

The Fifth Season Notes

Prologue

- There is a woman whose child, Uche, has just died and the world is ending. She is happy in a sense as now her child can actually be free.
- The land "they" live in is known as the "The Stillness". It is ironic though because the land "moves" frequently.
- Most of the cities are located along the equator because outside of there the earth tries to "eat them". One such city is Yumenes and it has been very stable.
- The town is unique because despite a lot the geological problems (assuming earthquakes?) it is built very robustly and elegantly - almost as a kind of challenge to the environment. It has large buildings, glass bridges, etc.
- There is a large pyramid-like structure in the center of the city with a spherical building balanced on top. It is known as the Black Star - it is where the empire leaders meet/work.
- There is a man talking with a companion. He talks about "stonelore" - some type of mythos that seemingly describes how to survive/live on this "planet"
- The man's companion is not human - but passable for human from afar. She is apparently a "stone eater".
- They talk of these "stone people" taking over the planet and their relationship with humanity - but few details are disclosed.
- The man shares his desire to "break" the city as the people in it are not "free"
- The planet seems to go through phases at which point it shakes/erupts and goes through a kind of volcano/nuclear winter for long periods. People have to prepare for this.
- There are obelisks that are massive crystalline structures/shards that hover in the clouds. It's not clear what they do - a remnant from a past civilization on the planet that didn't survive
- The woman from earlier lives in a town called Tirimo and her name is Essun
- Apparently Yumenes from earlier has been destroyed - just as the man said he wanted
- Elders from Tirimo see the destruction at Yumenes and head back to prepare should more earthquakes damage their town nearby
- The elders don't notice it but from that rubble there is a large human-sized geode. From it emerges a creature that looks like a human. It waits there and eats remnants from the geode and grows stronger and more "humanlike". It is most likely a stone eater. It begins to head towards Tirimo

Chapter 1 - You, At The End

- Essun is married to Jjia and has lived in the town or Tirimo for about a decade.

She is a very non-descript person that blends in. She has two children and is a teacher.

- NOTE: The author is talking about Essun but always refers to her using the pronoun "You" as if she's talking to the reader. So a line might read "You're the mother of two children", but they're referring to Essun.
- A neighbor, Lerna, comes to Essun's house to find her there with her dead son Uche.
- Lerna brings Essun to his house to rest
- Lerna explains to Essun that an earthquake has destroyed many towns up North
- Essun is not entirely human - or has some type of special power. Apparently she "used that power" to make the earthquake avoid the town of Tirimo. Only Lerna and her family know this about her.
- The head of Tirimo, Rask, isn't letting anyone in or out of the town
- As they talk you learn that Jija might have killed Uche - because he realized that Uche would have the exact same power as Essun and for all he knew could have unintentionally used those powers to cause the earthquake that happened. The fact that the town survived in the shape of a perfect circle with the center at their house serves to prove this.
- Essun isn't sure where her daughter Nassun is and if Jija did anything to her
- Essun knows she has to leave as the town will likely come to the same realization as Jija and come for her

Chapter 2 - Damaya, In Winters Past

- There is a child Damaya hiding from her parents in a barn. They are trying to sell her to some merchant she things. She also has some type of stone-powers that allow her to sense movement in the ground even from something as faint as a footstep
- The buyer, who has very white eyes, finds her. He briefly closes his eyes and touches the back of her head as if casting some type of spell
- Even though he is so supposedly a type of slave buyer he treats her much nicer than her mother and takes no issue with her "stone powers"
- He is taking her to Yumenes, near the equator, far from where they currently are to "help out"
- She realizes that the man isn't buying her, but more so that her parents are giving her away. Apparently he is a "Guardian" (not yet disclosed what that means). His name is Schaffer Guardian Warrant
- Her power makes her known as an orogene
- As a Guardian he watches over orogenes. It is his job to come find them when they are born. Parents are supposed to isolate such people until a Guardian can come and take them - they aren't supposed to keep such children.
- It seems he can read her mind
- They ride away

Chapter 3 - You're On Your Way

- Essun finds out from the town leader, Rask, that Jija left with her daughter Nassun
- Rask leads Essun out of the town peacefully, but towns people attack her
- She fights back and causes an earthquake that effectively destroys most of the town. The air around her gets very cold as she does this (some kind of equivalent exchange principle I assume where the power to move earth requires heat/energy and thus expending that energy makes things cold around you) - enough to flash freeze the people near her
- She goes to leave the town - conflicted about what she's done. Did the town deserve this for thinking the same way as Jija did - or is she just as bad as them?

Chapter 4 - Syenite, cut and polished

- Syen is talking with Feldspar. Both seem to be experienced "orogenes". They have rings and the number of rings corresponds to the skills they have mastered. They talk about Syen being assigned a partner. Feldspar is her "boss".
- They work in the Fulcrum, a city within the heart of the city of Yumenes itself.
- There is a whole "program" in the Fulcrum from the orogene people. There is a system whereby you can earn "rings" from Guardians. As you do you become more trusted and gain more freedoms and learn more "earth control" skills. Here orogenes are typically assigned partners to carry on promising lineages of orogenes that are especially powerful.
- Her assigned partner has 10 rings - the highest level. He believes they paired her with him because she is a "feral" - doesn't come from any special lineage. He argues that they don't carry on lineages due to promise - but for control. Certain lineages of orogenes are especially well-known and can thus be easily kept in check by Guardians. So it is in the Guardian's interest to make sure all orogenes are born from well known linear ages so they can more easily control them. Ferals are not as well known. By pairing them together it reduces the probability that her child will be uncontrollable since at least he comes from a well known lineage.
- They are assigned a mission together
- Syen doesn't like the Fulcrum, the Guardians, or their whole system

Chapter 5 - You're Not Alone

- Essun ventures south searching for Jira given that the earthquakes/shakes up North would've caused anyone to go south instead
- The sky has a red glow in the distance
- Essun continues to hint, as done earlier in the book, that this giant shake is the indication of the beginning of a "season" (still not really defined) and that as

such people need to be prepared for a long future of survival - like an apocalyptic event

- "Stonelore" is the set of accumulated legends/histories/myths of what to do in times like these
- Essun finds a place in a field to sleep
- A child approaches her - seemingly 7 or 8 and asks if he can stay with her for now. She lets him

Chapter 6 - Damaya, Grinding To A Halt

- Damaya travels with her guardian - referred to as Schaffa for short.
- They travel past a fault line where a recent earthquake has seeded new "earth" and rocks
- Damaya feels a strange connection to the place. Schaffa, who can seemingly read her mind, tells her to ignore it but acknowledges it can be hard for her as an untrained orogene to ignore it
- He tells her a story of old Yumenes when an orogene with much power had approached the city and threatened to destroy it. The emperor went out to meet him. Before doing so though his wife who somewhat knew of how orogene power worked had everyone in the city leave and burn all organic matter. Her theory was if the orogene can't pull energy from nearby things, he will be unable to destroy the city. (Normally he could pull power from the molten core under the earth, but the core is furthest from surface at the equator where Yumenes is located and thus he cannot get much power that way). This special planning allowed her and the emperor to defeat the rogue orogene. This is what led to the creation of the Guardians. The fulcrum is the order of the orogenes and the Guardians watch over the fulcrum.
- During a season, or significant shake that produces a type of ash/nuclear winter, few survive. Only one nation, Sanze, has managed to survive such an event (seven times in total). No other society or group has managed. Only small towns.
- Schaffa explains that while he "cares for and respects" Damaya, it is his obligation/duty to keep her under control regardless of the consequences of if it means hurting her. She has no choice but to submit to his control as they perceive her power as too great of a threat otherwise.
- Damaya accepts this for the time being, but is troubled by it and doesn't like that she can not have free will through responsibility - though Schaffa claims it is impossible. Schaffa demonstrates as such by showing that when experiencing pain Damaya may lash out - even if just as a reflex. Damaya in this instance manages to control herself as Schaffa wants. It makes her question everything though.

Chapter 7 - You Plus One Is Two

- The boy that is now accompanying Essun is filthy and doesn't give really any

details on his background. He appears to be 10 or so, but his mind seems to be much older. She refers to him as Hoa. His eyes are ice-white.

- She takes the boy to wash off and finds his hair and skin is also ice-white.
- She tells the boy at some point they will have to separate. He asks why she's looking for her daughter. She doesn't understand how he could know that. Further, he claims that he knows where her daughter is.
- She wonders if he might be a Guardian - or have the powers of one
- He says that Nassun, her daughter, is still alive and is headed away from them.
- She decides to peruse her daughter along with him

Chapter 8 - Syenite on the Highroad

- Syenite's new mentor is Alabaster
- There is a network of nodes managed by the Fulcrum across the earth to help maintain stability against earthquakes. Orogenes work at these outposts to maintain the system - much like telephone lines and towers. It's center is in Yumenes. The network doesn't encompass the whole world though
- An unexpected random shake occurs in a not too far off town. Alabaster senses it and tries to stop it.
- He somehow channels Syenite's powers in addition to his own - something that Syenite thought was impossible. The person with greater power takes precedence.
- She wonders how the shake could have happen - totally unexpected shakes don't happen
- Alabaster believes it was the person in charge of the local node that must have set off the unexpected event
- They travel to the local node building. They don't see destruction nearby like they expected
- When they get there though they find all horses and guards frozen
- Syenite sees the node maintainer and is surprised to see that it's not a voluntary position. It is a child strapped into a machine like seat that artificially keeps it alive. They've managed to remove the ability of the orogene to exercise any self control - just instinct. That instinct naturally quells earthquakes/shakes. Thus the node maintainer system that keeps everything in tact is just involuntary orogene slaves. They only let orogenes exist outside of this because they are even more useful when they can be kept in check and controlled
- Apparently most Guardians are non-orogene children of orogenes
- It seems possible Alabaster can also read minds somehow like Guardians
- The Fifth Season refers to Death - kind of like a nuclear winter would be a new season on earth until many years pass and normal seasons can return

Interlude

- Islands are not spoken of because they are generated near fault lines and thus

are fickle and human history has no chance to establish itself there - likewise for continents due to tsunamis generated by shakes

- The stars/skies are not spoken of because people are too busy focusing on the ground

Chapter 9 - Syenite Among The Energy

- Alabaster and Syen finally get to their destination town and stay at a crappy lodge outside town.
- They are greeted by the deputy governor, who treats them coldly. They treat her more coldly back. Syen thinks he overdoes it.
- They have dinner
- In the middle of the night Alabaster choked on something and uses his orogeny to unblock it. Syen didn't know you could control something so small. He also somehow controlled her powers to. She asks how he did it and if it's even possible. He says it is but can't tell her how. She wants to know more but he doesn't let her and says it's too dangerous.
- They think he was pointed buy the townspeople that don't like them.

Chapter 10 - You Walk Beside The Beast

- Essun thinks about becoming a different person - as she's done before - to move past all of this, but can't
- They sleep outside a camp and plan to get water in the morning but are awakened to screams and runaway
- They come back to get water and meet another person who tells them more lore about seasons
- An animal that becomes feral during a season attacks them, but the boy, Hoa, someone stops the animal by transforming it into solid substance (rock and crystal) and then shattering it
- They proceed

Chapter 11 - Damaya At The Fulcrum Of It All

- Damaya makes it to the Fulcrum and is enrolled in a series of classes to train her and other people in similar situations to her
- She works very hard and does quite well
- It is still a very dystopian scene - like a forced boarding school forcing all of the orogenes to learn control - in an occasionally brutal manner
- She aspires to be like the instructors with rings
- She starts getting bullied at the school
- She allies with a fellow outcast to get back at the bullies. She manages to, but in doing so exposes and realizes her fellow outcast was trying to use her too.
- Regardless she is successful and exposes them all. People are more friendly towards her after this.

Chapter 12 - Syenite Finds a New Toy

- Syen argues more with the towns people while Alabaster recovers back at the lodge
- Syen finally agrees to help with the blockage in the harbor
- In the harbor she notices something strange - an object in the ground under the coral in the harbor that is impenetrable to her - like a void
- She suggests the town ignore the problem and move their city, but they refuse
- She finally agrees to try and fix the problem in the harbor despite the strange object
- As she does she feels her power amplify like Alabaster did, but the source clearly isn't him. It comes from whatever is in that object.
- The object rises out of the ground and it is an obelisk - as mentioned from earlier in the prologue
- It is cracked though
- She sees imprisoned within it what looks like a dead orogene

Chapter 13 - You're On The Trail

- The person that Essun met in chapter 10 is named Tonkee - she is a geomest
- Geomest and Iorists are like the scientists of this world and generally go to the Seventh University in Dibars
- Tonkee lives in a cave
- They leave after resting a night and decide to stay together
- On the road they pass other people - they rarely come upon anyone near Yumenes - suggesting no nearby survivors of whatever happened there
- Hoa says that they are getting closer to her daughter Nassun but that there seem to be a crowd of other orogenes near her which clouds his vision - and also suggests he's some type of Guardian

Chapter 14 - Syenite Breaks Her Toys

- The fulcrum tells Syenite and Alabaster to wait by the city, which doesn't make sense to her
- Alabaster tells her not to tell anyone about how she connected with the obelisk - he wants it to be kept a secret
- Geomests are already coming to the city to inspect from near and afar
- Alabaster speculates they are keeping them there because she's the only person who's shown some ability to trigger/manipulate an obelisk
- While out on a walk a Guardian attacks Alabaster and Syenite. They incapacitate Alabaster. Before Syenite can be attacked/damaged she connects to the power of the obelisk and seems to stop the attack. She connects with the "stone eater" within the obelisk, whom plainly greets her

Chapter 15 - You're Among Friends

- Essun, Hoa, and Tonkee arrive where all of the supposed orogenes are where

Nassun is

- The town looks small and abandoned - strange
- They meet people. One is also an orogene and one appears to be similar to Hoa. They say they haven't seen Nassun.
- They come to an agreement to let them stay in the town, at least while they look for Nassun

Chapter 16 - Syen in the Hidden Land

- Syen awakes on an island with Alabaster and is greeted by a stone eater. The stoner eater tells them she saved them, as they see where they previously were burning on the horizon
- Stoner eaters move through the rock as if it is air - like spirits. Apparently they can do this with others too.
- This is not the same one that was in the obelisk.
- Guardians have the power to negate orogene's powers. If they touch an orogene they can literally destroy them.
- They come upon a town on the island. Alabaster speaks their language and learns they are pirates.
- They are of a civilization that has existed long before the Sanze, the main inhabitants of the main continent. Syen is surprised to hear this and almost doesn't believe it because she has never heard of them.
- Alabaster explains the difference is that in their society they put orogene's in positions of power - not as "slaves". Further the island is a good place to survive given plenty of fish and seaweed during a season. They simply use their orogene's to manage tidal effects.

Chapter 17 - Damaya, in Finality

- Damaya spends her free time at the Fulcrum exploring the old halls from past decades/centuries and finding oddities there
- A weird girl appears in their dorm and only Damaya seems to notice. Her name is Binof. She is searching for a special room.
- Damaya thinks she's noticed this room while exploring, but has yet to be inside it.
- Binof is not an orogene. She is supposedly some nobility in the surrounding city of Yumenes. She says there is some secret in there, but she won't share what it is.
- Damaya reluctantly agrees to help her find it. They manage to sneak inside.
- They find an office and a trap door within the office. They find a tunnel.
- Damaya demands to know what they're looking for. It is supposedly some artifact from history.
- Apparently before the founding of the current Sanze empire the city where Yumenes was founded was always avoided because of something there - hidden below where the fulcrum now is. It is supposedly unfounded/missing or

something.

- They find the cavern in a hexagon shaped room. It is lit up by electricity seemingly and there is a large hexagonal pit in the middle
- Damaya can tell that this hole has not been dug into the earth, but punched into the earth with some tool, left to sit, and then removed (as it must be now)
- There are iron needles lining throughout the pit
- A Guardian catches them. She asks if the pit called her, talked to her, or if she touched any "sockets" (reference to the iron rods). Damaya doesn't understand.
- The Guardian starts saying mysterious things about the pit, as if they have been controlled by someone else. She won't stop talking. Damaya's Guardian Schaffa shows up and seemingly kills this Guardian.
- He explains he killed her because the implant in her brain that made her a Guardian malfunctioned. Apparently a Guardian needs to stay close with their orogenes or it degrades faster.
- He explains that now she has to pass her first ring test after doing this.
- Damaya is Syenite

Chapter 18 - You Discover Wonders Down Below

- Essun and them go into a house and follow tunnels a mile downwards
- She realizes that the community here is an underground one - normally a stupid idea due to shakes - but it seems somehow they use their orogenes to keep things in place.
- Some of the orogenes there have the power to attract other orogenes.
- It is essentially an underground city built within a giant geode
- Much of the underground city is ancient - pre-Sanze empire - and most of the inhabitants don't know how it all works. When it was found again the place just had a bunch of skeletons.
- It seems the city runs off of orogene's powers passively - there mere presence keeps the city "alive and running"

Chapter 19 - Syenite on The Lookout

- The island they are on is called Moev
- Alabaster is happy as the Fulcrum likely thinks they are dead now. Further they are safe on this island since it's too far from any guardians that might think they're still alive or searching for them. In a way they are free now.
- Innon is essentially the leader of the town - and he is an orogene
- Alabaster and Syen both really like Innon
- Innon says that even though Alabaster is more powerful than her she is stronger (spiritually)
- Syen is pregnant

Chapter 20 - Syenite, Stretched and Snapped Back

- Time is fast forwarded - Syenite has lived on the island for a bit over two years now and has already had the baby
- Syenite and Alabaster given their Fulcrum training are far more powerful than Innon
- The child is already quite powerful in terms of Orogeny
- Syenite finally goes on a pirate mission with Innon
- They manage to steal from two ships and everyone is impressed by Syenite's powers
- Supposedly back in the day there weren't constant earthquakes. But after man's emergence and damage to the earth things started to change. It supposedly reached it's breaking point after orogenes killed earth's only child (it's not clear what that means). After that the bad seasons of earthquakes and whatnot started - the Fifth Seasons.
- Syenite doesn't completely believe the legends.
- They visit Allia by boat on their way back and it has basically turned into an active volcano
- Syenite feels responsible and tries to stop it but doesn't completely succeed. Alabaster is powerful enough that he can tell from the island and fixes it himself
- Syenite sees/feels in the distance someone near Allia - perhaps her Guardian watching.

Chapter 21 - You're Getting the Band Back Together

- Essun realizes that Tonkee is actual Bidof that Damaya met in the Fulcrum (thus implying Essun is Syenite who is also Damaya - just at different points in their life)
- Apparently Tonkee has been tracking her (or using her families resources to track her) the last 30 years
- Tonkee says that she is still investigating the mystery of the hole she found in the Fulcrum with Damaya and that's where the obelisks came from
- Essun explains that she basically managed to escape the Fulcrum by faking her death. Tonkee says she was able to track her not using Guardian "magic" but logical deduction
- Apparently obelisks move slowly towards sufficiently capable/powerful orogenes with enough potential
- Apparently over the last few years their movement sped up - likely due to having orogene children
- Essun asks why Hoa goes with them if he's a magical stone eater. He has no answer besides that he likes her.
- Essun sees Lerna (the one who first helped her in Tirimo) there
- Nassun is not there
- Hoa tells Essun that Alabaster is here in the "cave/geode" system

Chapter 22 - Syenite, Fractured

- 4 ships eventually come to the island - clearly led by Guardians and the Fulcrum
- Alabaster manages to stop much of them, but is taken away by a stone-eater before he can finish them off and disappears
- The ships manage to defeat the island and corner Syenite and her son
- Her Guardian Schaffa appears and tries to convince her to come with them
- Angrily Syenite connects with the nearby obelisk and destroys the island and everything around it, just like Alia
- In strange terms it is said that some people have gone looking for her (it is implied they are stone-eaters). One finds her and trails her as she somehow manages to survive the blast and now wanders alone through the fulcrum. It's revealed that one is Hoa

Chapter 23 - You're All You Need

- Syenite visits Alabaster, who is dying/torn apart. He is with the stone-eater from the island
- Alabaster explains that he survived through the stone-eater even as Syenite destroyed the area and almost everyone (even their child at the time)
- Alabaster explains that he caused the latest season and destroyed Yumenes using obelisk power plus the node maintainers. He wants Syenite to help make it worse (Seemingly out of revenge?).
- He asks if Syenite has ever heard of the moon.