

Firelight Study Guide

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Plot Summary

Jacinda is a teenager living in a cloistered community of people who have the ability to manifest as dragons. She has a twin sister named Tamra who has never manifested as a dragon. Jacinda's mother has long ago stopped manifesting and has apparently lost the ability. Jacinda's mother and sister are treated with indifference by the pride but Jacinda, the pride's only fire-breather, is coveted and there are hopes that she will produce children who have that ability. Toward that end, Jacinda is being paired with the pride's likely future leader, Cassian. Although Jacinda likes Cassian, she hates that she's being forced to choose a mate. As the story opens, Jacinda and her best friend Azure are flying in the daylight though the activity is strictly prohibited by the pride. When hunters find them, Jacinda leads them away while Az hides. Jacinda is wounded and cornered when a hunter named Will tells the hunting party he no longer sees her, leading them away.

Jacinda is haunted by her moment of face-to-face contact with Will but doesn't know why. When she returns to the pride, she's in serious trouble for having attracted the attention of the hunters. That day, Jacinda's mother slips away with Jacinda and Tamra and only much later does Jacinda learn that her wings were to be clipped, a painful and humiliating sentence for Jacinda to withstand.

The three wind up in Arizona where Tamra, who has never manifested and been all but ignored by the pride, fits in immediately. Jacinda soon discovers Will is a student at her high school. She tries to fit in for Tamra's sake and tries to ignore Will because she fears doing something that will lead him to the pride.

Will and Jacinda are attracted to each other and neither can seem to ignore the other. Everyone at schools knows when he begins paying attention to her. A girl who had hoped to gain Will's attention is furious over the situation and begins to make things difficult for Tamra in retaliation. One night Jacinda slips away to a golf course where she flies for awhile, her one relief from the stifling lifestyle she's being forced to live. When she's headed home, she encounters Will. She initially runs from him and cuts herself but gives in to his request and lets him give her a ride home. She's bleeding and Will gives her his shirt to stop the flow. Only later does Jacinda realize she's left his shirt in his truck and she knows that he'll realize that Jacinda is not human after all once he sees the purple draki blood.

Jacinda goes to Will's house where there's a barbecue going on and Will reluctantly invites her inside. She finds a reason to be alone and finds the shirt. She finds a room in which draki skin is used on furniture and she's furious but renews her resolve to get away. Then she's caught by Xander, Will's cousin, who sees the t-shirt and the blood. Instead of jumping to the correct conclusion - that Jacinda is draki - he jumps to the conclusion that Will has been hunting without the family. Jacinda then learns that Will had almost died of cancer as a child and that his father gave him a transfusion of draki blood that saved his life.



Will and Jacinda decide to stop fighting their attraction for each other and Will asks Jacinda out on a date. As they are leaving, Jacinda discovers Tamra is with Angus and Xander. Will agrees they should go with them to be sure Tamra is okay. Cassian soon finds them and Jacinda manifests in front of a group as she tries to save Will from a horrific fall. It seems Jacinda has put the entire pride at risk by revealing that draki can manifest from human form. Jacinda and Tamra leave with Cassian with Jacinda realizing that she'll be punished for her actions but Cassian pledging that he'll try to save her from having her wings clipped.



Chapters 1 through 3

Chapters 1 through 3 Summary

As the story opens, Jacinda is out with her best friend, Azure. The girls are draki or descended from dragons, and have sneaked away from the city governed by their pride in order to take a daytime flight. Flights in the daylight are prohibited because of the danger of being spotted, despite their remote location. Az reminds Jacinda that Cassian would not approve of their flight but Jacinda ignores the words. Cassian is the son of Sevrin, leader of the pride, and is expected to become leader himself some day. As the pride's only fire-breather, Jacinda is protected as a valuable commodity and most expect that she'll bond with Cassian, with the hope that their children will be fire breathers as well. Jacinda's twin sister, Tamra, likes Cassian but Cassian doesn't give her any notice.

Jacinda quickly manifests as a dragon, her wings unfurling from her back. Az also manifests and Jacinda admires the iridescent blue color, made more beautiful by the pinks and purples that shine through. Jacinda is more of a red-gold and she knows there's a connection with her coloring and one of the family's gems, an amber.

It's dawn when the two take to the air together. They fly around the area, playing. Az dips into the lake and Jacinda teases, calling her a show off. They are still playing when they hear the rumble of vehicles and veer away from the sound. Suddenly they discover one of the noises is a chopper and realize they are being pursued by hunters. They are chased into the woods and hide in a tree. Az suggests they demanifest but Jacinda knows they are both too frightened. She says a draki can never hold human form when it's very afraid. She also fears the hunters will figure out they were the draki seen earlier. The most closely guarded secret of the draki is that they can take human form and if hunters know this, it will put the entire draki race in even more danger. Suddenly there are hunters swarming the ground and Jacinda realizes they are soon going to be spotted. She tells Az she'll break cover, leading the hunters away, and that Az is then to hide in the lake. Az objects but Jacinda knows Az can't fly as fast as she and insists.

In Chapter two, Jacinda remembers that when she was twelve, she beat Cassian in a race for the first time. She says her father was shouting encouragement to her and she won the night-time race. She says Cassian's attitude changed after that and he became intent on winning her as his mate.

Back in the present, Jacinda drops from the trees and races across the woods. The hunters are in pursuit and she's quickly shot through one wing. She falls to the ground and knows she can no longer fly. She begins to run as the hunters draw nearer. She remembers her father who was also apparently killed by hunters and pledges that she won't be captured though she fears it's only a matter of time. She comes to a gorge and jumps into the pool of water at the bottom. The water is brutally cold and when she reemerges she discovers a small cave. She swims to it and pushes herself inside. She



soon hears the sounds of the hunters. They know she jumped but aren't certain whether she flew after making the jump or hit the water. There's an argument over who will go into the water after her and she hears a distinctive voice volunteer. The boy, Will, jumps into the water and quickly announces that he sees the cave. Will spots her quickly and moves toward the cave. Rather than calling out for the others, he swims nearer and stares at her. He touches her and heat flares between them. There's a moment in which there's a definite connection and Jacinda thinks she hears him say, "beautiful." Then the hunters are yelling out to him and he breaks the contact with Jacinda, telling them "it" isn't in the cave before swimming away.

In Chapter three, Jacinda stays in the cave for a long time, waiting until the sounds of the forest return to normal. When she can stand the cold no longer, she emerges from the cave and swims to the edge, climbing back to the top. She lies on the ground, allowing the power from the earth to begin the healing process that she knows would not come from man-made medicines.

She hears her name called and responds. Cassian is the first to reach her and he is obviously concerned, though his concern makes her angry. Her mother pushes him aside and hugs Jacinda, saying she'd been afraid for her. Severin arrives and demands that she demanifest. She does so and the wounded wing is torn more as it stretches to take on her human form. She then has a wound on her shoulder blade which is trickling blood down her back. There's a conversation about Jacinda that she doesn't fully understand as Severin says Jacinda is the pride's only fire breather and that she's broken the pride's rules. Jacinda's mom interrupts, saying Jacinda is her daughter, but Jacinda is fearful of what's about to happen.

Chapters 1 through 3 Analysis

The various powers of the draki are important to the story because each has strengths that can help them in specific situations. For example, Az is a water draki. As such, she can submerge herself effortlessly. Once underwater, she can remain there for as long as she wants. She has gills that appear the moment she's submerged. Jacinda's power is as a fire breather. When she's cornered, she considers that she might use her power to kill the humans who are hunting her but she isn't certain she can or should do that. Cassian is a fighter and his draki body is built for that purpose.

The pride is Jacinda's extended family, consisting of several families with some members related to others, making up an entire city of draki. Severin is the ruler and it's generally accepted that Cassian is the most likely to be the next ruler. Because Jacinda is a coveted member of the pride as the only fire breather, most people approve of the idea of Jacinda and Cassian bonding.

Tamra doesn't appear in this first section of the book but she plays an important role in Jacinda's life. Tamra is Jacinda's twin and there are later references to the fact that the girls look very much alike though they are very different in personalities. Twins are apparently not common and there's no discussion of whether this might have played



some role in the fact that Jacinda began to manifest at an early age and Tamra never has. Other draki who did not manifest are not introduced in the story but it's noted that the failure to do so is becoming more common. It's never revealed whether this is by choice or a result of some natural phenomenon among the race. Tamra will manifest later in the story. The fact that flying is such an important part of Jacinda's life and that Jacinda is such a coveted member of the pride has driven a wedge between the two girls, all but severing the natural bond that should exist between the twins.

Jacinda and her mother make reference to her father. Jacinda's father was apparently captured by hunters though no one knows this for certain.



Chapters 4 through 6

Chapters 4 through 6 Summary

In Chapter four, Az is waiting for Jacinda when she returns to the city but Jacinda's mom is abrupt in asking Az to leave. As soon as Az is out of the house, Jacinda's mom tells the twins to pack. She says they are leaving that night. Mom says they are to bring anything they believe to be important and as many clothes as they can. She says they won't be returning. Tamra is immediately excited and Jacinda knows that's because Tamra has never fit in here and that her mother hasn't since her father's death and her mom's decision to stop manifesting. Though it's not clear why their mom doesn't manifest, Jacinda sees it as an "act of solidarity" with Tamra. Her mom tells Jacinda her life will be simpler if she lets her draki go away as well.

They have to go through the center of town to leave the pride and Jacinda and Tamra push as their mom steers. They approach Nidia's house which sits at the gate. Nidia is the pride's shader. Jacinda admits that if she simply refuses to leave, her mom and Tamra couldn't make her. She almost hopes they'll be caught trying to escape but they pass by Nidia's house without incident. Jacinda looks into the future and doesn't know what she really hopes will happen. She isn't certain whether she belongs with Cassian but she does say that she can't live without flying, and that she'll never be allowed to fly away from the pride.

In Chapter five, Jacinda finds it difficult to breath as she helps carry their possession into their new apartment, a pool house behind a home in Chaparral, Nevada. Tamra exclaims when she sees the swimming pool but the landlady, Mrs. Hennessey, says they aren't allowed to use it. Jacinda's mom says she chose the desert on purpose because she knows it will be difficult for Jacinda to continue to manifest in the hot, dry weather. Jacinda's mom reveals that she'd left the pride briefly as a teenager - taking a tour as many of the draki did at that age. She says she'd initially gone to Oregon with her friend Jabel but had moved to Nevada knowing her draki would soon die. She goes on to say that Jacinda's father had wanted no life other than one with the pride and she'd returned to make him happy. Jacinda realizes that she is being called on to make the same sacrifice - a different life in order to make her mother and Tamra happy.

The next day, Tamra and Jacinda begin school. Jacinda introduces herself as Jacinda Jones and repeats the cover story her mother created. She is from Colorado and was homeschooled there. A girl named Brooklyn immediately begins to make fun of Jacinda, calling her a freak. She endures the hours of class and reassures herself that she'll find a way to fly again. Tamra is quickly fitting in and is making friends with Brooklyn's crowd of popular girls.

In a crowded hallway, Jacinda suddenly senses someone and discovers Will is a student at this school. Jacinda is caught unaware and immediately begins to manifest until Tamra tells her to get a grip. Will seems to sense Jacinda as well and their eyes



meet. Tamra realizes Will was the cause and believes it's because he's handsome. Tamra tells Jacinda to stay away from Will until she's got her draki under better control. She says their mother has indicated it shouldn't take long for that to happen.

In Chapter six, Jacinda goes to study hall where she meets a boy named Nathan who explains that most of the people in study hall have chosen not to participate in sports or don't have a high enough grade point average to play. Jacinda is shocked when Will enters the study hall room. She tries to hide from him but their eyes soon meet. Will asks to take a seat by Jacinda and she doesn't understand why her draki is so volatile every time he's near. Will reveals that he'd watched her run in PE and compliments her on her ability to run.

They are still talking when Will's cousins, Xander and Angus, enter the room. Jacinda immediately realizes they are also hunters and, as such, emit an evil that she doesn't sense with Will. Xander and Angus remind Will he's expected at a family function that night. Will doesn't commit and after they leave, he tells Jacinda she should stay away from Xander and Angus. When she asks why, he says they are "jerks." They are flirting with another girl and Will warns that she doesn't want to attract Xander's attention. Jacinda says she wasn't trying to and Will points out that he noticed her, and that makes it certain that Xander also noticed her.

Chapters 4 through 6 Analysis

Jacinda is fully aware that life in the pride is not wonderful for either her mother or Tamra. Tamra is treated as an outcast because she doesn't manifest. Although there's a reference to a "growing trend" among young draki to never manifest, the reasons aren't explained and the details of Tamra's daily life are also not revealed. Jacinda, though she has a best friend in Az and seems at home in the pride, admits now to feeling guilty about the way the pride members treated Tamra. Another interesting aspect of this is that Jacinda doesn't like her position in the pride. She's treated as a coveted object with her fate to be decided for her because of her unique ability as a fire breather. However, the moment her mom announces they are leaving the pride, Jacinda is angry and upset, knowing it will be difficult for her adjust in the outside world.

There are several details that are not revealed until later but that are teased in the first few chapters. Mom says Jacinda's father had argued with Severin and that he flew out alone on the night he was captured for a reason, but she stops before revealing that reason. It is later revealed that he was searching for another pride that might take them in. The conversation between Severin and Jacinda's mom at the end of chapter three is also teased again in chapter four. Jacinda's mom doesn't reveal the details but it will later be revealed that Severin had decided to clip Jacinda's wings in an effort to keep her from flying again and putting herself and the pride in danger.

Nidia is very old and the last of her kind. She shrouds the town with a fog that keeps them hidden from the outside world. If someone stumbles on the city, she is able to plant false memories before they are taken away so they never remember finding the



town. Jacinda notes that everyone is fearful of the day Nidia is gone because the village will be left exposed, easily seen by passing aircraft. They are making plans for that day, cultivating plants around the walls of the city and building watch towers. Jacinda expects to be caught by Nidia as they leave the grounds. The fact that they aren't could mean that Nidia is aware they are leaving and doesn't choose to raise the alarm.



Chapters 7 through 9

Chapters 7 through 9 Summary

In Chapter seven, Jacinda is having trouble with her locker and a girl named Catherine helps her. She says that Xander, Angus, and Will are all handsome, all have a "bad boy" persona, and that Will is the only one of the three who hasn't dated most of the girls in school. Catherine warns that Jacinda will earn Brooklyn's wrath if she becomes too close to Will. Catherine reveals that everyone knows Will sat with Jacinda during study hall and that Brooklyn won't be happy. Jacinda doesn't seem worried and thinks about the bigger fears she has. Tamra arrives and is obviously happy in her new role.

Their mom is waiting for them outside and they get into the car but are stuck in traffic. Jacinda has to fight off manifesting as she spots the truck with the lights on top, the truck belonging to the hunters who chased her. She also sees Will and Tamra, realizing Will is near, tells their mom that Jacinda almost manifested earlier. Jacinda's mom says Jacinda should keep her distance from Will, "just to be safe." Jacinda says she will but she can't help but wonder what good it does to be safe if her draki is going to be dead, making her dead inside.

In Chapter eight, Mrs. Hennessey is watching when they arrive home. Mom makes dinner, a macaroni that uses a specific blend of herbs. Jacinda says her mother's culinary ability is a benefit of her own draki, the verda draki, which knows all about the herbs, including how to best use them in cooking and medicine. After dinner, their mother prepares to leave for work at her new job at a local casino where she'll be gone all night. As she is about to leave, she says that she hates to leave the girls alone all night. Tamra points out she could sell some of the family gems but their mom says that's what the pride would expect, and they could be traced by those gems.

Before she leaves, Jacinda's mom tries to talk to Jacinda. Jacinda says nothing about their life here is easy for her. She says she realizes her mom chose to let her draki die but that she hates that her mom has chosen that for her as well. Even with this thought, Jacinda can't help but think there's something deeper going on with the pride and that there's some danger her mother hasn't revealed.

As they are getting ready for school the next morning, Jacinda asks Tamra if she misses anything about their home with the pride. She says no. Jacinda asks if she misses Cassian and Tamra says she's always known that Cassian's father would never allow them to be together because Tamra doesn't manifest. She says she's accepted that. Jacinda suggests that Tamra hasn't waited long enough and that she still might manifest, which makes Tamra angry. Jacinda doesn't say it aloud but she can feel her draki already withering away and knows that her mother's wish will come true. The only time her draki comes to life is when she's near Will. Though she knows there's danger in being near him, she can't deny the need to be.



In Chapter nine, Jacinda heads into PE with Catherine. Catherine takes one look at the situation and realizes they will spend the period on the basketball court with the boys. The boys' line and the girls' line converge near mid-court and Will drops out of line to be near Jacinda. Will asks if Jacinda can play basketball as well as she can run and, though she knows she should be wary around him, she laughs. Jacinda's turn to shoot a free throw comes and she throws wild, missing completely. Catherine watches Jacinda and Will together and says she'd never known the "love at first sight" really happened.

As their lines converge again, Will asks if Jacinda would like to go out. She asks if he means a date and he says he does. When she has a class later with Brooklyn, the girl is obviously furious and stares at Jacinda whenever she has the opportunity. At lunch, Catherine points out that Tamra is quickly fitting in and Jacinda is worried for a moment but reminds herself that she and Tamra are, and always will be, twins with a strong connection. Catherine and her friend Brandon reveal that Catherine and Brooklyn were once best friends until Brooklyn became so popular.

Chapters 7 through 9 Analysis

Jacinda describes her connection to the family gems. She says the earth is power to the draki but the gems are something even more powerful. She says they are pure energy and that draki are able to detect gemstones hidden beneath the ground. She knows that gems are worth a lot of money but says their value to draki is different. She also knows her mother wouldn't hesitate to get rid of the gems if not for the fear they would be found. She says her mother wants to eliminate everything related to the draki and the gems hold no sentimental value to her. Jacinda notes that her mother might as well sell off a piece of Jacinda's body as to sell off one of the gems because they hold that much power for her. But then she says it might be worth it because the pride would certainly find them and force them to return if they found one of the gems had been sold. It's never clear why the pride can't find the gems while they remain in the possession of Jacinda's family.

During lunch one day, Catherine points out that Tamra is quickly making friends. Jacinda says that Tamra has always loved time away from the pride and that there's no doubt she's loving her time now. Jacinda says it's right that Tamra should find happiness and that she's happy for Tamra, but it seems as if she's trying to convince herself. Jacinda is getting a taste of what Tamra's life has always been like at this point and Tamra is getting a taste of what Jacinda's life has been like. Jacinda is obviously battling herself. She wants to make her mother and sister happy but she is also struggling because she doesn't want to let her draki die. There is a bit of a coming of age theme in this story as well as Jacinda learns that the happiness of others is sometimes purchased at an extremely high cost, and that she might sometimes have to pay that cost.



Chapters 10 through 13

Chapters 10 through 13 Summary

In Chapter ten, Jacinda is looking forward to study hall when she can see Will. When she arrives in class, Will isn't there and Catherine says she saw Will and his cousins leave earlier in the day. Catherine then hands Jacinda a note given to her by Will to pass on to Jacinda. The note says he has to "leave town for a family thing" and that he looks forward to seeing her on his return. Catherine says Will and his cousins miss a lot of school. Jacinda knows they were in the Cascades just a few days earlier, hunting dragons, and that they've gone hunting again. Jacinda realizes she needs to remember that Will is a hunter and that his effect on her draki isn't enough to override that. She becomes determined to sever the connection she feels with him.

Jacinda sneaks away from home a couple of times in the next few nights, having found a golf course where she can manifest to fly for awhile. Jacinda is constantly begging to return to the pride and her mother becomes resigned to simply saying no. Then Tamra begins pleading for permission to try out for cheerleading though it will be expensive if she's chosen. Tamra argues that it will be a plus when she begins filling out college applications and Jacinda realizes Tamra is also anxious for this because it's part of the normal life she craves. Their mom gives in to Tamra's request and Jacinda feels jealous that Tamra's wants are being granted while her own are being denied.

Jacinda continues to get through the days at school and can feel her draki dying away. Jacinda is conflicted over her feelings for Will. She hopes he hasn't been hunting her own pride though she knows that simply puts another in danger. She hopes he's safe but hopes he doesn't catch any draki. Jacinda knows the pride's practice of killing hunters and has always believed it's reasonable. A hunter who has had his memory shaded will continue being a hunter, even if he has no memories of a particular pride. Jacinda can feel herself fading more and more into mere acceptance. She convinces herself she's putting more into her memories of Will than actually existed. She convinces herself she won't go out with him when he returns. She remembers every detail about him even as she tells herself to forget him. Then one day she steps into study hall to see Xander and Angus, and knows they are back.

In Chapter eleven, Jacinda realizes Will isn't in the room. She turns down an invitation to join some other students in the library and spends a few minutes wondering if draki blood now stains Will's hands. Then she senses his arrival and all her pledges to stay away from him disappear immediately. She can't wait for him to talk to her. He walks toward her table and she's rapt with attention, but he continues walking past her to where his cousins sit. Catherine takes her seat next to Jacinda and points out that Will is headed their way. He drops a note on her table but Jacinda, now hurt, tears it up without reading it. Jacinda is glad Will has reminded her that they need to stay away from each other.



That night, Jacinda slips away from home and heads out to the golf course. She has trouble manifesting and notes that she has to force herself into her draki form. Flying doesn't revive her as it usually does but she forces her body to remain aloft for awhile. She feels the need to grieve, realizing her draki is seriously fading. She lies for awhile on the ground, imaging her life as it had been before. She realizes her concerns about Cassian were minor compared to what she's living with now.

In Chapter twelve, Jacinda decides to go back to the apartment and notes that the word "home" holds no comfort for her now. As she gets near, she spots a vehicle that seems to be pacing her and becomes afraid. She then spots the light bar on the top of the vehicle and knows the hunters have figured out who she is and where she lives. The land rover rushes in her direction and Jacinda runs. Jacinda is very afraid and knows that the fact that she doesn't immediately manifest is a sign that her draki is near death. She runs through a yard, jumping a fence in the process and realizing that her draki is finally about to respond to the fear. Just then she hears Will call out and her name and turns to see him under a street light.

Will says he was looking for her and, when someone opens a door to see what's causing the commotion, Jacinda accepts his insistence that she get into his truck. Will says he got her address from one of the aides in the office the first day she arrived at school. He says he'd gotten the information "in case" he wanted to find her. Jacinda realizes her draki is responding to his nearness in a way it hasn't responded to anything else. She realizes that she needs Will to keep her draki alive in this barren land.

In chapter thirteen, Jacinda keeps a tight control on her draki though she can feel it stirring. She realizes that being near Will might be a way of keeping her draki sustained until she can return to the pride. As they drive, Jacinda says she simply couldn't sleep and was out for a walk. Then she notices that her hand is bleeding and hopes Will doesn't notice the purple blood, which would be a give-away of her true self. Will does notice the blood but in the darkness doesn't note the difference, and gives her his shirt to staunch the flow. Will binds her hand with his shirt and caresses her, then notes that her skin is very hot. Jacinda knows it's because she is so near to manifesting.

Jacinda seeks to make some distance between them and breaks the spell by asking why he isn't with Xander and Angus. Jacinda brings the conversation again to why he was at her house in the middle of the night. Will says she's special and Jacinda revels in his words. Then Will says a relationship between them can't possibly work because his family is "different." Jacinda is then hurt because she knows Will can feel the connection between them but he will deny it because of his family. Jacinda taunts him for that, saying he's a coward and he responds by kissing her. Jacinda suddenly realizes her wings are on the verge of breaking free of her skin and she breaks contact, jumping out of the truck. Will calls out to her and Jacinda realizes the kiss convinced him they need to pursue their relationship though the kiss has reminded her why they can't.

Suddenly, Jacinda realizes she's let Will leave with the shirt that's stained with her blood, and that he will figure out what it means. When she enters the house, Tamra is awake and says she'll never forgive Jacinda if she ruins their new life for Tamra.



Chapters 10 through 13 Analysis

Draki live about three hundred years and Jacinda says they age naturally for the first few years but then the aging process slows and they don't look nearly as old as they are. In her mom's case, the fact that she's denied the draki and allowed it to die has made her age more quickly. Jacinda notes that she'll continue to look like a teenager for another decade or more but that her mother has begun to look like the human she's become.

The fact that Jacinda's draki is quickly dying is a point of grief for Jacinda but her mother and Tamra don't understand Jacinda's fear. Jacinda's mother willingly let her draki die by refusing to manifest and it seems she was prompted to this by the fact that Tamra never manifested. Tamra is angry at Jacinda when she almost manifests in the hallway after encountering Will for the first time and Jacinda notes that Tamra has always believed it's simply a matter of control. Jacinda says it isn't a matter of control but this seems at odds with the fact that her mother apparently had enough control to let her draki die out of love for her daughter.

From the beginning, Will gives Jacinda something she's craved from her friends and from Cassian - to be prized for herself rather than being treated as a valuable commodity worth their love only because of what she is. Ironically, Jacinda's mother has tried to give her this very level of love but Jacinda has seen it as an effort to control as well.



Chapters 14 through 17

Chapters 14 through 17 Summary

In Chapter fourteen, the following day is Saturday and Jacinda heads to Will's house, determined to get the t-shirt back. She knocks on the door and Will answers but he's obviously not happy she's there. Will would likely have sent her away but his father arrives at the door and invites Jacinda in, saying there's a cookout in progress and she's welcome to join. She accepts and as they eat the meal on the deck, members of the extended family question Jacinda.

Jacinda finds an opportunity to leave the group and makes her way upstairs, hoping to find Will's room and the stained t-shirt. She finds the shirt in his room and is trying to figure out what to do with it to get it out of the house when she realizes someone is coming. She rushes into the first room she comes to and quietly closes the door, then eases backwards away from the door. She's horrified to find herself in a room filled with draki skin-covered furniture and fixtures. She sees familiar colors and fears one particular piece might be that of her father. She then realizes there's a map with notations indicating where the hunters have been working. She notes a black flag near her home in the Cascade Mountains and knows it probably stands for the place her father was captured. Jacinda is reminded again that Will's family are hunters. She knows that Will allowed her to escape and that he couldn't possibly have killed her father, but she knows his family probably did. She's still staring at the map when she hears the door close behind her.

In Chapter fifteen, Xander enters and Jacinda says she was looking for the restroom. Xander says Will hasn't paid attention to any girl "since he got sick," and that he can't help but wonder what's so special about Jacinda. Will arrives as Xander spots the blood stains on the shirt. He is angry at Will, asking what Will's been telling Jacinda and accusing Will of having been hunting without the family. Will says Xander is in danger of sharing secrets with his accusations and sends him downstairs. As soon as he's gone, Will asks Jacinda who she really is.

Will takes a careful look at the shirt, realizing it's Jacinda's blood. He asks if she's an enkros - or dragon hunter. She feigns ignorance, asking what an enkros is. He seems to be working through the clues in his brain and Jacinda kisses him, knowing it will stop his questions. She breaks the kiss when she's becoming dangerously hot. Afterwards, she thinks back to his statement, that there's only one way a human can have blood of that color. Jacinda doesn't know what that way is. Jacinda realizes something she hasn't considered before, that she knows little of the human world and that knowledge is power.

In Chapter sixteen, Jacinda is headed to the bathroom on Monday during class, having taken the opportunity to escape briefly from class. She is still faced with the knowledge that Will has the clues to come to the conclusion that draki can demanifest to human



form, and that he might someday put it together. In the hall, Jacinda encounters Xander with a girl. His teasing is cruel and Jacinda again seizes the fact that Will's family members are hunters of her kind. In study hall, Will asks Catherine to trade seats with him but Jacinda says she and Catherine need to study.

That evening Jacinda watches as her mom opens the box of the family gems and notes the immediate flushing of energy she gets from them. Her mom takes a piece of amber from the collection and Jacinda realizes she is going to sell it. Jacinda tries to argue but her mother pushes the comments aside and Jacinda knows she can't talk her out of it.

Chapters 14 through 17 Analysis

Jacinda's relationship with her mom seems to be deteriorating but it is more likely that this is merely a continuation of what their relationship was prior to leaving the pride. Jacinda's mom had constantly tried to control Jacinda in an effort to keep her safe. Jacinda has always seen them as any teenager does - her mother's efforts to keep her from enjoying her life and to make decisions for her. Jacinda has never given any thought to the possibility that her mother is looking out for Jacinda's best interests.



Chapters 18 and 19

Chapters 18 and 19 Summary

In Chapter seventeen, Tamra, Jacinda, and their mother have pizza at a place called Chubby's. Jacinda is returning a movie to the movie store nearby when she's dragged into an alley. She immediately fights but discovers it's Cassian. He says she wants to take them back and Jacinda says she isn't going. Though she wants desperately to return to the pride, she refuses to be dragged back by Cassian. Cassian says he believes Jacinda will change her mind and return with him. She says she isn't going to wake up some day and decide she'll become the property of the pride, used for breeding with the hope of creating more of her kind. Cassian says Jacinda doesn't need to tell anyone he's found them and that he'll give her five weeks to change her mind. He also tells her that he hopes she'll some day bond with him but that he would never force her. She says it will never happen and notes that he obviously isn't happy over the idea that she'll never "produce a slew of little firebreathers" with him.

Jacinda is later forced to a pep rally that she hates. She is overwhelmed by the crush of humans and is feeling ill when Will rushes to her rescue. In chapter eighteen, they leave the gym and sit in the stairwell talking. Will says he felt he knew Jacinda from the first moment he saw her and that she is someone "I have to let in." Jacinda remembers that she's safe with Will but that his family members are hunters. They kiss passionately and Jacinda breaks it off as she begins to manifest. She pushes away but considers that being around Will is enough for her draki in this place where she has so much trouble keeping it alive. They kiss again, Jacinda swearing she's going to keep the draki under control but failing to do so. Jacinda comes to the conclusion she's going to have to leave town in order to sever the connection with Will, even if she has to leave without Tamra and her mom. Someone sees them in the stairwell as the pep rally breaks up.

In Chapter nineteen, news that Will and Jacinda were in the stairwell together has traveled quickly. Tamra is angry and threatens to tell their mother, but Jacinda knows she won't because she doesn't want their mom to make them move. That afternoon, Jacinda realizes that if she's gone, the lives of Tamra and her mom will be much easier.

Chapters 18 and 19 Analysis

In Chapter eighteen, Jacinda wants to believe that Cassian has come for her because he cares about her, but she doesn't really trust him that much. This will be a constant issue with her for days to come as she wrestles with her feelings toward him and wonders what his true feelings toward her are. Just as is the case with Jacinda's feelings toward Will, the on-again, off-again attitude and actions can become almost annoying to the reader but are probably reasonably realistic considering Jacinda's age and maturity level. Jacinda's attitude when Cassian first arrives in Chaparral is evidence of her confused emotions. Though she wants desperately to go home, she won't allow



him to order her to return. She feels a strong connection to Cassian and it's unclear whether this is because they care for each other, because there's a physical chemistry between them, or because they are a race apart. Jacinda assures herself that it's only because they are the same that the connection exists and refuses to consider it might be more. Jacinda and Cassian part with him agreeing to give her time. Though she refuses to return to the pride with him, she realizes it feels good to know she could call on him if it becomes too much and she finds she has to leave Nevada.

Jacinda can't decide what to do about Will. She wants desperately to be with him, mostly because he provides fuel for her draki in a place she fears it will die. But she is often reminded that his family hunts her family, and that she should be wary.

In Chapter nineteen, Jacinda reveals an aspect of her relationship with Cassian that has not been discussed before. It's evident that Cassian has his sights set on Jacinda though Tamra has always had a crush on Cassian. Jacinda reveals that she has fought harder against Cassian because of Tamra's crush. She says she might not have resisted his advances completely if she hadn't been concerned for Tamra's feelings on the subject.



Chapters 20 through 23

Chapters 20 through 23 Summary

In Chapter twenty, Jacinda's mom announces she's leaving the following day to sell one of the stones. She says she'll travel some distance to make the sale to minimize the risk that they'll be found. Tamra is immediately excited, asking if they can have cell phones with the new money and move to a better place. Their mom says it will only ease the strain and perhaps buy a new car for the girls to share. Jacinda pleads with her mother who agrees to show her the gems one last time and promises she's only going to sell one, the amber. Her mom reveals that their father had been looking for another pride to take them in the night he was killed because he knew their pride was going to demand she mate, eliminating her choice in the matter. Jacinda says her mother must blame her for his death but her mom says she blames the pride. Her mom says Jacinda would be bonded and Jacinda says Cassian wouldn't make that demand. Then her mom reveals that Jacinda's wings were to be clipped as punishment for her near-miss with the hunters. Jacinda accuses her mom of making it up so Jacinda won't go back but she knows it's the truth. With that knowledge, Jacinda knows she's trapped.

In Chapter twenty-one, it rains - the first time since Jacinda's arrival in Nevada. Jacinda thinks over the new information and knows her father wouldn't want her to blame herself for his death. She realizes she needs to find a new pride to take her in and believes the answer to finding a new pride would be in the map on the wall at Will's house.

In Chapter twenty-two, Jacinda and Tamra get ready for school the next morning and Jacinda sees Will waiting for them. They miss the bus and agree to let Will take them to school. When Jacinda asks Will why he's there, he says he's "done letting you avoid me." From the back seat, Tamra asks Will what his intentions are and he says he likes Jacinda "a lot." Jacinda realizes there's a lot she doesn't know about Will but she believes him when he says he wants them to be together now.

In Chapter twenty-three, Tamra leaves them as soon as they arrive at school. Will makes good on his promise and walks her to class, showing up to walk her to every class throughout the day. He says he wants to take her on a real date and she agrees, admitting that it feels good to pretend there's nothing aside from a normal boy and girl going on a date. Brooklyn sees them walking together, holding hands, and Jacinda tries to disengage but Will calls her a coward and she kisses him instead. Later that day, Jacinda is in the bathroom with Catherine when Brooklyn and a group of her friends confront them.

Chapters 20 through 23 Analysis

Will's tease aimed at Jacinda as they are entering the school holding hands is a reference to her earlier challenge to him. When Will had said they couldn't be together



because of his family, Jacinda had accused him of being a coward. Now Jacinda is on the receiving end. Will calls her a coward and it's exactly what's needed to spur her to make their relationship public.

When Will asks Jacinda for a date and she accepts, she's suddenly caught up in the full understanding of what Tamra is seeking. She realizes that it would be wonderful if she were an ordinary girl and Will were an ordinary boy, and they were simply following their hearts for an ordinary date.

Will is very serious in the truck on the way to school with Tamra and Jacinda. He tells Jacinda he wants to "be with her" and it seems to indicate he's talking about a long-term commitment. What's interesting is that Jacinda's response is to think that she is only sixteen and she suddenly realizes she assumes Will is also sixteen but she doesn't know that for certain.



Chapters 24 through 26

Chapters 24 through 26 Summary

In Chapter twenty-four, Brooklyn says she doesn't want Jacinda in the school. Jacinda responds that she doesn't want to be there but doesn't have a choice. Brooklyn's response is that she will allow Tamra to be on the cheer squad if Jacinda stops "throwing herself" at Will. Then Brooklyn's attack becomes physical and Jacinda is thrown to the floor where she's hit and kicked. She releases steam and the fight ends abruptly with Brooklyn accusing Jacinda of burning her. They attack again and this time the fear pushes Jacinda into the first stages of manifestation. She rushes into a stall, hoping the others haven't seen her.

In Chapter twenty-five, Jacinda remains in the bathroom stall and is still there when she hears Will's voice. The girls leave the bathroom as Jacinda fights to demanifest. Then she hears Will's voice above her and looks up to see him leaning over the top of the stall, seeing her in her state of manifest. He is obviously shocked and then he disappears.

Jacinda's mom is in the principal's office and, despite Catherine's statement that Brooklyn and her friends did the attacking, Jacinda is suspended because of the burns. Officials believe Jacinda must have had a light and that she flushed it down the toilet. Jacinda is miserable because she knows that Will now knows the secret of manifesting and that it's put her entire race in more danger.

When Jacinda's mom finishes talking to the principal, they go to the car and find Tamra has been crying. Jacinda realizes cheer tryouts have been held and Tamra has been eliminated because of Jacinda's fight with Brooklyn's crowd. That night, Tamra has a date with a guy named Ben and Jacinda knows that Will won't show up for their date. She is miserable over the entire situation and wavers, knowing she should tell her mom the truth but hating the idea of messing things up for Tamra.

In Chapter twenty-six, Tamra leaves for school. That afternoon, Jacinda is tired of being cooped up and goes outside where she encounters Mrs. Hennessey. The woman says she was certain Jacinda was the one suspended from school and as Jacinda heads back indoors, Mrs. Hennessey says she has goulash made and that there's plenty for Jacinda to share. Jacinda is shocked but realizes that Mrs. Hennessey may not be nosey so much as lonely, and Jacinda understands that emotion. The next day, Jacinda goes to Mrs. Hennessey's without waiting for an invitation. She's there when Will arrives. Mrs. Hennessey teases her a little, saying Will is handsome. When Jacinda hesitates, Mrs. Hennessey asks if he's abusive, obviously concerned. When Jacinda says he isn't, Mrs. Hennessey suggests she go talk to him and Jacinda steps outside to meet him.



Then enter the apartment and Will says he decided to take the day off from school. He says he's finally figured out that Jacinda isn't a hunter but is a dragon. She explains they call themselves draki. Will says Jacinda could have told him sooner but she says he has also kept secrets. Will says Jacinda already knew what he was, having seen him in the mountains, and that she should have known he wasn't a threat. Will says he didn't recognize Jacinda but sensed her on some level. They kiss and Jacinda's body becomes heated. She then realizes she has to tell him the rest of the story - that she's a freak even among the draki because she's a fire breather. They continue to kiss and both are obviously struggling. Will says being in love with his "prey" is an impossible situation. Jacinda is enthralled that he uses the word "love."

They have grilled cheese sandwiches for lunch and talk more. Will asks Jacinda to promise she won't leave Chaparral and she does, though she knows he would help her leave if she asked it of him. Catherine arrives that afternoon with the news that everyone is talking about the fight with Brooklyn, and that many of the students are happy that Brooklyn got beat for once. Catherine reveals that Will's cousins confronted her, asking if Will was with Jacinda that day. That night, Will shows up at her window and the talk turns to his family. Will says he is a better hunter which makes him the favorite with his father and uncle. Will says that since his encounter with Jacinda, he hasn't led the family to any draki and that he won't ever again. They talk about other topics, including that draki live about three hundred years though the pride's shader, Nidia, is almost four hundred and some believe she's holding on because the pride depends on her.

Chapters 24 through 26 Analysis

When Jacinda and Brooklyn are first arguing in the bathroom, Brooklyn makes her threat to take her anger out on Tamra. Jacinda argues, saying she'd believed - as Tamra obviously does - that Brooklyn likes Tamra. Brooklyn responds that she can tolerate Tamra because Tamra knows how to get along. She's referring to Tamra's ability to fit in and the fact that she obviously is doing whatever Brooklyn wants in an effort to do that.

Tamra is furious over Jacinda's fight with Brooklyn's crowd. She sees it as Jacinda's way of sabotaging her efforts to fit in though none of it can really be counted Jacinda's fault. Tamra says Jacinda has to be the center of attention, regardless of the situation or the place. That night, Jacinda knows she should tell her mom that Will has seen her manifested and that he now knows what she is, as well as revealing that he's a hunter. She knows she should say these things but can't bring herself to do so as she watches Tamra leave on her date. Jacinda realizes that she hadn't been aware Tamra even has a date or that she likes someone, making it apparent that Jacinda has been so inwardly focused that she feels Tamra's accusation of self-centeredness to be founded. Jacinda knows that she's going to have to soon make the decision to leave and that leaving alone would be best for her mom and Tamra. That thought makes her miserable as well.

Jacinda tells Will they left the price because it isn't safe for her there. She says leaving was her mother's decision because the pride wants "to own her" as it would a valuable



commodity, because of her potential to produce fire-breathing offspring. What's interesting is that Jacinda doesn't tell Will she was on the verge of being punished and that members of her pride were going to clip her wings. She admits to herself that she doesn't want him to think her people are "barbaric."



Chapters 27 through 29

Chapters 27 through 29 Summary

In Chapter twenty-seven, Jacinda awakes the next morning to the smells of breakfast and discovers Will in the kitchen, cooking. They spend the day together. Jacinda knows Mrs. Hennessey probably won't tell about Will's visits and is amazed that she and the woman have forged a tenuous friendship.

In Chapter twenty-eight, Cassian arrives one day and Jacinda's cold reception makes him aware that she knows about the wing clipping. He promises he can stop the punishment if she returns with him. Cassian says Jacinda is important to him and says he'll die before he allows her to be hurt. Jacinda realizes she no longer wants to return to the pride. She admits that it's partly because of Will but that she's also come to realize she needs to give Tamra and her mom a chance at the life they want. She knows that when she and Will graduate high school they can now leave together and that she can survive until then.

In Chapter twenty-nine, Jacinda's mom believes the two of them will be at home alone that night, Tamra having announced plans for a date. Jacinda says she's going out as well and when they learn it's Will, both Tamra and her mom are furious. Jacinda tries to make them understand that she's finally found a reason to continue living but her mom demands that she not see Will. When it's time for their date, Jacinda sneaks out her bedroom window. She meets Will at the street and he says he'd planned to meet her mother. She says it's "not a good idea right now," and though he's obviously not happy with the situation, Will and Jacinda leave together.

They talk about themselves and Jacinda learns that Will is already eighteen. He says he missed a great deal of school over a battle with leukemia that is completely gone now. Jacinda notes that it's as if Will isn't telling her the entire story but she doesn't guess at what the rest might be.

They are planning to have dinner at a Greek restaurant but Xander catches up with them. He says they are going to Big Rock. Will says he has other plans but just then Jacinda sees Tamra in the backseat of Xander's vehicle.

Chapters 27 through 29 Analysis

Jacinda hates that what she is has become more important to most people than who she is. She feels the same with her mother. It can be argued that her mother's attitude is because she's trying to keep Jacinda safe but the pride's attitude toward her is also because more fire breathers would be a safety net for the pride. Jacinda knows her mother is simply waiting for the draki to die but Jacinda says it might not be that simple for her. She points out that little is known about fire breathers and that her draki may be a more important part of her than the draki of some others. She seems to truly believe



she will die if her draki dies and hates that she will have to be human before her mother is truly happy with her.

When Will realizes Xander is trying to pull him over on the way to the Greek restaurant, he offers to refuse. Will warns Jacinda that Xander will try to steal her away from him simply because Will is interested. This is an example of one of the themes of the book - the pitting of the two cousins against each other to the point that they've become overly competitive in every aspect of life.



Chapters 30 through 32

Chapters 30 through 32 Summary

In Chapter thirty, Jacinda and Will join the group at Big Rock because Jacinda is unwilling to leave Tamra alone with Xander and Angus, and Will understands that. Jacinda tries to talk to Tamra, warning her against spending time with Xander, but realizes that Tamra will do whatever it takes to fit in because she's so desperate to be accepted. Jacinda and Will move away a little but close enough to keep an eye on Tamra. They are kissing when Cassian interrupts. Cassian says Jacinda should leave with him immediately but before Jacinda can deny his request, Will tackles him.

In Chapter thirty-one, Will and Cassian are fighting and Will is holding his own, much to Jacinda's surprise. They tumble toward a cliff and fall over. Jacinda hears the sounds of impacting and before she can think of the consequences, she manifests and rushes to him. Will isn't dead but he's immediately furious, knowing that Jacinda manifested in front of the others. But Jacinda is also immediately upset, seeing a cut on Will's arm and the purple blood pulsing out. It's obviously draki blood and she can't make sense of it. He says when he was dying of cancer, his father infused him with draki blood. Will says he wasn't given a choice in the matter and that his father, having lost his wife, wasn't willing to lose a son without a fight.

In Chapter thirty-two, with Will planted on solid ground, Jacinda knows she has no choice but to leave with Cassian though Will says he won't let her go. But then he realizes, as she already has, that there's no choice and that she'll be killed by his family if she stays. Cassian is carrying Tamra who yells for Jacinda to join them. Jacinda tells Will she loves him though it's the guttural language of the draki and he can't possibly understand.

They reach Cassian's car and Cassian says he isn't certain Jacinda's mother will be welcome back into the pride and that Jacinda will be punished for manifesting tonight. Jacinda pleads with him to prevent a wing clipping and he promises to try.

Chapters 30 through 32 Analysis

Jacinda is, in some ways, an example of the coming of age theme but she is also still very young and immature even as the story comes to an end. As the final conflict occurs at Big Rock, Jacinda realizes she's not behaved as she should with regard to Tamra and her mother. In truth, Jacinda has been self-centered to a great degree but she's also struggling through a great emotional burden without a supportive network to help her. Jacinda has had an identity crisis, apparently for her entire life. Since she first manifested as a fire breather, she has been coveted and revered, and treated more as an object than as a person. This is countered by her mother who wants Jacinda to be completely human so the pride will no longer care about her. In her mom's eyes, this will



keep Jacinda safe but in Jacinda's mind, her mother is just one more person who doesn't appreciate or love Jacinda as she is.

When Jacinda, Tamra, and Cassian arrive at the car, Jacinda demands they go get her mother before heading back to the pride. Cassian initially refuses but eventually gives in to her demand when she says she won't go without her mother. It's interesting that Jacinda has considered on multiple occasions that she might have to move forward with her life without her mother, her sister, or both, but when the time comes that it would have been easy to move on without their mom, Jacinda cannot even bring herself to consider it.



Characters

Jacinda

A young dragon-girl who lives with her mother and twin sister, Jacinda is a rebel and hates to follow the rules that govern her society. Jacinda is a fire-breather and is the first one to manifest with such powers in her pride in many years. As the only fire-breather of the pride, Jacinda is considered something of a commodity and is therefore treated differently than most young girls of the pride. Jacinda is being sought by a couple of the young men of the pride who are expected to hold leadership roles in later life. While Jacinda likes Cassian, she seems determined not to become bonded to him simply because everyone is pushing her to accept him. When the story opens, Jacinda is flying with her friend, Azure, during the daylight though such excursions are strictly prohibited by the pride. When they have a close encounter with hunters, Jacinda is in trouble with the pride. Her mother forces her to leave the pride immediately and Jacinda hates her for it though she later learns her mother did so to save Jacinda from having her wings clipped - a horrible fate for a draki. In the desert city where her mother takes her, Jacinda is determined to prevent her draki from dying as her mother expects. It's not until they are forcibly returned to the pride that Jacinda realizes her mother had been doing her best to protect Jacinda.

Will Rutledge

Will is a young hunter of dragons who seems to have some connection to Jacinda from the first moment they meet. When Jacinda is trapped in a small cave and surrounded by hunters, Will knows where she is but chooses not to tell the other hunters where to find her. Will happens to attend the high school Jacinda attends once she and her family leave the pride. They can sense each other from across rooms and Jacinda immediately recognizes him though it's not certain he recognizes her. When Will encounters Jacinda one night, she bleeds on one of his t-shirts and knows this will give away that she's really a draki. When she tries to get the shirt back, she discovers that Will has draki blood flowing through his veins and Will explains that his father gave him a transfusion of draki blood when he was a child suffering from cancer. The blood cured him but leaves Jacinda distressed, reminded yet again that Will and his family are hunters. Will continues to protect Jacinda whenever he feels the need and he wants to protect her from his family. Will, though connected to the draki and able to sense them because of the blood that flows through his veins, doesn't relish the hunts as other members of his family do. Will warns Jacinda from early on that she should distance herself from his cousins because they are dangerous.



Cassian

The son of the leader of the pride, it's expected that Cassian will take over leadership when he's an adult. He is challenged in this role by his cousin and their rivalry is strong. Most believe Cassian will eventually pair off with Jacinda. Jacinda is determined not to let it happen because she is being pushed into it. Cassian seems to be determined to protect Jacinda but Jacinda isn't certain she trusts him.

Azure

Jacinda's best friend until she leaves the pride, Az feels betrayed by Jacinda's decisions in life. Az is more of a conformist than Az and seems dedicated to the pride but she is more dedicated to Jacinda and helps when Jacinda and Tamra decide to escape from the pride to rejoin their mother and Will.

Tamra

Jacinda's twin sister, Tamra doesn't manifest as a draki. Because of this, Tamra has never fit in and feels inferior to Jacinda, a fact that has driven the girls apart despite their close biological connection. When the family leaves the pride the first time, Tamra is extremely happy that she's fitting in at a human high school and making friends.

Corbin

Cassian's cousin, he lives across the street from Jacinda and believes Jacinda will have to bond with him if she doesn't choose Cassian.

Xander

Will's cousin, he is jealous of Will and the likely successor for control of the hunting family if Will were not in the way. Xander is ruthless and it's he who gives the first clue that Will has draki blood flowing through his veins.

Angus

Will's cousin, he is a hunter who is ruthless but not quite as bright or talented as either Will or Xander.

Mom

Mother of Jacinda and Tamra, she has not manifested in years, at least partly because she feels sorry for Tamra who never manifested. When Jacinda is almost caught by



hunters, she is to be punished. Though he mom doesn't tell her that her wings are to be clipped, this is the reason her mom decides to take Tamra and Jacinda away from the pride.

Mrs. Hennessey

The woman who owns the small apartment Jacinda's mother rents for the family. Mrs. Hennessey seems to be a nosy busybody but Jacinda comes to realize the woman is merely lonely. They make a connection before the end of the book.

Brooklyn

The girl who is very popular at the school Tamra attends, she has her sights set on Will and is ruthless as she tries to get him to notice her. When it's apparent Will is interested in Jacinda, Brooklyn sabotages Tamra's chances of becoming a cheerleader, pushing Tamra into spending time with Angus and Xander.

Severin

The leader of the pride and Cassian's father, it's his decision to clip Jacinda's wings that prompts Jacinda's mom to run away with the girls. Severin seems ruthless but may feel he has to be a tough leader in order to keep the pride safe.

Nidia

The pride's last shaver, she is very old and some believe she continues to hold to life because she is the last of her kind and the pride depends on her.



Objects/Places

The pride

The clan of dragon people who Jacinda considers her extended family.

Draki

The inner dragon that lives in the people like Jacinda. Jacinda's mother expects Jacinda's draki to die once she's away from the pride but Jacinda fights against it.

Nevada

The state Jacinda and her mother move to when they, along with Tamra, flee the pride.

Chapparal

The name of the city where Jacinda's mother takes the girls when they run away from the pride.

The amber

The gem Jacinda's mother sells as a means of providing money for them to live on.

The shader

Nidia is the last of the shaders, able to create a fog that keeps the town hidden from those passing by, including aircraft.

Fire breather

Jacinda is the only fire breather that has manifested in many years. As such, she's coveted by the pride who hope her children will be fire breathers as well.

The Cascades

Where Will and his family are hunting Jacinda as the story opens.



The golf course

Where Jacinda goes to fly in Nevada.

Enkros

A dragon hunter.

Big Rock

Where the showdown between Cassian and Will occurs.



Themes

Denying the draki

Jacinda's bond with the draki is never fully explained but it seems to be something of an alter-ego in some respects. Jacinda loves to fly and that's a big part of the draki, but not the only part. Likewise, the fact that she's a fire breather is an important part of the draki, but again, not the only aspect. Jacinda's mother has chosen to deny her draki and it has apparently shriveled and died from disuse. Jacinda believes her mother chose this route after it became apparent that Tamra wasn't going to manifest. Jacinda refers once to the growing number of youngsters who don't manifest but Tamra is the only one mentioned. It's not clear whether these youngsters have purposely chosen not to manifest, thereby denying their draki. In Jacinda's case, she has trouble controlling her draki in times of great emotional upheaval. When Tamra sees Jacinda almost manifesting in the hallway after catching her first glimpse of Will, Tamra is furious but Jacinda believes Tamra doesn't understand her connection with the draki. Jacinda's mom has a plan to leave Jacinda in the arid weather of Nevada where her draki will spontaneously wither and die. This plan is flawed because Jacinda doesn't want to allow her draki to die and does everything she can to safeguard it. When her mother says again that Jacinda's draki will soon die, Jacinda grows furious, saying no one understands the connection. It could be that Jacinda has a stronger-than-usual connection because she is a fire breather.

Another possible aspect of this theme is seen with the connection between Jacinda and Will. While Will apparently doesn't manifest and may not be full draki. However, the fact that he has draki blood flowing through his veins makes a connection between them. Their efforts to deny that connection are in keeping with Jacinda's efforts to deny her draki.

The need to be loved for oneself

There are several characters in the story who are prized for what they can do and many of them struggle with the fact that they are not loved for themselves. Jacinda is one of the main examples. Though she does enjoy the attention paid to her by the members of the pride, she also chaffs under the realization that the attention is because she's a fire breather. She believes most people care about her only because she's a fire breather and that she, as a person and a draki, is expendable without that trait. She struggles with this in a completely different way with her mother. Jacinda's mom wants her to let her draki die and become human because that will mean Jacinda is no longer valuable to the pride. Without that value, Jacinda's mom believes Jacinda will be safe. While she may be right, Jacinda hates the idea of letting her draki die and feels angry that her mother also can't love her for what she is without wanting to change her. Will has this same situation going on though it seems not to bother him to the degree that it bothers Jacinda. In Will's case, his family adores him because of his ability on draki hunts. Will



says that his father and uncle have pitted Will and Xander against each other most of their lives, obviously praising the boys for their abilities without caring what either is truly like. Tamra is another example of this theme, having been all but shunned by the pride because she doesn't manifest as a draki with no thought given to her feelings.

The need to protect the one you love

This theme is the catalyst that drives much of the action early in the book. When Jacinda is caught away from the pride by hunters, she's almost killed and the reaction of the pride's leader is to punish her severely so that she can't be in that position again. There are two purposes for the action - to keep Jacinda personally safe but also to safeguard the pride. While it can be argued that Severin and the other leaders don't care about Jacinda as a member of the pride but are only focused on her as the pride's beloved fire breather, the bottom line is they plan to clip her wings as a means to keep both her and the pride safe. Jacinda's mother's actions are very similar only her main concern is to keep Jacinda safe from what the pride has in mind for her. Jacinda's mother sneaks away with the girls in the middle of the night in her effort to keep Jacinda safe. Will is another example of this theme. When Cassian shows up at Big Rock, Will wants to keep Jacinda away from him, immediately recognizing him as a threat to Jacinda and to their happiness. But when Will falls, Jacinda manifests though it's in full view of an entire clan of hunters. She doesn't think about anything other than her desire to get to Will and save him. Jacinda's desire to save Tamra is what leads her and Will to Big Rock to start with. She fears allowing Tamra to be alone with Xander and his friends.



Style

Point of View

The story is presented in first-person from Jacinda's perspective. This means the reader doesn't know what's going on until Jacinda knows. For example, there is a strong connection between Jacinda and Will that is evident from their first meeting but there is no explanation given for that connection. Jacinda later finds draki blood on one of Will's t-shirts and she knows it's hers. However, Will's cousin sees the blood and doesn't immediately jump to the correct conclusion - that it's Jacinda's blood. Instead, he immediately accuses Will of having gone hunting without the family members. That doesn't make complete sense until later when Will reveals that he has draki blood in his veins. He'd been given a transfusion as a child when he was about to die of cancer. Jacinda comes to believe there is still more about Will she doesn't know but the reader doesn't learn what this is during this book. The limited perspective is often used as a means of keeping the reader in suspense. For example, when Jacinda and Azure are out flying together during the daylight as the book opens, they encounter hunters and Jacinda knows Az can't keep up with her to escape them. She leads the hunters away with instructions for Az to hide until the coast is clear. Jacinda is wounded and cornered and doesn't know what happened to Az. Because Jacinda doesn't know, the reader also doesn't know, and the reader is left wondering if Az might have been killed up to the moment Jacinda and Az are reunited.

Setting

The story is set in two overall settings. One of those is a real city in Nevada where Jacinda, Tamra, and their mother go after running away from the pride. This city is typical of Nevada, hot and dry, and was chosen specifically for those reasons. The second overall setting is a mythical city inhabited by draki, extended members of Jacinda's family and other families who form the pride. This setting is not real though given the circumstances described by the group, it could be. The city is shrouded in a perpetual mist which is very much like the mists that tend to be near some mountainous regions. In the story, that mist is created by a draki woman named Nidia who helps keep the city hidden from those who might otherwise spot it. There are descriptions of the city itself. Jacinda says the city is "shaped like a giant wheel." The "spokes" are streets and several important buildings, including the school, is in the center of the town. The town is surrounded by walls that are carefully gardened to ensure they blend in perfectly with the environment. There are also guard towers that have been built with an eye toward the time when Nidia might no longer be able to shade the city. In Nevada, there are several distinct settings. They are in the town of Chaparral which is apparently a real place. They rent a pool house and there is ample description of their new apartment. Some of the action happens at the high school and the description of that facility is left largely to the imagination of the reader.



Language and Meaning

The story is presented in a straight-forward manner. The action moves quickly though there are complex situations and ideas presented. As the story opens, Jacinda and her best friend are flying during the daylight though their pride prohibits the activity. The reason is that hunters are always a threat. As Jacinda and Az are in danger of being caught, Jacinda considers having them demanifest, believing the hunters won't be on the lookout for two young girls. However, there are problems with that and it's revealed that the fact that draki can demanifest into humans is one of the most closely guarded secrets of the race.

The reader with an average vocabulary may struggle with some sections of the book. There are some words that are created for this book, such as draki, which is a reference to the dragon form of each being. The meanings of these words are fairly well defined within the story. The means by which the person manifests into the draki form is not completely explained but there are details provided, such as the fact that the wings fold into the shoulder blades. Jacinda is threatened with having her wings clipped. This term is both literal and figurative because she is literally to have her draki's wings clipped so that she will be unable to fly but the act is also meant to bring her back under the control of the pride.

Structure

The book is divided into thirty-two chapters. Each is titled by number only though in the table of contents, the first few words of the chapter are presented, apparently as a clue to what's happening in that chapter. The book opens with an epigraph, a quote from Leonardo da Vinci. The quote addresses flight though it was likely metaphorical in da Vinci's case. The quote indicates that once a person has flown, they will always want to fly again. Jacinda is an example of that desire. She is flying as the story opens and is threatened because of it. She is flying on a night she encounters Will and fears she's revealed herself for what she is. The book is part of a series but can be read as a stand-alone volume. However, the reader should be aware that the book has an unsatisfactory conclusion. As the book comes to a close, Jacinda is being taken back to the pride and it seems likely she'll have her wings clipped because she disobeyed the rule to never fly during the daytime. It's not revealed in this book whether Jacinda is punished upon her arrival. Also near the end of the book, Tamra manifests for the first time and there's no indication how she takes this change or what effect it has on the characters. As the story opens, the characters are interacting in the pride. In chapter five, Tamra, Jacinda, and their mother have arrived at their new home in Nevada and Jacinda is struggling to fit in while Tamra is loving her new life. In chapter twenty-six, Jacinda has been expelled from school and begins spending more time with Will. In chapters thirty and thirty-one, Jacinda and Tamra are at a party with a group of hunters. In the final chapter, Tamra has manifested, shading the memories of the hunters. Tamra, Jacinda, and their mother are being taken back to the pride by Cassian.



Quotes

"I breathe fire. The only fire-breather in the pride for more than four hundred years. It's made me more popular than I want to be" (Chapter 1).

"I know an apology is expected, but I would rather swallow nails. It's this I'm running from - a life of disappointing my mother, of stifling my true self" (Chapter 3).

"Mom deliberately killed her draki years ago, let it wither away from inactivity once it became obvious Tamra would never manifest. I guess she did it so my sister wouldn't feel so alone" (Chapter 4).

"Before, this afraid, I would have instantly manifested. It's an instinct a draki is powerless to resist. That I'm still clinging to my human form can only mean I'm dying, weakening" (Chapter 12).

"Back home, I only ever felt safe, protected, and revered. Even with Cassian, I never felt like he liked me for me, but rather for what I brought the pride" (Chapter 13).

"Somehow, I think I know you. From the first moment I saw you, I felt that I knew you" (Chapter 18).

"We descend from dragons. Dragons who ruled the earth and skies millennia ago" (Chapter 19).

"My certainty that they would never force me to bond too young is ridiculous knowing now that they were willing to cripple me in the worst possible way. They're capable of anything" (Chapter 20).

"When I leave this place, I have to go alone. Be alone. Maybe forever" (Chapter 25).

"What did you expect me to do? Tell the girl I can't get out of my head that my family hunts mythical creatures" (Chapter 26).

"Now I don't want to leave. Mostly because of Will, but also because I've decided to give Mom and Tamra what they want" (Chapter 28).

"Will shouldn't be stronger than Cassian. Cassian's the strongest draki I know" (Chapter 31).



Topics for Discussion

Who is Jacinda? What are her strengths and weaknesses? Is she likable? What do others think of her? What do you predict her fate will be once she is returned to the pride?

Who is Tamra? What is her relationship to Jacinda? How might their relationship have been different if Tamra had manifested as a child as Jacinda did? What does Tamra want from her new life in Nevada? Why does she want this so badly?

Who is Will? What is his connection with Jacinda? Describe their first meeting. Describe their final meeting of this book. What are Will's strengths and weaknesses?

Describe Jacinda's family. Compare them to Will's family. Compare the love building between Will and Jacinda to any other fictional couple in literature. What do you predict will be the eventual outcome of their budding love? Why do you predict this?

Who is Cassian? Compare the feelings Jacinda has for Cassian with those she has for Will. What are Cassian's motivations in finding Jacinda after she and her mother leave the pride? Do you believe Cassian truly loves Jacinda or is he anxious to bond with her because she's a fire breather?

Who is Az? Who is Corbin? Who is Brooklyn? Who is Mrs. Hennessey? Who is Mr. Rutledge? Who is Severin? What are their relationships with Jacinda and her family? What are their roles in the story?

What is the most important theme of this story? Give three examples of that theme within the story. Compare this story to one other story with the same or a similar theme.