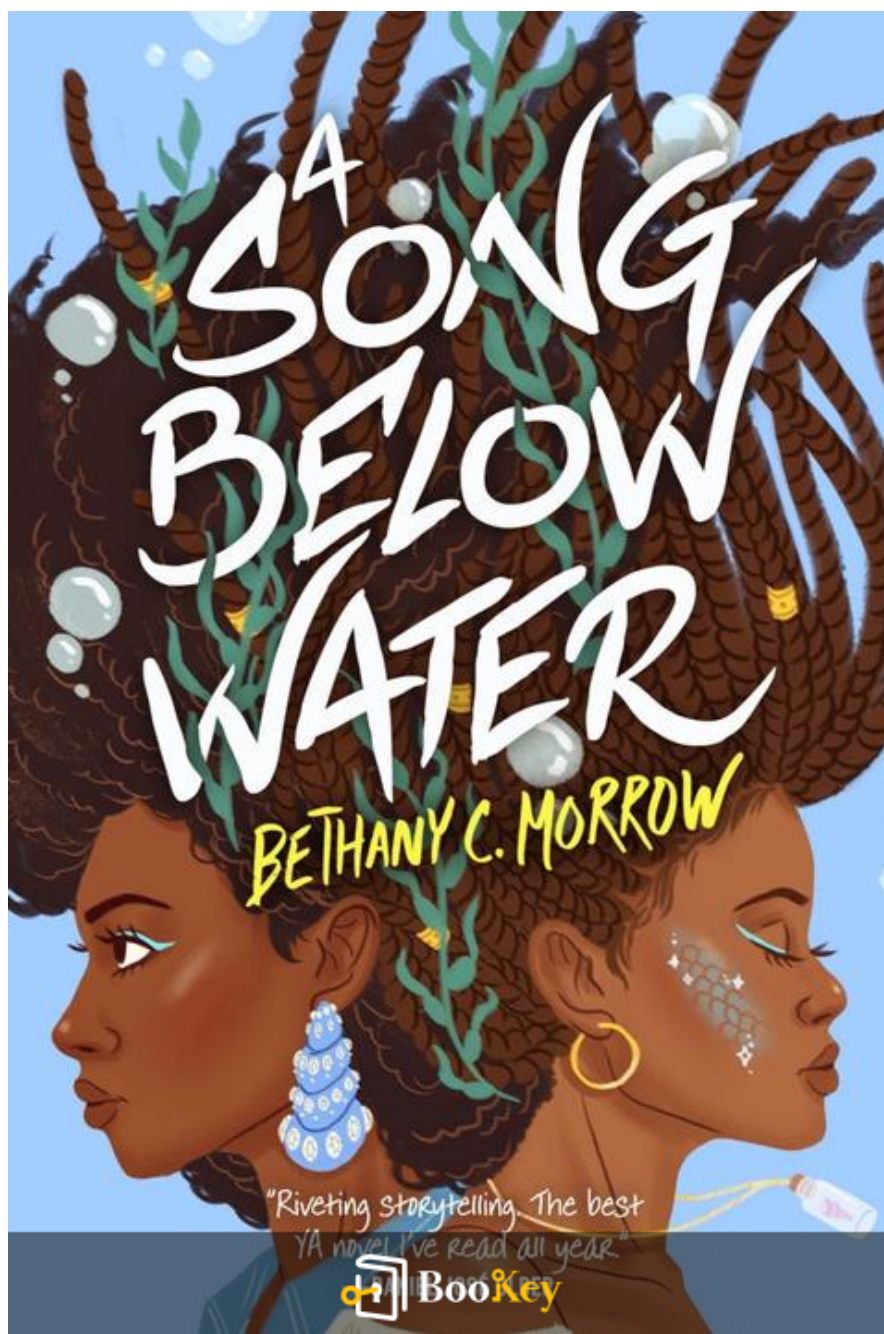


A Song Below Water PDF (Limited Copy)

Bethany C. Morrow



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A Song Below Water Summary

Hidden identities collide in a society steeped in fear.

Written by New York Central Park Page Turners Books Club

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About the book

In "A Song Below Water" by Bethany C. Morrow, the narrative unfolds in a predominantly white Portland where Tavia, a young Black girl, harbors a secret: she is a siren, a mystical being whose enchanting voice can manipulate emotions. Her world is steeped in the necessity of concealing her identity due to the societal prejudice against sirens, who are often viewed with mistrust and fear.

Tavia's closest ally is Effie, her best friend, who, like Tavia, grapples with the burdens and trials of adolescence, including family secrets and the pangs of unrequited love. Their friendship provides a sanctuary amidst the complexities of high school life. However, the tension escalates dramatically when a high-profile siren murder trial becomes a focal point in the media, igniting deep-seated fears and prejudices within their community. This trial highlights the dangers faced by sirens and puts pressure on Tavia and Effie to navigate their identities carefully.

The situation is further complicated when a beloved internet fashion icon—who becomes a symbol of siren representation—discloses her own siren heritage, inviting both inspiration and scrutiny. As the atmosphere grows increasingly fraught, Effie begins to confront unsettling aspects of her past that haunt her, revealing her vulnerabilities and inner struggles.

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Amid this turmoil, Tavia faces a pivotal moment during a tense encounter with the police, where she inadvertently utilizes her siren voice. This act not only reveals the magnitude of her powers but also threatens to expose her true identity. With the community on edge and secrets unraveling, both girls must engage in a profound journey of self-discovery, grappling with the implications of their identities in a world poised to erupt in chaos. Their stories intertwine, illuminating themes of friendship, resilience, and the fight for self-acceptance in the face of societal challenges.

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About the author

Bethany C. Morrow, an acclaimed author known for her work in speculative fiction across both adult and young adult genres, draws her inspiration from her roots in the American Northeast and her connections to Quebec. Her writing journey gained significant recognition with her adult debut, **MEM**, which was not only selected as an ABA 2018 Indies Introduce pick but also featured in notable publications like Locus Magazine and the LA Times. The novel explores themes of memory and identity, setting the stage for her evolving exploration of complex societal issues through her fiction.

Morrow broadened her literary influence further by serving as both editor and contributor for **TAKE THE MIC: Fictional Stories of Everyday Resistance**, a collection of narratives aimed at highlighting themes of resilience and empowerment, released by AAL/Scholastic in October 2019. This anthology serves as a platform for diverse voices, emphasizing the importance of storytelling in social justice.

Her young adult debut, **A Song Below Water**, scheduled for release in June 2020, marks a significant turn in her oeuvre. This contemporary fantasy weaves together elements of magic and reality, addressing crucial issues such as identity, race, and the struggle for self-acceptance. Through vibrant characters and a rich, imaginative setting, Morrow delves into the complexities of adolescence and the societal pressures faced by her

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protagonists.

Overall, Morrow's work embodies a commitment to exploring the human experience through innovative storytelling, positioning her as a vital voice in contemporary literature.

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Chapter 1 Summary: I. Tavia

In the opening chapter of "A Song Below Water," we are introduced to Tavia, a young girl living in the rainy city of Portland. Amid the dreary weather, she finds herself at a community pool, where she watches her play-sister, Effie, swim and showcase her skills underwater. Tavia's observations spark reflections on her own identity as a siren—a mythical creature rumored to possess a captivating voice linked to ancestral legacies. However, she is haunted by the absence of her grandmother's voice, which complicates her understanding of her heritage.

As she admires Effie's fluid movements, Tavia's emotions reveal a deeper conflict; she longs for a different reality, one free from the burdens of her identity. Her thoughts drift to a sterile hospital environment, alluding to a challenging and perhaps traumatic past.

Escaping into the online world, she browses the updates from her favorite vlogger, Camilla Fox, only to stumble upon unsettling news about the murder of Rhoda Taylor, who is posthumously labeled as a suspected siren. This revelation plunges Tavia into a wave of anxiety, amplifying her awareness of the dangers and societal prejudice that sirens face. The public perception of Rhoda as a threat further accentuates Tavia's fears and sense of isolation.



As the chapter progresses, Tavia's internal struggle intensifies, highlighting the harsh realities of being a siren in a world that often demonizes them. Embracing her invisibility, she reflects on her fears and the stigma attached to her identity, setting the tone for her emotional journey ahead. Themes of identity, belonging, and societal judgment emerge prominently, laying the groundwork for the challenges Tavia will confront as she seeks to understand and affirm herself in a world that is quick to reject her kind.

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Chapter 2 Summary: II. Effie

Summary of Chapter 2: Effie

Chapter 2 transports us into the serene underwater world of Effie, where the gentle melodies of water provide her solace from the complexities of life above. At the local pool, she forms a tentative bond with a boy named Wallace, who is characterized by his strength and stoic demeanor. Effie struggles with social interactions, often feeling alienated and misunderstood, which adds layers to her character as she seeks connection.

The chapter takes a poignant turn when Effie encounters her sister, Tavia, who is visibly shaken after an unsettling experience. Tavia, who communicates through sign language when overwhelmed, expresses her fears regarding Rhoda Taylor, a siren whose tragic involvement in a murder trial casts a shadow over them. This connection stirs anxiety within Tavia, as she worries about the implications it may have on her own identity and safety.

Their relationship as sisters grows stronger as they confront their shared feelings of uncertainty and apprehension. Leaving the pool together, they hold hands, symbolizing their solidarity as they navigate this turbulent emotional landscape. Tavia fears her father's reaction to her newfound



curiosity about Rhoda, anticipating restrictions on her online activities that could further isolate her.

In an attempt to escape their troubles, the sisters plan a carefree drive around Portland, reminiscing and laughing together. This fleeting moment of joy provides a much-needed reprieve from their worries. However, upon returning home, they are met with an anxious Mr. Philips, their father, whose worried presence signifies troubling developments ahead. The chapter concludes with an unsettling image of a gargoyle perched ominously on their roof, adding a layer of suspense and foreboding.

This chapter deftly explores the complexities of familial bonds, the burden of identity, and the confrontation of fears. Effie and Tavia's supportive dynamic amidst chaos highlights their resilience, setting the stage for the deeper challenges and revelations that loom on the horizon.

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Chapter 3 Summary: III. Tavia

In Chapter 3 of "A Song Below Water," Tavia navigates the intricate challenges of her identity as a siren while coping with her father's escalating fears surrounding a menacing gargoyle that has taken up residence on their roof. This supernatural being symbolizes more than just an odd occurrence; it represents the looming threat of exposure for Tavia and her family, deepening their already fraught dynamics.

As the chapter unfolds, Tavia's father's anxiety overtakes the family atmosphere, creating a palpable tension especially as he fixates on the potential dangers the gargoyle poses to their carefully guarded secret. Tavia witnesses her mother's attempts to calm her father, who is increasingly obsessed with ridding their home of the creature, convinced it could reveal their true identities to neighbors and the wider world. Amidst this turmoil, Tavia is left feeling small and invisible, internalizing her father's frustrations and believing she might be to blame for their troubles.

Seeking refuge, Tavia turns to her gospel choir, a space where she feels more accepted and less alone. Surrounded by friends who also bear the weight of similar identities, she finds solace in shared experiences—though the recent murder of a fellow siren, Rhoda Taylor, casts a long shadow over their comfort. Conversations in the choir revolve around Rhoda's tragic fate, igniting Tavia's own fears about being judged and exposed for her siren



heritage. This shared vulnerability fosters solidarity among the choir girls, yet Tavia remains silent about her own apprehensions, feeling the burden of her voice, a symbol of her power, as both a gift and a potential peril.

Tavia wrestles with the emotional aftermath of Rhoda's death, grappling with the implications of her own identity in a society rife with misunderstanding and fear. The weight of her responsibilities and the fear of rejection weigh heavily on her, complicating her sense of belonging. The chapter effectively intensifies the exploration of identity, secrecy, and family dynamics, underscoring the themes of fear and community.

As the chapter concludes, Tavia leaves choir practice in turmoil, caught between her family's expectations and the dangerous reality of being a siren. Her thoughts drift toward her grandmother and the strength she might draw from her heritage, leaving her with heightened awareness of the challenges that lie ahead. Tavia's journey illuminates her ongoing quest for identity, safety, and a sense of belonging amidst uncertainty, all while navigating the complex interplay of her supernatural existence and familial obligations.



Chapter 4: IV. Effie

In Chapter 4, titled "Effie's Dream and New Life," we delve deeper into Effie's emotional turmoil as she navigates her new existence with the Philips family after losing her previous life. The chapter begins with Effie haunted by troubling dreams, where a childhood game of "Red Rover" is transformed into a nightmarish scene dominated by shadowy figures of her friends, including her mother and Tav. This dream symbolizes Effie's feelings of abandonment and guilt, particularly as she finds herself called last, which echoes her ongoing emotional struggle with her past.

Upon awakening, Effie reflects on her adjustment to life with the Philipses, an adoptive family who provide her with warmth but also trigger feelings of guilt for moving forward while her old friends remain trapped in the park, their forms turned to stone. This contrast highlights her struggle between cherishing her new life and mourning those she left behind. She also experiences disconcerting "water mirages," adding a layer of anxiety as reality seems to blur, reminding her of the lingering shadows of her past.

Amidst this emotional battle, Effie tries to find moments of levity. One morning, her frantic search for misplaced keys leads to a playful moment when she discovers them in her swim bag—suggesting mischief from mischievous sprites, mythical beings known for their trickery. This incident momentarily lightens the mood, reflecting the supportive bond between



Effie and her new sisters as they share a chuckle over their daily routines.

As the chapter unfolds, the anticipation builds for Effie's role as a mermaid at the upcoming Renaissance Faire—an event steeped in significance as it carries on her late mother's legacy. Despite her excitement, Effie grapples with mixed emotions about her identity. Arriving at the fairegrounds with Tav, she is enveloped in a vibrant atmosphere that embodies magic and belonging, yet shadows of her unresolved past loom large. The chapter ultimately intertwines themes of identity, loss, and the ongoing tension between past and present, hinting at the trials Effie must face as the sprites linger ominously in the periphery of her life.

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Chapter 5 Summary: V. Tavia

In Chapter 5 of "A Song Below Water," the narrative dives into Tavia's introspective journey as she returns home with her sister, Effie. Tavia's complex emotions about her family shadow her tranquility; she feels a deep-seated jealousy and insecurity as she observes her father bonding effortlessly with Effie. This sense of inadequacy is compounded by her struggle with her identity as a siren, a being with a magical voice that can be both a gift and a source of alienation. Tavia longs for a voice that would allow her to blend in, rather than one that sets her apart, especially given her father's preference for silence over her compelling abilities.

Retreating to her room, Tavia yearns for the soothing presence of her deceased grandmother, hoping for guidance through her turmoil. In a moment of vulnerability, she imagines herself submerged underwater, caught between feelings of calm and desperation. Overwhelmed, she decides to escape her troubles with a walk outside.

During her stroll, Tavia encounters a gargoyle statue that initially frightens her; however, upon closer inspection, she recognizes the creature's true shape and significance, mirroring her own fears and the unknown territories of her identity. These moments of reflection lead her to reminisce about Priam, her almost-ex-boyfriend. Their past together brings her comfort but also highlights her struggles with acceptance and her siren powers.



Upon returning home, Tavia discovers an envelope addressed to Effie from Elric, a beloved character from a fantasy series they both cherish. This serendipitous find leads to a joyful moment as the sisters read Elric's handwritten fan fiction together—an experience that momentarily lifts Tavia from her sorrow.

As they share this playful exchange, deeper emotions surface, revealing Effie's longing for their late mother and the weight of grief that both sisters carry. In a heartwarming gesture, Tavia comforts Effie with a loving embrace, reinforcing their bond and the shared journey through loss and identity.

This chapter thoughtfully balances themes of sorrow and hope, shedding light on the intricate dynamics of family support amidst emotional struggles, and emphasizing the sisters' interconnected yet distinct experiences as they navigate their lives as young women facing the challenges of their unique identities.



Chapter 6 Summary: VI. Effie

In Chapter 6 of "A Song Below Water," Effie grapples with her complicated emotions, rooted deeply in her painful family history. The absence of her father weighs heavily on her heart, generating feelings of loss and anger that intertwine with cherished memories of her mother. Conversations with her grandmother, Mama Theo, further expose the weight of expectations and the burden of unasked questions that haunt Effie's thoughts.

Amidst this emotional turmoil, Effie finds solace in her friendship with Isabella Apatu, who is an eloko—a magical creature known for their enchanting abilities and vibrant spirit. Isabella's captivating nature brings light and joy to Effie's otherwise somber days, particularly during a tumultuous history class where Ms. Fisher, the teacher, attempts to discuss civil liberties. However, her poorly chosen comments regarding sirens—a group often marginalized and misrepresented—trigger deep feelings within Effie, highlighting the systemic bias against her kind.

In a bold attempt to confront her past, Effie visits the park where her friends were tragically transformed into statues, a haunting reminder of a pivotal moment in her life. Accompanied by Isabella, she navigates a wave of guilt and memories as they arrive at the park. There, they encounter the four frozen figures, symbolizing the irreversible impact of their shared history. The chapter intensifies when a mysterious voice beckons them to participate



in a game, adding an element of suspense.

Through these events, themes of identity, loss, and belonging are artfully woven into Effie's journey. Her struggle to reconcile painful memories with the desire to forge meaningful connections unfolds alongside her exploration of self-discovery. The chapter culminates in Effie's realization that confronting her past, particularly with Isabella by her side, may lead to both revelations and new complications, illustrating the intricate dance between her history and present.

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Chapter 7 Summary: VII. Tavia

Chapter 7 Summary

In this chapter, Tavia navigates a tumultuous landscape of emotions stemming from recent events, particularly a choir competition where her friend Naema defied societal norms by showcasing her powerful eloko trill—an illegal talent celebrated for its beauty yet frowned upon for its risk. This performance momentarily uplifts Tavia's spirits, allowing her to momentarily forget her anxieties related to social media scrutiny and the impending challenges she faces.

Upon returning home, she finds her sister Effie unusually asleep on her bed, stirring Tavia's concern. Their home is watched over by a gargoyle, a protective guardian whose imposing nature creates an unsettling atmosphere. As Tavia engages with this strange figure, a mixture of fear and comfort envelops her, hinting at the complexities of her home life.

However, Tavia's unsettling discovery of Effie's skin mysteriously peeling away introduces a new layer of urgency and concern. The silky covering that resembles a second skin raises alarm—each layer she removes reveals deeper issues linked to Effie's emotional state, particularly her recent solitary visit to their mother's grave. Despite Tavia's attempts to probe, Effie



deflects, expressing a desire to return home rather than confront the emotional turmoil tied to their mother's death.

As Tavia drives Effie to retrieve her car, their journey takes a tense turn when they are pulled over by two police officers, one of whom is connected to Priam, a figure from Tavia's school. The interaction surfaces Tavia's acute awareness of racial dynamics, inducing a wave of anxiety and vulnerability. In this instructive moment with authority, Tavia finds her voice, powerfully asserting her rights and reclaiming her agency, infusing the encounter with a sense of empowerment that defies the systemic fear imposed upon her community.

The chapter concludes with Tavia grappling with the intertwining of her sister's struggles, her experience of racial tension during the police encounter, and the emotional layers of grief and identity. It marks a poignant moment of self-discovery for Tavia, underscoring her resilience and determination to navigate the complex realities of adolescence alongside the weight of familial responsibility.

Key Themes and Character Developments:

1. Identity and Power: Tavia's journey involves harnessing her voice and its inherent power, allowing her to assert control amid fear and uncertainty.



2. **Family Dynamics:** The intricate relationship between Tavia and Effie is brought to the forefront, revealing the bond of love shadowed by unspoken traumas, particularly their mother's passing.

3. **Racial Tension:** The narrative emphasizes the harsh realities faced by Black individuals during police encounters, prompting discussions about empowerment and systemic issues.

4. **Mystery and Transformation:** Effie's skin shedding symbolizes deeper themes of change and self-exploration, hinting at new developments in her character arc.

Overall, this chapter combines personal and societal challenges to highlight the struggles of adolescence, familial loyalty, and the quest for identity, skillfully setting the stage for future conflicts and growth in Tavia and Effie's journey.



Chapter 8: VIII. Effie

Chapter 8 Summary: Underwater Feelings and Surface Conflicts

Effie arrives home, burdened by an overwhelming sense of loss and confusion, feeling as if she's submerged in a heavy, emotional tide. Haunted by the traumatic experiences of losing her friends in Triton Park and her mother's death, she grapples with a growing uncertainty about her identity. The shadow of her sister Tavia looms large in Effie's mind, leading her to wonder if she might share Tavia's mystical nature as a siren—creatures often associated with allure yet steeped in darkness.

Amidst these reflections, Effie recalls a haunting encounter at her mother's grave with a mysterious man dressed in a three-piece suit, clutching a duck-handled umbrella. His fright upon encountering her suggests deeper, unsettling connections to her late mother and the supernatural forces at play in her life, leaving Effie feeling trapped in a world she barely understands.

Just as she is lost in these heavy thoughts, Tavia arrives home, visibly shaken after an unsettling encounter with the police. The weight of their experiences as young Black women in a hostile society hangs over them, complicating their bond. Tavia divulges that Priam's father, a police officer, was involved in her distressing incident, further amplifying the tension.



As the Ren faire approaches, Effie attempts to regain a semblance of normalcy. She finds solace at the community pool, where she meets Wallace, an attractive lifeguard. Their initially awkward yet endearing interactions provide a fleeting escape from her worries, contrasting sharply with her

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Chapter 9 Summary: IX. Tavia

Chapter 9 Summary:

In this poignant chapter of "A Song Below Water," Tavia grapples with her multifaceted identity as a siren—a mythical being capable of enchanting others with her voice—amidst the ever-looming threat of exposure. The chapter begins with Tavia's hesitance to reach out to Naema, a member of her close-knit network, for assistance following a distressing encounter with the police. This incident amplifies her anxiety about being a siren in a society that may not accept or understand her.

Flashbacks into Tavia's past reveal a traumatic episode where she resorted to self-harm in an attempt to suppress her siren voice, fearing its potential to destroy her family and the community around her. This painful memory underscores her ongoing struggle with isolation and the challenges faced by marginalized individuals, particularly young Black girls battling societal biases.

Tavia's current crisis escalates when she inadvertently uses her siren call in front of Priam's father, a police officer, jeopardizing her safety and the secrecy of her identity. This incident compels her to seek help from Naema, but their interaction is charged with tension; Naema appears dismissive,



reflecting the complexities in their relationship shaped by shared yet divergent experiences of race. Tavia strives to assert her independence while bearing the weight of communal expectations.

As Tavia makes her way to class, she is confronted with the larger implications of her identity as a siren. The announcement of a highly publicized trial surrounding the murder of a fellow siren, Rhoda Taylor, grips her attention. The not-guilty verdict in this case ignites Tavia's reflections on the systemic injustices that threaten her existence and those of her community.

The chapter reaches a pivotal moment when Tavia witnesses the powerful Camilla Fox, an influential siren, openly embrace her identity in a viral video. Camilla's advocacy for the voices of Black women and girls serves as a catalyst for Tavia's self-reflection. Through this experience, Tavia begins to understand that her siren call—a source of both fear and shame—might also be her greatest asset in confronting the world.

By the chapter's end, Tavia experiences a significant moment of self-discovery. She starts to shift her understanding of her voice from a perceived burden to a potential shield against life's adversities. The narrative intricately weaves themes of identity, community, resilience, and the relentless pursuit of justice, illustrating Tavia's evolution as she navigates the journey toward embracing her authentic self.



Chapter 10 Summary: X. Effie

In Chapter 10 of "A Song Below Water," Effie grapples with the emotional fallout from Tav's recent struggles while also facing her own identity crisis. As she reflects on her heritage, Effie discovers her ancestral connection to mermaids, spurred by nostalgia as she tries on an old mermaid tail. This moment deepens her curiosity about her lineage and prompts her to reach out to Elric, an intriguing boy she feels drawn to, seeking clarity about their shared mystical backgrounds.

As Effie prepares to meet Elric, her self-consciousness heightens, particularly concerning her hair, which she conceals beneath a headwrap. This reflects broader societal pressures on Black girls regarding beauty standards and hair expectations. For Effie, her hair is emblematic of her identity, and the thought of potentially cutting it brings her vulnerability to the forefront.

The chapter takes a turn when Effie's grandmother, Mama Theo, unexpectedly visits, leading to tension-filled exchanges about Effie's frequent visits to her mother's grave. Mama Theo's reluctance to share information intensifies Effie's inner turmoil, as she yearns for understanding about her roots. This familial conflict is unexpectedly compounded by Officer Blake's visit, delivering alarming news about Tavia—a friend facing danger.



After the unsettling visit, Effie and Tavia head to the movies. Effie's initial excitement is soon clouded by anxiety over whether Elric may be on a date and how he may differ from his charming, idealized persona. When Elric finally acknowledges her, engaging playfully in public with affectionate gestures, Effie feels a surge of joy mixed with confusion. However, the encounter culminates in disappointment when she realizes Elric may not be aware of their deeper connection or her true identity.

The chapter concludes with Effie engulfed in a storm of self-doubt and confusion, highlighting her struggle with the expectations imposed upon her and the complexities of her heritage. Readers are left to ponder how Effie will navigate these intertwined challenges of identity, societal pressure, and personal connections as her journey unfolds.

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Chapter 11 Summary: XI. Tavia

In Chapter 11 of "A Song Below Water," Tavia is behind the wheel of her sister Effie's car, comforting her after a disappointing encounter with a boy named Elric. Effie's emotional distress opens a space for them to discuss the intricacies of relationships and the often unrealistic expectations surrounding love. Tavia shares insights from her own experiences, highlighting the differences and similarities in their romantic pursuits. Effie grapples with her identity, contemplating the idea that she might be more than an ordinary girl—perhaps even a mermaid, which complicates her relationship with her evolving sense of self.

During their heartfelt conversation, the sisters delve into their vulnerabilities, discussing past crushes, insecurities, and their shared longing for acceptance. Tavia, a siren, yearns to carve out her own narrative within the fantastical world of Renaissance fairs, seeking belonging amidst her unique identity. The chapter emphasizes the strength of their sisterly bond, showcasing how they support each other through emotional struggles.

As the dialogue transitions into a more dreamlike sequence, Tavia finds herself enveloped in an indigo-hued space, where she hears a haunting voice that echoes with a watery resonance. This surreal moment leads her to encounter Naema, a significant figure in her journey who embodies deeper connections to heritage and identity. Tavia reflects on her ties to her family



and community, contemplating her place within these connections.

A transformative moment occurs when Tavia sees her grandmother's reflection in the water, igniting a yearning for guidance and a reconciliation with her family's past. This experience propels Tavia into a deeper exploration of her identity and personal journey. The chapter concludes with her grappling with questions about who she is and where she fits in the world, while drawing strength from her relationships with Effie and her enigmatic gargoyle protector.

Key Themes:

- **Identity and Self-Discovery:** Both sisters navigate the complexities of self-identity, balancing external expectations with their desires to be true to themselves.
- **Family and Sisterhood:** The resilience of Tavia and Effie's relationship is a cornerstone of the narrative, illustrating the power of familial love in overcoming emotional challenges.
- **Myth and Reality:** The intersection of mythical elements, such as mermaids and sirens, with real-life struggles highlights the blurring of fantasy and personal experiences.
- **Connection to Heritage:** Tavia's journey of self-discovery becomes intertwined with her understanding of her heritage, revealing how these connections inform her identity and experiences.



Overall, this chapter eloquently weaves emotional depth with fantastical elements, offering a glimpse into the sisters' complex lives as they confront their identities and navigate the legacies of their ancestry.

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Chapter 12: XII. Effie

Chapter 12 Summary

In this chapter, the emotional landscape of Effie's world deepens as she navigates her strained relationships with her family and peers. It begins with a poignant encounter between Effie and her mother, Mama Theo, who is found crying on the porch, signaling a rift in their communication. Their conversation quickly escalates into a tense discussion about Effie's sister, Tavia. Mama Theo expresses her worry that the sisters are drifting apart, while Effie reveals her discomfort with her mother's insistence on maintaining a facade of closeness. This moment reflects Effie's broader struggle with her identity and the conflicting roles within her family, particularly as she grapples with feelings toward Tavia and her newfound connection to Elric.

Effie's internal turmoil is characterized by a desire for openness and understanding, yet she feels suffocated by unsaid truths that foster distance between her and Mama Theo. A pivotal moment occurs when Mama Theo cryptically advises Effie against disclosing her visit, causing a surge of anger and frustration in Effie, further straining their relationship. This confrontation lays bare unexpressed fears and emotions that have been festering beneath the surface.



Seeking solace, Effie turns to her grandpa, Paw Paw, who embodies wisdom with his simple yet profound advice about embracing life's uncertainties. His comforting presence offers Effie a brief respite from her emotional burdens, highlighting the importance of familial support in her journey.

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Chapter 13 Summary: XIII. Tavia

Chapter 13 Summary

As dawn breaks, Tavia awakens with a palpable sense of anxiety. Today marks a pivotal moment—the protest she has been diligently preparing for is finally here. Although her night was restless, she finds solace in her connection with Gargy, her gray-winged friend, whose presence mirrors her own feelings of being out of place in a world that is often hostile.

Meeting her friends, Tavia is greeted by a flurry of supportive mothers who equip them with bright orange backpacks. These bags contain disposable cameras for documenting the day and milk to help mitigate the effects of tear gas. The weight of their mission—to celebrate Black identity and protest police brutality following the tragic death of Kenyon Jones—settles heavily on Tavia’s shoulders. This moment resonates with her as she navigates her identity as a siren, a mythical being whose legacy comes with its own burdens in a society that stigmatizes her kind.

As they make their way to the protest, Tavia’s excitement is tempered by nerves and guilt over sneaking out and concealing the truth from her parents. Thoughts of her family’s history loom large, particularly the worries expressed by her father regarding their siren lineage. These reflections fuel



her understanding of the fears entwined with her identity.

Upon arriving, Tavia is enveloped by the sea of humanity gathered to honor Kenyon's memory. The atmosphere is thick with emotion, solidarity, and the shared purpose of seeking justice. It's a moment that ignites Tavia's feelings of belonging, even as she grapples with the looming threat of police presence that sows seeds of fear within the crowd.

The arrival of Camilla Fox, a significant leader in their community, is a turning point for Tavia. Camilla's empowering words about unity and resilience resonate deeply, uplifting the spirits of those present. However, the mood shifts dramatically as police officers make their presence known, escalating the tension and chaos that follows.

Amidst the confusion, Tavia feels the urgent pull of their cause, aware of her responsibilities while experiencing the exhilaration that comes from participating in a movement greater than herself. In a moment of crisis, she instinctively taps into her siren powers to intervene, but it's not enough. The chaos crescendos as Gargy rescues her just as Camilla is arrested, leaving Tavia feeling a profound sense of helplessness and conflict against the backdrop of activism.

This chapter delves into the complexities of identity and community, portraying the challenges faced by young Black individuals as they confront



societal pressures, intersecting historical legacies, and the urgent call for justice. Tavia's inner turmoil reflects the broader struggle for recognition and equality, encapsulating the emotional toll activism takes on the youth endeavoring to create change.

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Chapter 14 Summary: XIV. Effie

In Chapter 14 of **A Song Below Water**, Effie awakens in a dense, unfamiliar wilderness, disoriented after blacking out during a chaotic protest. A sense of urgency grips her as she realizes her sister Tavia is missing, prompting her to search the wild terrain. This dislocation fosters introspection, leading Effie to contemplate her abilities as a siren and the bond she shares with Tavia, another siren whose powers also set them apart from society.

During her search, Effie finds Tavia in distress, fervently calling for Gargy—a gargoyle guardian who offers protection to sirens like them. Tavia is traumatized, having witnessed another siren, Camilla, get collared—a terrifying event that symbolizes the oppression sirens face. This moment heightens Tavia's anxieties about her own identity and the dangerous implications of being a siren in a fearful world. Effie comforts her sister, solidifying the deep emotional connection between them as they navigate their fears together.

Tavia's realization that she can summon Gargy provides a glimmer of hope. When he arrives, he confirms that his protective role specifically includes Effie, revealing that both sisters have been brought to a nature reserve in Portland, a sanctuary amidst their perilous reality.



The sisters engage in a candid, lighthearted discussion about relationships, sharing their experiences with boys and reinforcing their close bond. However, the tone shifts dramatically upon returning home when they discover that their friend Isabella is missing, alongside a slew of recent disappearances which begin to overshadow their personal struggles.

Amidst the escalating tension, their mother, Mama Theo, is distraught and hints at troubling revelations regarding Effie's identity and the fears tied to her siren powers. The chapter reaches a critical moment when Effie's physical transformation prompts a panic, leading to Mama Theo taking extreme measures to protect her daughter. This results in a heartbreaking separation between Effie and Tavia, underscoring the dire stakes involved.

Despite the chaos, Effie promises Tavia they will meet again at prom, embodying their resolve to face an uncertain future together. The chapter powerfully explores themes of sisterhood, the complexities of identity, and the struggle against societal oppression, weaving together familial love with the urgent dangers that surround them.



Chapter 15 Summary: XV. Tavia

In Chapter 15 of "A Song Below Water," Tavia finds herself enveloped in a whirlwind of loneliness and guilt following the absence of her friend Effie, who has been taken away under mysterious circumstances. Desperate to connect, Tavia attempts to reach Effie, but her efforts go unanswered, deepening her feelings of betrayal—particularly towards her parents, who have failed to protect Effie from an undisclosed danger that Tavia feels responsible for.

Amidst her emotional turmoil, Tavia's mother visits, revealing her own experiences of feeling like an outsider within the family. This candid exchange allows for healing, as her mother acknowledges her mistakes in understanding Tavia's struggles and the intricate family dynamics that contribute to their pain. Their conversation shifts towards Tavia's encounter with Camilla Fox, the chaos at the protest, and Tavia's emerging bravery in the face of adversity.

As the chapter progresses, Tavia's internal conflict intensifies as she grapples with the responsibility of safeguarding Effie. She uncovers hints of a mystical connection to Effie's situation, including the dark implications of her father's potential involvement. Delving into the mythology surrounding sirens, Tavia becomes increasingly determined to unravel the truth about Effie, understanding that there may be deeper, supernatural elements at play.



Her contemplation is punctuated by a vision of her grandmother and an alternate version of Effie, who offer cryptic yet insightful guidance about the possibility of "Awakening" Effie. This revelation fuels Tavia's determination to explore her heritage and the magical threads that bind them, while unsettling news of new statues mysteriously appearing in the city hints at deeper ties to Effie's fate.

As prom night approaches, Tavia is overshadowed by thoughts of Effie and the lurking threats they face. The event itself is a poignant juxtaposition of happiness and anxiety, highlighted by the enchanting decorations and the presence of friends like Priam and Naema, who are each burdened by their own challenges.

Overall, this chapter underscores themes of isolation, the significance of familial relationships, and the quest for self-identity amidst encroaching supernatural realities. Tavia's journey is marked by emotional growth as she deepens her connection to her cultural roots and her sister, ultimately resolving to uncover the hidden truths that shape their lives.



Chapter 16: XVI. Effie

Summary of Chapter 16 - "A Song Below Water"

In this pivotal chapter, Effie Freeman grapples with the weight of her heritage while confined in her grandparent's home. Since her separation from her sister Tavia, she reflects on shocking revelations from Mama Theo regarding her identity—most notably, the unsettling possibility that her father might be a gargoyle. This leads to a torrent of emotions, primarily anger and betrayal directed toward Mama Theo, who has shielded Effie from the truth under the guise of protection.

The tension peaks as Effie confronts Mama Theo, demanding clarity about her lineage and the reason behind her long-standing ignorance about her father's identity. In a heartfelt confrontation, Effie articulates her feelings of entrapment and her desperate need for self-understanding. She bravely asserts that she would rather face the dangers of the world than remain in a state of ignorance, underscoring her internal battle for both identity and autonomy.

Just as their heated exchange reaches a critical point, her attentive friend Wallace arrives, providing a timely escape route to prom. This moment signifies a turning point for Effie, allowing her a chance to step into a new

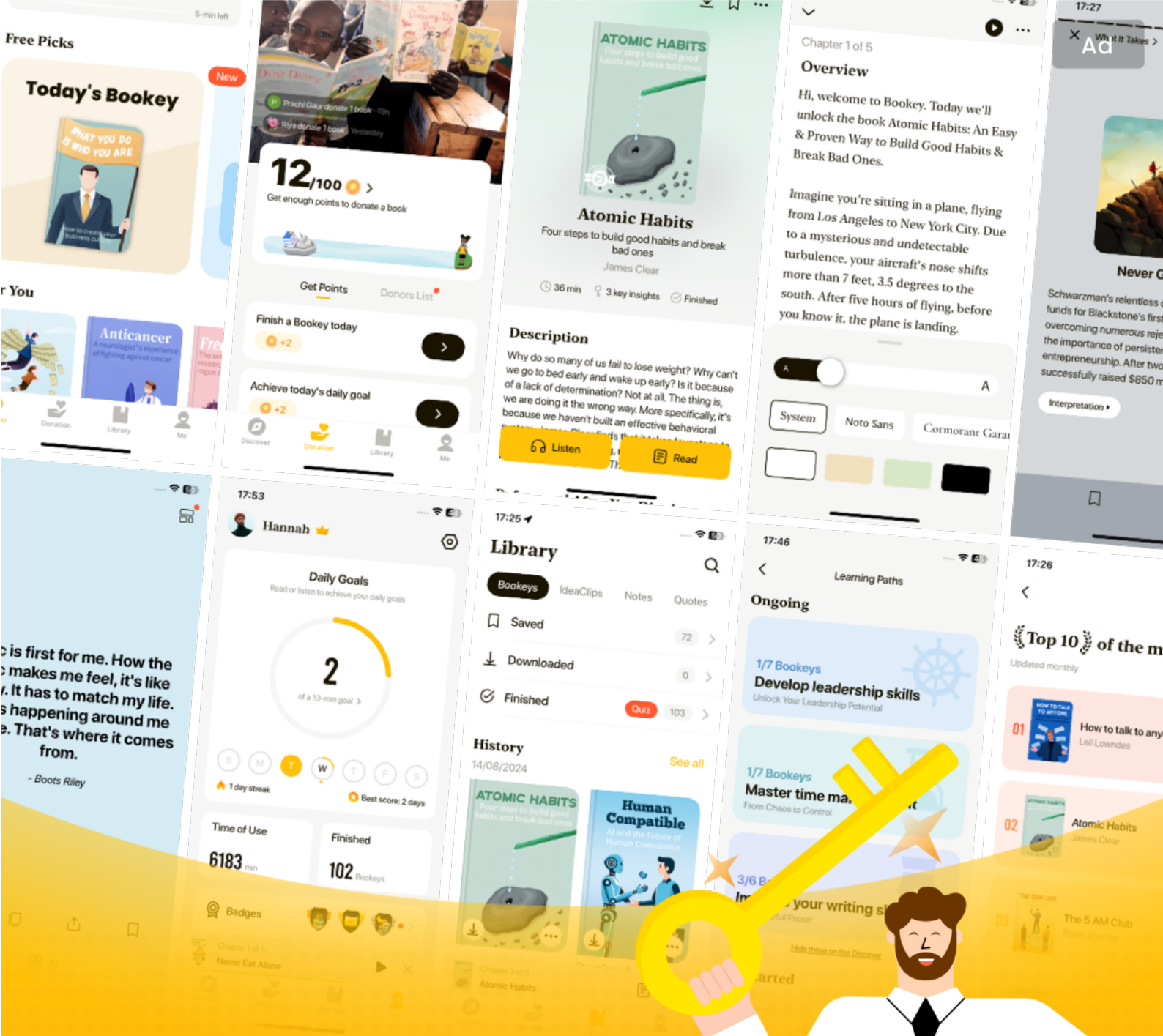


chapter of her life. Yet, as they navigate through the city, a sense of foreboding looms, hinting at the underlying chaos affecting their community, which starkly contrasts Effie's yearning for a typical high school experience.

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Chapter 17 Summary: XVII. Tavia

Chapter 17 Summary

In this crucial chapter of "A Song Below Water," Tavia faces overwhelming pressure and the repercussions of her choices amidst a chaotic prom night. Tavia grapples with personal turmoil regarding her relationship with Priam, but her immediate concern is her sister, Effie, who is in danger. Torn between emotional distress and her protective instincts, Tavia inadvertently unleashes her magical ability through the call "Awaken." This spell transforms her friend Wallace into a gargoyle, showcasing his dual identity and complicating Tavia's feelings, highlighting her internal conflict between her affection for Wallace and her struggle with her own siren legacy.

When Tavia finally locates Effie, she is taken aback by a shocking transformation: Effie has become a gorgon, a once-mythical creature boasting a serpent tail and mesmerizing features. While Tavia feels a sense of pride in her sister's powerful new form, she quickly becomes aware of Effie's fear and discomfort regarding this drastic change.

Effie, grappling with her new existence, pleads with Tavia to keep her transformation hidden from the world. However, the atmosphere shifts dramatically when Naema, a classmate with malicious intent, captures



Effie's metamorphosis on her phone. This moment heightens the tension, as Naema threatens to expose their secrets, forcing Tavia to confront her deepest fears about their supernatural identities being revealed.

Desperate to shield Effie, Tavia instinctively taps into her powers again, driven by a primal urge to protect her sister. The chaos surrounding them spirals out of control, echoing the turmoil that often accompanies their siren heritage. With Effie in distress, Tavia makes a fateful decision; she commands Effie to "stone" Naema in a bid to safeguard their secrets. This harrowing act marks a significant turning point for Tavia, leaving her in shock and grappling with the reality of their magical legacies and the sacrifices she is willing to endure for family.

Themes of identity, self-acceptance, and the heavy burdens of magical inheritance are intricately woven throughout this chapter, crafting a rich tapestry of emotional conflict and moral dilemmas. This harrowing event propels the story forward, leaving readers with lingering questions about the true cost of protection in their tumultuous lives.

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Chapter 18 Summary: XVIII. Effie

Summary of Chapter 18 from "A Song Below Water"

Chapter 18 opens with Effie regaining consciousness during a flight accompanied by Tavia and Garg. The atmosphere is tense as Tavia and Garg argue about their destination, with Tavia insisting they must reach someone who could ensure Effie's safety. As they soar over Portland, Effie becomes aware of a profound change within herself; her transformation has left her feeling revitalized, with her scales gone and a restored sense of vitality.

Their journey culminates at the Vancouver fairground, where Garg drops them off near the Hidden Scales pavilion. The location invokes a mix of nostalgia and guilt in Effie, connecting her to the legends surrounding the place and provoking thoughts about those affected by her past transformations. When Garg reverts to his human form, he surprises both girls with a more familiar appearance, hinting at his protective nature.

Curiosity drives Tavia and Effie to explore the Hidden Scales, familiar with its lore but astonished by the actual experience. Garg reveals that he had been tasked to protect Effie in his true form, which deepens their bond and suggests a budding romance between him and Effie. A tender moment shared between the two signals a hopeful connection before they step into



the pavilion together, which transports them into an enchanting, aquatic realm that feels both alien and yet oddly comforting.

In this magical environment, Effie encounters a figure resembling herself, who identifies as her father. This revelation triggers a tumult of emotions for Effie as she confronts the complexity of her lineage. A tense conversation ensues between her father and Mama Theo, her mother, as they discuss their past decisions and the impact on Effie's life. Caught between her parents and the emerging understanding of her identity, Effie is left feeling torn.

This chapter explores profound themes of family, identity, and the challenges of reconciling with one's heritage. Effie's quest for self-discovery and meaningful connections amidst familial conflicts is artfully depicted, generating a sense of hope for potential reconciliation and leaving readers eager to see how her journey continues to unfold.

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Chapter 19 Summary: XIX. Tavia

In Chapter 19 of **A Song Below Water**, Tavia finds herself in a surreal and emotionally charged situation after stepping through a tent portal with her gorgon sister, Effie. They witness a striking moment as Effie's father, Jacoby, emerges from a dark body of water, evoking a mix of warmth and confusion in Tavia. The intimacy between Effie and Jacoby stirs feelings of jealousy within Tavia, as she grapples with her own strained family dynamics.

As the sisters converse, Tavia encourages Effie to delve into the truth about her powers and embrace her lineage, rather than shying away from it. This conversation unearths Effie's guilt and the emotional weight of their family's past, marked by dark secrets, including the transformation of people into stone—an eerie manifestation of their lineage's burdens.

The atmosphere shifts dramatically when Jacoby intervenes, complicating their family dynamics with revelations that suggest a deeper, darker history behind their powers. Tavia suddenly feels an irresistible pull toward the water, leading her into a vivid otherworldly experience where she observes a serene yet intense exchange between Effie and their father. This transition stirs a profound realization in Tavia about the urgency to amend the painful legacy connected to other children who have been turned into statues.



Driven by a newfound determination, Tavia unites the families affected by these tragic transformations and promises to uncover the truth. In a powerful act of solidarity, she taps into her siren abilities to awaken the long-turned statues, sparking emotional reunions filled with joy and relief among the parents. This scene not only emphasizes the pain hidden in their pasts but also ignites a sense of hope for healing.

As the chapter reaches its climax, Effie bravely reveals her true gorgon form to the gathered crowd, prompting reactions of disbelief and wonder. The embrace between the awakened children and their parents signals a collective recognition: their painful history does not dictate their futures. Tavia experiences a profound sense of fulfillment, believing that they are finally on their way to mending their fractured lives and returning home.

Overall, this chapter deftly explores themes of identity, family, and redemption, illustrating the characters' evolution as they confront love, truth, and the intricacies of their extraordinary world.



Chapter 20: XX. Effie

In Chapter 20 of "A Song Below Water," titled "Building Bridges," the narrative delves deeply into the evolving relationships between the characters Effie and Tavia, amidst the backdrop of their recent challenges as marginalized individuals in a world that often misunderstands them.

Effie reflects on the aftermath of their sprite project, which linked to Tav's public Awakening—a significant event that had captured media attention and stirred public sentiment. Despite the trauma they experienced, Effie's friend Isabella remains a pillar of support, regularly checking in on her and helping to maintain their bond. However, Effie struggles with the repercussions of her father's controlling nature and her choice to hide her gorgon identity, a mythical lineage that adds an additional layer of complexity to her character. In a moment of vulnerability, Effie confides in Tavia, revealing the ways her father's manipulative behavior has shaped their relationship and her self-perception.

Tavia, deeply affected by Effie's isolation, vocalizes her concern, which emphasizes their close connection. This exchange highlights the strength of their sisterhood, as they reaffirm their commitment to each other in the face of external pressures and personal struggles. Tavia is determined to keep their bond strong, even as Effie charts her own path, reflecting the challenges of navigating friendship under the strain of identity and external



expectations.

Returning home, Tavia senses the weight of change following her newly public role as a siren activist, a movement aimed at advocating for the rights and recognition of sirens. Engagements with friends Wallace and Elric reinforce her support system, showcasing how these relationships help ground her amid the uncertainty. A key moment occurs during a conversation with her father, who, while initially expressing concern about the risks associated with Tavia's new visibility, ultimately supports her after learning about an upcoming documentary featuring both daughters. This exchange signals a turning point in their family dynamics, illustrating a developing understanding and respect between Tavia and her dad.

Additionally, Tavia reflects on her past relationship with Priam, contemplating its lessons and implications for her identity as a siren. Sharing these thoughts with her father fosters a deeper connection and empowers her to embrace her unique identity.

Overall, this chapter emphasizes themes of familial bonds, the complexities of identity, and the enduring strength of friendship. Effie and Tavia's intertwined journeys reveal their resilience as they confront the challenges of being exceptional in a world that often fails to accept those who are different. As they navigate their transformations, the foundation of their relationship becomes a source of strength amidst the chaos surrounding



them.

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