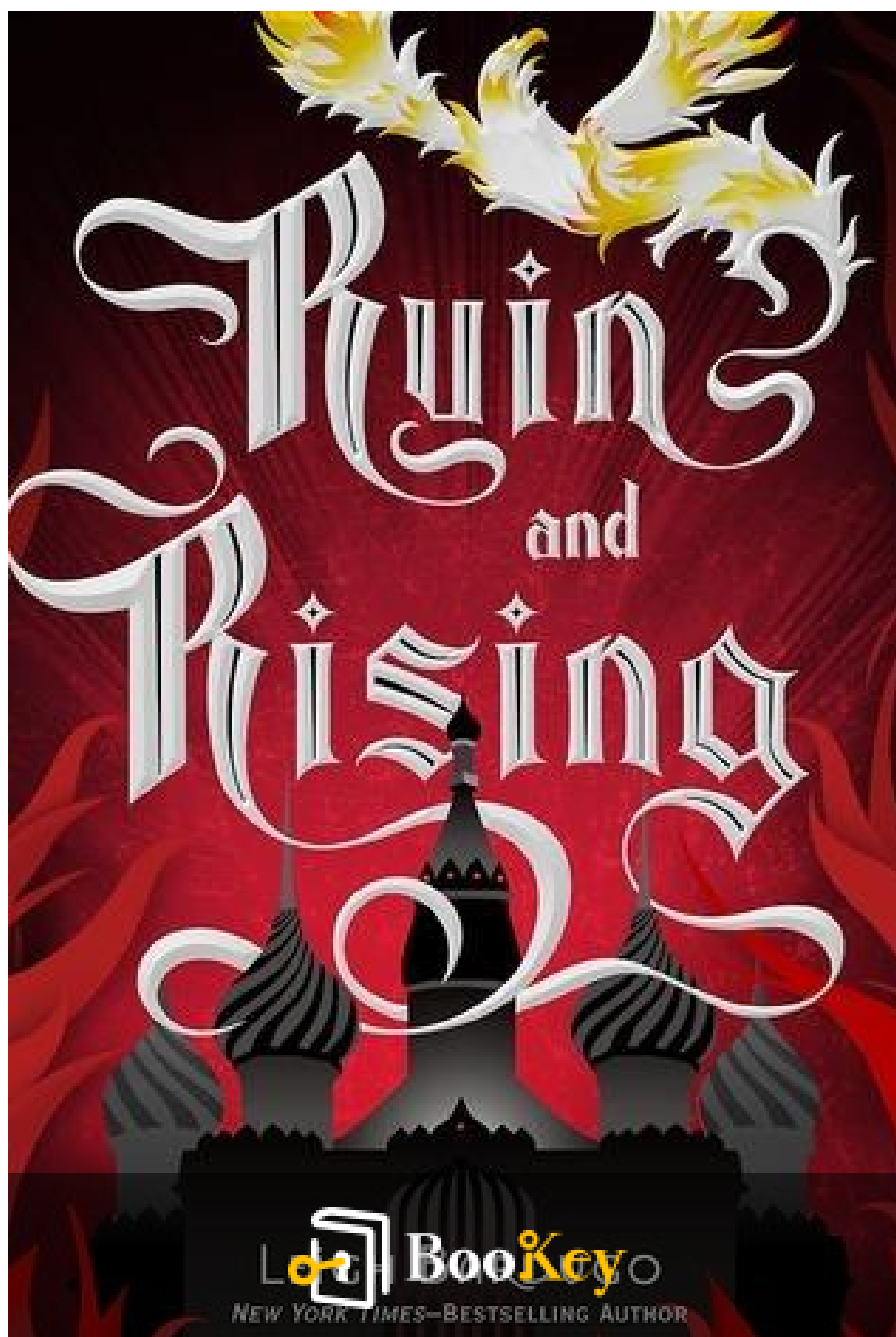


Ruin And Rising PDF (Limited Copy)

Leigh Bardugo



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Ruin And Rising Summary

A battle for light in a world of shadows.

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About the book

In the breathtaking culmination of Leigh Bardugo's Grishaverse trilogy, ****Ruin and Rising**** invites readers to witness a world on the brink of devastation, where alliances are tested and sacrifices are demanded. As Alina Starkov grapples with the weight of her newfound powers as the Sun Summoner, she must confront the darkness that threatens to consume her nation and those she loves. The stakes are higher than ever, as the malevolent Darkling seeks to harness the strength of their shared past, pushing Alina to unlock the true potential of her abilities. Caught in a web of intrigue, betrayal, and the haunting shadows of her own insecurities, Alina embarks on a perilous journey that promises to reshape not only her destiny but the fate of Ravka itself. Prepare to be swept away into a tale of courage, love, and the quest for redemption that will leave you breathless until the very last page.

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About the author

Leigh Bardugo is a bestselling author known for her captivating work in the young adult fantasy genre, particularly the Grishaverse series, which includes the highly-acclaimed novels *Shadow and Bone*, *Siege and Storm*, and *Ruin and Rising*. With a background in creative writing and a penchant for intricate world-building, Bardugo has garnered a devoted readership, thanks to her deeply flawed characters and richly imagined landscapes. Born in Jerusalem and raised in Los Angeles, she draws inspiration from her diverse heritage and a passion for storytelling that began at a young age. Her novels not only explore themes of power, loyalty, and identity but also challenge conventional narratives in fantasy literature, establishing her as a formidable voice in contemporary fiction.

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Chapter 1 Summary:

Chapter 1 Summary

The story begins with Alina Starkov, a figure revered by her followers as a Saint, standing on a stone balcony in the White Cathedral. Her attire, a patchwork kefta cobbled from scraps and remnants of better times, reflects her fragile state, both physically and emotionally. Despite the golden light emanating from her, it's a mere illusion created by Inferni fire, as she has lost her true powers following a devastating battle against the Darkling.

Alina feels trapped in her current role, where she has to perform hollow displays of power for the people while being isolated underground. The priest known as the Apparatus has an iron grip on her, offering her little freedom. He views her not just as a Saint but as a tool for his growing influence, emphasizing patience and the waiting game until they can reclaim power. Alina struggles with her identity—she is no longer the warrior she once was, and her body is weak from the trauma she has endured.

As Alina converses with the Apparatus, her unease increases. He prevents her from reaching out to the sick and vulnerable by limiting her interactions with the outside world. Instead, he insists she remain in the sanctuary of the White Cathedral, where she feels increasingly like a prisoner. She longs for



the freedom to explore her powers and to reach out to her allies.

While observing new pilgrims arriving, Alina notes with concern the lack of veterans among them, suggesting a shift in the priorities of those seeking refuge. The Apparat is keen on recruiting able-bodied young people for a burgeoning army, further illustrating his ambition that conflicts with Alina's desire to care for the weak and elderly.

The tension builds when Alina is led through the underground caverns toward the archives, experiencing the claustrophobic atmosphere and recognizing her waning influence. She reflects on her strained relationships, particularly with Mal, her former romantic interest who is now training the Soldat Sol, a group of young soldiers loyal to her cause but managed by the Apparat. Alina feels distant from Mal, troubled by the darker implications of war, and the potential loss of connections.

Upon reaching the training grounds, Alina witnesses Mal's leadership amidst a chaotic instructor-student dynamic. She is struck by his confidence and how the situation has shifted from a shared bond to differing paths. Mal's fierce protection of children from the horrors of war resonates with Alina, emphasizing her own inner turmoil and desire to protect those she cares for, despite being confined by the Apparat's ambitions.

The chapter crescendos with an abrupt invasion by the Apparat and his



Priestguards, who accuse Alina of being in danger from a conspiracy involving her friends. In an explosive moment, several of Alina's allies, including Genya and Mal, are brought before her bound and beaten, thrusting Alina into a crisis of faith as she realizes the danger surrounding her. The Apparat's actions reveal the extent of the political machinations at play, leaving Alina to grapple with her precarious standing among both friends and foes in a world turned upside down.

Key Points	Description
Protagonist	Alina Starkov, seen as a Saint by her followers.
Setting	White Cathedral, where Alina feels trapped and isolated.
Conflict	Alina's struggle with her lost powers and the control of the Apparat.
Powers	Alina's abilities are diminished, creating feelings of imprisonment.
Relationships	Strained connection with Mal, who is training young soldiers.
Apparat's Ambitions	He views Alina as a tool for his own power, limiting her interactions.
Theme	Identity crisis and the weight of responsibility in times of turmoil.
Climactic Moment	Alina witnesses her friends captured by the Apparat, leading to a crisis of faith.



Chapter 2 Summary:

In Chapter 2, the tense atmosphere unfolds within the Kettle of the White Cathedral as the protagonist, known as Sankta Alina, confronts the Apparat, an influential priest who has accused her friends of treason. The chapter begins with Alina witnessing the brutal treatment of her companions—Mal, David, Nadia, and Zoya—all powerful Grisha and a Fabrikator, as they are held in custody. The Apparat claims that there is a conspiracy aimed at bringing down the Cathedral, suggesting that these friends intended to drug Alina and betray her to the Darkling, a malevolent figure from her past.

Tamar Kir-Bataar, a fellow Grisha, reinforces these accusations, stating that her friends planned to use blasting powders to aid in their betrayal. As the Apparat riles the Priestguards against Alina, she struggles with the notion that those she trusts could turn against her. Despite the grave allegations, Alina defends her friends, insisting Mal would never betray her.

The tension escalates when the Apparat reveals that her allies are being detained and harmed. Alina realizes he intends to isolate her from everyone who might support her while sowing doubt about their loyalty. Just as despair threatens to engulf her, Alina decides she must demonstrate her power, a resurrection of her strength despite the months of subjugation under the Apparat's control.



In a moment of defiance, Alina manipulates the shadows, creating a distraction that allows her friends to mount a surprise attack against their captors. Amidst the chaos, Mal seizes an opportunity to use the blasting powder, causing an explosion that opens up a flue leading to the surface and daylight.

As the fight rages on, Alina taps into her long-dormant light power, feeling a surge of strength wash over her as she attempts to protect her friends. This newfound vigor allows her to wield her abilities defensively and offensively against the Priestguards, who start to question their allegiance in the face of her fierce display of power.

Realizing she must manipulate the situation even further, Alina brands a young soldier named Vladim with her mark, demanding his loyalty as a show of power to encourage other guards to support her as a leader, not a figure of deception and fear. Though conflicted about the violence and brandishing of her powers, she maintains control, understanding the necessity of making an impact and solidifying her influence.

With victory in sight, Alina organizes her allies, directing them to prepare for her upcoming speech to the gathered faithful as she prepares to emerge from the Kettle and assert her authority. The chapter closes with Mal expressing faith in her abilities, hinting at the deep bond they share amidst the chaos, as they prepare to confront both the outside world and the myriad



of challenges that lie ahead.

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Critical Thinking

Key Point: The strength of loyalty and trust in times of adversity

Critical Interpretation: In moments when the world feels chaotic and those around you are being accused or undermined, remember Alina's determination to defend her friends against the Apparat's treachery. This unwavering loyalty, reflected in her refusal to abandon her belief in their innocence, inspires you to stand firm with your own trusted allies when challenges arise. When faced with adversity, harness the energy of trust—like Alina embracing her dormant powers—to foster resilience and unity. It's a reminder that your faith in others can be a powerful catalyst for overcoming obstacles, turning moments of despair into opportunities for strength and collaboration.



Chapter 3 Summary:

Chapter 3 Summary

As the doors of the White Cathedral burst open, Alina Starkov, now known as the Sun Summoner, emerges to a crowd of worshippers. Light floods the passageway, prompting shouts of reverence as they kneel in prayer. The Apparat, a power-hungry priest who has positioned himself as a spokesperson for the people, recounts a recent triumph over darkness, insisting that faith vanquishes evil. Alina interjects, stressing the importance of her power alongside faith.

In the midst of the adoration, Alina grapples with her responsibilities and the implications of leaving the cathedral and the army in the Apparat's hands while searching for the firebird, the third amplifier she needs to combat the Darkling. With Mal, her ally and love interest, assisting her, Alina dispatches Tamar to gather the Soldat Sol, her sun soldiers, and secure more weapons.

The Apparat attempts to persuade Alina to delay her return to the surface, warning of the unstable political situation and suggesting that she should wait for the kings' conflict to play out. However, Alina fiercely asserts her loyalty to Nikolai Lantsov, the man she believes has survived against all



odds. Their conversation underscores the Apparat's manipulative nature and his desire to control the narrative surrounding Alina, framing her as a saintly figure to rally people around her.

In a strategic gathering, Alina convenes with her fellow Grisha in her quarters. There's tension and disbelief among her troops—Sergei expresses confusion at being imprisoned, and others share their bruises from previous battles, revealing the chaos of their circumstances in the underground. The atmosphere lightens momentarily as Alina showcases her radiant powers again, rekindling hope amongst her companions.

However, the seriousness of their predicament looms large. Mal shares the risk of their present situation, emphasizing that they must be careful with the number of Grisha they take aboveground. Alina lays out their plan to contact Nikolai, highlighting the hope that he may have established smuggling routes for arms across Ravka.

Despite apprehensions, several decide to join her in this daunting quest, including Genya, who has her own score to settle with the Darkling, and Zoya, who sees this as an opportunity to escape their damp prison. The group's dynamics shift as they prepare to leave, emphasizing both camaraderie and their individual motivations for going aboveground.

As Alina reflects on her relationships with her friends and allies, she



becomes increasingly aware of her own transformative path. She grapples with the burden of leadership and the potential for the darkness that lurks within her power. Seeking understanding of her bond with the Darkling, Alina attempts to access that connection through meditation, leading her into a vision where she encounters him in his throne room.

The Darkling, manifesting confidence and ruthlessness, engages Alina in a verbal sparring match. He acknowledges her strength but also hints at the peril of their bond. Alina carefully navigates their dialogue, asserting her independence while recognizing the complexity of her feelings toward him. When she dares to express the strength she has gained, it is against the backdrop of their tumultuous history.

Their interaction reaches a climactic moment when Alina, embracing her growing power, asserts her agency and ends the connection, leaving the Darkling with nothing but the memory of their exchange and the light she embodies.

Thus, this chapter blends themes of power, loyalty, faith, and the struggle for identity as Alina prepares to confront the darkness within her and outside, ultimately searching for a deeper understanding of her connection to the ones she loves—and the enemy she cannot escape.

Key Aspects	Summary
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Key Aspects	Summary
Setting	White Cathedral, where Alina emerges to worshippers' reverence.
Main Character	Alina Starkov (Sun Summoner)
Conflict	Alina's responsibilities and the Apparat's manipulations.
Supporting Characters	Mal, The Apparat, Nikolai Lantsov, Tamar, Genya, Zoya
Alina's Power	Importance of Alina's sun powers in the fight against evil and her leadership role.
Main Plot Points	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Alina's worship and leadership challenge. - Gathering troops and weapons for confrontation. - Planning to contact Nikolai for support. - Personal reflections on her bond with the Darkling.
Darkling Encounter	Alina meditates and connects with the Darkling, revealing complex emotions and a struggle for power.
Themes	Power, loyalty, faith, identity, and the internal struggle against darkness.



Chapter 4:

Chapter 4 Summary

In the dank confines of the alabaster chamber, Alina Starkov awakens with a gasp, full of guilt for her recent actions, though she finds strength in the revelation that the Darkling is at the Grand Palace and thriving. This encounter with her growing powers only fuels her determination to confront him; she refuses to be a pawn in his game anymore. Nursing a budding headache, she reflects on the Darkling's dangerous influence and her newfound ability to challenge him.

As the time for the services approaches, Alina dresses and prepares to address the eager crowd in the White Cathedral. With Vladim at her side displaying his branded loyalty, she gives a stirring speech, claiming that they will act as her extensions of power. The Apparat, the priest with dubious motives, backs her fervently, and Alina feels a potent connection to the crowd that previously terrified her. The moment is marked by the chants of "Sankta Alina!" which boosts her confidence but weighs heavily on her realization of the expectations placed upon her.

Once the service concludes, Alina and Mal meet up with their companions at Chetya's Well, trying to escape the prying eyes of the Apparat. They dress in



ordinary clothes to blend in better, but are overwhelmed by well-wishing pilgrims who offer gifts and blessings. Alina struggles with the affection they show, feeling both burdened and uplifted by their faith.

While Alina worries about their uncertain future, she plans their next move toward Ryevost. With Mal leading the way and David mapping their route, they navigate the treacherous underground tunnels that are being bombarded by the Darkling's forces. Alina's physical strength is returning, and she is spurred on by the hope of finding Nikolai, a prince who has gone missing since the chaos ensued.

As they traverse through the dark and narrow paths of the caverns, Alina's thoughts shift to Morozova, the creator of the amplifiers, and his maddening obsession with power. His journals detail his disturbing experiments, showcasing his descent into obsession with the amplifiers, leaving Alina to ponder the ethical implications of pursuing such power.

Their journey is punctuated by harrowing moments, including the treacherous crossing of an underground river, which causes anxiety about their precarious situation. The group encounters peculiar caverns filled with the wonders of nature that elicit awe, yet they also highlight their vulnerability as they navigate the challenges ahead. Quirks among the group, such as Harshaw's antics and David's habit of overpacking, provide brief moments of levity amidst the dire circumstances.



As Alina and Mal take a moment to acknowledge their feelings, he expresses his need to focus on her safety while also revealing the emotional toll of their circumstances. Their intimate conversation hangs heavily in the air, filled with both unresolved tension and the bond forged by their shared experiences.

Just as they attempt to process these emotions, the ground shakes with the force of an explosion, escalating the already tense situation and hinting at the dangers that lie ahead. The chapter ends with the group bracing for the unknown, their journey marked by uncertainties, conflicts, and the ever-looming threat of the Darkling's pursuit.

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Chapter 5 Summary:

Chapter 5 Summary

The chapter opens dramatically as Alina, Mal, Zoya, and their companions experience a harrowing moment in a collapsing tunnel. The sounds of explosions are deafening, revealing that they are under attack. Mal quickly assesses the situation, commanding the group to extinguish their lanterns and brace themselves against the falling debris. Amid the chaos, Alina feels a growing bond with Mal, symbolized through their clasped hands, as fear grips the group.

The explosions seem to be caused by Inferni above them, sending poisonous marsh gas into the tunnel. Mal maintains a calm demeanor as he directs the Squallers to push the gas away. Alina focuses on controlling a thread of light to illuminate the area, revealing their small group: Mal, Genya, David, Zoya, Nadia, Harshaw, and their cat Oncat, who are all covered in dust and terrified. After tense moments, they locate Tolya, Tamar, and Adrik blocked by a wall of rock. The team works together to dig them out, and they are relieved to see that everyone is accounted for except for Sergei and Stigg.

With tensions high, Zoya uses her abilities to locate Sergei's voice, revealing he is trapped but alive. They work for nearly two hours to excavate them,



and when they are finally freed, Sergei and Stigg are weakened but safe. This shared struggle strengthens their group dynamic as they offer each other support and camaraderie in the face of danger.

Once regrouped, they decide to move onward cautiously. Alina lights their way again, but the echoes of the cave keep them anxious, aware that their safety is precarious. They eventually make their way into a basement room, indicating they are not far from the river cities; however, the space feels ominous. They are in a crypt—a contrast to their earlier struggles underground.

Alina reflects on their current predicament. The crypt is filled with remnants of the past and haunted by memories of those lost in the wars Ravka has seen. Humor breaks the tension momentarily when they joke about how their escape from one kind of death may lead them to another tomb-like setting, underscoring the absurdity of their situation.

As they exit the crypt into the cemetery, Alina feels a wave of relief wash over her, but soon realizes the reality of their circumstances. They have emerged into a quiet, empty graveyard with rows of aboveground tombs. The stars shine brightly in the night sky, providing a contrast to their dark experiences below. Mal acknowledges the weight of their situation, urging everyone to keep quiet and seek cover.



In their attempts to travel unnoticed through the countryside, they hear the sounds of a militia convoy approaching. Mal's decision to avoid confrontation highlights his leadership as they blend into the surrounding trees to keep hidden. They find a clearing near a tributary of the Sokol River, where they set up a temporary camp. As the group regains their strength, Alina grapples with her sense of loss and the unpredictability of their situation, feeling both excitement and fear over the wider world they've reentered.

Tamar, one of the twins with a dual identity as a Heartrender, volunteers to scout the nearby town of Ryevost for news about Nikolai. Despite misgivings about sending her alone, the group recognizes her value in this mission. The twins share a phrase learned from their father—"despise your heart," a reminder to be pragmatic in the face of adversity, resonating deeply with Alina.

As the sun sinks low, Alina reflects on the burgeoning hope that Nikolai is indeed alive and that the changes in Ravka may favor them. Tamar's safe return with news of a potential alliance with Nikolai's forces brings a moment of optimism to the weary group. However, their respite is darkened by the presence of the Darkling's forces in town, which creates a sense of urgency to move quickly and strategically.

The chapter culminates in a tense encounter when Alina and Mal are



captured by three armed militia. Luchenko, the leader, recognizes Mal, revealing his identity as a fugitive and raising questions about their next moves. The militia’s intentions of using Alina and Mal as bargaining chips in a higher-stakes game intersect with their hopes of escaping from the looming presence of the Darkling, leaving the group in a place of uncertainty just as chaos erupts around them.

This chapter balances themes of survival, camaraderie, and strategic thinking against the backdrop of the ongoing war, demonstrating how each character's strengths and backgrounds contribute to their collective resilience in the face of overwhelming danger.

Key Points	Details
Setting	Collapsed tunnel under attack with explosions from Inferni above.
Main Characters	Alina, Mal, Zoya, Genya, David, Nadia, Harshaw, Tolya, Tamar, Adrik, Sergei, Stigg, Oncat.
Initial Conflict	Group is trapped with poisonous gas and falling debris.
Team Actions	Mal leads the group to extinguish lanterns, pushes gas away, and organizes rescue for captured members.
Rescue Operation	After two hours, they successfully dig out Sergei and Stigg.
Exploration of Setting	They find themselves in a crypt, reflecting on past wars and lost memories.
Emergence	They exit into a quiet graveyard, highlighting their precarious situation.

Key Points	Details
Travel Strategy	Mal decides to avoid confrontation with a militia convoy, finding temporary safety by a tributary.
Twins' Mission	Tamar volunteers to scout for news about Nikolai, emphasizes black-and-white pragmatism.
Hope and Tension	Tamar returns with news of a potential alliance but danger remains due to the Darkling's forces.
Climax	Alina and Mal are captured by militia; questions arise regarding their fates.
Themes	Survival, camaraderie, strategic thinking in midst of war.

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Chapter 6 Summary:

In Chapter 6, the chaotic aftermath of an ambush unfolds in the forest, with Alina and Mal trying to escape danger. As gunfire erupts around them, Mal protects Alina, and they find themselves surrounded by the Grisha and a militia. Panic ensues until Nikolai, a clever and charismatic leader with a reputation for boldness, arrives unexpectedly. He cuts the bonds binding Alina and Mal together, avoids revealing too much about the battle's chaos, and confidently prepares for their escape.

As they flee into the woods, Alina struggles to keep track of her friends amidst the confusion and danger. Several of her allies, including Tolya and Tamar, engage in fierce combat against the militia, showcasing their Grisha powers. The tension heightens as Nikolai leads them toward a mysterious airborne craft—dubbed the Pelican—that he has created as a transport vehicle. After a daring escape involving climbing aboard the craft while under fire, Mal and the others leap from the platform to confront their attackers, demonstrating their unwavering commitment to protect their group.

The scene shifts radically as Alina suddenly discovers her own latent powers during the battle, using her abilities to stop an attacking soldier with devastating effect. Overwhelmed by the violence and her newfound strength, she feels a mix of horror and power. Although they manage to escape aboard



the Pelican, a sense of relief quickly turns into anxiety about the costs of their survival and Alina's ability to control her powers.

As they ascend into safety, Alina gains perspective on the conflict by observing the landscape from the skies, reflecting on the toll of the ongoing war. When she converses with Nikolai, her feelings for him become clear, highlighting their complex relationship that evolves throughout the chapter. The chapter also reveals the dire state of their forces; Alina acknowledges the loss of the Second Army and the havoc wrought by the Darkling's forces.

Nikolai discusses the circumstances leading to their unexpected meeting while revealing more about the precarious situation back at the palace, including losses in battle and threats from the Darkling. He mentions that he came to investigate Luchenko's militia out of self-interest concerning his smuggling routes, thus intertwining their fates yet again in the war effort.

The chapter culminates in the Spinning Wheel, a hidden sanctuary where the group gathers for safety and planning. Here, Alina encounters Baghra, the Darkling's mother. Their tense but revealing conversations touch upon the themes of power and sacrifice, with Alina grappling with the implications of claiming further amplifiers to strengthen herself against the Darkling. Baghra warns Alina about the dangers of wielding such power, reinforcing the moral complexities of their situation. The climax reveals potential internal conflicts and foreshadowing, including underlying tensions between



trust and trauma as Alina faces the responsibilities of leadership and the heavy burden of her choices for the greater good.

Through this intricate blend of action, introspection, and the establishment of alliances, Chapter 6 deepens the narrative's exploration of power dynamics and personal sacrifice, setting the stage for the challenges that lie ahead for Alina and her allies.

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Critical Thinking

Key Point: Embracing Your Inner Strength

Critical Interpretation: In the chaos of confrontation, you discover that strength often lies dormant within you, waiting for the right moment to awaken. Just like Alina in the forest, when faced with danger, you can tap into your latent potential to overcome obstacles and protect those you love. This realization inspires you to face your challenges head-on, knowing that true power comes not just from skills or abilities, but from the courage to embrace who you are and take responsibility for your actions, even when the choices seem daunting.

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Chapter 7 Summary:

In Chapter 7, the tension escalates as Alina learns that Sergei has inadvertently revealed Genya's true identity, a serious misstep that could endanger both her and their position with the new King, Nikolai. Alina, fueled by frustration, rushes to find Genya and reassure her. Genya, uneasy about facing the King after her betrayal, reflects on her past actions, feeling undeserving of their support. However, with encouragement from Alina and Mal, she steels herself for the confrontation, emphasizing her resolve to stand for her actions against the Darkling.

As they enter Nikolai's war room, the atmosphere is thick with hostility. The King, visibly weakened and rattled, reacts defensively to Genya's presence, demanding punishment. Alina and Genya stand firm, and in a pivotal turn of events, Genya reveals the truth about her poisoning of the King—a carefully crafted revenge that highlights her resilience. The confrontation escalates, revealing deep familial tensions as Nikolai demands his father's abdication in light of the King's failures. Nikolai's authoritative stance reveals his determination to restore stability to Ravka, showing that he prioritizes the kingdom over his blood ties.

After a heated exchange, Nikolai forces the King and Queen into a position of confinement for their safety, leaving the remnants of an unhealthy power dynamic established by the former regime. Genya, shaken but resolute,



unexpectedly kisses David, revealing emotional connections among the characters and hinting at the rebuilding of relationships amid chaos.

Alina then has a quiet moment with Mal, where they reflect on the emotional impact of war and their moral complexities regarding power and violence. Alina confesses the ease with which she used her abilities—capturing her internal struggle with the newfound ruthlessness that power demands. Mal reassures her, reaffirming her strength and potential as a leader in a ravaged nation.

The chapter transitions into the following morning where Alina finds Sergei in a vulnerable state, indicating the mental toll on their peers. Baghra re-enters the narrative, demanding that Alina prepare for further training and growth. Their discussions touch on the responsibilities that accompany Alina's extraordinary powers as she learns to harness her abilities as a Grisha.

Finally, amidst Baghra's rigorous training, Alina successfully proves her capabilities by using the Cut to annihilate a distant mountain peak, demonstrating the significance of her strength and foreshadowing the stakes involved in the upcoming conflict. As the crowd cheers, Alina grapples with the exhilaration of her newfound abilities juxtaposed with concerns over the darkness they may uncover within her. This pivotal chapter sets the stage for Alina's transformation in a struggle that blends loyalty, power, and the



consequences of choices made in times of desperation.

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Chapter 8:

In Chapter 8, Sergei departs on the cargo barge, the Ibis, heading for a way station near Duva, as he seeks recovery and camaraderie among smugglers. Back at the base, Alina, Nikolai, Mal, and the twins discuss the strategy for locating the firebird in Sikurzoi, the last of Morozova's amplifiers. They remain cautious about revealing its location, as it is critical to their mission and could fall into the wrong hands, specifically the Darkling's.

Nikolai, having spent time poring over Morozova's journals, expresses concern about incomplete information and the eccentric nature of Morozova's writings. Alina mentions their past connection to the unmarked valley of Dva Stolba, believed to house remnants of ancient architecture pointing toward the firebird. As they lay out their plan to approach the valley through a copper mine in Murin, they also prepare their crew for the journey.

Tamar, excited to take command of their ship, the Bittern, assembles the crew, while Alina grapples with the emotional weight of splitting from those left behind, particularly Genya, who will remain to support the war effort with David. As they discuss their plans, Nikolai suggests a detour to West Ravka for diplomatic appearances, emphasizing the importance of showcasing Alina's powers to solidify their alliance, despite Mal's concerns about delaying their mission in Sikurzoi.



While preparing for this undertaking, Nikolai surprises Alina with a priceless family heirloom, the Lantsov emerald ring, signifying his growing bond with her and perhaps hinting at future intentions for their relationship. Alina wrestles with her feelings about this ring, the expectations it carries, and her complex connection with Mal, who has thrived outside the court's

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I've learned. Highly recommend!

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Chapter 9 Summary:

Chapter 9 Summary

Alina finds herself in a dimly lit room with the Darkling, who is being treated for a wound by a Corporalnik Healer. The atmosphere is tense, and Alina is reminded of the duality of the Darkling: he appears human and vulnerable, yet she knows he is a centuries-old monster responsible for countless deaths. The Darkling initiates a conversation by questioning her about her hesitations after Baghra revealed his true intentions, leading to a candid exchange about loyalty, truth, and the nature of power.

He reveals that he needed her allegiance beyond mere duty, hinting at rumors of her supposed romantic connection with Prince Nikolai. Alina deflects, stating that her feelings for Mal were complicated. However, the Darkling's relentless probing highlights her emotional turmoil and the dangerous game they are playing with each other. His understanding of the *otkazat'sya*, a marginalized class of people viewed as weak, reveals his pragmatic and ruthless nature, contrasting with Alina's idealism.

As the tension heightens, the Darkling attempts to physically dominate the moment, drawing Alina closer while voicing a desire for her to help balance his power. She questions whether she might become as dangerous as he is,



igniting their mutual acknowledgment of their bond as well as their profound differences.

In a moment of vulnerability, the Darkling reveals his true name, Aleksander, which Alina finds surprisingly common, shattering some of the mystique surrounding him. Their intimate exchange spirals into a moment where desire grapples with the reality of his dark past. Alina asserts that their history cannot be overlooked, and as she pushes him away, the Darkling grows frustrated with her defiance.

Their verbal sparring transitions to a chilling proclamation: he intends to enter the Fold, an ominous rift filled with darkness and monsters known as volcra, to demonstrate his power and to exact vengeance on Nikolai's forces. He threatens to turn Alina's life upside down, leaving her with a sense of impending doom.

Upon awakening abruptly back in her room, Alina quickly gathers her allies, including Tamar, Mal, and Tolya, to strategize in the face of the Darkling's menacing plans. They find David, a crucial ally with intelligence about the Darkling's intentions. Alina learns that the Darkling has been concocting a plan using Lumiya, a bioluminescent substance that can potentially create light in the darkness of the Fold, but it can only work with sunlight, complicating matters further.



As they discuss the ramifications of the Darkling's ambitions, Alina realizes the grave threat he poses not just to her and her allies, but to West Ravka itself. The chapter closes with Alina in stark realization of the Darkling's intentions, recognizing that if he succeeds, he could very well unravel their entire world.

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Chapter 10 Summary:

Chapter 10 Summary

As dawn breaks, Alina, Mal, and Nikolai gather in the deserted galley of the Spinning Wheel, discussing a critical threat posed by the Darkling. David, preoccupied with recalling plans for a glass skiff, exemplifies the group's shared commitment to their cause—his thirst for knowledge is noble rather than sinister. Alina reveals to Nikolai her ability to foresee the Darkling through visions, igniting concern and strategic ideas among the group. The Darkling's intention to use the Fold to isolate Ravka and strengthen his grip on power weighs heavily on their hearts.

Nikolai expresses the urgency of alerting West Ravka, anticipating that they might abandon their alliance upon learning of the Darkling's plans. The discussion amplifies as they consider rallying troops, including the Soldat Sol, who would fight for Alina. However, the specter of immense casualties clouds their strategy. Alina reflects on the sacrifices involved in their endeavors, knowing the fight against the Darkling will demand the utmost from them.

With vital information to transmit, Nikolai dispatches a message to West Ravka, warning of impending danger, while Alina decides to consult Baghra



for insights into the Darkling's growing power. In a dimly lit room, Baghra shares the haunting tale of her past, revealing that she is Morozova's daughter, the Darkling's mother. Her story unveils the origins of the amplifiers and her father's tragic fate when villagers, frightened of his power, forced him into the river, resulting in a family separation that left deep scars.

Alina learns that Morozova may have survived, potentially continuing his quest for the firebird, leading her to wonder whether she might be connected not just to Morozova—but to the Darkling himself. Baghra's bitterness informs Alina of the delicate interplay of power and protection, and she cautions Alina against the seductive nature of ambition.

After an emotional exchange, Alina realizes her involvement in these dangerous gambits is inevitable. As she prepares to leave for the Sikurzoi with Mal, she contemplates her journey and the complexities of familial ties, identity, and destiny. Nikolai later surprises Alina by inviting her to witness a meteor shower—an enchanting spectacle that momentarily lifts the heavy burdens they bear.

In a moment of connection and vulnerability, Nikolai proposes marriage, framing it as a political alliance that could unify the First and Second Armies. Despite their circumstances, he insidiously hints at the possibility of love, intertwining their fates while acknowledging the risks tied to the



amplifiers. Their discussion culminates in a tentative promise of a future together, suggesting that even amidst turmoil, hope may flicker in the vastness of the uncertain skies.

Alina's heart wrestles with her feelings for both Nikolai and Mal, leading her to ponder the nature of love and longing, as their lives hang in the balance. In the face of impending conflict, the stars above serve as a reminder of both the beauty and distance in relationships—a metaphor for her internal struggle between power and connection.

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Chapter 11 Summary:

Chapter 11 Summary

The next morning, Alina finds Nikolai on the terrace taking weather readings as Mal and his team prepare to depart within the hour. It's a chilly day, with sporadic snowflakes, but the weather conditions look manageable for their journey through the mountains, though they may face challenges. With excitement palpable, Tamar nudges Alina as they wait for the all-clear. Shortly after, Mal and Tamar, dressed in peasant attire, arrive. Upon confirming they can leave, Nadia's enthusiasm erupts, highlighting the group's bond.

Before they depart, Alina shares a bittersweet moment with Mal, who wishes her and the team a safe journey. Despite knowing they will reunite soon, Alina feels an unexpected pang of loneliness. Just as Nikolai begins to explain their route to Ketterdam, shadows envelop the terrace, and Alina is abruptly pulled into danger by a nichevo'ya, a creature of the Darkling, provoking a frantic response from Mal and Tamar.

As chaos ensues with a swarm of nichevo'ya attacking, Alina quickly rallies Tamar to get everyone to safety. Amidst the fray, they discover Sergei, an apparent traitor, ensnared by the Darkling and his creatures. Alina has a brief



moment of regret for him but insists on his safety, only for the Darkling to execute him brutally right in front of them.

The battle intensifies as Alina and Mal fight off the dark creatures. The Darkling taunts Alina about his control over their powers. Suddenly, Nikolai is thrown onto the terrace, injured but alive, and their relief is short-lived when Alina realizes dark shadows are entering him. With horror, she witnesses Nikolai becoming a creature of darkness, transformed against his will.

As he wrestles with his transformation, his black wings extend from his body, and he becomes a horrific reflection of himself. The Darkling revels in his manipulation, calling Alina's friends his future prey. In a moment of desperation, Alina fights back, using her powers against the shadow soldiers, but is overwhelmed by their numbers.

Just then, Baghra, the Darkling's mother, appears, asserting control over the nichevo'ya. She has hidden her own power, but now she reveals it, commanding the creatures as they awkwardly respond to her. Her confrontation with the Darkling escalates, and with a profound emotional declaration, she sacrifices herself by jumping from the terrace, drawing the nichevo'ya down with her.

Amidst the turmoil, Alina, compelled by Baghra's command to run, pushes



Mal and the young boy Misha to escape. They navigate through the chaos in the Spinning Wheel, where Grisha and soldiers clash with the Darkling's forces. Despite the disaster brewing overhead, they manage to reach the hangar. The scene is rife with panic as soldiers scramble to board airships, and Alina feels the weight of those they might leave behind.

Tamar seizes control of the Bittern, and with the help of her brother Nevsky and others, they prepare for flight. Amidst the chaos, Mal is injured but keeps fighting, while Alina rallies her fading strength to assist in their escape. As they finally launch, Alina casts one desperate look back, trying to commit to memory the last sight of her friends amidst the encroaching darkness, foreshadowing the heavy losses to come.

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Chapter 12:

Chapter 12 Summary

As the crew of the ship Bittern battles treacherous weather and their own physical wounds, the atmosphere is fraught with tension. Alina, still reeling from recent losses, grapples with the urgent need to protect her crew as they escape the mountains. The ship sways perilously under the relentless snow and wind, and injuries mount. Adrik suffers from a severe bite inflicted by a nichevo'ya, and despite the crew's efforts to stabilize him, time is against them. Harshaw, though injured himself, steps in to lend assistance, while Tolya, a Heartrender, tries to save Adrik. Alina uses her powers to keep him warm, but she knows that they need a real Healer alongside them.

Their survival tactics involve flying during daylight—a risky matter, given the myriad dangers they face, including the threat of being spotted by the Darkling. Discussions arise about their destination, and it becomes clear that they're headed towards the copper mine at Murin in search of safety and the rumored firebird. The group remains divided between fighting for their home or abandoning it for safer lands, reflecting their differing motivations and ultimately leading to an existential dilemma about home and identity.

While navigating their treacherous journey, a moment of hope arises when

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David suggests using Alina's powers to bend light around the ship, rendering them nearly invisible to observers. This new technique is successful, inspiring a temporary sense of relief among the weary crew. To keep their spirits up, Genya finds stimulant supplies while the team shares banter and bonds over the grueling situation they are in.

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Chapter 13 Summary:

Chapter 13 Summary

As the journey continues, everyone ultimately decides to remain together. Zoya, though vocally displeased, joins the group destined for the mountains, which consists of Mal, Alina, Tolya, and Harshaw. The plan is split into two teams: one led by David, with Tamar, Nadia, and Adrik heading to a settlement, and Mal and Alina's team venturing into the Sikurzoi, hoping to blend in with the refugees trying to escape before the snow falls. They are aware of the risks from Shu raiders near the border but feel reassured by their ability to blend in and the combat experience of their teammates, especially Tamar and Nadia.

Leaving at dawn, the group attempts to reassure Misha, who feels left out. Mal encourages him to embrace his role as a soldier for the sake of the others, reminiscing about how past mentors instilled bravery and responsibility in him. Their dynamic reveals the weight of their shared traumas while hinting at the growing bond among them.

Upon arriving at Dva Stolba, Alina is surprised to find the settlement thriving despite the remnants of destruction. Here, people engaged in daily life amidst the ashes of the past, suggesting resilience. The market buzzes



with activity, providing insights into the adaptive nature of those living in war-torn landscapes. Alina reflects on her parents and their potentially shared history within this shifting environment, reinforcing her deepening connection to her origins and the legends surrounding her heritage.

As they navigate through the market, Mal decides to purchase a local map for their venture into the mountains, though warnings about the sacred and dangerous Cera Huo loom over them. Conversations in Shu provide a glimpse into cultural tensions, while Tolya divulges legends about the Firefalls, hinting at the mystique and danger lying ahead.

As the journey continues, Alina's thoughts are clouded with memories and fears of the Darkling and potential threats. The group climbs steadily into the mountains, battling elements and succumbing to doubt while seeking the elusive firebird. Their camp is a fragile sanctuary under the stars, punctuating the tenuousness of their mission.

A night of silence is shattered when they detect movement nearby, leading to a defensive standoff. Zoya and Harshaw conjure flames to ward off potential attackers—a harrowing moment emphasizing the stakes they all face. Despite the tension and danger, humor emerges from the banter, revealing the characters' depth and camaraderie.

As dawn breaks, they press onward, with Mal's instincts guiding them

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through the wilderness. The terrain shifts, but Mal remains focused, searching for signs of the firebird while navigating internal and external adversities. Doubts rise within Alina, grappling with her goals and the dire consequences of their mission.

When they arrive at a grove lined with peculiar, orderly trees, Tolya shares the disturbing local legend of the “soldier trees”—the remnants of a massacre, which permeates the atmosphere with an eerie weight. While Zoya wields her magic to subdue illusions, this eerie landscape juxtaposes the beauty of the surrounding nature with a chilling history.

Eventually, they uncover the breathtaking cliff of the Cera Huo, marked by a cascading waterfall leading to a serene pool. Yet, beneath the beauty lies a foreboding, as the remains of past lives litter the base, emphasizing the danger that still lurks here. Reluctantly, the group retreats to safer ground, expressing trepidation about what awaits them in this haunted, mystical space.

Alina’s recent stresses and uncertainties culminate as they face the chilling possibilities of the Cera Huo, with her reflection on the convergence of beauty and danger serving as a poignant reminder of their perilous journey ahead as they seek not just the firebird, but a path to alter their fate.

Key Events	Details
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Key Events	Details
Group Formation	Zoya joins Mal, Alina, Tolya, and Harshaw for the mountain journey, while David leads Tamar, Nadia, and Adrik to a settlement.
Team Strategy	Two teams are formed: one aims to blend in with refugees in Sikurzoi, while the other heads to a settlement amid threats from Shu raiders.
Encouragement of Misha	Mal helps Misha embrace his soldier role, highlighting themes of bravery and shared trauma among the group.
Thrive at Dva Stolba	The settlement shows resilience despite destruction, where Alina reflects on her heritage and family history.
Market Insights	Group navigates through a busy market, with cultural tensions and local legends about dangers ahead discussed.
Mountaineering Challenges	The group faces environmental and psychological challenges as they search for the elusive firebird.
Defensive Standoff	A night-time movement leads to a tense defensive moment, showcasing character dynamics and camaraderie.
Search for Firebird	Mal leads through shifting terrain while Alina grapples with doubts about their objectives amid threats.
Legend of Soldier Trees	They encounter a grove with a haunting legend about past massacres, highlighting the dark history of the landscape.
Cera Huo Discovery	They find a breathtaking waterfall, but lingering dangers amplify the group's trepidations about their journey's stakes.
Alina's Reflection	Alina contemplates the juxtaposition of beauty and danger at Cera Huo, marking a culmination of her stresses and uncertainties.



Chapter 14 Summary:

Chapter 14 Summary

As dawn breaks, the group, gathered around a dampened fire and chewing on hardtack, prepares to depart their camp near the falls. Alina reflects on the quiet beauty of the misty valley and feels a fleeting sense of peace. This tranquility is shattered when a piercing cry echoes through the air, prompting Mal to lead the group into the woods in pursuit of its source. Despite the strenuous climb up the steep terrain, excitement courses through the group, driven by the hope of finding the elusive creature they seek.

After a grueling day, they finally reach the plateau above the falls, gazing out over the expansive, misty landscape. However, their initial anticipation turns to disappointment as they discover that the plateau provides no clues regarding their quarry—the supposed firebird remains elusive. Tensions rise as Zoya expresses her frustrations, questioning Mal's tracking abilities. Mal, caught between the desire for answers and the harsh realities of their journey, tries to maintain hope and a sense of direction.

Back on the precipice, Alina's worries deepen—what if something has befallen their friends back in Dva Stolba? Disheartened but determined, she suggests they find shelter for the evening rather than push onward without



proper supplies. As the group makes camp, Alina and Mal find a moment alone. Alina grapples with the weight of her powers and her connection to the Darkling, while Mal urges her to share her burdens rather than carry the weight alone.

The conversation between them reveals their complex emotions and the depths of their bond, yet it also highlights Alina's inner turmoil regarding the potential darkness entwined with her power. Just as she begins to feel closer to Mal, a sudden attack from the firebird disrupts the stillness. In a heart-pounding moment, Alina finds herself teetering on the edge of the cliff, saved by Mal's desperate grip. Their connection surges with shared power, hinting at a deeper, almost fated bond between them.

After the firebird flies away, Mal asserts that they are no longer hunters of the creature. It dawns on Alina that Mal himself may be an amplifier, fundamentally connected to her power. This revelation strikes her with a mixture of fear and clarity, challenging her understanding of their fates.

In the tense aftermath of the attack, the group regathers, and they discuss their new situation. Alina recognizes that the amplifiers are more than mere creatures; they are linked to both her and Mal's fates, foreshadowing complex choices ahead.

The night carries on with a sense of increased urgency as they prepare to



return to Dva Stolba, each member lost in thought. Mal's determination to live amidst their shared fear of impending doom brings a fleeting comfort during the night. They share intimate moments, both affirming their love and confronting the uncertainty that lingers over them.

As they make their way back, Alina's internal struggle grows heavy. Each step closer to Dva Stolba brings with it a dread of revelations that await them there. Their return is swift, but shadows loom as Tamar and the others reveal troubling news about a recent attack orchestrated by the Darkling, including the unsettling report of his march on Keramzin. Alina's heart sinks, realizing the implications of their findings and the formidable battles ahead.

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Chapter 15 Summary:

In Chapter 15, Alina is struck by devastating news that the Darkling has burned Keramzin, the school she attended, leaving the fate of the students and teachers in grave uncertainty. Panic escalates when she learns about the rumored destruction; she fears for the students' lives and rushes up the stairs, driven by a sense of urgency linked to a key she has been given.

Upon entering a familiar room, she is transported into a vision where she confronts the aftermath of the Darkling's destruction: the charred remains of Keramzin, the hanging bodies of her beloved instructors, and the horrific realization that innocent lives have been lost. Alina's grief is palpable as she mourns the death of Botkin and Ana Kuya, who had cared for her like a mother.

The Darkling reveals that he has taken the students hostage as a bargaining chip, demanding Alina's surrender in exchange for their safety. He coldly explains his reasoning and reveals his long-held ambitions. Their confrontation is filled with tension, with Alina straining against the weight of what she has lost and the sinister implications of the Darkling's plans.

In a moment of raw vulnerability, Alina breaks down in sobs, surrounded by her friends Zoya, Tamar, Nadia, and Genya, who offer silent support amidst her despair. They acknowledge the dire situation: Alina has only five days to



mount a rescue before the Darkling unleashes further destruction.

As they regroup, Mal emerges, pressing Alina to consider the extreme lengths they must go to in order to thwart the Darkling, even if it means risking his own life. Their collective despair morphs into a decision to strategize a daring plan involving illusion and invisibility to infiltrate the Darkling's camp and rescue the students.

David proposes an ingenious use of Alina's light powers to cloak themselves, thus rendering them invisible. The group discusses the logistics of the plan, layering in details about the risks and potential outcomes. Alina realizes that if they are to perform this extraordinary feat, it requires a different kind of battle against the Darkling—one where she uses her powers of light to strike from the shadows.

As they prepare and practice in the days leading up to their confrontation, Alina grapples with her own doubts but finds strength in her companions. They train vigorously and focus on executing their plan to save the students and ultimately confront the Darkling.

However, Alina is haunted by her past, conflicted about the morality of their approach and the potential to face the Darkling in a head-on battle where everything she loves could be destroyed. Just as they are ready to put their plan into action, they encounter a group of new followers who have come in



search of Alina, further complicating the situation.

With time running out, Alina must navigate the fragile balance of hope and despair, as a tumultuous confrontation with the Darkling looms ahead, promising high stakes and dire consequences. The chapter builds toward an impending showdown where Alina, driven by love and loss, must make the hardest decisions yet—shaping her fate, the fate of her friends, and the future of Ravka.

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Chapter 16:

Chapter 16 Summary

Determined to launch their attack from a safer location, Alina and her companions prepare to cross the Fold at Kribirsk. Given the constraints of the Bittern's capacity, they send Tolya with the Soldat Sol to wait on the eastern shore, allowing the others time to establish a base camp in West Ravka. After a brief yet tense crossing through the ominous Shadow Fold, where Alina confronts her connections to the dark power of merzost, they arrive in desolate West Ravka.

Here, they settle in an abandoned apple farm called Tomikyana, beside ruins untouched by human presence. Despite Zoya's disdain for the farm's ostentatious decor, the group quickly gets to work. Harshaw breaks in to scavenge supplies, while David and Genya plan the creation of lumiya and blasting powders needed for their upcoming confrontation. Alina feels the weight of responsibility as they prepare for their return trip to rendezvous with the Soldat Sol at the monument of Sankta Anastasia, a symbol of hope in an otherwise ravaged landscape.

Once at the monument, they set up camp, and amid a moment of solitude, Alina is confronted by Nikolai, who has been shadowing them. In a poignant



exchange, he shows recognition toward Alina through the emblematic Lantsov emerald ring she offers, prompting her to attempt to heal the darkness that has taken hold within him. While her light seems to provide temporary relief, the darkness fights back, leaving Nikolai devastated and ultimately prompting him to flee into the Fold, haunted by an insatiable

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Chapter 17 Summary:

Chapter 17 Summary

The morning after the rain, Alina awakens to a tranquil scene, with Mal having already prepared tea surrounded by blossoms. Reflecting on their time together, she writes their names in her diary, a subtle act signifying their bond. In the main hall, Genya offers her encouragement and a pressed coat as they prepare to confront the Darkling. Alina leaves Nikolai's ring with Genya in case disaster strikes, urging her to escape with David and Misha if needed.

As they gather outside, the Soldat Sol stand ready, alongside the remaining Grisha. Mal, carrying a symbol of their hope, smiles at Alina, reminding her of their shared mission. They travel through the orchard to the shores of the Fold, where Alina and her fellow Etherealki take the lead. Zoya summons an acoustic blanket to shield them as they venture into darkness, an environment laden with dread.

Within the Fold, Alina battles a paradox of fear and calm, cautious about the lurking volcra. Despite the palpable isolation, she feels a tether bind her to the Darkling, a hunger for conflict that resonates between them. As they proceed, tension mounts; the Squallers prepare to deliver an attack as a skiff



approaches, marking the Darkling's arrival.

With signaling clicks, Alina incites a wave of light, momentarily cloaking them in invisibility. Chaos erupts as they ambush the skiff, the Darkling's forces panicking under sudden gunfire. Confusion reigns, and a fierce battle ensues, where Alina feels the weight of fate as she grapples with the stakes of their actions.

As Alina navigates the tumult, she finds an opening to the skiff and races to find the captured students. Amidst the clash, she is grievously injured and left vulnerable, allowing the Darkling to confront her directly. His duplicity shines as he notes her pain, tormenting her with the fate of the students he has taken hostage.

In a desperate moment, Mal appears, weapon in hand, and urges Alina to make a dark sacrifice to end this struggle. With a trembling resolve, she stabs him, believing it necessary to unleash her full power against the Darkling. As Mal's life fades, an eruption of light engulfs her being, a celestial explosion infused with grief and power.

Alina's transformation into a near-godlike entity overwhelms her as she absorbs Mal's sacrifice. Yet, she cannot find the light that once flowed through her, now left hollow in the wake of the violence and heartbreak. Amidst the chaos, she fervently seeks a way to resurrect Mal, unable to



accept his death.

In a paradoxical twist, the students' latent powers surge forth, ignited by her connection to Morozova's amplifiers—their collective light dismantling the Fold's darkness. The battle rages, the balance shifting as hope flickers amid despair.

Ultimately, the Darkling's tyranny falls, but his retreat reveals the fragility of their victory and the heart-wrenching cost of their choices. As Alina clings to the hope of Mal's return, reality threatens to fracture her resolve, yet amidst the chaos, a miraculous breath signals his improbable revival. Hope emerges through the darkness, binding their fates together once more, but with the heavy knowledge of sacrifice that looms over them all.

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Chapter 18 Summary:

Chapter 18 Summary

The chapter begins with Alina and her friends escaping the Fold, where they had just faced a climactic battle against the Darkling. Zoya, commanding a skiff, ensures their safe transport as she distracts Soldat Sol guards. Mal, gravely injured, is beside Alina, who is also fading due to blood loss. Despite her physical weakness, Alina insists to Tolya that she died during the battle, emphasizing the gravity of her experience.

Once they return to Tomikyana, Alina's friends care for their injuries while crafting a story to disguise their true circumstances. Nikolai, who survived his ordeal and is recuperating, becomes the centerpiece of their narrative; he is proclaimed a hero while Alina is acknowledged as a martyr who gave her life to save Ravka. The chaos resulting from their victory has left many questions unanswered, but their clandestine efforts seem promising as they prepare for the next steps.

As Alina regains consciousness, she spends time with Mal, who is recovering but feels the absence of the power he once held due to the Darkling. They share a heartfelt moment as they discuss loss and the changes they have undergone. With the Fold disintegrating, they begin to



contemplate their future in a world reshaped by their sacrifices.

Meanwhile, Zoya and Tamar visit, bringing news of the unrest and turmoil in Kribirsk where the remnants of the Fold's grip are being eradicated. Nikolai has taken command, quirky yet determined, seeking to restore order and secure Ravka's borders. Even as chaos surrounds them, he displays resilience and capacity as a leader.

With their time at the barn short, Alina undergoes a transformation; she exchanges her Sun Summoner identity for a humble appearance with Genya's help and adopts anonymity as they travel. In the midst of celebrations marking the end of the war, Alina observes the people of Ravka rejoicing, while also recognizing the somber reminders of their losses.

Once in Kribirsk, Alina learns about the tensions at the royal barracks, particularly regarding the power dynamics with the Apparat, whom Nikolai needs for political stability. Alina recognizes the significance of her past identity, grappling with her role—no longer the Sun Summoner, she mourns her lost power but finds solace in her progress.

A pivotal moment occurs when Alina decides to assist Nikolai in rebuilding the Second Army and offer leadership to Genya, Zoya, and David. In the aftermath of their sacrifices, Alina feels the weight of her lost power yet resolves to carve a new path for herself in a world desperately needing



heroes.

The chapter culminates in a poignant scene at a pyre, where Alina witnesses the final honors given to Ruby and the Darkling. The public ceremony, filled with mixed emotions, acts as a symbolic farewell to her past, reinforcing the complex legacy they leave behind. In a whisper, she acknowledges the Darkling's name, "Aleksander," hinting at the lingering impact of their shared history as they move forward into an uncertain future.

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