

**The Thief, Chapter 11: Get Rekt Ambiades**  
by **Noelle** and **Caitlin**

**Opening quote:**

Caitlin: "He's done for," said Ambiades when I was chased back into the open by the horsemen. 'Good riddance,' he added as they bore down on me.

'Shut up, Ambiades,' the magus said.

'They'll have to dismount to get him,' said the captain.

'They won't have any trouble,' the magus had said sadly, not knowing how strongly my father had desired me to become a soldier and not a thief." (223)

Noelle: Ok, on three. One, two, three—

Both: Shut up, Ambiades!

Noelle: Bye Am-BYE-a-deez

Caitlin: Have a nice fall!

Noelle: Nice of you to drop by!

Caitlin: Hope we weren't too PUSHY [both laugh]

**[Intro music]**

Noelle: Welcome to the eleventh hour of our discussion of *The Thief* here on the Attolian Archives, the podcast about those books that you thought you, your friend's roommate's cousin, your local children's librarian, and nobody else was really into – until now! I'm Noelle.

Caitlin: And I'm Caitlin.

Noelle: And we're here to make bad puns and read *The Thief* ...

Caitlin: ... and we've almost finished *The Thief*.

Noelle: It's October 21st 2018, which means that the release of *Return* is in 149 days.

Caitlin: Today, we're discussing chapter 11 of *The Thief*, in which Gen kills a guy and then has a lie-down, Sophos cries, Ambiades dies (and Pol does, too), and Attolia, terrifyingly, smiles.

Noelle: Welcome ... to the beginning of the end of the beginning [Caitlin laughs] That was more catchy in my head.

Caitlin: Speaking of amBYEadis, that's a very Eddisian way that he died, falling off a cliff.

Noelle: Yeah, over the edge of the mountain. There's a lot of violence in this chapter.

Caitlin: So much.

Noelle: And there hadn't been for most of the book.

Caitlin: Right.

Noelle: They allude to violence a lot, it's clearly a world in which there's a lot of violence, but we hadn't really seen it. And now all of a sudden, two major characters are dead. And when we first hear about it, it has happened quote unquote off-screen. Sophos just informs Gen Pol and Ambiadès are dead and you have to absorb that really quickly as Gen does.

Caitlin: Mm-hm.

Noelle: And then it goes back and we're able to see that scene.

Caitlin: And same with Gen's fight at the base of the cliff.

Noelle: Mm-hm. And the details about that come out slowly.

Caitlin: Right.

Noelle: Because Gen's the one writing and he's reluctant to relive it, I think.

Caitlin: Mm-hm.

Noelle: It starts up very vague, with that "not knowing how strongly my father had desired me to be a soldier and not a thief" which implies how good at fighting he is.

Caitlin: Right. And the way we find out the details of this scene is very connected to how he's experiencing his wound at this time, like his thinking is a little muddled.

Noelle: Mm-hm.

Caitlin: His memory is muddled. There's something he's trying not to think about at first.

Noelle: Yeah.

Caitlin: And then it comes to him.

Noelle: Much like when they had the first fight with the Attolian soldiers, Gen feels very guilty about killing anybody even in self-defense. He killed one of the professional soldiers who

were actively attacking him with swords and he doesn't even want to think about it cause it horrifies him so much.

Caitlin: He narrates, "It had felt no different from stabbing a practice dummy [...] I hadn't wanted to be a soldier. I'd become a thief instead, to avoid the killing. See where that had gotten me" (224).

Noelle: And he specifically thinks about how his enemies had no way of knowing they were facing a skilled opponent. And Gen knows that he had the advantage of their assumptions and he feels guilty about that.

Caitlin: Right.

Noelle: And he says it's just as bad as if he had stabbed the guy in the back in a dark alley. It's also, because it's Gen, a little bit humblebraggy [Caitlin laughs]. Like "ohh, I'm so good at sword fighting"

Caitlin: "It's awful."

Noelle: "It's not fair for anyone to have to fight me."

Caitlin: But he is so bothered by his conscience that when he is narrating about when Eugenides comes and speaks with him about it, he says he would rather have died than have to

deal with his conscience. And then there's a moment of silence when he realizes Lyopidus died because of the god Eugenides's actions, so the god is also in the same way living with his conscience of being responsible for that death.

Noelle: And they share that guilt, they share that burden of living. The quote is quite lovely. It's "The god behind me was silent, and the silence stretched out from my bedside through the castle, and it seemed throughout the world, as I remembered that Lyopidus had burned and died while Eugenides had not" (235). And it's for "countless empty heartbeats."

Caitlin: Gen's earlier narrative comment about how he became a thief because he wanted to avoid the killing makes me wonder, is the god Eugenides sort of in the same situation where this is something he would never have wanted to be involved with? Like, killing.

Noelle: Mm-hm. Gen is also very young.

Caitlin: Yeah.

Noelle: Which is easy to forget. And we talked about the ambiguity of his age earlier, but he's without a doubt some kind of teenager.

Caitlin: Mm-hm. Kind of hits home in a different way in this chapter.

Noelle: Yeah. And it seems as if everyone is expected to grow up very fast. There's not much of a space for adolescence.

Caitlin: Yeah.

Noelle: It's childhood and then you barrel right into adulthood.

Caitlin: I would say that kind of seems like the cultural norm, the cultural expectation.

Noelle: Yeah. For sure.

Caitlin: Because Attolia, for example, she got married for the first time really young.

Noelle: Yeah. There's a lot of both direct and indirect interaction with the gods in this chapter. Especially because Gen only lives through his stab wound because of the Gift.

Caitlin: Right.

Noelle: Which, that's something that I did not notice on the first reading, I remember.

Caitlin: Me too.

Noelle: And his—the sword is pulled out and he says it feels like his life is being pulled out with it, it stretches, and won't quite leave him.

Caitlin: Yeah.

Noelle: And the gods are keeping him alive but at the same time, “my living was at the same time an offense to them” (227).

Caitlin: What do you think that means? I wasn't sure

Noelle: I think that the Gift conferring immortality on the bearer is something that was agreed upon a long time ago and the gods have to honor it?

Caitlin: Mm-hm.

Noelle: But they are not necessarily happy about it? And are not necessarily in agreement about it.

Caitlin: Yeah.

Noelle: Gen is definitely favored by certain gods and maybe not by others. There's another bit where he's being carried



away in the cart and he's also kind of half awake and half not, and he says that he hears important people shouting about him, and thinks that they're maybe gods. And so there's conflict happening about what to do with Gen and with the larger situation, even on the part of these great beings.

Caitlin: Yeah. Aractus definitely does not like him [laughs].

Noelle: Yeah.

Caitlin: And also maybe that bargain about the Gift conferring immortality was only supposed to be for the rulers?

Noelle: Mm-hm.

Caitlin: When the magus says—if he could be anywhere right now where would he be, is what Sophos asks the two of them—the magus says he would be in the temple watching the marriage of Sounis and Eddis.

Noelle: Mm-hm.

Caitlin: And Gen says ugh because he still associates the temple with boredom and he narrates, “My new, vehement belief in the gods had made me no more tolerant of the empty mumbling I’d seen in temples all my life” (246).

Noelle: Which also supports the idea that this level of involvement on the part of the gods in everyday life is very very rare.

Caitlin: Mm-hm.

Noelle: And Gen is either extremely lucky or extremely unlucky depending on how you look at it.

Caitlin: Yeah.

Noelle: Eugenides keeps helping him. When they're trying to escape the castle Gen feels capable and well even though he's gravely injured, and "there seemed to be a bubble of silence surrounding us.

Caitlin: I also kind of thought that capability was another effect of the Gift.

Noelle: Yeah.

Caitlin: That not only does it keep him alive but it keeps him well enough to get to a place of safety.

Noelle: Mm-hm.

Caitlin: He also gets that feather-shaped scar.

Noelle: Which is so cool!

Caitlin: Eugenides and a bullet knock a piece of rock into his face so he looks more similar to the god, which is very ... that's pretty big [laughs].

Noelle: That's Gen being permanently marked.

Caitlin: Right.

Noelle: With that connection. There's no going back now. You ain't divesting yourself of any attention my friend [Caitlin laughs].

Caitlin: And it's also I guess kind of foreshadowing for Gen's rise up the ranks of society into something almost, dare I say it, resembling a god.

Noelle: Yeah. That starts here at the end of this book. And speaking of a person resembling a god, guess who shows up in this chapter ...

Caitlin: Attolia!

Noelle: Woo!

Caitlin: Woo! Finally.

Noelle: Something that I'd forgotten is that she smiles so much. It specifically says that she smiles probably four or five times. And I had always thought of her as—she's described as the stone-faced queen, as having no emotion. But really she has this ... detached amusement, which is what she chooses to portray, that's the mask. And that's pretty cool. And I was trying to think about that from her perspective, given what we know about her. And the difference between the way that Gen chooses to mask his vulnerability be pretending to be more vulnerable than he actually is, and if you whine and complain all the time then nobody can tell when you're really hurt.

Caitlin: Mm-hm.

Noelle: And Irene chooses to act as if she is somehow separate or above or immune to everything.

Caitlin: Mm-hm.

Noelle: Which Gen is able to see through even in this interaction, when he says "you are more beautiful but she is more kind" (234) Irene's smile falters and Gen notices that when maybe somebody else wouldn't have.

Caitlin: Yeah. There's a lot of emphasis placed on Attolia's physicality in this chapter. He goes into a lot of descriptive detail on her. He narrates that she's "Lit by the aura of the gods [...] more beautiful than any woman I have ever seen [...] everything about her brought to mind the old religion" (232). So this is a pretty marked contrast between—the rest of the book we've heard about this really fearsome personality who is this enormous threat.

Noelle: Mm-hm.

Caitlin: She's going to behead them all if she catches them. And now you have that juxtaposed with this is who she is in person.

Noelle: Mm-hm. And she's sort of a wild card. A lot of this book has been about Eddis versus Sounis, and we know something about the personalities of the rulers of both of those places. But Attolia has been very hazy off in the distance, like she's this scary third party who could ruin anything at any time. And of course she's a fiend from the underworld [Caitlin laughs].

Caitlin: And mountain lions couldn't force Gen to enter her service [Noelle laughs].

Noelle: That's gonna take on a whole different meaning, that line, before you know it [laughs]. There are also a heck of a lot of hints and bits of foreshadowing and dramatic irony in retrospect in this chapter, the most we've had in a while, I think.

Caitlin: At the beginning of the chapter when Gen is lying in the cell and the magus comes in, there's a big moment where the magus says like I'm going to lift your head up and put my cloak underneath as a pillow and Gen says "no no no no don't do that" [both laugh] and he relaxes when "the magus didn't notice the bump under my hair at the base of my skull" (219).

Noelle: How did I not notice that the first time that I read this? [Laughs]

Caitlin: I know. Megan's a genius, that's why you didn't notice, Megan's a genius.

Noelle: Just really really unobservant. Another thing that I don't think I had noticed on any read before this one is when Attolia comes in and she's talking to Gen and she says he (being the magus) "suggests, however, that your loyalty to your own country is not strong.'

I winced. 'I have no particular loyalty to the king of Sounis, Your Majesty'" (231). So not only does Gen lie by omission by saying "well I'm not loyal to Sounis" but there's that "I winced."

Because even the suggestion that he's not loyal to his country, even though he knows that she thinks he's from a different country entirely, is offensive to him.

Caitlin: Mm.

Noelle: He wants to argue and prove that he is loyal.

Caitlin: What a good point, I hadn't picked up on that.

Noelle: And Gen—that's one of the cool paradoxes about Gen, is that he's a little viper and you can't trust him and he lies, but he's so unfailingly loyal.

Caitlin: It's kind of like all of those irritating parts of his personality are on the surface and then once you get down to some actual substance he has so many really positive base personality traits.

Noelle: Mm-hm.

Caitlin: That he doesn't let other people see unless they know him really really well.

Noelle: Yeah. Because if people know what's really important to him then that's something that they can use to hurt you.

Caitlin: This is making me sad [both laugh].

Noelle: What did we say before? Sad about Eugenides moment ...

Caitlin: Two of five thousand [both laugh].

Noelle: Here's another one for the list.

Caitlin: That's another thing he has in common with Attolia I think, is that the reason that she—one of the reasons that she puts such a strong mask over herself and her personality and her feelings and she can't let anyone get close to her or see emotion because then she can get hurt through that.

Noelle: Mm-hm. Yeah. Oh, speaking about being sad about Gen, there are once again instances when the narration keeps talking about one of his hands being impaired and the other one being fine. There's also a line that it was so dark “I couldn't see my hand in front of my face” (239) which if you're doing a real close reading, I'm gonna choose to believe that's on purpose.

Caitlin: He also "accidentally" leads them towards Eddis, accidentally on purpose, he gets the magus turned around in the town in the darkness.



Noelle: Yeah the magus is like "oh no, we're going the wrong way!" And Gen's like [gasps dramatically] "What?! How could this have happened" [Caitlin laughs]

Caitlin: Another foreshadowing sentence I never picked up on, he breathes a sigh of relief when the magus says they're going the wrong way.

Noelle: Yeah. And he asks about the road, comma, "although I already knew the answer" (243) [Caitlin laughs].

Caitlin: So, sad about Eugenides numbed 27 of 2,000, when he narrates that Sophos would let Attolia and the magus go but try to catch him, he narrates, "No one was going to start a war over me, and I could be tremendously useful if I could be induced to work for her" (245). Ahh ...

Noelle: Little does he know.

Caitlin: We're putting our hands to our hearts right now in sadness.

Noelle: We are, both of us [both laugh].

Caitlin: And he is tremendously useful when he does switch his allegiances!

Noelle: Yeah. I have a note for this chapter that's just "Sophos crying, sad emoji" [Caitlin laughs]. He's so precious! He's never done anything wrong ever in his life!

Caitlin: Gen's not the only one who has to grow up in a hurry.

Noelle: Yeah!

Caitlin: I feel so much worse about Sophos than I do about Gen sometimes though. Like I feel like Gen is a little bit more prepared for bad things to happen, like he's ...

Noelle: Yeah, he decided to take these risks.

Caitlin: Right.

Noelle: Whereas Sophos—

Caitlin: Is just a baby [laughs].

Noelle: Was carried along on this trip.

Caitlin: Yes.

Noelle: And there's a really wonderful and very sad juxtaposition that emphasizes that contrast between childhood and adulthood and how Sophos is kind of living in both of

those places where he is crying about Pol and he says "I don't want him to be dead" (227) like a child, and then says that Pol has a family, and I'm going to be the one to have to tell him that he is dead. And so he has this child's grief but also an adult's responsibility to deal with the aftermath of this death.

Caitlin: Also, very interestingly, the Mede threat is brought back in this chapter. When the magus says he wants to see a marriage between Sounis and Eddis and Gen asks why are you so keen on this marriage and the magus explains that Attolia, Eddis and Sounis are free countries sort of by chance at this point, because they had the old invaders and then drove them out and then they had next the Merchant Empire as conquerors but were able to drive them out because the Empire was busy fighting the Medes.

Noelle: Mm-hm.

Caitlin: But that next, once that conflict between those two greater powers is over the winner would be coming to conquer Attolia, Eddis, and Sounis, and that's why the three countries have to be united, hopefully, in the magus's eyes, starting with Sounis conquering the other two.

Noelle: Yeah. And so now we understand much more about what the larger stakes are for what's happening in this book. And it's funny that after the magus explains this whole thing,

Gen says "huh, all right, that was something to think about while we were walking" and then he proceeds to spend the next four books trying to solve that problem [Caitlin laughs].

Caitlin: Our w(h)ine count for this episode is zero instances of whining and zero mentions of wine.

Noelle: Absolutely embarrassing [Caitlin laughs].

Caitlin: That's maybe another good point to make about Gen is that when he truly is hurt he doesn't complain.

Noelle: He doesn't, yeah.

Caitlin: Sad about Eugenides number 28 of 2,000.

Noelle: Our quote of the week this week is "The Medes have been trying for a hundred years to expand their empire to span the Middle Sea. Soon they will want not only our land but to drive us off of it. For years and years they have fought the remains of the Merchant Empire, and while they fight, we are free. But when they are done fighting, Sounis, Eddis, and Attolia must be united to fight the winner, or we will be subjugated as we never were before. There will be no Sounis, no Attolia, no Eddis, only Mede" (247). Also it's wild that this was intended to be a stand-alone book!

Caitlin: I know!

Noelle: Cause you read this and you're like, "all right, that's a problem for the next four novels."

Caitlin: Oh, we have an interesting reply to our last episode, from whoknowsyourfuture on tumblr. They said, "A thought on this week's episode; on my most recent reread, it finally clicked for me that when Gen is hoping to get the gods' attention off of him—he's carrying Hamiathes's Gift! Of course we know he's not going to lose the gods' attention any time soon, but maybe he thinks once he's given the Gift to Eddis they won't really care about him anymore."

Noelle: That's such a cool thought. Like when he says "I wanted to divest myself of the gods' attention" maybe "the gods' attention" is the Gift, "I want to divest myself of the Gift."

Caitlin: Right. And he doesn't realize at this point that the reason he has their attention isn't necessarily because of who he is and what he's doing, he just thinks it's because of the object, not because of who he is in life.

Noelle: [Overlapping] But actually he's important!

Caitlin: Very important point, thank you for that response!

Noelle: That's chapter 11! Next week, Gen finally, finally gets home safe into his own bed and we finish The Thief. But don't worry that the podcast is ending—the episode after next we start Queen of Attoliaaaaaaaaaa.

Caitlin: Send us your comments, questions, thoughts! Chime in at [attolianarchives.tumblr.com](http://attolianarchives.tumblr.com)

Noelle: Be blessed in your endeavors

[Outro music]