

Heir Apparent Study Guide

Heir Apparent by Vivian Vande Velde

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Plot Summary

Heir Apparent by Vivian Vande Velde is a story about a girl named Gianinne Bellisario who is celebrating her fourteenth birthday. Her father gives her a gift certificate to Rasmussem Gaming Center and she decides to use it to become a character in game called 'Heir Apparent'. While she is connected to the game, the Center is invaded by a protest group called C.P.O.C. and the equipment damaged. The usual methods of exiting the game are no longer available and the only way that she can get out again is to complete the game. There is a limited amount of time that she has to accomplish this after which she will likely never recover completely. If she dies in the game, she simple feels a fizzy feeling and finds herself back at the beginning again.

Gaininne becomes Janine, a girl who discovers that she is heir to the throne by decree of her father King Cynric. She has spent her entire life living with sheep herders in the small town of St. Jehan, in hiding when her safety could no longer be guaranteed in the castle. She is never out of his mind however, and when he falls ill, not trusting anyone around him, he asks that she be named his heir. Sir Deming rides out to St. Jehan to get her, and as the game begins, Janine is waking on the hill to her mother calling her down. Janine returns to this hillside several times as one or another of her half brothers eliminate her from the throne. In a momentary visitation, Nigel Rasmussem manages to get a message to her emphasizing the need for a ring and letting her know what happened. Before her game is done, Janine will face a barbarian invasion, civil unrest, an obnoxious queen and her three traitorous sons, a dragon, and three magic users - each with different skills. She'll be put to the test in many ways as she must recover a crown from a dragon; stop an adviser from robbing the city blind; and earn the respect of the royal guard. Janine will lose her life several times in a bid to get to the end of the level in time. Princess Janine applies a moral and unflinching loyalty to her royal duties, hauling arrows to her guards when the barbarians attack. She refuses to give in to extortionist demands; ensuring her guards are well paid and appreciated and listening to the people around her. She also takes on the dangerous task of retrieving the Crown of King Brecc the Slayer. She is tried at every turn. Will she make it out to her life again? Will she be consigned to a virtual reality? The book ends with open-ended questions that remain unresolved and are intriguing to the reader.



Chapters One and Two

Chapters One and Two Summary

Heir Apparent by Vivian Vande Velde is a story about a girl named Gianinne Bellisario who is celebrating her fourteenth birthday. Her father gives her a gift certificate to Rasmussem Gaming Center and she decides to use it to become a character in game called 'Heir Apparent'. While she is connected to the game, the Center is invaded by a protest group called C.P.O.C. and the equipment damaged. The usual methods of exiting the game are no longer available and the only way that she can get out again is to complete the game. There is a limited amount of time that she has to accomplish this after which she will likely never recover completely. If she dies in the game, she simple feels a fizzy feeling and finds herself back at the beginning again.

She wakes up thinking that she'd arrived in a barn and can hear birds and feel the grass under her. She opens her eyes to blue sky, and sheep bleating in the area. Then she realizes the barn smell is coming from her. The computer conditions kicks in and she becomes Janine de St. Jehan, shepherder. Her mother, Solita calls her and Janine goes over to be introduced to Sir Deming. Sir Deming gives Solita little chance to talk, telling Janine that her parents were not her real parents and that in fact, she was born to a serving woman and her father was the recently deceased King Cynric. He has come to take her back to court where she will be named heir to the throne. He reluctantly gives her an overview of who her brothers and more appropriate successors to the throne are, and then insists that they depart without so much as giving her time to wash first. She kisses her mother and siblings goodbye, telling them that she'll send for them when things are settled.

Chapters One and Two Analysis

This year, Giannine Bellisario had gotten a present from her father - a rarity - and though it was likely he felt he was making an effort, it might have been more effective if he hadn't had his secretary call her to find out what kind of certificate would work. She selects Rasmussem Gaming Center, and makes her way past the protesters outside to redeem it. She chooses a total immersion game called Heir Apparent - not because the story line is so great, but because she liked the look of the guys in it. There are a pair of older boys playing that were hoping to find another two players to play Dragons Doom, but Giannine prefers to play against the computer generated characters instead. The receptionist takes her through a litany of instructions and information that sounds as though it has been said a thousand times before, and bored, she is now reciting to Giannine. After offering promos, and having the receptionists' pet dragon lunge at her again, Giannine goes over the available games and is finally ready to play. She selects Heir Apparent, asking if it is for both girls and boys, and discovers it is. Her selection is based on the looks of the male characters in the story line, but she has no problems with admitting that to herself.



Her next awareness is of a barnyard smell, but it doesn't quite jell with the feeling of grass underneath where she is laying. She sits up to find herself outside, and the smell of barnyard is coming from herself. She is wearing a patchwork wool dress and thinks about the decision she made. Instead of getting a certificate for a clothing store, or a music store, she'd chosen to become a grubby little girl living in time gone by. She decides not to waste the time she has thinking about her life and choices, and enjoy the game she paid for instead. She pushes the thought of her father and her birthday to the back of her mind. As soon as she did that, she was flooded with information about her life as Janine de St. Jehan. A voice calls out to her and Janine recognizes the character as her mother Solita in the game. A dog she knows as Dusty greets her enthusiastically and she tells him to stay and mind the sheep before going out. It's hard to swallow the knowledge that she is in a game and acknowledge Solita as her mother, but she puts renewed effort into the game's ambiance and heads down to her. Sir Deming wrinkles his nose as she comes closer, and can hardly wait to impart the information that the life she knew was a lie. Her parents raised her when it became too dangerous for her to remain within the castle walls. Her father was King Cynric and her mother, a serving woman. On his deathbed, King Cynric had named Janine his heir. Janine asks after the King's other children, and is told about the three young men who are in line to the throne. The goodbyes are brief and Janine, riding behind Sir Deming, is on her way to the castle.



Chapters Three and Four

Chapters Three and Four Summary

Councilor Rawdon introduces himself when Princess Janine and Sir Deming arrive, and Janine is escorted to the Great Hall. She tries not to look impressed as he pushes open the carved doors and announces her before wishing her luck and closing the door. At the other end of the room, her three half brothers are sitting with their mother. Janine says hello and without waiting for an introduction, walks over to them. The Queen observes that she smells before suggesting that they simply kill her, and Abas is only too happy to oblige. Kenric points out that as she has already been seen, they can't kill her and reluctantly the Queen agrees. Wulfgar suggests they start over and makes the introductions. The Queen is about to say something when the room suddenly goes dark. A crash of thunder and lightning follows, but the storm looks wrong. She can feel her scalp going tingly and can't hear what the Queen is saying to her. As quickly as it starts, it stops, and the family looks at her as though she's lost her mind. The lightning moves into the castle, lighting up the entire hall. Then, just as abruptly, it all stops. Janine can't explain what she'd seen. The Queen tells her that for now, she can keep her head and her position, and they collectively leave the room.

Janine follows. She isn't sure who to trust and knows she has to find an ally fast. Abas is the Queen's favorite and though Wulfgar and Kenric are obviously troublemakers, she knows she has to select one. She calls out to Kenric and asks him if there are wizards who live near the castle. He gives her two names - Xenos and Uldemar. Janine is convinced the storm was created by one of them. Janine notices two guards dragging a young boy between them. They approach, and ask Kenric if the usual punishment is sufficient. Kenric leaves the decision up to Janine, who decides to decree a royal change. After she establishes that no one had actually seen him committing a crime, she tells the guards to free him. She asks the young man if he is okay, and is rewarded with a hard kick to the shin before he runs off. She is about to go back into the castle when a bright shaft of light appears in the sky, along with harp music and a choir. A white robed figure addresses her as Giannine Bellisario, and she is almost too stunned to speak. He descends in front of her and announces that there has been a small emergency, identifying himself as Nigel Rasmussem. He tells her not to panic, and then announces that CPOC has broken into the building. While there is no danger to her body, she may find it difficult to leave the program unless she manages to finish the game. Anything less will simply loop her back to the beginning. As a last bit of advice, he adds that Kenric and Sister Mary Ursula don't work well together and that next time, she should remember the ring. She has no idea what he means. After delivering this message, Nigel sends a note to his department heads admitting that the danger is greater than was communicated to Giannine, in an effort to keep her from panicking. He asks for estimates as to repair and contingencies.



Chapters Three and Four Analysis

Princess Janine enjoys the way she is helped off the horse when she and Sir Deming arrive at the castle. Finally, someone is treating her like the royalty they say she is. Counselor Rawdon introduces himself, welcoming her and escorts her to the Great Hall where he leaves her without warning to meet the rest of the royal family. She tries to keep in mind the story Deming told her about her birth, and how they had advised the King when she was born. It would not be in her best interest to trust to soon, she decides. When Rawdon closes the massive carved doors behind her after leading her into the Great Room and wishing her luck, at first Janine thinks she is alone in the room. Feeling as though she is at a social disadvantage, she ignores the tittering and turns to face them, saying hello. Without waiting - she was half princess after all - she strides over to the group and addresses them. The Queen turns to her sons, and makes disparaging remarks about the smell that accompanies Janine. She suggests that they simply kill Janine now, and Abas is only too happy to oblige her, taking his sword out of its harness on his back. Janine backs up quickly. Abas tells her it will be less painful if she doesn't move. Thankfully, Kenric points out that Janine has already been seen, and they can't simply dispose of her. The Queen is visibly disappointed. Wulfgar suggests they start again, but Janine is one step ahead. She is starting to get angry, and tells him that they can all begin by introducing themselves to their new King. The Prince is taken aback for a moment, but quickly recovers and introduces his family to her. When he introduces his mother, the room goes black just as she is about to address Janine. It is as though the lights have suddenly gone out, and is then accompanied by a crash of thunder and lightning. The Queen becomes impatient and Janine tries to explain that she can't hear her. The royals look at each other as though she's lost her mind. Finally, the light returns. The Queen admits that for now, she has been named her husband's heir, and though she may yet decide to have her killed, the job is hers at least for now. Janine didn't feel as though her first impressions were very good.



Chapters Five and Six

Chapters Five and Six Summary

The figure calling itself Nigel told Giannine that she had at least five hours of worry free play time, but that the longer she is in the game, the greater the risk of a fatal overload. She concentrates on the two hints she was given and is so preoccupied that she is surprised when someone grabs her from behind. A group of about twenty guards are in front of her with weapons drawn. The guard who turns her around is one of the guards who she earlier forced to free the boy, and he tells the others that she is too weak to be a King, and sticks his knife into her. There is no pain, but a fizzy, carbonated feeling as her knees gave out. Her eyes closed and the next time they opened, she was back on the hill and her mother was calling her name.

Just like the first time, Dusty leaps up on her, licking her face. She tells him to guard the sheep and runs down the hill to where Sir Deming is standing with her mother. This time, she keeps her eyes open for the ring she is supposed to collect, noting that it is not on her mother's hands. Sir Deming had a ring, and she comments on how nice it is. He doesn't respond in a manner that makes her feel as though he is ready to give it to her. She listens as he tells that King Cynric is her father and named her as his heir. She asks if he sent a token but Deming tells her he was the token sent. Her mother weeps again as she leaves, bemoaning that her father won't be able to say goodbye, and when she asks Deming about Sister Mary Ursula, he looks at her suspiciously. By the time they reach the castle, she has eliminated his ring as the one that Nigel told her about. Just as before, Rawdon takes her to her family, and this time, she approaches with confidence. This time, she insists on respect from them and the Queen, put out, tells Abas again to kill her. Janine reminds them, as Wulfgar had the first time, that she has already been seen arriving and killing the appointed heir will create problems for them. The Queen agrees, and it is the last thing she heard.

Chapters Five and Six Analysis

Giannine tries not to panic. She wonders what she would feel if her brain became fried on the other end, and tries not to think about it. As near as she can estimate, she has less than thirty game days to figure the game out. She tries not to think about what might occur if she doesn't manage to find her way through the game in time. So preoccupied with her own thoughts is Janine that she doesn't hear the soldiers come up behind her. About twenty guards are there, along with the ones who caught the young thief earlier, and one of them announces that she is much too weak to be their King. Before she can argue the fact, he stabs her and she falls to the ground.

When she opens her eyes again, she is on the familiar hillside. She tries to work out how much time she has left. Giving herself a mental shake, she heads down the hill to her mother again. The sequence plays out much the same way, but this time Janine is



on the lookout for the ring that Nigel told her about. Neither her mother, or Deming seem to possess the right ring, so she assumes she isn't supposed to have it yet. She greets Counselor Rawdon and faces the royal family with more confidence. She is a little more insistent that they treat her with the respect her new station deserves. This only infuriates the Queen who insists that Abas kill Janine. Abas gets up willingly enough, and Janine provides the argument that she has already been seen by many people. Though they agree, it doesn't stop them from ending her life shortly afterward.



Chapters Seven and Eight

Chapters Seven and Eight Summary

She wakes to her mother calling her, and tells Dusty to stay with the sheep. She meets Deming, learns about her father and his wish that she assume the throne. She arrives at the castle for the third time but this time, before she goes in, she asks Rawdon if her family can be trusted. He hesitates, but admits that they may be a threat to her. Cynthia, appointed as her lady in waiting, helps her to clean up and get into a gown of burgundy velvet. This time, when she reaches the Great Hall, it is empty. The guard tells her that the Queen and Prince Wulfgar are out in the topiary maze. Janine finds the Queen Kenric instead and admires her ring aloud, thinking it might be the one Nigel referred to, but the Queen makes it clear that it is not. Dismissed, she tries to find her way back out of the maze and quickly becomes lost. Hearing a sound behind her, she turns and is knocked face first down to the ground. She tries to fight back, but gets that bubbly, fizzy feeling again, and suddenly her mother is calling her again.

Giannine thinks about the steps she has taken so far, and decides suddenly that the ring must be in the possession of the young poacher. She hurries Deming through his explanations and her goodbyes. This time, she was humble, not commenting on the rudeness of the royal family and was able to hear the conversation the Queen had tried to have with her the first time but was blocked by the noise of the storm. Queen Andreanna mentions that Janine is not trained to deal with the barbarians, the peasant uprisings and general life in the political arena. She suggests that Janine take a home in the country with her foster family and leave the politics to them. Janine thanks her for the offer, but insists that she will try to live up to her father's wishes. As they leave the room, Janine calls out to Wulfgar, and ask his advice. Their conversation is interrupted by the poacher and remembering her previous attempts, she again insists that if no one saw him poaching, they certainly couldn't put him to death. Wulfgar leaves, angry and she turns back, grabbing the kid by the tunic. She tries to explain that she is new and would like to help bring change. She asks if she can speak to his father, and after a few seconds, he tells her to follow him. They go over the drawbridge and he lets out a bird call that is quickly answered. She hears a rustling behind her and feels a thud in her back. Looking over her shoulder, she can see the arrow in her back. The boy runs to him and embraces him as the fuzziness takes over.

Chapters Seven and Eight Analysis

The game begins again, and Giannine gets through the beginning of it as quickly as she can, but this time she asks questions about her family before going in. She also decides to clean up first this time, but by the time she returns to the Great Hall, the family is gone. A guard tells her that the Queen and Prince Wulfgar are in the topiary. She orders him to show her the way through, and he does so. Janine discovers the Queen is with Kenric instead of Wulfgar and her demeanor is no more pleasant than it was the first



two times she had come. Her luck with them is no better than it has been in the previous times they've met. When she is dismissed, she tries to find her way back but gets lost. The sound of someone approaching is a relief until she is knocked to the ground, and has the fizzy feeling again. Then her mother calls her again.

Giannine is beginning to wonder if she will ever find her way through the game. By process of elimination, she can't think of anyone other than the young poacher that might have the ring she needs. This time, after talking to the Queen, she asks Wulfgar to walk with her and suggests that they summon the king's advisers, telling him she would appreciate his advice. He tells her that Sir Deming, Counselor Rawdon and Sister Mary Ursula are the advisers, and Janine asks about the Sister and what she is like. Wulfgar says she is a 'fussy old meddler' and suggests that she also meet with the ones in the kingdom who know magic. Janine agrees, and he names three - Orielle, Xenos and Uldemar. The poacher is brought to them again and Wulfgar tries to change her mind but Janine insists that part of the problem they are having with the peasants may be because they are too harsh in their treatment. She immediately realizes that it sounds as though she is criticizing Wulfgar himself, who spins on his heel and leaves her standing alone. She tells the boy he owes her a favor, thinking she might get the ring, but the he becomes even more defensive, telling Janine to talk to his father if she wants to be paid for her kindness. When she goes to meet with him and hopefully discuss better relations, she is shot with an arrow in the back and once again wakes to hear her mother calling her.



Chapters Nine, Ten and Eleven

Chapters Nine, Ten and Eleven Summary

Janine wakes certain that the ring she needs is the one on Deming's finger, and this time when she goes down the hill, she launches herself at him without warning. He fights her off and she even bites his hand before he stabs her with his knife. There is no ring, Janine insists and hears her mother exclaiming "Of course I have no ring". The last thing Janine hears her say is that her father took it.

The next time Janine goes down the hill to meet Deming, she insists on waiting until her father returns. With eyes misted over with tears, he tells her he was hoping they'd have more time. Janine tells him she'll send for him. Her father gives her some of the history of her birth while Deming waits impatiently. They were given a magic ring which the Midwife, who lives in service at the Shrine of Saint Bruce the Warrior Poet, still holds onto. The Midwife had only said that she would need it if she was ever summoned to court. When they begin their journey, she tells Deming that she needs to go to the Shrine, leaving no room for argument. He takes her to Feordina The Knitter, who is the Midwife who attended her birth and leaves her to approach on her own. Feordina tells Janine that if she is the rightful owner of the ring, a simple, original poem recited to Saint Bruce will reveal it. If Saint Bruce doesn't approve however, he will chop off her head.

Janine asks several questions before she is told that her time is limited, half is already gone. She begins with an Ode to Saint Bruce, and Feordina winces and ducks but Saint Bruce seems to accept it. She makes her wish for the ring and it falls from his armor. Feordina tells Janine that whoever she gives the ring to will be compelled to not only accept it, but to do her bidding from then on. She thanks her and leaves. Nigel Rasmussem sends a memo out to his department heads announcing that Giannine has finally broken through level one and there is concern about her lack of progress. It calls for immediate options for stabilization as her bios are already degenerating and they have no medical staff present.

Chapters Nine, Ten and Eleven Analysis

When Giannine wakes on the hill again, she realizes that since the ring wasn't with the royal family, and it wasn't with the poachers, it must be the one that Deming is wearing. She hurries down the hill and without warning throws herself at Deming. She bites his hand but still isn't able to get the ring and the last thing she feels is a fizziness and he sticks his knife in her ribs. She complains that the ring is likely a lie by Nigel to confuse her, and as she is slipping away, she hears her mother respond that the ring was given to her father.



Again, she wakes on the hill, but this time insists that her father come back before she leaves. Deming complains, but it isn't long before he comes over the hill, taking her into his arms in a great bear hug. He tells her briefly about how she came to be in their care, and how he was given a token - a ring - that should she ever be summoned to court, she would need. The ring, he had entrusted with the Midwife who now lived in relative seclusion in service at the Shrine of Saint Bruce the Warrior Poet. Her father tells her that she will have to retrieve it. When Deming impatiently asks if she is finally ready to go, Janine's father reminds him that she is his future king. He immediately changes his demeanor, asking her if it pleases her to go now. On the way back to the castle, Janine insists they stop at the Shrine, and though he is petulant about it, Deming takes her. She meets with Feordina the Knitter, who was the Midwife, and must pass a test before she can reclaim the ring. A simple, but original poem must be recited to Saint Bruce. If he approves, the ring is hers, but if he does not, her head will belong to him.

Saint Bruce is well read and has an incredible memory. She is warned to use a poem of her own creation. She manages to recite a poem that is almost limerick in nature, but Saint Bruce accepts the original composition and a wish reveals the ring. Feordina tells her that the wearer will be compelled to do her bidding, just as her mother had been compelled to sleep with her father. Janine suggests that her mother should have refused the ring, but Feordina insists that the person it is offered to will be compelled to take it. The only caveat is that it will only work once per owner before turning into an ordinary ring. She thanks her and leaves after asking everything she can think of where the ring is concerned, exasperating Feordina. In the real world, Nigel sends a message out to his department heads to make them aware that level one has finally been accomplished, but that the situation does not look good and it is unlikely she will finish the game in the short time remaining as her bios are already beginning to degenerate.



Chapters Twelve and Thirteen

Chapters Twelve and Thirteen Summary

Janine returns to Deming and they set off for the castle. He asks her what she gained from the shrine but she doesn't tell him. Again, Counselor Rawdon takes over when they arrive, and this time she approaches Wulfgar afterward. She manages to align herself with him, suggesting they combine forces to increase their leverage and call a council together. Wulfgar agrees and once again, Janine lets the poacher go, this time making him work off his crime. Back inside, Rawdon and Wulfgar tell her that they will send for Uldemar so that he can use his scrying glass to notify the others. Sister Mary Ursula is upset by the use of magic, and manages to insert just enough nonsense to have both Wulfgar and Rawdon leaving in frustration.

Once they are alone, Sister Mary Ursula tries to convince Janine to become more 'One' by fasting, solitude and meditation. Janine leaves her behind and heads to the guardhouse to ask Captain Penrod to send men to invite the magic-users to a council meeting. Penrod claims that Prince Wulfgar has already given that order and suggests that she and the Prince consult each other. Rather than give in to anger, Janine tells the guards how important they are, and assures them that their opinions matter and will be taken into consideration. She is quickly informed that they aren't paid enough, or regularly; that they aren't fed well; and that the queen tends to be too forward with some of the younger guards. She promises to look into those issues, beginning with their pay. She soon learns that Rawdon is in charge of payment, but has shorted them several times in recent months. She asks for an escort to Rawdon's chambers and Penrod offers his services. Crossing the courtyard, she hears the whoosh of an arrow and Penrod is on the ground with an arrow in his heart. Before she can scream, a hand is clamped over her mouth and she is dragged to a wagon. The cloth over her mouth is soaked in something that causes her to lose consciousness soon afterward.

Chapters Twelve and Thirteen Analysis

Deming's mood is sarcastic when Janine returns to him, ready to go to the castle. She meets the family and this time detains Wulfgar afterward, and suggests an alliance of sorts. He agrees, and when the poacher is brought in, Janine says she will handle it, and Wulfgar walks away. She tries to think of a way to save the boy's life without jeopardizing her own, and doesn't notice Sister Mary Ursula approach who, upon hearing Janine's proclamation to spare the poacher, has decided that she is of the 'One' and considers her to be an ally. Back inside the castle Wulfgar and Rawdon are taking the steps towards assembling a council. Sister Mary Ursula isn't happy that magic will be used, and begins to spout about Janine's oneness and how the use of magic will disturb the forces. She manages to alienate both Wulfgar and Rawdon with her babbling, and Janine's lack of responses could not have been more poignant.



After the men are gone, Janine is left with the Sister, who is convinced that what Janine needs is to cleanse herself. Janine gently disengages herself from Sister Ursula and heads to the guardhouse to find Captain Penrod. When she asks him to send men for the magic users in the realm, she is informed that Wulfgar has already given that order. She realizes quickly that she needs to get the guards on her side, and begins by telling them how valuable they are to her, and that their opinions are important to her. In moments, she learns that they are not being paid regularly, aren't eating decently, and that the Queen tries to take advantage of the younger guards. Janine promises to address the issues, and begins by asking who pays them. Counselor Rawdon is the one responsible, and Janine asks for an escort to his quarters. Penrod himself volunteers, which she takes as a good sign, but before they get across the courtyard, Penrod is killed by an arrow through the heart, and she is grabbed. A cloth that is soaked in something unpleasant is put over her mouth and nose and she quickly loses consciousness.



Chapters Fourteen and Fifteen

Chapters Fourteen and Fifteen Summary

Janine wakes to a bucket of cold water, and King Grimbold introduces himself to her, asking her where his crown is. They shackle her to a tree in the middle of their campground, using a chain long enough to allow her to sit, stand, lie down or walk around to choose sun or shade to sit in. A guard is posted, and water is given. She sits for some time, and when the guard changes, she offers the new guard her magic ring, and instructs him to keep her best interests at heart. She has him release her and instructs him to tell anyone who asks that he is acting on Grimbolds' orders. He does so - even when Grimbold himself asks where they are going. Grimbold kills the guard helping her and she tries to run, but is quickly overcome. Grimbold discovers the ring and puts it on Janine's finger. Then he asks her if she is compelled to do his bidding. When she admits she must, he questions her as to the whereabouts of his crown, and then they take turns making her do inane tasks for their amusement. They chain her up again, but leave her with instructions to behave like a chicken. Grimbold takes his turn guarding her, and is killed by a man hiding behind the tree. He steps out and she recognizes one of the guards but is still only able to cluck and scratch. Before he can free Janine, a wolf attacks him from behind, killing him. Then he changes into Wulfgar. He gives her a feral smile before telling her that it is a shame the barbarians killed her, and then he cuts her throat. Meanwhile, Rasmussem is still trying to figure out the best way to get her out, but with little success. The situation is becoming critical.

Janine wakes on the hill, discouraged, now sure that Wulfgar is her enemy. She works her way back to the Shrine, but has forgotten the poem she used the first time. She comes up with a sad excuse for a poem and surprisingly, Saint Bruce accepts it. She heads to the castle again with Sir Deming. This time, she approaches Abas, flattering his sword work. When the poacher is brought forth, Abas offers to deal with him, but Janine says no. She once again gains the support of the guards by asking about their conditions and wages. Then she asks that castle defenses be fortified. She heads to see Rawdon about the wage and asks Sister Ursula to find Deming and ask him to come to the Great Hall. Abas keeps up a running commentary about his workouts and triumphs. Rawdon isn't in his room, but she learns that he'd stopped in the kitchen for field rations earlier. She decides to check with Penrod to see if he's left yet, and crossing the courtyard with Abas, notices movement behind the wagon. She warns Abas, who catches the arrow aimed at him in his hand. Then he races for the wagon. Janine hollers that intruders are in the courtyard, and joins Abas who has already killed two of the three men and is fighting with the third, Grimbold. One man survives, although injured, and Penrod reports that four are dead. Janine sends two dozen men after those who escape and questions the one remaining injured man, discovering their plan was to kidnap her and force her to return the crown of King Brecc the Slayer. Once Janine asks the second question, Abas uses the weight of the wagon to kill the man.



Chapters Fourteen and Fifteen Analysis

Janine wakes in the barbarian camp, and King Grimbold introduces himself and explains the reason for her capture. When he realizes that she truly isn't aware of the history between their people, he decides to spare her life and ransom her instead. When she realizes that it is unlikely that anyone will come for her, she decides to use the ring to get her out of the mess she is in. The next time the guard is changed, she offers it to the new guard who is then more than willing to do her bidding - to the letter. This proves to be a problem when she tells the man to simply march her out of the camp, and if anyone asks, he is to tell them that he is acting on King Grimbold's orders. When King Grimbold himself questions the guard, he knows the guard's loyalty has been compromised, and is forced to kill him. Janine is recaptured, and Grimbold discovers the source of her power over his man. He gives Janine the ring to wear, and begins asking her pointed questions about its power. She has no choice but to admit that it compels the wearer to do the owner's bidding and for the next few hours they amuse themselves by instructing her to walk on one foot; cluck like a chicken; and other demeaning suggestions. She is still in the chicken state when one of the castle guards sneaks up and kills Grimbold. Clucking, she pecks at the key on his belt, but the guard is killed just as Janine is beginning to have hope when Wulfgar steps out from behind a tree in his wolf form and attacks. Then he changes back to his human form, and expresses his sorrow that the barbarians killed her before they could get to her. Rasmussem is monitoring her progress, but the situation is approaching a critical point as once again Janine begins the game.

She wakes again on the hill, wondering how many mistakes she will make before her time expires. Now she knows that Wulfgar is definitely her enemy, so this time, after a poor excuse for a poem is given to Saint Bruce, she returns to the castle again. This time, after speaking with the royal family, she asks Abas to stay behind. Again, she goes through the poacher issue, and again she lets the boy go. She questions the guards about their working conditions, and decides that to gain their loyalty, the fastest way might be to find out what is happening to their wages, and back pay. She heads to Rawdon's quarters, with Abas in tow, and learns that he has already assembled field rations, planning to leave the castle. Janine and Abas go back to the courtyard, hoping to stop him and Janine warns Abas when she sees movement behind the wagon. Abas springs to her defense, catching the first arrow right out of mid air, and then leaping behind the wagon to make short work of the intruders. Janine manages to stop him from killing them all, insisting she needs to ask the prisoner a couple of questions. Once she asks the second question, Abas kills the man without hesitation. When Janine is stunned by his behavior, he reminds her that she said she had a couple of questions. A couple is two, he tells her and heads back to the castle for lunch.



Chapters Sixteen and Seventeen

Chapters Sixteen and Seventeen Summary

Janine asks Captain Penrod whether he or his guards saw Rawdon leave, and he informs her that Rawdon visits his aging mother in the town of Fairfield frequently. She asks Penrod to have one of his men fetch Rawdon. Next, she asks again that the magic users, Xenos, Uldemar and Orielle, be summoned in all haste. Since there is no room at the table for her, she has the servants pull the throne over. She compliments Abas on his prowess with a sword earlier, and asks about the crown the barbarian had referred to. Kenric advises her that their father had won the crown in a tournament, but not fairly. She asks the family where the crown is now, but no one seems to know. Sister Ursula suggests perhaps the king's treasure room, and Deming corrects her, insisting King Cynric had given it to the dragon. No one seems to know the whereabouts of the dragon now however. Janine asks that a messenger be sent to the barbarians camp to apologize for King Griswold's death, and offer to return the crown to his successor. Lady Bliss loans Janine a red velvet dress which is much too large and as she is finishing, Captain Penrod arrives and tells her that Rawdon was not found in Fairfield, and his mother is no where to be found. Next, Janine goes to the treasury, and discovers that the room is all but empty.

Next, Janine and Penrod go to Rawdon's room, and breaking down the door they find nothing to help them locate the missing treasure. Janine leaves with five men, and wagons for the missing money, still wearing the red velvet over-sized dress. They first stop in Fairfield is a tavern, and they stop in three more afterward, but no one recalls having seen Rawdon. Finally, they find a young girl who had seen him carrying large bundles - even larger than usual. He was fidgety as well, she adds. When he was sure no one was watching, he went into the old church ruins which sit on top of the catacombs. She describes the way there, and Janine and the guards arrive, finding the way in easily. There are two rooms filled with tiers of remains and five more doors leading still further in. Janine directs the men to split up and explore room by room. There is no trace of Rawdon or the missing money, and Janine wishes Wulfgar were there with his wolf like senses to track them.

Chapters Sixteen and Seventeen Analysis

Captain Penrod hands his sword to Janine, kneeling in the dirt and telling her he accepts responsibility for the attack but Janine gives it back, telling him that better vigilance is all that is required. Captain Penrod informs her that Rawdon, as his mother's sole source of support, takes food to her regularly. In fact, his wagon had been particularly well laden that morning. She has them summoned. Then Janine walks to the head table and as there are no places available to sit, she asks a servant to move the throne over to the table and has it placed in the center opposite the royal family. When Kenric leans forward to tell her that she is sitting on the serving side of the table, she



insists that she isn't - they are. Janine asks about the crown the barbarians asked for, and though the royal family claims not to know where it is, Deming volunteers that King Cynric gave it to a dragon as a peace offering. Janine hopes that by offering the barbarians the return of their crown, they will forgive the death of King Grimbold - particularly since he was killed during the commission of a crime. Janine gets cleaned up, and this time gets clothing from Lady Bliss, who is several sizes larger than Janine. Still, Lady Bliss is so thrilled with the honor of providing a dress that Janine is unable to discourage her. Captain Penrod arrives with the news that Rawdon could not be found in Fairfield. In fact, there was no one in the town that fit the description of Rawdon's mother. He tells Janine that Rawdon has been going to his mothers for about three months, which is coincidentally the same length of time that they have been having difficulty being paid. Janine has Penrod take her to the treasury which to their surprise is completely empty.

They check Rawdon's room, but are not surprised to find no trace of the money or him. News spreads quickly, and Penrod fears the guards will seek employment elsewhere. He promises to stay, and ask the men to give her a day or two more. Meanwhile, Janine hopes to find Rawdon and recover the money. She promises bonuses to anyone who stays. She takes a handful of guards and wagons in the hopes that she can recover at least what was taken that morning, and heads in the direction of Fairfield. At first, they question people with no luck. Then a tavern owner suggests that they offer money for information. Janine informs him that she is his new King, and that she will be the one deciding his taxes. He becomes much more accommodating, and directs them to a local busybody - his mother in law. A young girl finally admits to having seen Rawdon going into the old burned out church. Below, is a maze of catacombs where the township used to bury their dead, her mother tells them. They get directions, and have no trouble finding the entrance. They search the first two rooms, but there are several doors leading on, so Janine splits the guards up, and continues searching, but to no avail. There is no sign of the money or Rawdon. Janine finds herself wishing she'd brought Wulfgar with her. His wolf nose might have had more success.



Chapters Eighteen and Nineteen

Chapters Eighteen and Nineteen Summary

Janine returns to Shelby to convince Wulfgar to return with her. When she arrives, the guards don't recognize her and refuse her entry. She screams in sheer frustration until Sister Mary Ursula shows up. Janine is admitted with her. The guards have trouble raising the drawbridge and Janine goes back to them and the guard insists that it is stuck. They try several times before Janine does and is able to raise it. She goes in search of Wulfgar and he tells her to ask Abas, but she insists she needs his special talents. He closes the door, so she bangs again and this time thrusts the ring at him. Knowing it will compel him, he still cannot refuse it. She tells him first to protect her and go with her to Fairfield. The guards have trouble closing the drawbridge after they leave. Once they reach the catacombs, Janine tells the guards to rest while she and Wulfgar search. He changes easily, and after a long search, they discover Rawdon dead under a pile of debris. Climbing over the cave in, they find the treasure stacked against the wall. Using double arrows, Janine marks the return path so that the guards can come and retrieve the treasure. Once the route is marked, Janine asks Wulfgar to stay with the men and accompany the treasure back to the city. Janine again rides back alone, carrying one sack of gold to prove that she'd found it. Again the drawbridge resists raising for a short while. Penrod informs her that the messengers sent to the barbarians camp returned without their heads. Janine is exhausted and wants to sleep but the meeting of the magic users is already in progress so she joins them instead.

Queen Andreanna, Kenric, Abas and the three magic users are sitting in the Great Hall when she arrives. She asks the guards to send for the royal advisers. The Queen is introducing Janine with as much disgust as possible when Uldemar announces that 'she brings the stench of the dead with her'. He clarifies that she doesn't smell of the dead, but that her trip to the catacombs brought several hundred of them back with her. Deming and Sister Mary Ursula finally arrive. Attack on the castle by the barbarians seems imminent and Janine asks for advice. They discuss how best to deal with the dragon but between the bickering and exhaustion, Janine isn't able to think straight. She announces she will take a nap, but just then a guard rushes in to announce that they are under attack. Nigel Rasmussem sends a memo to his department heads, telling them that Giannine doesn't have much time left, and premature disconnection may be necessary likely causing an irreversible vegetative state.

Chapters Eighteen and Nineteen Analysis

Janine has the first searchers rest while the next set searches. She goes back to Shelby and with the help of the ring, manages to convince Wulfgar to return to the catacombs. Wulfgar is less than enthusiastic about going with Janine, and closes the door on her face, but equally determined, Janine knocks on the door again, and gives him the ring. The look on his face reveals his awareness that he is being compelled to do so, but



unable to help himself. She asks again that he come back with her to Fairfield and adds that he keep her from harm. When they reach the catacombs, Wulfgar and Janine search while the guards rest. Wulfgar changes into his wolf form, and after many seemingly random turns they come across Rawdon's body under a rockfall. Wulfgar climbs over easily and Janine follows into a room where the treasure is. Realizing that she can't leave the guards to bring the treasure home, she asks Wulfgar to stay as well, and he has no choice but to obey. Janine heads back to the city, taking a sack of gold home with her to prove to the guards that they'd found it. Penrod meets her to tell her that messengers she sent to the barbarians were sent back without their heads. The message was pretty clear. Too tired to cope with it, Janine tells Penrod that they will discuss it after she;s had some sleep, but when Penrod informs her that the meeting is already under way, Janine realizes that sleep will have to wait.

Janine goes into the Great Hall where the Queen, Abas and Kenric are sitting with the three magic users of the realm. The Queen impatiently instructs the guards to close the doors, but like the drawbridge, the door can't be closed right away. Abas gets up to help and using all of his might manages to break the huge oak doors without budging the hinges. Janine asks how she can get rid of them, as it is now apparent that they are preventing the drawbridge to close, as well as the doors to the Great Hall earlier. Uldemar tells her that they are simply bored. Deming tells her to forget about trying to retrieve their crown and concentrate on reinforcements for the castle instead. Still, when Uldemar offers to scry for the dragon, she agrees. Janine is unnerved by Uldemar's scrying, and the constant bickering around the table is making it impossible to think straight. She announces that she will have to get some sleep before she makes a decision, but before she can get out of the Great Hall, a guard comes rushing in to announce that they are under attack. In the real world, Nigel is worried, fearing they will have to disconnect Giannine which may result in irreversible brain damage.



Chapters Twenty;Twenty-One and Twenty-Two

Chapters Twenty;Twenty-One and Twenty-Two Summary

Kenric, Xenos and Abas run down the hall with Janine on their heels. Some of the thatched roofs are on fire, and guards are lugging buckets of water back and forth. Janine helps where she can until finally, a horn sounds and the enemy retreats, seemingly without reason. A single messenger is sent forward with a white flag to parley. He tells them that unless they return the crown, they will all be killed. First, however, they want Janine to hand over the man who killed King Grimbold. Janine assures Abas she won't turn him over. When the messenger repeats they will all die, the guards begin to chant Janine's name. The attack is temporarily halted as the enemy waits for nightfall. They go back inside to discuss their options. Each of the magic users have specialties they are willing to contribute, but each has its' drawbacks as well. Uldemar can reanimate the dead; Orielle is good with potions, and Xenos' specialty is the creation of artifacts. At that moment, Sister Mary Ursula arrives with the news that Wulfgar and the treasury are now with the barbarians.

A second messenger brings one of the guards forward as prisoner, who tells Janine and the others that Wulfgar had been asleep when they came upon the barbarians. The barbarians offers to trade Wulfgar for Janine who refuses to negotiate. The barbarian slits the throat of the guard and returns to his group. Penrod suggests that Janine get some rest before nightfall but she counters that they get the men fed while they can. Bandages soaked in a healing potion created by Orielle are brought up, and Kenric asks Orielle to find a tray of food for Janine. After eating, Janine quickly becomes feverish, and delirious - the same symptoms King Cynric had before he died. A fizziness comes over her again.

Janine wakes on the hill again. Now she wondered what had truly killed the King. She is introduced to Deming, meets her father, and at the shrine of Saint Bruce the Warrior Poet, she recites the Ode to Saint Bruce that she had

, Feordina ducks and whimpers as usual, but this time the sword swings down. In the real world, Nigel recognizes that Giannine may not have enough time for another attempt. Medical personnel and members of the press are there, but the media is unaware of the true nature of the issue. He is trying to remain calm, but his heart is heavy.



Chapters Twenty;Twenty-One and Twenty-Two Analysis

Janine follows Kenric, Xenos and Abas outside. A flaming arrow is the first of many launched over the wall, sending Xenos back to the safety of the inside. Janine helps by bringing baskets of arrows up from downstairs. When at one point she loses her balance and almost falls from the wall top, it is Kenric who reaches out and catches her. He grins at her, turning her knees to jelly and she finds herself wishing that he weren't her half brother, or for that matter, that he was real. When the barbarians send a messenger forward, he tells them that they want both the crown, and the man who killed King Grimbold, or they will kill everyone, Janine refuses, and the guards begin chanting her name. Penrod explains that the men admired her courage and respected the fact that she fought along side them. The enemy pulls back out of range until nightfall leaving Penrod and his men to tend to the wounded and prepare for the next assault. Janine asks Uldemar if he can contribute anything, and is surprised when he tells her he can reanimate the dead. They would still remain dead however. Orielle's specialty is potions and she offers up one that would give a man or woman great strength, excepting that the effects only last one hour and then the person who had taken it would be as weak as a kitten for up to two hours. Xenos' specialty is the creation of artifacts. He claims that the barbarians hold him in high esteem and he has no reason to worry about the stability of their walls. Irritated, he walks through the wall and vanishes. Before Janine can do anything, Sister Mary Ursula arrives with the news that Wulfgar and the treasury are now being held by the barbarians.

The barbarians send a second messenger, and Penrod requests Janine's presence on the north battlement. The barbarian offers a trade of Wulfgar for Janine, and the guards roar in protest. Janine refuses to negotiate and the barbarian immediately slits the throat of the guard. She asks Penrod if he had seen Xenos leaving the castle, but he hadn't, and suggests that she get some rest before nightfall. Instead, she suggests that they get the men fed while they can. She asks Penrod if he had seen Xenos leaving the castle, but he hadn't. Food is brought up to the guards who stay on the wall, and Janine dispenses Mead, earning their gratitude. Orielle sits with Janine while she eats the venison stew she brought her, and shortly afterward, she begins to feel ill. She suffers fever and delirium, and the fizzy feeling returns.

Janine starts over again, this time waking on the hill angry and impatient. She gets to her feet and screams with frustration as she thinks about the number of times she has already done this, and the variety of people who have betrayed her. She goes down to meet Deming, say goodbye to her father and heads to the shrine once more. She is beginning to suspect that any original poem will be accepted, and recites an Ode to Saint Bruce. She learns soon after that Saint Bruce is more discerning as his blade returns her to the hillside. Meanwhile, Nigel is preparing for the worst. He writes his department heads to tell them that she likely only has this one chance left, and the idea leaves him feeling sick inside.



Chapters Twenty-Three; Twenty-Four and Twenty-Five

Chapters Twenty-Three; Twenty-Four and Twenty-Five Summary

Janine offers Saint Bruce a haiku, and at the castle insists that Rawdon accompany her to meet her family. Afterward she asks Kenric to walk with her and Rawdon. They step into the courtyard, and Captain Penrod approaches with the poacher. Janine asks Rawdon if he is an advocate of the strict laws and he admits the law is the law, but when Janine presses him, he concedes there could be room for compassion. This time, she consigns the poacher to be put to work for a month to pay for his crime. She tells Rawdon she believes the guards should get a better salary and Penrod reveals that they haven't been paid in full for the last several months. Rawdon admits he moved the treasury for safe keeping. Kenric demands to know where and Rawdon tells him that the money is in Fairfield. Janine agrees to show mercy if he reveals where the treasury is, and resigns his post. She puts him in charge of raising pigs, and he drops to his knees in gratitude. She also suggests the guard be doubled because of the barbarian unrest. Then she assigns Deming to count the remaining treasure, and arranges for the stolen money to be returned. Walking across the courtyard, she sees a shadow behind the wagon and yells out a warning, pushing Kenric out of harms' way.

Yelling prisoners should be kept alive, Janine avoids arrows until King Grimbold himself is led out from behind the wagon. They introduce each other and Grimbold tells Janine about the crown made for his people by Xenos. Janine invites him in to eat and Penrod again offers his sword to her, embarrassed that she could have been killed. She tells him she has the utmost faith in him, and he thanks her. So does Kenric for the diligence that saves his life. Grimbold sits himself down beside the Queen, openly admiring her as Janine introduces them. Again the magic users are sent for after Deming reveals that the crown was given to a dragon, in the hopes that they can help find it. Grimbold tells Janine he will give her two days to return the crown, during which there will be a truce. After lunch, Janine accompanies Rawdon to Fairfield to get the treasure, after first changing into a page's uniform. Rawdon led them right to the treasure and Janine watches as it is brought out. Then, leaving Penrod to finish, she heads back hoping to get some sleep. The guards at the castle recognize her this time and again have trouble raising the drawbridge behind her. She mutters hello to the ghosts as one pulls her hair while another pokes her in the ribs.

The ghosts prove to be a nuisance for everyone in the castle, no one getting much sleep. Janine chooses to continue wearing the page's garb. A servant brings fresh bread and honey, and after talking to Kenric and Sister Mary Ursula, Janine sits down with Sir Deming (the only choice for adviser in her mind) and they begin what becomes hours of advice and discussion about every detail Janine can think of when it came to running a



kingdom. After they'd had a midday meal, Kenric comes and tells them that Mother is meeting with the magic users. Janine asks Deming to find Sister Mary Ursula and Captain Penrod to join them in this meeting. Deming leaves and Janine goes with Kenric to the Great Hall.

Chapters Twenty-Three; Twenty-Four and Twenty-Five Analysis

Janine works her way back to the castle. This time, she insists that Rawdon accompany her inside to meet her family, knowing that if she keeps him with her, he will be unable to take the rest of the treasury out of the castle. She asks them both about her father, making conversation until Penrod approaches with the poacher. This time, she doesn't just let him go. Instead, she asks Rawdon how he feels about leniency if the criminal is remorseful. Rawdon is tongue tied but manages to agree. Janine consigns the young criminal to a month of work and Penrod and Kenric are impressed with how she handles the situation. Janine asks Penrod if he or the guards have any issues she should know about. Penrod tells her that the guards are not being paid in full, and Kenric's surprised look goes to Rawdon who immediately reveals that he moved a portion of the money for safekeeping when the King got sick. Kenric shakes him until he admits the money is in Fairfield, and he swears he only took a little of it. Rawdon is put in Penrod's custody while Kenric and Janine go to see how much of the treasury remains. Sir Deming is put in charge of counting the remainder, after which point the guards are to be paid, she decrees, along with a bonus for the delay. Arrangements are made to retrieve the gold and the guard is doubled to counter the barbarian's unrest. Walking through the courtyard, Janine sees a shadow beside the wagon and pushes Kenric to safety, yelling an alert.

Kenric helps Janine to her feet as King Grimbald is brought out from behind the wagon as the only survivor. He identifies himself as the King of the North and Janine introduces herself, telling him she is due to be crowned King in two days time. Janine's calm demeanor and willingness to listen to Grimbald has a settling effect and she tells him she regrets the death of his people. She adds that now he should know that he can approach her directly. They go into the Great Hall to eat, and Kenric escorts Janine on his arm, much to the surprise of the Queen. Grimbald takes an instant liking to the Queen, and throws compliments her way that include her ability to still bear children; her character after she supported the behavior of her late husband; and her refined manners that have him treating her with his best manners. He flirts with her and Sister Mary Ursula shamelessly throughout lunch, and comes to an agreement with Janine regarding the crown. After lunch, Janine changes and then she goes with Rawdon and Penrod to Fairfield for the treasure. She leaves before it is all loaded, hoping to get back to sleep for a while, but when the drawbridge won't close behind her, she knows the ghosts have once again followed her back.

Janine gave up trying to sleep at dawn. Intermittent moaning, wailing, door slamming, laughter and more kept her and everyone else from sleeping. A dress had been delivered and Janine had decided that the page's outfit was better suited to the kinds of



activities she had been involved in lately, despite the disapproval it garners from Sir Deming. Janine tells him that she is looking for advice, but not really in matters of wardrobe. They begin to discuss everything Janine can think of that she will have to know about running the kingdom. They talk about all aspects of taxation, discussed all of the kingdom's laws, made plans for a trade fair and schools, discussed road improvements and more. Then Janine sends riders to go from town to town in the hopes that the changes would settle peasant unrest. When Kenric arrives, Deming and Janine have long had their midday meal, and were just finishing up, He tells her that Mother is meeting with the magic users and Janine expresses her appreciation that Mother chose to let her know that they were there. Of course, that hadn't been the intention, but attitude is everything. She has Deming find Sister Mary Ursula and Captain Penrod to attend and advise her, and then with Kenric, heads for the Great Hall.



Chapters Twenty-Six and Twenty-Seven

Chapters Twenty-Six and Twenty-Seven Summary

Janine crosses the Great Hall ignoring the barbs being sent by the Queen and introduces herself to Orielle, then Uldemar and Xenos. Uldemar reveals that Janine brought the ghosts in and Janine deflects the issue, telling her she has a plan for them later. Deming returns and shortly afterward, Sister Mary Ursula and King Grimbold make an entrance. Janine brings some sense of order to the meeting, and with contributions from Xenos, who offers the use of his seven-league boots, and Orielle, who offers a potion to increase stamina and strength, Janine is beginning to believe she might be able to accomplish this quest. She has little choice as Grimbold will accept nothing less than his crown returned.

Janine declares that she will depart as soon as Orielle is finished making the potion. After Grimbold leaves, Deming tells Janine that she will never slay the dragon and suggests that she kill Grimbold, and have their army take on the barbarians. When Janine objects, citing how dishonorable it would be, he tells her that she can take or leave his advice. When no help is forthcoming from either Deming or Sister Mary Ursula, Janine goes in search of Rawdon who suggests that she approach Xenos again for an item that might help her in this situation. She goes back to him and explains that if the dragon eats her, he will not get his special boots back. Xenos relents and tells her his father has an item that would be of use. It is a hat that allows the wearer to slip between moment of time. It occurs to her that the crown might also be magical, and when she asks, she learns that it is a Midas crown. The wearer can only use it once, but whatever he or she touches will turn to gold. Xenos has no idea whether the dragon has used the crown, but dragons love gold, he adds. Uldemar offers to help her get to Xenos's father's place by turning himself into a horse and carrying her, and then offers to help her to calculate the steps necessary to get to Old Hag Mountain. His price for his services is twenty-five gold pieces. She leaves Kenric in charge and riding Uldemar, who now is a handsome bay, she sets off. When the drawbridge won't close behind them, she realizes the ghosts have come along.

Chapters Twenty-Six and Twenty-Seven Analysis

Janine goes into the Great Hall with confidence. She has already done this many times before, and no longer is concerned about the royal family. She goes straight to the three magic users and introduces herself. Uldemar comments on the ghosts that are following Janine, and she announces that she has plans to remove them later. Then, Deming returns and tells her that Penrod will not be joining them, stating that he supports any decisions made by their future king. Sister Mary Ursula arrives with King Grimbold on her arm, and he immediately insinuates himself beside the Queen. She clenches her teeth and demands that Wulfgar do something about it but he shrugs and grins. With Orielle on his lap he is unable or unwilling to come to her aid. Janine returns to the issue



of Grimbold's crown, and learns that the dragon is seven days travel away, however Xenos reveals that he has a pair of seven-league boots which will allow her to make the journey much quicker. There is of course always a danger that a step will take her leagues past the intended destination. Janine asks Orielle if she has any potions that might help, and she offers one that will increase a person's stamina and strength, although it only lasts an hour - but the cost for her potion is Wulfgar's hand in marriage. He agrees and the Queen is livid. Grimbold keeps trying to calm her down, to no avail. Grimbold is set on getting the crown back, so Janine must face the dragon, despite the general consensus that she will either be killed, or panic and run for leagues.

As the room clears, Deming is more willing to speak freely. He warns her that the dragon is many times her size, and breathes fire, telling her that the likelihood of success is very slim. As her adviser, he recommends that she kill Grimbold instead, and send their army to subdue the barbarians once and for all. Janine thinks that plan is dishonest and underhanded. She says so, and Deming reminds her that she pays him for his advice, which is what he gave her. What she does with it after that is up to her. Having little success with Deming's advice, she asks Sister Mary Ursula what she thinks, but her head is wrapped up in Wulfgar and Orielle's planned marriage and what she might wear to such an event. As a last resort, she goes to Rawdon for his suggestions. Rawdon is still grateful that Janine was as lenient with him as she was, and is willing to help her in any way he can. He suggests that she talk to Xenos again, who can likely provide her with an artifact of some kind that can help her. She goes back to Xenos and using the boots as leverage, she asks if there is anything else that might help her. Xenos reluctantly admits there is, but his father is in possession of it. A hat that enables the wearer to step through moments in time unseen would certainly be worth having. As an afterthought, she asks him about the crown, and he admits that it also has power, able to turn anything into gold. It can only be used once per owner however. Uldemar is not without suggestions either. He offers to take Janine to Xenos's father's house by turning himself into a horse, and once there, he offers to help calculate the steps necessary to reach the dragon's lair. Soon, Janine, riding the handsome bay, sets off across the drawbridge. She can hear the guards struggle to get it up again, and realizes the ghosts have decided to come along.



Chapters Twenty-Eight and Twenty-Nine

Chapters Twenty-Eight and Twenty-Nine Summary

Uldemar had no trouble finding Xenos's father's house, despite his blindness, having seen it in the scrying glass. The house sat on a hill and when Uldemar and Janine tried to walk up the path, they were held back by unseen forces. Janine notices that the flagstones are different colors and the walk appears to be color coded. As long as Janine stays on the same color as the stone she started on, she is able to go forward. It takes three times before she discovers that the cream colored stones will get her to the house. A child answers the door and Janine asks for Xenos's father. He says it is him and gets perturbed when Janine doesn't believe him. He invites her in and asks her to stand on a large red X. He tells her that he will ask her three riddles and if she answers them properly, she can have the hat. If she answers incorrectly, he claims she can try as many times as she wants again. Though suspicious, she agrees. She gets the first one wrong. The floor under her opens up and she slides out of control through a black tunnel until she reaches the far side of the hill. Some of the ghosts ride along and Janine can hear them call out 'Wheee' as they went along. It takes her three times before she gets them right and he hands her a knitted ski cap that is the color of slush. He tells her how the hat works and once again she rides the slide outside. More ghosts ride with her each time.

Uldemar calculates the exact steps required to get to a flat area between the base and the summit of Old Hag Mountain, and Janine decides to leave immediately. She says 'seven leagues' and steps forward. Step after step she takes safely and then finds she has arrived. She leaves a pile of sticks to show where she started out, and begins to climb. It isn't long before she is thinking about Orielle's potion, knowing it would make the climb much easier. As she climbs, she realizes that the ghosts are no longer with her. It amuses her to think of them playing on the slide at Xenos's father's house. Janine can hear the dragon throughout the night, and the next morning uses Orielle's potion to finish the climb. In a moment, the potion kicks in and she makes her way up easily. She swings up onto the ledge with the hat in her teeth so that she can use it at a moment's notice.

Chapters Twenty-Eight and Twenty-Nine Analysis

Uldemar carries Janine easily, having no difficulty finding Xenos's father's house based solely on what he 'saw' as he used his scrying glass. When they reach the house, Uldemar returns to his human form, but neither is able to get up the path until Janine realizes that the walkway is color coded. The young boy that answers the door when she finally figures it out claims to be Xenos's father, and at first she doesn't believe him, but the cigar in his hand is a bit of a giveaway. He asks her to stand on a large red X. She complies and he tells her that if she wants the hat, she will have to answer three riddles correctly. When she answers the first one incorrectly, the floor under her



disappears and she slides out to the far side of the hill. Unamused, but needing the hat, she returns, and it takes three tries before she slides out triumphant. Each time she goes down the slide, more and more ghosts join in, enjoying the ride.

Uldemar cautions her over and over again to walk in a straight line, and to take normal sized steps when she is walking in the boots. She promises him she'll be fine, although deep down she is concerned. Still, she takes the first step and finds herself somewhere else, standing in front of a lake and grateful that Uldemar's calculations were correct. Another step and yet another and she soon finds herself part way up Old Hag Mountain just as Uldemar said she would. She climbs as far as she can, listening to the sounds of the dragon until morning. Then she swallows Orielle's potion and climbs the rest of the way to the top to find her face to face with the dragon.



Chapters Thirty and Thirty-One

Chapters Thirty and Thirty-One Summary

Napping, the dragon doesn't move as Janine makes her way behind it to the second cave where piles of treasure are. She brushes against a statue and though she stops it from falling, the crown on its head falls waking the dragon. She crouches behind a chest, and watches it approach, sniffing the air and when it turns to look at her, she jams the magic hat on her head. The dragon doesn't move. She starts counting to keep track of the brief time she has and begins looking in earnest for Grimbold's crown. Janine sees two rocks of gold near the front of the cave and knows that the dragon tried unsuccessfully to turn the mountain into gold. She feels a breeze in her hair and realizes the hat has gone back to its owner. There on the ledge, she sees the crown that the dragon had been sleeping with and grabs it just as the dragon turns. Flame sizzles her back and without even looking down, she turns and says 'seven leagues' and steps off into thin air.

Her first step takes her onto someone's thatched roof. She quickly repeats and walks before her feet go through and one more step after that completes three sides of a square. One more step would put her at the foot of Old Hag Mountain. Then she just collapses. Orielle's potion has worn off, and as she had warned, Janine is too weak to move at all. The next two hours pass by one second at a time until finally she can move her right arm. Finally, she can get up, and she walks until the sun is almost overhead before taking another seven leagued step. The mountains in the distance look like the right ones, and she tries to retrace the directions Uldemar had given her. One step has her treading water, and she manages to say the words and take a step which lands her in a treetop. The tree is barren, struck by lightning, and Janine remembers that Uldemar had used such a tree as a landmark to find Xenos's father's house. She hikes until she sees it, and Uldemar grazing in the front lawn. She calls out to him. A group of woodsmen block their path as they travel, one of them the poacher's father, who thanks her for sparing his son and then warns her that some peasants are planning to take over the castle, advising she stay away. Instead, she and Uldemar head for the castle with all haste, Uldemar almost galloping into trees in his haste. As they near, an arrow grazes Uldemar's rump and he stumbles. They clatter across the drawbridge and Janine dismounts turning back. She calls out to the ghosts who followed them home again, appealing to their love of family. She asks them to rise up and help protect what is theirs. The peasants on the drawbridge begin falling into the ditch and their own weapons rise up to beat them about the head and shoulders. The men behind slow down and as the peasants retreat, her men cheer. Grimbold's men approach and when Janine holds up the crown, they cheer even more. Then someone screams, pointing into the air where the dragon can be seen approaching.



Chapters Thirty and Thirty-One Analysis

The dragon is so large that Janine almost turns around and takes a seven league step out of there. She carefully makes her way around him to a secondary cave that is filled with treasure and it occurs to her that she may never find the crown among such sheer volume. She finds a crown, but knows from Grimbold's description it is not the one, but she places it on the head of a statue just in case. She accidentally brushes against it and the dragon is wakened by the sound of the crown hitting the ground. She hides behind a chest as the dragon sniffs around looking for her, and when it finds her hiding place she quickly pulls the magic hat onto her head. Counting, she looks for the crown. Towards the front of the cave, she notices two gold rocks and realizes that the dragon had probably tried to turn his entire mountain to gold, but it hadn't worked. She realizes the magic hat is gone just as she spies the real crown, left where the dragon had been lying. She grabs it as the dragon turns and without a second thought says 'seven leagues' and steps off the cliff into the air.

She tries to take steps that will make a square, bringing her at least close to where she can find her way back. When she has made the third turn, having stepped first onto a thatched roof, and once into a lake, she runs out of Orielle's potion and collapses where she stands, unable to take another step. It is two long hours before she can move her arm, and then slowly the rest comes back. She walks for a time, and then steps in the direction of the mountain again. Seeing what she believes is Old Hag Mountain in the distance, she tries to retrace her steps to Uldemar and finally takes a step that has her landing on the top of a burned out tree. She remembers him using the tree as a landmark, and a short time later she sees the house that Xenos's father lives in. Uldemar, in his horse persona, is grazing in the yard, and she calls out to him. Xenos's father steps out to angrily suggest that she take her ghosts back with her, and it isn't long before she feels the crush of them around her again. She rides Uldemar back toward the castle, but is stopped by a band of woodsmen. Seeing their bows and arrows she remembers how they killed her once, and contemplates using the boots to seven league her way out of there, but she wouldn't leave Uldemar like that. One of the woodsmen approaches and after confirming who she is, he thanks her for the clemency she gave his son the poacher. He approved of her assigning him a month of labor, warns her not to return to the castle. He tells her that some of the peasants are planning an uprising. With all haste, she, Uldemar and the ghosts return to the castle just in time to cross the drawbridge before the renegades. Unable to raise it with the ghosts however, it seems as though they will be overrun, but Janine appeals to the ghosts to help save the land that their families still inhabit. They rise to her plea for help and soon have the peasants on the run. Her men cheer, as do Grimbold's men when they see the crown. A scream turns their attention to the sky where a dragon is fast approaching.



Chapters Thirty-Two and Thirty-Three

Chapters Thirty-Two and Thirty-Three Summary

He lands on a parapet, and sends a burst of flame over their heads in warning, telling Janine that seven league boots are not impossible to track. Angry that the covenant with King Cynric has been broken, he promises to eat Janine first as he picks her up. Janine waits for the fizziness that sends her back and then realizes there is a way out. She puts the crown on her head and touches the dragon's claw. He stops moving. She peeks out from eyes clenched shut and is almost blinded by the sheer amount of gold. With help from Penrod, she gets down and hands the crown to Grimbold. In the Great Hall her coronation feast is laid out. Grimbold displays the crown, attracting the Queen's attention while Janine returns the seven league boots to Xenos. Kenric hands her a glass of honey water, and two steps later, her knees give out. Kenric kneels beside her. She asks him how he could poison her again and he looks genuinely confused. He assures her he didn't and tells her to give his mother the ring. Then he instructs her to tell the Queen to treat her fairly and not incite her sons against her. He tells her to ask for the crown. It is put on her head and Deming proclaims "Long live King Janine" as the world around her dissolves.

The next thing Janine knows, the receptionist is welcoming her back. Kenric is still holding onto her and for a moment she wonders if the receptionist has been sucked into the game as well. The person she thinks is Kenric introduces himself as Nigel Rasmussem, and Janine is stunned to discover he is only sixteen years of age. The receptionist asks if she wants to rest before her grandmother comes to get her, and Gianinne admits that sounds great. She asks Nigel to stay, and he pulls up a chair. He tells her that she was in the game for almost an hour and a half, and that technicians on both coasts as well as Japan, England and the Ukraine were following her progress. After Nigel sits with her for a bit, talking to her about the game and the choices she made, the receptionist returns to tell her that a man claiming to be her father is there. She shows Gianinne the drivers' license she'd asked him for, and Gianinne confirms it is him. Then she lets Nigel help her up as she waits for her father.

Chapters Thirty-Two and Thirty-Three Analysis

When the dragon lands, he spews out a mouthful of flame over their head and announces that he can track seven league boots. He tells her she dishonored the covenant he had with the King, and now, to pay for that, he will have their kingdom, beginning with her. He scoops her up and all Janine can think of is the hope that the fizzy part kicks in before she feels him roast or bite her. Then she realizes that she doesn't have to die. She quickly puts the Midas crown on her head, and touches a claw on the foot that holds her. Instantly, all movement in the dragon stops. She peeks through mostly closed eyes and the shine that reflects off the dragon makes her think at first that he is spitting fire at her. When no heat accompanies it, she looks again. The



men are cheering and with help from Penrod, she manages to climb down. She returns the crown to Grimbald, and his men cheer her as well. They go inside where a feast is laid out and Janine sees a crown on a pillow sitting on the crown. The Queen is lured away when she sees Grimbald with the crown, gushing about how beautiful it is, and Kenric hands her a glass of honey water. She only manages to take a couple of steps before her legs give out and her head starts to swim. Incredulous, she looks at Kenric and asks her what she did wrong. Why did he poison her? Confused, he tries to reassure her that he didn't, but Janine begins to cry in frustration. He tells her to give the ring to the Queen and instruct her to be fair and quit plotting against her. Then he tells her to ask for the crown which is placed on her head. Deming calls out 'long live King Janine', and the room is gone.

When Janine comes to, Kenric is still holding her. She can smell popcorn, which strikes her as odd, and when she opens her eyes, she sees the receptionist who welcomes her back. She turns to confirm he is still holding her, and he tells her he isn't Kenric. He introduces himself as Nigel Rasmussem. Gianinne insists that is impossible as she has seen photos of Nigel and he is an older man who is short, round and wears glasses. Nigel tells her that the person she is describing is his uncle David. Nigel used his likeness believing he would come across as more credible if he did. Nigel admits that he is only sixteen and had started the company two years previously. He tells her that his parents, despite his genius with computers, regulate his time with them, so to be close, he works the concession on weekends and after school. He sits down with her at her request, and tells her she was in the game for eighty seven minutes. People from around the world followed her progress he tells her, and in fact, she had done things in the game that he hadn't thought possible. Her choices were unusual, he admits, and tells her that trusting Kenric is almost always a bad choice in the game. He fashioned the character after himself, and is grateful that he had the chance to be a good guy for a change. She questions why he helped her in the end, and he explains that the game is meant to be fun. If a player cries, the characters immediately become more helpful. The receptionist returns telling Gianinne that her father has arrived, and Gianinne is stunned that he would come to her in person. Nigel helps her sit up, although she doesn't need the help anymore, and they wait for him to come in.



Characters

Giannine Bellisario (aka Janine de St. Jehan)

Giannine has just turned fourteen years old. Birthdays depress Giannine and put her in a mood that warns others not to mess with her. Her father's secretary called her to ask her what kind of gift certificate she wanted from her father this year, and she quickly told her 'Rasmussem Gaming Center' which is an arcade that has virtual reality, total immersion game rooms and concessions. Giannine's mother lives in New York to suit her employer, so Giannine only sees her for one weekend a month and longer during summer vacation when she comes to visit Giannine and her mother who looks after Giannine. Her mother and father divorced when she was five - her father demanding a paternity test before admitting Giannine was his daughter.

In the game 'Heir Apparent', Giannine takes on the persona of Janine de St. Jehan - sheepherder. She is competent with her flock, able to milk, shear, castrate or help with breech births. Janine was raised in a small village named St. Jehan. She has an older dog named Dusty and in the game, her mother's name is Solita. Sir Deming arrives in St. Jehan, and takes great pleasure in telling her that her parents are not her real parents and that she is the product of a serving woman and King Cynric.

As Janine, Giannine learns confidence, and poise while maintaining her personality within the game. Rather than adopt a Princess demeanor in manner and dress, she chooses to clothe herself in a page's outfit, and work directly with her subjects and the royal guard. She soon earns their respect after she not only recovers the castle's treasury, but ensures that the guards are paid along with a bonus for their loyalty and patience. She retrieves the gold herself instead of sending other to do her bidding and she takes on the dragon herself as well, instead of sending a knight, a warrior or one of her half brothers in her stead. Slowly, she manages to turn even the most negative of her opposition and in the end, they cheer her with enthusiasm and respect.

Nigel Rasmussen

Owner of Rasmussem Gaming Center, he warns Giannine after CPOC breaks into the building. Nigel is a sixteen year old young man who started Rasmussem Enterprises at the age of fourteen. He explains his brilliance with computers as having a direct correlation to the name his parents gave him. His world headquarters for Rasmussem Enterprises is in Rochester, New York. His parents regulate the time he is allowed to spend with computers so to keep his hand in, he takes a job at his own concession stand after school and weekends.

Kenric, King Cynric's youngest son is modeled directly after Nigel, and is usually considered to be a bad character and one not to be trusted. When Gianinne puts her



trust into that character, Nigel is surprised and impressed by her ingenuity and originality.

Nigel is devastated by the damage done to his gaming center by the protesters, but most of all, he is horrified by the possibility that one of his clients could actually suffer permanent brain injury as a result. He stays with her, giving her every advantage he can in the game, and communicating with all of his department heads around the world in an effort to think of something that would help him to safely extract her from the game she is stuck in. When she manages to complete the game, his relief is boundless. He sits by her bedside, holding her, and then continues to remain, holding her hand as she slowly comes back to herself all the way.

Uldemar

Uldemar is very tall and has no hair on his head. His eyes are completely white, resembling ping pong balls in that they have no pupils or irises and are totally white. Uldemar keeps bringing Janine's attention to the fact that she smells of the dead. Not only does she smell of the dead, but she carries the dead with her, he announces. He tells Janine that she likely brought several hundred dead with her when she returned from the catacombs. Uldemar scrys for the dragon for Janine, telling her that it is in the southern province in a cave.

Xenos

Xenos likes to dress in a monk style brown road with the hood pulled up. He gives the initial impression that he is shy. His ears are hairy and pointed and he carries a pocketful of live centipedes and keeps popping them into his mouth as he sits through the meeting. His body appears to be as hairy as his ears, Janine discovers as she accidentally grabs his ankle when she loses her balance under the table. When he upsets Orielle with one of his comments, she removes his ear magically and lays it on the table. Later, it is put back on, but upside down.

Xenos is the magic user that made the barbarian's crown which was later unfairly won by King Cynric and then given to the dragon who was ravaging the area. Xenos has a voice that is reminiscent of fingernails on a chalkboard. He is reluctant to do so, but finally admits that he has seven-league boots that would get her to the dragon more efficiently. With further prodding, he admits that the crown he made for King Brecc the Slayer is actually a Midas crown, allowing the wearer one opportunity only to turn the first thing they touch after putting it on to gold. He also admits that his father has possession of a magic hat that allows the wearer to slip between moments in time for a short time only.



Orielle

Orielle is a natural beauty. She is coordinated, polished and gorgeous. Orielle's specialty is potions. She had a troubled and difficult childhood. Her father had run out on them when he had seen that she was marked with the pentagram on her palm that identified her as a witch. Her mother tried to drown her when she was only seven years of age, and from then on she was raised in the gutter. She is well versed in matters of betrayal and deception, and knows how it feels to be used. Janine earns her respect by plunging into her new life head first, without shirking duty or drama, and without attempting to use her femininity to advance her cause.

Captain Penrod

Captain Penrod is the Captain of the guards. He is one of the guards that arrested the young poacher, and in one of Janine's lifetimes, kills her for freeing the poacher and showing weakness in Penrod's mind. Captain Penrod is responsible for one of Janine's deaths, having stabbed her with a knife. He and his guards believed that she was too weak to rule their kingdom after Janine chooses to set a poacher free rather than kill him or cut off his hand. In later attempts, Janine realizes that Penrod and his men have not been fully paid for some time, and investigation reveals that Counselor Rawdon has been stealing from the treasury for several weeks. Janine rectifies the wages, including a bonus to the men for their patience, and further earns their respect when the barbarians attack and she spends her time hauling arrows to the guards on the battlements rather than hiding inside with the Queen.

Once Janine wins Captain Penrod over, he is more than helpful, protecting her and escorting her when necessary. She shows great trust in him and he rewards her with the loyalty of himself and his men.

Prince Wulfgar

The first born son to King Cynric, Wulfgar was educated elsewhere and is described as having returned with some exotic ideas. Wulfgar is the only one of the three sons who has facial hair, sporting a goatee that Janine thinks looks sexy. Prince Wulfar returns to the castle with much more than just exotic ideas. He is able to change himself at will into a wolf. In one of Janine's earlier lives in the game, he uses his wolf alter ego to kill her in the garden maze. In yet another life, Janine engages his specific talents as a wolf to help her to locate the treasure in the catacombs. He does so, but only after she insists he take the magic ring Janine has and swears to keep her safe. When Janine arranges to go to the dragon's lair to retrieve the barbarians Midas crown, she requires help from the magic users in the realm. Orielle, whose specialty is potions, offers to create a strength potion for her, but in payment she wants Wulfgar as her husband. Wulfgar agrees.



Prince Abas

Abas is the second son, who Sir Deming describes as having incredible prowess physically, in the classical sense of the expression. Abas has the appearance of having just emerged from a Hercules movie of old. He has large, bulging muscles that are more than obvious in an outfit that was made mostly out of leather and metal studs. He has a healthy, bronzed appearance, with skin that is toned and slick. Abas sees himself as a muscle man and is inordinately proud of his physical prowess. He can be distracted from just about anything simply by asking him for details about a battle or contest of some kind. Prince Abas and Orielle conspire to poison Janine in one of her lifetimes, Orielle pretending to be her friend.

Prince Kenric

Kenric is the third born son to King Cynric and is overly interested in the magical arts. Kenric is created as one of the game's bad guys, but Janine, through a process of elimination, ends up trusting him and by doing so manages to win the game. Kenric is modeled after Nigel himself. In her first attempt at the game, he stops the Queen from ordering Janine's death when he reminds them that she has been seen entering the castle by many people already.

Kenric has dark hair and his eyes are light. In the game, he often wears black which either symbolizes his state of mourning over the loss of his father; the fact that he looks good in black; or the fact that it is a game hint that he is usually considered to be a bad guy.

Counselor Rawdon

Wearing a crushed velvet suit, Counselor Rawdon is who is waiting for Princess Janine when she arrives at the castle. He is gray haired, and greets her with all of the decorum a Princess should be awarded, despite her rags and need for a bath that had so offended Sir Deming. He escorts her to The Great Hall where the rest of the royal family is waiting.

Janine learns that Counselor Rawdon has been systematically cleaning out the treasury, taking the wealth a wagon load at a time to the catacombs near Fairfield. He manages to do this without arousing too much suspicion by claiming he is the sole provider for his aging mother in that town. When Janine catches him, rather than put him to death, she puts him in charge of the pigs until he can redeem himself.

Sister Mary Ursula

Sister Mary Ursula is a self proclaimed Sister of the Sisterhood of One. She is about seventy years of age, and is against the use of magic in all forms, believing that it



disrupts the harmonies of the cosmos. Sister Mary Ursula is barely sane, constantly quoting things that make no sense until afterward at which point they could almost be deemed useful information.

Sir Deming

Janine first meets Sir Deming when he comes to the village of St. Jehan to find her. He has come on a horse that has never been asked to plow anything, and between the two of them, they had enough gold trim to successfully feed the citizens of St. Jehan for a year. He avoids contact with children and chickens as he holds a lacy handkerchief to his clean shaven face. He has a hat that is plumed with an ostrich feather and a distinct lack of manners. He delights in telling Janine that her parents are not her parents.

Sir Deming becomes one of Janine's most trusted advisers, although she doesn't always take his advice. One instance in which that was true was when he recommended that she kill King Grimbold and send the troops out after the barbarians instead of trying to retrieve the Midas crown from the dragon.

Queen Andreanna

Aged between forty and fifty years old, she sits on her throne with her crown on her head, and ignores Janine when she comes into the room. The Queen almost immediately suggests that they kill her. Throughout the game, and her many incarnations, the Queen is both condescending and unyielding.

King Cynric

King Cynric is Janine's biological father in Heir Apparent. When he dies, he appoints Janine as his heir because he doesn't trust the rest of the family. As it turns out, he was right to be suspicious of them as Janine discovers his death was a result of poison.

Feordina The Knitter

Feordina The Knitter was the Midwife who attended when Janine was born, and helped take her to the couple who was to raise her in secret. She also has the magic ring that Janine is told by Nigel Rasmussem that she will need. She wears clothing that she makes entirely from various kinds of vegetation including a two foot wide mushroom cap that she wears on her head for a cap. She lives in what appears to be a lean to, but is actually an entryway into a larger cave behind. Feordina is only about four feet tall and tells Janine that she hid the magic ring in Saint Bruce's armor. The proper owner can call it forth by reciting original poetry. If Saint Bruce likes and approves of the poem recited, the ring is relinquished.



Dexter

Janine's father in Heir Apparent, Dexter is a peat cutter. Janine discovers early in the game that she was adopted by Dexter and Solita.

Dusty

Janine's dog in Heir Apparent, Dusty is an older animal who has bursts of energy. He has floppy ears and is black and white.

David Rasmussem

David is Nigel's uncle. He is a short man with a round physical frame and glasses. Nigel uses his uncle's likeness as the front photo for Rasmussen Enterprises, thinking it would lend credibility to the young business and its younger owner.

Solita

Giannine's mother in Heir Apparent, Solita loves her daughter and her five siblings - two younger brothers and three younger sisters.

King Grimbold

King of the barbarians, Grimbold is determined to regain the crown taken from his father, King Tobrecan by King Cynric. The crown he is seeking to regain was fashioned by Xenos for the barbarians first Chieftain.

King Brecc the Slayer

The original King of the barbarians for whom the crown was made by Xenos and later won by less than scrupulous means by King Cynric.

Lady Cynthia

Lady in waiting who first loaned Janine a dress to wear after bathing.

Lady Bliss

The lady in waiting who loaned Janine a red velvet dress which was too large.



Ghosts

About a hundred restless spirits who follow Janine home from the catacombs when she goes to retrieve the money taken by Rawdon. They crowd the drawbridge, making it hard to bring up; cluster in doorways making it impossible to open or close them at times; and making all manner of noise at night from shrieking to rattling chian

Dragon

The dragon is found by Uldemar using his scrying glass. He was originally given the crown made for the barbarians by Xenos after King Cynric had won it by unfair means. Now, the dragon is in the southern province living in a cave on the Old Hag Mountaintop. Dragons like gold and this dragon was distracted by the crown endowed with the Midas spell, allowing it's owner to change one thing into gold simply by touching it. Though the crown is a single use magic item, the dragon is placated with it and leaves the villagers alone. Dragons are like cats, according to Xenos's father. They sleep in starts and fits at all hours of the day and night, so there is no time that is better than another to approach one.



Objects/Places

Rasmussem Gaming Center

The Center for which Giannine Bellisario has a fifty-dollar gift certificate given to her by her father for her fourteenth birthday. When she goes to play, CPOC strikes locking her in the game.

C.P.O.C. (Citizens to Protect Our Children)

This is the organization that pickets Rasmussem Gaming Center and breaks in, doing so much damage that Giannine is trapped within the game. CPOC believes that the only movies that should be made should be G-rated and libraries should only carry books that have strong family values.

Rochester Transit Authority

This is the bus from the line that refuses to let Giannine get off in front of the Rasmussem Gaming Center. The company refuses because the CPOC members are picketing their existence out front.

Heir Apparent

This is the game that Giannine elects to play with her Rasmussem Gaming Center certificate. In it, she is the King's heir. The King has just died and named her his heir. By making the correct decisions, she can inherit the throne. The game is described as 'bean soup', meaning that there are multiple ways to win.

St. Jehan

This is the small township that Giannine finds herself in when she plays Heir Apparent, St. Jehan consists of eight huts set in a cluster, made from straw and held together with sheep's offal.

Shrine of Saint Bruce the Warrior Poet

This is the Shrine at which the Midwife has given herself in service, and where Janine must go in order to retrieve the magic ring.



Shelby

This is the name of the township in which Janine is made heir of.

Fairfield

This is a town two hours to the west from Shelby, where Rawdon's aging mother is supposed to reside.

Old Hag Mountaintop

This is the site of the cave in the southern province where the dragon now resides.

Merlons

This is the name for the upright sections of the castle walls at the top where guards can hide behind and fire arrows from safety.

Crenellations

These are the openings between the merlons that allow the guards to fire arrows at the enemy.

Catapults

Used in battle, catapults fire large boulders wrapped in rags soaked in flammable liquids, able to crush and burn whatever they land on.

Sapping

This is the process by which the enemy uses their shields held above their heads collectively to protect others who are digging a tunnel so that a portion of the wall might collapse.

Parley

This is the word given to a white flag- initiated conversation between two or more enemies.



Haiku

This is a short variety of poem Janine uses on one of her encounters with Saint Bruce.

Seven-League Boots

These are boots belonging to Xenos that allow the wearer to increase a footstep from a single step to a step that covers seven leagues simply by saying 'seven leagues' before stepping. They behave as regular boots otherwise.



Themes

Royalty vs Loyalty

Heir Apparent is a game that Giannine enters using the fifty-dollar gift certificate given to her by her father for her fourteenth birthday. She plays the part of Janine de St. Jehan, the King's illegitimate child who was taken from the castle for her safety when she was little more than a young child. She grows up in the tiny town of St. Jehan as a sheep herder. Her father in the game is a peat farmer. When Sir Deming comes for her, he is immediately put off by the smell of her clothes. This is an attitude that carries on when she arrives at the castle. Deming immediately deserts her, handing her off to Counselor Rawdon, who takes her to the Great Hall. While she is getting to know her 'family', Rawdon is loading up the last of the realm's treasury.

Janine could easily have taken this opportunity to adopt a regal bearing and assume the true role of a Princess waiting for her coronation. Instead, she immediately takes on the worst of the issues facing the kingdom. By doing so, and by neglecting to put on airs of any kind, Janine manages to earn the loyalty and respect of the castle guards, and later of her royal half brothers and of the magic users. Her stock of respect and loyalty increases when she ensures the guards are paid and given bonuses, and takes on the dragon herself in order to regain the Midas crown that has her kingdom at odds with the barbarians to the north. When she returns to the castle with the crown, she earns King Grisbold's respect, and that of his men as well.

Mercy Without Weakness

In lifetime after lifetime, Janine continues to display mercy although it costs her her life on more than one occasion. Though the laws of the kingdom state that poachers are to be killed or are to have a hand cut off, Janine simply can't believe that her character should allow that to happen. When she is killed the first time as a result of the leniency she shows the young poacher, and her death is preceded by a swift kick to the shins from the poacher as well, she still deigns to repeat the action in her next lifetime, and in each subsequent lifetime. She soon learns that to allow the young poacher to be set free without any punishment at all is a mistake. While she hopes that her leniency would be reflected in the way the people of the kingdom feel about her, in truth, she is seen as undermining the strength of the kingdom by rescinding or abolishing the laws they are governed by.

Finally, she comes to understand that a punishment of some kind is essential when a crime has been committed. With that in mind, in her next lifetime, she consigns the younger poacher to a month of labor to be decided by Captain Penrod. He approves of her actions, as does the poacher's father later on. This leniency is continued when she is faced with deciding Counselor Rawdon's fate, having discovered his treachery with the treasury. He is stripped of his position as royal counselor and put him in charge of



the pigs until he is able to redeem himself. This action earns her his undying gratitude and loyalty.

Learning From Mistakes

Heir Apparent by Vivian Vande Velde is a novel of fantasy that follows the main character Giannine Bellisario through a game by the same name. In it, Gianinne, known as Janine de St. Jehan is a shepherd who has just discovered that she has been named heir to the throne of Shelby. Without any preparation, she is taken from the only home she knows and must stand tall and alone against the rest of the jealous royal family, the uncertain and lately unpaid royal guards, the peasants of the kingdom and the barbarians from the north. Each time she makes a mistake or forgets something important, she finds herself starting the game again. Janine must learn from her mistakes in order to progress, but she must also learn from the mistakes made by those around her. For example, Janine repeatedly releases a poacher brought to her by the Captain of the royal guard, Penrod. When she releases him the first time, Captain Penrod and some of his men return soon after and kill her, citing that she is too weak to be their new king. She continues to set him free each time facing different reactions until she finally realizes that he must be punished in some way. Then, she consigns him to a month of labor to be decided by Penrod, and the issue is resolved satisfactorily. The same can be said for her dealings with her half-brothers, her royal advisor, Counselor Rawdon, and even Xenos. Each life she has is a myriad of mistakes followed by an effort that is superior and eventually successful.



Style

Point of View

Heir Apparent by Vivian Vande Velde is written entirely in the first-person perspective from the sole perspective of the main character Gianinne Bellisario who is known throughout most of the story as the character Janine de St. Jehan - heir to the throne in the kingdom of Shelby. The narration is reliable, and follows the gaming life of Gianinne as she tries to complete the level which would result in her being crowned as the new King.

The story is recounted by her as she lives and dies multiple times within the game, and is interspersed by segments where in real life, her health is threatened by an attack on the Gaming Center by a group calling themselves C.P.O.C. They damage the equipment to such a degree that the owner, Nigel Rasmussem, is concerned for her health and safety, but is unable to get her out of the game in any manner other than by her finishing it. He manages to make contact with her twice, apprising her of the situation briefly, and letting her know that she is working within a small safety zone.

Janine, as she is known in the game, is diligent, honest and without presumptions as she is killed time and time again in her efforts to make it through the level. Rather than take some of the more obvious shortcuts that could be used, she chooses to actually immerse herself in the character and complete the challenges put in front of her despite the danger she must face.

Setting

Heir Apparent is a story that begins with Giannine Bellisario on her fourteenth birthday. Her father sent her a fifty dollar gift certificate to her favorite gaming emporium, and when she goes there to redeem it, she finds herself confronted by a protest group called C.P.O.C. (Citizens to Protect Our Children). The group is an organization that believes that the only movies that should be made should be G rated and libraries should only carry books that have strong family values. They begin by picketing Rasmussem Gaming Center and after she becomes immersed in the game, they break in, doing so much damage that Giannine becomes trapped within the game. Owner Nigel Rasmussem gets two brief messages to her in an effort to help her.

In the game, known as Janine de St. Jehan, she is a shepherd who has no idea that her father is actually King Cynric, and her mother was a simple serving wench. The King had sent her away to keep her safe, but on his deathbed, he names her as heir to the throne. Sir Deming rides to St. Jehan to collect her. In the many lifetimes she has as she tries to pass through the level, she must go to the Shrine of Saint Bruce the Warrior Poet where the midwife who helped with her birth, Feordina The Knitter where she must recite an original poem to get a magic ring. Then she must explore the catacombs under



an old church near Fairfield to find and return the treasure taken from the realm by one of the royal advisers. From there, she goes with Sir Deming to the kingdom of Shelby. Her adventures don't end there. In a realm of dragons, knights and magic users, Janine must travel to the Old Hag Mountaintop to retrieve a Midas crown and return it to King Grimbold - the king of the northern regions of the realm. To accomplish this, she must first go to the home of Xenos's father where she must collect a magic hat. All of this is so that she is able to finish the level and return to the gaming center.

Language and Meaning

The language of this novel is consistent with a blend between the world as Giannine knows it, and the world of the realm of Shelby in the time of castles, royalty, dragons, and magic. The subject matter is well supported by language that includes total immersion gaming rooms and Giannine arguing with a bus about the destination drop off point she wants. The bus is required to take her safety into consideration, especially as she is still a minor. She manages to outsmart the electronic babysitter by telling it she has changed her destination and would like to go to a nearby art museum instead. Once past the protesters outside, Giannine is given a selection of games to choose from. She is able to use her certificate for half an hour in any total immersion game, and she selects Heir Apparent.

When Giannine enters Heir Apparent, she becomes Janine de St. Jehan, a sheepherder in the small town of St. Jehan. She is named as the heir to the kingdom of Shelby, and becomes immersed in a world where life has not reached electronic dependency. In that world, she must rely on her wits, determination, and courage to face a royal family that is jealous, and threatening; rule a kingdom that fears she is weak; and face a dragon to bring peace to her people. She uses magic, employs ghosts, and recites poetry in an effort to succeed in the quests set out for her.

Structure

Heir Apparent by Vivian Vande Velde is a novel of three hundred and sixteen pages, divided into thirty three chapters. The chapters range in length from two to fourteen pages. Each chapter is given a heading that describes the contents of the chapter. Chapter One, for example, is titled 'Happy Birthday to Me' to reflect the fact that this chapter covers Gianinne's trip to Rasmussem's Gaming Center to use the fifty dollar gift certificate given to her by her father for her birthday. Chapter Two (Off to a Fantastic Start (Not!)), Chapter Six (Do Not Pass Go; Do Not Collect \$200); Chapter Seven (Shuffle and Deal Again); Chapter Eight (Hey, Loser, Start Over Again (Again)); Chapter Nine (Stop Me If You Think You've Heard This One Before); Chapter Ten (Family History); Chapter Fifteen (Bright Sword, Dim Brother); Chapter Twenty-Two (Did Someone Say Deja Vu?); and Chapter Twenty-Three (Will The Guilty Party Please Step Forward?) all are chapters that have Janine beginning the level again, waking on the hill above her home to her mother calling her. Chapters Four, Eleven, Fourteen, Nineteen,

and Twenty-Two contain inter office email messages from Nigel Rasmussem that update the issues facing Giannine and the health risks.



Quotes

"He sent for you to have you named his heir" (Chapter 1, p. 21).

"This girl, smells like a goat" (Chapter 3, p. 25).

"Obviously, you're so overcome by grief at the death of your old king that you're forgetting yourself" (Chapter 6, p. 50).

"Between the barbarian hordes waiting at our northern border for the first sign of weakness, and the peasant uprisings in the east, now is not the time for an inexperienced shepherd to play at being king" (Chapter 8, p. 61).

"Janine, when you first came to us, you were less than a week old - just a tiny little bundle, wrapped in a blanket" (Chapter 10, p. 72).

"Right and truth are One with pinochle and rye bread" (Chapter 12, p. 95).

"I be having my own kingdom, thank you - when Shelban kings be not sabotaging us" (Chapter 14, p. 108).

"This dragon was eating cows, horses, and maidens, and then King Cynric bought him off by giving him a crown that had been won at an iffy tournament" (Chapter 16, p. 144).

"She brings the stench of the dead with her" (Chapter 19, p. 181).

"Then be preparing to be dead" (Chapter 20, p. 202).

"Are you an advocate of strict interpretation of sever laws to deter crime" (Chapter 23, p. 224).

"The problem is not you and your people; the problem is how to win the friendship and gain the trust of you and your people by recovering that which has been taken from you" (Chapter 26, p. 251).

"I haven't had this much fun since Xenos had a cold and was sneezing centipedes" (Chapter 28, p. 276).

"And this time take your stinking ghosts with you" (Chapter 31, p. 295).

"Seven league boots are not impossible to track" (Chapter 32, p. 302).

"Most players give the ring to Sister Mary Ursula, befriend Grimbold at his camp, and get Xenos Senior to take on the dragon, rather than handling it personally" (Chapter 33, Pg. 314).



Topics for Discussion

How does Giannine feel about the birthday present she gets from her father? Under what circumstances does she get it? What is her relationship with her father like, and why? In what way does this change, if at all?

What issue or entity almost prevents Giannine from being able to use her gift? What group or person is responsible? What reaction occurs based solely on their presence? What is the purpose of their presence there? How does Giannine avoid or overcome the issue?

What kind of pet does the receptionist have? Where is it allowed to be? How does it respond to Giannine? What does the receptionist assure her? What kind of behavior does it exemplify and what keeps it from being a fearful pet? What is the last thing Giannine says to it?

What does Giannine learn from Nigel Rasmussem after the game has begun? How does he get that information to her? What exactly does he tell her? What risks exist? What is she now unable to do at all?

How many times does Janine have to restart the game from the beginning? Who kills her in each situation, and why?

Where does the game actually begin? What is Janine's occupation before she is told about King Cynric? What does King Cynric do that alienates Janine from the rest of the family members? Who are Janine's royal family and what sentence can be used to describe each one?

What quests must Janine accomplish before she is able to finish the game? What risks are involved in each quest? Where is each quest located?

What does Janine learn about Counselor Rawdon? How does she elect to deal with the situation? What is the outcome? What comes back with Janine after she seeks to rectify the problem caused by Rawdon? How is this both a blessing and a curse?

What magical items does Janine use during the game? How are they used, and what is accomplished with them? In each instance, what would the most likely outcome have been had that particular magical item not been available?

Who does Janine end up putting her trust in? What does she discover about this character? How does this impact her when she emerges from the game?