

Arrow's Flight Study Guide

Arrow's Flight by Mercedes Lackey

(c)2015 BookRags, Inc. All rights reserved.



Contents

Arrow's Flight Study Guide.....	1
Contents.....	2
Plot Summary.....	3
Prologue.....	4
Chapter 1.....	5
Chapter 2.....	7
Chapter 3.....	9
Chapter 4.....	11
Chapter 5.....	13
Chapter 6.....	15
Chapter 7.....	17
Chapter 8.....	19
Chapter 9.....	20
Chapter 10.....	22
Chapter 11.....	24
Chapter 12.....	26
Characters.....	28
Objects/Places.....	33
Themes.....	36
Style.....	38
Quotes.....	41
Topics for Discussion.....	45



Plot Summary

"Arrow's Flight" by Mercedes Lackey is an intriguing tale of a Herald's challenges in the magical world of Velgarth. Talia becomes a Herald and must pass her internship, which holds many trials that she never expected to face. "Arrow's Flight" is a fascinating story filled with magic and adventure.

Talia graduates from the Collegium, the school for Heralds, and receives her Whites, the uniform for Heralds, but she continues to worry about Elspeth, the Queen's daughter, who still has not been Chosen by a Companion and cannot be announced Heir until she is Chosen. When Elspeth is finally Chosen, Talia prepares for and participates in the official ceremony and attends a private party for the Heralds with Kris and Dirk, who seems overly interested in Talia. The day after the ritual, Talia receives notice that her internship with Kris will begin the next day, and they are assigned to the Northern Border Sector.

At the beginning of their journey, Kris informs Talia of the Court rumors regarding her misuse of her Gift and Elspeth's dependence on Talia. Talia's shields begin to slip, and Kris worries as she withdraws into isolation. At Hevenbeck, they mete out judgment on a maddened sewing maid who sacrifices poultry in order to exact revenge on her employers, and they encounter a plague at Waymeet where Kerithwyn, a Healer, warns Talia and Kris about Talia's lack of control.

When Kris and Talia are snowed in at a Waystation during a blizzard, they begin sleeping together as they work on Talia's control of her Gift. Kris teaches Talia Grounding and Centering so that her shields have a proper base. They are rescued after a month by the Guard and the Herald Tedric. Talia restores the Weatherwitch's happiness by reuniting her with her child, and the Weatherwitch prophesizes concerning Talia. After Skif's visit near Midsummer, Talia and Kris' fear of the other's infatuation causes them to fight, but that clears the air and allows them to strengthen their friendship. Kris tells Talia his suspicion that Dirk is lifebonded to Talia.

Talia and Kris finish their rounds of the Northern Border Sector with Talia in charge. At Hevenbeck, they re-encounter the angry sewing maid who has allowed raiders into the village, but Kris and Talia defeat the raiders. In Westmark, Talia judges and punishes the sexually abusive stepfather of a dead girl whom he also killed. When special couriers question whether this is an ethical use of her Gift, Talia defends her decision, convincing Kris that she has finally become a full Herald. Talia and Kris rendezvous with the new Heralds of the Sector, and as they head towards their lodgings for the night, Kris expresses his faith in Talia's ability to handle her duties.



Prologue

Prologue Summary

"Arrow's Flight" by Mercedes Lackey is an intriguing tale of a Herald's challenges in the magical world of Velgarth. Talia becomes a Herald and must pass her internship, which holds many trials that she never expected to face. "Arrow's Flight" is a fascinating story filled with magic and adventure.

Long ago, when the world of Velgarth is wracked by Sorcerous Wars, humans flee to the eastern coastline, but before long, they spread westward again and build new kingdoms, such as Valdemar. In Valdemar, Companions, horse-like creatures, choose Heralds and form a lifelong bond. The Heralds act as administrative overseers, dispensers of justice, information gatherers and even temporary military advisers. The Monarch must always be a Herald, and second in importance to the Monarch is the King or Queen's Own who is Chosen by a special Companion who never ages, thus assuring the Monarch of at least one person whom they can always trust. For generations, the government seems perfectly designed, but in the reign of King Sendar, the kingdom of Karse hires mercenaries to kill Sendar, so his young daughter, Selenay, assumes the throne. The Queen's Own, an aged Herald named Talamir, causes Selenay to make an ill-advised marriage, and Elspeth, the issue of that marriage, is a spoiled female brat. It is obvious that the girl will never be Chosen.

Talamir plans to send the child to a remote fosterage to escape the spoiling influence of her nurse and the Court, but Talamir is murdered. His Companion, Rolan, chooses a new Queen's Own, Talia Holderkin, who is from a puritanical Border group and has no idea what it means to have a Herald's Companion accost her and carry her off. Because females hold subordinate positions among her people, Talia is ill-prepared for the world of Heralds, though she does have experience in the handling and schooling of children. Talia manages to find a true home among the Heralds and to civilize the brat, but now a year and a half of field duty awaits her, along with a trial she never dreamed of having to pass.

Prologue Analysis

The Prologue to "Arrow's Flight" tells about the setting, the world of Velgarth, as well as the history of Velgarth concerning the Sorcerous wars. Furthermore, the Prologue describes the origins of the kingdom of Valdemar, which is the main setting of the novel. The functions, origins and importance of Companions, Heralds and the Monarch's Own are also detailed. After providing the general background of this land, the Prologue continues to specifically describe Talia, the main character, and how she becomes the Queen's Own. Talia's reaction to being Chosen and the beginning of her life in the world of the Heralds are also described. The Prologue ends with foreshadowing Talia's internship where she will face a of which trial she never dreamed.



Chapter 1

Chapter 1 Summary

At fighting practice, Alberich mocks Talia's performance when he beats her during Elspeth and Talia's special tutelage. When Alberich turns his attention to Elspeth, Talia thinks about this afternoon's surprise; Keren and Sherrill claim the right to give Talia the good news that she has been voted into full Herald status on the anniversary of her first class at the Collegium. They take Talia to claim her new quarters and tease her about the possibility of being assigned to the handsome Kris for her internship, but Talia is not impressed with Kris' attractive face because she would rather have a plain face and a good heart. Though Sherrill teases Talia about Skif, the friendship never turns romantic, and Talia thinks more of Skif's counselor, Dirk. When Sherrill mentions how surprised Elspeth will be by Talia's wardrobe change, Talia expresses concern at the girl's depression over not yet being Chosen. Talia knows Rolan, her Companion, is worried about Elspeth, but he is also concerned by the power maneuverings at Court. Talia chooses an apartment at the top of the tower to avoid neighbors since she has the Gift of Empathy and can feel what others feel.

Talia watches Elspeth's graceful sparring, and when Elspeth scores a kill on him, Alberich praises her. After the lesson, Elspeth laments that she has still not been Chosen, but Talia cheers her with the promise of riding Rolan. Talia worries about Elspeth's problem but has no idea how to solve it. Talia wakes in confusion and, from her window, sees Elspeth heading for the Grove. Talia follows to see Elspeth Chosen by Gwena, a Grove-born Companion like Rolan, but no other living Companion. Talia congratulates Elspeth, but neither wonders why no one else was roused by the calling that woke both of them from their beds. Talia convinces Elspeth to settle in the Grove with Gwena while she deals with the important matter of informing Queen Selenay, which must be done decorously. Selenay appears to be at work on unpleasant business with Lord Orthallen and Seneschal when Talia petitions Selenay for the right to enter a trainee into the Collegium because Gwena has Chosen Elspeth. Talia engages the day in the necessary tasks to transfer Elspeth from her mother's custody to the Collegium. Talia decides to dine at Court since Selenay will likely formally announce Elspeth as Heir.

Once everyone arrives, Selenay makes the announcement, and Elspeth is gratefully comforted by Talia's presence. Though she is glad when Selenay places the coronet on Elspeth's head, Talia panics when she realizes that another ceremony must take place in which the Queen's Own plays a significant role. Selenay and Elspeth teach Talia the game of deciding which animals the couriers most resemble to alleviate boredom at dinner. The next day, Talia seeks Kyril, and he and Elcarth agree to drill her in the protocol and politics for the upcoming ceremony. The Council meeting is an ordeal because Talia and Elspeth have a voice on Council but no vote until they pass their internships. The Council eagerly interrogates Talia and Elspeth, debating whether they should shorten or lengthen Talia's internship and whether Elspeth's education can be



rushed. Most Councilors seem eager to help the children with several exceptions- Lord Orthallen seems displeased that Elspeth has finally been Chosen; Bard Hyron feels it is all happening too quickly and does not trust Talia; Lord Gartherer is displeased and disappointed; and Lady Wryst is annoyed. Talia is most bothered by Lord Orthallen's reaction, but she cannot tell anyone because she has no facts to report. She worries about Elspeth because she will soon be gone for a year and a half and there will be no one to watch for potential schemes.

Chapter 1 Analysis

Talia is evidently an important figure in Valdemar, since she is being specially trained with Elspeth, the future Queen, by Alberich. During her combative practice, Talia flashes back to earlier that afternoon when her friends, Keren and Sherrill, deliver the good news that she has been voted into full Herald status; this foreshadows a new era in Talia's life. Their teasing about Talia interning with Kris foreshadows that coming to pass. This chapter also details some of the changes that Talia makes as a result of her change in status, such as changing her living quarters and obtaining a new wardrobe. Talia demonstrates her love for Elspeth through her concern regarding the girl not yet being Chosen, and Elspeth's dejection over this fact, after her training session with Alberich, foreshadows Elspeth being Chosen. This foreshadowing is fulfilled shortly afterward when, that night, Talia wakes and follows Elspeth to the Grove where Elspeth is Chosen by Gwena. The fact that Gwena is like no Companion except Rolan in being Grove-born, as well as the fact that only Elspeth and Talia are summoned by the calling, indicates something special and unique in Elspeth being Chosen. After convincing Elspeth to settle in the Grove with Gwena, Talia discharges her duty of informing Queen Selenay that Elspeth has been Chosen, and the Queen is very satisfied with the report.

Talia attends dinner at Court in order to support Elspeth, once again showing her devotion to the future Queen. At the Council meeting, Talia is disturbed by the discontent that some Council members feel over Elspeth being Chosen and named Heir; Talia can discern this due to her Gift of Empathy which allows her to know others' feelings. Unfortunately, she cannot do anything about the situation because she is only reading feelings and not the exact cause or thoughts behind the feelings. Talia worries more about Elspeth in light of these feelings, since Talia must soon leave Elspeth alone at Court while she goes on her internship for a year and a half.



Chapter 2

Chapter 2 Summary

The three weeks until investiture seem like three years to Talia as she memorizes the elaborate ceremony of oaths and bindings while also using her Gift to assess any danger to the Queen or Heir. She also spends an hour at Court daily, debating items of protocol, but Elspeth is spared such nonsense because she is busy with her new classes and duties. Talia is glad to find that the girl is content. The Council meetings disturb Talia because the Councilors and couriers cast fearful glances at her, and she worries about the rumors being circulated. Elspeth does not understand why Talia continues to train with Alberich since the Heir is the better fighter, but Alberich does not want anyone to know how skilled Elspeth truly is, plus crowned heads do not defend themselves.

The day for the rite of Elspeth's formal investiture as Heir finally arrives, and Talia dresses in her High Court ceremonials for the first time in her life, complete with weapons. Dean Elcarth brings Dirk and Kris to escort Talia; since Talia is interning with Kris, she might want to get acquainted with him "under calmer circumstances than the last time they met" (page 44). Talia is relieved when Kris and Dirk assure her that they are escorting her because there is less chance of trouble with two hulking brutes standing near the Queen. At Dirk's teasing that no one will stand a chance with Talia now that she has seen Kris, Kris is relieved when Talia rejects the notion. Dirk has trouble sorting out his odd feelings for Talia because the sight of her arouses complicated feelings that he is unsure whether he wants to acknowledge. Though her nerves affect her, Talia refuses to allow it to show. The ritual is set in the Great Hall, and Talia is aware that she, Kris and Dirk are a reassuring sight to those who feared seeing weakness, but she also feels a general uneasiness though she cannot fathom the reason behind it. Talia attempts to appear harmless and competent as the ceremony begins, and when her nervousness decreases after a while, she tries to will some of that confidence into Elspeth who is not faring as well since she has to address a personalized speech to each of her new liegemen. She is grateful when Kris and Dirk assist her, and when the ceremony is finally complete, the Queen's party retires from the dais and the Bardic Circle instrumentalists strike up a dance melody. Dirk claims the first dance with Talia and yields her to other partners reluctantly afterward. Kris only dances with Talia, Elspeth or much older women to avoid being devoured by the Court beauties. He earns Talia's respect with his desire to become Dean when Elcarth retires. When Dirk reclaims Talia for the next dance, she notices that many white-clad bodies are disappearing, and Dirk explains that they are slipping off to private parties.

After changing into something more comfortable, Talia meets Kris and Dirk in the library, and they escort her to the party in the tack shed of the Companions' Field. They are greeted by everyone, and Skif joyfully greets Talia, praising her performance at the ceremony. As their entrance fee, Dirk, Kris and Talia perform "Sun and Shadow", and Dirk greatly admires Talia's singing. When dancing begins, Talia pulls Skif aside to



privately discuss his accident, and as he recounts the story, Talia removes the paralysis of fear from his mind for which Skif is extremely thankful. After they rejoin the party, Talia yawns, and realizing that it is dawn, she collects her belongings. She assures Dirk that she had a good time, and motioning to Selenay and Alberich with Keren, Sherrill and Jeri, Dirk assures Talia that she will not be expected for duty today since no one will rise before noon. As they wish each other pleasant dreams, Dirk claims "they most assuredly will be" (page 65).

Chapter 2 Analysis

Talia is nervous about the formal ritual in which Elspeth will be named Heir because, as the Queen's Own, Talia must play a large role in the investiture. Talia prepares for the ritual tirelessly during the three weeks prior to the ceremony. When Dean Elcarth brings Dirk and Kris to escort Talia to the ceremony, he makes her uncomfortable by teasing her, but the boys assure her that they are serving as her escorts simply because they appear more imposing, which will prevent possible trouble. Additionally, Talia learns in this chapter that she will be interning with Kris, fulfilling the earlier foreshadowing from chapter 1. Because Kris is handsome and frequently sought after by the Court beauties, he worries that Talia will be interested in him, showing his conceit, but he is relieved when Talia rejects such a notion because she prefers a man with a kind heart to a man with a handsome face. Talia's thoughts indicate an interest in Dirk which is reciprocated by his thinking of his uncanny attraction to the Queen's Own. At the ceremony, Talia overcomes her nervous fears and strives to be a comforting influence to Elspeth. Talia is bothered by the fact that she still feels a general uneasiness coming from some of the Council members.

The investiture ceremony proceeds without problems, and during the dancing portion of the ceremony, Kris avoids the Court beauties seeking to devour him by dancing mostly with Talia. When Dirk dances with Talia, it is evident that his feelings for her are quite strong. Dirk and Kris invite Talia to attend a private Heralds' party after the ceremony. Dirk's admiration for Talia grows when he hears her sing. Talia shows her friendship for Skif and demonstrates her power when she discusses his accident with him and frees him of his fear relating to the event. Talia enjoys the party so much that she does not realize how long she has stayed until it is nearly dawn, at which point she and Dirk wish each other pleasant dreams, and Dirk's response shows the increase in his feelings for Talia, or at least an increase in his acceptance of those feelings.



Chapter 3

Chapter 3 Summary

Talia wakes late with the desire to return to sleep, but she is plagued with the feeling of duty. As she prepares to bathe, she finds a note on her door from Kyril stating that due to an emergency on the Northern Border, her internship with Kris will begin tomorrow. Talia bathes and consults with Rolan who reassures her before seeking Kyril. Kyril is pleased to see that Talia looks alert, and though he does not understand her reputation as a sweet but simple creature, he realizes that being underestimated may work to Talia's advantage. Though the Forest of Sorrows protects the Northern Border from potential for trouble, Kyril does not like to leave the Border Sectors without a Herald for long, because the people already feel isolated and need to know that they are important to the kingdom. Kyril teaches Talia the Arrow-Code and makes her practice her pattern for several hours before declaring her competent. He describes the meaning of different colors and patterns before expressing confidence in her abilities and dismissing Talia.

Talia searches for Kris and finds him in the tack shed with Dirk. After she inspects Rolan's traveling equipment, Kris and Dirk lead Talia to requisition supplies and advise her on which personal belongings to pack. When Kris teases Dirk about worrying about Talia, Dirk blushes. While Talia packs, Keren visits to wish her good luck and takes her to a surprise farewell party in her honor. Skif helped prepare the party because he is aware that Talia isolates herself when she needs others the most, and he projects to Talia how important and satisfying their friendship is to him. After the party, Talia is sent to bed early with a smile on her face. Late that evening, a tap on Kris' door reveals his uncle, Lord Orthallen, who expresses concern over Talia's unusual Gift. He tells Kris about the rumors that Talia has fostered an unnatural dependence in the Heir and uses her Gift to influence the Council, perhaps unintentionally. Lord Orthallen counts on his nephew to lay these doubts to rest. At false dawn, Talia wakes, eats breakfast and prepares for her journey. Talia straps her packs to the chirras, harnesses Rolan, and heads out of the Capital with Kris.

Chapter 3 Analysis

On the day after Elspeth's investiture as Heir, the fact that Talia wakes plagued by duty foreshadows the discovery that her internship is to begin the next day, and this is fulfilled quickly when Talia receives the note from Kyril concerning her internship. Since Talia is nervous, she seeks solace from Rolan, revealing their tight-knit relationship. Kyril's thoughts about Talia reveal that many are apt to underestimate her, but they also reveal that he has no ill-intent toward Talia. Kyril explains some of the details of the internship and teaches Talia the Arrow-Code before dismissing her. He also expresses complete confidence in her abilities and wishes her luck during her internship. With Dirk and Kris' help, Talia prepares to leave Court for her internship. Dirk's reactions to Talia makes Kris suspect that his partner is interested in his new intern. Skif demonstrates his



intimacy with Talia by his knowledge that she tends to isolate herself when she most needs others, and the farewell party in her honor shows that Talia is well-liked. Lord Orthallen's visit to Kris reveals the rumors about Talia at Court and also creates the first inkling of doubt about Talia in Kris' mind. This foreshadows the results of these rumors when Kris discusses them with Talia. The chapter ends with the beginning of Talia's internship as she and Kris leave the Capital.



Chapter 4

Chapter 4 Summary

Talia and Kris travel in silence. Talia has not been out of the city much because her parents disowned her when she was Chosen. At age thirteen, women in Holderkin either take a vow of silence and chastity to serve the goddess, or they marry; Talia is relieved when she is Chosen. When Talia tells her story to Selenay, the Queen ensures unhappy children can leave Holderkin by sending Heralds with thought-sensing to the Border Sectors. Talia tells Kris about her past until they stop for lunch. Wondering about his uncle's words, Kris asks Talia about influencing Elspeth and the Council, but Talia vehemently denies the rumors. Talia does not speak to Kris for a long time after they return to the North Road. When he asks how her Gift works, Talia explains that she can feel emotions and sometimes fix them if they are strongly related to a specific thing. Kris tells Talia that he and Dirk have been partners since they both got their Whites because Kris sees and Dirk fetches which allows them to find things. When Kris hopes that a woman will figure out Dirk is worth ten faces like Kris', Talia noncommittally expects that one will someday, and Kris is suspicious of her nonchalance. They discuss the happiness and honor of being Chosen, and Talia tells of how she once returned to Holderkin to rescue her sister only to find a stranger who rejected her. Talia is "resigned to letting things rest as they are, knowing my example shows misfits that there is an escape" (page 107).

Thinking about the poisonous rumors, Talia worries that they could be true and she may accidentally be influencing others when she is excited, agitated or asleep. When Kris and Talia stop at a small village, they entertain and answer questions about the Heir as payment for the villagers' hospitality. A small boy asks about the Heralds, and Talia senses Rolan noticing the boy as well; the boy will likely be Chosen in another year or two. When they mount the next morning, Kris gives Talia a small pouch, noting that she forgot her stipend. The road and landscape changes as they travel northward, and Talia continues to worry that she is misusing her Gift. At the next village, she tries to determine whether she is influencing people's moods. Further north, as the villages are spread further apart, Talia can feel the press of Kris' emotional state, and it does not help her doubts that he is still uneasy about her. Kris tries unsuccessfully to ignore his uncle's words but dares not broach the subject with Talia again. He wonders if she misuses her Gift unintentionally or, worse, if she is using it to manipulate him. He feels horrible about his suspicions because he is starting to like her and feels that she is becoming a friend of the same order as Dirk, like they are brother and sister. Once they reach the border of their Sector, they will stay at Waystations to maintain impartiality with the people of the Sector. Kris knows Talia will try her hardest and assures her of his trust, though he thinks that he hopes he can trust her.



Chapter 4 Analysis

During the beginning of Talia and Kris' journey, Talia tells Kris about her childhood and past in Holderkin, her hometown. Her description of her childhood unhappiness only serves to reinforce the truth of her claim that she was relieved when she was Chosen, and this also shows how important the Herald lifestyle is to Talia. Talia is infuriated and filled with self-doubt when Kris tells her of the rumors at Court. She continues telling Kris about her Gift, and in return, Kris tells Talia about his partnership with Dirk. Her nonchalance in regard to Kris' hope that someday a woman will discover Dirk's true worth causes Kris to suspect that Talia has feelings for Dirk. Talia tells Kris about returning to Holderkin to rescue her sister and how she sees herself as an example of hope for misfits in her hometown.

As the journey continues, Talia is increasingly plagued by doubts as to whether she is misusing her Gift. She tries to ascertain whether she is unintentionally influencing people's moods when they stop at villages along the way, and her self-doubt fulfills the earlier foreshadowing concerning her reaction to the rumors at Court. Her discomfort is increased by the fact that Kris is uneasy about her. Talia's emotional and ethical questions foreshadow her problems with her Gift that begin in the next chapter. Kris instinctively likes Talia, but his uncle's words prevent him from trusting her wholeheartedly, so he struggles to find his true feelings about Talia while plagued by the suspicion that she is manipulating his feelings. Based on Talia's feelings, it is likely that, if she is manipulating Kris' feelings, she is not doing so in her favor but rather against her.



Chapter 5

Chapter 5 Summary

When Kris leads Talia to the first Waystation, she starts a fire and heats water for their baths, bathing herself and fixing a meal while Kris tends to the animals. Realizing why Kris is dawdling, Talia chides him for thinking of her as a woman. As they approach the first village in their Sector, Talia is nervous because she has no idea what reception and requests await them. Additionally, her shields are unusually thin, but she fears that telling Kris will only reinforce his doubts about her. As they ride into the village, it seems that the entire population meets them to request the marriage of a young man and his pregnant betrothed. The villagers seem worried that the Heralds will object, but Kris takes the young couple aside, witnesses their vows and signs their marriage contract. Although the rest of the day is spent in idleness, the press of people puts a strain on Talia so she allows Kris to take most of the attention. Her shields have not been this fragile since she first learned to fully use her Gift, and Talia is filled with fear and self-doubt as she thinks about the rumors at Court. The next day, Kris and Talia tell the villagers news of the Capital and other towns, but Talia's dreams that night are uneasy and she wakes ill-rested. The third day is spent collecting news of the village to pass along, and that night, Talia reinforces her shields until she is weary enough to sleep. They return to the road on the fifth day, and though it grows noticeably colder, Talia is relieved because she does not have to continually worry about her shields failing, but her nerves continue to fray. Kris is unhappy because he likes Talia, but is unsure if she is manufacturing his feelings of approval. It is not helpful that she is withdrawing.

When they stop at a Waystation between villages for the night, Kris consults with Tantris, his Companion, who is worried and puzzled but suggests Kris needs more expert aid since Rolan does not wish to discuss the affairs of his Chosen. Kris is troubled that even a Companion does not feel fit for solving the problem at hand. Before Kris and Talia reach the second village, they are accosted by two parties demanding justice concerning the offspring of a cow and a bull allowed to stray into someone else's field. Kris has no expertise in this field and asks Talia for help since she is farm bred. After questioning the villagers, Talia orders the owner of the bull to pay for repairing the cow owner's fences, but since the man with the cow moved his cow to an unused field to take advantage of the opportunity, he is ordered to pay half of the stud fee. Additionally, she dictates that the owner of the bull must properly confine it; else, any who find the bull roaming and confine it to a safe place is entitled to have his cows serviced for free. Kris and the other villagers approve of Talia's rulings. As Kris and Talia continue toward the village, they almost immediately receive a dispute for arbitration concerning the boundary between two neighboring farms, and Kris requests records that contain clues about ownership of the properties in question. Meanwhile, Talia is reluctant to take part in the affairs because her shields are slowly disintegrating. When Kris and Talia discuss the dispute the night before leaving the village, Kris suggests the Hand of Fate which involves shooting two arrows into the air and drawing a new boundary between where they land. They leave after settling the dispute by this method.



Kris is unable to read Talia at all because she is so withdrawn and isolated. Because the disputes were solved so easily, he worries if Talia forced the disputants to be less antagonistic and frets that, if so, the quarrels will resume once they are gone. Talia realizes that she controls her Gift on a purely instinctive level and does not actually understand how it works. Though she longs and fears to talk to Kris about it, she does not think he can help since they have completely different types of Gifts. Saying nothing, Talia endures in self-doubt and does her best to reverse a situation that grows increasingly out of control.

Chapter 5 Analysis

Kris and Talia reside at Waystations during their assignment in order to maintain impartiality with the population of the villages where they must arbitrate, judge and punish. At the first Waystation, Talia realizes that Kris is maintaining distance because she is a woman, and she chides him for thinking of her as female instead of simply as another Herald that he is training. Talia is nervous to begin her internship at the first village, but her fears are intensified by the fact that her shields are unusually thin, fulfilling the earlier foreshadowing that her self-doubt will affect her Gift. Talia continues to worry about her fragile shields as Kris takes the lead in arbitration at the first village. Their role and actions at the first village are a demonstration of their duty, which is repeated at every other town they stop at on their journey.

As Talia's self-doubt increases, so does the strength of her shields and, as a result, her control of her Gift. Kris continues to doubt whether Talia is manipulating his feelings, and his doubts are increased by her withdrawal into herself. Tantris, Kris' Companion, is also bothered by Talia's actions but does not know how to solve the situation, and this makes Kris more nervous. At the second village, Talia arbitrates a dispute about a cow at Kris' insistence, since she has more experience in the field because she is farm bred and he is not. Kris wonders if Talia uses her Gift to assist her in settling disputes after they leave the second village, and Talia realizes that she does not actually know the intellectual aspect of controlling her Gift because she does it on a purely instinctive level. Since Talia is afraid to discuss her failing shields and control with Kris, she does her best to handle the situation on her own as it grows increasingly out of control.



Chapter 6

Chapter 6 Summary

There is little of note in the villages on the way to the Border, and Talia continues to be silent and withdrawn. Kris cannot account for her nerves, especially since Rolan also seems unusually on edge. Feeling that she is falling to pieces bit by bit, Talia's unhappiness plagues her by the time they reach Hevenbeck near the Border. Due to concern over Elspeth's most recent message, Talia pays scant attention to the petitioners before her. When an older, rich couple accuses their young sewing maid of stealing and eating their poultry, Talia, disturbed by the girl's gaze, says they have no proof, but Kris commands her to cast a Truth Spell which causes the girl to rage about sacrificing the birds to exact her revenge on her employers. When Talia reaches out in self-defense and puts the girl to sleep, Kris and the couple are speechless. Kris orders the couple to take the girl to the Healer and pay the expenses. Kris is ominously silent on their return to the Waystation, and Talia apologizes because she feels like a failure. Realizing his mistake in not encouraging Talia's fragile self-esteem, Kris fears he has ruined her and worries she is going mad and taking him with her.

When Talia and Kris near the tiny hamlet nearest the Border and right beside the Forest of Sorrows, Talia is unable to sense the population centers and worries that her powers have failed completely, but since she can still feel Kris, she tells him what she is feeling and they quicken their pace because if there is trouble, the sooner they get there, the better. Since the village is too quiet and the gates are unattended, Kris orders Talia to stay on the hill while he descends into the village. Shortly after he enters the village gates, the gates close and lock, and he sends an arrow to Talia to inform her that the entire village has fallen victim to some kind of plague. Leaving the supplies, Talia and Rolan ride toward the nearest Healing Temple, five days east by horse. At the Healing Temple, Kerithwyn, the most experienced Healer in plague diseases, accompanies Talia immediately, promising that two Heralds and two more Healers will follow soon. As Talia helps Kerithwyn astride Rolan, the Healer gives Talia an odd look when their hands touch. They reach Hevenbeck shortly after midday on the second day of their return, and Kris, looking worn, admits them into the village. He describes the symptoms, and Kerithwyn recognizes the plague as snow fever. She will start healing the most ill first, and although Kris' Gift is wrong for Healing, Talia's Gift of Empathy should be useful.

While Kris administers an herbal mixture to every victim, Kerithwyn and Talia enter the house with the worst victims. Following Kerithwyn's instructions, Talia drops her shields, allowing Kerithwyn to draw from her energy and begin Healing the villagers. Talia is cheered by the sight because it is the first time in a long while that she has done something right. After treating everyone in the house, Kerithwyn insists Talia rest and eat to replenish her energy stores; else, she will be useless. Talia, Kris and Kerithwyn work tirelessly until the two Heralds and two Healers arrive, allowing them their first full night of sleep. By the end of the week, several former patients are well enough to help, so Kerithwyn commands Talia and Kris to leave before they catch the plague



themselves. Kerithwyn warns Talia that her shields are full of holes and she needs to work on her control before she affects even the unGifted. Gathering courage, Talia follows Kris from the village as he consults the maps and finds a particularly good Waystation where they can stop. Just as they reach the Waystation, the chirras shuffle uneasily. Touching the animals' minds at Kris' request, Talia learns that a big blizzard is coming down from the north and will hit the Waystation before dusk.

Chapter 6 Analysis

Talia's continued isolation disturbs Kris, but Kris is bothered even more by the fact that Rolan also seems on edge. By the time that they reach Hevenbeck, Talia's discontent with her problem affects her to the point that she does not pay attention to the petitioners before her, nearly resulting in a dire misjudgment of the mad sewing maid which is prevented only by Kris' interference in her judgment. The girl's rage is so powerful that it nearly overwhelms Talia, and she is forced to reach out and put the girl to sleep to protect herself; this increases Kris' doubts as to whether Talia misuses her Gift, but her reaction to his obvious disapproval also causes him to realize that Talia's self-esteem is fragile and that there is something serious going on with her and her Gift. Talia's Gift reveals a problem at Waymeet, and Kris rides into the village and is able to inform her of a plague. Though she is frightened, Talia yields to her duty and leaves Kris in order to summon Healers. When Talia returns, it is evident that her first concern is to her duty as she disregards her problems in order to help nurse the ill at Waymeet. When things are under control, Kerithwyn, the Healer, insists that Kris and Talia leave, but she warns Talia about how seriously damaged her shields have become. Fending off suicidal and helpless thoughts, Talia follows Kris out of the village because she must honor her duty regardless of her personal issues. The chirras warn Talia that a blizzard is approaching as they reach the Waystation, and this foreshadows the blizzard which strands Talia and Kris at the Waystation for the next month.



Chapter 7

Chapter 7 Summary

Kris and Talia bring everything into the Waystation, including their animals. When Kris mentions that Kerithwyn told him Talia's Gift is out of control, he expects anger or denial but not the suicidal despair and killing rage that affects him and the Companions. Kris slams Talia into the wall, and she collapses into sobs. He cuddles with her in bed for warmth and realizes his fault in telling her the rumors and shattering her already fragile self-esteem. He shares a bottle of spirits of wine, the standard cure for sensitivity, with Talia, but when he intends to give her a brotherly kiss, it does not stay brotherly. They yield to their mutual desire, and Kris is surprised to find that Talia is a virgin. They sleep together because it is warmer, and Tantris wakes Kris when the Companions and chirras need to go outside to use the bathroom. Talia curls against Kris, warming him, when he slips into bed, and he is surprised that she is such a sensualist considering her inexperience. She explains that she has second-hand experience through Rolan. Kris and Talia discuss how to control her Gift, and it is evident that she is learning since she recognizes her need for help. After learning that the Companions can impose shields on Talia from the outside for short periods of time, Kris, Tantris and Rolan decide to take turns shielding Talia's Gift while they invent training for her to control it. Talia and Kris spend the day doing chores and evaluating their supplies. They are glad for the abundance of supplies because they may be snowed in for a month. While they sing after supper, Talia and Kris are surprised when the chirras join in. Kris warns Talia that the next few days will be hard because he, Tantris and Rolan will teach her when she is projecting so she can learn to control it. Then, she can work on rebuilding her shields.

When Kris notices a scar on Talia's hand, she tells how she received it from her brother, Justus, for refusing to drown a bag of kittens. Kris apologizes for not trusting Talia and promises that they will fix her control issues. He believes Talia and Dirk will be more than casual friends because they are so alike. Due to Talia's slightly eager response, Kris realizes she is smitten with Dirk, and he is fairly convinced that Dirk is also interested in Talia. He realizes that there are depths to both of them that he will never see. Kris cannot imagine being able to bear being snowed in for such a long time with anyone other than Talia or Dirk, but they need the time to learn to control Talia's Gift. He assures her that they will learn to control it. Awake after Talia sleeps, Kris struggles against a Herald's impartiality to believe in Talia wholeheartedly because he knows that the moment she senses doubt in him, despair and betrayal will turn her Gift against both of them, and he has no doubt how that will end.

Chapter 7 Analysis

When Kris confronts Talia about her lack of control concerning her Gift, she reacts with despair and rage, which is not the reaction he was expecting. After he manages to dissipate her rage, he attempts to comfort her grief as he realizes that this is at least



partially his fault since telling her the Court rumors had shattered her already fragile self-esteem. In comforting Talia, Kris gives her a kiss that is meant to be fraternal but leads to a sexual intimacy between the two of them. Kris is shocked to find that Talia is a virgin since rumor had suggested a sexual relationship between Talia and Skif; this proves the inaccuracy of rumors. Talia shows her caring nature by warming Kris each time he returns to their shared bed.

Kris and Talia discuss how they may be able to control her Gift, and when Kris discovers that the Companions can impose external shields on Talia's Gift, he decides to take turns with Rolan and Tantris to help Talia control her power while they find a way for her to control it on her own. Talia tells Kris more about her past, and this causes him to compare her to Dirk. When Talia reacts eagerly to his suggestion that she and Dirk will be more than casual friends, Kris' suspicions regarding a potential future romance between Dirk and Talia are heightened. Kris begins to truly see who Talia really is and feels guilty for ever doubting her; however, he struggles against impartiality to express his faith in her for fear that despair and betrayal will cause her to accidentally turn her Gift against them both if she senses any doubt in him.



Chapter 8

Chapter 8 Summary

As Kris pursues an icy apparition through the forest, he hears Talia weeping ahead of him and realizes the monster is stalking her. When he tries to shout a warning, he wakes with a start to find that Talia is also awake, due to dreaming that they should move their supplies inside the Waystation. Talia and Kris move the supplies with a growing sense of urgency. When they wake in the morning, the roar of wind behind the Waystation where the supply shed is located frightens them, and they believe the stories about the Forest of Sorrows and Vanyel's Curse when they see many felled trees, one of which fell against the wind to avoid destroying the Waystation. Deciding to dig their way out, Talia and Kris construct a shovel from My Lady's travel case, and while they work, Talia worries about how long it will take the Guard to clear the road, causing Kris to chide her for projecting. Talia manages to block her emotions as Kris plays the harp to help calm her.

To dispel the gloom, Talia wonders what is going on at Court since it is Midwinter, and Kris mentions that his uncle hates Midwinter because there are so many petitions. Talia feels that Lord Orthallen dislikes her and is trying to find a way to get rid of her. She justifies this by Orthallen's knowledge of an attempt on her life and his unjust punishing of Skif, as well as trying to convince the Council to double her internship. Kris tries to explain possible reasons for his uncle's behavior, but Talia suggests that Lord Orthallen considers her a threat to his influence with Selenay. She suspects he told Kris about the Court rumors because he knew how Talia would be affected by hearing them. After admitting his uncle loves power, Kris changes the subject because they have plenty of other things to worry about, such as the fact that since Talia is strong enough to project she could do it again. Kris and Talia spend the next several days trying to clear the road, but then the weather changes and the night gets colder.

Chapter 8 Analysis

Talia's dream that they need to move their supplies inside the Waystation works like a prophecy. After they act on the message in the dream, the supply storage shed is destroyed during the remainder of the night. The mystery behind the Forest of Sorrows and Vanyel's Curse is reinforced by the fact that one of the trees fell against the wind to avoid damaging the Waystation. Kris continues to aid Talia in blocking her emotions and informing her when she projects. They construct a shovel out of the traveling case for My Lady. When Kris mentions his uncle, Talia insists that Councilor Lord Orthallen does not like her and cites her reasons for this belief, but Kris defends his uncle by explaining his reactions as natural instead of antagonistic toward Talia. Kris changes the subject, refocusing on their problems with Talia's control, which continues to be an ongoing issue. The weather changing and the night getting colder foreshadows Kris and Talia being stranded at the Waystation for a while longer.



Chapter 9

Chapter 9 Summary

When they see the destruction of their hard work the next morning, Kris recommends that they rest for several days. Kris and Talia realize they can work faster on the frozen snow if the Companions and chirras help. Rolan and Tantris agree but insist the Heralds rest the next day. While rubbing Kris' back, Talia asks him to tell her about Dirk. Kris tells how Dirk was born the son of a Bard and a Healer, the only daughter of a farmer who settled on the Border. Dirk has six siblings, and they are all talented in music. Dirk takes Kris home with him on their first holiday from the Collegium, and Kris returns every chance he gets. When he was Chosen at age eleven, Dirk tried to direct Ahrodie's attention to his sister because he thought he was too ugly to be a Herald. Dirk is very sensitive, and Kris helped him get over a broken heart and swears to break the neck of anyone who hurts Dirk like that again. Kris worries that Talia is becoming infatuated with him since Dirk and Talia seem more than interested in one another.

Kris begins training Talia to control her Gift, starting with the concepts of Ground and Center. She is probably having problems with her Gift now because she was taught shielding first. Kris teaches Talia to find a stable place while feeling everything; this is Centering. Connecting herself to the earth is Grounding. As Talia continues to practice, she says she could easily hate Kris, but she knows that he is only trying to help her. Tantris insists that Kris and Talia rest again the next day, so Talia continues practicing and finally meets with victory hours later. Kris realizes that Talia's shields collapsed because they were never properly based in the first place. Once they go to bed, Talia thanks Kris for his help because she truly needs him, but Kris worries that it is something more than need.

Once Kris falls asleep, Talia worries that she may have used her Gift to influence the way Kris feels about her. Though she likes Kris well enough, she is more strongly attracted to Dirk than anyone before as though he is some missing piece of herself. As she recalls Keren and Sherrill talking about falling in love at first sight, Talia admits to herself that this seems to be what happened with her concerning Dirk. Though she needs Kris, need is not love, and she worries that Kris has become infatuated with her. After managing to sort out some of her feelings, Talia goes to sleep, worrying that she is driving both her and Kris over the edge and knowing that if it happens again, it can only end in the death of one or both of them.

Chapter 9 Analysis

Kris and Talia are disheartened to see that their hard work has been destroyed by the snow freezing over, so Kris suggests that they rest for several days since it will not make much difference either way. Rolan and Tantris condone this plan, though they also agree to Kris and Talia's suggestion that they can work faster at removing the frozen



snow with the help of the chirras and the Companions. While Kris and Talia relax, Talia asks Kris to tell her about Dirk, indicating her continued interest. Kris tells Talia about Dirk's family and childhood, as well as how much Kris likes to visit them. Kris also shows that he is very protective of his partner by swearing to break the neck of anyone who hurts Dirk like the woman who broke his heart in an attempt to seduce Kris. Kris worries that Talia is infatuated with him because he suspects that Dirk is interested in her. Kris begins training Talia to control her Gift. The fact that she was taught shielding first was an oversight because her teachers likely assumed that she already understood Grounding and Centering, but since she did not, her shields had no base. Talia practices until she understands the concepts. Kris continues to worry about Talia being infatuated with him, but ironically, Talia is concerned that she has manipulated Kris' feelings and caused him to be infatuated with him. Talia worries about regaining control because she fears that her lack of control will cause the death of her, Kris or both of them.



Chapter 10

Chapter 10 Summary

Since she knows that she can control her Gift by being exhausted, Talia keeps herself very busy. Talia, Kris, the Companions, and the chirras work hard every day to clear the path, and Kris drills Talia repeatedly until Grounding and Centering become reflexive. Though her shielding begins to return, it is very thin. About a month after reaching the Waystation, they finally dig their way to the road which is as drift-covered as the path. Kris is bewildered since he never contemplated such a thing, and Talia tries to stay calm despite feeling that she is being watched because she believes the feeling originates in her mind. When Kris feels the same, he strikes out at Talia, causing her to lose control of her emotions, but she regains control when she feels the power ready to strike her down. Rolan stands beside Talia and faces the forest in challenge, and there is a feeling of surprise before the sensation of being watched disappears. After apologizing, Kris suggests they place signals on the road to alert the Guard that they are at the Waystation and alive. Three days later, the Waystation feels confining, and Talia, feeling claustrophobic, asks Kris to go somewhere because she is disturbed by the forest watching and feels it does not like her. Tantris believes the forest is disturbed by Talia because she is a Herald who is a danger to another Herald.

The next morning, the Companions seem to be listening to something when Kris and Talia awake; people are finally coming. They pack and meet the road crew at the end of the path. Herald Tedric is with the road crew, and he informs them that the Waystation was well-stocked due to the Weatherwitch's nagging. Talia and Kris inform Tedric of what transpired while they were snowed in, and he wants Talia to do something for the Weatherwitch. They reach Berrybay just after sunset, and Tedric sends Talia and Kris to their lodgings while he tends to their animals. When Talia falls asleep immediately, Kris questions Tedric about his knowledge of the Queen's Own and learns the rumors that Talia misuses her Gift and is poorly trained. Kris worries that Heralds will lose faith in the Collegium if they learn of Talia's poor state Talia, so they must complete their circuit and restore Talia's powers to a functioning level.

After Kris and Talia are properly outfitted the next day, they set about discharging their duties to the Berrybay populace. Although rest helps Talia control her Gift, she wants to weep when confronted with the villagers' suspicion and fear, which is demonstrated by the fact that they wear evil eye talismans against evil around her. The talismans are gone by the third day, but Talia worries how the villagers will react when she seeks the Weatherwitch on the fourth day. The depression surrounding the Weatherwitch's cottage is nearly palpable to Talia, and she is partially attracted to and partially repelled by the shadowy mind. Though she doubts her Gift, she cannot turn away. Since the Weatherwitch has been maddened by the loss of her child, Talia instructs Tedric to replace the Weatherwitch's doll with the surviving child of a gypsy family who died of snow sickness two months earlier. The Weatherwitch is happy and grateful, and she predicts that Talia will reclaim what was hers and will find her heart's desire after she



has seen the Havens. To Tedric's amazement, Talia explains that she seemed to see that the Weatherwitch needed a second chance to make everything right. Talia could see a tie between the Weatherwitch and the child, though she does not know how it is possible that he could actually belong to the Weatherwitch. Talia has weathered this one, and now, all she has to do is continue to survive.

Chapter 10 Analysis

Talia, Kris, the chirras and the Companions work hard to clear the snow from the path, and Talia continues to work diligently at Grounding and Centering with Kris' assistance. Her shielding begins to return, but it is still very thin. They are at the Waystation for a month before they finally dig their way to the road, but this is very discouraging since the road is still covered in snow. When Talia is overcome with despair, she feels that she is being watched, and Kris believes she is projecting when he senses the same sensation. Though Talia nearly loses control of her emotions at Kris' accusation, she regains control when she realizes that the power watching her is ready to strike her down. Rolan, facing the forest in challenge and causing the watching sensation to disappear, shows that he is protecting Talia. After Talia and Kris post signals to alert the Guard of their location, they discuss the watching sensation. Tantris assures them that the forest is watching.

Furthermore, the forest seems confused by Talia because its duty is to protect the kingdom and its Heralds. Though Talia is a Herald, she is a potential danger to another Herald, Kris. This feeling disturbs Talia. Talia and Kris are finally rescued by Herald Tedric and the Guard. After Talia goes to sleep at Berrybay, Kris learns the extent of the rumors about Talia from Tedric. Though the villagers treat Talia with distrust at first, she manages to earn their trust by the third day. At Tedric's request, Talia visits the Weatherwitch and cures her depression by giving her a second chance to make things right through the gypsy child; though it seems impossible that the child rightfully belongs to the Weatherwitch, Talia sees a connection between the two. The Weatherwitch prophesies that Talia will reclaim what is hers and will find her heart's desire after she has seen the Havens and faced much sorrow. Talia has weathered her first round of duties after rebuilding her shields, and now she realizes that all she has to do is continue to survive.



Chapter 11

Chapter 11 Summary

Kris tells Talia that it is almost Midsummer which means her internship is half over so he asks for her evaluation. Though she has had a horrid time, Talia is grateful that she did not lose her control and shields at Court. Talia's feelings for Kris have mellowed into something similar to what she has with Skif, but she worries that he may be infatuated with her because he often looks at her with a shadowed expression. When the courier arrives with news and laws from Court, it is Skif. He also shares gossip, such as the Collegium being full because twenty were Chosen this spring, and the rumors at Court focus on Elspeth's unfitness for the Crown and her dependence on the Heralds, especially Talia.

As they share stories of the road, Talia excuses herself because she is uncomfortable since Skif's Companion is a mare and Rolan is sporting. While Talia is gone, Skif questions Kris about his relationship with Talia because he suspects that Dirk is acting like a man with a lifebond. Admitting that they began sleeping together during the blizzard, Kris fears that Talia has become fixated on him, but he plans to break things off because, once the infatuation fades, her attention will return to Dirk if it is a lifebond. After Skif leaves early the next afternoon, Talia knows that Kris is bothered by something which has to do with her, and she worries that he has become more involved than they intended; she does not want to hurt his feelings, but it is not Kris who she wants. Talia is excited to receive a letter from Dirk which contains music transcripts, but she is also worried because Dirk sent it to her instead of Kris. After Kris looks through the package, he begins telling Talia that Dirk is the better man, and when she realizes Kris suspects her of being infatuated with him, she punches him in the jaw for his conceit and storms off. Kris follows her, and they sort the matter out. Kris explains Midsummer celebrations to Talia since she never celebrated it in the Holdings, even though her birthing day is on Midsummer's Eve. Talia admits to her fear that she had manipulated Kris into being infatuated with her, and Kris tells her that he believes Dirk may be lifebonded to her and he would be happy for them both to find someone who deserves them. The next morning, Talia wakes to a garland of flowers and a silver ring that Heralds only give to their closest friends.

Chapter 11 Analysis

Kris informs Talia that it is Midsummer and halfway through her internship. Though Talia has had a horrible time due to her control issues, she still recognizes the value of her problems occurring during her internship, rather than at Court. She also continues to question the moral implications of using her Gift. In her thoughts, Talia compares her feelings for Kris to those for Skif. Kris tells Talia that Dirk's nickname for her is "little bird", and the fact that Dirk has a nickname for Talia further indicates his feelings for her. When a courier from the Capital arrives, Talia is happy to see Skif. This is also useful



since Skif is Talia's friend and knows what information from Court she is most eager to hear.

When Talia excuses herself due to discomfort over Rolan sporting with Skif's mare, Skif questions Kris about his relationship with Talia; however, Skif is not jealous, but rather, he suspects that Dirk is lifebonded to Talia and wants to diminish his mentor's pain as much as possible. Kris shares his concerns that Talia is infatuated with him, but he decides to break it off with her in order to propagate a relationship between Dirk and Talia, showing his value for his friendship with Dirk. Talia is excited to receive a letter from Dirk, though Dirk tries to hide his true feelings in the cordial letter. When Kris admits his fears of Talia being infatuated with him, she strikes him for his arrogance. They fight for a while before Talia admits that she had similar fears. They make up and are friendly again. When Kris learns that Talia never celebrated Midsummer or her birthing day, which falls on Midsummer's Eve, he bestows appropriate gifts on her for the occasions, including a friendship ring between Heralds.



Chapter 12

Chapter 12 Summary

As Talia and Kris hear petitions on a beautiful autumn day, a small boy brings a letter from his grandfather about a feud and a poisoned well. When Kris disagrees with Talia's desire to handle the situation immediately, she realizes that he is intentionally arguing with her in an attempt to manipulate her emotions, and Kris admits it and can now stop since she has figured it out. Talia does not use her Gift to settle the dispute because she is unsure about the ethics of manipulating people's emotions, and Kris worries that Talia will freeze if an emergency arises and the only way for her to deal with it is to use her Gift. On Kris' birthday, Talia presents him with a ring identical to her own. As they approach Hevenbeck, Talia is struck with fear, pain and rage. Kris foresees to the village and learns that there are ten to fifteen raiders. They charge to the village and defeat the raiders who are led by the angry sewing maid who sacrificed the poultry. At Waymeet, Kris is met as a hero for nursing the population during the plague. They visit Tedric at Berrybay and find the Weatherwitch and her child are thriving. Talia's shields are stronger than ever, but she is still plagued with the moral questions concerning her Gift.

Near Westmark, Talia feels ahead and senses that there has been death and there will be more unless she gets there immediately. She races off, leaving Kris behind. A stranger being chased by a murdering mob appeals to Talia for justice; he is accused of murdering a young girl whose still-warm body was found in his wagon. Talia promises the man justice and orders everyone to assemble in the square because no one is above suspicion. A man claims the girl as his stepdaughter before Talia begins questioning the villagers. Although the girl was often seen talking to the trader, Talia is suspicious of the stepfather because he is so anxious to punish the trader. After Talia invokes a Truth Spell, the trader says that the girl wanted him to take her with him when he left so that she could escape. When the stepfather attacks the trader, Talia sees his anger and fear and knows the truth, but she cannot accuse him on the basis of what she sees, so she calls the other stepdaughter forward and asks her to speak the truth and be free of this man. The sister of the dead girl admits that the dead girl wanted to escape their stepfather because he has forced both girls to lie with him since their mother died, raping them when they resisted. Furthermore, the living girl is pregnant with her stepfather's child. Talia transfers the Truth Spell to the stepfather, forcing him to admit to molesting both girls and murdering the one. Talia forces a mental rapport on him so that he continually relives every moment his stepdaughter spent as his victim.

When Kris rejoins Talia, there are special couriers accompanying him, and the woman, noting that Talia has made judgment and punishment, asks if this is an ethical use of her Gift. When Talia defends her decision, the couriers nod with satisfaction to Talia's surprise. Now, Talia must turn the fear in the villagers' faces back to trust, and Kris is proud of her regard for duty and her confidence because now she truly is a Herald. After finishing their rounds in Westmark, Talia and Kris reach the rendezvous spot, and Talia is relieved, though she cannot believe that her internship is finally over. As they head to



an inn in a nearby town after detailing the hazards of the circuit to the new Heralds, Kris tells Talia that it is finally over; now is when it really gets hard, but he assures her that she is ready.

Chapter 12 Analysis

During the second half of her internship, Talia is in charge of handling arbitrations and disputes, but Kris constantly questions and contradicts her. When she realizes that he is testing her control over her Gift, she confronts him, and he agrees to stop. Kris worries about Talia's fear of using her Gift to settle disputes because she is still unsure about the morality of manipulating others' emotions. Talia discharges her duties, including winning the villagers' trust, without Kris' aid. On his birthday, she presents him with a friendship ring identical to her own, indicating the strength of their friendship. As they visit the villages in their Sector for the second time, they are forced to confront raiders at Hevenbeck who have been admitted by the insane sewing maid.

Talia and Kris visit the other towns and encounter minimal issues. Near Westmark, Talia is struck by death and races ahead. Using her Gift and skill, Talia determines the guilt of the dead girl's stepfather, and she punishes him by forcing him to continually experience the time his stepdaughter spent as his victim. When special couriers question the ethics of Talia judging and punishing the man, Talia defends her actions and is surprised by their approval; apparently, an important aspect of being a Herald is confidence in one's decisions. Kris is very proud of Talia and her regard for her duties, and he believes that she has truly become a Herald now. After their rendezvous with the new Heralds, Talia's internship is completed. Kris expresses complete confidence in her abilities, though the hard part is yet to come.



Characters

Talia

Talia becomes the Queen's Own when Rolan Chooses her after Talamir is murdered. Talia is from Holdings, a puritanical Border group, and has no idea what it means to have a Herald's Companion accost her and carry her off. Because females hold subordinate positions among her people, Talia is ill-prepared for the world of Heralds, but she manages to find a true home among the Heralds; however, now a year and a half of field duty awaits her, along with a trial she never dreamed of having to pass. At the beginning of this novel, Talia is voted into full Herald status on the anniversary of her first class at the Collegium. Alberich trains Talia and Elspeth in combat, but after the lesson, Talia is concerned by Elspeth's dejection regarding not yet being Chosen. That night, Talia wakes and follows Elspeth to the Grove where Elspeth is Chosen by Gwena. Talia informs Queen Selenay, but she panics when she realizes that another ceremony must take place in which the Queen's Own plays a significant role. She prepares for the investiture and does well during the ceremony. Afterward, she attends a private Heralds' party with Dirk and Kris, but the next morning, Talia receives a note from Kyril informing her that her internship will begin the next day. He then teaches her the Arrow-Code.

After making the necessary preparations, Talia and Kris leave the Capital and head for the Northern Border. Talia is very upset when Kris tells her that rumors are circulating about her at Court. Talia tells Kris about her past, and when he mentions his hope that a woman will figure out Dirk is worth ten faces like Kris', Talia noncommittally expects that one will someday, and Kris is suspicious of her nonchalance. Talia continues to worry about the rumors and grows increasingly concerned that they could be true and she may accidentally be influencing others when she is excited, agitated or asleep. At the first Waystation, she chides Kris for thinking of her as a woman, and she is very nervous as they approach the first village in their Sector, especially as her shields are very fragile. At the second village, Talia settles a dispute between two parties demanding justice concerning the offspring of a cow and a bull allowed to stray into someone else's field. After questioning the villagers, Talia orders the owner of the bull to pay for repairing the cow owner's fences, but since the man with the cow moved his cow to an unused field to take advantage of the opportunity, he is ordered to pay half of the stud fee. Additionally, she dictates that the owner of the bull must properly confine it; else, any who find the bull roaming and confine it to a safe place are entitled to have their cows serviced for free. Talia realizes that she controls her Gift on a purely instinctive level and does not actually understand how it works. Since she is afraid to talk to Kris, she endures her situation in self-doubt and tries to reverse it as it grows increasingly out of control. At Hevenbeck, Talia casts a Truth Spell on the sewing maid and learns that the girl is sacrificing poultry to exact revenge on her employers. Near Waymeet, Talia worries that her powers have failed completely when she is unable to sense the population. After Kris determines that the entire village has fallen victim to some kind of plague, Talia retrieves the Healer, Kerithwyn, who returns to Waymeet with Talia and helps heal the villagers. Before Talia leaves Waymeet, Kerithwyn warns Talia that her



shields are full of holes and she needs to work on her control before she affects even the unGifted.

As Talia and Kris near the Waystation, the chirras warn them about an impending blizzard. They are stranded at the Waystation for nearly a month, during which they begin sleeping together and Kris helps Talia learn to control her Gift and rebuild her shields. Kris begins to suspect that Talia is infatuated with Dirk, but he also worries that she has become infatuated with him; simultaneously, Talia fears that she has accidentally manipulated Kris into becoming infatuated with her. During their confinement, Talia and Kris also work to clear the path to the road. Since she knows that she can control her Gift by being exhausted, Talia keeps herself very busy. Tantris believes the forest is disturbed by Talia because she is a Herald who is a danger to another Herald. When they are finally rescued, Talia and Kris discharge their duties in Berrybay, and Talia agrees to visit and try to help the Weatherwitch at Tedric's request. Since the Weatherwitch has been maddened by the loss of her child, Talia instructs Tedric to replace the Weatherwitch's doll with the surviving child of a gypsy family who died of snow sickness two months earlier. The Weatherwitch is happy and grateful, and she predicts that Talia will reclaim what was hers and will find her heart's desire after she has seen the Havens. Talia has weathered this one, and now, all she has to do is continue to survive. Talia and Kris fight when she learns his conceit in believing that she is infatuated with him, but they reconcile, and Kris gives Talia a Midsummer garland and a friendship ring for her birthing day. Talia does not use her Gift to settle the dispute because she is unsure about the ethics of manipulating people's emotions. Kris worries that Talia will freeze if an emergency arises and the only way for her to deal with it is to use her Gift. On Kris' birthday, Talia presents him with a ring identical to her own. At Hevenbeck, Talia and Kris defeat ten to fifteen raiders who were admitted by the mad sewing maid. Talia's shields are stronger than ever, but she is still plagued with the moral questions concerning her Gift. Near Westmark, Talia feels ahead and senses that there has been death and there will be more unless she gets there immediately. Using her Gift and skill, Talia determines the guilt of the dead girl's stepfather, and she punishes him by forcing him to continually experience the time his stepdaughter spent as his victim. When special couriers question the ethics of Talia judging and punishing the man, Talia defends her actions and is surprised by their approval; apparently, an important aspect of being a Herald is confidence in one's decisions. Kris is very proud of Talia and her regard for her duties, and he believes that she has truly become a Herald now. After their rendezvous with the new Heralds, Talia's internship is completed, and Kris expresses complete confidence in her abilities, though the hard part is yet to come.

Kris

Kris is a very handsome Herald who is sought by many of the beauties at Court. He is assigned to mentor Talia during her internship. Dean Elcarth brings Dirk and Kris to escort Talia to the investiture for Elspeth as Heir. Talia is relieved when Kris and Dirk assure her that they are escorting her because there is less chance of trouble with two hulking brutes standing near the Queen. At Dirk's teasing that no one will stand a chance with Talia now that she has seen Kris, Kris is relieved when Talia rejects the



notion. During the investiture, Kris helps Elspeth think of ways to address the various nobles, and he only dances with Talia, Elspeth or much older women to avoid being devoured by the Court beauties. He earns Talia's respect with his desire to become Dean when Elcarth retires. At the private Heralds' party, Dirk, Kris and Talia perform "Sun and Shadow". When Kris learns that he and Talia are to depart for her internship the next day, he assists her in preparations. Late that evening, a tap on Kris' door reveals his uncle, Lord Orthallen, who expresses concern over Talia's unusual Gift. He tells Kris about the rumors that Talia has fostered an unnatural dependence in the Heir and uses her Gift to influence the Council, perhaps unintentionally, and Lord Orthallen counts on his nephew to lay these doubts to rest. Kris and Talia leave the Capital for her internship.

During the beginning of their journey, Kris confronts Talia about the rumors at Court concerning whether she is misusing her Gift. He also discusses his past after Talia discusses her past, and he tells her quite a bit about Dirk who he suspects is more than casually interested in Talia. Kris tries unsuccessfully to ignore his uncle's words but dares not broach the subject with Talia again. He wonders if she misuses her Gift unintentionally or, worse, if she is using it to manipulate him. He feels horrible about his suspicions because he is starting to like her and feels that she is becoming a friend on the same order as Dirk, like they are brother and sister. Once they reach the border of their Sector, Kris tells Talia that he knows she will try her hardest and assures her of his trust, though he thinks that he hopes he can trust her. At the first village, Kris witnesses the vows of a young couple and signs their marriage contract. Kris is unhappy because he likes Talia but is unsure if she is manufacturing his feelings of approval, especially when she begins withdrawing. In regards to the dispute for arbitration concerning the boundary between two neighboring farms, Kris suggests the Hand of Fate which involves shooting two arrows into the air and drawing a new boundary between where they land. In Hevenbeck, Kris orders Talia to cast a Truth Spell to determine whether the sewing girl is stealing her employers' poultry. On the way back to the Waystation, Kris realizes his mistake in not encouraging Talia's fragile self-esteem and fears he has ruined her. At Waymeet, Kris rides ahead into the village when Talia is unable to sense the population centers. He stays in the plague-ridden village and nurses the villagers while Talia retrieves help from the Healing Temple.

As Talia and Kris near the Waystation, the chirras warn them about an impending blizzard. They are stranded at the Waystation for nearly a month, during which they begin sleeping together. Kris helps Talia learn to control her Gift and rebuild her shields. Kris begins to suspect that Talia is infatuated with Dirk, but he also worries that she has become infatuated with him; simultaneously, Talia fears that she has accidentally manipulated Kris into becoming infatuated with her. During their confinement, Talia and Kris also work to clear the path to the road. When they are finally rescued, Talia and Kris discharge their duties in Berrybay. Talia and Kris fight when she learns his conceit in believing that she is infatuated with him, but they reconcile, and Kris gives Talia a Midsummer garland and a friendship ring for her birthing day. Talia does not use her Gift to settle the dispute because she is unsure about the ethics of manipulating people's emotions. Kris worries that Talia will freeze if an emergency arises and the only way for her to deal with it is to use her Gift. On Kris' birthday, Talia presents him with a ring



identical to her own. At Hevenbeck, Talia and Kris defeat ten to fifteen raiders who were admitted by the mad sewing maid. After Talia's confidence in her decision at Westmark, Kris is very proud of Talia and her regard for her duties, and he believes that she has truly become a Herald now. After their rendezvous with the new Heralds, Talia's internship is completed, and Kris expresses complete confidence in her abilities, though the hard part is yet to come.

Weatherwitch

Tedric asks Talia to visit and try to help the Weatherwitch. Since the Weatherwitch has been maddened by the loss of her child, Talia instructs Tedric to replace the Weatherwitch's doll with the surviving child of a gypsy family who died of snow sickness two months earlier. The Weatherwitch is happy and grateful, and she predicts that Talia will reclaim what was hers and will find her heart's desire after she has seen the Havens. To Tedric's amazement, Talia explains that she seemed to see that the Weatherwitch needed a second chance to make everything right, and she could see a tie between the Weatherwitch and the child, though she does not know how it is possible that he could actually belong to the Weatherwitch.

Dirk

Dirk is Kris' partner and may be lifebonded to Talia. He tries to ignore his feelings for Talia but knows that he will not be able to suppress them for long. Talia and Kris often talk about Dirk during Talia's internship, and Kris suspects that Talia and Dirk have more than a passing interest in one another, which causes him concern because he fears that Talia has become infatuated with him. Dirk expresses concern for Talia before she leaves for her internship, and Skif tells Kris that Dirk acts oddly whenever anyone mentions Talia while she is away from Court.

Lord Councilor Orthallen

Lord Councilor Orthallen is a member of Court. He is also Kris' uncle. He is discontent when Elspeth is named Heir and, before Talia's internship begins, Lord Orthallen confronts his nephew about the rumors concerning Talia, causing Kris to doubt Talia. This leads to her problems controlling her Gift and shields. Talia feels that Lord Orthallen does not like her and is trying to get rid of her because he believes that she is a threat to his influence with Queen Selenay.

Elspeth

Elspeth is Queen Selenay's daughter and Talia's friend. She is distraught that she has not been Chosen, but she is finally Chosen by the Companion, Gwena. After she is Chosen, Elspeth is named Heir and admitted into the Collegium for Heralds where she studies contentedly.



Kerithwyn

Kerithwyn is a Healer who assists Talia and Kris in nursing the plague victims at Hevenbeck. Additionally, she warns Talia that her shields are full of holes and warns Talia to learn to control her Gift.

Skif

Skif is Talia's close friend who the other Heralds believe was her lover at one point, though their friendship never progressed to that point. He also served his internship under Dirk.

Rolan

Rolan is Talia's Companion who Chose her to be the Queen's Own.

Tantris

Tantris is Kris' Companion.

Selenay

Selenay is the Queen of Valdemar and the mother of Elspeth.

Alberich

Alberich trains Elspeth and Talia in combat.



Objects/Places

Velgarth

Velgarth is the world in which this novel takes place. Long ago, when the world of Velgarth was wracked by Sorcerous Wars, humans fled to the eastern coastline, but before long, they spread westward again and built new kingdoms, such as Valdemar.

Heralds

The Heralds are Chosen by Companions and act as administrative overseers, dispensers of justice, information gatherers and even temporary military advisers. The Monarch must always be a Herald.

Companions

Companions are horse-like creatures who Choose Heralds and form a lifelong bond. In this novel, Rolan is Talia's Companion, and Kris is Chosen by Tantris. Elspeth is relieved when the Companion, Gwena, Chooses her.

Queen's Own

Second in importance to the Monarch is the King or Queen's Own who is Chosen by a special Companion who never ages, thus assuring the Monarch of at least one person whom they can always trust. Rolan is the special Companion, and after the death of Talamir, he Chooses Talia as the Queen's Own.

Chosen

The Chosen are those people Chosen by Companions to become Heralds. Until they complete their schooling at the Collegium and pass their internship, they remain Chosen, but after they pass school and their internship, they are known as Heralds.

Chirras

Chirras are pack animals that carry Heralds' supplies during their journeys. The chirras warn Talia and Kris of the impending blizzard as they near the Waystation. When Kris and Talia sing, they learn the truth of the rumor that chirras sing as the animals hum along in accompaniment.



The Collegium

The Collegium is the school, located in the Capital, where the Chosen train to become Heralds.

Northern Border Sector

The majority of this novel takes place in the Northern Border Sector, since this is where Talia is assigned on her internship with Kris.

Holding

Holding is Talia's birthplace, where women are expected to assume a subordinate role.

Waystation

Talia and Kris are snowed in at a Waystation for nearly a month when they get caught in a massive blizzard. While they are there, Kris teaches Talia the concepts of Grounding and Centering which enables her to rebuild her shields.

Valdemar

Valdemar is the kingdom in which this novel takes place and of which Queen Selenay is the monarch.

Hevenbeck

On their first visit to Hevenbeck, Kris and Talia encounter the mad sewing maid who sacrifices poultry to exact her revenge upon her employers. When they revisit the town, they confront and defeat ten to fifteen raiders whom the crazy girl had admitted into the village.

Waymeet

When Kris rides into Waymeet, he discovers that the village is riddled with a plague. Talia obtains help from the nearest Healing Station, and with Kerithwyn's help, the health of the village is restored.

Westmark

The last village that Kris and Talia visit during her internship is Westmark. This is where Talia judges and punishes a man for molesting and killing his stepdaughter. Her confidence in this situation convinces Kris that she is truly a Herald now.



Themes

Duty

One of the most important themes in "Arrow's Flight" is that of duty since Talia, the main character, is a Herald, and more specifically the Queen's Own. She first demonstrates her regard for duty in her diligent combat training with Alberich and Elspeth, as well as her general concern for Elspeth. Elspeth shows her adherence to duty in training with Alberich and through her desire to be Chosen. When Elspeth is Chosen, Talia handles the arrangements involved with enrolling her in the Collegium. Talia also studies in preparation for the investiture ritual naming Elspeth as Heir. Before her internship officially begins, she learns the Arrow-Code. Talia and Kris demonstrate pride as well as duty during their discussion of the honor and joy of being Chosen. Talia's concern with the Court rumors result from her feeling of duty to act morally, and this also leads to the dissolution of her shields.

At Hevenbeck, Kris and Talia adhere to their duties by arbitrating the matter between the rich, old couple and their sewing maid regarding the poultry, and they serve the village of Waymeet by nursing the population to health after the plague. At the Waystation, they are diligent in digging their way out of the snow, and Talia focuses on Centering and Grounding in order to control her Gift and rebuild her shields so that she can continue her Heraldic duties. At Berrybay, Talia helps the Weatherwitch despite her fear of failure, even as she continues to worry about the ethics of manipulating the emotions of other people. At Hevenbeck, Talia and Kris defeat the raiders, and Talia judges and punishes the murderous stepfather at Westmark. When special couriers question the ethics of her decision, Talia defends herself, gaining much respect. She refuses to allow Kris to help her regain the villagers' trust because it is her duty, and Kris is proud that Talia has finally become a Herald, accepting her Gift as an important aspect of her duty.

Magic & Gifts

A key element of this novel is magic, and Talia's primary dilemma concerns her Gift and learning to control it. The world of Velgarth is plagued by Sorcerous Wars, and the kingdom of Valdemar emerges, complete with the magical aspects of Companions and their Chosen. After Talamir is murdered, Rolan Chooses Talia to become the Queen's Own, and Elspeth is overjoyed when she is Chosen by Gwena. When Lord Orthallen addresses his concerns about Talia to Kris, he worries about the rumors that Talia is unable to completely control her Gift. This leads to Kris doubting Talia's abilities during the beginning of her internship which in turn leads to Talia's doubt in herself and the weakening of her shields.

At Hevenbeck, Talia casts a Truth Spell on the rich, old couple and on the sewing maid to determine how to arbitrate the matter. At Waymeet, Kerithwyn warns Talia about the



holes in her shields, claiming that she will affect even the unGifted if she does not repair them and learn some control. At the Waystation, Talia accidentally projects her emotions, but Kris teaches her to prevent this. He also teaches her the concepts of Grounding and Centering which enables Talia to rebuild her shields; however, Talia continues to worry about the ethics of using her Gift to manipulate other people's emotions. There is a lot of mystery concerning the magic of the Forest of Shadows and Vanyel's Curse. The Gifts possessed by Heralds are commonly things like Kris being a farseer and Dirk's Gift of fetching, but Talia has the more unique Gift of Empathy. She also casts a Truth Spell in Westmark to make the stepfather confess to killing the young girl after she uses her Gift to read his emotions and learn that he is guilty.

Relationships

The relationships in this novel are very important and drive the action and events. Talia's life as a Herald allows her to create a family for herself that is completely opposite from the family into which she was born in the Holdings, since her biological family disowned her when she was Chosen. Talia forms an especially close bond with Elspeth, Queen Selenay's Heir. This results in the rumors at Court that claim Talia influences Elspeth with her Gift in order to make the girl dependent on her. Talia has many friends in the other Heralds, especially Skif with whom she has a familial connection, though many believe they have a romantic relationship. Kris is Talia's mentor during her internship, and his doubts lead to her shields breaking down. Eventually, they become friends and begin sleeping together. Both worry about the other becoming infatuated due to the potential relationship between Talia and Dirk.

Kris is normally partnered with Dirk, and he worries about his close friend, especially in regards to the fact that Kris begins sleeping with Talia and then suspects that Dirk may be lifebonded to her. Talia suspects that she loves Dirk and is always eager to hear Kris tell her about his partner. This is how she learns about Dirk's family situation and how similar her personality is to Dirk's. When Dirk sees Talia before Elspeth's investiture ceremony as Heir, he tries to ignore his feelings for Talia. This becomes increasingly difficult to do, as can be seen in his concern for her well-being during her internship, as well through his actions that lead Kris and Skif to conjecture whether Dirk is lifebonded to Talia.



Style

Point of View

The point of view of this novel is third person. This point of view is also omniscient and reliable, and this is proven by the fact that the narrator informs the reader of the characters' thoughts and feelings, as well as their physical actions. This point of view is important to the novel as a whole because Talia's development is a predominant aspect of the novel and could not be seen if the reader did not have access to her thoughts and feelings. Additionally, the point of view is useful in allowing the reader to compare and contrast characters as they are privy to the thoughts and emotions of all of the characters.

The story is told through a fairly equal distribution of exposition and dialogue, as well as detours into examining the thoughts and emotions of the characters, especially Talia. This is most likely used to provide the reader with a more complete idea of the events, thoughts and relationships that are presented throughout the novel. The reader would have a much more skewed vision of the characters if they were not enlightened to all aspects of the characters' beings. The events in this novel are most frequently seen through Talia's eyes, but the viewpoint often detours to include the views of Kris, Elspeth, Dirk, Skif, and others.

Setting

This novel is set in the world of Velgarth, in the kingdom of Valdemar. This is a fictional world comprised of many kingdoms, and Valdemar is composed of many different Sectors. Queen Selenay is the monarch of Valdemar. The people in this world are divided into commoners, nobility and Heralds. The Heralds are Chosen by Companions for their Gifts and morality. The Heralds act as administrative overseers, dispensers of justice, information gatherers and even temporary military advisers. The Monarch must always be a Herald. The main difference between the people of Valdemar is found in the difference between city people and country bred people, as can be seen in the different experiences of Kris and Talia.

Velgarth is the world in which this novel takes place. Long ago, when the world of Velgarth was wracked by Sorcerous Wars, humans fled to the eastern coastline, but before long, they spread westward again and built new kingdoms, such as Valdemar. Valdemar is the kingdom in which this novel takes place and of which Queen Selenay is the monarch. The Collegium is the school, located in the Capital, where the Chosen train to become Heralds. The majority of this novel takes place in the Northern Border Sector as this is where Talia is assigned on her internship with Kris. Holding is Talia's home town, where women are expected to assume a subordinate role. Talia and Kris are snowed in at a Waystation for nearly a month when they get caught in a massive blizzard. While they are there, Kris teaches Talia the concepts of Grounding and



Centering which enables her to rebuild her shields. On their first visit to Hevenbeck, Kris and Talia encounter the mad sewing maid who sacrifices poultry to enact her revenge upon her employers. When they revisit the town, they confront and defeat ten to fifteen raiders whom the crazy girl had admitted into the village. When Kris rides into Waymeet, he discovers that the village is riddled with a plague. Talia obtains help from the nearest Healing Station, and with Kerithwyn's help, the health of the village is restored. The last village that Kris and Talia visit during her internship is Westmark. This is where Talia judges and punishes a man for molesting and killing his stepdaughter. Her confidence in this situation convinces Kris that she is truly a Herald now.

Language and Meaning

The language of the novel tends to be somewhat stiff and formal. The word choice and sentence construction is appropriately formal due to the fact that the primary characters in the novel are nobility and courtiers of varying degrees. Though fairly formal, the language does not hinder reader comprehension, since the vocabulary is fairly common and the sentences maintain a structure similar to that with which most readers are accustomed . This allows the novel to be understood fairly easily.

The language of the novel tends to characterize different social classes, such as the villagers compared to the courtiers and the city-raised versus the country-bred. In addition, it distinguishes certain characters' personalities through the dialogue by showing their reverence and disregard for various topics. The novel is written using a fairly equal distribution of exposition and dialogue, which allows the reader plenty of opportunity to differentiate between the narrator and specific characters. The language aids in allowing the reader to become well-acquainted with the primary characters in the novel. Overall, the language is fairly easy to understand and is effective in distinguishing various characters and their personality traits.

Structure

This novel contains twelve chapters and a prologue. There are three hundred, eighteen pages in the book, and the chapters average twenty-five pages in length. The chapters are numbered rather than titled, and they tend to be somewhat long and quite detailed. The amount of time conveyed in each chapter ranges from a matter of days to an extended period of several months.

The novel's plot is fairly simple with only minor subplots, such as Elspeth's investiture. "Arrow's Flight" by Mercedes Lackey is an intriguing tale of a Herald's challenges in the magical world of Velgarth. Talia becomes a Herald and must pass her internship, which holds many trials that she never expected to face. "Arrow's Flight" is a fascinating story filled with magic and adventure.

The pace of the novel is generally quick during scenes of action, but the pace slows significantly when the narrator explores the thoughts and emotions of the characters. The novel is easy to read and quite engrossing as Talia faces the challenges of her

internship. The Prologue provides background information about the history of Velgarth and Valdemar, and there are occasional flashbacks throughout the story as Talia and Kris discuss their pasts. Overall, "Arrow's Flight" is easy to understand and very entertaining.



Quotes

"In point of fact, the one rule by which the monarchs of Valdemar governed their people was 'There is no "one, true way.'"" Narrator, Prologue, page 7

"Great pride shall earn great humiliation." Sherrill, Chapter 1, page 15

"Elspeth's always there, and there's nothing like being worse at something than a thirteen-year old girl to really deflate your opinions of yourself. Well, that ought to reinflate her self-esteem a bit." Talia, Chapter 1, page 20

"It did not occur to either of them to wonder why no one else had been mustered out of bed by that imperative calling both of them had answered- and why no one else had even noticed anything at all out of the ordinary even yet." Narrator, Chapter 1, page 29

"The Companion Gwena has Chosen, and her Choice is the Heir-presumptive, now Heir-In-Right, the Lady Elspeth. May I have the Queen's leave to enter the trainee in the Collegium rolls?" Talia, Chapter 1, page 31

"Appearances, partially. I do not wish that any save the Heralds should know how skilled you truly are. That could be the saving of your life, one day. Also it is tradition that crowned heads do not defend themselves; that is the duty of others." Alberich, Chapter 2, page 40-41

"I hope you don't mind being used like this... as a shield. I'm dancing with you to keep from being devoured by them. I can't dance just with beldames, Elspeth has to take other partners, and the only Heralds I can trust not to try to carry me off are Keren, Sheri, and you. And those other two can't dance." Kris, Chapter 2, page 52

"You're as well prepared as any of us is for his first assignment- and you're one of the best Heralds the Collegium has ever turned out. You ought to do just fine, though this is going to be a tough assignment. Good luck to you, Talia; I look forward to seeing you in another year and a half." Kyril, Chapter 3, page 76

"They say you're young, you're inexperienced- some say too young to be in the position of power that you are, and to be wielding such a strange mindGift." Kris, Chapter 4, page 100

"No one honors a saint on his hearthstone." Kris, Chapter 4, page 107

"Then stop thinking of me as a woman." Talia, Chapter 5, page 120

"There's just too much...well, 'silence' is the only way I can put it. I can hardly feel anything, and the little I can pick up is as if everyone were sleeping, or unconscious." Talia, Chapter 6, page 144



"Child, your shields are as full of holes as last week's target, and if you weren't so exhausted, you'd be projecting everything under the sun! You're in such a state that if I had any time, I wouldn't let you leave this place. But I don't have either the time or the energy to spare. I don't know what you've been doing, or what you think you're doing, but whatever it is, it's dead wrong. You'd better get yourself in hand, girl, and quickly, or you'll be affecting even the unGifted." Kerithwyn, Chapter 6, page 157

"If things were that bad, Rolan would have left you. He'd have repudiated anybody not worthy of her Whites." Kris, Chapter 7, page 164

"You wouldn't do anything to save yourself pain, but you dared your brother's anger to save the kittens. That's so much like Dirk it isn't funny. Hurt him... he'll just go and hide himself; but hurt a friend, or something helpless- Gods! He'll sacrifice himself to save it, or he'll rip your heart out because he couldn't. You're two of a kind; I really think you're going to be more than casual friends." Kris, Chapter 7, page 182

"We... haven't got a good situation here. You- you could have killed us both the other night. You still could. And out there... I've never felt so hopeless in my life. Between the two, I just wanted to give up. I just wanted to curl up in a ball and hope it all went away." Kris, Chapter 8, page 186

"I don't get along with your uncle very well. No, that's a lie. I don't get along with him at all. I know he doesn't like me, but there's more to it than that. I keep having the feeling that he's looking for a way to get rid of me." Talia, Chapter 8, page 197

"Look, Talia, we're not getting anywhere like this. You're tired; so am I. One day isn't going to make any difference to us one way or the other- for that matter, neither will two or three. I'm your counselor; well, I counsel that we take a rest, and let our bodies recover, until we can think of a plan that has some chance of getting us out of here." Kris, Chapter 9, page 207-208

"I need you, Kris. That's something I don't forget even when I'm angriest. I really need you." Talia, Chapter 9, page 225

"That horrible feeling of something watching might be gone, but there was still something uncanny about the Forest of Sorrows, something touched with the chill of death and the ice of despair. Whatever power held sway here, it was unsleeping and brooding; she knew it beyond doubt, and somehow knew she was feeling only the barest touch of its power- and she didn't really want to trust the supposed protection of her Whites by venturing too far alone." Narrator, Chapter 10, page 240

"If anyone discovered the state Talia was in, not only her reputation would be finished, but the reputation of Heralds as a whole and that of the Collegium would be badly damaged. The faith Heralds themselves had in the Collegium would be shaken if they knew how poorly counseled she'd been." Narrator, Chapter 10, page 253

"You will reclaim what was yours, and no one will ever shake it from you again. You will find your heart's desire, but not until you have seen the Havens. The Havens will call



you, but duty and love will bar you from them. Love will challenge death to reclaim you. Your greatest joy will be preceded by your greatest sorrow, and your fulfillment will not be unshadowed by grief." Weatherwitch, Chapter 10, page 260

"I can't go back until I figure something out... Not just the 'how' of my Gift, but the 'why' and the 'when'. It's obsessing me, because those rumors about manipulation come so close to the truth. I have used my Gift to evaluate Councilors, and I have acted on that information. When does it start becoming manipulation?" Talia, Chapter 11, page 264

"He's been acting damned peculiar whenever anybody mentions Talia. He was starting to act that way when you two left, and it's gotten worse since then. Dear old 'I'm-indifferent-to-women' Dirk came close to tearing my heart out and feeding it to me when I couldn't give him any more information about you two than rumor- and I would bet my hope of the Havens that it wasn't over your welfare." Skif, Chapter 11, page 272

"Lord- poor Elspeth, facing those damned rumormongers all by herself! Gods- I need to be there- and I can't be there-" Talia, Chapter 11, page 275

"The letter was so bland that it could have reflected either polite indifference to her, or been an attempt to conceal the same sort of obsession that she was feeling." Narrator, Chapter 11, page 276

"Dirk may well be lifebonded to you- and if that's true, I couldn't be happier. It would satisfy one of my dearest wishes, that both of you should find partners who deserve you. And if those partners should be each other- that would make me one of the happiest people in this Kingdom." Kris, Chapter 11, page 285

"The only other people I know of with Empathy are Healers- and they are never going to come into contact with the situations I have to deal with. Where are the boundaries?" Talia, Chapter 12, page 292

"Talia felt her control was back, and more certain than before. Her shields were back, and stronger. Now if only... If only she could ease the aching doubt in her mind... the rights and the wrongs..." Narrator, Chapter 12, page 301

"There will be no 'ordeal', and nothing to fear if you are truly innocent. I do not know what you have heard of us, but I pledge you that you shall have exactly what you asked of me- justice." Talia, Chapter 12, page 304

"Is shooting raiders an ethical use of my hands? It's part of me; it is totally in my control, it does not control me. I made a reasoned and thought-out decision- if the man ever accepts his own guilt and the fact that what he did was wrong, he'll break free of the compulsion I put on him. Until then he will suffer exactly as he made his victims suffer. That seemed to me to be far more in keeping with his crime than imprisoning or executing him. So I judged, and meted out punishment; I stand by it- and I would do it again." Talia, Chapter 12, page 313



"Now it's over- and now is when it really starts to get hard. But you're ready. Trust me, little bird, you are ready... As sure as I've ever been of anything in my life. You've been ready since Westmark. If you can handle that, you can handle anything; touchy nobles, Heirs with adolescent traumas, heart-wounded Heralds-... Even that. Especially that. you haven't let it get in the way of anything yet, and you won't now. You're ready, dearheart. And if you dare make a liar out of me-... I'll- I'll commission a Bard to write you into something scathing." Kris, Chapter 12, page 317



Topics for Discussion

Describe the relationship between a Herald and their Companion.

What is Talia's Gift, and what problems does she encounter concerning her Gift?

Why is Talia so important to the kingdom of Valdemar?

Compare and contrast the varying opinions about Talia.

Which village has the most difficult issues for Talia and Kris to resolve, and why?

How do Dirk's feelings for Talia affect the relationship between Talia and Kris?

How does Talia's past affect her current relationships?

Is Talia's internship a success or a failure, and why?