Chapter 3: Visitors to the High Plateau

“In no other country in the world can one see people on the road who bear the mark of death, like trees marked for felling.”

This chapter introduces a second set of characters into the story: Diana and Bessay, a young couple on their honeymoon who have come to study the age-old customs, including the blood feud, of the people living in these mountains. To the bride, the habit of obligatory murder is repugnant. The story takes a personal turn when Diana glimpses Gjorg waiting for his month-long truce to end, and with it his life. For a brief time, the destinies of the killer and the honeymooners intersect.

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<th>Knowledge Check</th>
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<td>Try to answer these questions from memory:</td>
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1. What is the surname of Bessian and Diana?
   (a) Vorpsi.
   (b) Ukaciera.
   (c) Binak.
   (d) Kryeqyqe.

2. Why are Bessian and Diana traveling on the High Plateau?
   (a) They are lost.
   (b) It is their honeymoon.
   (c) They are just passing through.
   (d) They are visiting a relative.

3. What is the name of the Northern Plateau?
   (a) Rrafsh.
   (b) Kulla.
   (c) Orosh.
   (d) Brezhtoft.

4. What does Bessian call the lands under the sway of the kanun?
   (a) Lands of the dead.
   (b) Lost lands.
   (c) Ancient kingdom.
   (d) Shadow lands.

5. What are murane?
   (a) Black armbands.
   (b) Piles of stones.
   (c) Waystations.
   (d) Castles.

6. Where is Bessian and Diana’s destination?
   (a) The village of Brezhtoft.
   (b) The city of Tirana.
   (c) The Castle of Orosh.
   (d) The Tower of Refuge.

7. Where does the boundary dispute take place?
   (a) Eagle’s Height.
   (b) Wolf’s Pass.
   (c) Hunter’s Meadow.
   (d) Snake Mountain.

8. Who is mediating the boundary dispute?
   (a) The prince of Orosh.
   (b) Bessian.
   (c) Ali Binak.
   (d) Gjorg.

9. Who does Bessian compare Gjorg to?
   (a) Macbeth.
   (b) Hamlet.
   (c) Othello.
   (d) Antonio.

10. What does Diana think of the ‘Steward of the Blood’?
    (a) Repulsive
    (b) Impressive
    (c) Repugnant
    (d) Admirable.
Understanding and Interpretation

*Skim and scan* Chapter 3 to find the necessary information to answer these questions:

1. Who are Bessian and Diana? What are they doing on the High Plateau?

2. Describe the relationship between the two. Does it seem warm? What kind of a couple are they? Can you sense any tension between them?

3. Bessian and Diana witness the resolution of a border dispute. In what way do their reactions to this event compare and contrast?

4. In what ways does this chapter suggest that, to Bessian, the world is almost like a theatrical show? What is the significance of this implication?

5. What does the reader discover about the *Kulla of Orosh* and those who live there in this chapter?

6. Explain the connection between Gjorg and Diana as it emerges in this chapter:
On first sitting down to write a novel, authors must make an important decision: who will tell the story? Whose point of view will the reader be given? The options are limited to the view of the following people:

1. The narrator of the story (First Person) | Third Person Omniscient
2. The reader of the story (Second Person) | Third Person Limited
3. Someone ‘outside’ the story looking in (Third Person) | Third Person Objective

*Broken April* is written in the **third person** but in each chapter the viewpoint is **limited** to only one character (when the third person narration provides the thoughts and feelings of only one character, this is called **third person limited**). However, between chapters 2 and 3, Kadare switches **perspective** from Gjorg’s point of view to the point of view of Bessian and Diana Vorpsi. In this way, the reader is offered two (or three) contrasting viewpoints: those of an insider and an outsider.

**Activity**

Explore the effect of **switching narrative perspectives** in the novel so far by noting down the three characters’ differing views on the *kanun*:
Discussion Point: *authorial intrusion*

When writing in the third person, the author is deciding to remain ‘outside’ the narrative and not directly convey his or her viewpoint on a story. However, the writer will inevitably have his or her own views on the matter at hand. After all, a novelist feels strongly enough about a topic, person or place to commit a great deal of time to their subject matter. When you feel like you can detect the author’s viewpoint leading your opinion, this is known as *authorial intrusion*. This happens if the narrator enters the narrative in some way to express or comment on a situation. In third person narration, this might be very subtle; for example, does one character represent the author’s viewpoint? Are we being asked to trust a particular character simply because we share the same narrative viewpoint? It might come through an author’s choice of vocabulary. For example, when Kadare uses the word ‘fervently’ to describe the way Bessian talks about the Kanun, is he leading us to think something about Bessian?

Discuss the idea of *authorial intrusion* in *Broken April*. Are there any particular viewpoints the author seems to sympathise with? How do you know? Is Kadare leading your opinion about the kanun one way or another?

Note your ideas here:

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**Novel Study: Symbolism**

“The murane, as they are called, always look sad.” (p70)

In literature, symbols are items, objects, people, places, names, sounds, and even ideas that stand for things other than themselves. A symbol is a concrete referent for an abstract idea. *Broken April* is a highly symbolic novel. For example, in chapter 3, great attention is drawn to the stones of the High Plateau. Bessian and Diana witness a traditional boundary ritual in which stones play an important role. Ali Binak also draws attention to the *murane* (burial cairns) that dot the landscape. Previously, Kadare described the generations of gravestones belonging to the Berisha and Kryeqyqe families. It is clear that ‘stones,’ while standing for themselves, also stand for ideas greater than themselves, such as shame, death, the legacy of violence, the history of the kanun, and so on.

**Activity**

Search through chapter 3, and previous chapters as well. Collect quotations involving *rocks and stones*. Annotate these quotations with ideas as to the symbolic meaning and association of stones in the novel.