

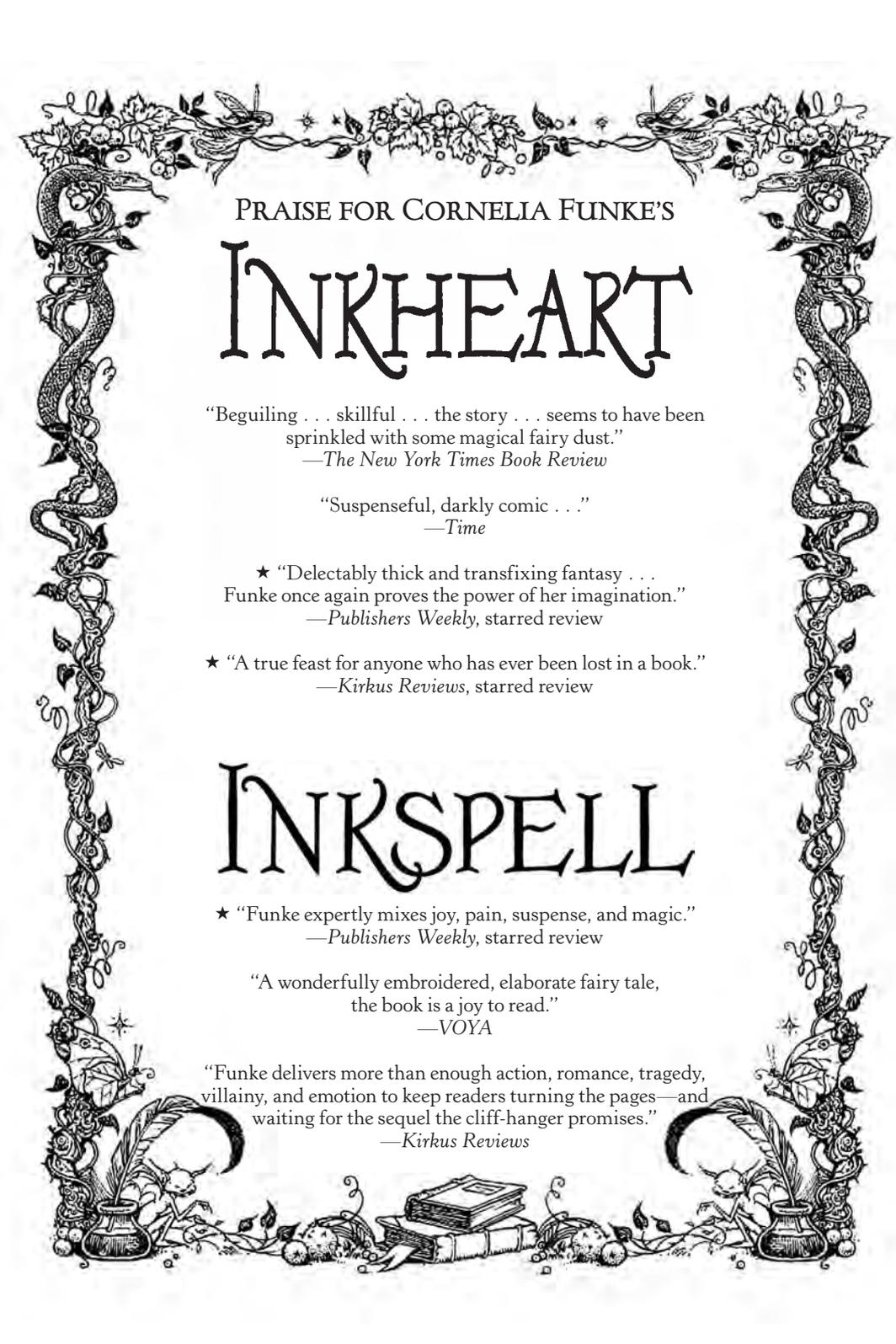
INKWORLD

The COLOR of REVENGE



#1 *New York Times* Bestselling author

CORNELIA FUNKE



PRAISE FOR CORNELIA FUNKE'S

INKHEART

"Beguiling . . . skillful . . . the story . . . seems to have been sprinkled with some magical fairy dust."

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★ "A true feast for anyone who has ever been lost in a book."

—*Kirkus Reviews*, starred review

INKSPELL

★ "Funke expertly mixes joy, pain, suspense, and magic."

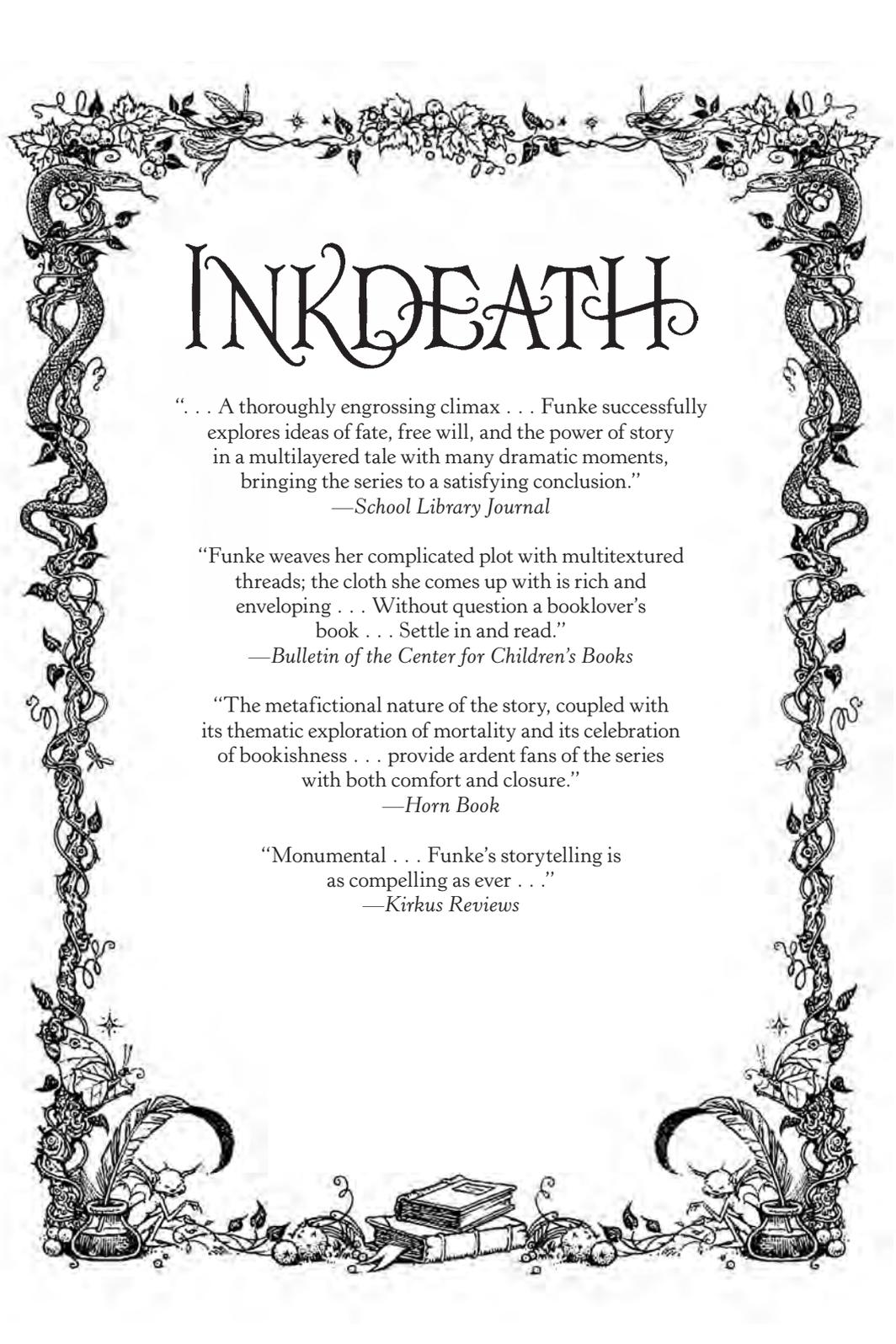
—*Publishers Weekly*, starred review

"A wonderfully embroidered, elaborate fairy tale, the book is a joy to read."

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"Funke delivers more than enough action, romance, tragedy, villainy, and emotion to keep readers turning the pages—and waiting for the sequel the cliff-hanger promises."

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INKDEATH

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“Monumental . . . Funke’s storytelling is as compelling as ever . . .”

—*Kirkus Reviews*

INKWORLD

The
COLOR of REVENGE



CORNELIA FUNKE

Translated from the German by Anna Schmitt Funke

Chicken House
Scholastic Inc.

For Ben
who explained to me that there is only one art
that has always existed
And for Anna
who helped to tell this story right

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English translation by Anna Schmitt Funke © 2023 Cornelia Funke

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WHAT HAPPENED PREVIOUSLY

Dear Reader,

The events that precede the story fill more than 1,500 book pages. For a long time, I racked my brain about how to summarize them on one double page to ease the readers' return into the Inkworld. But then Dustfinger brought me two tightly written pages of parchment that his stepson Jehan had discovered in Orpheus's desk.

They delivered exactly what I was looking for: a summary of the events that preceded those in this book. Of course, Orpheus describes them from his point of view, so I advise reading them with caution. Nevertheless, I think that the following will help to understand how we came to the events described in *The Color of Revenge*.

So here we go . . .

Cornelia

I, Orpheus Gemelli, am not from the Inkworld. But I have done great things in it, even if my enemies have done everything in their power to ensure that my achievements are lost from memory. Curse them, them and their lies! Here is what really happened:

It all began with Dustfinger, also known as the Fire-Dancer, being read out of his world against his will. Oh yes, that is possible. The bookbinder Mortimer Folchart did it, the one who in Ombra is also known as the Bluejay. Mortimer does not like to admit this, but he is a silver tongue. I know because I have the same gift. We can bring words to life with our voices. Unlike me, Mortimer never

used his gift to its full potential. He lost his wife by accidentally reading her into the Inkworld, and Dustfinger spent more than ten years in the wrong world because Mortimer simply could not manage to read him back home.

The man who finally accomplished this was I, Orpheus Gemelli.

The only one who once deserved to bear the title of silver tongue.

I knew Dustfinger long before I met him on a lonely country road in a different world. Because I had read about him in a book. Inkheart. A man named Fenoglio wrote it. In Ombra he goes by the name Inkweaver. His own words brought him here, and he uses his writing abilities to bring useless princes like Cosimo the Fair back from the dead and to let giants stomp down from the mountains. Fenoglio is an old man without a conscience, whose words cause nothing but calamity. But I did not know this yet when I read his book. Inkheart is about Dustfinger, the Fire-Dancer. That he is a liar and a traitor it did not tell me, and I made Dustfinger the hero of my childhood.

My heart raced when he stood before me one day in flesh and blood, begging me to send him home with my silver tongue. Into the world described in Fenoglio's book. Back to his wife and his daughters.

Oh, I was such a fool! I trusted him. I believed he was my friend because I had read about him. Fine, I accepted a small sum as payment for my services. So? I granted his most desperate desire. Thanks to me, he is now celebrated in all of Ombra for his fire play. Thanks to me, he has his beautiful wife back. But does he thank me for it? Not even a little bit.

Dustfinger rejected my friendship. He preferred to give it to a tattered boy called Farid, whom Mortimer read out of an Arabian fairy tale. Dustfinger taught the devious little thief everything he knows about the fire. He even died for him! And who was it who brought him back from the dead?

WHAT HAPPENED PREVIOUSLY

I, Orpheus.

But not even that made me worthy of his friendship. On the contrary. Dustfinger told the whole world that it was Mortimer who was his rescuer!

Mortimer, the bookbinder, who also only made it to Ombra through my gifts as a reader, then donned a mask of feathers and played at being a noble robber! The Bluejay! Pah! He is still nothing but a bookbinder, even if he traded in his tools for a sword back then.

Dustfinger granted him the friendship that he denied me, the man who brought him home, the man who summoned him back from the dead!

Betrayal and ingratitude.

They should all have those two words tattooed onto their foreheads. Dustfinger, Mortimer, and Fenoglio, who made me look the fool with his words one too many times.

And they had many helpers: Mortimer's daughter, Meggie, who regrettably inherited his silver tongue; his wife, Resa, who grew wings just to fight me on the Castle in the Lake; her aunt Elinor, who always swore at me so rudely while I was a guest in her house; and her shriveled little librarian, who is also rumored to be a silver tongue. What a congregation of falsehood and treachery. They all joined forces against me when I found well-deserved fame and fortune in this world. And that despite my voice being the very thing that brought them here!

Even Dustfinger's wife, Roxane, and his daughter, Brianna, regarded me with nothing but disdain, although it was I who returned husband and father to them.

Betrayal.

Ingratitude.

They would not even allow Orpheus Gemelli the simple pleasure

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of the patronage of the Adderhead, a prince who appreciated his gifts more than they did. Back then I dreamed of writing the future of this world, with Dustfinger as its hero. I was still willing to forgive him. But what did he do? He brought down the Adderhead with his fire, together with Mortimer and the Black Prince, Dustfinger's childhood friend. "Orpheus remembers!" I call to them. "Even if you tell this world a different story."

They put Violante, the Adderhead's ugly daughter, onto Ombra's throne. And I had to steal away like a thief in the night and leave behind everything I had. Wealth and influence, even my voice and the power it gave me over words. I lost everything back then.

While Dustfinger and his oh so noble friends celebrated their victory and returned to a peaceful life in Ombra. But I will have my revenge. And the story will be told as Orpheus writes it.

Orpheus Gemelli



1

SHADOWS OF FLAME

Who'd be happy, let him be so:
Nothing's sure about tomorrow.

Lorenzo de' Medici

The world was black. It was night in Ombra. Only the castle walls were tinted red. On the battlement, burning shadows stood guard among soldiers of flesh and blood. They were present between the archways, and in the courtyard where the living had gathered, flames taking the shapes of women, men, and children. The inhabitants of Ombra had lived in peace for more than five years now. But on this cool September night they remembered all those who had given their lives for this peace. And like every year on this date, Dustfinger gave those they had lost bodies of flame.

Fire-Dancer. Dustfinger heard the crowd murmuring the name they had given him, the low voices dense with gratitude. Through him, the fire not only summoned Ombra's dead once a year; it also illuminated the city's narrow streets at night, and it warmed the houses in winter and brought joy when Dustfinger made the flames

dance and play with him. The fire delivered his thanks for all the happiness Ombra had granted him.

Violante, the ruler who had kept and protected Ombra's peace, stood on the balcony from where she had announced both good and terrible news in the years she had reigned. Her subjects no longer called Violante Her Ugliness. Violante the Brave, they had named her, sometimes even the Kind. Violante usually wore black, but tonight her dress was white, for that was the color of mourning in Ombra.

Dustfinger's daughter stood, as always, by Violante's side. Brianna had inherited her father's fiery hair, but she resembled her mother much more. When Roxane stepped out of the waiting crowd and bowed her head before Violante, Brianna's face blushed with love and pride. Roxane's long hair had turned gray over the years, and instead of wearing it down, she usually kept it in a braid now. But in Dustfinger's eyes the years had only made his wife more beautiful. The crowd fell silent when Roxane began to sing. Her audience had done the same on the night when Dustfinger had heard her sing for the very first time, in a much darker, grander castle, in front of princes and rich merchants. Her voice had even made them forget to gape at her beauty.

The fire traced Roxane's shadow onto the walls as she sang of all those Ombra had lost. Her voice filled the courtyard with the longing for them, with memories of their laughter and tears, and just for one night, her song—like Dustfinger's fire—brought them back to life.

Lost and found . . .

Dustfinger let his gaze wander over the crowd.

So many faces. So many stories.

Not all of them were interwoven with his own, but some

had changed the fabric of his life forever. There was Fenoglio, whose words had brought him such misfortune. His glass man, Rosenquartz, sat on his shoulder, and the little boy who clung to Fenoglio's hand was Dante, the son of Mortimer and Resa Folchart. Resa smiled at Dustfinger when she noticed his gaze. Their stories had often intertwined, in this as well as in another world, and they shared memories darker than the sky above them. Her husband, Mortimer, was the best bookbinder in Ombra, but nobody had forgotten that Mortimer used to wear the mask of the Bluejay, the legendary robber. Or that he had once sacrificed his own freedom in exchange for the lives of Ombra's children.

Stories . . .

Mortimer Folchart looked over at Dustfinger as if he had heard his thoughts. Mortimer Folchart's voice had a different magic from Roxane's, but luckily he had stopped making use of it many years ago. No one in Ombra knew that he and Resa, like Fenoglio, came from another world. Except for Dustfinger.

No. He didn't want to think of that tonight: all the years in the wrong world, the all-consuming longing . . . *You are here, Dustfinger*, he reminded himself as his eyes drifted from Roxane back up to Brianna. *You have what you longed for. Your wife, your daughter, and the world that you love.* Why did he still feel the old restlessness that had already haunted his youth? "You want to pack up and leave again, don't you?" Roxane had asked him just yesterday, only half in jest. *Sing it away, Roxane!* Dustfinger thought. *Just sing away the restlessness of my foolish heart.*

Her voice filled the night not only with the pain of losing the ones you love, but also with the certainty that love is always worth the pain. Mortimer's daughter, Meggie, certainly believed this right now. She was no longer a girl but a young woman, and all of

Ombra loved Doria, to whom she had given her heart. How could one resist a boy who built wings from wood and linen and used them to fly off the city wall?

Roxane's voice faded away and Dustfinger's figures of flame turned into fiery pollen that the wind carried up into the night sky.

"Your wife's voice gets more beautiful each year, but your fire was not bad either." A warm hand settled on his shoulder. The cloak that the Black Prince wore was so blue that it made Dustfinger think of a deep lake or a dark summer sky. Nyame loved blue. Blue and gold had always been his colors, long before people had started calling him the Black Prince.

Violante waved at the crowd one last time before she disappeared into her chambers and the castle grounds began to empty. It was a cold night without the fire.

"Where is your marten? Is your settled life boring Gwin?" Nyame gave Dustfinger a knowing smile. They had been friends for so long that nobody knew better how much the marten embodied Dustfinger's restlessness. The last years had not brought peace for the Black Prince. There was always a nobleman somewhere mistreating his subjects. And whenever Nyame allowed himself a few days of rest in the camp of the motley folk, a delegation of desperate farmers was sure to show up, entreating him for help.

"Right there! Are you blind? There behind the gate!" Rosenquartz's shrill voice cut through the night. The glass man had sharpened Fenoglio's quills for many years.

"There!" He almost fell off Fenoglio's shoulder, pointing his pale red finger at the gate where the people streamed past the guards.

"Nonsense!" Fenoglio snapped. "It was some other glass

man. Now calm down. You are going to make yourself burst one day, getting overexcited about every tiny bit of balderdash!”

“Balderdash?” squealed Rosenquartz with his delicate voice. “It was Ironstone, I’m sure of it, and have you forgotten whom he served? Orpheus!”

Dustfinger thought he could feel his heart turn to ice.

Orpheus.

No. He was dead, or far, far away.

“Enough!” Fenoglio grumbled annoyedly. “Was Orpheus with him? No. There you are!”

“So?” Rosenquartz whined. “That does not prove anything. The fellow whose shoulder he sat on did not look trustworthy in the least!”

“I said, enough!” Fenoglio snapped at him again. “I’m cold, and I’m sure Minerva already heated up the delicious soup she made this morning.”

And with these words he joined the crowd that shoved out of the castle gate. Dustfinger, however, stood there, searching every shoulder for a gray-limbed glass man. How painfully fast his heart beat. So fast, from all the old fear that the sound of just a simple name had brought back. Orpheus.

What if Rosenquartz was right? What if not only his glass man but Orpheus himself was in Ombra? Was he already sitting in some chamber, writing words that would once again rob the Fire-Dancer of everything he loved?

“What?” Nyame wrapped his arm around Dustfinger’s shoulder. “Don’t look so worried! Even if it was Orpheus’s glass man, you heard what Rosenquartz said. He has a new master now! Do you seriously believe that we would not have heard anything from Orpheus for all these years if he was still alive?”

He really did sound unconcerned.

But for Dustfinger, the memories came back, whether he wanted them to or not. A face, red with rage, like that of a hurt boy, pale blue eyes behind round lenses, devious despite their apparent innocence. And then the voice, so full and beautiful, that had brought him back here from the wrong world. *You ranged yourself on the bookbinder's side, although he snatched you out of your own story, instead of backing me, the man who brought you home! That was cruel, very cruel.*

Violante's guards bolted the castle gate for the night, and the people who had gathered to honor the dead disappeared into the alleyways of the city. Did one of them carry the glass man who could tell him whether his master still lived?

Go, Dustfinger. Look for him!

Roxane had joined the other motley women. They wanted to meet at the camp down by the river. But Dustfinger still heard the velvet voice in his mind, the one he first heard in another world: *My black dog is guarding your daughter. I expect she's terribly afraid. But I've ordered my dog not to feast on her sweet flesh and soul . . . just yet.*

The horrors of the past were so much more powerful than the fiery shadows he had summoned tonight.

"Nardo! Are you coming?" Nyame looked back at him questioningly. In their youth, they had taken the fact that both of their names started with the same letter as proof that their friendship had been predestined by fate. Why had he never told Nyame and Roxane the truth? About the book and the other world, about all those terrible, lost years and the man whose voice had brought him back here? Had life not taught him often enough about how lonely keeping secrets could make you?

You don't understand, Nyame! he wanted to cry out. *There is a*

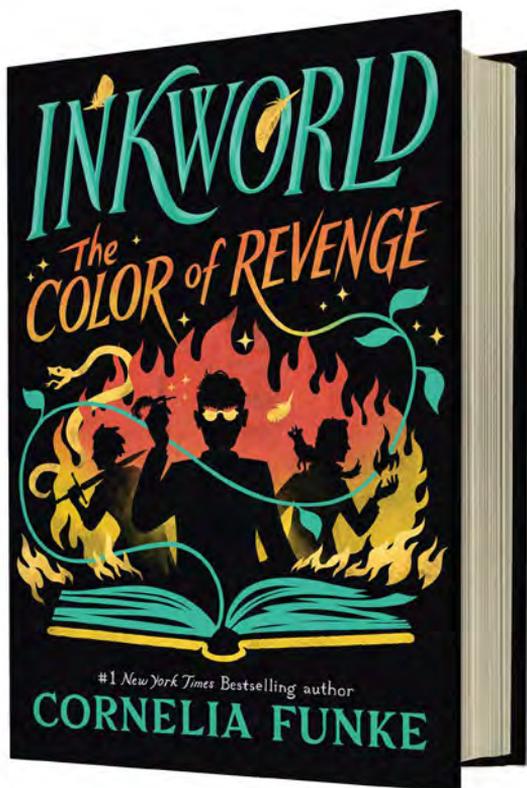
SHADOWS OF FLAME

book that tells our story. And Orpheus came to this world, only because of that book.

But Dustfinger remained silent, as he had all those years since his return. The glass man must be wrong. Orpheus was dead. Or back in his world, where the Fire-Dancer and the Black Prince were nothing but heroes of a made-up story.



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