

## A Reading Group Guide to

### ***Chain of Gold***

By Cassandra Clare

#### **About the Book**

After a lifetime of moving from place to place, Cordelia Carstairs has many reasons to be eager to settle in London: to train with her best friend and future parabatai, to persuade influential people that her father deserves a fair trial, and to finally spend time with other Shadowhunters and make friends. But the thing that excites her most about London is James Herondale. The mere sight of James takes her breath away. When she hears that he is madly in love with a woman newly relocated to London, she lets herself hope; she is crushed when she discovers that the woman in question is the tragic Grace Blackthorn. However, Cordelia's romantic disappointment takes a back seat when a series of daytime demon attacks throws the London Enclave into a state of turmoil. Several key members of the tightly knit Shadowhunter community are injured or sickened by demonic poison in their wounds. Now Cordelia, James, Lucie, and the band of Merry Thieves must discover who summoned these demons, and what they want from James. Is this generation of Shadowhunters strong enough to fight this evil and win? And can Cordelia save the man she loves only to see him build a life with another woman?

#### **Discussion Questions**

1. Part one begins with a quote by Charles Dickens. What does this quote tell you about the story to come? Are there events in the book that prove to be "first links" for the characters involved? Why do you think the author chose a phrase from this quote as the book's title?
2. The Deumas demon seems to recognize James, although this is not something that lesser demons do. Do any of the other demons that James fights recognize him? What do the different demons say to James, and what effect do these statements have on him? Why do the demons focus on James instead of Lucie?
3. Why is James able to enter the shadow realm? How many people know that he can do it? Why is it happening more often now than it used to, and how are the visits different than they used to be? Do you think this foreshadows anything to come?
4. What does Matthew say to James to send him into the shadow realm? Why does this work?
5. Cordelia thinks of the ball thrown in her family's honor as "the first skirmish in a war." Why does she feel this way? Do you agree or disagree with her? Could the ball also be considered the first skirmish in a different war? Explain your answers.
6. Cordelia wonders, "What [is] the point of being a female Consul if you still [have] to fret about keeping people happy?" Why do you think she feels the need to keep people happy? Where do you think this comes from? Are there other instances where pressures of being a woman is

evident in Cordelia's, Lucie's, or the other Shadowhunters' behaviors or thoughts? Do you think this has more to do with the era or with the Shadowhunter culture? Explain your answers.

7. What is the significance of Tatiana asking James to trim the briars around Blackthorn Manor? Why does the author mention all the ways that this event could have gone differently?

8. The chapter titled "The Living Hand" begins with a quote from John Keats's work of the same name. What is the meaning of this passage? Which characters would wish their "own heart[s] dry of blood"?

9. James thinks of Grace as "a fire blazing in the heart of a glacier." Why does he get this impression from her? Do you think this is how other characters would describe her? What is Grace's role in Belial's plan?

10. Jesse describes himself as being "on the threshold of a door. I am unable to take a step outside the door, and I know I can never be allowed back in, to live again. But the door has not closed behind me." How is this statement different from those made by other ghosts encountered in this world? How did Jesse get in this state?

11. Why does James view Cordelia's presence as "a steady light . . . when the world's [gone] dark?" How is this different from what Grace represents to him? Are there times when Cordelia is a literal light for James?

12. Why is it important to Tessa to represent each Shadowhunter family equally when she's redecorating the Institute? Which characters are ill-treated by their fellow Shadowhunters because of their familial connections?

13. Grace's descriptions of Blackthorn Manor make James think of the house as "a carcass, once a beautiful living thing, rotting away." Do you think this is an apt description of the house? Are there other carcasses at Blackthorn Manor? Explain your answers.

14. Cordelia does not believe in hating people because they are forced to make impossible choices. Do you think she's forced into making any impossible choices? Are any of her friends and loved ones faced with impossible choices? Does Cordelia forgive them for making these choices? Explain your answers.

15. Why does Tatiana hate so many of her fellow Shadowhunters? How will her plan help her to exact revenge? Do you think it works? Do you think she learns from the experience?

16. The bracelet that Grace gives to James is engraved with the words "loyauté me lie," or "loyalty binds me." Do you think it's loyalty that binds him to Grace? Explain your answer. Is there anyone else to whom his loyalty does bind him?

17. Anna talks of a time when Shadowhunters had relationships with Downworlders, and the two groups were able to help each other. What happens when these relationships are allowed to die off? Do the Shadowhunters and Downworlders help each other in any of the author's previous books?

18. Tatiana tells James that caring about Grace is his weakness. Do you think she's right about this? Does Tatiana suffer from this same weakness? Do any of the other characters?
19. Tessa says, "I wonder sometimes if it is easier to be brave when one is young, before one knows truly how much there is to lose." What do Tessa and Will have to lose, now that they are older? Do you think James and his friends know what is at stake if they lose?
20. Why is dying of poison not a part of Shadowhunter life? How does this add to the sadness of Barbara's and Oliver's deaths?
21. Why do people underestimate Matthew? Do you see any reason to think this is true? Has he ever let James down? Explain your answers using examples from the book.
22. This book is divided into two separate parts. Why do you think the author chose to do this? What is the difference between the two parts? Why do you think the author chose to divide the work where she did?
23. Magnus Bane tells James, "You are who you are, made by the sum of your choices and actions. Not a teaspoon of demon's blood." Is this statement borne out in the story? Does James's demon blood have an effect on his life?
24. While convincing Thomas that he can create the antidote, James gives him a look of "quiet intensity mixed with immovable conviction. This [is] James at his best . . . His faith in his friends [is] unwavering: it [is] strength, and they [share] that strength between them." Are there other examples of James's faith in his friends? If so, what does James's support allow them to accomplish? Does anyone have this same kind of faith in James?
25. Why does Jesse give his last breath to James? How would Tatiana feel if she knew about it?

### **Extension Activities**

1. This book contains a number of creative and amusing insults, including the phrase "you daft boot." Research insults used in this era, and work some of them into your everyday vocabulary. What are other common words or expressions? Have a conversation with one of your friends where you are only allowed to use language that would fit in during this time period.
2. The events in this book take place after the Infernal Devices series, but before the other Shadowhunter books. Create a Shadowhunter time line that includes all major events from Cassandra Clare's books. Alternatively, for a smaller scope, you can choose a specific Shadowhunter family or artifact, such as Cortana, to trace.
3. Cordelia's family traveled a lot, so she understands that there are benefits to living in Idris and benefits to living in the mundane world. Write two real-estate listings: one for a house in Idris, and one for a house in your town. Be sure to include points that would make each home enticing to a Shadowhunter.

4. In addition to the usual Latin phrases, this book also contains phrases in Welsh, courtesy of Will, and in Persian, from Cordelia and her family. Choose one of these languages or another language that interests you, and learn some key words and phrases.
5. Both Shakespeare and Oscar Wilde are quoted or mentioned numerous times by characters in this book. Read a work by one of these authors, and write a short report on it. Reflect on reasons why the characters may have been so taken by these authors.
6. Several Persian dishes are mentioned in the book. Find a recipe for one of these meals, or for another Persian dish that sounds tasty, and cook dinner for your family or friends.
7. Both Matthew's and Cordelia's fathers have drinking problems. How does this affect them? Is there an organization at your school or in your community that works to help students avoid alcohol dependency or provides support for family members? Investigate further to see if there is some way that you can get involved.

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