

Broken April PDF (Limited Copy)

Ismail Kadare



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Broken April Summary

A haunting tale of vendetta and the cycle of bloodshed.

Written by New York Central Park Page Turners Books Club

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About the book

In Ismail Kadare's haunting novel "Broken April," the story unfolds against the backdrop of ancient Albanian customs, particularly the Kanun, a code governing honor and justice. The narrative begins with Gjorg, a man thrust into a brutal cycle of vengeance after the murder of his brother. Bound by the tenets of the Kanun, he takes it upon himself to exact revenge, killing his brother's murderer. While this act grants him a brief reprieve of thirty days from the obligation of further retribution, it also marks the beginning of a grim countdown to his own death, as the cycle of vengeance demands that he too will face the consequences of his actions.

As Gjorg navigates his harrowing fate, the story introduces a honeymooning couple, whose innocent love stands in stark contrast to the dark realities of Gjorg's life. The bride becomes fascinated by Gjorg's tragic situation, drawn into the deep-rooted themes of honor and retribution that permeate his existence. Her interest serves to highlight how the brutal legacy of vendetta extends beyond individual lives, ensnaring the innocent in its web and illustrating the timeless struggle between love, justice, and the inescapable consequences of a violent past.

In this intricate narrative, Kadare explores the intertwining of personal tragedy and broader societal norms, revealing how deeply ingrained traditions can dictate the fates of individuals in their relentless pursuit of

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honor, ultimately demonstrating the inescapable cycle of violence that characterizes human history.

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About the author

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Chapter 1 Summary:

In Chapter 1 of "Broken April," we are introduced to Gjorg Berisha, a young man ensnared in the relentless cycle of a blood feud, a conflict deeply entrenched in the traditions of his culture. As he waits on a ridge with a rifle in hand, he is poised to carry out an act of vengeance against Zef Kryeqyqe, the man he holds responsible for his brother's death. The frigid air mirrors Gjorg's internal turmoil as he grapples with a sense of duty overshadowed by a profound sense of dread.

As twilight descends, Gjorg reflects on the weight of his task—this moment, he believes, will irrevocably alter the course of his life. His thoughts drift back to a previous failed attempt at revenge, emphasizing the crushing inevitability of violence that defines his existence. The tension builds as he anxiously awaits his target's arrival, torn between his desire for release from his family's legacy of bloodshed and the palpable weight of his violent heritage.

When Zef finally appears, Gjorg hesitates, initially considering an act that would only wound rather than kill. However, the cultural pressures and familial honor compel him to take a more drastic measure; he aims to kill, notifying Zef before the shot rings out. This moment marks a pivotal turn in Gjorg's life, as he is thrust deeper into the abyss of violence and guilt.

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After the killing, Gjorg approaches the lifeless body, understanding that he has become irrevocably linked to the cycle of vengeance. His return to the village unveils the immediate repercussions of his act. The villagers' reactions lay bare the social dynamics reshaped by bloodshed, as Gjorg's name and deed are proclaimed by the herald. This announcement alters his social standing forever, ushering in a tumultuous reality where expectations of retaliation and honor dictate his every move.

The chapter closes with Gjorg burdened by his role in this ancient struggle; he faces the daunting prospect of a thirty-day truce—an interval that offers little solace, as it is merely a pause in the inevitable cycle of vengeance that looms over him. As he contemplates the relentless demand of blood taxes and family honor, we witness the intertwining themes of fate, the weight of ancestral duty, and the destructive nature of revenge amidst the stark realities of an unforgiving society bound by archaic codes. Gjorg's journey reflects a broader critique on how such traditions ensnare individuals, dictating their paths in a world where honor is often synonymous with violence.

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Chapter 2 Summary:

Summary of Chapter II of "Broken April"

In this chapter, we follow Gjorg as he embarks on a taxing journey across the desolate expanse of the High Plateau, enveloped in mist and rain. His goal is to reach the Kulla of Orosh before nightfall to attend to a pressing obligation steeped in the tradition of vendetta dictated by the Kanun, a blood code that governs his clan's customs, including the necessity of revenge against the rival Kryeqyqe family.

The bleak and barren landscape mirrors Gjorg's internal turmoil and isolation. He is haunted by memories of his betrothed, who died tragically before their wedding, and these memories intertwine with the harsh realities of the Kanun. As he walks, he encounters fellow mountain folk—shadows of his own struggles—and reflects on the rituals surrounding both marriage and blood feuds. Each step is heavy with the expectations placed upon him by his lineage and the weight of ancient customs.

His journey is further marked by a wedding procession, which serves as a painful reminder of his lost love and amplifies his feelings of grief. Gjorg wrestles with the conflicting emotions arising from the obligation to kill a member of the Kryeqyqe family, a task he feels he must complete to honor

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his family's long-standing feud.

Upon reaching an inn, Gjorg meets other patrons who, like him, bear the burdens of loss and the prospect of vengeance. The atmosphere is laden with a sense of sorrow and inevitability, underscoring the universal weight of death and the shadow it casts over their lives. Here, he learns that circumstances may delay his confrontation, highlighting the relentless passage of time and fate in the cycle of retribution.

As night descends, Gjorg finally enters the castle, gripped by an unsettling mix of dread and a yearning to resolve the demands of his bloodline. This chapter encapsulates themes of loss, duty, and the relentless grip of tradition, beautifully setting the stage for the inevitable conflicts that lie ahead.

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Chapter 3 Summary:

Chapter 3 Summary

In this chapter, Bessian Vorpsi and his wife, Diana, continue their expedition through the desolate expanse of the Northern Plateau, known ominously as "The Accursed Mountains." Riding in a luxurious yet jostling carriage, the couple reflects on the travel articles chronicling their honeymoon. While Diana feels a mix of excitement and apprehension, Bessian finds himself preoccupied, grappling with impatience as they approach the romanticized landscapes he has often written about.

As the couple traverses the barren, mist-covered heathland, Bessian shares his contemplations about the mountains and their inhabitants, expressing admiration for the resilient mountaineers. Conversely, Diana's intuition warns her of the troubling lives they may encounter. Their journey reveals a stark contrast between the idyllic legends associated with the mountains and the harsh realities faced by those who dwell there.

They observe groups of mountain folk—some burdened with sacks of corn, others clutching tattered umbrellas—striking Bessian as an unexpected reminder of the region's struggles. Diana is particularly intrigued by one mountaineer, stirring thoughts about the legendary bravery of the

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highlanders. Their discussions delve into the complexities of life governed by the Kanun, a traditional code that dictates the social fabric of the mountains, particularly concerning blood feuds and the norms of hospitality.

Upon reaching an inn, their experiences take a poignant turn with the arrival of Gjorg, a young mountaineer marked by a black ribbon sewn onto his sleeve, symbolizing his entanglement in the cycle of vendetta. This encounter prompts deep reflections for both Bessian and Diana. Bessian's curiosity is piqued by the intricacies of the Kanun, while Diana starts to empathize with Gjorg's burdens, feeling the weight of traditions and familial debts that ensnare him.

Diana's internal struggle with her feelings towards Gjorg grows, significantly influenced by the palpable threat of violence that accompanies the vendetta culture. As they prepare to stay for the night at the Kulla of Orosh, a sense of foreboding looms. The romantic notions they harbored begin to morph into stark realizations about the tragic fates awaiting those who are bound by vendettas. The chapter closes with Diana lost in contemplation, caught between her love for Bessian and the magnetic pull of the enigmatic Gjorg, underscoring the evolving interplay of danger and desire shaped by the rigid codes of the mountain community.

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Chapter 4:

Summary of Chapter IV of "Broken April"

In this chapter, we delve into the mind of Mark Ukacierra, a formidable steward of the blood and prince's first cousin, as he ascends the wooden staircase of a castle steeped in tension and tradition. His intimidating presence is underscored by a brief interaction with a frightened servant who warns him to tread lightly, revealing the unease that permeates the castle while its guests remain asleep.

Mark grapples with a growing discontent as he enters a cold, dimly lit room filled with ancient books and records. This somber atmosphere mirrors his internal turmoil as he reflects on the blood feuds that have long plagued the High Plateau—a region governed by the Kanun, a set of traditional codes that dictate justice and revenge. Recently, the decline in killings troubles him deeply, as it signals a potential weakening of this essential societal framework.

His thoughts turn to the guests who arrived the night before, particularly a woman whose presence unsettles him. Unlike the familiar customs and worldviews he champions, she represents a challenge to the status quo, igniting a fear within Mark that clashes with his established image of



fearlessness. This encounter encapsulates the chapter's themes of power, tradition, and societal fragility.

As Mark contemplates the "Blood Book," a record of historical feuds and debts of vengeance, he acknowledges that while these conflicts are deeply

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Chapter 5 Summary:

In Chapter 5 of "Broken April," we rejoin Gjorg as he returns to his village of Brezftoht on March 25, following a taxing journey. Unlike his previous trip to Orosh, where he may have felt a sense of purpose, Gjorg returns in a state of disconnection. He encounters a mouranë, a traditional memorial pile of stones, which prompts introspection about his life and the futility of existence. This poignant moment encapsulates his struggle with despair and the weight of his present circumstances. Nevertheless, he manages to move beyond this encounter and reconnect with his family, who receive him with quiet acceptance.

As days slip by, Gjorg grapples with feelings of aimlessness, compounded by the approaching change of seasons and the heaviness of his upcoming obligation—the expiration of his truce on April 17. This looming date intensifies his anxiety about an uncertain future. In search of distraction and clarity, he ventures into a bustling district, observing the lives and stories of unfamiliar travelers.

Amidst this exploration, he overhears conversations regarding a mysterious carriage associated with an alluring woman with auburn hair. This revelation stirs a profound realization in Gjorg: his departure from home was not merely an escape but also a pursuit to reconnect with this woman. His thoughts become increasingly consumed by the idea of death, heightening

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his urgency to find her again.

Gjorg's wanderings are marked by a series of fragmented encounters—he yearns for the carriage, repeatedly describing it as he seeks potential leads. However, despite his efforts, he never quite manages to track it down. The specter of death looms large, reflecting his internal turmoil and deepening his desire for a meaningful connection.

As the chapter progresses, Gjorg's journey becomes emblematic of themes such as despair, longing, and the quest for purpose under the shadow of unavoidable fate. With April approaching, time feels constricted, amplifying his dread of unfulfilled desires and the burdens he carries. Ultimately, the narrative culminates in a stark recognition of the elusiveness of happiness and hope, especially for one burdened by the weight of personal choices and the inexorable march of destiny.

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Chapter 6 Summary:

In Chapter VI of "Broken April" by Ismail Kadare, the tension between Bessian and Diana Vorpsi deepens as they embark on a journey through a stark and desolate landscape. Bessian becomes increasingly aware of Diana's transformation; her pale and withdrawn demeanor suggests fatigue and emotional strain from their trip. Despite his affection, their communication falters, creating a chasm of unspoken disappointments that leaves Bessian feeling anxious and helpless.

As night descends, they continue navigating a lonely road, where Bessian attempts to bridge the emotional gap by recounting stories about their route, which he believes is safeguarded by the *bessa*—an ancient code of honor that mandates protection for travelers. He tries to connect with Diana through a tender gesture—a kiss on her neck—but her lack of reciprocation heightens his worries about their relationship.

Their travels take an unexpected turn when they encounter an elderly mountain woman stranded by the roadside due to a cramp. Taking her into their carriage, the woman shares chilling tales of blood feuds that plague her village, illuminating the region's violent culture and the cycle of vengeance that rends families apart. This grim narrative not only disturbs Bessian but intensifies his fear for Diana's safety amidst such brutality.



Approaching the village, an unsettling silence from the houses signals the pervasive sorrow wrought by the blood feuds, further straining the connection between Bessian and Diana. In a sudden and impulsive act, Diana enters a tower of refuge, igniting panic in Bessian. He instinctively tries to follow her, but others restrain him due to the imminent threat of violence. The priest and Ali Binak attempt to aid Diana, yet Bessian's escalating fear reflects his helplessness and desperation.

When Diana finally emerges from the tower, her calm demeanor belies the tumultuous emotions swirling around them. Her silence regarding her actions within the tower exacerbates Bessian's feelings of isolation and confusion, leading to a further breakdown in communication. The intensity of their relationship, set against a backdrop of cultural violence and despair, reaches a peak, leaving both characters emotionally fractured as they leave behind the haunting High Plateau.

This chapter poignantly explores themes of love, the struggles of communication, and the relentless shadow of cultural violence, effectively portraying how societal conflicts can fracture personal connections.

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Chapter 7 Summary:

In Chapter 7 of "Broken April" by Ismail Kadare, we delve into the turbulent journey of Gjorg, a young man steeped in the tradition of blood feuds that shape the mountainous Albanian landscape. Gjorg travels on the highroad to Brezftoht, acutely aware that the *bessa*—a temporary truce granted to him—will conclude at noon. This marks a critical point in his life as it forces him to confront the imminent danger from those seeking revenge for his family's wrongdoings.

As he walks, Gjorg's mind is clouded with dark thoughts, reflecting on how the position of the sun will dictate the nature of his death should he perish once the truce expires. This moment of reflection highlights the overarching theme of fate and mortality that permeates the novel. He is haunted by a vision of a black carriage, representing the love and connection to his past life and family, serving as a poignant reminder of what he stands to lose.

In parallel, Bessian and Diana traverse the Grand Road, attempting to distance themselves from the haunting remnants of their own experiences on the High Plateau. Despite the physical distance from their troubles, Bessian senses an emotional shift in Diana. He grapples with feelings of loss and nostalgia, realizing that their journey has irrevocably changed their relationship, filled now with unspoken burdens.

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As they make their own paths, Gjorg encounters a fellow mountaineer who provides him with crucial information regarding the elusive carriage. This revelation ignites a flicker of hope in Gjorg, compelling him to press on and reach his goal before darkness falls.

However, just as triumph seems within reach, a sudden twist occurs. The weight of Gjorg's past and the looming threat of vengeance culminate unexpectedly, leading to a moment of intense emotional turmoil as he collapses upon hearing a name tied to his family's tragic history.

Chapter 7 intricately weaves themes of duty, blood feuds, and the profound emotional scars wrought by violence. The narrative captures the fluctuations between hope and despair as both Gjorg and Bessian face their realities, enveloped in a somber atmosphere charged with a sense of impending doom, effectively showcasing the human cost of their choices and the inescapable grip of tradition.

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