Gwen is in residence with Guwayne. Thor is on a quest to find his mother and the Silver, the elite knights of the kingdom, are on an annual pilgrimage. Gwen's brother



Godfrey arrives just in time to warn Gwen's people of the attack and to slam the gates of the city closed against the McClouds. As the story comes to an end, Gwen and her people are evacuating the city while Godfrey and a few soldiers are holding off the McClouds, the Silver trying to rush back to join the fight. Luanda is just about to break through the Shield, knowing that Romulus might very well kill her and Romulus is hoping that Luanda is the key to finally breaking in.



# Chapters 1 - 4

## Summary

As the story opens, Gwendolyn is screaming out in the pain of childbirth. She prays that she could hold off just a few more hours until she would be in a safe place, but she knows it won't wait. She screams out for help but knows no one will come to her aid. She fears that she and her child might die here, in a field. She remembers a time not long before when she was in the Netherworld. She'd freed Argon but had been forced to choose between her husband and her child. She cries, recalling the choice and wonders why there are always such extreme sacrifices demanded. She is in severe pain and considers that she and her baby might die in this field. She thinks about Thor, her betrothed, and their early days of courtship.

Gwen discovers she is unable to resist the urge to push and the baby is born. The baby begins to cry at once. With his cry there are eclipses of both suns simultaneously, an event that Gwen knows occurs only "once every ten thousand years." Then hail begins to fall and Gwen reacts, pulling her baby to her to protect his small body from the elements. She knows that the omens that have occurred at the child's birth are signs of great things that lie ahead for him. The baby then begins to cry and it seems as if his screams prompt an earthquake. She feels weak from the stress and loss of blood, and she again realizes that the two of them might very well die here, along in the field. Gwen also realizes that she doesn't care that much about her own death but greatly fears the possibility of her baby's death. She cries out again and her cries are answered by the shriek "of an ancient creature." She sees Ralibar bearing down on them as she loses consciousness.

Chapter 2 opens with Luanda staring at the dead body of a man named Koovia, whom she has just killed. The great hall where she is standing is filled with people and everyone has become completely still. Then one of Koovia's men rushes at Luanda and she realizes she's about to die. But before the sword can strike her, Bronson comes to her aid and fights the man off. That act prompts the eruption of an all-out fight as the MacGils and McClouds square off. Luanda suddenly realizes that members of the McCloud clan are furtively moving to the doors of the hall, barring them and slipping outside. It takes a moment to process but Luanda realizes the McClouds are planning to burn the hall, killing all its occupants even though some of those remaining are McClouds. Luanda rushes for one of the final doors remaining open and kills the man who was about to bar it. She makes Bronson understand what's happening and he quickly spreads the word. Luanda, Bronson, and the MacGils race out and bar the door behind them, trapping some McClouds inside. Those McClouds already outside are holding torches and Bronson leads the charge to kill them.

Luanda knows that Bronson won't be able to do what has to be done, burn down the hall with the McClouds inside. She takes a torch and throws it onto the roof and several MacGils follow suit. Luanda tells Bronson that this is "what it means to rule."



In Chapter 3, Reece is walking with Stara and their childhood love is fully rekindled. Reece is torn because his marriage to Selese is just days away and he knows that he has made a commitment to that union, but he also feels that he loves Stara more deeply than he will ever love anyone else. He thinks about their childhood love, forbidden because they are cousins and because their fathers are embroiled in a feud. They had kept in touch via falcon for awhile but the messages had stopped, intercepted by Stara's family. Reece considers that it might have been fate that brought him to this place and putting him in a situation to encounter Stara. They pledge their love anew and Reece decides he will break off his engagement to Selese to marry Stara instead.

In Chapter 4, Gwen is dreaming that she is on a bridge with Thor and her child calling for her in opposite directions. Unable to reach both, she is unable to decide and the bridge collapses. She wakes to discover she's in her bed and Selese is tending her. Thor is there and tells Gwen that the baby is fine. He says Ralibar flew them to safety. Gwen suggests they name the baby after Thor but he says he'd rather name the child for Gwen. They settle on Guwayne. Another servant tells Gwen she's been asleep for almost two days and that Gwen's mother is still alive, though gravely ill. Gwen insists that she be taken to her mother immediately.

## Analysis

The story opens with Gwendolyn, a main character, giving birth in a field far from her home. There is no one around. Gwen thinks back to her time in the Netherworld and a choice she had to make between her husband and her child. There is no explanation of how she came to be there or why she is alone. This is one of several instances in which the reader is simply expected to accept the situation without understanding it. These few situations are not overly difficult to get past for the reader who doesn't know or doesn't remember details from the previous books.

An interesting conflict in the story is Gwen's relationship to Thor. Gwen refers to him several times as her husband; but, their wedding is actually in the planning stages when Gwen is returned to King's Court. The wedding doesn't take place. It seems it might be more appropriate to refer to Thor as her betrothed, but it could also be that there was some sort of previous ceremony that isn't explained in this book. It's left to the reader to decide the importance, if any.

There is a brief introduction of Luanda, including the fact that she is the firstborn of a king and that she has been banished from her home. In fact, Luanda is Gwen's sister. Gwen is the queen of the kingdom. Luanda has been banished by Gwen and is living in exile among the MacGils and McClouds, warring clans. Luanda loves Bronson deeply but hates that he seems so weak in some situations.

When Gwen is back in the castle and safe among family and servants, she learns that others were aware of the earthquake and the eclipse, both signs that happened at the moment of Guwayne's birth. Although Guwayne is only an infant, it is evident that he has special powers. The omens that occurred at his birth and at another important



moment of his life are proof. While his powers are discussed, their source is not revealed in this book.

## Discussion Question 1

Describe the birth of Gwen's baby.

## Discussion Question 2

It will later be revealed that Gwen has been fostering peace between the McClouds and others of the kingdom. With that knowledge, what is the significance of Luanda's action?

## Discussion Question 3

What problem do Reece and Stara face? What does Reece decide he will do about it?

## Vocabulary

exhilarated, vengeance, deftly, clansmen, banished, marginalized, reciprocated, faze, intercepted, rift, portends



## Chapters 5 - 7

### Summary

In Chapter 5, Godfrey is seated at a wooden table observing the celebration going on around him. Godfrey is Gwen's brother and he has been sent by Gwen to try to broker peace between the MacGils and McClouds. Godfrey decides that throwing a party with lots of liquor and women will achieve that and the party is in full swing. Godfrey has heard some of the MacGils and McClouds talking together over the course of the evening and he hopes this is the beginning of friendship between the clans. He begins to worry a little as the men become drunker by the minute and it seems likely that the situation is going to get out of hand. An argument erupts and Godfrey tries to stop the fight short of violence. It seems he might succeed but the McCloud man involved grabs the MacGil and stabs him in the chest, killing him. Without giving it much thought, Godfrey grabs the McCloud's sword and kills the McCloud. The fight begins in earnest then with everyone joining in. Godfrey passes out when he's flung across a table.

In Chapter 6, Gwen is taken to her mother's chamber where several people are standing a deathwatch. Guwayne is with Gwen. Gwen and her mother, referred to as the Queen, each apologize to the other, saying they wish they had been more the mother and daughter the other wanted and needed. The Queen says that Gwen is destined to be a great leader, greater than her parents, and that Gwen's father would have been proud of her. The Queen is moved to tears by the sight of Guwayne. She tells Gwen that she fears for their safety because there are troubling times in the kingdom. She warns Gwen that there can't be peace between the McClouds, MacGils, and Gwen. She says the MacGils and McClouds in Tirus's part of the kingdom are not to be trusted. The Queen makes Gwen promise that she will allow Luanda a respite from her exile to attend the impending funeral. Gwen asks her mother to bless Guwayne and the Queen does, but says Guwayne is already more blessed and more powerful than Gwen can imagine. She cites a prophesy to that effect. Their meeting ends with the Queen telling Gwen that a kingdom's peace is sometimes most secure when that kingdom is at war.

In Chapter 7, Steffen is riding east from King's Court with a group of Gwen's guard and carts filled with supplies, including money, basic food grains, and building materials. Steffen has a physical deformity. His head is out of proportion to his body. He was tormented as a child by this family and by everyone in his village. Steffen stops as he tops a hill and realizes that his own village lies just ahead of him. He dreads seeing his family and the people who made his life miserable but he is determined to carry out Gwen's orders to provide provisions to help villagers rebuild. He resolutely goes forward and is surprised when he reaches the village to discover that it's still as squalid as when he left years earlier. He easily finds his house. His parents and siblings are there. They don't realize that he's Gwen's emissary and tell him he isn't welcome. They believe he's come home in need of a handout or a place to stay and they rudely order him out of the way, fearing that the Queen's emissary might pass them by if Steffen is seen in their





doorway. The Queen's guards jump to Steffen's defense, telling his father that Steffen is the Queen's representative and that anyone who threatens Steffen can be executed, just as if they'd threatened the Queen herself. Steffen doesn't allow the execution but he does declare that the village can figure out how to rebuild without the supplies he has available, and he leaves. Steffen vows that he will never again return to his home village as he leaves.

## Analysis

Godfrey's impressions of the MacGills and the McClouds is presented in chapter five. These clans are known to be rough as seen in the scene in which Luanda and Bronson fight the McClouds. In that scene, the MacGills are not at all reluctant to join the fight or to help Luanda burn down the great hall with some of the McClouds still inside. When Godfrey is surrounded by MacGills and McClouds, he notes that they are all rough but that the McCloud men are just a little harsher than the MacGills. It's later proven to be very true and the McClouds will attack Gwen's stronghold.

Godfrey is drunk as the fight breaks out in chapter five. He's been drinking with the others and notes that the ale here is strong. This is very typical for Godfrey and he doesn't think much about being responsible. This immaturity is why he comes to the conclusion that having a huge party with lots of women and liquor is an appropriate way to deal with the fighting between the two warring clans.

The deathbed scene in which Gwen and her mother talk frankly to each other is emotional. Each confesses to being less than they should have been in their relationship. Gwen says she should have been a better daughter and her mother says she should have been a better mother. An interesting aspect of this is that Gwen's mother says she was "a good Queen, and a devoted wife," but says she didn't perform her motherly duties as well as she should have. This is likely the attitude of every mother who feels she should have and could have done better for her children, especially looking back on that aspect of life from the deathbed. The Queen says Gwen reminded her of herself. This is later discussed by Luanda who notes that Gwen and her mother never got along but that Luanda and her mother never argued.

Relationships are an important aspect of the book. Gwen and her family are apparently a part of the MacGil clan though they are distanced from the MacGills that live outside King's Court in the Upper Islands where Tirus once ruled. Reece and Stara, who is daughter of Tirus, are cousins, which is one basis for their forbidden childhood love. Godfrey is trying to broker peace between the MacGills and McClouds at Gwen's insistence but he has already seen that the men of both clans are rougher than they really need to be and that there's an uncivilized aspect to their very natures. As an interesting aspect of this, Luanda believes the correct avenue is to rule by fear though this goes against Gwen's orders. Gwen's efforts to bring peace between the clans will ultimately fail and her mother seems to realize that it's a lost cause.



Chapter 7 talks about the Ring and there are references throughout the book about the Shield. Neither are fully identified in this story. It appears that the Ring refers to the overall kingdom ruled by Gwen, including King's Court and the villages outside. The Shield protects the Ring from outside forces. In previous books, the Shield has been damaged or destroyed and there are references to the new stability and strength of the Shield, though it appears as the story ends that Luanda could hold the power to collapse the Shield.

Steffen isn't a major character in this book, though it seems he might play a larger role in other books of the series. Steffen might be a dwarf, based on the description of his "deformity." In ancient times, children with genetic defects were often treated as if they were freaks. This seems to have been Steffen's childhood. An interesting aspect of this is that Steffen doesn't really want to go into his home village. He stops before he gets there and seems to consider whether he really has to continue on this route or if there is some other option available to him. But he decides to continue. Once there, he's treated rudely by his parents and siblings even though he is wearing the clothing that identifies him as the Queen's emissary. It's interesting that his family doesn't even notice or consider that he might have become someone important. But even more notable is Steffen's decision to leave the village without any provisions at all. It seems a bit self-serving and that he's putting his desires ahead of Gwen's wishes, but it's the decision he makes. The reader is left to wonder if Steffen's family might have been at the receiving end of the wrath of the other members of the village after learning the reason for Steffen's decision.

## Discussion Question 1

Describe the "party" hosted by Godfrey. What is the reason for the party? What is the party's outcome?

## Discussion Question 2

Based on the brief interaction between Gwen and her mother, the Queen, what can you surmise about their relationship?

## Discussion Question 3

What happens when Steffen arrives in his village?

## Vocabulary

scoffed, broker, truce, allocating, dole, entailed, flabbergasted, vindication, raze, delusion



# Chapters 8 - 11

## Summary

In Chapter 8, Reece is still in the Upper Isles. He is miserable and wet when he arrives at Srog's Fort and is greeted by Srog, one of Gwen's emissaries. Reece asks why he hasn't seen many people and Srog explains that the people of the Upper Islands are widely distributed across the region and that they don't tend to congregate. According to Srog, the people are "odd" and "reclusive." Srog has a dry set of clothing waiting for Reece and Reece is grateful for the gesture. Reece was sent by Gwendolyn to check on Srog and hear about the challenges he faces. Srog describes the relationships between Gwen's people and the MacGils. Though they are related, the Upper Island MacGils have been sabotaging Gwen's ships and efforts at settling the region. Srog predicts there will be no peace here. Srog also predicts the people of the region are angry that their former king, Tirus, is in prison but says he thinks they will be equally angry if Tirus is free. Srog asks Reece to relay his recommendation that they give up on the idea of settling the Upper Islands. As Reece prepares to board his ship, he reminds Srog that settling the Upper Isles is part of Gwen's plan. He asks if it will help to send more ships and soldiers but Srog says he doesn't believe that will make a difference.

In Chapter 9, Stara is at her mother's fort where she has lived since her mother's death. Stara is thinking about Reece. She is elated to know that he will call off the wedding even though she feels a little sorry for Selese. She justifies the situation, saying that she has loved Reece all her life and that she loves only him, while Selese has only known Reece for a short time compared to the time Stara and Reece have known each other. Just then, Stara is joined by her brother, Matus. Matus knows that Stara and Reece were together earlier and he disapproves. Stara says she and Reece love each other, and that Reece will call off his wedding to Selese. Matus points out that the marriage between Reece and Selese is more than just a marriage, but is part of the "political theater." He predicts that everyone in the Ring will be angry if Reece breaks his promise to marry Selese. He asks Stara if "her passions" are worth the chaos that will surely arise. Stara says Matus can't possibly understand the depth of the love she and Reece share. Stara is angry and tells Matus that she will refuse to have anything to do with him if he ever talks to her about Reece again. Angry, Matus leaves and Stara believes she and Reece will soon be united.

In Chapter 10, Tirus's sons are entering the prison where Tirus is being held. Their names are Karus and Falus and they hate seeing Tirus in prison. They also hate having to ask permission to see him and facing the guards that are in charge. Falus reveals to Tirus that Stara and Reece have been in contact and that they have to figure out a way to keep Reece and Stara apart. Tirus disagrees. He says that a marriage between Reece and Stara would force Gwen to release him. Tirus tells his sons they must convince Selese that Reece plans to break off the wedding, just in case Reece changes his mind and decides not to call it off. There are scrolls containing messages written by Stara and Reece when they were young, proclaiming their love. Tirus instructs Falus to



take the scrolls to Selese as proof that Reece is in love with Stara. Tirus says this is the key to freedom for the Upper Island.

In Chapter 11, Thor is working to train new recruits for the Legion. The new soldiers will replace those lost in recent battles. Other members of the Legion are on tasks assigned by Gwen, leaving Thor to the training. Among those who might possibly make the cut are a young boy who is known as Merek the Thief. Merek pleads for the opportunity to try out for the Legion and Thor grants it, though he isn't optimistic. Another young boy named Ario arrives. He says that he met Thor when Thor's men were fighting the monsters of the jungle near Ario's home. Thor thinks the boy is too small but allows him to try out as well and is later surprised at the boy's strength. Ario says other boys have learned to fight and fire a bow because they wanted to while his family has been forced to learn in order to survive. Thor is called away by some of the soldiers he most respects.

## Analysis

A little more of Stara's true character is seen in Chapter 9. Stara has several brothers, including Matus. Stara and Matus live on separate floors of her mother's fort. The rest of her brothers live in the castle owned by Tirus, former king of the Upper Isles. It seems possible that Stara and Matus have been driving out of the castle by their siblings but Stara indicates that she and Matus choose to live apart. She says the two of them are "more refined" than the other members of their family, and that may certainly be the case.

There's a conversation between Thor and one of the potential Legion recruits in Chapter 11. The young boy is Merek the Thief and Thor initially denies him the opportunity to join those hoping for a spot in the Legion based on the fact that the boy was a known thief. Thor makes a good point, saying that the soldiers of the Legion must be able to completely trust and depend on each other. Thor says that anyone who would steal is not to be trusted. But Merek counters, pointing out that his family was hungry and that he'd stolen things only in an effort to provide food. He challenges Thor, saying that it's easy for someone to condemn thievery when his family isn't hungry, but says it becomes a different matter when stealing is the only way to put food on the table. Thor accepts Merek's argument and later admits that Merek might very well be one of the few to make the final cut.

## Discussion Question 1

What is the reaction of Stara's brothers when they discover she and Reece have reconnected?



## Discussion Question 2

Explain why Thor doesn't want to allow Merek the opportunity to seek a spot on the Legion. What is Merek's argument that makes Thor change his mind?

## Discussion Question 3

Describe what you know about the Ring at this point.

## Vocabulary

reclusive, morphed, parapets, exasperated, periphery, jubilant, agape, dumbfounded



# Chapters 12 - 15

## Summary

In Chapter 12, Thor walks away from the training ground with a couple of men, including Kendrick, Gwen's sister. Thor asks if he's done something wrong but Kendrick says that Thor should have a rank of his own prior to his wedding to Gwen. Thor discovers that he's being taken to Sacred Lake where he is to undergo a sacred ritual that will make him part of the Silver, an elite group of soldiers who are "lifelong warriors" for the Ring. Thor is surprised. As part of the ceremony, he's asked if he accepts the honor which is a lifetime commitment. He does. He is pushed underwater and feels an incredible transformation while he's there. He's taken then to Brendan, the royal armorer, where he's fitted with a lightweight, shiny armor worn only by members of the Silver.

In Chapter 13, Romulus is traveling across his country. He is searching for a wizard who has the spell to fight the dragons that are laying waste to the houses and entire villages around his country. Romulus and his men are on their way to meet yet another wizard. Romulus has found many who claimed to hold that power but none who actually delivered. This time he is so angry that he threatens to kill one of his own men if the wizard is another fake. However, as soon as they enter the cave, Romulus begins to notice signs that the wizard might be more powerful than the others. The wizard says he doesn't have a way to fight the dragons but can give Romulus the ability to control them for a month. He says Romulus must trade his soul for that power and Romulus agrees, though one of his men urges him to consider the consequences. Romulus is told to fall on his face in what appears to be a shallow puddle of water, and he obeys. He expects to bash his face on the floor but is submerged instead. He feels the difference immediately. He knows without a doubt that the dragons will now obey him.

In Chapter 14, Gwen and Thor are walking up King's Hill where a ceremony for Guwayne will take place. They arrive at the top and discover Argon is there, waiting to perform the ceremony. He takes Guwayne in his arms and the baby begins to scream. Argon dips him three times in the lake at the top of the mountain and recites a blessing. As the ceremony comes to that point, several volcanoes that have stood silent for years rumble to life. Even Argon is amazed and wonders who Guwayne really is.

In Chapter 15, Alistair is helping with wedding preparations but stops that work to visit her betrothed, Erec. She is Thor's sister. She discovers that Erec has decided he must travel to visit his family because his father is very sick. Alistair immediately decides she will accompany him though it means she will miss Gwen's wedding. Alistair has visions. She stops to visit with Thor for a moment on her way to rejoin Erec and she has a sudden vision of Thor's dead body. She doesn't reveal this to Thor. She does tell Thor that she knows he is going to look for his mother and predicts he'll find her. She gives him a talisman given to her by her mother. She believes Thor will need it though she doesn't know what power it holds.



## Analysis

Thor's parentage is obviously in question, and this fact seems to be an issue for him, as it does for other characters in the book. It seems many of them don't know one or both of their own parents, Others don't get along with their parents. As part of the ceremony enlisting Thor into the Silver, his father is supposed to help him don his armor for the first time. Two of the men, Erec and Kendrick, ask for the honor of serving in his father's place. Thor is grateful and Kendrick tells him that it's possible to "choose" one's parents. He explains that a person's biological parents are determined by fate and there is no way to change that, but the biological parents who don't do justice to a child can be replaced. He tells Thor to imagine a table where his father would be seated. But instead of imagining his biological father there, Kendrick says Thor should imagine a man or a group of men who embody the attributes that Thor believes are important in a father figure. Thor mentally seats several men he admires around this table and discovers that Kendrick is correct. This is another case in which the relationships play an important role in the story.

The constant introduction of characters is somewhat difficult for the casual reader who doesn't know anything about the previous books. While most are identified to some degree, there is not a great deal of background about any of the characters and the reader has to figure out who they are. Additionally, it's sometimes difficult to remember the wide cast of characters' names, especially when several chapters might lapse before that character is seen again.

### Discussion Question 1

Describe how Thor chooses a new father. What qualities might he seek when making this choice?

### Discussion Question 2

Who is Romulus? What is he looking for and what does he get instead?

### Discussion Question 3

What are some of the pros and cons for a story with a huge cast of characters?

## Vocabulary

meandering, legendary, befitting, fathom, insignia, ritualized, meticulously, populated, quell, charlatan, luminescent, clamor, transition, mystical, rampant



# Chapters 16 - 21

## Summary

In Chapter 16, Reece arrives at home and rushes to his mother's bedside before making any other stops. He is devastated to think about how near she is to death. He has spent the time it took to travel from the Upper Islands thinking about his love for Stara and his pending wedding to Selese, and he is uncertain what he should do. He knows that everyone in the kingdom is anticipating the wedding, a double event in which Gwen will marry Thor and Reece will marry Selese. The moment the Queen realizes Reece is there, she announces that she already knows about his plan to call off the wedding. She's furious and says he has mistaken lust for Stara for love, and that he's bringing dishonor to the family by breaking off his engagement to Selese. Reece realizes that his mother is right and when he says so she says she is proud that he listened to her and came to the right decision. As Reece is about to leave the chamber, his mother says she has always loved him more than any of her other children. Reece knows that he will leave immediately to find Selese and renew his vow to marry her.

In Chapter 17, Selese is just leaving a house where she was tending the sick. She is excited about the coming wedding and thinking about things she needs to accomplish. Just then, a man calls out to her. He identifies himself as Falus from the Upper Isles and says he has news of Reece. Selese jumps to the conclusion that he might be hurt but Falus instead gives her the old scrolls and says Selese deserves to know what's happening. Selese begins reading the scrolls, recognizes Reece's handwriting, and is heartbroken. She shreds the paper.

In Chapter 18, Kendrick is overseeing repairs to a bridge that was damaged while the shields were down when a squire rushes up with news that Kendrick's mother has been found. The squire has a medallion that matches the one Kendrick carries with him. The medallion was sold by a woman named Ailsa and Kendrick believes he has the first real lead on his birth mother since he began his search.

In Chapter 19, Luanda and Bronson arrive at King's Court for the Queen's funeral. Luanda believes her exile has been lifted and that she's returning home to stay. Luanda thinks back to her role in the Upper Islands. The MacGils there love her and, because she was the one to lead the way burning the great hall with the McClouds inside, look at her as their leader. Despite this, Luanda believes Gwen will be giving her a position in King's Court and that she will never again have to leave. When Luanda arrives at the funeral she finds her brothers and sisters already there. They are Kendrick, Godfrey, Reece, and Gwen. Luanda notes that Gwen looks careworn from the duties of being Queen but Luanda still wishes she was in that role. She is jealous of Gwen's baby and hates that she hasn't yet had a child of her own. The funeral service led by Argon comes to an end and all the siblings place a rock on their mother's sarcophagus. Gwen walks away and Luanda calls out to her. Gwen says Luanda's presence at the funeral was allowed only because their mother requested it. She orders Luanda to leave and





never return. Luanda screams out a curse on Gwen's baby and Gwen orders soldiers to forcibly remove Luanda.

In Chapter 20, Selese goes to the Lake of Sorrows where she ignores the cold and walks into the water. She is sad because Reece planned to abandon her but devastated to think that he apparently doesn't love her. She continues to walk into deeper water and her final thought is of her love for Reece. In chapter twenty-one, Reece rushes to find Selese and is directed toward the Lake of Sorrows. He is very happy that he's been made to see that his love for Selese is deeper and more important than his childhood fantasy of Stara. When he reaches the Lake of Sorrows, he spots Selese and rushes toward her before realizing that she is lying on the shore, dead. He wishes for a chance to explain to her but knows he is too late.

## Analysis

By the time he gets home, Reece is already wavering on his decision to marry Stara. It's not so much that he isn't certain he loves Stara as the fact that the upcoming wedding is going to be such a huge affair that Reece can't imagine canceling it. The Queen knows all about Reece's encounter with Stara before he even enters her bedroom. She begins arguing with him the moment she's aware of his presence. She tells him that he needs to put aside his childhood fantasy of Stara. It's a statement of their mutual affection that the Queen is brutally honest with Reece and that Reece is so willing to listen to her words.

The encounter between Selese and Falus makes several points clear. First, Selese is fragile. She doesn't question Falus and the author notes that the scrolls are obviously years old, a fact that Selese subconsciously realizes but doesn't question. She is also willing to jump directly to the conclusion that the scrolls are genuine and that Reece is ready to call off the wedding rather than giving him an opportunity to explain. She also accepts Falus's flimsy excuse that Stara's family wanted to be the one to tell Selese because Reece is planning to humiliate her. The fact that Falus says Reece is about to humiliate Selese in front of "both kingdoms" indicates that he is not at all ready to accept the union of the Upper Islands to the kingdom traditionally ruled by Gwen's family, even though Gwen is trying desperately to unite the two regions. Srog told Reece that would be the case but Gwen simply can't accept it. The politics at play are typical of those seen in traditional kings' courts, as is the fact that Reece is called on to do his duty.

Kendrick's situation is not fully described in this book. He notes that he is the son of King MacGil, who is Gwen's father as well. However, Kendrick and Gwen do not share a mother and Kendrick has apparently grown up being called the King's illegitimate son. Kendrick has achieved success in his personal life. He is a member of the Silver and a trusted soldier, but he feels that something is missing from his life because he doesn't know his mother. Though he is a grown man, it's later revealed that he has daydreams still about his mother and her reason for abandoning him. He has imagined that his mother is a princess who was warned away by King MacGil for so long that he now believes it to be fact and he will be horribly disappointed when that isn't the case.



Luanda thinks back to her childhood when she and her mother had been constantly at odds. Luanda was ambitious, even as a youngster, and she believed she and her mother fought because of that commonality, but now suspects that it might be a case of her mother having hated Luanda's ambitious nature. When they were children, the Queen had never argued with Gwen and Luanda thought that was because their mother had no ambition for Gwen. Luanda had expected that Gwen would remain at King's Court, doing nothing important, all her life. It's only when Luanda is standing at the funeral that she realizes she might have been wrong about the relationships altogether.

Luanda's jealousy is completely out of proportion, especially once Gwen reveals the reason for Luanda's exile. Gwen says that Luanda had sought to have all her siblings murdered, though Gwen doesn't go into the details of how or why. It seems likely that Luanda's ambition and jealousy prompted that failed plan. An interesting aspect of Luanda's character is seen in her hatred of anyone who grants mercy but it's now evident that Gwen might have ordered Luanda executed for having plotted the murder of her siblings. Luanda expects not only mercy for that act, but forgiveness as well, even though she doesn't believe in granting mercy to the McClouds, as will be seen in a later chapter. Ironically, Luanda will be right in that Gwen shouldn't have been so lenient on the McClouds but Luanda believes even a temporary exile is too harsh for her own crimes. On the subject of the jealousy, Luanda is jealous that Gwen is showing signs of strain as the Queen and that she has a baby while Luanda doesn't, though Luanda and Bronson desperately want one. Then each of the siblings puts a rock on their mother's sarcophagus. Luanda is pleased with her rock, a white, smooth stone she brought with her for the occasion. However, Luanda places a golden rock as her own offering and Luanda refers to it as the most beautiful rock she's ever seen. It's somewhat petty and shows an important aspect of Luanda's character.

## Discussion Question 1

Describe the meeting between Reece and his mother. Why do you believe the Queen's words help Reece decide that marrying Selese is the correct choice?

## Discussion Question 2

What future had Luanda imagined for herself? What is her reality?

## Discussion Question 3

What is Kendrick's situation? Why do you believe his mother's identity is so important to him?

## Vocabulary

reverberating, mockery, contemplated, urgency, sundry, pertinent, teeming, resplendent, vindicated, quashing, sarcophagus, strident



# Chapters 22 - 25

## Summary

In Chapter 22, Gwen and Thor are standing together, watching people go about the final preparations for the double wedding. A messenger arrives with the news that Selese has committed suicide. Gwen and Thor arrive at the Lake of Sorrows where Reece continues to cradle Selese in his arms. Reece pledges revenge for the man who killed Selese and explains the situation to Gwen. Reece claims responsibility but pledges revenge for the “treachery.” Gwen tries to convince Reece to allow attendants to take Selese’s body away but he carries her himself. Gwen is disappointed that her own wedding will be postponed and feels a sense of foreboding dread.

In Chapter 23, Romulus becomes more certain that he will have the promised power over the dragons which are wreaking havoc in his region. He plans to stop their attacks and to use them to break through the Shield, gaining entrance to the Ring where Gwen rules. He arrives at the top of a hill and can see a group of dragons flying around, swooping in to burn buildings. The dragons are obviously “enjoying their destruction” and seem to almost be playing with the buildings they tear apart. Then the dragons see Romulus and rush toward him. He stands, unafraid, and raises both hands. A blue light emanates from his palms and the dragons halt, staring at him with “the look of a beast staring back at its master.”

In Chapter 24, the funeral has been held for Selese but Reece can’t bring himself to allow her to be buried. Everyone has stood for hours as he held onto her. He continues to berate himself for his actions with Stara but knows that he and Selese would have been married by now if not for Tirus’s orders. He continues to pledge revenge.

In Chapter 25, Steffen is on top of a mountain where he’d often gone as a child to escape the harassment of his family and the villagers. He looks at himself in a pool of water and knows that the features of his face are acceptable but it’s his body that makes him ugly. A beautiful young woman joins him. He recognizes her as Arliss, a girl born with missing fingers who was also ridiculed as a child in their shared village and one of the few who was kind to Steffen. Arliss says that everyone in the village now knows of Steffen’s role in the Queen’s plan, and that the village is humiliated with the knowledge that he was there. They continue to talk and Arliss reveals that she never married. He then invites her to join him at King’s Court, pledging that Gwen will grant her a place if he simply asks. Steffen kisses her and she doesn’t draw away. She says she is happy with this turn of events.

## Analysis

Gwen and Selese have apparently been through a great deal together in previous books, and Gwen is very fond of Selese. When Selese commits suicide, Gwen is faced



with a difficult decision. Her father's decree had been that no one who committed suicide would be buried in the royal cemetery. It's not known why he made that declaration but it has apparently been strictly adhered to since its inception. When Gwen declares that the royal wedding will be postponed and a royal funeral will take place for Selese, she's reminded of her father's rule. Gwen flounders for a moment then seems to realize that she is now Queen. She says that her new decree overrides her father's rule and insists that Selese will have a royal funeral.

There are several similarities between events of this book and religious ceremonies. When Thor is inducted into the Silver, he is submerged and compares the experience to becoming a new man, very similar to a baptism. This is seen again in Romulus after he trades his soul for the power to control the dragons. Baby Guwayne is submerged as well, and this could be compared to the christening ceremony of some religions. The situation involving Selese is another example. Gwen's father declared that anyone who committed suicide would not be buried in the royal cemetery, an idea held by some modern day religions.

Steffen's situation is typical of anyone who is outside a group because of a difference. He looks critically at himself and believes he would not be considered ugly if not for his misshapen body. He notes that his hair and other facial features are acceptable. Steffen has a bit of an epiphany while he's standing there. He suddenly realizes that his reaction to his family has given them more power than they would otherwise have. While he doesn't act on this revelation, it is a sign of his own coming of age that he recognizes the truth of this realization at all.

## Discussion Question 1

Describe Steffen's epiphany. Is he correct in this revelation?

## Discussion Question 2

Why does Reece blame himself for Selese's suicide but still want revenge?

## Discussion Question 3

What are the plans Romulus has once he controls the dragons?

## Vocabulary

fluttering, preside, scenarios, harshly, hilt, fathom, reeling, mourning, envisioned, entourage, perplexed, treachery



# Chapters 26 - 29

## Summary

In Chapter 26, Alistair and Erec are on their journey to see Erec's father. Alistair is apprehensive about leaving the Ring and meeting Erec's people. She continues to worry about her premonitions that the Ring is in danger. The road forks. Erec and his men begin on the downward trail but Alistair says they will be killed if they go that way. Despite the objections by his men, Erec insists they take the longer trail that continues upwards and a few minutes later a rock slide buries the lower trail. All the men stop and stare in wonder at Alistair. She still doesn't know how or why she has this power and there's a side of her that wants to remain in the dark on these points.

In Chapter 27, Kendrick continues his journey to the village where his squire found the medallion. He imagines what his reunion with his mother will be like. He believes she'll have a good explanation for not contacting him all these years. He begins asking for Alisa as soon as he's in the small village. When he tells a woman he is Alisa's son, the woman begins to laugh which makes Kendrick furious but also leaves him confused. He is eventually directed to the Red Horse Inn. Once inside he discovers that it's a brothel and that his mother works there as a prostitute. She doesn't realize who he is at first and offers to "serve" him. When he identifies himself, she tries to cover her near-naked body and tells Kendrick he should leave. As he leaves, a man orders that he pay for his time in the back room but Kendrick attacks the man, smashing the man's face into his armor. He leaves and pledges that he will never return or think about this encounter again.

In Chapter 28, a young man named Conven continues the last leg of his journey to his home village. His twin was killed in the recent battles and Conven is struggling with his grief over this loss. He's been away from home for a long time and the thing that has kept him going is his plan to return to his home and his young bride, Alexa. As he nears the village and his home, he begins to feel better about life and to hope that he can overcome his grief. He enters his cottage and discovers his wife is kissing another man. She explains that she believed Conven was dead and that she's remarried. She says it's too late to return to Conven and the life they'd shared. He rushes away, remembering the plans he and his twin had made to gain glory on the battlefield before settling down with their wives and families. Conven enters a bar and begins drinking. He's soon embroiled in a fight and it takes several officers to take him into custody.

In Chapter 29, Matus is talking with his brother, Karus. They don't agree on much and Matus says Karus was wrong to try to poison Srog because he is the Queen's man. Karus says Gwen is not his Queen and that he won't obey her. Stara overhears her brothers arguing. She learns that Falus gave Selese the scrolls and that Selese committed suicide. Karus believes this means Stara and Reece will marry but Stara knows Reece's sense of honor will never allow him to marry Stara now. Stara shouts that she hates Karus and, catching him off guard, shoves him down. Then, she rushes



from the room, crying, with the knowledge that she and Reece will never marry. Stara also knows that marriage to Reece was the one thing that would have brought her happiness in life.

## Analysis

Kendrick has built up his own image of his mother, believing that she's probably a princess of some sort who was threatened into abandoning Kendrick. He has also built up the ideal reunion with his mother thrilled to finally meet him. Instead, he finds a harsh reality but there's a physical resemblance that does indicate that she is probably his mother. She doesn't deny it as a possibility but says that he shouldn't have come to find her. It's an important aspect of Kendrick's character that he still needs to know who his mother is and that he's created such lofty ideals about her when those were never the most likely scenarios. Another important aspect of this scene is Kendrick's final reaction. Kendrick rushes from the place, determined that he will never again think about his encounter with his mother. In fact, Kendrick won't likely be able to stop thinking about it for some time to come. This is the nature of broken dreams and Kendrick, though an important warrior, is also a man.

The attitude of Karus after Selese's suicide is that this means there is nothing standing in the way of Stara marrying Reece. Stara knows Reece much better than Karus, Falus, or Tirus. She knows that his sense of honor will never allow him to find happiness with Stara now because it would have come at such a high price. An important aspect of Stara's character is seen here as well. While Stara wanted Reece to break off his marriage to Selese, she is horrified that she has inadvertently contributed to Selese's death. Stara is very different from her father and two brothers, and this is another example of that.

## Discussion Question 1

Compare the dreams Kendrick has created about his mother with the reality.

## Discussion Question 2

How does Stara learn of Selese's suicide? What does she believe this means for her chance of happiness with Reece?

## Discussion Question 3

Describe what Conven expects to find at home and compare that to what he finds. Why do you believe he starts the fight that ends with his arrest?



## Vocabulary

premonition, meticulously, subsided, baffled, musings, reconcile, repulsion, foment, duplicitous, mercenaries, cryptically





# Chapters 30 - 33

## Summary

In Chapter 30, Thor is continuing his training with the young men who are potential recruits to the Legion. With each exercise, he dismisses a few for various lacking skills or traits. He calls on the youngsters to hold up swords that are much heavier than the typical fighting swords, then has them hold up two at a time. They question him, some apparently believing the request is too demanding and Thor has to explain to them that it will make them stronger than their opponents, ultimately giving them an important edge. Only the largest and strongest of the boys and the smaller boy named Merek are able to do as Thor commands. Thor then has the boys pair off to each other. At one boy's continued insistence that the swords are too heavy, Thor has three swords lashed together for his own use and he breaks the boy's single sword in two. Thor tells the boy to leave and that he can return when he learns to speak with respect to his elders. Two members of the Legion, Eldon and O'Conner arrive. Eldon holds a double sword high with one hand and chops a log in two with it. O'Conner then fires an arrow better than any of the recruits. Then Eldon and O'Conner praise Thor for his induction into the Silver. Thor announces to them that he plans to leave the Ring in search of his mother and asks that his friends take over the training. They agree.

Their conversation is interrupted by Merek who announces that he's just heard that Conven is in prison. Thor, O'Conner, and Eldon go to the prison where Thor tells Conven that his Legion brothers need him and that he's letting them down by giving up on life. The speech strikes a chord and he reaches out for Thor's hand.

In Chapter 31, Reece boards the ship carrying Falus and his men. He manages to blend in and gain access to Falus' chamber. He then stabs Falus in the heart. Reece commands that Falus look him in the eye as Falus dies. Falus predicts Reece won't get away with killing him, but Reece says he did get away with it.

In Chapter 32, Luanda is standing near Bronson, looking out over "rows and rows of McCloud prisoners." The men are all accused of having known about the rebellion and are under arrest. Luanda believes they should all be executed but Bronson has all of them fall to one knee and pledge allegiance to Gwen, then he sets them all free. Luanda is furious and believes they've made a huge mistake. Bronson points out that he, as Gwen's subject, has no choice but to obey her command. He says he believes the decision to set the men free rather than executing them was the correct one.

In Chapter 33, Thor is planning to leave in search of his mother. He has an underlying fear that he's putting Gwen and Guwayne in danger by leaving them but rationalizes that the Ring is well protected by the Shield and by Ralibar. Thor will be riding Mycopolis, another winged beast. Thor apologizes that they haven't yet married but promises they will when he returns. He then leaves.



## Analysis

Thor dismisses one boy who seems to have the correct skills. When the boy asks why, Thor challenges his method of having gained the lance he was using. The boy admits that he grabbed it from the hands of another of the potential recruits. Thor says that being a member of the Legion requires total trustworthiness. He points out that when the members of the Legion are involved in a battle, they are fighting a common enemy and that each must be willing to pledge to do everything they can to defend the others. The boy's action means he doesn't have that as an inherent part of his nature. The ideas and tenants held most important by the soldiers are so important to them that it seems to trump everything else. This boy pointed out that he was more skilled with the lance than many of the other boys. Thor's own beginnings are not related at this point and it's not clear whether he has always been honorable. It seems more believable that Thor and his fellow soldiers built their loyalty up over time.

Full descriptions of Mycoples and Ralibar are not given in this book. Ralibar is the creature that brings Gwen home to safety after she gives birth to Guwayne. Mycoples is apparently a similar beast. As Thor is saying good-bye to Gwen, Ralibar is rubbing against Mycoples neck. Thor believes that he's leaving Ralibar behind as part of the protection of the Ring and his family. What also isn't explained is the connection between Mycoples and Ralibar. When Thor leaves with Mycoples, Ralibar is apparently very upset. When Gwen and the King's Court is attacked later, she believes that Ralibar will come to her rescue; but, that doesn't happen.

## Discussion Question 1

Describe some of the requirements for joining the Legion and how Thor seeks those traits and skills among his recruits.

## Discussion Question 2

Another example of the differences between Luanda and Gwen are seen in this section. Describe how the sisters differ on how the region should be ruled. Who do you believe is right? What is your reasoning?

## Discussion Question 3

Why does Reece kill Falus? How does he accomplish the task?

## Vocabulary

surreal, valor, winnowing, wielded, basked, inducted, hoisted, reverberating, jovial, wallow



# Chapters 34 - 38

## Summary

In Chapter 34, Godfrey is in a tavern with a couple of his friends and several of the men from the region. He is suddenly struck by how juvenile his friends are and wishes that there was some meaning to his life. It's a feeling that has been growing within him recently as he deals with his current situation. Godfrey moves down the bar to be farther from his friends and overhears a plot to attack King's Court. Godfrey quietly gets the attention of his friends and orders that they follow him out of the bar. Once outside, they rush to a high place and see that the McClouds are massing troops, making it likely that what Godfrey overheard was correct. Godfrey knows that most of the soldiers will be away for the day on their annual pilgrimage, making it likely that King's Court will be overrun and everyone killed, including his sister and nephew, Gwen and Guwayne. Godfrey announces his intentions to reach King's Court to warn them. His friends say it's impossible and refuse to go with him. Godfrey leaves.

In Chapter 35, Srog is writing a letter to Gwen, describing how miserable he is to be in the Upper Islands. There is clamoring from outside and a servant rushes in with the news that Falus's death has prompted a revolt. He says the castle has been overrun and that Srog is in danger. Srog is attacked and wounded before Matus arrives and urges that Srog leave by a secret tunnel.

In Chapter 36, Gwen is in the castle in the room that was her father's study. She feels connected to her father here and had worked hard to restore the room. She is struggling to cope with her emotions of Selese's death and other recent upheavals. She has a sense of fear, believing bad things are coming for her and the Ring. She learns that Reece killed Falus and of the uprising in the Upper Islands after they learned the news. Srog is captive as are many of Gwen's ships. Tirus and the Upper Islanders are demanding that Gwen "make amends" for the death of Falus in the form of an apology from Reece. Gwen calls for Reece. She's furious at his actions and points out the far-reaching political effects. Reece argues that killing Falus was just and that Gwen's demand is political. Gwen silently admits that she's glad Reece killed Falus because she also loved Selese and is angry by what happened to her, but she insists on the apology and threatens to imprison him if he refuses. Reece points out that Gwen is his sister. Gwen becomes enraged and shouts that she is Reece's Queen before she is his sister. Reece leaves the room and Gwen, in that instant, wishes she was not the Queen.

In Chapter 37, Erec and Alistair are continuing their journey. They arrive at the shore to discover that the boat Erec expected to meet them wasn't there. He is met by a stranger who offers the use of his own boat and Erec pays for passage though he fears it is a mistake.

In Chapter 38, Luanda is bathing in a mountain stream. It's very cold, but she has begun the habit as a way of reconciling the reality of her new life. She has a sprig of a



local herb that she urinates on each morning. If she's pregnant, the leaves will turn white. She no longer expects a positive result but continues out of habit. On this day, she suddenly looks back at the sprig and discovers that it's white. Suddenly her life doesn't seem as unpromising. She rushes to tell Bronson the news. Back at the castle, Luanda suddenly realizes there's something wrong. She enters the room where Bronson would be at this time of day and discovers the bodies of his guards. Bronson is also dead near the back of the room. Luanda knows the McClouds killed Bronson, but she places a greater degree of blame on Gwen. She pledges she will make everyone suffer as they have made her suffer. She has a plan to "ruin Gwendolyn, once and for all." She knows she will set it in motion at once.

## Analysis

Godfrey has a run-in with a young woman who tells him that he's wasting his life. In fact, Godfrey has done little with his life other than spend time drinking and taking the easiest road in every situation. It's only recently that he's begun to consider his life and what he's actually doing with it. The answer to that question is "nothing," and Godfrey is just beginning to realize that he wants to do something. He's is just coming to that conclusion when he realizes that King's Court is in danger. It's only after he makes the connections that he desperately wishes he hadn't had so much liquor so that his mind would be sharper. And interesting aspect of this is that his two friends aren't nearly on the same page. When Godfrey decides that he's going to try to reach King's Court ahead of the attackers, his two friends are ashamed of their decision but refuse to go with him. This coming-of-age aspect of Godfrey's character is seen to a lesser degree in other characters, making it one of the themes of the book.

The argument between Gwen and Reece is important because it clearly outlines some aspects of each characters' traits and puts a finer point to their relationship. Gwen cared deeply for Selese as is seen in her decision to refute an earlier declaration regarding the burial of one who commits suicide. That was a big step for Gwen, going against an edict her father had declared and it demonstrates that Gwen wanted to give Selese a royal burial and she wanted to help ease her brother's pain. Gwen silently admits that she's glad Reece killed Falus and that Falus deserved to die for his role in Selese's suicide. However, Gwen has worked very hard to try to bring the Upper Islands under her control and she sees this as a huge step back. What Gwen doesn't realize is that she has never really made progress toward taking control of the Upper Islands at all. She has seen some success but the underlying tension indicates that it's only a show of respect for Gwen while the men of the region want to rebel and do attack King's Court just a short time after Gwen's conversation with Reece. Gwen demands that Reece go to Tirus and apologize for killing Falus even though she secretly agrees with Reece's action. She makes the demand because she wants to hold onto what she sees as progress toward gaining control. Her comment that she is his Queen before she is his sister is an important part of how she sees herself. She takes her duties to the Ring seriously. She loves Reece but refuses to allow her brother to tear down what she's trying to build, which she believes is the best thing for her kingdom. An important aspect



of Reece's character is seen as he argues that Falus got Justice. A more in-depth discussion of this aspect will be seen in Chapter 44.

Luanda's role in the story is that of a villain though she tries to put her problems off on everyone else. She specifically blames Gwen for having exiled her though it's revealed that Luanda had prompted the action by trying to have Gwen and several others killed. That plot had resulted in Luanda's exile but she cannot accept any of the responsibility. It's not revealed until the final chapter of the book what Luanda's plan is and it's not revealed in this book at all how this plan will work.

## **Discussion Question 1**

Describe how Godfrey comes to know of the plan to attack King's Court. What does he decide to do about it? What is the reason for his decision?

## **Discussion Question 2**

Describe the showdown between Reece and Gwen. Why does Gwen insist on the apology? Why does Reece refuse? Which is right?

## **Discussion Question 3**

What do you see as the most important theme of the book? Give at least three examples of that theme up to this point.

## **Vocabulary**

immerse, culminated, exorcise, jostled, abet, emulate, mulling, conspiratorially, stupor, missive, exhorted, duplicitous, mete



# Chapters 39 - 44

## Summary

In Chapter 39, hundreds of soldiers are walking up a mountain as part of the annual Pilgrimage Day ceremony. Many are walking with a loved one. Kendrick, still hurting from his recent encounter with his mother, is walking with Sandara. He wants to marry her but Sandara says she will return soon to her home, which is far away. Kendrick and the other soldiers pray once they reach the plateau of the mountain and Kendrick's prayer is that Sandara will agree to marry him. Suddenly, Kendrick realizes that he's seeing a mass of men descending on King's Court. He can't image who the attackers are and knows that he and the other soldiers are too far away to stop the attack.

In Chapter 40, Godfrey is just ahead of the McClouds. Godfrey makes it into the gates and shouts for the few remaining soldiers to close them behind him. At his command, the horns are sounded to evacuate the city and the people immediately respond, having been drilled to obey. He rushes into the room where Gwen is having a meeting and brings her up to date on the McClouds and the attack. Gwen initially refuses to leave but Godfrey convinces her that she'll be killed if she doesn't join the evacuation. She leaves and Godfrey joins the few soldiers remaining in King's Court as they stand at the walls, ready with their arrows.

In Chapter 41, Gwen pauses to look at the McCloud army. There is smoke in the distance indicating the McClouds had destroyed villages on their way to King's Court. She prays that Thor will sense her need and return. She looks for Ralibar but the winged creature is nowhere to be seen and Gwen knows that its departure has done something to Ralibar. She joins her people who are waiting outside the back walls of the city but who are waiting for her to join them before departing. Gwen plans to take her people to the Upper Isles though she knows that place will also be hostile and the life she's recently built for herself is over.

In Chapter 42, Romulus continues his march. He is leading his army of men and is followed by his army of dragons. His plan is to destroy the Shield. Once inside, he plans to kill Gwen. They arrive at the edge of the Shield and Romulus is angry when the dragons bump into the Shield without being able to break through. Romulus throws one of his soldiers into the Shield and the man is killed instantly. While Romulus is considering that he might have failed to break into the Shield yet again, he sees Luanda on a bridge on the inside of the Shield.

In Chapter 43, Luanda thinks briefly of the baby growing inside her even now. She'd desperately wanted a child but now that child has no father and Luanda believes the pregnancy is a "cruel joke" and that she probably won't get to keep the baby anyway. She plans to leave "this world, to leave this Ring, to leave this planet." However, she plans to have revenge on Gwen before she does. She has seen Romulus on the other side of the Shield and believes he will kill her once she breaks the Shield. She knows



that she is the key to bringing down the Shield though she doesn't explain. She begins walking across the bridge that will lead her to the Shield and prays to Bronson for forgiveness.

In Chapter 44, Reece enters the castle of Tirus. He's furious that he's here and resents being ordered to apologize. Srog is there, being held captive by Tirus's men. Reece is ordered to take a knee before Tirus and to apologize. Tirus says that the apology has to be "good." Reece falls to his knee and he struggles with the situation. He continues to feel that this isn't justice. He finally comes to a decision. He looks directly at Tirus and says that he apologizes "for not taking your life, too." Before anyone can make a move to defend Tirus, Reece stabs Tirus in the heart, killing him. Reece is surrounded by Tirus's men but he doesn't care, feeling that he's done the honorable thing.

## Analysis

Godfrey arrives just in time to help bar the gates from the McCloud army, and to urge Gwen to escape with Guwayne and the other citizens of the city. One of the final things Gwen says to Godfrey is that their father would have been proud of his actions. Godfrey feels good about the praise but he also feels better about himself, now that he's taken positive action. He fully expects to die if he remains at the wall, fighting off the McClouds, but he intends to stay anyway. Godfrey's fate is not revealed in this book nor is the outcome of the McClouds' attack on King's Court.

Reece's final scene of this book takes place in the court overseen by Tirus, who has been set free during the revolt brought to a head by Falus's death. Reece continues to feel that apologizing to Tirus isn't the honorable course of action. While he's kneeling in front of Tirus, Reece notes that it feels as if his entire life will be defined by this single moment. Immediately following that thought, Reece kills Tirus. As is the case in Godfrey's situation, Reece feels he will probably die. Yet, he doesn't have any regrets about the actions that led him to this spot. Another similarity of the two situations is that the fates of Reece and Godfrey are not revealed in this book. The reader who wants to know what happens to them will have to read the next book of the series.

## Discussion Question 1

Describe Godfrey's arrival at King's Court and his actions once there. How does this compare to his earlier actions in the book? What does it indicate about his character?

## Discussion Question 2

Why is Reece in the court of Tirus in the final chapter? What is he supposed to do? What does he actually do? Why does he take this action?



## Discussion Question 3

If Luanda brings down the Shield, what will likely happen to the kingdom and between Luanda and Romulus? Support your answers with facts about characters and places.

## Vocabulary

purge, auspicious, exotic, traits, keel, ransacked, slovenly, decimating, eviscerated





# Characters

## Gwen

Queen of the Ring, she is the daughter of the former queen and beloved of her people. Gwen is a wise woman with regard to ruling her people but she fails to realize the uncivilized nature of the McClouds. She earns a great deal of love and loyalty by sending supplies to the villages in her kingdom, helping the people who are struggling just to fee themselves. She has sought to end a feud between the McClouds and MacGils through peaceful negotiations and entreaty but doesn't understand that the McClouds are unreasonable people set on death and destruction above all else. Gwen is the mother of Guwayne. She is betrothed to Thor, Guwayne's father. She is tormented by a vision she has repeatedly in which she is forced to choose between Thor and her child. She can't reconcile her decision and worries that something will happen to either Thor or Guwayne. While she can feel the power coursing through Guwayne, she doesn't know the source or the reason for that power. She is as amazed as everyone else when there are serious omens at auspicious moments in Guwayne's life, including the moment of his birth. Gwen is a strong character with a strong sense of duty and honor. When Reece kills Falus, Gwen insists that he make a trip to apologize to Falus' father and threatens to imprison Reece if he doesn't agree. When Reece objects, pointing out that they are siblings, Gwen shouts that she is his queen before she is his sister.

## Thor

Thor is Gwen's betrothed and the father of Guwayne. He is an honorable knight and an important warrior in the kingdom. Thor is tasked with the choosing and rebuilding of the armed forces for the kingdom. He is somewhat disgusted with the level of skill and honor among the youngsters who come to him as possible recruits; but, he is determined to find those suitable for the task. It's while he is involved in this training that Thor is taken aside by some fellow warriors and inducted into the Silver, an elite force of knights who wear a special armor and are charged with defending the kingdom. Thor is the youngest to achieve this honor and he's very surprised when it occurs. He wonders briefly if it might be a prank of some sort but discounts that possibility because of the level of honor among the men involved in the ritual. Thor is dedicated to his friends, family, and kingdom and this dedication is seen clearly when a fellow knight is jailed for starting a bar fight. The knight Conven recently lost his twin brother. Thor realizes that Conven is losing to the grief. With that in mind, Thor reminds Conven that his fellow knights are depending on him and that failure to live up to their expectations means he is letting others down. Thor leaves the kingdom and Gwen behind in his quest for his mother though he worries that he might be leaving Gwen in danger.



## Godfrey

Godfrey is Gwen's brother. He is assigned by Gwen to try to broker peace between the MacGils and McClouds. He figures throwing a party with plenty of liquor and women will accomplish that and is upset when the situation falls apart, ending in an all-out brawl. Godfrey is drunk in a tavern but beginning to realize that he should be acting more honorably when he overhears a comment about the McClouds' planned attack on King's Court where Gwen is living. Godfrey rushes to warn the soldiers and Gwen and prepares to do battle with the invading McClouds even though he knows it will probably cost him his life. He feels finally a satisfaction at having done the honorable thing.

## Reece

Reece is the brother of Gwen. He is on an errand for her to the Upper Island when he encounters Stara, a cousin and childhood love. Reece believes that he is in love with Stara yet and pledges to break off his impending marriage to Selese in favor of Stara. However, when Reece reaches home, he is lectured by his mother and realize that his infatuation with Stara is little more than lust. He pledges to go through with his marriage to Selese and then pledges revenge when he discovers she committed suicide, prompted by news from Stara's brother of the relationship between Stara and Reece. Reece kills Stara's brother, Falus, and then her father, Tirus. He has a strong sense of honor and believes killing Falus and Tirus is the right and honorable thing to do.

## Stara

Stara is the cousin of Reece. She lives among the McClouds but is loyal to Gwen, one of the few members of her family with that alliance. Stara feels a connection to Reece and wants desperately to marry him but when she discovers that her brothers and father prompted the suicide of Reece's betrothed, she knows there is no way her relationship with Reece could possibly continue.

## Selese

Selese is a kind and giving young woman. She is betrothed to Reece and will become Gwen's sister-in-law upon the marriage. Selese is looking forward to Reece's return from his business in the Upper Island when she encounters Falus, Stara's brother, who gives her scrolls written between Stara and Reece when they were children, pledging their love to each other. Selese doesn't recognize the scrolls as old and believes Reece plans to call off their marriage, so she commits suicide to save herself from that fate.



## Conven

Conven is a young knight who is away at war for a long time. After his twin brother is killed, Conven struggles with his grief even as he returns home, anxious to begin his life anew with his wife. When he arrives home, he discovers that his wife thought he'd died in battle. She has remarried. Conven is overcome by grief and begins a bar fight that ends with his arrest. It's only after he's in jail and Thor talks to him that Conven begins to see past his grief, realizing that it is time for him to pick up his responsibilities again.

## Luanda

Luanda is the sister of Gwen. She is exiled, though the reason for her being banished is not deeply explored in this book. She is living among the McClouds and believes the only way to achieve peace there is to rule by force. However, her husband Bronson tends to rule by peace as Gwen orders. Luanda is jealous of Gwen's success and hates her family for her exile. She learns she is expecting a child as the book nears a close. As she rushes to tell Bronson the news, she discovers that he has been murdered by the McClouds. In her grief, Luanda realizes she is the one who can break through the Shield that protects the kingdom. She walks across a bridge intending to do just that as the book comes to a close.

## Romulus

An outsider, Romulus hates Gwen and desperately wants to destroy the King's Court though he can't find a way past the Shield to do so. With little thought, Romulus trades his soul to a sorcerer who gives him the power to rule the dragons for a month. He attacks the Shield and is furious to find that even the dragons can't penetrate the barrier. Just as he fears he might have to give up, Romulus sees Luanda on the other side of the Shield, about to break through to him.

## Kendrick

Kendrick is a young soldier who rushes to meet his mother when he learns her identity. Kendrick is Gwen's half-brother. He has built up a fantasy of why his mother hasn't contacted him. He is devastated when he discovers that his mother is nothing more than a prostitute and that she isn't at all pleased to see him.



# Symbols and Symbolism

## Ralibar

Ralibar, a winged creature, is the only thing that saves Gwen from almost certain death after she gives birth to Guwayne in a field. Ralibar seems distraught after Thor leaves and Gwen notes that the creature is no where to be found when King's Court is attacked.

## The Lake of the Sorrows

Where Selese drowns herself at the Lake of the Sorrows. Also, Thor goes there to pray for Gwen's recovery after she gives birth to Guwayne.

## The Shield

The Shield is a barrier that protects the kingdom. It is strong and apparently impenetrable to outside forces. Romulus attacks the Shield with dragons but it withstands the assault. Though she doesn't complete the task in this book, it appears Luanda will be the key to bringing down the Shield.

## The Pilgrimage

The Pilgrimage is an annual event undertaken by the soldiers who usually guard King's Court. This event is why most of the soldiers are away on the day the McClouds attack.

## The Queen's Funeral

After the Queen dies, her funeral appears to be very traditional in some ways. An important aspect of this funeral is that Luanda is invited home for the event. She believes her exile is being lifted. She's heartbroken to discover that's not the case.

## The Red Horse Inn

Kendrick meets his mother at the Red Horse Inn and discovers she's actually a prostitute.



## **Tirus's Castle**

Tirus waits at his castle for the apology Reece is supposed to deliver for having killed Tirus's son, Falus. However, Reece believes that an apology is dishonorable and that Falus deserved to die. Instead of apologizing, he kills Tirus.

## **The Legion**

The Legion is the general army that provides protection to the Ring. Thor is training young recruits to rebuild the Legion until he leaves in search of his mother.

## **The Silver**

The Silver is an elite group of soldiers that wear a special shiny armor that sets them apart from the regular Legion. Thor is inducted into the Silver.

## **Omens**

Omens are the events that happen at specific moments in the life of Guwayne that indicate he is destined for greatness.



# Settings

## King's Court

Where Gwen lives as ruler of her kingdom, there is a working town within the walls of the King's Court. There is not a great deal of description offered other than what is necessary to move the action along. For example, it's known that there is a front and rear gate and they must be some distance apart. When Godfrey arrives at the front gate with the warning about the McCloud attack, Gwen and most of the people of the town move to the rear gates and leave the town behind. There is a wall surrounding the town and the castle where Gwen lives has several huge rooms, including a remodeled library and office where Gwen works.

## The Upper Islands

Where Tirus rules and where he is imprisoned before an uprising sets him free to retake the throne. This is a rough land though Gwen is seeking to create peace between the people there and the people who accept Gwen as their ruler. The majority of the people in the Upper Isles are rough with little civility. Throughout the book, the region is called the Upper Isles or the Upper Islands.

## The Ring

The overall kingdom ruled by Gwen, this includes King's Court and the villages outside the walls of the Court. The Ring is not completely defined in this book. It is protected by the Shield but it is possible for those inside to pass through and, apparently, to return.



# Themes and Motifs

## The Importance of Relationships

There are many relationships among the various characters of the book and these become important in understanding the dynamics that are going on with families and between individual characters. Stara and Reece are one example of this theme. They are cousins though the exact kinship is not readily apparent from this book. This cousin relationship means the two are not actually permitted to enter into a romantic relationship, though they ignore that taboo as children and seem ready to ignore it again as adults. The fact that they are related makes Tirus believe that Gwen would be compelled to free him if Stara and Reece married. Gwen has several siblings, including Reece, who are important characters in the book. Luanda has been exiled and her jealousy of Gwen makes her a formidable adversary though Luanda has been formally exiled. Equally important is the comparison of the relationship between Luanda and the Queen and that of Gwen and the Queen. Luanda recalls that she and her mother never argued and she'd taken that as approval for her driving ambition. Gwen and her mother were constantly at odds and the Queen says this was because she and Gwen seem so much alike. Thor also has a sister, Alisa, and their relationship is newly-discovered. Yet another aspect of this theme is seen when several characters seek approval from their parents. Kendrick has apparently spent a long time searching for his mother. He is Gwen's half-brother and has dreamed that his mother is likely a beautiful princess, forced to remain apart from Kendrick. What he finds is devastating because his mother is actually a prostitute. Thor says that he doesn't have a father and creates a father figure by imaging a table with men he admires seated around that table, each lending their best traits. Finally, Steffen hopes to find approval from his family because of his position in Gwen's regime. When he arrives at the home of his family, he is treated rudely and is terribly hurt. It's only later that he realizes he is giving his family the power to hurt him and that they wouldn't have it if he were not endowing them with it.

## Ruling a Kingdom

Gwen has been named Queen. She is seeking to rule the Ring through kindness and honesty. She sends Steffen throughout the kingdom with supplies meant to make the lives of her people better. He has an array of items, including basic food and building materials, that he is distributing as they are needed. These actions in her region of the Ring have made her a beloved and respected Queen and Gwen believes she can make the same sort of impressions in the Upper Islands. However, Godfrey, Srog, and others who are sent to the Upper Islands by Gwen realize that probably isn't to be the case. That region was previously ruled by Tirus who is now imprisoned. It's noted that Gwen would have been within her rights to have Tirus executed but she doesn't. She probably believes this will earn some respect but that's not the reaction. The people of the Upper Islands equate this sort of kindness with weakness and they seek to exploit it. Luanda recognizes this and it's Luanda who burns down the great hall with several of the



McClouds inside. Later, Bronson releases many of the McClouds who have been captured. He is acting on Gwen's orders and the men fully expect to be executed. When they aren't, they are happy and Gwen apparently expects this action to endear her to the men and their families. Luanda is frustrated by the decision, believing that it shows weakness that the men of the region don't understand.

## The Quest for Power

There are many characters in the story who are seeking various kinds of power. In some cases, the quest is honorable and the character can be admired for the ambition. In other cases, the desire for power is selfish and not to be admired. Romulus is among the latter. He is introduced as he is seeking a sorcerer who has a spell to control the dragons that are laying waste to the region. As far as this goes, Romulus seems to be hoping to simply stop the dragons from burning and destroying everything. But then Romulus finds the sorcerer who can actually grant that power and he trades his soul for an even greater power - the ability to control the dragons. With this power, Romulus doesn't plan to just save his own country but intends to break through the Shield, gaining access to the Ring in order to attack Gwen's country. Another example of this is seen in Tirus's decision to pave the way for Stara and Reece to marry. While he had previously opposed the match, he moves in favor of it after he is in prison. He believes that Gwen would have to set him free, making it possible for him to regain his throne, if his daughter were married to Gwen's brother. A very minor example of this theme is seen in the number of young recruits who are hoping for a spot on the Legion. Many come from rural areas and imperfect homes, and becoming a member of the Legion is an honor, putting them in a position above what they would otherwise likely achieve.





# Styles

## Point of View

A Sea of Shields is written in third person from an omniscient perspective. The third person perspective is the only option available to the author because there are so many characters and the action takes place in various places, sometimes simultaneously. For example, Luanda discovers that she is pregnant and rushes home to tell Bronson the good news, only to discover that Bronson has been murdered by the McClouds. About this same time, Romulus is gathering his dragons and preparing to attack the Shield to gain entrance into the Ring. It's evident that these two events are happening about the same time because Luanda heads toward the Shield from inside and discovers that Romulus is standing outside the Shield at the same time. The fact that events are happening simultaneously makes the omniscient perspective imperative. The omniscient perspective is also necessary because of the huge cast of characters. This omniscient perspective is somewhat limited by the fact that this is one book of a series. Things that are known to the characters are not automatically revealed; and, the casual reader who hasn't read previous books of the series may not know all the details or may not fully understand the details that are referenced.

## Language and Meaning

A Sea of Shields is written in modern English, and the reader with an average vocabulary shouldn't encounter many unfamiliar words. The bigger challenge is keeping track of the happenings in the various characters' lives and learning the various settings. The settings and events are supernatural, meaning the reader won't have a comparable setting with which to compare. For example, in the first chapter there is a reference to "both suns," indicating the setting is supernatural. In that same chapter, Gwen passes out after giving birth and "Ralibar" arrives to swoop up mother and baby. There's no explanation of Ralibar but it appears to be a mystical flying beast that protects Gwen's kingdom. There's also no explanation of how Gwen came to be alone in the middle of a field when she's giving birth to a baby. This is one of several questions that are not answered unless the reader has knowledge of the events in previous books. There is a great deal of dialogue included in the book and the majority of this reads as if the speakers were modern American people. There is no doubt this is the author's way of reaching the target audience of modern-day teens. On this front, the author is successful and seems to reach that informal tone.

## Structure

A Sea of Shields is the tenth in the Sorcerer's Ring series by Morgan Rice. While the book can be read as a stand alone, there are bits of history the casual reader may not understand without having read the previous books of the series. The book also ends



on several cliffhangers and situations are not resolved, leaving the reader to wonder about the fates of many of the characters. There is a wide cast of characters and the casual reader may find it difficult to keep track of them, especially without benefit of having read the previous books. The book is divided into forty-four chapters. As a rule, each chapter is dedicated to a specific character and the next chapter skips to some the events happening in the life of some other character. This makes the book somewhat difficult to track, especially for the reader who doesn't have the background of the previous books. Many of the names are uncommon which may also present a challenge to some readers. The storyline is presented roughly in chronological order though there are some overlaps because of the focus on individual characters at any given point in the book. The book opens with a quote from Shakespeare's "Henry V" in which Henry rouses his soldiers with the famous "band of brothers" speech. This same idea is used in the book as a means of urging young recruits to look at their fellow soldiers as a band of brothers.



## Quotes

Reece knew it was the wise thing to do. The right thing to do.

-- Reece (chapter 3 paragraph 4)

**Importance:** Reece is referring to his upcoming marriage to Selese. He promised Stara he would call off the wedding but he is having second thoughts now that he is back home. His mother solidifies those thoughts and makes him see that the emotions he holds for Stara are fleeting, while his marriage to Selese could be enduring.

Those McClouds, Godfrey realized, were rougher around the edges than the MacGils. The MacGils were tough, but the McClouds - there was sometime to them, sometimes a bit uncivilized.

-- Godfrey (chapter 5 paragraph 11)

**Importance:** This is one of the first indications that the people of the Upper Islands are just different from the people of King's Court. Godfrey is drunk in this scene but he realizes that there is a hard edge to the men that won't respond to Gwen's typical leadership style.

You are an exceptional daughter. And an exceptional Queen. A far greater Queen than I ever was.

-- The Queen (chapter 6 paragraph 25)

**Importance:** Gwen and her mother are sharing a few private moments while her mother is literally on her deathbed. The Queen is expressing what most parents feel looking back on their lives - that they were inadequate, especially in dealing with their children.

It had all, his entire upbringing, been a grand delusion. These were just pathetic people.

-- Steffen (chapter 7 paragraph 71)

**Importance:** Steffen has returned to his home village as part of his orders from Gwen who put Steffen in charge of distributing supplies to the villagers in need. Steffen left home, an outcast, and has always believed that his family was perfect while he was unfit to be part of it. It's only after seeing them as an adult and a powerful man in his own right that Steffen realizes this isn't true.

They hated the indignity of having to descend to this place to see their father, a great warrior who had been rightful King of the Upper Isles. And they silently vowed revenge.

-- Falus and Karus (chapter 10 paragraph 1)

**Importance:** This is typical of the men of the Upper Isles. Though Gwen continues to try to negotiate some sort of peace in her rule over the people of this region, the men continue to chaff under her rule.



Over these last moons, Romulus had sent his men on a quest to every corner of the Empire to find a magical spell to combat these dragons.

-- Romulus (chapter 13 paragraph 4)

**Importance:** At this point, Romulus is dealing with dragons in his kingdom, known as the Empire. The dragons are destroying everything they come to and Romulus wants only to stop them but he is more than willing to trade his soul for the power to control them, when he discovers that's available.

It felt so good to be home again. Waves of relief washed over her as she spotted her home, the place she had grown up, saw all the people - her people - milling about, the throngs heading into the city for her mother's funeral.

-- Luanda (chapter 19 paragraph 1)

**Importance:** At this point Luanda believes that her invitation to her mother's funeral means she is going to be reinstated at court. She is devastated when she finds out she is to return to exile immediately following the funeral. It seems some of this might have been avoided if Gwen had made the information clearer when Luanda was told she could attend the funeral.

All Reece had wanted was a chance to make up for his mistake. If it hadn't been for Tirus's son, Reece would surely have had that chance.

-- Reece (chapter 24 paragraph 5)

**Importance:** Reece is mourning Selese's suicide. He never says that he isn't to blame and accepts that he should never have rekindled his relationship with Stara while he was betrothed to Selese. However, he fully believes that he would have been able to make up for his mistake if Falus hadn't given Selese the scrolls and led her to believe Reece was calling off the wedding. It will lead him to take revenge, killing both Falus and Tirus.

In Matus's eyes, his father deserved to be imprisoned, which was a generous act on Gwendolyn's part. His brother, though, could not feel more differently - and as Matus marched into the room, he was met by the hostile glare of Karus, who sat around their long, wooden table, scowling, debating with several other soldiers sitting with them.

-- Matus (chapter 29 paragraph 4)

**Importance:** This is an example of the differences between Matus and his brothers. Matus is virtually the only person in the Upper Islands who is loyal to Gwen and he is hated by his brothers and father for that loyalty.

As they neared each other, Gwen, furious with REece for getting her kingdom into this mess, reached up and smacked Reece hard across the fact.

-- Gwen (chapter 36 paragraph 42)

**Importance:** A few minutes later, Gwen demands that Reece apologize for killing Falus and threatens to put Reece in prison if he refuses. When he points out that they are



brother and sister, she shouts that she is his Queen before she is his sister. It's a defining moment in their lives and Reece will go to do as Gwen orders but he actually kills Tirus rather than apologizing to him.

Luanda needed someone, something, to blame. There were the McClouds, of course, who had done this, and who she wanted to murder. (chapter 38 paragraph 25)

**Importance:** With her next thought, Luanda settles on Gwen as the real reason her beloved Bronson is dead and she vows revenge. It's a statement of Luanda's character that not even the thought of the life growing inside her is enough to keep her content now and she pledges to get revenge on Gwen, regardless of the cost.

It was a feeling of responsibility. It was foreign to him. And he liked it.  
-- Godfrey (chapter 40 paragraph 16)

**Importance:** Godfrey has been irresponsible throughout the book, drinking too much and caring little for what he should be doing. He came to realize a level of dissatisfaction earlier in the book and risked his life to give King's Court and his sister a few minute's warning.