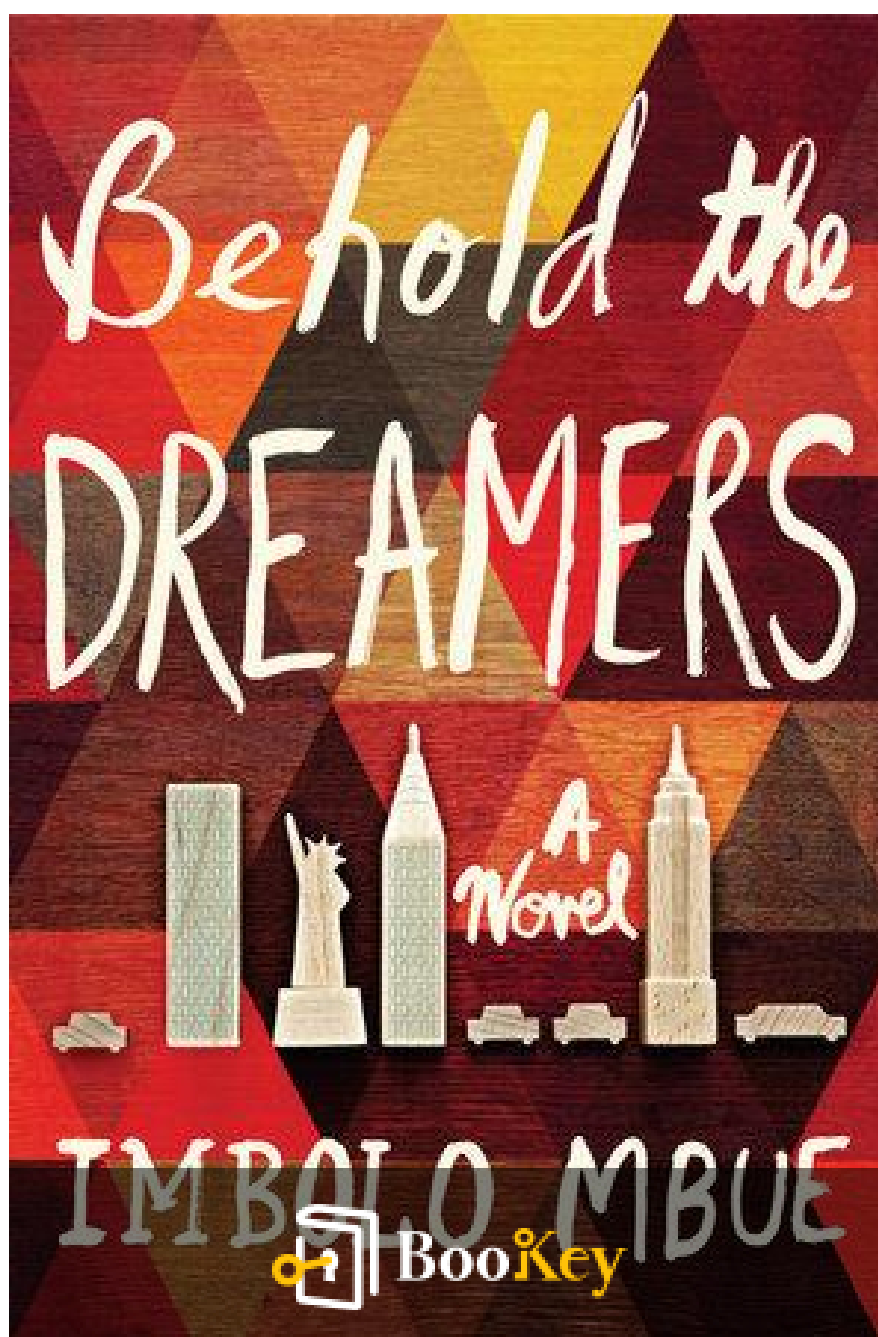


Behold The Dreamers PDF (Limited Copy)

Imbolo Mbue



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Behold The Dreamers Summary

Hope and Struggle in the American Dream

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About the book

In "Behold the Dreamers," Imbolo Mbue masterfully weaves together the lives of two families in New York City—a struggling immigrant family from Cameroon and a wealthy corporate family at the heart of the American Dream—intersecting their hopes, aspirations, and harsh realities in a narrative that resonates deeply with contemporary issues of ambition, identity, and the pursuit of happiness. As the Jonga family navigates the relentless challenges of their new life, and the Edwards family grapples with its own secrets and crises, Mbue invites readers to reflect on the fragility of dreams amidst the stark divide of socioeconomic status. This poignant and thought-provoking novel serves as a mirror to the complexities of modern America, compelling us to question what it truly means to live the dream, and drawing us irresistibly into the lives of characters whose fates are bound together in an ever-changing world.

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About the author

Imbolo Mbue is a talented Cameroonian-born author renowned for her insightful exploration of the immigrant experience in contemporary America. Raised in Limbe, Mbue moved to the United States for her studies, eventually earning a degree from Rutgers University and an MFA from Columbia University. Her debut novel, "Behold the Dreamers," published in 2016, received widespread acclaim, winning the 2017 PEN/Faulkner Award and garnering a place on numerous bestseller lists. Through her compelling storytelling and rich character development, Mbue delves into themes of aspiration, identity, and the complexities of the American Dream, weaving together the lives of her characters against the backdrop of a rapidly changing society.

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Chapter 1 Summary: 1

In Chapter 1 of "Behold the Dreamers" by Imbolo Mbue, we meet Jende Jonga, an immigrant from Cameroon stepping into a daunting new world as he arrives for a job interview at Lehman Brothers in New York City. Dressed in a borrowed green suit, he's both excited and terrified about the role of a chauffeur to Clark Edwards, an executive. Jende's nervousness stems from his unfamiliarity with the corporate environment and the pressure to impress in an interview that feels out of reach for someone like him. With a resume crafted to highlight a history that reflects hard work and dedication, he grapples with the fear of being judged not only on his qualifications but on his legal status in the U.S.

As Jende enters the office, he is struck by the beauty and opulence around him, a stark contrast to his life in Harlem. His conversation with Clark begins with typical interview questions that escalate into inquiries about his immigration status, which terrifies Jende. However, he navigates the conversation with a mix of truth and evasiveness, carefully revealing just enough information to maintain the illusion of security regarding his legal standing. Clark's indifferent manner seems to weigh heavily on Jende, but the tension dissipates when Clark expresses his preference for loyalty and confidentiality over qualifications—qualities Jende believes he can provide.

Meanwhile, parallels are drawn with Jende's wife, Neni, who reflects on her



life in America while shopping in Chinatown with her friend, Fatou. Neni exudes happiness about her new life, from her job as a home health aide to being a student at community college. Her aspirations of becoming a pharmacist symbolize a hopeful future that starkly contrasts her struggles back in Limbe, Cameroon, where she waited for Jende to rescue her from a life of stagnation.

Through the shift between Jende's anxiety and Neni's optimism, themes of immigration, ambition, and the pursuit of the American dream are set in motion. Their intertwined stories depict the grit and determination of a couple navigating the complicated realities of life as immigrants, with both humor and poignancy. Jende's initial job interview serves as a crucible for their future, instilling in him hope that they can build a life together in America despite the obstacles they face.

The chapter ends with Jende's appointment with destiny potentially changing their lives forever, leaving readers both eager and anxious for what lies ahead for this ambitious couple.



Critical Thinking

Key Point: The pursuit of the American dream requires resilience and courage.

Critical Interpretation: As you navigate through the challenges of your own life, remember Jende's journey and the courage it takes to seize opportunities, even when faced with uncertainty. Like Jende, who stepped into a daunting interview with hope despite his fears, you too can confront your own obstacles with determination. Your aspirations, much like Neni's dreams of becoming a pharmacist, symbolize the boundless potential within you. Embrace the grit you hold; let it inspire you to reach for your dreams, proving that resilience can transform fear into opportunity.



Chapter 2 Summary: 2

In Chapter 2 of "Behold the Dreamers," the emotional landscape of the characters begins to unfold, revealing personal struggles and the dynamics of their relationships. Jende, the protagonist and chauffeur, finds himself anxious in the presence of Cindy Edwards, his employer. He worries about her perception of his performance, constantly second-guessing his every move while driving her around New York City. Despite her polite demeanor, Cindy is grappling with familial tensions, particularly revolving around her son, Vince. During a heartfelt phone conversation, Cindy expresses frustration about Vince's decision to skip the holidays with the family for a retreat in Costa Rica, highlighting a disconnect between her expectations and his choices. This exchange illustrates her deep concern for her family, as she laments their lack of togetherness and questions her husband Clark's priorities.

The chapter shifts to Jende's memories of his hometown, Limbe, as he shares fond recollections with Clark during a drive back from Washington, D.C. He describes Limbe's welcoming sign and the simple joys of life there, contrasting it with the complexities of his current life in America. Jende's sense of nostalgia is palpable, and it offers a glimpse into his desire for a better life for his family. He articulates how America symbolizes hope and opportunity, especially in contrast to the limitations he faced in Cameroon.



As the chapter progresses, the focus shifts back to Clark, who is busy navigating his own professional challenges at Lehman Brothers, where tensions are high due to the looming financial crisis. He exhibits an intense dedication to his work, which strains his relationship with Cindy, who feels neglected in their family dynamics. The disconnect between them further highlights the theme of ambition versus family and emotional connection.

The characters' interactions reveal their complexity, as both Jende and Clark experience the pressures of their respective lives. Jende is faced with the obstacles of immigrant life and the aspiration for respectability, while Clark grapples with the burdens of corporate work and family responsibilities. Tension mounts through Jende's foreboding realization that his immigration status is precarious, culminating in a shocking phone call from his immigration lawyer, which threatens his stability in America. This news leaves him and his wife, Neni, emotionally devastated, illustrating the harsh realities faced by immigrants striving for a better future.

The chapter ends on a somber note, as Jende contemplates the possibility of leaving America and returning to Cameroon, where hope seems scarce. This creates a powerful interplay between dreams and the stark reality of their situations, deepening the themes of ambition, family, and the immigrant experience. Overall, Chapter 2 serves to humanize these characters amidst their struggles, setting the stage for the unfolding drama that lies ahead.



Critical Thinking

Key Point: The struggle between ambition and family connection

Critical Interpretation: Imagine standing at the crossroads of your dreams and relationships, feeling the weight of expectations pulling you in different directions. This chapter's portrayal of Jende's and Clark's lives serves as a poignant reminder that while ambition can drive us to seek greater heights, it often comes at the cost of our precious family bonds. Let their journeys inspire you to reflect on what truly matters—finding a balance that honors both your aspirations and the connections that ground you. It challenges you to prioritize meaningful moments with loved ones, ensuring that in your pursuit of success, you do not neglect the warmth and togetherness that family can provide.

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Chapter 3: 3

In Chapter 3 of "Behold the Dreamers" by Imbolo Mbue, Neni grapples with a profound sense of despair and helplessness following the looming threat of deportation that hangs over her family. The chapter opens with her trudging through New York City, overwhelmed yet determined to maintain routine amidst the chaos of her thoughts, namely the gnawing fear of losing control of her life. Struggling with debilitating headaches and nausea, Neni's emotional state is further complicated by the unexpected news of her pregnancy, which she finds difficult to embrace amidst the upheaval in her life.

As she navigates her daily responsibilities—working as a home health aide and caring for her son Liomi—she feels the weight of her expectations. Despite her fatigue, she attends a parent-teacher conference, where she learns that Liomi, her six-year-old son, is a good student but struggles with attentiveness due to distractions from friends, particularly a boy named Billy. After a tense conversation with the teacher, Neni returns home, conflicted between her desire to comfort her child and the tough love she

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Chapter 4 Summary: 4

In Chapter 4 of "Behold the Dreamers" by Imbolo Mbue, we delve into a day filled with significant interactions and reflections among characters navigating their contrasting worlds and aspirations amidst the sweltering summer in New York City.

Clark, a Wall Street executive, grumbles about a golf outing he feels obligated to attend. Jende, his chauffeur, listens quietly while Clark expresses disdain for the game, revealing his dissatisfaction with his job and the overwhelming pressures of corporate life. During the drive, a phone conversation with Tom, Clark's boss, escalates into a heated argument about strategy and ethics, highlighting the rising tensions within Lehman Brothers. Clark pushes for a more honest approach to their precarious business situation, while Tom seems steadfast in maintaining their current course despite its inherent risks. This exchange not only showcases Clark's growing disillusionment and moral conflict but also hints at the impending doom of the financial institution as he battles against entrenched corporate attitudes.

The narrative then shifts to Jende and his friend Vince, who share a ride as Vince prepares to visit the dentist. Their conversation touches on deeper themes involving disillusionment and identity. Vince, a law student, confesses to his disdain for the legal profession, revealing his intention to abandon law school for a more meaningful existence in India. Jende, who



comes from a vastly different background, finds it hard to understand Vince's perspective but offers compassion. Their exchange serves as a window into the tension between aspirations and societal expectations, with Jende rationalizing the struggles of American life while Vince grapples with the contradictions of his privileged upbringing.

As the summer unfolds, we see Neni, Jende's wife, adjust to her new job in the opulent summer home of the Edwards family in the Hamptons. Neni is struck by both the grandeur surrounding her and the need to perform her duties to earn a living. She is pregnant and eager to contribute to her family's future, reflecting the sacrifices immigrant families often must make. Her conversations with Cindy, the matriarch of the Edwards family, reveal Cindy's vulnerabilities beneath her polished veneer as she shares her own struggles overcoming a difficult past. This newfound connection between Neni and Cindy creates a bond rooted in shared womanhood and the challenges of motherhood, leading to a mutual respect that transcends their class differences.

Key themes emerge through these interactions: the pursuit of the American Dream, the burden of societal expectations, the ethical dilemmas in the corporate world, and the intimate struggles of motherhood. The chapter captures a moment of tension where personal aspirations clash with societal structures, paving the way for deeper reflections about identity, success, and the sacrifices made along the way. The vivid contrast between the lives of



Jende, Neni, Clark, and Vince underscores the complexities of navigating American life across different socio-economic landscapes, ultimately weaving a rich tapestry of disparate yet interconnected human experiences.

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Chapter 5 Summary: 5

In Chapter 5 of "Behold the Dreamers" by Imbolo Mbue, we delve into the everyday lives of Jende and his son, Liomi. This chapter paints a vivid picture of their relationship, marked by tender moments as they navigate the complexities of life as immigrants in the U.S. Jende, who drives a cab to support them, relishes the quality time he spends with his son. They bond over meals of fried plantains and eggs, shared subway rides, and weekend outings, such as a swim at the pool where Jende proudly teaches Liomi how to swim. Their days are filled with joy, yet Jende is haunted by the fear of an uncertain future, especially concerning potential deportation back to Cameroon.

A pivotal moment occurs when Liomi innocently asks if they are returning to Cameroon, a question triggered by eavesdropping on his mother, Neni's, phone conversation. Jende reacts with anger, scolding Neni for exposing their son to such fears. The tension between Jende and Neni reflects the broader theme of fear and uncertainty, especially regarding immigration status. While Jende strives to protect Liomi from harsh realities, Neni struggles with the emotional burden of their precarious situation.

As the chapter unfolds, the narrative shifts to Neni, who is in the Hamptons working for the Edwards family. We witness the dynamics of the Edwards's household, particularly the tension in Cindy and Clark's marriage. Their



relationship is strained, highlighted by Cindy's dependence on alcohol, which Neni subtly observes during her time there. Anna, another worker, warns Neni about Cindy's issues, suggesting that their family is hiding serious problems beneath the facade of wealth and luxury.

Clark, despite his success and responsibilities as a father and husband, grapples with disappointment and frustration over his son's choices. He expresses admiration for Vince's bravery to leave law school and pursue a different path, reflecting his own struggles with job satisfaction and family responsibilities. This conversation at Hudson River Park reveals Clark's inner turmoil and his desire to provide for his family, juxtaposed against Vince's yoke of privilege and the allure of a more meaningful existence.

Neni's internal conflict becomes more pronounced as she grapples with whether to intervene in Cindy's life, reflecting themes of loyalty and the boundaries of involvement in others' troubles. The chapter closes with Neni contemplating the complexities of her situation, balancing her obligations to her own family with the potential repercussions of speaking out about Cindy's drinking.

Overall, Chapter 5 highlights the poignant realities of immigrant life, the nuances of familial relationships, and the intersection of personal and societal struggles against the backdrop of contemporary America. Through the lens of Jende and Neni's experiences, the chapter captures the bittersweet



essence of love, hope, and the constant anxiety of an uncertain future.

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Critical Thinking

Key Point: The importance of protecting family while managing fear and uncertainty

Critical Interpretation: Imagine standing on the precipice of fear, where every decision you make could tear your family apart or keep it together. In this chapter, Jende's fierce desire to shield Liomi from the harsh, cold realities of their immigrant life resonates deeply. It inspires you to realize that, in your life, the instinct to protect your loved ones is paramount. Every challenge you face may fill you with anxiety, but it is the love and commitment you hold for your family that drives you to persevere, to shield them from life's uncertainties while navigating your own. This reflection ignites a spark within you, encouraging you to find strength in vulnerability and to create a safe space for those you cherish, reminding you that even amid tumultuous times, love can be your greatest anchor.



Chapter 6: 6

In Chapter 6 of "Behold the Dreamers," we dive into the lives of Jende and Neni as they prepare for a farewell dinner for Vince, who is about to embark on a journey to India. Neni spends the day cleaning and cooking traditional Cameroonian dishes in anticipation of the gathering. Her excitement, however, is tinged with anxiety when Jende reveals Vince would like to bring his young son, Mighty, with him. Neni firmly objects, fearing for their safety in Harlem, but ultimately, Jende convinces her to welcome the boy, emphasizing the importance of the friends reuniting before Vince's departure.

When Vince and Mighty arrive, the boys quickly immerse themselves in the warmth and laughter of the Jongas' home, displaying a joyful innocence that transcends any signs of poverty around them. They enjoy a traditional meal served on the floor, breaking bread together while Jende shares whimsical stories from his childhood. The dinner brims with laughter and unity, illustrating the richness of their Cameroonian culture amidst their American struggles.

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Chapter 7 Summary: 7

In this chapter of "Behold the Dreamers," we find Jende returning home to a lively dinner with Winston and Neni, filled with traditional dishes. Amidst laughter and banter, Winston excitedly shares that he has reconnected with an old flame through Facebook, which sparks discussions about trust in relationships and the nature of secrets between spouses. Jende, who works as the chauffeur for Clark Edwards, grapples with a burdening secret about Mr. Edwards's unfaithfulness, realizing that revealing it to Neni might complicate their lives. The conversation reveals the dynamics of their marriages, the importance of loyalty for Jende, and Neni's fears stemming from her own past experiences with her father.

As the discussions unfold, themes of trust and the challenges of communication in relationships surface. Jende's internal conflict about whether to disclose what he knows about Mr. Edwards intensifies, given that Neni believes she has a right to know about her husband's affairs. There's a notable tension between Jende's loyalty to Mr. Edwards and his desire to keep Neni informed, reinforced by Winston's suggestion to take a bold stand against any threats to his job from Mrs. Edwards.

On Jende's birthday, he navigates a conversation with Clark about Mrs. Edwards's curiosity regarding his daily activities. To Jende's surprise, Clark enables him to share information with Cindy, highlighting themes of



ambivalence present in the upper-class lifestyle, where Jende's passive role is defined by his obligations and contract.

Throughout the chapter, Jende's thoughts reveal his deep affection for Neni and his desire to protect her from insecurities, connecting back to his upbringing in Cameroon, which shapes his view on marriage. There's a significant moment when Mighty, Jende's young son, overhears a fight between his parents, bringing the reality of familial strife to the forefront. The interplay of traditional values with the complexities of American marital life continues to resonate as Jende contemplates the fragility of happiness within families.

As the story unfolds, the dynamics of Clark and Cindy's relationship become pivotal. Jende's role expands as he writes thorough accounts of Clark's daily life, attempting to shield Cindy from further emotional turmoil. The chapter concludes with Jende emotionally supporting Mighty, emphasizing the tender relationship he has with the boy, while foreshadowing the impending chaos that will arise from the scandal affecting the Edwards family. The narrative expertly weaves together the themes of loyalty, trust, and the pressures of societal expectations within the context of both immigrant and native experiences in America's cultural landscape.



Chapter 8 Summary: 8

In Chapter 8 of "Behold the Dreamers" by Imbolo Mbue, a new chapter in the lives of Jende and Neni unfolds with the birth of their daughter, Amatimba Monyengi, affectionately called Timba, symbolizing hope and joy after their loss. Their home comes alive with friends celebrating this new life, creating a brief moment of happiness amidst their ongoing struggles. Jende's employer, Clark Edwards, generously allows him time off for the birth, showcasing the small kindnesses they experience in a challenging environment.

However, their joy quickly turns to fear when Jende receives a letter from Immigration, notifying him of his impending removal from the United States. The weight of uncertainty hangs over their family as Jende consults with Bubakar, his immigration lawyer, who promises to help. But the conversation also reveals doubts; Winston, Jende's cousin, expresses skepticism about Bubakar's competence, suggesting that Jende's story does not hold up against the scrutiny of immigration authorities. Despite these fears, Jende and Neni cling to hope, encouraging one another to believe in a brighter future.

As the holidays approach, Neni seeks solace in church, hoping to find community and support that she desperately needs. Yet, her experience at Judson Memorial Church is not what she expected. Instead of the vibrant,



lively atmosphere she cherished in Cameroon, she finds herself surrounded by a somber crowd. Despite feeling out of place, Neni meets pastor Natasha, who offers compassion and understanding, further igniting her hope.

Tensions build at home as Jende reacts with frustration towards Neni's visit to the church. Their disagreement escalates into a confrontation, exposing the strain their dire circumstances have put on their relationship. Jende feels a sense of betrayal for discussing their immigration status and believes it has put them at further risk. Neni, filled with a desire to fight for their family's future, grows increasingly frustrated with Jende's resignation.

The chapter ends on a bittersweet note as Jende's insecurity about work surfaces again. Their precarious situation is highlighted by the looming court date regarding his immigration status. This chapter vividly encapsulates the themes of hope, familial love, the complexities of immigrant life, and the ever-present tensions between ambition and despair. As they navigate the expectations and pressures of their new life in America, the struggle for dignity, belonging, and survival intertwines their dreams and fears.



Critical Thinking

Key Point: Hope amidst adversity

Critical Interpretation: As you navigate through life's challenges, remember how Jende and Neni embrace the joy of their daughter's birth even as uncertainty looms over them. This chapter illustrates that hope can be a powerful force, inspiring you to find light in the darkest of circumstances. Just like Jende and Neni, allow the small moments of joy to catalyze your resilience, motivating you to strive for better days ahead, no matter how daunting the obstacles seem.



Chapter 9: 9

In Chapter 9 of "Behold the Dreamers," Jende grapples with his identity and worth as he struggles to find work after losing his cab-driving job. After a bleak conversation with Mr. Jones, the cab company owner, it becomes clear that the job market is oversaturated, leaving Jende feeling desperate and stressed. Neni tries to comfort him, but he finds it hard to accept her optimism, reflecting his internal turmoil and concern over their financial stability. Eventually, Jende secures two dishwashing jobs, but the physical toll on him leads to growing health issues, which Neni insists he should see a doctor about.

As Jende immerses himself in work, the strain on their relationship and the family dynamic grows more pronounced. Neni, feeling the pressure as their primary caregiver, begins to worry about their finances and suggests returning to work herself, but Jende insists he will take care of her and their children. The burden of unfulfilled responsibilities and anxieties about Jende's deportation case loom over them, heightening their fears for the future.

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Chapter 10 Summary: 10

In Chapter 10 of "Behold the Dreamers" by Imbolo Mbue, the events unfold around the tragic death of Cindy Eliza Edwards, a well-off woman whose life ended alone in her New York City apartment due to a drug overdose. Five weeks after Neni Jonga, a caregiver, left her job in Cindy's household, Cindy's demise comes as a shock to those who knew her. Lonely and battling depression without support from her friends, Cindy's death raises questions about the nature of friendship and the hidden struggles individuals face, particularly in a city as bustling as New York.

As Jende and Neni discuss Cindy's death, they reflect on the social disconnect prevalent among the wealthy elite. Jende questions why none of Cindy's affluent acquaintances noticed her suffering, leading to a powerful critique of societal neglect. The narrative emphasizes themes of isolation, wealth disparity, and the façade that often conceals deep emotional pain, while Neni finds herself mourning for the children left behind, especially Mighty Edwards, who must now contend with the shame surrounding his mother's passing.

The chapter transitions to the somber memorial service for Cindy, where her youngest son, Mighty, plays a heartbreaking rendition of Debussy's "Clair de Lune." The ceremony draws hundreds, revealing the contrast between the public grieving and the private struggles of those left behind. Vince



Edwards, Cindy's son, honors his mother with anecdotes that highlight her imperfections but also her beauty and kindness, prompting reflections on motherhood and the deep-seated impacts of love and loss.

Meanwhile, Jende grapples with the stress of his life in America, especially after learning about his father's death back in Cameroon. His return home for the funeral is complicated by his immigration status and financial constraints, illustrating the burdens of immigrant life amidst personal tragedy. As Jende processes his grief alone, he considers returning to Limbe permanently as an escape from the relentless hardships he faces in New York, despite Neni's resistance to such a drastic choice.

Neni, thriving academically despite her circumstances, receives an invitation to join an honor society, marking a hopeful moment in her narrative. However, the pursuit of scholarships to continue her education is overshadowed by the harsh realities presented by her college's dean. Neni faces not only financial barriers but also the doubts of an authority figure who questions her aspirations of becoming a pharmacist, highlighting the challenges that immigrants face in achieving their dreams in the face of systemic obstacles.

The chapter encapsulates significant themes of grief, aspiration, and the harsh realities of immigrant life while interweaving the personal struggles of Jende and Neni with broader societal reflections. It reveals how dreams can



often clash with reality, casting shadows over ambitions and forcing characters to confront their paths in a world that can be both beautiful and cruel.

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Critical Thinking

Key Point: The importance of genuine connection and support in overcoming loneliness and struggles.

Critical Interpretation: Imagine living in a bustling city like New York, surrounded by countless faces yet feeling an unbearable weight of isolation. This chapter powerfully illustrates the tragic consequences of neglecting the emotional struggles that can lie hidden beneath the surface of seemingly successful lives. It inspires you to cultivate authentic connections and to reach out, extend support, and empathize with those around you, reminding you that understanding and kindness can be lifelines for those silently fighting their battles. In your own life, this beckons you to prioritize meaningful relationships, fostering an environment where friends and loved ones feel seen, heard, and valued, ultimately helping to mitigate the loneliness that so often pervades modern existence.



Chapter 11 Summary: 11

In Chapter 11 of "Behold the Dreamers" by Imbolo Mbue, we dive deep into Neni's tumultuous emotional landscape as she grapples with the reality of her life in America. After years in her father's restrictive home in Limbe, Neni finally had a taste of independence and hope for a brighter future. She worked hard to obtain basic computer skills and dreamed of becoming a pharmacist, but her husband, Jende, wishes to return to Cameroon, proclaiming that life is too hard in America.

Neni is adamant about staying, believing that America offers opportunities her hometown does not, and she passionately dreams of creating a happy life for her and her children. The stark contrast between her aspirations fueled by American TV shows and the harsh realities of immigrant life leaves her feeling frustrated and powerless. Jende's insistence on returning home, tied to his suffering in this new land, leads to a growing chasm between them.

As the couple struggles with their differing visions for the future, the theme of marriage and the weight of cultural expectations rise to the forefront. Neni's friend Fatou offers a candid view on women's roles in marriage, suggesting that women often subordinate their desires to their husbands. This reflection resonates with Neni as she confronts her own position within her marriage.



Despite her efforts to convince Jende to stay, including broaching the topic of divorce for the sake of their dreams, Neni faces an emotional and physical clash with him. A horrifying encounter escalates into domestic violence when Jende, consumed by frustration, physically assaults her. Neni's desperate attempts to understand and manage their situation—while also thinking of their son's future—reflect the themes of sacrifice, parental love, and the harsh disparities between expectation and reality.

As Jende embarks on the path toward his immigration court date, he contemplates voluntary departure to avoid the risks of remaining undocumented. Conversations between Jende and his friend Winston reveal the disillusionment many face after relocating to America, pondering whether the pursuit of the American Dream is worth sacrificing their current lives.

Even after the chaos of violence and the strain of their relationship, Neni's resilience shines through. She and Jende navigate their complicated relationship, culminating in a promise for a better life in Cameroon. Neni oscillates between hope and despair, determined to fight for her children and ensure they have opportunities she was denied.

This chapter captures the essence of struggle and the emotional turmoil of immigrant life, highlighting the tension between personal dreams and familial obligations, the impact of cultural expectations, and the painful



realities that confront so many seeking a better life.

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Chapter 12: 12

In Chapter 12 of "Behold the Dreamers," we dive into the lives of Neni and Jende Jonga as they navigate the challenges of impending departure from America back to Cameroon. The chapter begins with a voicemail from Vince that piques Neni's curiosity while she prepares for a social event, hinting at unresolved issues from her past. During the celebratory atmosphere of Olu's mother-in-law's birthday party, the contrast between the joy of the gathering and Neni's internal uncertainties is palpable.

As she reflects on a voicemail from Vince, Neni realizes that it likely concerns their previous conflicts and the truth about events involving Vince's mother, Cindy. When she finally engages in a conversation with Vince, they discuss their lives after loss—Vince's mother has passed, and he shares how his father is coping alone, striving to provide support for his son, Mighty. The conversation unveils Vince's call to consider Neni as a nurturing figure for Mighty, who is still grieving.

Neni struggles with the weight of Vince's request, recalling her complicated

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Chapter 13 Summary: 13

In Chapter 13 of "Behold the Dreamers" by Imbolo Mbue, Jende, the protagonist, prepares to leave New York City and share a heartfelt farewell with his former employer, Clark Edwards. After sending an email, Jende is pleasantly surprised when Clark invites him to say goodbye. Jende arrives dressed in his black suit—an emblem of his respect for the job, even though Neni, his wife, believes it unnecessary. The meeting unfolds with warmth, reminiscing about their time together, reflecting on losses, and hopes for their respective futures. Clark seems revitalized and happier since the death of his wife, while Jende expresses gratitude for the opportunity Clark provided him that enabled a better future for his family.

Their conversation reveals shifts in both their lives—safe havens and tough realities. Clark shares his plans to relocate to Virginia, and Jende, preparing to return to Cameroon, speaks of a bittersweet departure from America. The significance of family and connections becomes a recurring theme as they discuss their children and futures. Jende shares that he sought asylum in America, but it was denied, leading to his decision to return home rather than face uncertainty in immigration courts.

The connection deepens when Clark offers Jende money as a parting gift—something truly generous that Jende accepts with gratitude. This moment highlights the humanity and kindness that can transcend social and



economic divides. As their time together comes to a close, Jende makes sure to send his regards to Clark's family and expresses concerns for Leah, who is struggling back in New York. This poignancy underscores the weight of their experiences.

Later, as Neni prepares to move, she gives away their belongings, feeling a strange mixture of nostalgia and a sense of closing a chapter in life. Despite the sadness of leaving New York, where they forged memories and built a life, she looks toward returning home. The family's journey concludes with them boarding a flight to Douala, Cameroon, with Jende holding money saved for their new life, an echo of their hopes and sacrifices.

The chapter emphasizes themes of family, identity, and the complexities of returning home after pursuing the American dream. Jende and Neni's transition reflects not only their personal growth but also the emotional landscape of immigrants grappling with belonging and home. As they finally arrive in Cameroon, a mixture of familiarity and strangeness awaits—signifying both a return and a new beginning.

