

# **The False Princess Study Guide**

## **The False Princess by Eilis O'Neal**

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



# Contents

<a href="#">The False Princess Study Guide.....</a>	<a href="#">1</a>
<a href="#">Contents.....</a>	<a href="#">2</a>
<a href="#">Plot Summary.....</a>	<a href="#">3</a>
<a href="#">Chapters 1 and 2.....</a>	<a href="#">4</a>
<a href="#">Chapter 3 and 4.....</a>	<a href="#">8</a>
<a href="#">Chapters 5 and 6.....</a>	<a href="#">11</a>
<a href="#">Chapters 7 and 8.....</a>	<a href="#">13</a>
<a href="#">Chapters 9 and 10.....</a>	<a href="#">15</a>
<a href="#">Chapters 11 through 13.....</a>	<a href="#">16</a>
<a href="#">Chapters 14 through 16.....</a>	<a href="#">18</a>
<a href="#">Chapters 17 through 19.....</a>	<a href="#">20</a>
<a href="#">Chapters 20 through 22.....</a>	<a href="#">21</a>
<a href="#">Chapters 23 and 24.....</a>	<a href="#">23</a>
<a href="#">Characters.....</a>	<a href="#">25</a>
<a href="#">Objects/Places.....</a>	<a href="#">28</a>
<a href="#">Themes.....</a>	<a href="#">30</a>
<a href="#">Style.....</a>	<a href="#">32</a>
<a href="#">Quotes.....</a>	<a href="#">34</a>
<a href="#">Topics for Discussion.....</a>	<a href="#">36</a>



## Plot Summary

Sinda Azaway is living the life of a princess in Vivaskari just after her sixteenth birthday when she learns she is really the daughter of a weaver who has been forced to live as a stand-in for the true princess. This exchange occurred due to a prophecy that indicated the princess would die before her sixteenth birthday. Sinda is sent away to live with her only surviving relative, an aunt who is a dyer in the tiny village of Treb. There, Sinda works hard but has few skills that will help her survive the life of a poor peasant. When she begins to feel magic surging through her body, her aunt relates the story of her mother, who was also magic. Sinda fears the magic because she is unable to control it and returns to the city of Vivskari with the hope she'll be accepted into the wizard's college there.

She's turned away because she is not of noble blood nor is she able to pay tuition. Her anger rages out of control and she causes a fountain to bubble over, a show of magic that prompts a powerful but unorthodox wizard named Philanthia to take Sinda as a scribe while agreeing to teach her to control her magic. Sinda begins to work but is troubled that she is unable to quickly learn to harness the magic that Philanthia assures her is very powerful.

Meanwhile, Sinda renews her friendship with the son of an Earl, Kiernan. When she stumbles on a ritual being performed on Orianne, who has been presented as the princess Nalia, Sinda realizes that Orianne is also not the real princess. Sinda and Kiernan set out to discover the truth and find a plot that runs deep and involves a powerful wizard named Melaina and her sister who was the Oracle who gave the false prophecy. Melaina prompted her sister to give the false prophecy and prompted the king and queen to send their daughter to a convent for her own safety, putting Sinda as a stand-in for the princess until the danger had passed. Sinda then learns that Orianne is Melaina's daughter and that Melaina switched her with the real princess at birth in order to bring her own line of the royal family into power.

Sinda struggles to right the wrong that's been done, putting the true princess back on the throne. She arrives at the coronation just before Orianne is crowned and makes her accusations. When it becomes apparent that Sinda is telling the truth, Melaina tries to kill the real princess which would still clear the way for Orianne to take the throne, but Orianne steps in front of the princess, sacrificing herself.

With the rightful heir on the throne, Sinda tries to decide what to do with her life. The real princess, raised as Mika but now called Nalia, calls on Sinda to be her chief advisor and announces that Kiernan is waiting for her. Kiernan says his parents have agreed to bless his engagement to Sinda and she prepares to move forward with these new roles as her life.



# Chapters 1 and 2

## Chapters 1 and 2 Summary

As the story opens, Sinda is in the garden with her good friend, Kiernan. Sinda believes she is Nalia, the princess and is the only heir to the throne. She lives with the king and queen and their court in the city of Vivaskari. On a particularly nice day, Sinda and Kiernan are trying to figure out a puzzle. They have a map they believe leads to King Kelman's Door, a magic opening in the wall that surrounds the palace. They discovered the map one day in the library and believe they know where the door is located in the wall, but they can't find it. There is writing on the map that neither of them can translate but they want to solve the mystery on their own without help from any adults. As they are arguing about whether Sinda is looking in the right section of the wall, Cornalus, the steward, arrives with instructions that Sinda is to join her parents in the Hall of Thervaldor. Sinda is surprised by the summons because her parents are usually too busy to see her at all during the day.

Kiernan is the son of the Earl of Rithia and is Sinda's companion although she notes that he has vastly different interests from her. While she amuses herself studying or reading, he is always finding adventures. Many of the people who live in the palace have noticed that Keirnan is the only person able to get Sinda to relax.

Sinda asks if she has time to go by her room to tidy herself but Cornalus says she's wanted immediately. She takes time only to run her fingers through her hair a little before entering the great hall. The king and queen are there as well as Neomar Ostralus, the head of the wizard's school and trusted magical advisor, and Melaina Harandron who is likely to take over Neomar's spot upon his retirement. Melaina is also a noblewoman, the Baroness of Saremarch. The queen calls Sinda by the name she's used her entire life, Nalia, and announces they have something important to tell her. The king begins by saying he and the queen travelled to Isidros before the birth of their only child to receive a prophecy from the oracle there. Sinda recites the prophecy as she believes it was handed down but the king says that wasn't the true prophecy. He says the true prophecy indicated the princess would be murdered before her sixteenth birthday. Sinda is trying to make sense of the scene, especially because the king refers to 'the princess' rather than talking directly to Sinda. He then reveals that she is not the princess but has been a stand-in for the real princess because of the prophecy. The real princess has been raised elsewhere in order to keep her safe.

The king says only a few people knew of the deception and the queen says they couldn't simply hide the princess away because the harm that was to befall her would simply have sought her out. Neomar then moves to Sinda and casts a spell. Sinda notes that she feels something falling away from her. It's the removal of a spell that has been present her entire life to ensure that others saw and accepted her as the princess.



Sinda learns that the spell had to be recast periodically because it weakened over time, and that Melaina was the one who carried the young princess to her new home at the convent. She is told the real princess has been raised with no idea of her true identity but has now been told and will arrive shortly. The king says Sinda's father was a weaver and that he willingly gave up Sinda to be raised as the stand in for the princess. Sinda's father didn't mention a mother and he has since died. They then reveal that her real name is Sinda.

In chapter two, Sinda is in her room, remembering the council meeting that followed her discovery of her true identity. Sinda says the king had announced the true prophecy to the council members and Sinda had shown her arm - a place without the birthmark previously used to identify her as the princess. With the stripping of the spell, the mark has disappeared. Sinda recalls that she'd told the council she was not the princess and that there had been "gasps of shock."

Sinda has learned she has an aunt who lives in the small village of Treb. She's a dyer and Sinda is to be taken to her at once. Some servants enter the room and announce they are to help Sinda pack. They refer to her as "my lady" but she corrects them, pointing out she's not royalty as they'd always believed. As the women pack, Sinda thinks about her life. She knows she's going to miss the people and her home. She says she has never been a true princess in actions, and that she's always been uncomfortable in crowds and formal dinners. Sinda says that a real princess would never have had fingers covered with ink and would have been much more graceful than Sinda.

It doesn't take very long for her things to be packed. She's not allowed to take everything and has only some of the simplest of her gowns. Sinda is still at the window when an elaborate carriage arrives and she knows this will be the real princess. She is very graceful when she steps out and Sinda notes that they look very much alike. She's taken to board a much simpler carriage. Cornalus arrives as she's boarding with a velvet bag that contains some gold and a letter for her aunt. He seems uncertain how to talk to her but says the queen has pledged to pray for Sinda daily. Cornalus says he didn't know about the switch until a few minutes before it was revealed to Sinda, and that if he had, he would have tried to somehow save her from the pain she's feeling. As the carriage pulls away, Kiernan runs out and calls out, "Nalia." Sinda doesn't call for the carriage to stop, knowing there's no way for them to be friends now.

They arrive in Treb well after dark. The driver stops and asks for directions. When they arrive at the home of Sinda's aunt, Varil Azaway, the coachman goes to the door to help her out. He almost calls her "your highness" before catching himself in mid-word. When Sinda and Varil meet for the first time, Varil says Sinda looks like her biological mother. Sinda apologizes for showing up with so little warning.

Sinda wakes the next morning in the tiny bed in a small room. She checks the bag of gold given to her by Cornalus the previous day and discovers it's not a lot though it is probably a small fortune to her aunt. She soon realizes that she slept in the only bed while her aunt slept in the living room on the floor. When Varil opens the letter from the



king, she reveals that she's been granted permission to hunt herbs and plants on protected land belonging to the king for five days each year. She says she can't possibly afford to go there and that there's nothing there she needs that she can't find closer.

Sinda soon learns there are only about twenty houses in the entire village. Aunt Varil soon takes her to the home of a neighbor whose daughter has recently moved away, leaving some things behind. Varil points out the work of a dyer is hard and that Sinda will have to work for her keep. Sinda says she's willing to learn to do anything required of her. Varil points out that her clothes aren't suitable for the work. Sinda had thought they were very plain - the plainest of all her clothes - but she quickly realizes they are much nicer than anything others of the village are wearing. As Sinda changes into the hand-me-down clothing, she promises herself to settle in to Treb and to build a life for herself here.

## Chapters 1 and 2 Analysis

Sinda describes the fact that she's being taken immediately to her aunt as happening very quickly, "like the severing of a limb, so that the injury would heal more quickly." Those were the words of the king but Sinda doesn't seem to object. She certainly doesn't argue, and that's a point that's made later in the story.

An interesting aspect of this is that the queen seems to have grown to love Sinda. Sinda notes there's a catch in the queen's voice as she tells Sinda the news. It's later noted that she sometimes cries, apparently with longing for Sinda. The queen has treated Sinda like a daughter for the sixteen years Sinda has lived in the palace. There seems to be no doubt that she's come to care for Sinda after all that time. The queen's perspective is never presented and it's left to the reader to decide if there was an impact on the queen and if that matters.

As Sinda is digesting the information, she begins to think about her life as a princess. She notes that her hair was always in disarray and that her fingers always had ink on them. She says she wasn't comfortable at elaborate, formal functions and has always been clumsy. Sinda says if she'd truly looked at herself, she'd have known she couldn't possibly be a princess. The thought is ridiculous because simply being born a princess doesn't make her graceful or neat. She is also likely being overly sensitive at the moment, trying to somehow shift the blame to herself. Sinda has a tendency to excuse the actions of others and this is a major example of that. Over time, she continually defends the king and queen and their decision to put her in a position of danger without even apologizing for having done so.

Sinda is furious when she sees the small stack of gold coins given to her as she leaves the palace. She says that it would seem to be a lot of money to the people of the tiny village of Treb, but that she's seen money in vast amounts and knows this means nothing to the king and queen. She also realizes that she's stood in harm's way for her entire life, bait waiting to be killed so that the real princess would remain unharmed. In that respect, the money seems even less. Sinda realizes the amount was settled on for



a purpose. There's enough money there that she won't starve for the foreseeable future but not enough for her to begin gathering an army or followers to cause a rebellion and attempt to take the throne. When Sinda considers that, she rationalizes that the amount was carefully chosen to protect the real princess. With that idea, Sinda is able to overcome her anger. Her patriotism shows through repeatedly and it may be at least partly because she's grown up learning the history of her people from the perspective of heir to the crown.



# Chapter 3 and 4

## Chapter 3 and 4 Summary

In chapter three, Sinda notes that she's unprepared for her new role in life. She is expected to work with her aunt and the work is grueling. Some days they spend hours searching for specific plants in the forest. Sinda hardly ever knows what she's looking for and her aunt isn't anxious to teach her. Other days, she's called on to help her aunt with the dying process. She says she has always been able to catch onto new ideas presented by her tutors and she is frustrated by her inability to figure out how to do the tasks her aunt assigns. She does begin to learn the domestic tasks, such as chopping wood, arranging the skeins of dyed wool, sewing, and cleaning. She says she is too tired to think about her old life, which is the only blessing she can find in this new life. Sinda longs for her aunt to show her some affection and she believes Varil's attitude toward her will change with time, but weeks pass and nothing changes.

One day Sinda has the opportunity to ask about her parents and she learns her father was a "quiet and serious" young man. Varil worried about him when he became an apprentice in Vivaskari because she feared he was overly trusting. She says Sinda's father married her mother, Ilania, who was charming and busy. Varil says Sinda resembles her mother in appearance but that she's very much like her father in her willingness to accept whatever life hands her. Varil points out that Sinda was tossed out of the palace after sixteen years and that she willingly got into a carriage and allowed it to happen. Varil says Sinda's father accepted Ilania's leaving, moved back to Trab, and waited to die. After the story, Sinda says she now understands why Varil hates her but Varil says she doesn't hate Sinda. She points out that she's used to living alone and doesn't know "what do to with you." She says Sinda is of an age to be courted but that she's be a liability to a young man dependent on a wife to make a home for him. It's only after this conversation that Sinda considers whether she might have given in to the dictates of the king too easily. But she reminds herself that he is the king and that she is nobody, certainly not important enough to disobey the king.

Sinda is viewed by others in the village as an oddity. They know she was the stand in for the princess and that she's been cast out. She says some young girls might have used the situation to make friends but she finds herself unwilling to make friends because of the situation. Sinda begins experiencing an emotion she can't name. It's only much later that she realizes it's magic. One day when she is walking home with a basket filled with nettle heads for her aunt when she trips and falls in front of a group of young people from the village. She's humiliated but a young man named Tyr Varanday, son of the man who owns the general store, helps her pick up the nettle heads. He then asks if he can call on her to show her around the village. Sinda says he can.

When Tyre shows up to pick up Sinda, Aunt Varil grudgingly gives her permission but warns they are to go no farther than the town. Tyr encourages Sinda to talk and she





confides that Aunt Varil doesn't seem to like her very much. As they talk, Tyr tells Sinda that he wants to be her friend. Sinda responds that she's glad of that.

In chapter four, Sinda returns home and Aunt Varil's first words are that Tyr is trouble. She says he often spends time away from the village and that he believes "he's better than other people, that he deserves things they don't." She says he also likes to get his own way. Sinda is angry and says Tyr is the only person who has made overtures to be her friend.

Tyr and Sinda begin spending a great deal of time together. Though some of the other young people from the village sometimes seem interested in joining them, Tyr always pushes them away so that he and Sinda are together. One day Sinda is in the woods gathering plants when Tyr catches up with her and kisses her. When Sinda thinks about Kiernan during the kiss and wonders why. Tyr says he has to be away for a few days and that he'll miss her while she's gone.

Three days later, Sinda is working at the dying process in the back yard when Kiernan arrives. She's furious at being caught in such old clothing looking horrible after the hard work. Kiernan says he'd wanted to follow Sinda immediately upon her departure but his father had refused, saying he was needed to welcome the real princess and that leaving upon her arrival would be rude. Sinda asks why he's come to her, pointing out she no longer has a title or anything to offer him. He says he came because he misses her. Kiernan reveals that he's brought King Kelman's map and Sinda snaps at him, pointing out that she has no library for research. She then lies, saying she has friends and a great deal to keep her busy. She says she doesn't need his pity and Kiernan leaves. As soon as he's gone, Sinda begins to cry.

## Chapter 3 and 4 Analysis

Sinda and her Aunt Varil are not immediately fond of each other and they don't grow closer over time. Sinda does her best to obey her aunt's commands and she submits to the grueling schedule without complaining. She eventually has a chance to question her aunt about her parents and learns the reason her aunt can't seem to like her. Varil reveals that Sinda's father was a quiet man who fell in love with her mother and married her after only a short time. When Sinda's mother gave birth to Sinda, Varil saw a change in her and a short time later, Sinda's mother simply left. Varil says Sinda's father lost interest in everything and she believes he died younger than he should have because he was heartbroken. This is probably why he was willing to give Sinda up as a stand-in for the princess. Varil's first words to Sinda were that she looks like her mother. Varil blames Sinda's mother for the death of Sinda's father, and Varil's first words to Sinda were that she looks like her mother, which probably explains why Varil can't become fond of Sinda.

The argument between Varil and Sinda over Tyr is significant because of Varil's attitude regarding Tyr. She says Tyr's mother's family have lots of possessions and that they've made Tyr believe he's better than other people. When she says this, Sinda suddenly



realizes Varil thinks the same of her. Varil's perspective is not presented and she never indicates this as a possibility, so it's not really clear whether she Sinda is correct. But this makes the point that Sinda again believes she can't possibly be doing anything right. Sinda is working very hard and does so without complaint, but she lacks the self-confidence to believe she's doing anything right. Another important aspect of this is Sinda's action following the argument. She stands up to Varil, saying she has no friends and that Tyr wants to be her friend, indicating she will befriend him with or without Varil's approval. This is impressive because Sinda seldom stands up for herself. What's even more noteworthy is that Sinda goes to be later and wants to hold onto something from her past life for comfort. Instead, she holds to the blanket on her bed, reminding herself this is now her life.



# Chapters 5 and 6

## Chapters 5 and 6 Summary

In chapter five, Sinda realizes she's ruined the dye bath she was supposed to watch while Kiernan was there. She realizes the only comfort she has now is to go see Tyr, who is supposed to be back by now. She reaches the house where she knows he will be and, hearing voices, stops. Tyr is talking with some of the village boys and says he's will soon be able to say that he's slept with the girl raised as a princess, referring to Sinda. Sinda is suddenly furious with the situation and realizes the vine she's holding to has completely died in her hands. It suddenly dawns on her that the unease she has been feeling recently is magic.

When Sinda returns home, Aunt Varil is waiting and begins to fuss at Sinda about the ruined dyebath. Sinda asks where the magic comes from and Aunt Varil reveals that her mother had been magic. As Sinda deals with her chaotic emotions, a wind rushes through the house and she struggles to calm herself in order to get control. Varil goes on to say that Sinda's mother had apparently used her power only to control other people.

Sinda goes to bed but rises the next morning with the realization that she has to find someone to train her to control the magic. When she sees her aunt for the first time that morning, she apologizes, saying that she was wrong to keep the information from Sinda. Varil says there's a "hedge witch" in a neighboring village and is about to suggest she might help Sinda control her power, but realizes Sinda means to leave Treb on her own. Sinda says she wants to return to Vivaskari.

Sinda and her aunt part and Sinda arrives by coach at an inn called the Cat's Paw, which the driver of the coach promises is inexpensive but safe. She has no real plans other than to secure an education at the wizard's school.

In Chapter six, Sinda is at the college and is told that she simply won't be admitted. She's told she has to be either of noble birth or very wealthy and that the money she offers isn't enough to pay her tuition. Sinda is finally ushered out of the building and seats herself near a fountain. She isn't certain what to do next and is struggling to find an idea when she sees Melaina. She is angry that the college is closed to her and others like her. That anger translates to magic and Sinda soon has the water of the fountain boiling. Just then, a powerful wizard named Philantha asks if Sinda had made the water boil on purpose. They talk for a moment and Philantha offers to become Sinda's teacher.

Sinda serves Melaina as scribe and researcher for Philantha in return for room, board, a small payment, and magic lessons.



Philantha explains that the magic "wants to be used" and will come to the surface one way or another. Under her tutelage, Sinda freezes water. Philantha says Sinda can use herbs and potions to make the magic easier and that magic performed on another person is always more difficult.

## Chapters 5 and 6 Analysis

Sinda is upset that Varil knew about the magic in her background and that she had never mentioned it. Varil indicates she'd hoped Sinda wouldn't have inherited the magic but Sinda says that's no excuse. Sinda's reaction to learning she has magic is fear because she sees the vine die in her hand and the wind rush through her aunt's cottage. She is afraid she'll hurt herself or someone else unless she learns to control the magic. Those with magic typically show signs of the magic while they are very young. As it is later revealed, Sinda's magic remained hidden so long because of the spell placed on her by the wizards of the court that made her appear to be the princess.

When Sinda announces to Varil her intention to return to Vivaskari, Varil asks how Sinda is going to pay her way. Sinda reveals the gold given to her by Cornalus as she left the palace. Sinda's first words after the revelation are to apologize, saying she should have given the money to Varil but that she'd thought she might need it someday. Varil says the money belongs to Sinda for having spent those years as a stand-in for the princess because the king and queen feared she would be murdered. This is an important part of Varil's character. She works hard at her profession and her life is difficult, but she doesn't want the wealth that the gold represents. Varil believes she is supposed to work for anything she has and doesn't seem to covet anything she hasn't worked for.



# Chapters 7 and 8

## Chapters 7 and 8 Summary

In Chapter seven, Sinda is elated to have performed a spell but quickly learns every bit of magic she performs saps her energy. One day after Sinda has "blased a leg off one of the study's tables," Philantha says Sinda would actually have less difficulties if she had less magic. Philantha continues to say Sinda is working too hard against the magic. Sinda eventually comes to believe she has to set things right with Kiernan and makes plans to seek him out. Neomar discovers Philantha is teaching Sinda and insists he be kept apprised of her progress.

Sinda arrives in Kiernan's rooms and apologizes only to discover he wants to apologize as well. Sinda reveals that she's magic by creating a little spark of light in the palm of her hand, fearing the knowledge might make him see her differently. Kiernan's immediate response is that they can have a great deal of fun with that. They struggle to get their relationship back on an even footing and Kiernan at one point calls Sinda a "stupid cow" because she hasn't figured out that he wants to spend time with her.

In Chapter eight, Kiernan says everyone has figured out that he's renewed his relationship with Sinda because he's stopped sulking around the palace. He says the newly-installed princess wants to meet her and Sinda says she won't allow it. After they argue about it, Sinda returns to Philantha's and she recognizes that Sinda is upset. She says she supposes Kiernan has done something and indicates she believes there to be more between Kiernan and Sinda than friendship. Sinda learns Kiernan's parents have been looking for a suitable wife for Kiernan. When Sinda continues to mope for several days after their argument, Philantha says she's going to turn Kiernan into a sparrow if they don't make up.

One day Sinda is sent to the apothecary shop for Philantha. She believes she's being followed to the shop and when she steps outside after picking up Philantha's order, forgets to look for the man because of a strange pulling sensation. She can't resist the urge to look to her left and there she sees the princess who says she slipped away from the palace because she needed to see Sinda. They go to a bench at the statue of Queen Conavin to talk. They share their thoughts on their lives and though Sinda is initially angry, she realizes that both she and the princess are victims of circumstances beyond their control. The princess reveals that the queen sometimes cries, apparently for missing Sinda. Sinda admits that it's easier to be Philantha's scribe than it had been to be a princess. Both say they miss their friends and the places they'd known as home for most of their lives. The princess reveals that her name was Oriane though she is now known as Nalia.



## Chapters 7 and 8 Analysis

Neomar says that Philantha's decision to teach Sinda magic is unusual. Though he doesn't forbid it, he hints that the king and queen would be interested in knowing how Sinda is progressing. The possibility that Sinda might claim to be the true princess is apparently on the minds of lots of people though Sinda isn't at all interested in taking such a stand.

There is a great deal of information provided about Orianne's life after arriving at the palace revealed in chapter eight. Because the perspective is limited to that of Sinda, it's not revealed until this point that Orianne has had difficulty adjusting to her new life. More time will pass before it's revealed that Orianne is also not the true princess. For the sake of clarity, she will be referred to as Orianne throughout this study guide.

Sinda is jealous of Kiernan though she continues to insist their relationship is no deeper than friendship. Kiernan has lived his life with the knowledge that, as the son of an earl, he would not be an acceptable suitor for Sinda's hand. Now the tables are reversed and Sinda - a nobody - would not be suitable for Kiernan. It's partly because of these societal dictates that each is denying their love though that's what their friendship has grown into.



# Chapters 9 and 10

## Chapters 9 and 10 Summary

In Chapter nine, Sinda tells Philantha about the strange pulling sensation she'd had when she and Orianne met in the market. Philantha says it's the remains of the spell that fooled people into believing she was the princess. As Sinda continues to go through her days, she fights a feeling of unease and a lack of purpose. One day she picks up the map to King Kelman's Door and is surprised to discover she can read some of the words that are written in wizard's language and that she'd previously dismissed as runes. She discovers that only one of royal blood will be able to find and open the door. Sinda realizes she should return the map to the palace and she sets out to do that.

Inside the palace walls, she sees that two figures in the center of a room and soon discovers one of them is the princess. There is a golden haze, just as there had been the moment the spell making Sinda appear to be the princess had been stripped. Sinda realizes the other person is a wizard who is casting a spell on Orianne, and that she's also not the true princess.

In Chapter ten, Sinda realizes Orianne truly believes she is the princess, just as Sinda had believed it her entire life. Sinda considers rushing to the king and queen with the information but knows they'll put it down as Sinda's way of trying to get even for being cast out of the palace. She tells Kiernan what she's seen and he says he doesn't want to believe it but is eventually convinced that it's the truth. They realize that either Neomar or Melaina have to be behind the plot but can't figure out which. Sinda remembers that Philantha and Neomar had been at college together and fears Philantha might also be involved. Kiernan suggests the real princess is dead but Sinda doesn't believe it.

## Chapters 9 and 10 Analysis

Sinda's accidental discovery that Orianne is also not the real princess prompts Kiernan's belief that the real princess is probably dead. The spell that has combined the girls together their entire lives involves a swapping of their essences so that they are literally tied. Philantha describes it as taking a bit of the soul of one girl and planting it in the other. Philantha believes the pulling sensation Sinda felt on meeting Orianne for the first time was prompted by their souls recognizing each other. In fact, there's a third girl, the real princess, and they are all three connected.



# Chapters 11 through 13

## Chapters 11 through 13 Summary

In Chapter eleven, Sinda learns the following day that Neomar has left town, apparently planning to be gone until autumn. Sinda and Kiernan struggle to figure out what their next steps should be and Sinda decides they need to see the oracle at Isidros who gave the prophecy about the princess's death.

In Chapter twelve, they arrive at the temple at Isidros pretending to be siblings with Sinda working on research. The oracles each keep a journal and Sinda hopes to read the journal compiled by the oracle that gave the princess's prophecy. However, she soon discovers the most recent volumes are not available to the public because some of the prophecies contained in those journals have not yet come to pass. They are, however, told they can have an audience with the current oracle. When they enter the temple, the oracle greets Sinda as "Princess-who-was."

In Chapter thirteen, the oracle gives Sinda the key to the locked part of the library where the oracles' journals are kept. Sinda asks why and the oracle says that she'd had a vision of herself giving Sinda the key. As Sinda is preparing to leave, she stumbles and touches the oracle who then presents another prophecy. She says she can see a triangle and one side of it crumbles. She says she cannot tell what it means but Sinda, realizing the triangle represents the three girls, says she understands. She imagines the crumbling side of the triangle indicates one of the girls is to die.

Sinda and Kiernan make their way into the locked part of the library that night and find the oracle who had given the princess's prophecy had lived as oracle only seven years. They find the prophecy recorded as they'd been told, with the princess dying in the palace before her sixteenth birthday. They are disappointed but Sinda browses on through the book. In the very back she finds a last inscription, indicating the oracle knows she is about to die and that she has something on her conscience. She says she's asked to be "buried with it" and Sinda assumes it has something to do with the prophecy. They sneak down to the tomb where the oracles are buried and break in.

## Chapters 11 through 13 Analysis

The oracle says Sinda still holds the crown of the princess though she is not wearing it. She is obviously speaking of her personal vision of Sinda and the vision is very accurate. Because Sinda knows Orianna is not the real princess, she's become determined to find the real princess on her own. This is an important part of one of the book's themes. Sinda needs to feel important. Though she was probably correct in that the king and queen wouldn't have believed her if she'd told them Orianna isn't the real princess, there comes a time later when she has enough evidence to present her case to the king and queen but she doesn't. She continues to argue to Kiernan that she



doesn't have enough proof but she really wants to be the person to save the princess and return her to her rightful place on the throne.



# Chapters 14 through 16

## Chapters 14 through 16 Summary

In Chapter fourteen, Kiernan and Sinda enter the mausoleum and eventually find the tomb of the oracle they seek. They find she has a small box in the crook of her arm and Sinda removes it. The oracle had written that she had given a false prophecy to the king and queen and that the true prophecy was that the princess was "at the walls of a palace, looking up at it from outside, her hand inside her shadow's." Kiernan is immediately frustrated that there isn't more detail and that the prophecy seems to make no sense. Suddenly they are interrupted by the appearance of monk who demands to know what they're doing. Kiernan knocks the man out and Sinda puts a spell on him to make him forget what he saw, but has no way of knowing for sure her spell worked.

In Chapter fifteen, Kiernan and Sinda complete their six-day journey back to Vivaskari. A few days later Sinda has an idea for their next step. She and Kiernan go to the palace library and look up genealogies. While they know the oracle may have been in league with anyone, Sinda hopes to find a blood relationship between the oracle and either Melaina or Neomar. She soon finds that Melaina's sister Alethea had died of redvein, a very rare disease. Her date of death matches that of the oracle. Kiernan discovers that Melaina had a daughter born just a few days before Sinda. They realize that Melaina arranged the prophecy then offered to take the real princess to the convent to be raised, but instead put her own daughter in the convent and sent the real princess somewhere else. Kiernan can't figure out what Melaina's motivation is but Sinda discovers that Melaina is descended from a branch of the royal family that tried to gain power but lost it. Kiernan and Sinda are leaving the palace when they encounter Melaina.

In Chapter sixteen, Sinda senses the power emanating from Melaina and is powerless to stop it. Kiernan calls out to Lord Cavish who happens to be passing by and his presence puts a stop to Melaina casting a spell on Kiernan and Sinda. Later, Sinda says she believes the real Nalia is on Melaina's estate, Saremarch. Kiernan argues they have to tell someone but Sinda insists they don't have enough proof. Kiernan says Sinda has enough proof but wants to be the heroine. Kiernan kisses Sinda and says he wants to be with her, and that it doesn't matter to him that she's not the princess. But he realizes it matters to Sinda and he says he won't go with her. Sinda casts a spell that will keep him from talking about it to anyone until she returns. Kiernan says he won't go along with her just to see her hurt.

## Chapters 14 through 16 Analysis

From the confession of the oracle, Sinda knows that the oracle had been involved with either Melaina or Neomar and her suspicions immediately go to Neomar because he left the palace the day after Sinda saw the spell on Orianne being renewed. She wavers over the coming days as she tries to figure out which is to blame.



Sinda is struggling to get control of her magic and she's obviously frustrated by the entire situation. Sinda is an intellectual. She points out that she'd learned things quickly from her tutors when she was being taught the things she'd need to know in order to be a good ruler. But she's had trouble figuring out how to fit in once her life at the palace is over. Both with her aunt as a teacher of dying and Philantha as her magic tutor, she's unable to quickly master skills. One day Philantha tells her about a young wizard who had been able to quickly and completely master whatever she assigned. Sinda apologizes for not being more like that but Philantha says that young man had no imagination and no real future because of his lack of creativity. She says Sinda will be a powerful magician some day and promises to stay with her until that day comes.



# Chapters 17 through 19

## Chapters 17 through 19 Summary

In Chapter seventeen, Sinda learns the king has come down with redvein. Sinda is certain Melaina has caused the illness, the same one that killed her sister the oracle. Sinda soon sets out for Saremarch. Sinda arrives in the small village of Saremarch and one of the villagers asks if she's there because there's a tinker stopping in town that day. She lies, saying she'd heard the tinker was coming to town, and spends time hanging around the village, hoping Nalia will come to town to see the tinker as well. When the princess arrives, Sinda is certain of her identity.

In Chapter eighteen, Nalia is a small girl and she's obviously had a hard life. She believes herself to be Mika. She runs from Sinda initially and Sinda has to chase her all the way to her tiny shack. Sinda quickly realizes that Mika is naturally distrustful and that she's going to have to handle the situation carefully. She refuses to believe she's the princess even when Sinda shows her the birthmark on her arm that proves it. Their conversation is interrupted by the arrival of Melaina and some soldiers. Sinda and Mika make a run for it. Just as Sinda is caught, she thinks she hears Kiernan's voice.

In Chapter nineteen, Sinda wakes in a room that's been magically altered so that her magic doesn't work. She's there for days before Melaina arrives. Sinda is furious and accuses Melaina of ruining a great many lives. Melaina points out that she gave up her daughter - having seen her only a couple of times prior to her arrival at the palace - and her sister in order to see her family restored to the throne. Melaina says Sinda can have a role in the new hierarchy as advisor to Orianne. She says Orianne will need people she can trust and that Sinda knows everything a princess should know. She points out that, as that advisor, Sinda would be a suitable match for Kiernan. Sinda refuses and Melaina says she's leaving immediately because Orianne is to be crowned shortly.

## Chapters 17 through 19 Analysis

There isn't a great deal of focus on Sinda's relationship with the king and queen but the reader should remember that Sinda believed them to be her parents for most of her life. She naturally loves them as a daughter loves her parents though there was a distance between them because of the responsibilities of the kingdom. When Sinda learns that the king is ill, her emotions come to the surface.

Melaina strikes a nerve with Sinda when she points out that, as advisor to the queen, Sinda would be a suitable match for Kiernan. Sinda will remember Melaina's words many times in the coming days and will try to distance herself from Kiernan in order to avoid heartbreak when he has to marry someone else.



# Chapters 20 through 22

## Chapters 20 through 22 Summary

In Chapter twenty, Sinda is asleep when guards arrive outside her holding cell. They argue, one saying that Melaina had left explicit instructions that Sinda wasn't to be moved and the other pointing out that the house would soon be totally engulfed in flames. The second says he doesn't plan to explain to Melaina that Sinda had died in the house fire and they agree to move her. Once they are outside, Sinda sees the fire is very serious and then she sees Kiernan and Mika. Sinda uses magic to throw the guards off her and then rushes toward Kiernan but she stops, remembering Melaina's words that she is nobody and therefore not good enough for Kiernan.

Kiernan explains that he'd followed Sinda and had helped Mika escape when Sinda was captured. He says they'd set the fire in the hope it would force the guards to bring Sinda into the open. Sinda realizes that he and Mika have apparently become friends in the short time they've been together. They know they have to get to the palace quickly to stop the coronation but also know Melaina will have people watching the gates. They set out without a real plan of what they'll do when they get there.

In Chapter twenty-one, they continue to travel, staying off the main roads. The journey is grueling, especially for Mika who has never ridden a horse for a long distance. At one point Mika confesses that her reason for going to take the throne is her desire to help the poor people of the kingdom. Sinda, denied an education at the wizard's college, understands. They near Vivaskari and Kiernan learns the king was buried two days after his death, probably Melaina's way of clearing the way quickly for the coronation which is not going to be open to the general public. They are still outside the gates and trying to figure out a way to get into the city and then into the palace grounds. Mika points out that Sinda and Kiernan have spent their entire lives in the palace grounds and that they should know some secret passage that will serve this purpose. They realize that King Kelman's Door is the answer.

In Chapter twenty-two, Sinda casts a spell to change their appearances. They each ride into the city separately and are admitted through the gates. They go first to Philantha's to get the map. There they discover someone has broken into the house and beaten Philantha and the only servant at home that day. Philantha says the men had demanded to know where Sinda was and when she would return. Sinda's first response is guilt. She says if she'd told Philantha what was happening, Philantha would have been able to protect herself.

Kiernan sends for a healer and Sinda pulls two of her best dresses from her trunk for her and Mika to wear. They grab the map and head for the palace. Before they can get out of the house, more men arrive. There's a brief fight before Sinda, Mika, and Kiernan rush from the house toward the palace. The men follow. Once they reach the appropriate



wall of the palace, they stop and Mika looks at the map, immediately able to read the part of the inscription that had defied Sinda and Kiernan so that the door appears.

## **Chapters 20 through 22 Analysis**

As the three are traveling toward Vivaskari, Mika brings up the notion of the prophecy given to Sinda by the oracle. That prophecy indicates that one of the three girls will die and Sinda hasn't hidden that from Mika. Sinda believes the biggest threat is to Mika but admits that it might be to her. Kiernan is determined to keep Sinda safe and Sinda is determined to keep Mika safe. Through all this, Sinda will later realize that she'd given little thought to Orianne's safety.



# Chapters 23 and 24

## Chapters 23 and 24 Summary

In Chapter twenty-three, they make it through the door and Kiernan plans to hold their pursuers at bay but the moment Mika steps away, the door disappears. The three rush toward the coronation ceremony and push their way through the crowd. Sinda cries out to stop the ceremony and Melaina steps out to meet her. Sinda tells the queen of Melaina's plan, including the prophecy of the death of the princess and killing the king. Melaina begins to deny Sinda's claims, pointing out that Kiernan would do anything for her and that she's desperate to regain a place of importance in the kingdom. Sinda realizes no one is going to believe her but she recalls Philantha's words about performing spells, saying it is always easier to perform a spell on oneself. Sinda knows Mika and Orianne almost as well as she knows herself because of the way the three have been bound. A part of that bond remains because of the need to keep Mika hidden and Sinda steps forward, removing the spell completely. Immediately, the wizards and others recognize Mika as the real princess and see the plot for what it was. Melaina throws a bolt of lightning toward Mika but Orianne steps in front of it and is killed just before Kiernan kills Melaina with his sword.

In Chapter twenty-four, Sinda returns to Philantha's house. Philantha is in bed for a time, recovering from her wounds. Days pass and Sinda begins to fall into a new routine in which magic is a part of her daily life. Sinda feels guilt over Orianne's death. She knows she didn't spend much time considering that Orianne might be the one to die and knows that Orianne was innocent in the manipulations of her mother.

One day Mika arrives. She says she needs someone in the palace she can trust and wants Sinda to become her chief advisor. Sinda realizes it's a position she wants very much to hold and agrees. Mika then says that Kiernan has been hoping Sinda would come to him. Sinda says that he hasn't called on her and Mika says this is one time Sinda will have to make the move.

When Sinda arrives to talk to Kiernan, he says he's told his parents he plans to marry Sinda, with or without their blessings. He says they've given them, realizing the important Sinda will have as Mika's chief councilor. Sinda agrees to marry him though she says she wants to put off the wedding for a little while.

## Chapters 23 and 24 Analysis

Sinda was raised as a princess with all the tutoring and skill-building necessary to make her life easier. Orianne was raised in a convent with an eye toward teaching her all the things she'd need for life as a ruler, though she didn't know it until much later. Of the three, only Mika is raised as a poor peasant without any of the skills she needs to become a ruler. However, Mika has something the others don't in that she realizes there



are people living in abject poverty because they don't have a chance at a better life. Mika decides that's what she'll focus on though it may be just her way of trying to make sense of a senseless situation.





# Characters

## Sinda Azaway

Raised as a princess named Nalia, Sinda is told soon after her sixteenth birthday that she is actually the daughter of a weaver. She doesn't object to being sent away and accepts her new life of poverty and hard work without a fight. This lack of self-esteem is an important part of Sinda's personality and is part of the reason she has trouble harnessing her magic once it is manifested. After her aunt points out that Sinda simply left the palace without an argument, Sinda considers the situation and realizes her aunt is at least partly right. As her magic becomes more powerful and Sinda feels less in control of that power, she takes the initiative to return to the city to seek training. Even then, Sinda is willing to accept that she's not welcome in the palace and that she's owed nothing for the years she served the role of princess. Sinda's lack of confidence makes learning to control her magic more time consuming than it might otherwise have been. When Sinda comes to realize the plot regarding the princess is more complicated than she'd initially been told, she sets out to find the real Nalia. She insists her motives are pure and that she's right in going without telling anyone of her quest but Kiernan realizes she's actually trying to make up for having lost her title as princess. Sinda eventually comes to realize Kiernan is right on that point but has difficulty finding a new role for herself.

## Kiernan

Son of an earl, he is raised in the palace alongside Sinda, believing she is the princess. Kiernan is full of life and laughter, and is often the one seeking ways to manufacture adventure. Kiernan is, in many ways, the typical spoiled son of a wealthy family but he also has a mind of his own. As he is growing up with Sinda, he grows to love her and his family hopes they will marry though it's not the normal alliance a princess would make. But once Sinda is revealed as a stand-in for the princess, Kiernan is at a loss on how to proceed. He doesn't want to like the new princess but finds himself drawn to her. Kiernan goes to visit Sinda and is hurt when she sends him away. However, his love for her is deep and when she is ready to make up, he has no qualms about renewing their friendship though he wants something more. When Sinda tells the real Nalia that Kiernan's family will never allow them to marry now that she's not a princess, Nalia says Kiernan isn't the kind of person to allow his parents to dictate who he will marry. Kiernan is an astute judge of character. When Sinda is set on seeking the princess, he urges her to give up the quest, pointing out the dangers. He also urges her to tell someone what she's discovered, but she refuses. Kiernan realizes that Sinda needs to feel important and that if she can't be a princess, she'll be the person who puts the rightful princess back on the throne.



## Philantha Sovrit

A rather unorthodox wizard, she recognizes Sinda's power the first time that they meet and takes Sinda on as an apprentice. Philantha is determined to help Sinda realize her full potential but she also recognizes that Sinda has the right to study as she pleases. When Sinda announces she's leaving but doesn't reveal that her destination is to find the princess, Philantha says only that Sinda's place will be waiting upon her return. Philantha also tells Sinda that she's got more power than any wizard Philantha has trained and that Sinda will eventually master it.

## Tyr Varanday

The son of a merchant in Treb, he seems to like Sinda and she appreciates the fact that he seems to want to be her friend. Just when Sinda is finding herself more attracted to Tyr, she overhears him talking to his friends about his determination to sleep with Sinda, the woman who was raised as a princess.

## Neomar Ostralus

Head of the wizard's college, he is the wizard who puts the spell on Sinda to make her appear to others as the princess. He becomes ill just before the king is killed and doesn't know that Melaina has cast another spell, creating the belief that her own daughter is the princess.

## Varil Azaway

Sinda's aunt who lives in Treb, she is Sinda's only living relative at the moment she's cast out of the castle. Varil is a dyer. She's a hard worker and blames Sinda's mother for the despair that apparently contributed to the death of Sinda's father. She can't seem to connect with Sinda, probably at least partly because of how she feels about Sinda's mother but also because she's accustomed to living alone and prefers that. She does do her best to make a place for Sinda upon her arrival in Treb.

## Melaina Harandron

A powerful wizard who is believed to be the person most likely to succeed when Neomar retires as chief of the wizard's college, she is also a cousin of the king and queen though this fact is hidden for a long time. Melaina has harbored anger that her line of the family does not hold the throne and she is the person who hatches the elaborate plot to put her daughter, Orianna, in power.



## Orianne

Daughter of Melaina, she is just a few days older than Nalia and has been raised in a convent. Orianne believes she is no one important until she's told she's the princess, and before her coronation she's told she isn't really the princess after all. She's a sweet, trusting person and sacrifices herself in order to save the real princess. For the purpose of clarity in this guide, she is referred to as Orianne except in direct quotes.

## Mika

The real princess of the story, she is raised in abject poverty and has trouble believing she is the real princess for a long time. Mika is tougher than Orianne but smart enough to realize she needs trusted people around her if she is to make a good ruler. For the sake of clarity in this guide, she is referred to as Mika except in direct quotes.

## The King and Queen

Parents of the real Nalia, they are unaware their birth daughter has become a pawn in Melaina's quest to put her own daughter on the throne in Nalia's place. The king and queen are trusting people. The king dies - the result of a spell cast by Melaina in order to clear the way for Orianne's coronation.



## Objects/Places

### Vivaskari

This is the city where Sinda is raised as a princess and where she returns to be trained as a wizard.

### King Kelman's Door

This is the doorway in the palace wall that can be opened only by one of noble birth. Sinda and Kiernan are searching for this wall when the story opens.

### Treb

This is the tiny village where Sinda's aunt lives.

### Cat's Paw

This is the inn in Guildhall where Sinda stays until she's accepted as Philanthia's student.

### The Wizard's College

This is the institution in Vivaskari where those with magic are trained if they have the cost of tuition or are of noble birth.

### Goldhorn Gardens

These are the public gardens where Sinda asks Kiernan to meet her in her attempt to apologize for her rudeness at Treb.

### The Statue of Queen Conavin

This is where Sinda and Ori sit to talk on their first meeting.

### Isidor

This is where Sinda and Kiernan go to talk to the Oracle.

## **Saremarch**

This is the land owned by Melaina and where Sinda goes to find the real Nalia.

## **The Mausoleum**

This is where Sinda finds the Oracle's confession related to the real prophecy about the princess.



# Themes

## The Thirst for Power

The thirst for power is the overriding theme of the story that drives the majority of the action. Melaina is a well-regarded wizard who holds an important place at court. However, she is also a distant cousin of the King and Queen of Vivaskari and her ancestor was the younger of twins who sought to overthrow his sibling. Melaina hated that her line of the family was cast into obscurity while the other branch of the family held the power of the throne. It's because of this anger that Melaina comes up with the elaborate plan to put her own daughter on the throne. Melaina's plan involves others and hurts many people. She coerces her sister, an oracle, to give a false prophecy that preys on the oracle's mind for the rest of her short life. And she kills her sister. She condemns a true princess to a life of abject poverty and sends her own daughter to live in a convent. She also arranges for Sinda to live her childhood as a princess only to be cast out once it's revealed that she isn't really the princess at all. Sinda points out that Melaina has caused all this hurt to others and that it hasn't cost her anything. Melaina objects, saying that she gave up her own daughter and saw her only a few times over the course of her life. To a lesser degree, Sinda is an example of this theme. Sinda discovers she's not a princess and longs for a purpose in life. When she announces her plan to seek out the real princess, Kiernan tries to talk her out of it, saying that she's only doing it to ensure that she is recognized for her action. Sinda later realizes that it's true.

## The Need to Feel Important

Sinda is raised as a princess and knows that she's very important. When the king is telling her of the prophecy and the fact that she isn't really the princess, he points out that the safety of the princess was the most important consideration when they were making the plan that called for Sinda being raised as a stand-in for the princess. When Sinda learns that she is no longer that princess, she's bereft. When she learns Oriane is also not the real princess, Sinda sets out to find out the real story. It doesn't take her long to discover that Melaina has a great deal to gain by putting her daughter on the throne and that the prophecy given about the princess wasn't real. With that knowledge, Kiernan urges that Sinda take what's she's learned to the king and queen. She refuses, saying she doesn't have enough information but Kiernan realizes the truth - that Sinda is struggling to find importance in her life. She denies it originally, but admits to it later. As the story draws to a close, Sinda finds herself on the verge of becoming the new queen's most trusted advisor and chief wizard. She imagines herself in the palace with this new title and there's little doubt she's looking forward to the important position she'll play in the newly-organized court under Mika's rule.



## Coming of Age and Self-confidence

Sinda is a true example of a coming of age theme for several reasons. Sinda ages physically only a few months over the course of the book but she overcomes her self-consciousness, learns to harness her magic, and begins to stand up for herself. As the story opens, Sinda believes herself to be a princess. She lives under the rule of her parents, the King and Queen of Vivaskari. As the princess, she is expected to behave in specific ways and to do everything that's expected. That likely explains why Sinda, upon being told she has to leave the palace, simply agrees to leave. It's not until she's chastised by her aunt for simply agreeing to leave that she begins to consider her action. When Sinda discovers she has magic, she is afraid of it and seeks someone who'll teach her to control it. Even at this point, Sinda is too unsure of herself to believe she can become a wizard. As Philanthia tries to teach her to use her magic, Sinda remains afraid to trust herself or to depend on her magic. It's not until she finds a way to trust herself that she is able to perform magic correctly with no mishaps. This trust comes with self-confidence in herself, not just with regard to magic. It's important to note that Sinda suddenly realizes she's done the right thing and that she has the power to show the kingdom the real princess. At that moment, Sinda steps into her role as a wizard with the ability to conform her magic to her will.



# Style

## Point of View

The story is presented in first person from the limited perspective of Sinda. This limitation means the reader doesn't know about any aspect of the story until it's revealed to Sinda. An important example of this limitation is seen as the story opens. Sinda believes she is Nalia and is addressed as such. She is in the garden with her friend Kiernan and is frustrated that she can't find King Kelman's Door. Sinda is shocked to learn she is the princess and has no idea that she's actually the daughter of a wizard until much later. The reader learns about her magic as Sinda does. Another important aspect of this limited perspective is that Sinda doesn't know for certain whether Kiernan's feelings for her have changed after all they go through together. As Sinda tries to come to terms with the idea that Kiernan's love for her might not have been strong enough to withstand their trials, Kiernan is actually forcing his parents to accept that he's going to marry Sinda. The reader doesn't know this until Sinda learns it. The limited perspective is an important means of keeping the suspense alive. Sinda learns that someone is dishonest with regard to the swapping of the princesses. The reader learns the identity of this wizard only when Sinda learns it. The limited perspective is appropriate to the story and serves its purpose.

## Setting

The story is set in a mythical land sometime around 1162. The year is detailed by the fact that the Oracle began her seven-year reign in 1145 and sometime during that seven years gave a prophecy that Sinda finds sixteen years later. The overall setting spans several neighborhoods within the village of Vivaskari, the village of Treb, and the pilgrim destination of Isidros. Within those settings are specific settings such as the inn where Sinda stays for the first few days upon returning to Vivaskari, the home of Sinda's aunt, Philantha's house and the wizard's school. Most of these are described in moderate detail but often those details are part of the action. For example, at the wizard's school, Sinda is seated at the fountain, giving in to despair at being turned away, when she makes the water boil. This action catches the attention of Philantha and begins Sinda on the next phase of her life. Another example is seen when Sinda and Kiernan go to search for the Oracle's records. They go to the library where they learn they don't have the correct records, talk with the Oracle and are sent to a locked section of the library where they learn they need to go to the mausoleum. There are at least a few details listed about each of these settings. For example, the bodies are shrouded but not buried in the mausoleum and the library is "small and somewhat dark, with lamps set at intervals." The settings are believable and the descriptions appropriate for the story.





## Language and Meaning

The story is presented in a straightforward manner and the language is typical of modern speech patterns though the story is set a century ago. The author makes no attempt to match the speech patterns that might have been typical of that time period which makes the book an easy read. The reader with an average vocabulary will find few unfamiliar words and the meanings of most of those are easily discerned through context. The names of the characters and places are sometimes difficult to pronounce but most of these are so unique that the reader will have little trouble remembering the people or places associated with each. The action of the story moves fairly quickly though the author does spend time on details and descriptions that are not always necessary to the story. For example, there is a great deal of discussion about Sinda's life during her time with her aunt. Her life over this period is brutal though Sinda tries to accomplish the tasks she's assigned without complaint. She is hurt deeply by the false friendship of a boy in the village and it seems this should have made Sinda more skeptical of other friendships but that is never seen. The overall tone of the story is one of danger and intrigue though there is an undercurrent of hope present from the beginning. There are important moments in the story in which it seems life might not turn out well for Sinda but most readers will be expecting the happy-ever-after ending the author provides.

## Structure

The story is divided into twenty-four chapters. Each chapter is titled by number only, meaning there is no clue as to the contents of that chapter. The story is presented in chronological order and the action moves only from the perspective of Sinda. This means that action that occurs outside her knowledge is not presented to the reader at all until and unless Sinda learns of it. As the story opens, Sinda and her best friend Kiernan are in the garden of the palace where they are trying to discover the location of King Kelman's Door. The principal of the door is explained as Sinda remembers how she and Kiernan came to be searching for the mythical entrance to the palace grounds. Also in chapter one, Sinda learns she is not the real princess. In chapter two, she's sent away to live with her aunt in the tiny village of Treb. In chapters three and four, she begins trying to establish a new life for herself and in chapter five comes to the conclusion she has to return to the city. In chapter six, she is taken in by Philantha and begins to learn to harness her magic. In chapter eight, Sinda meets Orianna and in chapter ten, realizes Orianna is also not the true princess. In chapter twelve, Sinda and Kiernan set out to find out what's really going on and discover the false prophecy. In chapter fifteen, Sinda learns Melaina's role in the situation and becomes determined to find the true princess. In chapter eighteen, Sinda finds Mika but is captured. In chapter twenty-one, Sinda and the others arrive at the palace and in chapter twenty-three, Sinda eliminates the spell that hides the identity of the true princess. Chapter twenty-four brings the story to a close, wrapping up several loose ends including the engagement of Kiernan and Sinda.



## Quotes

"The princess was the only heir. We had to keep her safe" (Chapter 1).

"You left without so much as a peep. Didn't even complain when they put you in that carriage and sent you off" (Chapter 3).

"Magic. What I had been feeling all along had been magic, magic that I had not known I had" (Chapter 5).

"'You, a wizard, a dangerous one.' His eyes swept over me, then landed on my face. 'Do you have any idea how much fun this could be'" (Chapter 7).

"Still, I closed my eyes and prayed, Please let me stop. I just want to be me - I just want to be useful and...content" (Chapter 9).

"Instead, I gave them a false prophecy, one that would make them think the princess would die unless they hid her away" (Chapter 14).

"For several hours we stirred pots, shredded herbs, and generally tried not to blow ourselves up" (Chapter 15).

"This kiss trampled Tyr's kiss, threw it to the ground, and danced on its grave. It was like being kissed by sunlight, or joy" (Chapter 16).

"She was painting a picture in my head, so vividly I could see it. Myself, no longer awkward and unwanted, but strong, striding through the palace in wizard's robes" (Chapter 19).

"The spell still bound us, three sides of a triangle, holding our souls together. It was the spell that still made Orienne appear to be the princess" (Chapter 23).

"When I had thought of the oracle's prophecy, I had, somehow, always assumed it would be my dying, or Mika. I had considered Orienne only as an afterthought" (Chapter 24).

"I was stronger now, braver. I had faced my worst fears, and survived them" (Chapter 24).

"I told you before I fell under your spell before you even knew you had magic, before you saved a kingdom, back when there was no chance you would be allowed to marry me. Nothing's really changed since then, except that now any children we have might be wizards themselves, and I'll be hopelessly outnumbered" (Chapter 24).

## Topics for Discussion

Who is Sinda? Who is Orianne? Who is Mika? Who is Nalia? How are the girls connected? What are the strengths and weaknesses of each?

Sinda, Orianne, and Mika each go through identity crises as they are manipulated to the wills of others. What is the affect of each? Which is most suited for the throne? Why?

Who is Kiernan? What is his connection to Sinda? To Orianne? To Mika? What is his role in putting the true princess on the throne? What kind of person is he? What are his strengths and weaknesses?

Describe the elaborate plot Melaina concocts regarding the princess. What are her motivations? What do you consider her biggest mistakes?

What is the oracle? What is the role of the oracle in the story? What does this say about the beliefs of the people of the story? Is this aspect of the story believable, considering the people and setting? Why or why not?

Who is Philanthia? Who is Varil? What is the role of each in Sinda's life? What does each do to help Sinda? How are their lives similar?

What is the most important theme of the story? Why? Give three examples of this theme.