

THE OFFICIAL BOOK CLUB KIT

WE WERE MEANT TO BURN

An Ashes & Ruin Novel

Nicolette Elzie

For readers who like their fantasy with fire, yearning, sharp knives, and complicated feelings.

WELCOME TO CORINEA

Dear Book Club,

Thank you for choosing *We Were Meant to Burn*.

At its heart, this is a story about a woman who has spent her entire life being told who she is, what she is worth, and what she was made for.

Nix knows how to survive. She knows how to obey. She knows how to kill.

What she doesn't know is how to choose.

This book asks what happens when someone who has only ever been treated as a weapon begins to realize she is a person. What happens when loyalty becomes complicated, family stops meaning what you thought it did, and love asks you to trust the very parts of yourself you've been taught to hate.

It is also, naturally, about a dangerously charming mercenary annoying a stabby princess until feelings occur.

I hope this kit gives you plenty to argue about, laugh about, yell about, and perhaps text each other about at wildly inappropriate hours.

Thank you for stepping into this world with me.

With love and ruin,
Nicolette

BEFORE YOU BURN

You can use as much or as little of this kit as you'd like.

Inside you'll find:

- Spoiler-free conversation starters
- Full-book discussion questions
- Character debates
- Rapid-fire questions
- A Book Club Superlatives game
- A Corinea-themed evening guide
- Food and drink ideas
- Printable activities
- A pronunciation and world guide
- Information about book club swag
- Information about author Q&As

IMPORTANT: The first discussion section is spoiler-free. Everything after the spoiler warning assumes everyone has finished the book.

ABOUT THE BOOK

Nix Zaldanna was raised to be the perfect weapon.

As the feared Nightshade of Rojas, she has spent her life obeying the empire that shaped her, even when obedience required blood.

But captivity places her in the path of Malakai, an infuriating mercenary whose secrets may be every bit as dangerous as her own.

Forced into an uneasy alliance and a journey across Corinea, Nix begins discovering something far more terrifying than monsters, war, or magic:

Choice.

As buried truths unravel everything she believes about her family, her identity, and herself, Nix must decide whether she will remain the weapon she was created to be or risk becoming someone entirely her own.

Perfect for readers who love:

Enemies to lovers • Forced proximity • Slow-burn yearning • Found family • Morally gray heroines • Dangerous magic • Feminine rage • Political intrigue • Complicated families • Women with knives

WELCOME TO CORINEA

Magic in Corinea is shaped by thirteen goddesses and divided into distinct gifts.

Among them are powers over:

Mind • Dreams • Healing • Water • Fire • Air • Metal • Earth • Animals • Death • Time • The Future
• Spirit

Magic has never been separate from power in Corinea.

Neither have the women who wield it.

A Few Names You May Want Help Pronouncing

Nix — NIKS

Danixtl — dah-NEESH-tuhl

Dom — DAHM

Elías — eh-LEE-ahs

Jaax — JAHKS

Aguatítlan — ah-gwah-TEET-lahn

Rojas — ROH-hahs

Bruja — BROO-hah

Alebrije — ah-leh-BREE-heh

WARM UP THE FIRE

Spoiler-Free Conversation Starters

Use these before everyone has finished the book, during a halfway meeting, or simply to get the conversation moving.

1. What was your first impression of Nix?
2. How long did it take before you trusted Malakai?
3. Which part of Corinea would you most want to visit?
4. Which magical gift would you choose for yourself?
5. Which magical gift would you absolutely **not** want?
6. Who would you most want beside you in a fight?
7. Which character would you trust to get you safely across Corinea?
8. Which character would you trust the least with a secret?
9. Were you rooting for the romance immediately, or did Malakai have to earn you?
10. What surprised you most about the world?

SPOILERS BEYOND THIS POINT

If someone at the table has not finished the book, confiscate the rest of this guide immediately.

Politely.

Or in true Nix fashion.

Your choice.

INTO THE FIRE

Book Club Discussion Questions

Nix

1. At the beginning of the book, how much of Nix's identity actually belongs to her?

Consider the difference between the person she believes herself to be, the role Danixtl created for her, and the person we begin seeing underneath.

2. Nix has done terrible things, but she was also raised and conditioned to commit violence. How responsible do you believe she is for her past actions?

Is there a point where being manipulated stops absolving someone of responsibility?

3. Nix often interprets vulnerability as weakness. What moments begin challenging that belief?

4. What does freedom mean to Nix at the beginning of the story compared with the end?

Is freedom simply the absence of captivity, or is it the ability to choose?

FAMILY & IDENTITY

5. How did the revelation about Danixtl change the way you interpreted Nix's childhood?

Did it make Danixtl's treatment of her feel more understandable, more horrifying, or simply different?

6. Nix learns that the family she believed was hers was built upon a lie. What do you think ultimately makes someone family in this story: blood, loyalty, history, choice, or something else?

7. How did learning about Dom change your understanding of his relationship with Nix?

Did anything earlier in the book feel different in retrospect?

8. Which relationship best represents found family to you in this book?

NIX & MALAKAI

9. When do you think Nix actually falls in love with Malakai?

And perhaps more importantly:

When does she realize it?

10. Malakai repeatedly challenges the way Nix sees herself. Do you think he changes her, or does he simply give her enough safety to begin changing herself?

11. Their relationship begins under circumstances where trust is almost impossible. What ultimately makes Nix trust Malakai?

12. Which moment between them felt more intimate than any explicitly romantic or sexual moment?

POWER, CHOICE & CONTROL

13. The magic system gives extraordinary power to women, yet Nix spends much of the story without meaningful control over her own life. What do you think the book is saying about the difference between having power and possessing agency?

14. Several powerful people believe they know what is best for Nix. When does protection become control?

15. Did your opinion of Danixtl change as more information was revealed? Why or why not?

16. Do you believe people like Danixtl see themselves as villains?

What might she tell herself to justify what she has done?

THE ENDING

17. Jaax's ability to take control of Nix weaponizes one of her greatest fears: losing ownership of herself. Why do you think that is particularly devastating for her character?

18. Nix believes she has killed the people she finally allowed herself to love. Which loss do you think destroys her most: the people themselves, the future she imagined with them, or the belief that she was responsible?

19. The story repeatedly asks whether Nix is a monster. By the end of the book, what is your answer?

20. Did you see the ending coming?

If not, at what point did you realize something was very, very wrong?

21. After everything Nix learns about herself, who do you think she believes Nix Zaldanna is when the book ends?

22. If you could tell Nix one thing before the final chapters, what would you tell her?

CHOOSE VIOLENCE

Rapid-Fire Book Club Debates

No five-minute speeches.

Choose your answer.

Defend yourself.

Who are you taking with you?

To survive in the wilderness:

Malakai / Dom / Nix

To hide a body:

Nix / Lian / Jaax

To talk your way out of trouble:

Malakai / Elías / Kerun

To start a revolution:

Nix / Dom / Kerun

To keep you alive:

Elías / Malakai / Nix

To keep your secrets:

Dom / Elías / Malakai

Absolutely NOT allowed to plan the vacation:

Kerun/Elías/Dom

The important questions

Would you rather:

Have Nix hunting you or Malakai hunting you?

Would you rather:

Be able to wield fire or enter dreams?

Would you rather:

Spend one evening at court in Rojas or one evening drinking with Malakai's crew?

Would you rather:

Have Xixi choose your outfit or Nix choose your weapon?

Who fell first?

Who fell harder?

Who needs therapy most?

Who would be the worst roommate?

Who are you trusting with your drink at the tavern?

BOOK CLUB SUPERLATIVES

Have everyone vote anonymously before revealing the answers.

Most Likely To...

Start a fight: _____

Finish the fight: _____

Commit a felony before breakfast: _____

Get everyone kicked out of a tavern: _____

Secretly be the biggest softie: _____

Accidentally start a political crisis: _____

Survive the apocalypse: _____

Die doing something spectacularly stupid: _____

Give surprisingly excellent relationship advice: _____

Give catastrophically bad relationship advice: _____

Need a hug but threaten anyone who offers one: _____

Burn down the world for someone they love: _____

THE REAL QUESTION

At the end of your discussion, go around the room and answer:

What do you think *We Were Meant to Burn* means?

There are no wrong answers.

Probably.

HOST A NIGHT IN CORINEA

Want to turn your meeting into an entire experience?

THE VIBE

Think:

Red • Black • Gold • Roses • Candlelight • Firelight • Ornate details • A little decadence • A little danger

Low lighting and candles immediately do most of the work.

Bonus points for flowers, gold trays, vintage glassware, dramatic clothing, or anything that makes the evening look vaguely like someone important might be assassinated before dessert.

DRESS CODE

Optional:

Rojas After Dark

Red, black, gold, jewel tones, corsets, dramatic sleeves, dark florals, boots, leather, gold jewelry, or anything you think you could reasonably flee a palace in.

TABLE DETAILS

Scatter printed quotes or character cards around the table.

Put everyone's name into a bowl and randomly assign each guest a character or magical class.

Use red roses or dark florals as a centerpiece.

And naturally:

Keep a decorative knife nearby.

Decorative.

Please do not make me responsible for your book club crimes.

FOOD & DRINK

You don't need an elaborate themed feast.

Pick one drink and one or two snacks and call it immersive storytelling.

THE NIGHTSHADE

A dark berry mocktail or cocktail with:

Blackberry

Lime

Sparkling water

Optional mint

Optional edible flowers

For a cocktail version, add your preferred clear spirit.

THE BURNING ROSE

A red or ruby-colored drink garnished with:

Rosemary

Dried rose petals

Fresh berries or a citrus wheel

EASY TABLE FOOD

Chips with salsa or guacamole

Empanadas

Fresh fruit with chile and lime

Pan dulce

Mini tacos

Street-corn-inspired cups

Chocolate or cinnamon desserts

Dark chocolate and berries

Choose whatever is accessible to your group.

The objective is **book club**, not accidentally opening a restaurant.

PICK YOUR MAGIC

Mini Book Club Activity

Everyone chooses the magical gift they would want most.

Then answer:

Why did you choose it?

What would you actually use it for?

What is the first irresponsible thing you would do with it?

And finally:

Should anyone at this table actually be trusted with magical power?

Circle one:

YES / ABSOLUTELY NOT

YOUR CORINEA ALIGNMENT

Choose the statement that sounds most like you.

A

Give me the facts. Give me a weapon. Tell me where we're going.

B

I have a plan.

No, you may not see the plan.

C

Before we do anything dangerous, has anyone eaten?

D

I would like everyone to stop fighting for approximately five minutes.

E

I absolutely know something I'm not telling the rest of you.

F

I wasn't involved.

Whatever happened, I definitely wasn't involved.

RESULTS

Mostly A: Nix Energy

You were not invited to cause problems. This has never stopped you.

Mostly B: Dom Energy

You have contingencies for your contingencies.

Mostly C: Elías Energy

Congratulations. You are now responsible for keeping everyone else alive.

Mostly D: Lian Energy

No one appreciates you enough.

Mostly E: Malakai Energy

Suspicious. Charming. Unfortunately compelling.

Mostly F: Kerun Energy

That answer did nothing to convince us.

DOWNLOADABLE EXTRAS

Visit the official **We Were Meant to Burn Book Club Hub** to download:

Character artwork

Printable bookmarks

Phone wallpapers

Full pronunciation guide

SHARE YOUR BOOK CLUB

I would love to see your meeting.

Tag:

@authornicoletteelzie

and use:

#WeWereMeantToBurn

Your photos may even be shared to my stories, with permission.

Whether your evening involves elaborate costumes or six people sitting around someone's kitchen table yelling about fictional people, I want to see it.

WANT AUTHOR SWAG?

Book clubs reading **We Were Meant to Burn** may request an official Book Club Swag Pack, subject to availability.

Swag may include:

Signed bookplates

Bookmarks

Stickers

Art prints

Exclusive Ashes & Ruin goodies

Availability and contents may vary by group size and location.

Visit the Book Club Hub to submit a request.

INVITE THE AUTHOR

Want Nicolette to join your discussion?

Book clubs may request a virtual author visit for select meetings.

Virtual visits may include:

A short hello

Reader Q&A

Behind-the-scenes book discussion

Writing and publishing questions

Spoiler-filled Ashes & Ruin conversation

Availability is limited and requests should be submitted in advance through the Book Club Hub.

THANK YOU FOR READING

There are thousands of books you could have chosen.

You chose mine.

That will never be a small thing to me.

Thank you for giving Nix, Malakai, Xixi, and this strange, dangerous world a place at your table.

And if this book left you emotionally unwell...

I'll see you in *The Ruin We Made*.

With love and ruin,

Nicolette Elzie