

The Hero and the Crown Study Guide

The Hero and the Crown by Robin McKinley

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



Contents

The Hero and the Crown Study Guide.....	1
Contents.....	2
Plot Summary.....	3
Part 1: Chapters 1-2.....	6
Part 1: Chapters 3-5.....	8
Part 1: Chapters 6-8.....	10
Part 1: Chapters 9-11.....	12
Part 2: Chapters 12-13.....	14
Part 2: Chapters 14-17.....	16
Part 2: Chapters 18-20.....	18
Part 2: Chapters 21-23.....	20
Part 2: Chapters 24-25.....	22
Characters.....	23
Objects/Places.....	26
Themes.....	28
Style.....	30
Quotes.....	32
Topics for Discussion.....	34



Plot Summary

The Hero and the Crown by Robin McKinley is the prequel to McKinley's bestselling novel The Blue Sword. In The Hero and the Crown, Aerin-sol grows up in the home of her father, the King of Damar, feeling as though she has never really belonged because of the belief that her mother was a witch from the North. Due to this, Aerin feels as though she has something to prove. Aerin begins slaying dragons after reading an ancient book about the creatures, eventually killing the huge menace known as Maur, the Black Dragon. This battle leaves Aerin badly injured, leading her to follow a dream that takes her to the home of the mysterious Luthé who will finally give Aerin the answers she needs and send her into a final battle that will change her life forever. The Hero and the Crown is a novel of self discovery, of family and country, that will inspire as well as entertain.

Aerin-sol, daughter of the King of Damar, has always felt as if she does not belong in the house of Arlbeth. This feeling is underscored by the taunting of Aerin's cousin, Galanna. Galanna dislikes Aerin, in part because she has always wanted to marry the first sola, the first in line for the crown, but Tor-sola is clearly in love with Aerin. Galanna is forced to marry the second sola, Perlith, a man with an acid tongue as cutting as Galanna's. Galanna's behavior has been so bad in the past that she bullied Aerin into eating a whole branch of surka, a plant known to be fatal to all but those with royal blood. Aerin is sick for months afterward. During her slow recovery, Aerin reads a history of Damar that talks about the huge dragons that once roamed the countryside and gives a recipe for an ointment said to be able to resist the fire of dragons.

During her long recovery from the surka, Aerin befriends her father's injured warhorse, a huge white stallion whose hind leg was rendered useless by a sword wound. Slowly, day by day, Aerin gains the trust of this horse, Talat. In time, Aerin is able to ride Talat despite his injury. In fact, Aerin takes Talat's tackle and modifies it to create a unique saddle that allows Aerin to control the horse's movements through the pressure of her small legs. Also during this time, Aerin begins to work with herbs to recreate the ointment mentioned in the ancient history on dragons. Eventually Aerin finds a combination that creates an ointment that does in fact protect the wearer from fire.

Soon after her recovery is complete, Aerin is having breakfast with her father when a man from a nearby village comes to ask for the King's help in ridding his village of a dragon. Aerin sees this as her chance to prove her ointment works. Aerin sneaks off on Talat and goes to the village, slaying the dragon and his mate. On the way out, Aerin runs into the men her father sent to slay the dragons. These men take Aerin back to her father's house and show him the proof of her actions. Aerin explains all that she has learned and done to her father. Arlbeth is so impressed with his daughter that he presents her with her own sword, swearing her to his service from that moment on. Arlbeth sends Aerin out to slay many dragons in the months after her first experience, making in her a hero of the people.



Trouble begins to grow in the west when a baron there becomes infected with demon-mischief. Arlbeth and Tor must ride out to stop the trouble. On the day they are to leave, a messenger comes and tells them that Maur, the Black Dragon, has awoken and is tormenting his village. Arlbeth takes this news as sign of dark days of battle ahead, riding out to the west anyway. Aerin decides to ride to the village's rescue and slay the dragon. Maur is much larger and a much stronger enemy than Aerin believed, however. Maur's fire breath burns through the ointment she wears and burns her arm and face, leaving her lungs badly damaged. However, Aerin manages to hang on and kill the beast despite her injuries.

Aerin lies in the valley below Maur's nest for a long time, slowly recovering from her injuries. When she is well enough, Aerin goes to inspect the dead dragon and finds a red jewel under its body. Aerin keeps the jewel, believing it might serve a purpose one day. Finally Aerin knows she must return home if she is to survive her injuries. On the road, Aerin comes across Arlbeth and Tor who have come looking for her. They help Aerin return home where the head of Maur has been brought to celebrate Aerin's victory. However, Aerin struggles still with her injuries, hearing in her mind the taunting of Maur and dreaming of a mysterious blond haired man who calls for her to come find him.

One night, Aerin slips out of the castle and rides into the North where she finds the mysterious blond man, Luthe. Luthe makes Aerin drink from a nearby river that proves to have mystical properties. Aerin quickly regains her health. Luthe tells Aerin that he once knew her mother, sharing with her information on her mother that no one else could have shared. Luthe then tells Aerin that the trouble that has been plaguing her country comes from her own uncle, Agsded. Luthe tells Aerin that if she does not face Agsded, and defeat him, that her country will be destroyed.

Aerin rides out into the North and is quickly joined by a group of cat-like animals known as folstza and the dog-like creatures called yerig. Aerin also has the support of a sword Luthe has given her known as Gonturan. Aerin arrives at a tower in the North and the animals help find a way inside. Aerin climbs for what seems like days until she finally finds a man who wears a face eerily like her own. This man wears a crown that has been missing from Damar for centuries known as the Hero's crown. This crown makes him nearly invincible against Aerin's sword. However, when Aerin throws a surka wreath containing the jewel she found under Maur's body, Agsded is destroyed. Aerin falls a great distance and finds herself in a world many generations in the future.

Luthe meets Aerin on the road as she returns, telling her how he had to use his magic to bring her back to her present time. Aerin and Luthe become lovers, sharing the secret that they are both more than mortal. Luthe then urges Aerin to return to Damar, assuring her they will be together again. As Aerin approaches the city where she grew up, she discovers it under siege by an army from the North. Aerin fights alongside Tor, to whom she has given the Hero's crown. Together they beat back the army, ending the siege. However, the city is still struggling under a cloud of despair that is only increased with the knowledge that Arlbeth has died. Aerin recalls the head of Maur and knows it must be removed from the castle. Together, Aerin and Tor roll the massive head out of the city

where it lands on the field of battle, turning it into a desert. The sense of despair is lifted. In the days after the battle, Aerin and Tor are married, together ruling the country of Damar.



Part 1: Chapters 1-2

Part 1: Chapters 1-2 Summary

The Hero and the Crown is set in a mythical country called Damar where dragons still exist, although they are no larger than a dog. Damar's royal family is known to have magical powers that include the power to heal. Once Damar was kept safe from menace by a crown known as the Hero's crown, but the crown has been missing for generations. Out of respect for the lost crown, the king no longer wears a crown of his own.

In chapter one, Aerin knows that her mother is thought to have been a witch. Aerin's cousin, Galanna, has always used this information to imply that Aerin does not have royal blood and therefore does not belong in the house of Arlbeth, despite the fact that he is her father. For this reason, Aerin has always felt the need to prove herself. As part of this, Aerin has decided to ask her father to take her along when he travels west to end trouble brewing among his barons there. When Aerin asks, she does so in front of Perlith, Galanna's husband. Perlith mocks Aerin. This does not hurt Aerin near as much as Arlbeth's refusal to allow her to go.

In chapter two, Aerin locks herself in her room, refusing to see anyone except her maid, Teka. Aerin thinks of her mother and asks Teka about her. Aerin's mother died in childbirth, supposedly out of disappointment at having born a daughter. Teka knew Aerin's mother, and was fond of her, but finds it difficult to soothe Aerin's hurt when they discuss the rumors that Aerin's mother was a witch who wove a spell to entrap her father. After dark, when no one will see her, Aerin sneaks out of the castle to visit her horse, Talat. Seeing the horse soothes Aerin's injured emotions.

Part 1: Chapters 1-2 Analysis

These first two chapters introduce the main characters and the conflict that will propel the plot of the novel. First introduced is Aerin, a young woman who is the daughter of a king and a woman who is rumored to be a witch. In the time in which Aerin lives, being the daughter of a witch makes Aerin an outcast, almost like an illegitimate child in the time of medieval England. People do not trust Aerin and question her inability to use magic like all of the people of royal blood. The rumors about her mother and her inability to use magic leave Aerin feeling like a leper, like she has something to prove all the time. This builds character in Aerin, pushing her to do things that she might not have done otherwise.

Also introduced in these chapters are Galanna and Perlith, two of Aerin's most outspoken enemies. These two resent Aerin's position as the king's daughter and the fact that the first sola, the first in line to the crown, is clearly in love with her. It is jealousy that pushes Galanna and Perlith to hate Aerin so much, but it is also their



taunting that pushes Aerin to show bravery and courage. Tor-sola is also introduced in these chapters, the gallant first sola who will one day be king. Arlbeth, the King of Damar, is also introduced here. Arlbeth, who once was deeply in love with Aerin's mother, is a distracted, busy monarch who does not know what to do with his daughter and therefore has not been a powerful influence in her life. However, he is kind and clearly loves his daughter, despite his inability to understand her.

The conflict introduced in these chapters is Aerin's need to know more about her mother and to prove that she is worthy to be called the daughter of the King of Damar. This need to know more about her mother drives Aerin, but it is also the thing that separates her from the people around her and drives her to prove her own worth. It is all interrelated and it will prove to be the driving force that motivates Aerin in everything she does throughout the development of the plot.



Part 1: Chapters 3-5

Part 1: Chapters 3-5 Summary

In chapter three, Aerin recalls when she was twelve, her father and Talat were in a fierce battle. Talat was cut badly in his hindquarters, leaving him unable to use one leg. However, Talat continued to carry her father through the rest of the battle and then carried him home. The grooms were not able to help Talat regain use of his leg, so he was put in his own pasture, where it was hoped he would sire many foals. Unfortunately, Talat frightened the mares away and became a mean, solitary animal.

Several years later, Galanna, who has always believed Aerin is not of royal blood, goaded her into eating from the surka plant. The surka plant is known to be fatal to those not of royal blood and to bring on visions for those with royal blood. Aerin ate a whole branch of the surka plant, causing her to become so ill that it would take months for her to recover. Convinced that her illness proves her lack of royal blood, Aerin seeks to avoid people, especially her beloved Tor, throughout her recovery. Aerin begins reading books from the royal library, taking one such volume, a history of Damar, to the pasture where Talat grazes.

In chapter four, Aerin reads of the dragons that once roamed Damar, larger and more powerful than the small dragons that annoy villages now. At the back of the book, Aerin finds a recipe for an ointment called kenet, that is said to be proof against dragon-fire. However, the recipe is incomplete, missing the amount of the ingredients required. As Aerin considers this recipe, pacing in Talat's pasture, the horse begins walking with her. Aerin begins befriending the horse, grooming it and talking to it late into the day. After a short time, Aerin decides to attempt to ride the horse and finds him a most willing participant.

In chapter five, Aerin continues to ride Talat, unaware of Tor's growing affection for her even when he invites her to a private dinner in his rooms. At dinner, Aerin convinces Tor to give her sword fighting lessons, to which he agrees somewhat reluctantly.

Part 1: Chapters 3-5 Analysis

These chapters take place in the past as compared to the present of the first chapter. In these chapters, Aerin recalls her illness after eating from the surka plant. The plant is known to give those of royal blood visions when eaten in small portions, but also thought to be the cause of death to a famous royal family member when he used it too frequently. Aerin becomes terribly ill after eating from the plant and this causes her to believe that she truly is not of the royal blood as everyone seems to think. It is a difficult time for Aerin that not only shows the depth of her stubbornness when it comes to her cousin Galanna, but leads her to befriend her father's lame warhorse, Talat.



Aerin becomes interested in the history of her country, especially the dragons that are said to once have roamed the country. These dragons are the large, powerful dragons of legend, nothing like the tiny menaces that still roam the outlying villages. Aerin finds a recipe for kenet, an ointment that is said to resist dragon-fire. This foreshadows a time when Aerin will make the kenet and face a dragon. The reader sees Aerin's strength and her determination in her previous actions making this idea of her fighting dragon's inevitable. Not only this, but Aerin was called Dragon-slayer in the first chapter. Aerin is also learning about swordplay from Tor, suggesting a time when she will use this knowledge.

Aerin has always been close to her cousin Tor, the first sola. Now this relationship seems to be changing, turning into one of great love and affection. If Aerin were to marry Tor, she would one day rule the country with him as his wife. This only increases Galanna's reasons for hating her, suggesting more tension as the novel's plot continues to develop.



Part 1: Chapters 6-8

Part 1: Chapters 6-8 Summary

In chapter six, Talat grows strong, returning to his prior attitude of courage and confidence with Aerin's attention. In fact, Talat has grown so strong that one day he jumps over a fence. During this time, Aerin modifies Talat's saddle to allow her to use her legs to lead the horse rather than relying on the reins she has decided to discard.

Aerin is forced to take part in Galanna's wedding, despite her hope that her illness would keep her away. Aerin is dressed beautifully that day and everyone in attendance notices the way Tor looks at her, convinced he is in love with the sol. Aerin does not notice, however. During this time, Aerin begins work attempting to make kenet, surprising Teka with her sudden fascination with herbs. After Aerin's initial failures, she begins to keep careful notes of her attempts in order to help her in finding the right combination of herbs.

In chapter seven, Aerin turns eighteen. There is a banquet to celebrate, despite Aerin's reluctance to attend. In the privacy of her rooms after the banquet, Tor gives Aerin a sword. The night of a dance party nearly a year later, Aerin finally creates a batch of kenet that works. That night Aerin is so happy about her success that she attends the dance party with enthusiasm she has never shown before.

In chapter eight, Tor is taken with how beautiful Aerin looks, a little confused by her apparent distraction. Perlith dances with Aerin and attempts to give her a flower he made with magic, aware that coming into contact with magic often makes Aerin sick after eating the surka. Tor comes to Aerin's rescue, forcing Perlith to apologize. Aerin is gracious in accepting his apology. That night Aerin is restless and she goes to a balcony high in the castle. Tor joins her and for a while they are able to talk with their old relaxed camaraderie. They talk about the Hero's Crown, a mythical crown that was said to keep menace away from Damar, but was stolen generations ago. Arlbeth longs for the Crown's return now as menace begins to spread from the west of Damar.

Part 1: Chapters 6-8 Analysis

In these chapters, Aerin continues to reflect on the past. Aerin continues to make friends with Talat, proving the lame horse still has the heart of a warhorse. At the same time, Aerin is working with the kenet recipe and she finally has some success. Aerin is so focused on these things, she does not notice the growing passion between herself and Tor. Tor is clearly in love with Aerin, but Aerin is still enough of a child that she still only sees in him her childhood friend. The reader wonders if she will ever notice Tor and if a happy marriage could possibly be in their future. What leaves the reader uncertain is the continued malice of Perlith and Galanna that seems intent on keeping the two apart.



Tor tells Aerin about the Hero's Crown, a magical crown that was said to have protected Damar from menace for many years before it was stolen. Arlbeth hears of trouble in the west and worries that it will lead to the downfall of his beloved country. Arlbeth wants the crown back, believing that it will restore peace to the region. Unfortunately, no one has any idea where it has gone. However, the reader suspects the crown will become an issue as the novel continues to develop.



Part 1: Chapters 9-11

Part 1: Chapters 9-11 Summary

In chapter nine, Aerin makes a large batch of kenet and asks Teka for permission to travel alone with Talat. Teka refuses to give Aerin permission, insisting that she ask her father. Aerin has breakfast with her father and receives permission. They head out the next day, traveling far enough away to keep the smoke of a large fire from attracting attention. Aerin dons a set of clothing that she has soaked in kenet and then rubs the ointment on her exposed skin. When Aerin walks into the fire, she is surprised to find it does not burn. Aerin then rubs the ointment on Talat and leads him into the fire. The ointment works on the horse as well.

In chapter ten, Aerin begins to make a point of having breakfast with her father because she can see it brings him pleasure. One day, Aerin is present when a man comes and asks for help with a dragon in his village. Aerin quickly slips out of the castle ahead of her father's men and goes to slay the dragon. It seems like an easy idea, but the dragons are more fierce than Aerin thought and she struggles to kill her first. However, the book she read has prepared her for the struggle, and she is triumphant not only over the original dragon, but its mate as well. As Aerin rides through the village on her way home, the king's men arrive. Aerin reveals what she has done. The men offer to escort her home.

In chapter eleven, the king's men present Aerin to her father, where she is forced to admit what she has done. Arlbeth is torn between pride and outrage, finally Arlbeth makes Aerin promise to show him how to make the kenet and to promise to tell him before she runs off to prove another point alone. The following morning, Tor brings Aerin's sword to breakfast, where Arlbeth officially gives it to her so that she is obligated to use it only in his service and punishes her with it by slapping her on the face with its blade. After this, Aerin becomes Arlbeth's best dragon-slayer, slaying so many dragons that the people begin to call her Aerin, Dragon-Killer. Perlith makes fun of Aerin in court by singing a song the people of Damar have begun to sing about her. A week later, trouble in the west becomes so bad that Arlbeth and Tor plan to ride out to deal with it personally.

Part 1: Chapters 9-11 Analysis

Aerin discovers that her kenet works and uses it to slay her first dragon, going out behind her father's back. This delves into the relationship between daughter and father. Arlbeth loves his daughter to distraction, but he simply does not know how to relate to a stubborn, intelligent girl. Arlbeth understands his daughter's need to prove herself; therefore, he does not punish her for her actions. However, Arlbeth cannot allow his daughter to go out in the countryside and get herself killed. Therefore, Arlbeth makes Aerin one of his own subjects, restricting her to using her sword only at his bidding. This



allows Aerin to develop a reputation as a dragon-killer, making her a hero to all the people in the tiny villages around Damar that are plagued by these creatures. However, it does not get her the respect she desires, not does it make her a soldier of such standing that her father will allow her to travel to east with him to put an end to the trouble there. In essence, Arlbeth is telling Aerin she is strong enough to deal with minor nuisances, but not to take on the more manly duties of soldiering.



Part 2: Chapters 12-13

Part 2: Chapters 12-13 Summary

In chapter twelve, Teka brings Aerin a message from Tor asking that she come to see the men leave for the west. Aerin finally relents and is waiting in the courtyard the following morning. As Aerin holds her father's horse for him, a tradition of debatable luck, a messenger comes from a distant town and tells the king that the mystic Black Dragon, Maur, has awoken and is terrorizing his village. The king acknowledges this news with a deep sadness and leads his troops out the city gates. Aerin consoles the messenger and promises to return to his village with him to help evacuate his people. As they approach the village, Aerin can see a large ash cloud that directs her to Maur's location.

Aerin camps for the night and prepares for battle early the next morning, donning her kenet soaked clothing and rubbing a double layer of the ointment both on her exposed skin and Talat. Aerin finds Maur in the next valley, so close that she should have heard him breathing. They begin to battle. Aerin finds this large dragon much harder to battle than the smaller version she has fought before. The dragon swings its tale at Talat, knocking him to the ground and pinning Aerin's foot under him. The dragon then covers Aerin in so much dragon-fire that the kenet burns away and her left arm and cheek are burned. Aerin breathes deep the fire, burning her throat and lungs. Aerin manages to stand. When Maur bends to spit fire at her again, Aerin grabs onto Maur's nostril and is lifted into the air. As Maur tries to throw Aerin off of its face, Aerin plunges a knife into its eye, forcing knife and arm deep into Maur's brain.

In chapter thirteen, Aerin wakes to find the dragon dead, but she is so injured that she cannot stand. Aerin manages to drag herself to the stream where she soaks her burned arm and face, as well as her broken ankle. Aerin passes out and remains in the stream so long she loses track of the passage of time. Eventually Aerin becomes conscious enough to realize she needs to remove Talat's saddle to prevent sores. Soon after, Aerin is able to crawl back to where she has hidden her saddlebags and provide a small meal for herself. Aerin drifts in and out of consciousness, often dreaming of a blond man who promises he can help cure her injuries if she will only come to him. Aerin remains in the valley for a long time, eventually coming to the point where she can stand and walk with a stick. Aerin returns to the body of Maur and finds a red jewel under its body. Aerin takes it. A short time later, Aerin decides she should try to return to the city.

Part 2: Chapters 12-13 Analysis

As the king and Tor prepare to leave to deal with trouble in the west, word comes that the mythic beast, Maur, has awakened and is terrorizing villagers. The king knows that this is a sign of more trouble to come, that Maur has the power to destroy much of the country, but there is little he can do about it at that point. The reader cannot guess what



it is that the king is thinking at this point, but can guess that he is frightened by the reappearance of a mythical beast that was said to have been defeated many generations ago, about the time the Hero's Crown came to Damar. The king desperately wants the crown back, afraid all this recent trouble is a sign that more is to come. However, the king can do nothing but deal with the current trouble and hope the rest will wait until a way can be found to deal with it.

Aerin, who has made herself the self appointed expert in killing dragons, goes after Maur. This dragon is much bigger and more powerful than the small ones she has fought in the past, however, and she is left badly injured. Aerin spends a great deal of time recovering from this battle alone. The reader wonders what might be happening in Damar that would keep a loving father and cousin from finding Aerin during this time, an idea that foreshadows disaster in Damar. This situation also shows Aerin's strength of character, however, especially the fact that she never once thought of giving up. Important here as well are one, the dreams Aerin has. These dreams seem like just dreams, but they hold a surreal aspect that will be important later in the novel. Two, the jewel Aerin has found. It seems like a simple souvenir at this point, but will prove to be much more important later.



Part 2: Chapters 14-17

Part 2: Chapters 14-17 Summary

In chapter fourteen, Aerin and Talat are several days into their journey when they come upon Tor and Arlbeth among a procession searching for her. The men escort Aerin back home, where she is given a hero's welcome. The head of Maur has been brought to the city and placed on display within the castle. Many healers come to care for Aerin, but none seem able to better cure the heat of her burns than her own use of kenet and none seem able to do anything about the searing pain in her throat and lungs. Eventually Aerin feels well enough to join her father and Tor for a meal in the main hall. Aerin learns that the trouble in the west turned out to be a distraction to allow Maur to torment the countryside on its way to the city. A short time later a celebration is held to celebrate Aerin's heroic act in slaying Maur. During the party, Aerin believes she can hear Maur tormenting her, suggesting Aerin managed to kill Maur through pure luck.

In chapter fifteen, Aerin takes to her bed again, her struggle to breath growing worse. One night Aerin dreams of the blond haired man again. The man admonishes Aerin for waiting too long and begs her to come find him. That same night Aerin, delirious with illness, writes a brief note to Tor and leaves the castle for what she is afraid is the last time. Aerin and Talat travel into the north, finally coming to a house where the blond man awaits them in the yard. Aerin wakes hours later in the company of the blond man who tells her his name is Luthe. Luthe claims to have known Aerin's mother. Luthe also tells Aerin that he believes he can heal her illness.

In chapter sixteen, Luthe takes Aerin to a stream where he makes her drink. Aerin falls into a vision, seeing a man with his face covered, trying to force her to drink. Aerin also sees her city burned to the ground, turned into a desert. When Aerin comes to again she discovers that she can breath again.

In chapter seventeen, Aerin finds herself healing quickly as each day passes. Aerin and Luthe talk often. Luthe tells Aerin that his mother lived in the north and that he attended school with her and her brother. Luthe tells Aerin that he has lived a long life, that he is immortal, and that her mother was as well. However, Aerin's mother had a brother who was arrogant and he used his magic for evil. This brother, Agsded, poisoned Aerin's mother. Aerin left the north and went in search of a man with some magic, or kelar, in his blood to create a child that could fight Agsded in her place. When Aerin was born, it is true that her mother despaired that she had had a female child rather than a male, but it was the poison that killed her. Now Luthe tells Aerin that it is Agsded causing the trouble in Damar and that it is her destiny to stop him.



Part 2: Chapters 14-17 Analysis

Aerin returns home a hero, but the souvenir the people have brought to the city, Maur's head, mocks her and causes her illness to become more severe. Aerin again dreams of the blond haired man and wakes convinced that he is the only one who can help her. Aerin's lungs have been badly damaged by breathing in the dragonfire, causing her so much damage that she most likely will not live long enough to enjoy the newfound respect the city now has for her.

Aerin goes to Luthe, the blond man, and learns that her mother was what her people consider a witch, but that she was a good woman with good intentions. Aerin must take over her mother's fight against an uncle she never knew she had to stop him from destroying her people in Damar. Aerin's mother was as much a hero as Aerin is slowly becoming, showing the reader and Aerin where she gets her strength and her courage. However, Aerin's mother failed and left Aerin to take up the slack. The only question now is whether or not Aerin will be able to succeed against a mage much more powerful and knowledgeable than she.



Part 2: Chapters 18-20

Part 2: Chapters 18-20 Summary

In chapter eighteen, Aerin packs her things on Talat's back to face her uncle. Luthe gives Aerin a sword, called Gonturan, that he found many years before. Aerin heads north, leaving Luthe alone in his compound.

As she travels, Aerin becomes aware that someone or something is following her. One night Aerin calls out to the stranger and is surprised to have a pack of folstza, cat-like creatures, join her. The folstza follow Aerin and Talat as they travel the next day, making poor Talat nervous. However, Aerin believes they are there to help. The following day, Aerin and her band of soldiers are joined by a pack of yerig, dog-like creatures. Normally the two sets of animals would not get along, but these two packs seem content to co-exist at Aerin's side. Eventually Aerin and her army reach a large tower with no obvious entrance. Aerin sees Maur and raises Gonturan to fight him, but fails. Aerin believes she has failed the only method of opening the tower, but Talat and the animals claw through the rocks until a staircase is visible.

In chapter nineteen, Aerin begins to climb the stairs, leaving her army behind. Aerin climbs and climbs, climbing for what she believes is days. When Aerin finally reaches the top, she takes the dragon's bloodstone and weaves into a wreath of surka she carries so that her other hand will be free to wield her sword. When Aerin sees Agsded, she is shocked to see that his face is very similar to her own. Agsded baits Aerin, trying to break down her confidence by suggesting her father has sent her into a fire without hope of rescue. Agsded then tells Aerin that he has the Hero's Crown and with it he is too powerful to stop. Aerin attempts to stop him with her sword, but misses. Out of desperation, Aerin throws the wreath with the bloodstone inside and is shocked when she begins to fall as the tower crumbles below her feet.

In chapter twenty, Aerin finds herself lying on a pile of rubble in a lush, green forest. Aerin does not know where she is or where her army has gone. Alone, Aerin gathers wood and begins a fire. When Aerin wakes the next morning she believes she can hear voices. However, when Aerin opens her eyes, she finds she is still alone, but the desert landscape has returned. Aerin hears a sound behind her and she is suddenly aware that her army has returned. With them, the army brings Aerin the Hero's Crown and her bloodstone.

Part 2: Chapters 18-20 Analysis

Aerin arrives in the north where Agsded is waiting for her. Aerin climbs for what seems like years, finally reaching the room where Agsded waits. Like Galanna before him, Agsded uses taunts to try to undermine Aerin's confidence. However, Aerin is stronger than Agsded expects her to be. Not only this, but Aerin has a secret weapon that even



she does not understand. Aerin comes out of the battle in a lush forest that she does not understand, alone as though her army has abandoned her. Aerin is frightened and confused. The reader does not understand this situation either, at least the reader who has yet to read *The Blue Sword*, but hopes it will be explained in a future chapter.

In the end, Aerin has discovered who stole the mythical Hero's Crown that has been missing from Damar for generations. It is no surprise to Aerin or the reader that Ageded has the crown. When Aerin returns to her own landscape, she finds her army waiting and the Hero's Crown back in her possession. This suggests to the reader that Aerin now has the capacity to return the crown to her country and save them from disaster. However, the reader will have to wait to find out if Aerin is successful.



Part 2: Chapters 21-23

Part 2: Chapters 21-23 Summary

In chapter twenty-one, Aerin begins traveling back the way she came with her army. On the road they find Luthe waiting for them. Luthe explains that Aerin was battling Agsded for centuries, as well as her climb up the stairs and her fall in the rubble. Luthe came to help bring her back to her own time. Aerin shows Luthe the bloodstone when she tells the story of how she survived. Luthe tells her it was formed from the last drop of blood from the dying Maur and that it has many powers. Aerin insists that Luthe take the stone to prevent anyone from using its power for evil.

Luthe travels with Aerin and her army as they make their way back toward the south. As they travel, Aerin and Luthe become lovers. When the time comes for them to part, Luthe promises to wait for Aerin although he knows it will be many years before she comes back to him. Aerin agrees, understanding that she is now immortal and has plenty of time to finish out her life with Tor before returning to Luthe.

In chapter twenty-two, Aerin continues to travel with her army. As they move closer to the city, Aerin becomes convinced that her people desperately need her. When Aerin comes to the hill that sits above the city, she looks down into the valley and sees a northern army has the people of the city pinned in the valley. Aerin pulls Gonturan out of her sheath, allowing her blue light to encase herself and Talat, and charges into the battle. Aerin tries to get the attention of either her father or Tor to give them the Hero's Crown, but finds it difficult at first. Eventually Aerin finds Tor and pushes the crown onto his head, causing a red light to encase him.

In chapter twenty-three, Aerin continues to fight, eventually locating her father. Arlbeth is fighting from the ground, having sustained a wound to his leg. Aerin pulls him onto Talat behind her and fights through the battle to take him to safety. Aerin returns to the battle before once again rushing to her father's side. Arlbeth has passed away. Tor tells Aerin the fighting has been going on for nearly a year. Aerin had thought that Agsded's death would have ended the battle. It is then that Aerin thinks of Maur. Aerin insists that Tor go with her to the castle to retrieve Maur's head. As they draw close to Maur, Aerin can feel despair overtaking her. When she sees the head, Aerin can hear Maur speaking to her. Aerin and Tor drag the head from the castle and roll it out of the city. When Maur's head falls into the valley, the entire valley is turned into a desert.

Part 2: Chapters 21-23 Analysis

Aerin and Luthe become lovers, causing the reader who had hoped to see Aerin and Tor together some confusion. However, this situation is made clear when Luthe and Aerin discuss her future. Aerin is to return to Damar and Tor for Tor's lifetime, and then she will return to Luthe. Both Aerin and Luthe are immortal; therefore, there is no reason for



them to rush into their relationship. It is a touching situation that leaves the reader somewhat satisfied.

Aerin returns home and finds a northern army attacking her beloved city. Aerin again proves her strength and courage when she dives right into the battle and fights the army back. Aerin is joined by Tor, who is wearing the Hero's Crown and using its magic to battle through the enemy. The battle is won, but it costs Damar their king. In the end, Aerin realizes that her people have been beaten by their own sense of despair brought on by Maur's enchanted head. Aerin rids her country of the head, bringing back the optimism that once inspired the country. Things are beginning to look up for Damar with Agsded dead and Aerin on their side.



Part 2: Chapters 24-25

Part 2: Chapters 24-25 Summary

In chapter twenty-four, Aerin wakes two days later and finds Teka crying over her. Aerin and Tor meet over a meal. Tor tells Aerin that she is a hero, that without her they would not have been able to defeat the northern army. Tor then asks Aerin to marry him and rule the country at his side as his queen. Aerin agrees, but asks Tor to wait to make her his queen until things have calmed down. A short time later, Tor is crowned king using the Hero's Crown. Tor is the first king in generation to wear a crown.

In chapter twenty-five, Tor and Aerin get married, to the great pleasure of their people. Life is difficult the first year after the battle that has come to be known as Maur's battle, but Arlbeth thought ahead to put away enough food that the people are fed well enough. Many who came to the city to find refuge remain, including Katah, a mother of six whose husband died in the battle. Katah becomes a royal secretary. The head groom also takes a wound during the battle and retires, but remains active with Talat. The yerig and foltza remain in the city, becoming domesticated and breeding with other domesticated animals. Aerin settles down to her new life, slowly forgetting the young blond man she once loved.

Part 2: Chapters 24-25 Analysis

These final two chapters wrap up the novel nicely. Aerin and Tor marry, fulfilling the secret wish of the romantic reader as well as the prophecy suggested by Luthé. Aerin becomes queen, something she never imagined would happen before. However, the people have come to accept Aerin, no longer concerned with who her mother might have been or what she might have done. Aerin has earned respect on her own with her own actions.

The final chapter of the novel finishes wrapping up the plot, but also begins to relate the characters and actions of the characters in this book with the characters and actions in the next book, *The Blue Sword*. This will allow those who have already read the other novel to understand how this novel is related and allow those who have not to move into the next novel with a special understanding they might not have had before.



Characters

Aerin-sol

Aerin-sol is the daughter of the king of Damar by his second wife. Aerin has been told that her mother is a witch, something that causes a great deal of distrust in the people of Damar. Aerin feels that the fact that she has not begun to have magic powers like others of the royal family proves that she is not of true royal blood, making her unworthy of her position in her father's house. As a result, Aerin is often driven to do things that are dangerous and lead to complicated situations. One time Aerin eats from a plant known to be poisonous to prove to a cousin that she is not frightened and that she is of royal blood.

Aerin never knew her mother because she died when Aerin was born. Aerin believes that her mother's disappointment in having a female child caused her death. This places a burden on Aerin that makes her act in unfeminine ways, such as learning to use a sword. Aerin is driven by what she does not know and does not understand. This drive pushes Aerin to learn things she might not have ordinarily have learned, leading her down the path of a destiny she does not understand until the moment the past comes into her present.

Arlbeth

Arlbeth is the king of Damar. Arlbeth is twice widowed. Arlbeth's first marriage did not result in a child. Arlbeth's second marriage caught his people by surprise because a widowed king does not normally remarry unless he has a need, such as a mother for his children. For this reason, people question the motives of Arlbeth's second wife, especially when it becomes known that she has come to Damar from the north, a region thought to be the home of witches and demons. Arlbeth's second wife produces one child before his wife dies of unknown causes.

Arlbeth adores his daughter, Aerin, but he does not know what to do with a female child. Arlbeth spends a great deal of his time on state business; therefore, Aerin is raised by her nurse maid. Arlbeth is aware of the difficulties Aerin has because of her mother's mysterious past, but again he is unsure how to deal with it. Eventually Aerin and her father are able to build a relationship, but it proves to be too little too late. Evil comes to Damar and Arlbeth is killed in a battle with a northern army.

Tor-sola

Tor-sola is Aerin's cousin and the next in line to be king. Tor is older than Aerin, but he has always reached out to her, befriending her when other cousins avoid her. Tor is gallant, intelligent, and the perfect ideal of a prince. However, Aerin does not see this. Aerin thinks of Tor as simply her kindly older cousin who cares for her like a brother.



Even when Tor begins to notice how Aerin has grown, Aerin fails to notice the change in the way he speaks with her and how he begins to avoid her.

Tor is the one who teaches Aerin how to use a sword. In fact, Tor gives Aerin a sword of her own as a gift for her eighteenth birthday. Tor does anything he can to make Aerin happy, even butting heads with his cousins, the ones who spend a great deal of time teasing Aerin. In the end, Tor proves himself to be as brave as Aerin and to be worthy of the Hero's Crown. Tor and Aerin are married and rule Damar together.

Galanna

Galanna is one of Aerin's cousin. Galanna is a beautiful girl, small and petite, where Aerin is tall and clumsy. Galanna has always wanted to marry Tor because he is destined to be king. However, Tor never shows interest in Galanna. In fact, Galanna can see from an early stage that Tor has eyes only for Aerin, fueling her dislike of Aerin. Galanna often teases Aerin, often telling her that she is not of royal blood and does not deserve to marry a man like Tor. It is also Galanna who encourages Aerin to eat the plant that leads to a near fatal illness and dulls her blooming magical powers.

Perlith

Perlith is second sola, the second in line for the crown should something happen to both Arlbeth and Tor. Galanna marries Perlith when it becomes clear that Tor is not interested in her, settling on second instead of a lesser marriage. Perlith is a lot like Galanna, often abusing Aerin verbally because of the rumors about her mother. At one point Perlith attempts to use magic to embarrass Aerin in front of guests to the castle, but Tor comes to her rescue. Perlith is simply a bitter man who resents his place in the hierarchy of the throne and the little girl who is braver and stronger than he.

Teka

Teka is Aerin's nursemaid. Teka was handpicked to raise Aerin before she was born, therefore she knew Aerin's mother for a short time. Teka often tells Aerin stories of her mother, but hesitates to indulge in the rumors that abound regarding the dead queen. Teka works hard trying to teach Aerin to be a proper lady, but Aerin resists every effort. In the end, Teka is deeply relieved to find Aerin has survived her struggles and learned about her mother. Teka is like a mother to Aerin, making her an important character in the novel.

Luthe

Luthe is a young, blond man who lives in the mysterious north. Luthe is an immortal mage who trained with a master alongside Aerin's mother and her uncle, Agsded. Luthe comes to Aerin in her dreams after she kills Maur and finds herself badly injured. Luthe



calls to Aerin to come to him. and eventually she does. When she does, not only does Luthe heal Aerin, but he is able to tell her things about her mother she never would have known otherwise and to teach her enough magic to help her save Damar. Luthe and Aerin become lovers, but they put their relationship on hold so that Aerin might live her life out with Tor before returning to Luthe.

Agsded

Agsded is Aerin's uncle. Agsded is a proud mage who uses his powers for his own benefit rather than the benefit of mortals. Agsded is the one who stole the Hero's Crown from Damar, and he uses it to destroy that country with the help of people from the north. Aerin learns that her mother tried to stop Agsded's evil ways, but he poisoned her. It is Aerin's destiny to stop Agsded, a fight she is not prepared for, but an impending battle forces her to face him much too early.

Hornmar

Hornmar is the groom at the king's stables. It is Hornmar's duty to oversee the care of the horses. Hornmar is the one who tries to heal Talat after his devastating injury leaves him with a lame leg. Unfortunately, Hornmar is unable to save the leg and Talat is put out to pasture. Hornmar encourages Aerin's companionship with Talat when he becomes aware of it, hoping that it will help both the once great warhorse and the young, sick girl. Hornmar is an honorable man who does a great job caring for the king's horses. In the end, Hornmar is injured in Maur's Battle, causing him to retire and devote his time to Talat.

Aerin's Mother

Aerin's mother is a young woman who simply walks into the city one day and wins the heart of the king. No one in Damar knows much about her. Therefore, when rumors spread that she is from the north and must, therefore, be a witch, everyone believes it. After her death, the people seem to forget that they once adored the young queen and instead shun her daughter as though her mother's mysterious past has tainted her in some way. Aerin finally learns from Luthe that her mother was a mage and was poisoned by her own brother, causing her death after Aerin's birth. Aerin was brought into the world with the hope that she would one day be strong enough to kill Agsded, her own uncle.



Objects/Places

Talat's Tackle

Aerin modifies Talat's tackle, discarding the bit and reins while changing the saddle so that Talat can feel Aerin's knees giving direction.

Kenet

Kenet is the ointment Aerin discovers in the back of a book that repels dragonfire. Aerin also uses it to treat burns.

Surka

Surka is a plant that grows in Damar. It is believed that small amounts of surka can give people of royal blood visions. However, large amounts can be fatal. Aerin eats a large amount of surka when Galanna goads her into it in order to prove she is of royal blood.

Bloodstone

After slaying Maur, Aerin finds a red stone under his body. Aerin later learns this stone is the fatal drop of blood from the dragon and that it has incredible powers.

Surka Wreath

Aerin takes a wreath of surka with her into the tower where she faces Agsded. Aerin places the bloodstone in the wreath and later throws it at Agsded, causing his death.

Hero's Crown

The Hero's Crown is a mythical crown that is said to have kept menace from Damar for many generations. However, the crown was stolen, causing the king's of Damar to refuse to wear a crown until it can be returned. Aerin returns the crown after her battle with Agsded.

Aerin's Sword

Aerin receives a sword as a birthday gift from Tor. Aerin is later given this same sword by the king so that she might use it only at his command.



Gonturan, The Blue Sword

Gonturan is a simply adorned sword that Luthé gives to Aerin in her battle against Agsded. This sword encases the person wielding it in a blue light that seems to offer some protection. This weapon also seems to have a mind of its own, guiding the wielder to the best cut possible.

Dragons

Dragons continue to exist in Damar, but they are small, annoying creatures that burn crops and small children. Aerin learns to fight these creatures after perfecting the recipe for kenet.

Maur, The Black Dragon

Maur, The Black Dragon, is a large dragon thought to be legend until it reappears in a village on the outskirts of Damar.

The North

The North is a region north of Damar where it is thought that both witches and demons exist.

Damar

Damar is the country in which Aerin lives with her father, Arlbeth.



Themes

Courage

The novel is set in a time when knights fought in chain mail and kings were men of honor. Chivalry was a way of life. Aerin, however, is a female child; therefore, her role is that of a lady, someone who decorates a room with her beauty and her silence. Aerin is not happy with this role. Aerin wants to learn to wield a sword, to fight alongside the men. Aerin wants to be more than the child of the king's second wife, a woman rumored to have been a witch.

Aerin proves her courage every day when she faces up to her cousin's teasing and does not back down. Aerin even eats a plant that is thought to be fatal just to prove to this same cousin that she is not afraid. This plant makes Aerin very sick, giving her time she might not have taken before to read the history of her beloved country. Aerin finds an recipe for a fire-resistant ointment that will help the wearer fight dragons. Rather than tell anyone, Aerin works the recipe until she finds the right combination of herbs to recreate the ointment. When it works, Aerin slays her first dragon, not only proving her stubbornness, but showing her depth of courage as well.

Aerin does not stop at becoming a beloved Dragon-Killer in her beloved country. Aerin goes on to kill Maur, the mythical Black Dragon that is much larger and much more dangerous than the smaller dragons she has slain before. However, this proves to only be a test before the big event. Aerin must face her uncle, a powerful mage who is determined to kill her and everyone she loves. Aerin faces him without a single doubt, proving once again the depth of her courage.

Love

Tor-sola is in love with Aerin. Tor and Aerin have been good friends since childhood. However, as Aerin blossoms into adulthood, Tor finds himself drawn to her in unexpected ways. Tor can think of nothing but Aerin, and he looks at her with such raw desire that everyone in the country knows before Aerin how he feels about her.

Aerin adores Tor, but she thinks of him as a brother, not a lover. When Aerin is injured after fighting Maur, she thinks of Tor. However, it is a blond stranger that draws out Aerin's sensuality. Aerin falls in love with Luthe, a man who once knew and loved her mother. Aerin becomes his lover, sharing intimacies that are stolen in the night while Aerin is trying to make her way back to Damar to save those she loves.

Aerin returns to Damar a hero, helping to rid the country of the last of her uncle's evil. Within days of success, Tor proposes and Aerin realizes that she has always loved Tor. Aerin and Tor marry, ruling the country together, and Aerin slowly forgets about the other man she once loved, Luthe. Luthe is for another lifetime and Aerin knows she has enough time to give to both the men she loves.



Family Relationships

Family relationships exist in several forms in this novel. First there is the relationship between Aerin and her cousins. Galanna is jealous of Aerin, jealous because she is the daughter of the king and receives many breaks for this reason. Galanna is also jealous because Tor, the young first sola, is clearly in love with her. Galanna wants to be queen. Galanna's best chance to become queen is to marry Tor, but he has eyes for no one but Aerin.

There is also the relationship between Aerin and her father. Arlbeth was deeply in love with Aerin's mother and loves his daughter deeply because of that relationship and because of the person Aerin is on her own. However, Arlbeth does not know how to deal with a female child. Arlbeth is often mystified by Aerin's behaviors and attitudes. However, this confusion slowly lifts as Aerin becomes a dragon slayer and her father has something he can share with her, something he understands. Their relationship is difficult, but filled with affection that both share for the other.

Finally, there is the relationship between Aerin and her mother. Aerin never knew her mother, but has heard rumors about her mysterious past. Aerin believes her mother was a witch from the north and that she died out of disappointment in bearing a female child. Later, however, Aerin learns her mother was poisoned by her own brother. This led Aerin's mother to seek out a man with magic in his blood so that they might have a child together powerful enough to destroy her brother. Aerin's mother experiences disappointment at bearing a daughter only because she knows how difficult her future will prove to be.



Style

Point of View

The novel is written in the third person point of view. The novel has only one narrator, Aerin-sol. The novel remains inside Aerin's head the entire length of the plot, following Aerin from a disappointed child to a slayer of mythical dragons and the savior of her country. This point of view allows the reader to hear Aerin's thoughts, to feel her emotions, and to understand her motives.

The point of view is common in modern literature, allowing the reader an intimate relationship with the main character without coming so close to the main character that the motives, emotions, and actions of other characters are not understood. There is some commentary in this novel that is clearly not in the voice of Aerin-sol, that of the author. However, these moments are rare and they only serve to add to the overall comprehension of the actions within the plot.

Setting

The novel is set mainly in the mythical country of Damar, specifically the main city where the king resides. As the daughter of the king, Aerin has full run of the castle, and she often spends a great deal of her time in the stables and her own rooms. However, Aerin also spends time in the main dining hall and the ballroom. These rooms are not specifically described, making the setting only as important as necessary to explain Aerin's motives and actions. The novel also takes Aerin to remote sections of the country, where she battles dragons and her evil uncle, Agsded. These settings again are only described as necessary to continue the feeling of a medieval setting and to explain Aerin's actions.

The setting of the novel could be unnecessarily detailed as fantasy novels often include. However, the author of this book only describes her setting in enough detail to allow the reader to get a sense of the time and atmosphere of the setting, not so much the physical presence of the setting. This lack of detail allows the reader to use their own imagination in understanding the castle, city, and countryside of the world in which Aerin lives.

Language and Meaning

The language of the novel, like the setting, has the potential to take over the plot. However, the author is careful not to include too many words that are particular to her setting. There are a few words that are unusual, such as the addition of sol and sola to the names of the king's daughter and his heirs, but these are easily explained and used infrequently in everyday speech. There are other words the author uses, such as the name of the fireproofing ointment and the plant that causes Aerin's drastic illness, but



again these are simple names that are simply introduced and used often enough that the reader does not grow confused when it appears in the text.

The language of this novel is simple English. The reader, no matter what their level of education, should have no trouble comprehending the author's use of grammar and language. The use of unfamiliar or made up words is not so frequent that the reader is overwhelmed or feels as though they need a dictionary to translate. In fact, the author keeps her use of unfamiliar words to such a minimum that the reader is not distracted by the language, but entertained by it.

Structure

The novel is divided into two parts and twenty-five chapters. The first set of chapters begin in the present, but move into the past as Aerin shares the story of her formative years and how she came to be known as the Dragon-Killer. The last part of the novel follows Aerin as she battles Maur, the Black Dragon, meets Luthe, and battles Ageded. The novel is told in equal parts exposition and dialogue, with the first half of the novel told in many sections of internal dialogue as Aerin spends a great deal of time alone dealing with her sense of being an outsider.

The novel has one plot that follows Aerin as she goes from being a sulking teenager to the savior of her country. There are multiple subplots that include Aerin's romance with Luthe, the story of Aerin's mother, and Aerin's relationship with Tor. The main plot and the subplots build off of one another, propelling the plot to a highly satisfying conclusion.



Quotes

"She could not remember a time when she had not known the story; she had grown up knowing it."

Part 1: Chap. 1, p. 3

"The young Aerin had worshipped Talat, her father's fierce war-stallion, with his fine lofty head and high tail."

Part 1: Chap. 3, p. 21

"But there was no glamour in dragon-hunting."

Part 1: Chap. 4, p. 31

"Aerin peeled out of her fancy clothes and fancy manners and pelted off to the barns at the first opportunity, and thought no more about weddings."

Part 1: Chap. 6, p. 53

"On her eighteenth birthday there was a banquet for the first sol, despite all she could do to prevent it."

Part 1: Chap. 7, p. 57

"Talat was not going to walk into a bonfire and stand there till she told him to come out again."

Part 1: Chap. 9, p. 81

"The second dragon-slaying went better than had the first." Part 1: Chapter 11, pg. 101

"The dragon's fiery blood fountained out and covered her, and she fainted."

Part 2: Chap. 12, p. 118

"Perhaps he is only a dream, her dreaming self thought; but she looked at the way his blond eyelashes caught the sunlight, at the freckles on the backs of his hands, at the way the little fingers curled under the base of the cup he held, at the steam that rose from his cup. He blinked when it wafted into his eyes."

Part 2: Chap. 15, p. 139

"Aerin's sense of the passage of time had been uncertain since she met Maur; and as her health returned in Luthe's mountain valley, she yet had difficulty in believing that days and weeks had any meaning."

Part 2: Chap. 17, p. 161

"And because she had nothing else left to do, and because she was still holding the wreath in her other hand, she threw it at him."

Part 2: Chap. 19, p. 189



"She hoped she might never be careless of Tor's feelings: Tor, who had been her best friend all her life, and sometimes her only friend. Perhaps the memory of the reek of Maur's despair made her a little forgetful too, for she began to think of the wide silver lake as a place she had visited only in dreams, and of the tall blond man she had once known as a creature of those dreams; for the not quite mortal part of her did sleep, that she might love her country and her husband."

Part 2: Chap. 25, p. 246



Topics for Discussion

Who is Aerin-sol? Why does she feel like an outsider in her own country? Why are people wary of her? Why do Galanna and Perlith often make fun of Aerin? Why does the king do little to stop them? What does Aerin do in reaction to this teasing? What does this say about Aerin's personality?

Why does Arlbeth find it difficult to deal with Aerin? Why does Arlbeth allow Teka to raise Aerin as she sees fit? Who is Teka? What relationship does she have with Aerin? How does Aerin feel about Teka? When does Aerin realize that her father finds pleasure in her presence? What does Aerin do about it? How does Aerin feel about her father?

Who is Tor? What is his relationship with Aerin? How does he feel about Aerin? How does Galanna think Tor feels for Aerin? What does Galanna do about it? How does Tor show Aerin how he feels? Why is Aerin oblivious of Tor's feelings? Does Aerin not love Tor? Is Aerin too young to understand love? What would happen if Aerin were to marry Tor? Why are the people of Damar concerned about Tor's feelings for Aerin?

What are dragons? Why are they so small in this novel? Why do the men have trouble killing them? What advantage does Aerin have over the dragons? Does this make killing the dragons easier for her? Why or why not? Why does Aerin feel the need to kill dragons? How many does she kill? Do the people like what she is doing? Why or why not?

Who is Luthe? How does he come into Aerin's life? How does he know so much about Aerin? How old is Luthe? What does he do to heal Aerin after her battle with Maur? What does this treatment do to Aerin? What does Luthe tell Aerin about her mother? Why does Luthe send Aerin to battle Agsded? Why does he not accompany her? Where does Aerin find Luthe after her battle with Agsded? Why? Why do they become lovers? Why do they part?

Who is Talat? What happened to him? Why is he put out to pasture? Why does he refuse to sire any foals? How does Aerin come to befriend him? What does this friendship do for both Aerin and Talat? Is this good? Why does Aerin begin riding Talat? Why does Aerin take Talat to both her battle with Maur and her battle with Agsded? Is this wise? What happens to Talat after this?

Who is Agsded? Why is Aerin the only person capable of fighting him? Who sends Aerin to Agsded? What does Agsded say to Aerin when they meet? For what purpose? How does Aerin defeat Agsded? What does she take from Agsded to return to Damar? What purpose does this serve?