

The Golden Fool Study Guide

The Golden Fool by Robin Hobb

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Plot Summary

Golden Fool by Robin Hobb centers on Tom Badgerlock, a servant to the royals in Buckkeep Castle. Tom is in disguise; he is actually FitzChivalry Farseer, a royal who is heir to the Farseer throne. Tom has Wit and Skill, two magical powers, and uses them to protect Prince Dutiful and his family.

Tom Badgerlock seems like an ordinary servant at Buckkeep Castle. He serves Lord Golden, an eccentric but kind royal. Tom mourns the death of his pet wolf, Nighteyes. Tom is actually in disguise. He is FitzChivalry Farseer, a royal in line for the Farseer throne. Everyone thinks he is dead, but in actuality, he is in guise as Tom Badgerlock. There are some who know his real identity such as Lord Golden, who is also in disguise. Golden is really a court jester called the Fool. Queen Kettricken and Chade, Tom's old mentor, know that he is Fitz.

The Queen rules over the Farseer kingdom of the Six Duchies. There is a rebel group called the Piebalds. They want power at any cost. They force citizens to join them or citizens face persecution or even execution. The Piebalds know that Tom is really Fitz.

Tom has two magical powers, Skill and Wit. Skill is the ability to talk telepathically with other Skilled Ones and to go outside of oneself. Wit is the ability to sense animals and bond with a beast i.e. the way Tom bonded with Nighteyes, his deceased wolf. If one has either magic, s/he must keep it secret for fear of persecution. Prince Dutiful, the Farseer prince, is Skilled. Tom teaches Dutiful about Skill in lessons. Dutiful is betrothed to the Narcheska, a princess from the Out Islands. Both are not happy about the betrothal, but it is their royal duty. The Queen wants this marriage to represent peace between the Farseers and Outislanders.

The Narcheska says she will not marry Dutiful unless he slays the dragon that betrayed her people and gives her its head. Dutiful agrees and challenges her to join him on this quest. She agrees.

Tom finds out Chade's servant, Thick, has very strong Skill. He is also a spy for the Piebalds, but he is mentally challenged and does not realize what he is doing. Tom kills the Piebalds leader, two other Piebalds and a horse. In the fight, he is stabbed. Poison runs through him. Dutiful, Chade, Thick and Golden form a Skill coterie and use their magical energy to heal Tom. Tom realizes this is the coterie that will protect Dutiful on his dragon quest.

The Queen welcomes all the Skilled and Witted to Buckkeep Castle, which is unprecedented. The citizens of the Six Duchies are excited as springtime arrives because Dutiful will set forth on his dragon quest with the coterie.



Prologue, Losses Sustained; Chapter I, Piebalds; Chapter II, Chade's Servant

Prologue, Losses Sustained; Chapter I, Piebalds; Chapter II, Chade's Servant Summary

Golden Fool by Robin Hobb focuses on Tom Badgerlock, a royal servant, who is in disguise. He is actually FitzChivalry Farseer, a magical royal. Tom aids the royals and others to understand the two forms of magic, Wit and Skill, of the kingdom.

In the Prologue, Losses Sustained, Tom Badgerlock and FitzChivalry Farseer are the same person. Tom is deeply saddened and in mourning over the death of his pet wolf, Nighteyes. Nighteyes is not just a pet to him; he had been literally part of Tom. Tom has a foster son named Hap. Hap is an apprentice who learns a trade and he is also involved in a romance. Tom has the friendship of the Fool, guised as Lord Golden, and Chade. Tom is also on the verge of a romantic relationship with Jinna, the hedge-witch. Prince Dutiful of the Farseer kingdom is about to be betrothed to the Narcheska, a princess of the Outislander kingdom. Tom must teach the Prince about Skill and Wit, two separate magical powers. Lord Golden says to Tom that he wishes he could cure Tom's sadness over Nighteyes. Tom recognizes that he is lonely.

In Chapter 1, Piebalds, the Piebalds claim persecution by the Witted, or magical people, of the Six Duchies. In actuality, the Piebalds are a rebel group who want to separate and seize power. They hate the Witted Bastard, FitzChivalry Farseer (Badgerlock), who was seen as an obstacle for inheriting the throne. Fitz was raised as a near deity. Piebalds want to overthrow the Farseer monarchy and put one of their own in power. They force the Witted to either unite with them or risk exposure (the Witted remain in secret about their magical identities). Either join the Piebalds alliance or be killed.

Tom goes to Jinna's house to wait for Hap. Hap boards there during his apprenticeship. Secretly, the Piebalds kidnapped the Prince, but Tom and the others returned him without anyone knowing. The Prince goes back to normality. Tom and Jinna talk. He is 35 years-old. They have kissed. But Tom does not go for Jinna because he is too sad about Nighteyes. Hap comes in. He says he hates the apprenticeship. He does chores, but nothing substantial. Tom tells him Nighteyes is dead. Hap feels relieved when he hears Nighteyes' death is not his fault, since the wolf escaped from him at one point. Tom is upset by Hap's reaction, that the boy is relieved, not in mourning. But then Tom sees Hap is upset. Jinna warns Tom that Hap needs more discipline.

Tom leaves Jinna's house and in the forest, he feels men surround him. He turns around to face them, but does not see anything. They taunt him and ask him where Nighteyes is. They go away. Tom thinks these men want him to know they know where he is.



Tom goes to Lord Golden's room and tells him about the men in the forest. Tom says they want him to know they know who he is, where he lives, that he is Witted and that Nighteyes is dead. Tom says he must go back to his cottage and get his scrolls, but Golden advises against it, since the men will follow him.

In Chapter II, Chade's Servant, Tom goes to Chade's tower. Chade is Tom's old mentor and an assassin. Tom was Chade's apprentice assassin. Tom thinks the men in the forest are Piebalds. He wants to kill them. On the way to Chade's tower, Tom spies on the Narcheska, who has a dance lesson with her uncle Peottre. She is young, only 11 years-old. She is scared to marry and she does not want to marry the Prince. She is fearful of having sex. Peottre consoles her. A servant comes in and presents a sexual gown for the Narcheska to wear that night. The servant is rude and blunt, which is strange. Peottre rips up the dress.

Tom finally reaches Chade's tower. Chade has a servant named Thick. Thick has the Skill or magic. He can speak to Tom telepathically. Tom is both Skilled and Witted. Thick is scared of Tom, thinking Tom will hurt him. Tom says Thick's Skill is very strong. Tom tells Chade that Thick is Skilled. Thick is also a half-wit, or mentally challenged. Tom says he should teach Thick about Skill, but he is not sure he can even teach Prince Dutiful. Tom tells Chade the Narcheska does not want to marry Dutiful. Chade tells Tom the Out Islands, where the Narcheska is from, is a matriarchal society. So Peottre has a strong influence over her, since he is from her mother's lineage. The Outislanders had been enemies of the Farseers during the Red Ship War. Chade advises Tom to ride in public, where the Piebalds cannot get to him. Chade advises Tom not to return to his cottage for his scrolls until Chade arranges a secret time for him to go.

Prologue, Losses Sustained; Chapter I, Piebalds; Chapter II, Chade's Servant Analysis

Tom is not what he seems. He is also FitzChivalry Farseer from the Farseer kingdom. Thus, the reader is confused at this point as to who Tom actually is. This foreshadows that Tom has strong lineage in the Farseer kingdom and perhaps he has more power than he lets on. He has both Skill and Wit, two magical powers. This foreshadows that Tom's powers are in hibernation for now, and that they will be useful if a life-threatening situation ever arises. Not only will Tom utilize his powers, but so will Fitz, a stronger persona than Tom.

Nighteyes' death symbolizes a deep loss in Tom's emotional psyche. Nighteyes was not just a wolf to him. He was a friend and a companion who was literally part of Fitz. His death symbolizes a death of love in Tom. Tom cannot achieve a romantic relationship with Jinna because he is too distraught over his wolf. It is almost as if his heart had been taken away when Nighteyes died. Thus, Tom must go on a quest to find his heart again, or to find the loving part of himself. Without it, he will not be able to love anyone.

It is evident that Skill is important in this world. Although it is a hidden quality, those who have Skill possess great power. For example, Thick is mentally challenged, but because



he has Skill, Tom sees him as a talented and powerful person. Thick's Skill is very strong, so strong in fact, that Tom nearly falls over due to it. However, both Tom and Thick keep their Skill powers to themselves. They are the minority and are scared of revealing themselves. This is social commentary on how minorities in a society must appear powerless. They cannot organize and use their power against the majority for fear of persecution and death. Therefore, the minority has a hidden power that cannot be displayed until it is absolutely necessary.



Chapter III, Echoes; Chapter IV, The Betrothal; Chapter V, Shared Sorrows

Chapter III, Echoes; Chapter IV, The Betrothal; Chapter V, Shared Sorrows Summary

In Chapter III, Echoes, Queen Kettricken, Prince Dutiful's mother, is with King Verity, who is the King-in-Waiting. He is killed in the Red Ship War. He had been a great king-to-be.

Tom practices his weapon skills. He goes into the public steam room. Two young men come in and one picks a fight with Tom. Tom sidesteps his punch and pins the young man. Two older men throw the young men out of the steam room. Tom is sad because he knows these older men. He had been friends with them when he had been known as Fitz, but now he is in disguise as Tom Badgerlock.

Tom, Prince Dutiful and Lord Golden ride horses. Dutiful wants Tom to teach him Skill, but Tom is reluctant to teach him. Tom tells Dutiful he has a foster son Hap and the Prince is jealous. Dutiful asks Tom to tell him about King Verity, his father, but this is hard for Tom because he cannot reveal his true identity of Fitz. Tom tells him King Verity was not Witted. Dutiful asks why he is Witted then because he hears it runs in families. Civil Bresinga is friends with Dutiful. He trusts Civil, but Tom does not. By accident, Tom calls Lord Golden "Fool" in front of Dutiful and Dutiful asks why he says that. Golden says it is a nickname, but gives Tom a warning look. The Prince wants Tom at his betrothal ceremony, but Tom says he cannot go because he is just a servant. Dutiful says to go as Golden's bodyguard, but Tom says this is not appropriate. The Prince orders Tom to find a way to be there.

Dutiful reveals he cannot do anything right with the Narcheska. She makes him feel stupid and clumsy. Golden says it is cultural differences and Dutiful should learn about her matriarchal society. Tom and Dutiful will meet at dawn in King Verity's tower room to learn Skill. Golden falls off his horse and hurts his ankle, but it is a ruse for Tom to go to the betrothal ceremony. Golden will lean on Tom and Tom will carry his footstool.

In Chapter IV, The Betrothal, as Tom dresses, Lord Golden eyes him sexually. They go to the Great Hall where the betrothal ceremony is. It is decorated in a grand and elaborate way. Tom observes the Farseers and the Outislanders. This marriage represents a bond between the two kingdoms. Dutiful is young, probably around 13 or 14 years-old. The Narcheska enters in a procession with Peottre and her father, Arkon Bloodblade. In the ceremony, Bloodblade purposely cuts the inside of his arm and blood pools in his hand. It is an Outislander gesture for bravery. The Outislanders clap and cheer. But the Farseers are in shock over this gesture. Dutiful and the Narcheska only dance one dance. She dances with Peottre. It is late. Tom realizes the Prince will not make their Skill lesson at dawn. Tom goes to sleep and hears a Skill (telepathic) call



over and over. The call is Shadow Wolf. Tom speaks Skill with a girl. She says she misses him and this is the only time she can reach him, in his dreams. Tom wakes up and realizes it is his daughter who speaks to him.

In Chapter V, Shared Sorrows, Tom goes to King Verity's tower for the Skill lesson, but Dutiful does not show up. Tom runs into Chade and Thick. Thick hates Tom. Tom and Chade go into the Queen's sitting room. The Queen knows Tom's real identity of Fitz. She expresses her sorrow over Nighteyes' death and Tom is sad again. The Queen says she loved Nighteyes. Tom cries. She says Tom had a Mountain woman for a mother and that is how he became Witted. She feels guilty Tom is in this servant position. She gives him money. She wants to tell Dutiful who Tom really is, but she says it has to be the right time. She gives him a silver pin of a tiny fox. Tom loves it and wears it inside his clothing. He says King Verity loved her very much. The Queen says this love sustains her and that she hopes Nighteyes stays with Tom the way the King stays with her.

Chapter III, Echoes; Chapter IV, The Betrothal; Chapter V, Shared Sorrows Analysis

The Outislander society is matriarchal. This represents a historical shift in power. Usually, the power belongs to the men in society, but for the Out Islands, this is not true. The women have the most power and so do their lineage. For example, it seems that Peottre, the Narcheska's mother's brother has the most paternal influence over her. Arkon Bloodblade, her own father, does not seem to wield his fatherly power over her. It seems as if he is merely a sperm donor, not a father figure. Thus, the women of the Out Islands symbolize a feminist power in a historical world. The Narcheska also does not have interest in the Prince. She refuses his male companionship. She is not drawn to the male component. Though this may be due to her young age, it is also due to her feminist lineage. She wants to be in power and choose her own mate eventually.

As the Narcheska comes from a matriarchal society and the Prince comes from a patriarchal society, this foreshadows a clash in power. How will these two royals work together if they cannot resolve their cultural differences? This symbolizes the problems in any marriage, the idea of not being able to resolve one's problems and compromise. But with these two, it is worse because there is a power struggle at hand. This foreshadows an epic scene where the two royals may fight for power.

The idea of loss is at the forefront of Golden Fool. Everyone seems to have a loss. Tom's loss is Nighteyes. The Queen's loss is King Verity. The Prince's loss is his father figure, King Verity. Characters such as Tom and Lord Golden experience a loss of identity as well. They cannot be their true selves in order to be safe. They must pretend to be something they are not. Thus, loss comes in many forms, either through death or loss of one's self.



Chapter VI, Obliteration; Chapter VII, Lessons; Chapter VIII, Ambitions

Chapter VI, Obliteration; Chapter VII, Lessons; Chapter VIII, Ambitions Summary

In Chapter VI, Obliteration, Tom overhears Lord Golden talking with Laurel, the servant who had been rude to the Narcheska and Peottre. Laurel asks Golden to relay the message to Tom to meet her at the horse stables at noon that day. After she leaves, Tom comes in and tells Golden he overheard Laurel. He leaves and meets Laurel. She tells him the Piebalds know who she is and where she lives. She is twice a traitor to them. They consider her Old Blood or Witted. She serves the Farseer regime, thus the Piebalds will kill her. Laurel says Laudwine, the Piebald leader, has recovered from his arm being chopped off by Fitz. Many Old Blood leave the Piebalds and return to their traditional ways. The Queen wants to help the Old Blood because everyone knows Dutiful is Witted. The Old Blood have kindly feelings toward the Queen and wait for her response. Those who remain in the Piebalds are the most dangerous. They desire revenge, not justice. They hate Fitz the most. The Piebalds attack and kill Old Blood who will not side with them.

Laurel says Tom is a target. The Piebalds could have killed him that night in the forest. They want to keep him alive to use him for something. The rumor is Tom and Golden are not what they seem to be. Tom says Laurel should flee, but she says she will stay and serve the Queen. Her real message is that Tom should flee because he puts the Queen in danger. He says his fleeing would not remove the danger from the Queen. Laurel will pass on this warning to the Queen.

Tom rides into Buckkeep Town and goes to Jinna's house. They have sex twice. She says having sex with a Witted one is untamed and animalistic. Tom is confused about his feelings for her. Jinna says Hap is undisciplined and that he should live with his apprentice Master, like all the other apprentices.

Tom leaves and goes to see Hap at his apprenticeship. Hap is unhappy and refuses to live at the Master's house. Hap wants Tom to meet his girlfriend, Svanja. Tom leaves and goes back to Buckkeep Castle. He goes to Chade's tower. Chade leaves guard clothing for Tom to ride out with the guard that night. This is a ruse so Tom can go on his own way and go back to his cottage.

Tom rides with the guard and leaves them slyly. He goes back to his cottage, which is ransacked. All his valuables are stolen. He finds the scrolls and takes them with him.

In Chapter VII, Lessons, Tom and Dutiful meet back at the castle. Tom's skill master is abusive to his students and Tom remembers this well. Tom warns the Prince that they



are both students in regard to Skill. He will teach Wit as best as he can. Tom says Dutiful must separate Skill and Wit.

Dutiful says he loves Civil Bresinga like a brother. Civil likes him for him, not what Dutiful can do for him. Civil offers to teach Dutiful about the Wit. Tom says no. The lesson begins. Tom teaches Dutiful to lower his Skill walls. He hears music, which belongs to Thick. Thick always plays music for some reason. Tom realizes the Prince's talent is great. Tom and Dutiful go on a journey to the beach. They talk via Skill. Tom loses Dutiful and lures the Prince back to himself. The Prince does not want to come back. He will not speak aloud. Dutiful finally returns. He is exhausted and sweating.

Dutiful asks if Lord Golden is a child molester. Civil says Golden likes little boys. Tom says no. Golden is a great man. Dutiful does not really believe him. They end their Skill lesson.

Tom meets with Chade, who says Laurel is protected by a bodyguard now. Chade says the Old Blood massacres are only rumors, thus he cannot act on them. Thick comes in and speaks Skill with Tom. He says the other servants hit him and take his coins and candy.

In Chapter VIII, Ambitions, Tom realizes he learns more from Dutiful's first Skill lesson than Dutiful does. The lessons continue. Dutiful is effortlessly talented in Skill and he may surpass Tom. Tom tells Chade he is afraid of this because Tom will not be able to warn Dutiful. So he occupies Dutiful with a game to slow down his progress. Chade says maybe Dutiful got the Skill from Tom, since he had interaction with the Prince as a tiny boy. Chade gives Tom herbs for his headaches after Skill. Tom is scared Dutiful will learn to put up Skill walls and block Tom out. He asks Chade to send Thick away because his Skill is too distracting. Chade says no. Chade is angry because he has never been tested for Skill. He believes he has Skill, but it has never been brought out or trained. Chade says he has lost his mind and is growing old. If he develops Skill, he can repair his body and extend his life. Tom will not teach Chade because he barely understands Skill himself. Chade is annoyed.

Tom cannot get Hap alone. He is always with Svanja and she talks nonstop. Tom sees Jinna a few times and they have sex many times. He tells Jinna that he thinks of their relationship as two adults indulging in pleasure. Jinna is offended.

Chapter VI, Obliteration; Chapter VII, Lessons; Chapter VIII, Ambitions Analysis

Throughout these chapters, there is much question of identity. No one seems to be who they are. For example, Laurel is not just a servant. She serves the Queen in some capacity, but she is also a fighter against the Piebalds regime. Tom and Golden have secret identities. It seems that Golden also has a question of sexuality in regard to identity. Dutiful asks Tom if Golden is a child molester of young boys. In the previous section, Golden eyes Tom in a sexual way as he dresses. Therefore, this foreshadows



another hidden identity for Golden. Perhaps he is gay, or at least bisexual. In the novel, identity is not just about self, but it is also about sexuality and sex. The Narcheska does not identify herself as a sexual woman and does not want to engage in sex, though she is betrothed to the Prince. Tom engages in sex with Jinna, but he does not have the emotional capacity to have significant feelings for her. Thus, sexuality is confusing and no one seems to know where they stand sexually.

The Skill represents power. Even though it is a hidden trait, the Skill is powerful enough to sway someone. For example, Dutiful does not want to return from his journey at the beach. Skill lures and entices him. It wants to keep Dutiful in its clutches. This is why Tom is scared of Skill because he does not quite understand its power. Thick is extremely powerful in regard to Skill. However, he is also mentally challenged. Thus, Skill represents a separate type of power as opposed to intelligence. It seems to be a power of emotion and willpower. To understand Skill, one must submit to it fully, which Tom is afraid to do.

Tom's relationship with Hap is dwindling. He feels a loss as a father. Therefore, this symbolizes another loss of love for Tom. He cannot convince Hap what is right. As a father, this is devastating because he tries to teach him the right ways, but Hap goes the wrong way. This foreshadows that Tom may lose Hap altogether if he does not try to discipline him.



Chapter IX, Stone Wager; Chapter X, Resolutions; Chapter XI, Tidings from Bingtown

Chapter IX, Stone Wager; Chapter X, Resolutions; Chapter XI, Tidings from Bingtown Summary

In Chapter IX, Stone Wager, Winter Fest occurs in Buckkeep. Tom is overwhelmed. He instructs Dutiful in the mornings and masquerades as Golden's servant. He spies on Civil Bresinga, but cannot find anything incriminating. Tom thinks the Piebalds have forgotten about him. The Queen announces criminals cannot be executed. Tom goes to find Hap at the Stuck Pig, the tavern, and he finds Laurel, who has been drinking and crying. Her horse has been killed. She is not Witted (magic to sense and bond with animals), but she is distraught. Tom hugs Laurel and Jinna enters. She sees them hugging and leaves. Tom sees how upset Jinna is. Laurel says she will leave Buckkeep. She is afraid of what they will kill next.

Nettle, Tom's daughter, shows up in his dreams. He talks with her. She says she will talk with him again. The next day, Tom meets Dutiful. He teaches Civil the game Tom had taught him. He and Civil play with a bunch of others. Lady Vance plays. She is 17 and womanly. She says if she wins, the Prince must go riding with her. He lets her win and says only a beautiful woman could master this game. The Narcheska overhears and leaves. Dutiful does not know how to fix his mistake.

Tom meets with Chade and Thick. Thick says the Prince is sad. Chade asks Thick how Nettle is today. He says she is worried because the dream man (Tom) will not talk to her anymore. And her father and brother argue. Chade senses Tom does not like talking about this. Chade says Nettle should be at Buckkeep Castle to master her Skill. But Tom does not want that for his illegitimate child (Nettle). He wants her to be happy in the countryside. Chade says Tom must train Thick. Tom realizes Chade has been watching him since he was young. Chade feels he has to watch over Tom. Tom offers to teach Chade the Skill, but Chade says no.

In Chapter X, Resolutions, Tom spies on the Narcheska and Peottré. She is furious about Dutiful's insult. She says she will have sex with Dutiful if she has to. She knows Dutiful sees her as a child. Henja, her handmaiden, says she must win over Dutiful's heart. The Narcheska says she will try.

Tom, Golden, Dutiful, the Queen and Chade prepare to go on a ride with Lady Vance. It will be insulting if Dutiful goes alone with Lady Vance. Peottré and the Narcheska ride out in traditional Outislander gear. Peottré announces she is not a child. She is almost the same age as Dutiful. The Narcheska insults Dutiful and says they will see if he is good enough to be King one day. They all ride. Dutiful and the Narcheska hardly speak.



Tom goes back to the Stuck Pig to look for Hap. He meets Svanja's father who is irate. Svanja has not been home. The father accuses Tom of having an uncontrollable son. He says Hap has ruined Svanja, but Tom thinks this is not the first time Svanja has lured men.

In Chapter XI, Tidings from Bingtown, Bingtown is a trading community with a port. Ships go in and out of there. Ambassadors come from Bingtown. They want to see the Queen. Tom and Golden must attend the meeting in a hidden way. Bingtown wants to form an alliance with the Farseers against the Chalced. But the Six Duchies will be in danger, so the Queen says no. But Bingtown has something spectacular to offer. Bingtown wants to annex, or overtake, the Chalced due to normal trading disputes. A Bingtown ambassador says Tintaglia, the Bingtown dragon, will aid the Farseers in whatever they need if they ally with Bingtown. Everyone is stunned. No one is sure Tintaglia is real. But she is the last real dragon. The Queen says this is out of the question. The Queen wants to make the Chalced friends, not enemies.

Hap admits he has sex with Svanja. Tom tries to talk him out of it. If he gets her pregnant, he will regret it. Hap needs to declare his intentions for her before they have sex. Tom sees Hap repeating his own mistakes.

Tom drinks and feels sad about Molly, his long lost love. She is Nettle's mother. Tom had sent them both away from Buckkeep and sent his friend Burrich to watch over them. But Burrich and Molly have fallen in love, gotten married and started a family. Hap does not know about Molly and Nettle.

Chade and Tom had awakened the dragons long ago. But they had all been killed except for Tintaglia.

The Narcheska says the betrothal will be called off if the Queen allies with Bingtown or the "dragon breeders" as she calls them. The Queen stands firm against the girl's threat. Apparently, the Queen is now rethinking Bingtown's proposal.

Chapter IX, Stone Wager; Chapter X, Resolutions; Chapter XI, Tidings from Bingtown Analysis

Tintaglia represents an awakening of power in the Six Duchies. The Queen had turned down the Bingtown offer of an alliance—that is until she heard about Tintaglia. The dragon seems to be as powerful as the Skill and the Wit, of which those who live in the Six Duchies are afraid. The dragon represents a power they want or a power they want back. Combined with the Skill and Wit, Tintaglia can make the Six Duchies all-powerful. This foreshadows that the dragon may bring unlimited power to the kingdom, but with unlimited power comes much danger and responsibility. This foreshadows that grave danger may come to the kingdom as well, if this power is not controlled correctly.

Hap repeats Tom's mistake. It is a cycle. This cycle passes on from father to son, even though Hap is not Tom's bloodline. It is interesting because Skill and Wit are passed



down from family member to family member. But mistakes are passed down naturally, through every generation, even though the Skill and Wit are not—these two forms of magic skip generations. This cycle will continue to repeat until the mistake is not made anymore.

Feminine power is a constant theme amongst the Outlanders, especially the Narcheska. But who is more powerful in the novel, the Narcheska or the Queen? When the Narcheska goes to the Queen, she feels that she is in power. She tells the Queen she will not be betrothed to anyone who allies with the Bingtown traders or dragon-feeders. The Queen disciplines her like a child. Both women represent feminine power in their own way. This foreshadows that the Queen overpowers the Narcheska because a more powerful thing than feminism is age.



Chapter XII, Jek; Chapter XIII, Challenges; Chapter XIV, Scrolls

Chapter XII, Jek; Chapter XIII, Challenges; Chapter XIV, Scrolls Summary

In Chapter XII, Jek, Chade is Tom's great uncle. Tom meets with Chade and the Queen. The Six Duchies dragons are treated as tales, but then everyone believes they are real. The Queen is not sure about Tintaglia, but they decide this dragon exists. Tom leaves the meeting and goes to Golden's chambers. He meets a striking woman named Jek, who keeps asking Tom about Amber. But Tom does not know who Amber is. Jek infers that Golden and Tom are gay lovers. Golden enters and dismisses Tom. Tom listens outside the door. Jek keeps a secret for Golden. Jek says Golden is in love with Tom and Golden agrees. Tom is furious because Golden infers they are gay lovers. He feels betrayed.

Tom spies on the Narcheska and Peottre. She is naked. Tom sees elaborate and beautiful tattoos on her back. The tattoos are of a green serpent. The tattoos burn her. Peottre puts wet towels and snow on them. Peottre says the Narcheska will not have to sleep with Dutiful.

Tom runs into a boy from Bingtown. He wears a veil. He asks Tom if he dreams of dragons, specifically Tintaglia. The boy says she grows thin and weary of hunting and feeding the serpents. He asks Tom to speak to the Queen in favor of an alliance, but Tom says goodnight.

Tom goes to the stable and runs into Starling, a woman with whom he has slept in the past. She is still angry Tom dumped her and calls him Golden's lover. Tom is insulted and goes to the tavern where he gets drunk. He visits Jinna and tells her she is right about Hap's need for discipline. She says Hap is responsible for himself. Jinna says she will not sleep with Tom again. They start new as friends.

In Chapter XIII, Challenges, Tom is happy because he and Jinna are friends. But he has not heard from Hap. The Queen, Chade and the Six Duchies powers meet daily to discuss Bingtown's alliance offer. Tom is not asked to share his thoughts. The Narcheska and Peottre ignore the Bingtown traders who stay at the castle. Chade explains to Tom that Starling is upset because he had taken away her chance at a better life when he dumped her. She had been mistress to Fitz, a royal in line for the throne.

Tom meets Hap, who has been kicked out of Jinna's house. He must stay with his apprentice Master.



There is a farewell banquet for the Outlanders to return home for a while. The Narcheska and Peottre enter late. She announces the betrothal does not meet her expectations because it is not 100 percent sure Dutiful will be king. She will only marry if Dutiful successfully finds and slays the dragon, Icefyre that betrayed the Outlanders during the Red Ship War. She wants Icefyre's head. Everyone is shocked. Tom puts a Skill command on Dutiful, but the Prince fights it. Dutiful speaks over the Queen and accepts the challenge. The Narcheska says if he is successful, she will be his wife, no matter if he becomes king. He presents her with a challenge: to accompany him. The Narcheska accepts. Everyone is shocked and excited.

In Chapter XIV, Scrolls, the Outlanders depart. The Bingtown traders are still there. Jek taunts Tom about the secret between him and Golden. Tom remembers how angry he is toward Golden for the gay rumor. Dutiful does not have a lesson with Tom because he is angry Tom put a Skill command on him last night. Tom reads scrolls to brush up on dragon lore and Icefyre. Chade and Thick enter. Chade says Tom and Thick must learn to work together because the Prince needs a coterie (magic group) on his dragon quest. Tom asks Chade if he finds a Skill Master to teach the coterie and Chade answers they have Tom. Tom says he is not a Skill Master. Chade says they must locate Nettle, Tom's daughter. The Queen commands that Nettle comes. Tom wants her to remain untouched. Tom makes a request to the Queen not to bother Nettle. Chade says he will bring this request to the Queen. Tom and Chade agree to watch the Bresingas. Lady Bresinga now has low class citizens in her household and she forms new alliances, not of her consent. They think it is against her will.

Tom asks what Thick wants, so Nettle is not disturbed. Thick wants simple things such as a red whistle, a pink cake, and other little items. Tom promises Thick he will do better by him.

Chapter XII, Jek; Chapter XIII, Challenges; Chapter XIV, Scrolls Analysis

The idea of sexuality comes up again in the book. Tom is angered about being perceived as homosexual. Golden confesses his love for Tom. In a world with masculinity and especially in the world of the fantasy genre, it is uncommon to explore the idea of a homosexual character and relationship. However, the author makes social commentary saying that homosexuality does exist in this historical time period. Being gay represents a hidden, dark secret. It is a closeted, unspoken sexuality. Therefore, Golden hides his true identity as he seems to be a straight man and attracts the ladies. But the clues in the book pin him as gay. He looks at Tom sexually. He is particular about his clothing and his beauty, which is a common gay stereotype. Yet Golden holds a masculine power. He is still strong and a person of upstanding character. However, he is not openly gay, and much like life in many societies today, to be gay is to be shunned—a social commentary the author seems to make.

The Narcheska's tattoos symbolize a loss of innocence. They literally burn into her skin with fire. They cause her great pain. When Peottre helps relieve the pain with wet



towels and snow, they discuss her future sex with Dutiful. The tattoos burn sexuality and maturity into her, whether she wants both of these things or not. The tattoos are also beautiful and alluring. Tom, a grown man, is fascinated with her naked back. Therefore, a loss of innocence begins for the 11 year-old Narcheska. Peottre tries to stop this loss by telling her she will not have to sleep with Dutiful. But the damage is done. She has sexuality seeping into her body.

The challenge represents a power struggle between the Narcheska and Dutiful. The challenge is for the Narcheska to ensure she marries the right man. It is for Dutiful to prove himself as a man. The tables are turned in this challenge. The Narcheska is expected to sleep with Dutiful and prove herself as a woman and bearer of children. But she utilizes the challenge to make Dutiful prove himself as a brave man and provider for her kingdom. It is a classic struggle between man and woman. This foreshadows that the challenge may bring realizations to both of them about marriage and adulthood.



Chapter XV, Quarrel; Chapter XVI, Fathers; Chapter XVII, Explosions

Chapter XV, Quarrel; Chapter XVI, Fathers; Chapter XVII, Explosions Summary

In Chapter XV, Quarrel, Tom looks at scrolls. The Queen says to be Witted is no crime. She stops executions of the Witted in Buckkeep Town. She makes the citizens sign a proclamation not to execute just for being Witted. Tom still dreams of Nettle, but he ignores her. Tom is still angry with Golden, but he goes to Golden's chambers. They get in a verbal fight. Tom is prideful and says he is angry because Golden keeps telling Jek and everyone that they are gay lovers. Tom says his reputation is damaged. Golden speaks to Jek in a woman's voice, or Amber's voice. Jek may believe Golden is actually a woman, so she believes their relationship is heterosexual. Golden confesses his love for Tom. Tom says that can never happen. Golden says this conversation is not necessary because he already knew the outcome. He tells Tom that he will never forget this conversation and he will feel badly. Golden makes Tom leave. Tom is miserable.

Tom tells Chade he retracts his Nettle request to the Queen. Chade agrees and sets up a meeting for Tom and the Queen. The Queen says if any danger happens, Nettle must be called upon to come to Buckkeep Castle to be taught Skill and be part of the Prince's coterie. They agree Nettle will not be called to Buckkeep unless there is absolute danger.

In Chapter XVI, Fathers, Dutiful will not come to his Skill lessons. Tom skills Dutiful to come, but the boy refuses. Tom uses Skill to lead Thick through the passages to him, so Tom can give him his red whistle. This is a Skill experiment for Tom. Thick is successful. Dutiful enters too. Tom explains he is the teacher and they are the students. They must learn Skill every day. Thick likes this idea better than being a servant. Dutiful thinks Think is stupid and disgusting.

Tom is summoned to observe a meeting in hiding. Swift, Molly and Burrich's son and Nettle's half-brother, pleads to become page in the court. His family does not know he runs away to Buckkeep Castle. Swift says Burrich stifles his Wit, so he wants to come to Buckkeep Castle to freely use the Wit. Burrich comes in later and says he does not permit his son to use the Wit because Burrich mistakenly thinks his old friend Fitz died as a beast because of the Wit. The Queen decides Swift must return with his father. Burrich will continue to suppress his son's Wit.

Tom mulls over the idea of revealing himself to Burrich. He goes to the tavern. Svanja's father is there and says his daughter is ruined because of Hap. Tom replies both their reputations are ruined. They get in a bad, physical fight. Hap tries to stop it and begs for Tom not to hurt Svanja's father. Hap says Tom does not understand love. Tom says Hap forgets everything he taught him, but Hap says he is doing his best and he loves Tom.



Tom sleeps and hears Nettle in his dreams. He says her father and brother are safe. She says her house is in turmoil, since Swift ran away. Tom says he knows Burrich, but does not say much else to reveal his identity.

In Chapter XVII, Explosions, Chade has scorched eyebrows and a red face. He can't hear. He was working on a mix and it blew up. Dutiful and Tom meet for a lesson. Dutiful says his first lesson when he and Tom went to the beach was magical. He picked up a figurine at the beach. It is of the Narcheska as a woman. He and Tom are shocked. Tom explains to Dutiful that Thick is most Skilled for his coterie. Thick enters. Thick and Tom skill each other and Dutiful feels left out. Dutiful asks Thick to stop his constant music. He does this, but Tom realizes that for Thick, Skill is natural. Stopping the Skill is unnatural to Thick. Tom desires to know why Thick is this way. Thick, by accident, reveals that he spies on the Witted Bastard, who is Fitz or Tom. He reports back to someone and Tom thinks he reports to Laudwine, the Piebalds leader. Thick leaves. Dutiful realizes that they are being spied upon as well. Dutiful tells Tom that Civil Bresinga tells him of the Old Blood ways. Civil has been very sad lately. Tom says Dutiful should not go riding with Civil because he does not trust him. He wants to keep Dutiful inside the castle.

Chade says Tom must keep Dutiful in the castle at all costs. He must find out where Thick goes and reports.

Chapter XV, Quarrel; Chapter XVI, Fathers; Chapter XVII, Explosions Analysis

Nettle represents an estranged love for Tom. Nettle is his biological daughter, yet Burrich raises her. Nettle does not know who the man in her dreams is, but she feels a close connection to him. Tom tries to ignore her as best as he can, but when she needs comfort, he provides it. He tells her that her father, Burrich, and Swift are safe. Thus, he turns into a father figure when needed. He also does this with Thick and Dutiful. Whenever a father figure is needed, Tom fills the void. There are many voids to fill, which is why Tom feels overwhelmed most of the time. With Nettle, he is a father figure to a girl, which is a strange role for him. He is used to serving as a father figure for boys. Though Nettle represents an estranged love, Tom brings her closer into his life and protects her, even begging the Queen to leave Nettle be.

The idea of Thick's Skill being natural is in direct correlation with Golden's homosexuality. Both are natural for these two characters, yet they must hide what makes them different. For Tom, he does not understand either of these natural impulses. He is very normal. The Skill is unnatural to him. So is homosexuality. Tom represents the conservative part of society; the part that does not understand the strange desires of the fringe. For both Thick and Golden to suppress their natural impulses is a nearly impossible feat. They must pretend every day and stifle themselves. Tom has no idea how this feels since he is part of the "normal" society. Thus, the author makes social commentary on how those who are different must hide their true selves.



The Prince's coterie represents a meeting of the minds. The Skill will overcome any problem the Prince and the Six Duchies must face. Magic is viewed as an all-powerful force that will protect Dutiful from evil. The Prince is a part of the coterie, as is Thick. They are polar opposites, but they must learn to work together for the common good. This foreshadows that Thick may be very valuable to the Prince in the near future.



Chapter XVIII, Pink Sugar Cake; Chapter XIX, Laudwine; Chapter XX, Coterie

Chapter XVIII, Pink Sugar Cake; Chapter XIX, Laudwine; Chapter XX, Coterie Summary

In Chapter XVIII, Pink Sugar Cake, Dutiful arranges the cake for Thick. Laudwine, the Piebalds leader, may want to kill Dutiful. Tom gives Thick presents from Dutiful. Thick says his employers call Tom a stink dog. Thick helps Tom delve into his memories. Tom hears a conversation between Thick and his boss telling him to be careful of Tom because he chopped off Laudwine's arm. Padget is who commands Thick. He is Laudwine's middle man. He wants to know where and when he can kill Tom and the Prince. Laudwine says if Padget ever betrays him, he will be killed or worse. The servants who beat Thick and steal his coins and candy are his employers, not anyone in Buckkeep. Tom bathes Thick, combs his hair and dresses him in clean clothes.

In Chapter XIX, Laudwine, Tom meets Starling. Her husband has no interest in her sexually anymore. She thinks he is having an affair. Tom confirms she is a beautiful and desirable woman, but he will not sleep with her because she is married. Tom goes to Buckkeep Town and finds out where Laudwine is. He goes there and overhears Laudwine and Civil Bresinga. They have an agreement for Civil to spy on the Buckkeep Castle, but Civil wants out of it. Civil says his mother has no friends. She is dishonored. Civil says he does not want to be part of Laudwine's Piebalds. Laudwine commands Padget to kill Civil. Dutiful skills Tom that Civil is in grave danger. Tom skills back he will protect Civil. Tom kills Padget, Laudwine and another Piebald. Laudwine stabs a sword into Tom's back. Tom goes out to the street and kills a horse that is out of control. The Prince tries to skill Tom, but Tom skills him to go away. Tom sees Henja, the Narcheska's hand maiden and possible Piebald, in the street, but he falls unconscious.

In Chapter XX, Coterie, Tom is in jail with a prisoner, who is put there by Chade. Tom can hardly move because he is injured. Golden comes to get Tom. Tom's wound is fatal. It smells horribly because there is poison in him. To cure him, Chade, Golden, Dutiful and Thick form a coterie. Golden uses his Skill fingers to touch Tom's wound and holds hands with the others. A light goes on in Tom's body. He starts to heal from within. It hurts. Tom sleeps for four nights and four days. The Queen comes in and says she owes him for everything he has done for her.

Chapter XVIII, Pink Sugar Cake; Chapter XIX, Laudwine; Chapter XX, Coterie Analysis

Laudwine's maimed arm represents his loss of power. The Piebalds are a rebel group who try to separate from the Farseers, yet they have no real power. When Laudwine



had been whole, they had some power because Tom (as Fitz) maimed him. He had to do so in order to survive. But now that Laudwine is maimed, his power flounders. This is in direct correlation to Golden's Skill fingers, which actually invoke power. Golden uses his fingers to heal Tom from within, something an actual doctor cannot do. Thus, body parts represent power in the book. However, power can be used for good or evil. It simply depends on how it is used.

The healing of Tom symbolizes a rebirth of Tom. Before the injury, he had been without emotion and he could not access his feelings of love. As he heals, he has a rebirth into a new being. This foreshadows that Tom may change emotionally after the coterie heals him, and he may change into a more loving being. It is love that heals him. The energy from the coterie had been brought forth by the group's love for Tom. They had willed him to live and they healed him. Thus, Tom is now changed forever with this experience. Time will tell how much Tom changes exactly.



Chapter XXI, Convalescence; Chapter XXII, Connections; Chapter XXIII, Revelations

Chapter XXI, Convalescence; Chapter XXII, Connections; Chapter XXIII, Revelations Summary

In Chapter XXI, Convalescence, Tom still recovers. He is still very injured. Tom demands Golden and Chade talk to him about what has been going on. The day after Tom killed Laudwine and Padget, there had been scrolls saying the Queen killed them because they were Witted. The scrolls had warned not to trust the Queen, not to come to her Old Blood convocation and that she and her minions would kill anyone who speaks the truth about her son, Dutiful, who is Witted. Civil's mother commits suicide because she cannot let Civil spy on Buckkeep for her safety while she is being sexually assaulted by the Piebalds every day. The agreement had been supposed to be if Civil spied, the Piebalds would keep his mother safe, but her house had turned into a prison. Civil had gone to Laudwine to get out of the agreement, not caring if he died in the process.

Chade and Golden say that no one else had seen Henja in the street. No one is sure of her role yet.

Tom says the five of them are a coterie. He forbids Chade to practice Skill and Chade gets angry, saying that he is denied his rightful teaching.

In a mirror, Tom sees that his facial scars are gone and his broken nose is almost straight due to the coterie's healing. They have over-healed him. Tom looks a bit unrecognizable. Tom continues to rest and reads scrolls about healing and maintaining one's body. Tom realizes Chade keeps these scrolls from him. Chade is on a quest to master the Skill. Chade employs Thick to explore Thick's Skill. Tom realizes Chade has this obsession and nothing will stop him. Tom wants Chade to be careful and Chade says he will.

In Chapter XXII, Connections, Tom restores his scars so he looks familiar again. He rests, eats and relaxes. Chade says the Bingtown traders tell the truth about the dragons. Nettle bothers Tom in his dreams. She is upset because Burrich and Swift quarrel and they refuse to tell her why. Tom advises her to let the quarreling remain between them and to love both of them. Hap visits and says Tom had been right. Svanja finds a sailor and takes up with him. She forgets about Hap. Svanja's family likes the sailor because he gives them gifts. Hap lives with the Master. Tom says love can hurt.

Tom and Dutiful talk. Dutiful tells Tom that he knows he is really Fitz. The Queen had told him. Tom says he must keep it a secret or the Queen could be in danger. Dutiful



cannot tell Civil. Dutiful will still address Fitz as Tom for appearances. Thick comes in and Tom realizes Dutiful takes on Thick as a part of his coterie.

In Chapter XXIII, Revelations, Tom goes to Jinna's cottage and tells her about Hap. She knows and thinks it is for the best. Jinna asks why Tom has killed three men. She knows one had been Witted and asks how he had killed a Witted? He explains who the Piebalds are and their hunger for power. Tom lies and says he had killed them because they had stolen Golden's money. Jinna does not believe Tom and tells him to leave. Tom goes back to Golden's chambers. Golden has been ill. Tom sees Golden's naked back. He has the same tattoos as the Narcheska. They do not hurt Golden all the time, but the application of them had been very painful. It is a horrible memory for any child. Golden is a White Prophet. But an evil woman named Kebal Rawbread seeks to be the only White Prophet. If she comes to power, she will kill Fitz or Tom. Henja, the Narcheska's hand maiden, is Kebal's creature. Golden says every part of the world is connected. Thus, saving the dragons means saving the world. Golden says they must go with Dutiful to prevent him from slaying Icefyre the dragon so he can mate with Tintaglia, the Bingtown dragon, and there can be real dragons in the world again. Tom says he cannot do that because Dutiful must slay Icefyre. Golden says he will die on Aslevjal, Icefyre's island home.

Chapter XXI, Convalescence; Chapter XXII, Connections; Chapter XXIII, Revelations Analysis

As Tom becomes more aware of his goings on and his healing process, it is apparent there is a rebirth. Not only is there a physical rebirth with his scars being removed, but there is also an emotional rebirth. He begins to feel connected to others again and he feels love. He advises Nettle on her situation with her brother and father. He advises her to love them, no matter what. He relates to Hap when Hap tells him of Svanja's mistreatment of their love. Tom tells his son that love does hurt. Tom also feels a connection to the coterie and he feels they have a strong bond. He is happy to see that Dutiful accepts Thick into his coterie and actually helps him. Therefore, Tom has a rebirth and he now recognizes love around him, something he did not do before his injury.

Golden talks about how everything is connected. To save the world, they must save everything in it. This is a very Buddhist philosophy. Every creature, no matter how small, is important and connects to the greater scheme of things. As Golden reveals himself as the White Prophet, his motivations turn into saving the world he knows. He becomes a wise sage. Thus, Golden takes a self-journey. He had started out as the Fool, or court jester, in Fitz's court. But he progresses and develops into a wise elder, one who knows a lot about the world. It is up to Golden to see if he can fulfill his White Prophet role.



Chapter XXIV, Connections; Chapter XXV, Convocation; Chapter XXVI, Negotiations

Chapter XXIV, Connections; Chapter XXV, Convocation; Chapter XXVI, Negotiations Summary

In Chapter XXIV, Connections, Tom tells Chade about what Golden has told him. Chade does not seem to believe all of it. Then he says Dutiful must slay Icefyre and that Golden cannot go to Aslevjal with them. If Keбал, the White Prophet, exists, they must keep Golden away from her.

Tom, Chade, Dutiful and Thick continue their morning Skill lessons. Golden is not included. Tom has problems teaching Chade because he is older and stresses because he is not as good as Dutiful and Thick. Chade has a plan to dismiss Tom from Golden's service. Tom is offered an appointment with the Queen's guard. Tom and Hap recognize each other as men now.

Golden avoids Tom. Tom grows fearful of the Prince's quest. Tom has extreme dedication to teach Dutiful the Skill. He agrees with Chade that Dutiful must have a practiced coterie. Tom tries to be a patient teacher, but Chade is an impossible student. Tom tries to utilize Thick's strong Skill to make Chade hear him. It does not work and they give up.

Civil returns to Buckkeep after mourning his mother. His Wit is still a secret. He has passed on very little information to the Piebalds, according to Dutiful. Tom still does not trust Civil. When Civil had been in danger, his cat had attacked Dutiful as a sign to help Civil. At that same time, Dutiful had tried to skill Tom, but Tom had not heard him. Tom remembers King Verity had the same complaint about him. When Tom had gone into battle, the King could not access a Skill link to Tom.

In lessons, Chade hears Thick's music and also Nettle. Chade skills to the Skilled Ones to come to Buckkeep to serve Dutiful. They hear a foreign voice in the distance. Tom pretends he does not know who Nettle is. Thick says he hears Nettle sometimes.

In Chapter XXV, Convocation, the Queen has an Old Blood (Wit) convocation. They all ride out and meet the Old Blood, but something does not feel right. Tom feels he should not have told Chade about Golden. Tom skills to Dutiful something is not right. The Queen gives Dutiful up as a hostage to the Old Blood. He will stay with them for three days. In exchange, they give, Web, the oldest Old Blood to the Farseers. Everyone is upset that Dutiful is a hostage. She and Chade argue about this, but she says it is her decision. Tom skills Dutiful and he is fine.



Old Bloods and Farseers have negotiations. Some of the Old Bloods are angry and want revenge. They want their oppressors to be killed or their children to be killed. The Queen disagrees. Web disagrees too. Tom meets Web at night in the Great Hall. The Farseers are mean to Web, but Web shows them that he, an Old Blood, is fine. Web eats with them, which is a big step for the Farseers and Old Bloods. Tom sees Web as a gift.

In Chapter XXVI, Negotiations, Web is a wise sage. The Queen likes him very much because Web wants to move past the wrongs of the past. He wants peace between the Old Bloods and Farseers. Some of the Old Blood disagree and they want revenge. The Queen wants peace. Tempers flare. Civil comes into the meeting and reveals himself as Witted. He says the Farseers have welcomed him with open arms. The Queen and Dutiful know Civil is Old Blood and they treat him well. Civil talks about peace between the two groups. Everyone is impressed by Civil's speech, including Web and the Queen. On the last day of the Queen's convocation, there is progress. A proclamation states executions can only be carried out in each of the Six Duchies and only with justice. This establishes consequences for Old Blood mistreatment. Web offers to stay at the Buckkeep Castle to teach the Farseers about the Old Blood ways. The Queen is happy. When they get Dutiful back, the mood has shifted toward peace.

Chapter XXIV, Connections; Chapter XXV, Convocation; Chapter XXVI, Negotiations Analysis

Chade's motivations seem to change. He had had good motivations toward Tom and Golden, but now he seems obsessed with the Skill. His obsession blinds everything else. When Tom teaches him, Chade takes advantage of the Skill and talks with Nettle, summoning her and the other Skilled Ones to Buckkeep Castle. Chade also wants Golden to stay out of the dragon quest. Something seems amiss with Chade because his usual motivations, which are the best intentions for those around him, seem to turn slightly sinister. Chade's character takes a dark turn, but as the reader, s/he is not sure where this dark turn will take Chade and the others. Perhaps this foreshadows that Chade may use his Skill for evil instead of for good. If so, the coterie and the Prince's dragon quest will be in grave danger.

Web is a gift, as Tom acknowledges. But Web is a wise seer. He is the male equivalent to the Queen. He represents the peace between the Old Bloods and Farseers. He is trustworthy and peaceful. He wants to move beyond the past and have a good relationship with the Farseers. Web's motivations for peace actually motivate those around him to do the right thing.

However, it is Civil Bresinga and his motivations that sway the Old Bloods into believing the Queen wants peace and to help them. His speech comes out of nowhere and inspires those around him. Therefore, Civil symbolizes a new hope. He has endured a painful past with the Piebalds and their torture of his mother, but he moves beyond it to find peace in his heart. He does not seek revenge. He seeks love and peace, just as the Old Bloods and Farseers should do.



Chapter XXVII, Spring Sailing; Epilogue

Chapter XXVII, Spring Sailing; Epilogue Summary

In Chapter XXVII, Spring Sailing, everyone buzzes about the Prince's quest. The coterie minus Lord Golden will accompany Dutiful. Civil will go too. Web teaches Dutiful, Civil and Swift about Old Blood ways. Swift is a page now. The Queen announces she will welcome the Witted in her court. Nettle is angry at Tom in his dreams. He hears the menacing, foreign voice again. Golden plans to accompany Dutiful on his quest. Chade lets Golden think he is going because otherwise Golden will plan to get there anyway. Golden is rich so it can be arranged. Tom realizes the coterie will be broken without Golden. Chade alludes to asking Nettle. Tom will fight with axe, something at which Tom is good. Chade says Tom must take care of Swift.

Tom apologizes to Golden and says he misses him. Golden has changed. He gambles and drinks. Golden accepts Tom's apology. Tom wants to say much more, but he lets it be.

In Epilogue, the writer is Tom. He discusses the idea of the circle. It is the idea of repeating history. The same errors cannot be made over and over. The way to a better life is having the courage to make new mistakes.

Chapter XXVII, Spring Sailing; Epilogue Analysis

In the end, Tom's revelation of the circle comes true. The circle symbolizes Tom's life. He has made mistakes and they repeat through Hap. But he has also made new mistakes and learns along the way. He has lost good friends such as Golden and Jinna but he gains two "sons" in the form of Dutiful and Swift. He also has a Skill relationship with his daughter, Nettle. Tom's circle is one of being a father, caregiver and protector. That circle will never be unbroken as long as he continues to live as Tom Badgerlock and not repeat the past mistakes of FitzChivalry Farseer.



Characters

Tom Badgerlock, FitzChivalry Farseer

Tom Badgerlock is a servant to Lord Golden in Buckkeep Castle. He poses as Tom, an ordinary servant, but in reality, he is FitzChivalry Farseer, who is the heir to the Farseer throne. Everyone thinks he is dead. A few insiders know Tom's true identity. Tom has two magical powers called Skill and Wit. Skill is the ability to speak telepathically to other Skilled Ones and go out of oneself. Wit is the ability to sense animals and bond with a beast. Tom's beloved wolf, Nighteyes, is dead. Tom mourns his loss. As he grieves, he becomes emotionally unavailable to others. He does not discipline his foster son Hap as needed. He sleeps with Jinna, a friend, but he will not give himself to her emotionally.

Tom has the task of teaching Prince Dutiful about the boy's Skill power. Tom is reluctant to teach Dutiful because he does not know much about the Skill either. He only reads scrolls to gather information. He becomes a father figure to Dutiful, whose real father, the King, died long ago. Tom also becomes a father figure to Thick, a mentally challenged but incredibly Skilled servant. Tom teaches both boys how to Skill with control.

Tom is a loyal friend. Lord Golden is in disguise as well; he is actually a court jester. Tom confides in Golden and trusts him like a father figure. Tom is friends with Chade, his old mentor, from whom he seeks advice. Loyalty is so strong with Tom that he kills three rebels to protect Dutiful and the kingdom. He does not think about the consequences, he simply kills out of fatherly protection.

Prince Dutiful

Prince Dutiful is the likely heir to the Farseer throne. He lives in the Buckkeep Castle in the Farseer kingdom with his mother, the Queen. Dutiful is a young boy of only 13-14 years of age. He will not become king-in-waiting until he is 17 years-old. It is not 100 percent sure that he will become king. He has the magical power of Skill, but he must learn to use it properly. Tom teaches him. Dutiful can be stubborn though. He acts immaturely at times; for example, not showing up for his Skill lessons. When he is angry at Tom, he stubbornly refuses to show up to his lessons. He immediately rejects Thick because Thick is unwashed and has mental challenges.

The Prince is also immature in love. He is betrothed to the Narcheska, the Outislander princess. But he does not think of her as womanly because she is only 11 years-old. He speaks over the Queen to accept the Narcheska's challenge to slay a dragon. He asserts his manhood here and begins to mature. He takes Skill lessons very seriously and accepts Thick into his coterie. He offers himself as a hostage to the Old Bloods for three days. He now takes on manly responsibilities.



Dutiful is also a loyal friend. He stands by Civil Bresinga, his true friend, when no one else will. Tom and the others think Civil is a spy. But Dutiful sticks up for Civil and protects him. In the end, Dutiful's instincts are right because Civil saves the day.

Nighteyes

Nighteyes is Fitz's (Tom's) wolf who dies in an earlier book. Tom mourns his loss.

Queen Kettricken, The Queen

Queen Kettricken or The Queen is Prince Dutiful's mother. She was married to king-in-waiting, King Verity, but he died long ago. She still misses Verity. She wants peace between the Farseers and all their old enemies.

The Narcheska

The Narcheska is the Outislander princess. She is betrothed to Dutiful, but she does not like him. She challenges Dutiful to slay a dragon for her and she will marry him. She will accompany Dutiful on this dragon quest. She comes from a matriarchal society. She is close to her uncle Peottre. She is only 11 years-old, but she is beautiful and powerful. She has beautiful and elaborate tattoos all over her back. The tattoos burn her at times.

The Piebalds

The Piebalds are a rebel group in the Six Duchies. They want power at all costs. They will persecute or execute those who do not join them. The Piebalds hate Fitz the most because they see him as an obstacle to overthrow the monarchy. Laudwine is their leader.

Hap

Hap is Tom's foster son. He is an apprentice, but hates it. He lacks discipline because he sleeps with a young girl. He is foolish in love. When the girl dumps him, he goes to live with the apprentice Master.

Lord Golden, The Fool

Lord Golden is a royal in Buckkeep Castle. He dresses meticulously and takes pride in his looks. He knows Tom's true identity. Golden's true identity is that he is a court jester. Golden is Tom's true friend, but he is in love with Tom. Golden is gay. He becomes a drinker and gambler. He has the same tattoos as the Narcheska. He is a White Prophet.



Chade

Chade is Tom's old mentor. Tom had been his assassin apprentice. Chade used to be an assassin, but now he is a royal adviser to the Queen. He is obsessed with the Skill and developing his Skill ability. He had not been taught the Skill as a child (as Tom was) and he is angry about that.

Thick

Thick is Chade's servant. Thick is mentally challenged, but he has very strong Skill. Skill is natural for him; it is unnatural for Thick to turn off Skill. Thick is a spy for the Piebalds, but he does not realize what he is doing because he is mentally challenged. He becomes an important part of the Prince's coterie.

Laurel

Laurel is a servant to the Queen. She is a Piebalds traitor. She warns Tom the Piebalds are after him.

Peottre

Peottre is the Narcheska's uncle. He is her mother's brother. The matriarchal lineage is so strong that he has more say in her life than her father. Peottre protects the Narcheska fiercely and refuses to see her mature sexually before she is ready. Peottre and the Narcheska are always together.

Arkon Bloodblade

Arkon Bloodblade is the Narcheska's father. He has no real say in her life. He is not respected. At the betrothal ceremony, he cuts his arm and holds up the blood. It is a sign of bravery in Outislander tradition.

Jinna

Jinna is Tom's lover. They sleep together, but Tom cannot commit to her emotionally. Jinna will not sleep with him anymore. She boards Hap, but due to his wild ways, she kicks him out.

Civil Bresinga

Civil Bresinga is Dutiful's best friend and confidant. Everyone thinks Civil is a spy, but Dutiful trusts him. Civil has the Wit. Civil is a spy for the Piebalds, but he is forced into



this role to protect his mother. When he learns his mother is raped and imprisoned daily in her house by the Piebalds, he breaks off the deal. He saves the day when he makes a speech to the Old Blood about how the Queen and Dutiful accept and love him as a Witted One.

Nettle

Nettle is Tom's daughter with Molly, his former lover. Nettle is raised by Molly and Burrich, Tom's old friend. Molly and Burrich have married and had a family; thus, Nettle does not realize Burrich is not her father. To Nettle, Tom is simply the man she skills in her dreams.



Objects/Places

Six Duchies

The Six Duchies is an area or state. Buckkeep Town is located in the Six Duchies.

Buckkeep Town

Buckkeep Town is located in the Six Duchies. It is a small, rural town of magical and non-magical citizens.

Wit

Wit is a form of magic where one can sense animals and bond with a beast.

Skill

Skill is a form of magic where one can speak telepathically to other Skilled Ones and go outside oneself.

Out Islands

The Out Islands are a matriarchal society from where the Narcheska comes. The Outislanders had been at war with the Farseers long ago. But now they try for peace.

Old Blood

Old Blood are the Witted Ones.

Stuck Pig

The Stuck Pig is a tavern where Tom and Hap drink in Buckkeep Town.

Aslevjal

Aslevjal is the frozen island where the dragon, Icefyre, lives. The Narcheska challenges Dutiful to journey there to slay Icefyre and bring her its head. She will accompany Dutiful on this quest.



Jamaillia

Jamaillia is the northernmost port in the Spice Islands. Traders go in and out of there. Jamaillia is known for its exotic and expensive goods. It is trendy to dress and accessorize like a Jamaillian.

Bingtown

Bingtown is a port city in the Six Duchies. Traders go in and out of there. The Bingtown traders visit Buckkeep Castle and request the Queen to ally with them. They want to ally against the Chalced, their neighbors, due to trading disputes. The traders offer loyalty of their dragon, Tintaglia.



Themes

Loss

The theme of loss is apparent throughout *Golden Fool*. Everyone seems to suffer a loss of some kind and that loss defines them as an individual. For example, Tom loses Nighteyes and he mourns over his loss. Due to the wolf's death, Tom also loses a part of his emotional self. He struggles to bond with his foster son, Hap, and with his lover, Jinna. He cannot do what is emotionally right in either situation because he is wrought with loss. Thus, he loses these two relationships in the duration. Tom also loses his real identity as FitzChivalry Farseer. He struggles every day to keep up the servant identity of Tom, but in reality, he has lost a major part of himself. Golden also loses his identity since he is really a court jester. Golden's identity is hidden because he is a closeted gay. When he admits his true identity of homosexuality to Tom, they lose their relationship for a while.

The Narcheska also must struggle with losing her identity. In the Out Islands, she is powerful and beautiful. In Buckkeep Castle, she is beautiful, but looked at as a little girl. She loses the strength of her matriarchal lineage. She does not have her mother and aunts to help her. The Narcheska struggles with the loss of innocence because she is expected to have sex with Dutiful.

The Queen had lost her husband, King Verity, a while ago. Dutiful had lost the King as well, his father. Both the Queen and Dutiful struggle in loss. They try to remember the King as best as they can. They keep him alive through stories. But the loss is always there.

Feminine Power

A major theme in *Golden Fool* is feminine power. One who possesses this power the most is the Narcheska. She is the princess from the Out Islands. She is a little girl of 11 years-old, but she is powerful and beautiful. Her word is looked upon as the final word by her citizens. In Buckkeep, she struggles a bit with her feminine power because everyone looks at her like a child. The Narcheska asserts her power when she stands up to the Queen. When Dutiful insults her, she insults him back, and she tells the Queen she is not happy with the betrothal. Dutiful must slay a dragon and bring her its head in order for her to marry him. She asserts her feminine power over Dutiful and takes control of the marriage situation. Here, she is in complete control. Dutiful agrees to this challenge. Thus, her power wins.

The Queen also has feminine power. She is the most powerful in the kingdom. She does not let the Narcheska push her around. She disciplines the girl when needed. When her male advisors argue with her decisions, she states that the decision is final. In contrast, Jinna has sexual power, which can also be construed as feminine power.



Jinna lures Tom into her bed and he cannot resist her. They have sex many times and she makes sure he satisfies her sexually. The same is true of Svanja, Hap's girlfriend. He also cannot resist Svanja's sexual power and will risk getting into trouble for her. The power of a woman cannot be resisted in this kingdom.

Father Cycle

A major theme in *Golden Fool* is the father cycle. Someone is always without a father and there is always someone else to fill that father role. For example, Tom does not have a father figure in his life currently. He looks to Golden and Chade to advise him on his life. Sometimes, he even whines to them like a child. They listen and guide him in the right direction. In turn, Tom plays the father role many times. It starts out with Dutiful, whose father was killed long ago. Dutiful is a bit undisciplined and immature. Tom takes him under his wing and teaches him how to use Skill properly. He also advises him on his betrothal to the Narcheska and his concerns about Civil Bresinga. He looks at Dutiful as a son. Meanwhile, Tom has a foster son named Hap. He had taken Hap in and taught him how to be a man. But Hap grows undisciplined and he is foolish in love with his girlfriend. He sleeps with her, despite the consequences. Tom advises Hap to let the relationship go and tries to discipline his son, but these are Hap's decisions. Finally, when Hap is alone and has discipline, Tom and Hap can restore their relationship.

Tom becomes a father figure to Thick, the mentally challenged but very Skilled servant. He bathes him, combs his hair and gives him clean clothes. Tom teaches him Skill and gives him presents. At the end of the book, Tom is given another "son" in the form of Swift. Swift will learn from him and Tom must raise him. Tom also has a daughter, Nettle, whom he skills. He protects and loves her, but lets her be untouched in the countryside with the family she knows.



Style

Point of View

The point of view in *Golden Fool* is the first person. Tom Badgerlock, the protagonist, tells the story through his eyes. The reader receives a close glimpse of what goes on with Tom and especially how he feels. For example, at the book's beginning, the reader can feel Tom's grief over the loss of Nighteyes with a close perspective. When Tom is distraught throughout the story, the reader feels his sadness in each situation. Tom must also give a wider perspective when he describes a situation or the royals in the castle or a room. In doing so, the point of view changes to a third person omniscient in which the reader can receive all the details of the place. For instance, when Tom arrives at the betrothal ceremony, an omniscient narrator describes the elaborate decoration of the Great Hall.

The first person point of view works well in the book because the reader receives a sense of Skill and Wit, the two magical powers of Tom. Tom must skill others, meaning he speaks telepathically. Thus, the reader must have the first person to get a close look into his mind and see what he skills. Others also skill Tom. A reader sees how Tom interprets the Skill. Nettle, Tom's estranged daughter, skills him in his dreams. The voice of Nettle is very close to him and very personal. The first person point of view allows for these personal messages to be read in the most optimal way. The reader feels close to Tom as he interacts with characters normally and as he interacts with characters via Skill.

Setting

The setting of *Golden Fool* is in the Six Duchies. The Six Duchies is a rural state. Within it, there is Buckkeep Town. This is where the citizens live. It is a small, rural town with magical and non-magical people. Tom goes there to meet with Hap, his foster son. He goes there to see Jinna. He also goes there to drink at the Stuck Pig, the tavern for the Old Blood. Tom lives in Buckkeep Castle as a servant. The castle seems like a normal, medieval castle with chambers and elaborate rooms. It has a Great Hall, which is decorated beautifully and elaborately for occasions such as Winter Fest and the betrothal ceremony. The important room of the castle is King Verity's tower where the Skill lessons take place. Nothing is particularly special about the tower except that Verity used to dwell there.

Tom also goes into the forest a couple nights. The forest is a usual medieval forest. It is dark and creepy. Tom also goes back to his cottage. The cottage is ransacked most likely by the Piebalds. All his valuables, such as pots and pans, are stolen. The cottage is a complete mess and looks like someone had cooked and eaten there. Tom finds the scrolls for which he is looking for the cottage and leaves. He considers burning it down, but he leaves it in deplorable shape in case a squatter needs to live there.



Language and Meaning

The language of *Golden Fool* is formal, but readable to the modern reader. It is not written in a formal, time period language of medieval times. The characters speak in a formal way, similar to modern speech. This helps with understanding the storyline, since it is quite complicated. The meaning of the formal language is that the characters must speak this way because many of them are servants to royals. Also, many of them are royals and speak in a highly formal way.

Swearing is rare in the book. The language holds steady throughout each chapter. Even speaking via Skill does not hinder the language in any way. The language is not without rules as the author writes in a grammatically perfect way. The sentences follow grammar rules and complex rules of literature. Difficult vocabulary is interspersed throughout the book.

When the characters speak in Skill, the language becomes very personal. It does not lose its formality, but becomes personal interactions between the characters. They may say things they would not say aloud. Skill allows for the reader to receive a personal look into each character who skills. The Skill is set apart differently in the text, since it is in italics. It seems to be the most important language of the book because it is highly developed by only certain, magical characters. They use this Skill language to communicate with each other telepathically and keep each other from harm. It is with this language that they form a coterie to heal Tom and protect the Prince.

Structure

This book is comprised of 27 chapters, a Prologue and an Epilogue. Each chapter has a name, which displays the overall theme for the individual chapter. Chapter length varies from 14 pages to approximately 26 pages long. Each chapter has a roman numeral. The chapters have short paragraphs that do not give much description of place. Days can pass throughout the book, since the author focuses on tension lines and storyline. Traveling scenes occur, but only when there is action. Months can also pass in the book. There is no structure to how time passes.

The multiple plot lines are complicated and it takes the reader a while to connect the dots. *Golden Fool* is about Tom Badgerlock, who is really FitzChivalry Farseer, an heir to the throne, and how Tom uses Skill and Wit to protect the Prince and others.

The book's pace is normal and moves moderately. It is neither fast-paced or slow. It is the right speed for an advanced, modern day reader. It is a difficult read due to the complicated plot lines and incredible amount of information. Words of difficult vocabulary are interspersed throughout the story. The plot engrosses the reader into the world of the Farseer kingdom and magic. The book moves in linear fashion with the reader receiving only glimpses of Tom as Fitz. Back story is present to understand the complicated plot lines. The book is a difficult read due to the plot lines, but entertains as a whole for those who like the fantasy genre.

Quotes

"The death of Nighteyes gutted me." Prologue, Losses Sustained, p. 2

"Truth can run well out of a man like blood from a wound." Chapter III, Echoes, p. 48

"Had someone firmly connected Tom Badgerlock to the Witted Bastard of song and legend?" Chapter VI, Obliteration, p. 105

"With the Skill, one could injure or heal, blind or enlighten, encourage or crush." Chapter XIV, Scrolls, p. 275

"The Wit runs still in the Farseer bloodline." Chapter XV, Quarrel, p. 288

"I must be Tom Badgerlock to you, in every way." Chapter XXII, Connections, p. 442

"The pack is the whole of you. The wolf's life is in the pack." Chapter XXIII, Revelations, p. 452

"I was as much Tom Badgerlock as FitzChivalry Farseer now." Chapter XXIII, Revelations, p. 453

"When you save any part of the world, you've saved the whole world." Chapter XXIII, Revelations, p. 459

"No man would entrust half his soul to a man he cared nothing for." Chapter XXIV, Connections, p. 474

"One man armed with the right word may do what an army of swordsmen cannot." Chapter XXVI, Negotiations, p. 494

"Perhaps having the courage to find a better path is having the courage to risk making new mistakes." Epilogue, p. 520



Topics for Discussion

What do you think of Tom as a father? Does he fulfill the father role correctly? How does his fathering differ from his blood-related daughter, Nettle, to his "adopted" sons Hap, Dutiful and Thick?

What does sexuality represent in Golden Fool? Is sexuality a good or bad thing? Is it something to be feared or something to be desired? Whose sexuality is the most confusing and why?

How can Tom and Hap break the cycle of repeating past mistakes? Are there lessons learned in repeating the same mistakes? Who makes more mistakes, Tom or Hap? How do these mistakes bring them closer?

Who has more feminine power? The Queen or the Narcheska? How are their feminine powers different? How are they alike? Do you foresee a working relationship between the two women as daughter-in-law and mother-in-law?

What does the dragon quest represent for the Prince? What will he find on this quest symbolically and emotionally beside the actual dragon? The Narcheska will go on this quest too. What is this quest to her? Does it symbolize a loss of her power?

How would you define intelligence? Thick is mentally challenged, but he is exceptional in using the Skill. What is more important in this world, Skill or intelligence? Would you like to have Skill in your everyday life? Why or why not?

How does Tom live with a masked identity? How should he be true to himself and Fitz? Who is Tom now? Is he more Fitz or more Tom? Does he completely need to forego his true identity as Fitz? Why or why not? Could you ever live your life in disguise and keep your true self a secret?