

# **The Prize Study Guide**

## **The Prize by Julie Garwood**

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## Plot Summary

"The Prize" by Julie Garwood tells the story of a Saxon girl whose home is invaded by a Norman soldier who was told to bring her to London as a prize. Nicolaa is a strong woman who is determined to hold on to what is her own. She and Royce are attracted to each other, and they have to learn how to live together in harmony.

Royce is sent on a mission by the king. He is to go to the Saxon household and bring Nicolaa to London where she will be awarded to a nobleman. Although he has an inexperienced group of soldiers with him, Royce breaks through the stronghold only to find that one twin, a nun, is there, but Nicolaa is gone.

He talks with the nun and then leaves to deal with other things. By the time he discovers that the household doesn't have twin daughters, the real Nicolaa has left. She finds sanctuary in the church. Royce gets her away from the Abbey and takes her to London where she impresses the king and queen. After saving a child whose gown is on fire, she is allowed to choose her own husband. Nicolaa picks Royce.

They aren't in love yet, but those close to them realize that it won't be long until they are. They already show signs of loyalty to each other. When Saxons try to involve Nicolaa in an assassination plot, she refuses. Royce protects her and is more concerned about her than he is of himself. They go back to Rosewood and are attacked along the way. During the fight, Nicolaa discovers that her brother Thurston is alive. She tells Royce about her brother one night when she is in a drunken state.

They talk about the situation when she is sober, and Royce encourages her to always be truthful. They have some minor altercations and power struggles but work most things out. Royce brings Ulric and Justin back, and Nicolaa is thrilled to see the baby. She isn't allowed to see Justin until he settles into his soldier training.

Thurston surprises her by coming into the home, and she defends Royce and says she loves him. Royce lets Thurston leave, but won't let him take his son. Ulric goes to live with the family of Thurston's wife. The next time Nicolaa sees Justin, she realizes that he is thriving in training. He even laughs for the first time in a very long time. This pleases her, and she decides to do all she can to make Royce's life peaceful. She is not a naturally peaceful person and so this is difficult for her.

Nicolaa and Royce are invited to a tournament and after winning numerous feats, Justin and other top soldiers go with them to fight. The tournament is exciting and Royce's men do well, especially Justin. Morgan and Henry try to wreak havoc, and Nicolaa kills one of the men with a stone from her sling as he tries to shoot an arrow at the king. Royce and Nicolaa face a future together, solid in their love for each other.



# Chapters 1-5

## Chapters 1-5 Summary

"The Prize" by Julie Garwood tells the story of a Saxon girl whose home is invaded by a Norman soldier who was told to bring her to London as a prize. Nicolaa is a strong woman who is determined to hold on to what is her own. She and Royce are attracted to each other, and they have to learn how to live together in harmony.

In Chapter 1, Nicolaa carefully aims at Baron Royce before shooting the stone out of her sling. She doesn't want to kill him. She just wants to harm him. It's 1066, and the Norman is invading her Saxon home. She had already chased off the first three invaders, but this one isn't so easy. She knows he will win by the end of the day. Still, she wants to make it challenging for him. Her stone knocks him off his feet.

When he came back to consciousness, Royce looks around him and realizes how inept the soldiers under him are. Under his guidance, they continue into the Saxon Hall. It is his mission to take the prize to London. Her name is Lady Nicolaa. He talks to the steward and discovers that there are twin girls in the household. One of the twins is praying in the keep. She is a nun named Danielle. He tells them that he wants the other twin, but is informed that she left.

Royce searches through the house and comes across a servant girl who is scared of him. He also finds the nun. The serving girl goes over to her and informs Sister Danielle that the Norman leader has arrived. She wonders if they should surrender. Royce is impressed with the nun's gentle demeanor and her fragility. When he sees her face, he notes that she is exquisitely beautiful.

There is a baby in the room that she is taking care of, and he asks who the child belongs to. She says it's her servant's son, Ulric. Royce notices that she shows no fear of him, and she doesn't even seem to have noticed the sickle-shaped scar on his cheek. He asks her some questions about the household and about her twin. She tells him that most people can't tell the girls apart. They have very different temperaments, however.

He reassures her that no harm will come to her sister, and Ingelram interjects that she is just the king's prize. The king is planning to award her to a noble knight. Danielle wonders how they have even heard of her sister. She asks Royce if he will give his word that he alone will go after her sister, and no other. She wants to take care of the injury on his head before he goes after her sister.

A young soldier comes in and informs Royce about a battle nearby. Royce realizes that the young man is inexperienced. His friend Hugh joins him, and they talk about the soldiers under them. Royce realizes that there is something about Danielle that bothers him, but he can't figure out what it is. Hugh brings in an informant, and Royce questions him about the household.



Royce asks that Daniel be brought to him, but he finds out that she has left to go visit her brother at the Abbey. He points out that they have just let her go to a church, which would give her sanctuary. Royce goes back to asking the informant more questions and discovers that there aren't any twins. There is only one girl in the household.

In Chapter 2, Royce begins to laugh at the cleverness of the young woman. He's also pleased to know that he wasn't attracted to a nun. Ingelram feels horribly for the way he allowed himself to be deceived by Nicolaa, and he offers his sword to Royce for retaliation for the humiliation he caused his leader.

Royce asks him where he was before he came under his command. Ingelram tells him that he was Baron Guy's squire for two years. When Royce asks if Baron Guy has ever used a vassal's sword against a soldier, he expects to hear a denial. Instead, he learns that Ingelram did witness that sort of retaliation. Sometimes soldiers died as a result of infection from the wounds inflicted by Baron Guy. Most of the soldiers were obedient to Baron Guy, but they weren't loyal. They realize that Ingelram received his transfer because Baron Guy thought he would be a disservice to Royce, who he is jealous of.

Hugh develops a fever, and Royce sets aside his plans to go after Nicolaa. As Hugh worsens, they realize that they have to go to the Abbey for help. At the Abbey, the men have to leave their weapons behind. Hugh is placed next to Justin, Nicholaa's brother. Sister Felicity is taking care of both of them, and she is old. Royce finds himself face to face with Nicolaa, who is taking care of her brother. She still isn't afraid of him.

Nicolaa whispers that she should have killed him when she had the chance. When he asks what she means, she tells him that it was her stone that felled him. She makes sure that he knows that she could have killed him if she wanted to. She deliberately aimed the stone in a manner that he would be hurt but not killed. Royce asks her if she has all her belongings there because he plans to take her to London after his friend recovers. She insists that she won't go anywhere with him, but he disagrees.

For the first time, Royce looks at her brother. The young man wishes for death because he lost his hand in battle. Both Nicolaa and Royce discuss battles and warfare. He compliments her on her survival strategies and lets her know that she will walk outside the walls when it is time. She insists that she won't leave.

In Chapter 3, eight weeks later, Hugh is recovered. The abbess tells Nicolaa that she overheard Baron Royce asking Hugh to stay at the holding until he has taken the prize to London. This worries Nicolaa, but she tries to persuade herself that he is bluffing. As she talks with her servant, she finds out that Royce is on his way to get her, and her home is now called Rosewood.

Nicolaa finds out that those back at home are having a hard time disliking the Normans. Royce called all of them together and praised Hacon for defending his mistress. He asked him to kneel and pledge his loyalty, without demanding. The man didn't ever raise his voice against others, even when they made mistakes.



Nicolaa asks about baby Ulric, her nephew. Alice, the servant, tells her that he is doing well. Nicolaa wishes that she would get word from her brother, Thurston, and she wonders if he is dead. Alice continues filling her in on information learned around household. Baron Royce thinks that Nicolaa has already been married.

Later, Nicolette goes to the sickroom to see her brother, and he is in a foul mood. Soldiers ride up, and she realizes they have come to get her. Baron Royce sends the abbess in to tell her to look out the window so she can see the message he has for her. Royce is holding baby Ulric. She comes running out of the abbey, and Rafe asks if Ulric is her son. She says that he is, but Royce knows that she is lying.

He promises that no harm will come to the child. Royce gives her a cloak so she will be warm as they travel. She is angry that she is going to be dragged to London as a prize. Royce puts her up on the horse, then he dismounts and takes the child into the Abbey. This is where the child will stay until her future is determined. Nicolaa says she needs to stay as well, to take care of her brother. Royce commits to training Justin since he's a trainer of man.

They travel away, and after a long day of riding they set up camp for the night. Nicolaa waits until she thinks Royce is asleep then tries to escape. He quietly follows her, and she hurts her foot as she tries to run away. Royce goes over to help her. As he is helping her, he notices that her face is bruised. This bothers him, even when he finds out that it is an injury from her brother, and it was unintentional. As they fall asleep, Nicolaa mentions that she shouldn't be sleeping close to him like this because of her husband. Royce informs her that the husband is dead. Upon questioning she tells him that her husband has been dead for two years. He points out that Ulric is almost eight months old. He tells her that she isn't a very good liar.

In Chapter 4, after a week of traveling with Lady Nicolaa, Royce is ready to strangle her. She tries to escape three more times and is extremely stubborn. He realizes that he wants to protect her, and the only way she is going to survive in his world, she needs to become more docile.

When they arrive in London, she is sent to a chamber by herself. Royce realizes that she is afraid, and he decides to make her mad instead so he says, "checkmate." Two Saxons take care of Nicolaa, and she talks with them as she bathes and changed clothes. They tell her that it's not so bad living with the Normans.

King William and his wife Matilda gather people together to introduce them to Nicolaa. She isn't in the room yet. The king and queen talk about her bravery and the way she bested the king's soldiers on numerous occasions. William announces that there will be battle games the next day, and the winner will win her hand in marriage. When she walks in, everyone is stunned by her beauty. Lawrence asks Royce if he plans to fight for her.

Baron Guy steps forward and announces that he will challenge anyone for her hand in marriage. He also says that he will win, but a knight calls out and says he will only win if



Baron Royce doesn't enter the games. This makes Guy angry. Other knights step forward to announce that they plan to compete. It makes Nicolaa feel humiliated.

A child screams, and Nicolaa realizes that the girl's gown is on fire. She grabs the child and extinguishes the flames. Her hands are covered with blisters and burns, but the child is safe. Royce asks to look at her hands, but Nicolaa doesn't show him. Matilda comes over and takes care of her. Royce accompanies them as Matilda calls in her own healer. He stays there until Matilda tells him to leave.

Nicolaa verbalizes how much she dislikes Royce, and Matilda asks her what she sees when she looks at Royce. Nicolaa tells her that she sees a stubborn and vain man. She says that he knows his appeal. Matilda prods her to explain how Nicholas feels about Royce's appearance. Nicolaa admits that she finds him handsome.

When she goes back to the hall, Matilda whispers to her husband. The king announces that the games are called off for the next day. In thanks for saving the child, Lady Nicolaa will choose her own husband. She walks up to Royce and whispers, "checkmate."

In Chapter 5, half an hour later, they are married. Nicolaa knows that Royce must be furious. The queen seems very pleased. Royce's vassals come forward and pledge loyalty to her. When they are finished, the king announces that he is pleased with the marriage. His wife had predicted it, and she was right. Baron Guy suggests that Nicolaa picked Royce because he was the only one that she knew. He is surprised that she chose Royce because of his appearance. Nicolaa asks if he is referring to the handsome act of valor on Royce's cheek.

Matilda tells Nicolaa that Guy is very competitive, yet he constantly loses to Royce. Nicolaa says she already knew that because Royce was a legend whispered about by her brother's soldiers. However, she has never heard mention of Guy's name. She wanted to marry the best.

Later, Matilda talks with Lawrence and says that she thinks it's a good match. She says that Nicolaa is already loyal to Royce, and in time she thinks she will give him her heart. Nicolaa asks how Matilda knew that she would choose Royce. Matilda told her that it was a simple conclusion because when she asked how Nicolaa felt about Royce's appearance, she didn't mention the scar. This makes Lawrence very happy.

Nicolaa is exhausted, and she is in pain from her burns. Her servant gives her a sleeping draught then later tells Royce that Nicolaa is having nightmares. However, because of the draught, she can't wake her mistress up. Royce holds Nicolaa in his arms and tries to make her comfortable as she sleeps.

## Chapters 1-5 Analysis

Chapter 1 sets the tone for the book, immediately introducing the conflict. In a time where Saxons and Normans fight for power, a young woman is trying to keep her



household together. This is particularly difficult because women do not have much power in this era. Nicolaa is calm and skilled with a weapon. She is also wily. The young woman has defeated several opponents who have come to invade, but she knows she won't be so lucky this time. Even though she knows her adversary, Baron Royce, will take over by the end of the day, she still doesn't kill him when she has the opportunity. Instead, she relies on her ingenuity to escape from him, pretending she has a twin sister and passing herself off as a nun.

Baron Royce is a powerful man who many fear due to his looks and strength. He enjoys battle, yet has patience with those who are less experienced than he. Royce shows that he is a man of honor by the way he is horrified by the fact that he is attracted to a nun. He also shows that he is a man of honor in the way he assures household members that he will not harm them.

In Chapter 2, Royce isn't the typical soldier out to destroy. He has respect for war itself, and is more impressed with Nicolaa's strategy than angered by it. He is a patient man, willing to listen to others before acting out. This is shown by the way he listens to Ingelram and treats him fairly even though the man just allowed the prize to escape. He also prioritizes friendship. Even though he knows where the prize is, he delays going after her so he can care for his friend.

At the abbey, both Nicolaa and Royce show compassion for their loved ones. They talk together and get to know each other more, and Nicolaa finds out why Royce is after her. She is a strong woman, though, and she refuses to give in to him.

In Chapter 3, from her servant, Nicolaa finds out more about Royce. The man seems like a good man - treating her people with patience and respect. Still, she doesn't want to go off with him. He outwits her, using bait he knows she can't resist to get her out of the abbey. At this point in the story, even though he has only shown goodness and kindness, she isn't willing to risk the baby in his arms. She doesn't go peacefully and tries to escape on a regular basis, but he is a seasoned soldier, and she doesn't get away.

In Chapter 4, Nicolaa has been raised to dislike the Normans, yet the Saxons caring for her encourage her to get along with the Normans, stating that they aren't so bad. This chapter shows a great deal of character development. Nicolaa puts aside her dislike for the Normans and saves a Norman child, even though she is hurt in the process. Royce realizes that even though he is annoyed at Nicolaa, he wants to protect her and help her adjust to the new life she has to live. Nicolaa shows insecurity for the first time at the beginning of the chapter when she is sent to her rooms, and Royce helps her by diverting her fear to anger. By the end of the chapter, Nicolaa admits to finding Royce attractive. There is a definite draw between the two strong characters.

In Chapter 5, Nicolaa thinks she is making Royce's life miserable and chooses him for marriage out of spite. Still, she rushes to his defense when Guy questions her choice of husbands. Lawrence is thrilled when the queen mentions that Nicolaa doesn't seem to care about Royce's scar. This is important because Nicolaa is now getting approval from



his friends while Royce already has been getting approval from those close to Nicolaa. This symbolizes a peaceful merging of the households.



# Chapters 6-10

## Chapters 6-10 Summary

In Chapter 6, when Nicolaa wakes up, she still feels groggy. Royce isn't around as she dresses for dinner in clothes left for her by the queen. Nicolaa is already upset when she leaves for dinner, since her husband didn't bother to come get her. She is even more upset when she notices guards outside her door. Then she finds out that they are there to protect her—not to keep her in.

When she enters the hall, she sees Royce. Still frustrated that he didn't come to her, she refuses to go to him when he beckons. They have a minor dispute then eat. Royce helps her eat since she still can't use her hands. Nicolaa notices all the women looking at her husband and doesn't like it. She asks him where he slept the night before and is embarrassed to discover that he slept with her.

A herald comes to sing for everyone. In his song, he tells the tale of a woman who bested men in battle. Nicolaa enjoys the story tremendously until she realizes it's about her. The knights she bested come forward and offer her tributes. She is horrified, because she feels as if everything is a game to them. It isn't a game to her because her home was stolen. Royce reminds her that it is war, not a game.

Four men talk together in the shadows of an alcove. They have a plan that involves Nicolaa. They plan to kill her when the plan is finished. Nicolaa has no idea that they are talking about her, and she leaves early because she isn't feeling well due to the pain from the burns on her arms. Lawrence takes her to her rooms.

There is a servant in her room that she hasn't seen before. The woman tells her that she has been ordered to give Nicolaa a message. There are Saxons who expect her to kill her husband that night. Nicolaa says she won't do it, and she asks who their leader is. She points out that she couldn't kill him even if she wanted to since she can't hold a knife. As the woman leaves, she tells Nicolaa to find a way to kill him and tells her that three men will come for her at dawn. If she hasn't done the deed, the men will kill both her and her husband.

In Chapter 7, when Royce comes to his room, he finds Nicolaa throwing up into an empty chamber pot. He helps her, and they begin talking. Nicolaa tells him urgently that he must go back to Normandy where he will be safe. He asks her what happened. He sees the dagger on the chest and asks her about it. She tells him the story about the woman and tells him that she is supposed to kill him.

Nikola realizes that she feels very safe with him. They prepare to go to bed, and he tells her that he won't have any relations with her until her hands are healed. Nicolaa asks him to kiss her good night, saying that it is a family tradition. It's a very passionate kiss.



After Nicolaa falls asleep, Royce talks to his guards. Later, a vassal comes to tell him that they found the old woman. Her neck is broken, and she is dead. Somebody has thrown her behind some crates. Royce makes plans to leave by midday the next day.

In Chapter 8, Royce is disappointed when the assassins don't arrive at dawn. He doesn't want Nicolaa to be alone as they prepare to leave. Extra soldiers accompany them when they are on the road. Royce tells her that she will not leave Rosewood, and Justin and Ulric will be brought to her.

The next day, as they are traveling, Royce realizes that they are about to enter a perfect place for an ambush. Nicolaa feels very safe, and she is surprised when they are attacked. Royce is ready, however. Some soldiers try to protect her while Royce fights. Nicolaa is told not to go after her husband, but she ignores the advice. As she gets near him, she notices a warrior aiming at her husband. It is her brother, Thurston. He is preparing to kill Royce.

In Chapter 9, Royce hears Nicolaa scream and turns. She throws herself into his arms and takes the arrow that is meant for him. He is furious. Nicolaa tells him to forgive him since he couldn't have known, and Royce doesn't understand what she's saying. As Royce takes her to her home, he realizes that he is falling in love with her. He mentally tries to talk himself out of it.

Nicolaa falls in and out of consciousness. She doesn't know how to deal with the situation she is in, wondering if she is betraying her brother if she tell Royce about him. When she is conscious, she fakes unconsciousness. She decides to pretend that she has amnesia when she wakes up, but that doesn't work very well. Hugh comes to talk with her, and she shares her frustration regarding Royce and his attitudes.

In Chapter 10, things needed to change, and Nicolaa decided that she would try to be nice. Royce still hadn't brought her brother and nephew home, and he doesn't sleep with her. She dresses carefully and informs her servant that she is going to be pleasant at dinner that evening. She decides to get her husband drunk then confess to her lies about Ulric and explain about her brother Thurston. Clarise encourages her to put her pride aside and tell the truth. Nicolaa decides to stick with her own plan.

During dinner, Hugh is talking with Royce about tearing down parts of the castle. Royce explains that he's going to reinforce the home with stone and wood. She acts unusually submissive. Royce realizes that his wife is trying to get him drunk, and he begins sharing his drinks with her. Soon she is suffering from the effects of the alcohol.

He begins questioning her in her drunken state, asking her where her calluses are from. She explains that they are from the loops from her sling. He hadn't believed her at first, but now he does. He asks her if she had planned to get him drunk, and she admits it. She tells him she was doing it so that she could seduce him. She also tells him that she is not Ulric's mother and that Thurston is alive.

He questions her and discovers that Ulric is really Thurston's son. Royce also figures out that she deliberately took the arrow meant for him. By the time they get to bed,



Nicolaa has fallen asleep. He is pleased the thought that she had wanted to seduce him at least.

## Chapters 6-10 Analysis

In Chapter 6, Nicolaa wears clothes given to her by the queen. This shows the high regard the queen has for the Saxon. It also shows that although she doesn't want to have anything to do with the Normans, Nicolaa doesn't focus on revenge.

At dinner, Nicolaa demonstrates that she hasn't lost her stubbornness. She also shows her trust in her husband by the way she relaxed into him when she is overtired. The woman seems a bit confused by her own feelings since she is jealous of the looks the other women give Royce.

The story from the herald brings several things to light. Nicolaa is so modest that she doesn't even realize the story is about her until near the end, then she is embarrassed. She is also upset because the story that is entertaining them is really a tragedy on her end. Royce comforts and reassures her.

In Chapter 7, later, she shows loyalty to him by telling him about the assassination plot. He is more concerned about her safety than is. The relationship between the two is getting more solid.

In Chapter 8, Royce enjoys conflict and doesn't shie away from it. This is shown in his disappointment in the fact that the assassins didn't come by the next morning. He is a wise military man, and he is ready for battle. The only thing that throws him off is distraction by Nicolaa. The conflict of the story increases as Nicolaa notes that her brother is alive and planning to kill her husband, even though he doesn't know that she is married to Royce,

In Chapter 9, when Nicolaa is injured, Royce hurries to protect her. He realizes he is falling in love with her, but love is a foreign concept for him so he persuades himself that it really can't be love. Back at Rosewood, Nicolaa and Hugh have a chance to talk. Although she is annoyed with Royce and verbalizes it, Hugh sees through her and is happy for his friend. He knows that Nicolaa and Royce are meant for each other.

In Chapter 10, being docile isn't easy for Nicolaa, but she is prepared to do her best to have a good attitude if it will help her get her way. She misses the baby in her care, and she wants to share her secrets with Royce. Nicolaa comes up with the plan to get him drunk. When her servant advises against it, Nicolaa remains true to her stubborn self and refuses to listen. The plan backfires on her when she gets drunk, but the information comes out anyway. Thanks to Royce's kindness and patience, the experience is yet another step forward in their relationship, and the secrets are gone.



# Chapters 11-15

## Chapters 11-15 Summary

In Chapter 11, when Nicolaa wakes up, she realizes that she is sleeping with her husband. He appeared happy and fit, but she feels miserable. By noon, she begins to feel better. Royce asks her what happened the night before, but she doesn't remember. Her servant points out that she was stark naked that morning so something must have happened.

She talks with Royce later and asks him what happened. He tells her that he isn't pleased that telling the truth is so difficult for her, but he likes how she responds to him. He tells her that he's going to get Justin and Ulric the next day. She goes off to prepare for their arrival.

At dinner, when she tells her husband her plans for sleeping arrangements, he tells her that Justin is going to sleep with the other soldiers. Hugh tells everyone that he is going to meet for London the next day, and he hopes for one last chess game that evening. Royce says that Nicolaa is going to be busy after dinner, and Nicolaa compromises by saying that she could just play one quick game.

As Hugh sets out the chess game, one of the wooden statues falls to the floor. Nicolaa tells him to be careful because her father carved the pieces. Fortunately, nothing is damaged. Nicolaa shows Royce the nick in the black queens crown. Her father was telling a funny tale as he was carving, and he laughed so hard he cut his finger and nicked the wood. Royce asks her about all the other pieces, and she tells him that she and her mother painted and polished the pieces. She was in charge of the whites. Nicolaa easily and quickly defeats Hugh in the game.

After the game, Royce tells Nicolaa that it's time to begin a discussion. He talks to her about the night before, and he tells her that he wants to get along with her. He expresses how important honesty is. He begins to lecture her, and her mind wanders. As she prepares for bed, she notes that her husband is going to join her. She tells him that she is inexperienced, and he's gentle with her. They are both pleased after they make love. Although they don't express love for each other, Royce kisses her on top of her head before they fall asleep, and it is enough.

In Chapter 12, Royce is in the great hall talking with some men when Nicolaa wakes up the next day. Things seem tense, and as she walks forward, she notices that little Ulric is home. Royce is holding him. She thanks him for his kindness and asks about Justin. Her husband tells him that Justin is there, but the place is no longer his home. He is now a soldier in Royce's ranks. Royce tells Nicolaa that she may see his brother after he is settled in.



Nicolaa gets Ulric settled in, then she returns to the hall. They talk about expanding the holding and strengthening the walls. Nicolaa hadn't realized that the walls were weak. After dinner, Nicolaa talks to the servants, telling them that they should obey her husband. She apologizes for changing orders her husband had given earlier that day.

She isn't happy as she leaves the hall, annoyed with her husband. Someone grabs her from behind, and she begins to struggle until she hears her brother's voice in her ear. It is Thurston. He asks why she tried to protect the Norman, and she tells him that Royce isn't her captor, he is her husband. She admits that she was not forced to marry him, and Thurston reminds her that the war is not over. He can't believe that she wants to stay with her husband. She admits that she loves the man. Thurston calls her a traitor.

He asks where his son is. Thurston also asks about Justin. When he goes to check in on Ulric, he tells Nicolaa that he doesn't want her to touch his son. Royce comes into the room and sees Thurston with the child. Thurston threatens to kill Royce, and Royce confronts him about abandoning his brother after he heard that he was injured. Royce realizes that Justin knew his brother had betrayed him.

Royce demands that Thurston tell him who threatened his wife before he leaves. He tells Thurston about the situation that occurred in London. Thurston knows nothing about the situation. The two men come to a tentative truce although neither of them like it. They agree that Ulric will go to live with Thurston's wife's family, and Royce tells Thurston to get rid of his hatred while there is still time.

After Thurston leaves, Royce realizes that Nicolaa was worried about him. Royce reassures her and tells her that he is there to protect her. She questions some of the decisions he is making regarding house and Justin. He reminds her that he said he would take care of when they were back at the Abbey. They make love, and as she falls asleep, she wishes that her husband loved her.

In Chapter 13, when Nicolaa comes to talk with Royce, he notes how all his soldiers turned to mush when she is around. He asks her what her plans are for the day, and she says that she doesn't have any duties to do. When he gives orders, she can't run the household. They argue, and he gives a list of things that she should do so that she has peace. One of these rules is the fact that she is not allowed to cry.

She asks him if he loves her, and she tells him that she told Thurston that she loved him. Royce thinks she said that in order to gain Thurston's cooperation. When he tells her that he thinks marriage is like a map, she tells him that he should have married one of his soldiers and runs out of the room.

Lawrence comes in and tells Royce that Justin lost his temper. Nicolaa hears them talking, and she finds out that her husband is going to go help Justin redirect his anger by allowing her brother to get angry at him. She announces that she trusts him and leaves. Royce instructs Lawrence to make sure that she doesn't interfere.

Royce talks with Justin and explains the rules of conduct for soldiers in his ranks. The boy charges at him, and he trips the boy. He tells him that he is his baron and Justin is



his vassal. Royce informs the boy that he is going to train with the rest of the unit. He turns to leave, and Justin tries to sneak up behind him and attack him. Royce trips him once again. As Ingelram takes Justin to go get a uniform, he points out that the baron retaliated without using his hands.

Nicolaa goes to bed early, and Lawrence confesses that it's probably his fault. Five minutes after he began waiting for Lady Nicolaa, he looked up and noticed that she was watching from on top of the wall. She saw Royce's confrontation with her brother.

In Chapter 14, Lady Millicent and Baron Duncan comes to pick up Ulric. The situation is hard for Nicolaa, but she knows they will be good to the boy. They promise to love him. As they talk later, Nicolaa confesses to Royce that when she chose him for husband, she was being selfish. She realizes that she could have destroyed his life. She plans to change her ways to make sure that they live in peace and harmony together. They make love once again.

In Chapter 15, Nicolaa tries to become the kind of life she thinks Royce wants. She controls her temper, keep her opinions to herself, and does her best to be agreeable. She also organizes the servants. Clarise points out that she is trying to get her husband to feel about her as her father felt about her mother. She doesn't think that Royce loves her.

Royce is pleased with the changes he sees in her, and he offers to let her speak with Justin. She is pleased with the changes that she sees in her brother, and Justin is reassured that she is treated well. As he walks away, Justin's friends start teasing him because Nicolaa was trying to mother him as they talked. It is kind-hearted teasing, and Nicolaa is very happy to hear him laughing. Royce and Lawrence talk about Justin's progress, and they are pleased. However, he notices that the other soldiers are going easy on him. He points out how this is a disservice to Justin.

## Chapters 11-15 Analysis

In Chapter 11, Nicolaa wakes up with an excruciating hangover. Royce is a nice guy, but he still makes her pay a bit for her antics the night before. He makes her think that she has disappointed him. She thinks she has disappointed him sexually when really he's disappointed that she is so uncomfortable telling him the truth.

The two continue to get to know each other better, and Nicholaa shares more about her past. She shows the close relationship her family had as she talks about the importance of the chess game and the stories and laughter from her family. Royce wants to hear more about her past, and he is also impressed with the way she plays chess.

When Royce lectures Nicolaa, she finds herself daydreaming. Still, she respects him enough to stay there pretending to listen to him. She realizes that he cares for her just as she is caring for him. When they finally come together sexually, he is very gentle and patient. The experience is good for both of them. She wants a token of love after they





have had sex, but she doesn't verbalize it. He kisses her on the head, and she is satisfied.

In Chapter 12, Royce is true to his word, and Justin and Ulric are there at the keep. Still, it's not the same as the past. They all have new positions, and Royce is the baron. Justin has to live with the soldiers. Although that sounds autocratic, Royce shows how caring he is in the way he handles the baby.

There is a small battle between husband and wife when Royce gives a command, and Nicolaa countermands him. She finds herself in a situation where she has to apologize to the servants and tell them to listen to her husband. This makes her angry, but it shows that she cares for her servants and doesn't want them to suffer for her own actions.

Thurston comes to visit her, and although she is happy to see her brother, she still defends her husband. Royce comes in, and although he wants to seriously harm her brother, he doesn't do so because he knows that she loves her family. As they talk, it's apparent that there is more to the story than originally seen. Thurston is actually a weakling who isn't strong enough to stand up to support his own family.

Royce talks with Nicolaa and they work through their troubles. Nicolaa wants more. She wants love.

In Chapter 13, Royce publicly shows affection to Nicolaa, and she has no apparent recognition of her affect on the soldiers around her. Once again, she and Royce disagree, but Boris doesn't seem to really understand her.

Royce is an experienced trainer of men. He knows what Justin is going through, and he doesn't take his anger as a personal attack. Instead, he sees it as growth. Even though Nicolaa doesn't understand what he is doing with her brother, she trusts him enough to leave her brother in his hands.

In Chapter 14, it's very difficult for Nicolaa when Ulric leaves with the relatives. Still, she lets them go because she knows that what is best. Royce know how difficult it is for her, and he comforts her. They are bonding emotionally.

In Chapter 15, determined to win her husband's love, Nicolaa does her best to behave in a peaceful manner. At first it's pleasing to Royce, but those closest to her know that it's a real trial for her. As she listens to men talking with her husband, she learns that some of the things she was annoyed with her husband over were really actions taken for her own protection. The house is in very bad shape, and he is trying to strengthen it.

Nicolaa finally has a chance to meet with her brother. She is thrilled and tries to take on a mothering role. Justin is thriving under Royce's training. It's the happiest Nicolaa has seen her brother in a long time, and this makes her happy. Royce and Lawrence notice that Justin isn't just doing better as a soldier, he's actually becoming a leader.





Royce knows that Justin means a lot to Nicolaa, but he also knows that is in the boy's best interest to train him properly as a soldier. He encourages everybody to be real with Justin as they are fighting. It seems harsh at first, but they'll come to realize that eventually it might save Justin's life.

When Royce allows Justin to fight him, he doesn't hold back. Still, he shows that he is always aware of his wife and is sensitive to her feelings by the way he makes Justin smile even when he is pinned. Justin understands, and he is pleased when he wins the privilege of having dinner with the family. He knows he has earned it, and it's not an act of pity.

The house is falling apart, and now Nicolaa is literally hanging, waiting for Royce to rescue her. He tells her to let go, and she drops into his arms. This is symbolic of his eagerness and ability to protect her, and it's also symbolic of her willingness to trust him.



# Chapters 16-18

## Chapters 16-18 Summary

In Chapter 16, Royce has a hard time figuring out how to convince his wife that he would have chosen her. Although it's frustrating, it's even more frustrating to see her perpetual smile. Royce has invited six additional soldiers to supper, and Morgan and Henry come inside. They talk about hunting down the last of the resistors. Nicolaa hears them, and she knows that one of these resistors is her brother. They taunt her with this knowledge. Royce tells the messengers to give their message and leave.

As he talks, Morgan picks up one of the chess pieces off of the mental and begins to play with it. He gives the message from the king and also says that the king and queen insist that Lady Nicolaa attend a tournament. Morgan says that he intends to crush the soldiers and they won't be defeated this time. To emphasize his point, Morgan tosses the black queen into the fire. Royce immediately attacks him and shoves him back into the wall, which gives way. This makes Nicolaa smile.

Royce feels that his wife took Morgan's treachery a little bit too well. He waits to see what she will do, and he intercepts when she comes out after the man with her sling. Royce suggests they go to bed, and he began to kiss her. Justin and his friends walk by, and Justin is pleased to see his sister so happy. He knows he won't have to worry about her any longer.

That night at dinner, Nicolaa notices some cuts on her husband's hands. He doesn't respond to her questioning about them. He seems exhausted, and one night she wakes up in the middle of the night and goes to find her husband. He is making a black queen for her. She realizes that he loves her. Her brother comes in, and hands Royce a better knife. The men talk about how surprised and pleased she's going to be, and she whispers that she is both surprised and pleased.

Nicolaa tells her brother that she loves her husband, and that he loves her as well. Justin says he knows that. Royce asks her if she is certain that he loves her, and when she says yes, he tells her that he hopes it means that she will stop smiling all the time because it's driving him crazy. He doesn't want a fake wife. He wants her.

In Chapter 17, Nicolaa is back to her former self, and they argue before noon the next day. She's changing the plans for their housing, trying to make better kitchen space. Royce is busy figuring out who will go to compete in the games. He is setting up feats of strength, and the top 10 soldiers from each division will earn the honor of fighting in the games. By the second week, he is getting more withdrawn, and he won't talk about the competition. Nicolaa knows he is worried, but she is patient and figures he will confide in her when he's ready.



Four weeks before the games, he talks with her. He reminds her what an honor it is for men to be chosen to fight. He tells her that the men have been chosen, and it can't be undone. She agrees. Royce mentions that there is one soldier in particular who is well above the others. Justin has earned the right to command the unit. This scares her and makes her angry at her husband. He asks if she really has faith in him, and she says she does. He tells her that Justin is walking around like a rooster. She asks Royce to make certain that her brother is ready, instructing him on any deceitful trick that an opponent might use.

They invite all the soldiers who won to a special dinner. Royce tells Justin that beginning the next day, he is going to set aside two hours each day to instruct him. Nicolaa asks her brother about the covering he has for his arm. She tells him that she is cunning as well. She suggests they sew something sharp into the leather so people would get injured if they tried to grab his arm.

Nicolaa tells Lawrence to be very careful because Morgan and Henry both might want to take him down if they can't get Royce. Henry is angry because she didn't choose his baron for marriage. Preparing for the tournament is difficult for Nicolaa. It's also a time of happiness because she realizes that she's going to have a baby. She doesn't want to stay home, so she doesn't tell her husband about the baby until they are traveling and they are far enough away from home that he won't send her back. He is very pleased.

In Chapter 18, a field outside of London are ready for the tournament. People are dressed up, children are playing, and the occasion seems very festive. Baron Guy's soldiers fight against Baron Royce's. Lawrence and Henry are facing off against each other. Lawrence defeats him quickly and easily. After the seasoned warriors battle, it's time for the younger soldiers to participate. Nicolaa watches her brother go into the field.

Royce tells the young soldiers that he expects a victory. The herald talks with Nicolaa and says history is being made that day since a one-handed warrior is leading soldiers into combat. She tells him that it's her brother. He's happy to hear it because that means there are two legends in the same family. Clayton, the herald, is one of the three official observers. He watches everything carefully hoping to get details to add to her legend.

The fight begins, and Justin seems to instinctively know how to play to the crowd. He fights well, and he's the last one left standing. Nicolaa sees Royce and Guy having a heated debate by King William. Guy subjects his vassals to public humiliation. Nicolaa watches Royce walk onto the field, and she thinks he is coming to the tent for refreshments. As she goes to prepare some for him, she notices that her sling is there. She hears trumpets, and observes her husband on the field facing off against Guy. When she tries to go closer to see what is happening, soldiers hold her back telling her that her husband had requested that she watch from a distance.

The fight seems even at first, but Royce is more controlled. Nicolaa relaxes and looks around a bit. She notices two soldiers acting suspiciously. Grabbing her sling, she heads outside. One of the soldiers shoots an arrow, and Guy steps in front of it at the last second, saving Royce. The soldiers are Morgan and Henry. Royce takes care of



Henry, and Nicolaa prepares to hit Morgan's arm, using her sling, before he shoots his arrow at her husband. She dispatches the stone, and at the last second he turns in his saddle and aims at another target. The stone catches him in the side of the head, killing him.

Royce goes to help Guy since he still has an arrow lodged in his sore shoulder. Nicolaa is worried that Royce is going to be upset with her since she interfered. When he comes to her, he tells her that he is not angry. She finds out that the king had sentenced Henry and Morgan to death, and they were retaliating by trying to kill the king. Her stone saved the king's life. Nicolaa and Royce are solid in their love for each other and prepare to face the rest of their lives together.

## Chapters 16-18 Analysis

In Chapter 16, Royce is amazing at training soldiers, but he is so geared toward toughening others up (and toughening himself up) that he doesn't understand how to express his softer side. This becomes a problem when he wants to show his wife that he truly loves her. Nicolaa knows this about him, and she realizes that love is expressed in simple forms and sometimes has to become spelled out. This is apparent in the way she verbalizes acknowledgement of her husband's love for her after she discovers him trying to replace the broken chess piece.

This chapter shows the importance of and growth in family bonding. The reader has seen Nicolaa mothering Justin. Now, the reader also sees that Justin has been concerned about her as well. He doesn't let down his own guard until he sees her kissing Royce during the day. There is also a bond between Royce and Justin as they work on the chess piece together.

In Chapter 17, Royce is caught between his duty as a trainer of soldiers and his duty of caring for his wife. He has set up feasts for his soldiers to see who would compete in the tournament, and Justin is an overwhelming success. Royce knows this will add stress to his wife's life. He shows how much he cares for her in his distress over the situation. They are honest with each other, and she once again demonstrates his faith in him. Nicolaa shows support of her own by coming up with a devious plan to ward off opponents who tried to take advantage of her brother by grabbing his arm. She also shows support for her husband's men, expressing concern over the thought that they might be harmed. The household is no longer Norman vs. Saxon. It's a household filled with people who care about each other.

In Chapter 18, the tournament is exciting, and Royce's men perform well, attesting to his strength as a trainer. There is redemption in this chapter as Guy steps forward to take an arrow meant for Royce. Nicolaa saves the king's life, but true-to-form doesn't want the glory from the act. She and Royce are just happy to be together, secure in their love for each other.



# Characters

## Lady Nicolaa

This Saxon runs her household since her brother is missing. Normans invade, but she fends them off until Royce comes. She uses her ingenuity and pretends to be a nun, escaping to the church. A strong woman, this character tries to escape many times on the way to London, and she has a hard time adjusting to life with the Normans. Even though she doesn't want to be there, she shows compassion when a Norman child is on fire, sacrificing herself to help the girl.

This character is very handy with a sling shot, and she can run a household. She is close to her brother, but shows trust for her husband when she allows him to take over the training of her brother. It's difficult for her, and she has a hard time not babying him as she sees him struggling to learn to fight with one hand.

## Baron Royce

This soldier is a leader of the Norman's that received an assignment from the king. He had to bring Nicolaa back to London so she could be a prize for a nobleman. The man is strong and has a distinctive scar on his face that many find ugly and scary. In reality he is very kind and understanding.

He is also patient and forgiving. He trains soldiers and does it without cruelty. This is shown in the way he gives the bumbling Ingelram encouragement and a chance to become a worthy soldier. This character also offers to train Nicolaa's brother. He is angry because he lost his hand, but this character shows the young man that he is really a great fighter, and he has the ability to excel on the battlefield even with his impairment.

## Justin

This is Nicolaa's little brother. He was injured in battle and lost a hand. Royce took on his training.

## Duke William

Great leader of the Norman army, he will later become England's king.



## **Matilda**

This is William's wife and queen of England. She is very short. She is also wise and she knows before anyone else that Nicolaa and Royce cared for each other.

## **Thurston**

This character is Nicholaa's big brother.

## **Ulric**

This character is Thurston's son. He was left in Nicolaa's care and she tried to pretend he was hers.

## **Baron Hugh**

This man is a soldier and a good friend of Royce. He almost died and had to recover in the abbey next to Justin.

## **Ingelram**

This is Royce's soldier. He was very inept as a soldier at first, but Royce was patient with him.

## **Clarise**

This is Nicholaa's maid.

## **Baron Guy**

This man is a powerful Norman, but he always comes second to Royce. This makes him jealous. The man is not kind to others.

## **Hacon**

This is Nicholaa's steward. He protected her by claiming that she was one of a set of twins.

## **Sir Gregory**

This was the first knight that tried to conquer Nicholaa's castle. She defeated him.



## **Danielle**

This is Nicholaa's 'twin' sister. She was a nun.

## **James**

This individual was a Saxon spy that gave information to Royce. He was the one who alerted Royce to the fact that there was no set of twins in the household.

## **Henry**

This is Guy's right hand man.

## **Morgan**

This is another man who works with Guy.

## **Charles**

This man is Hugh's vassal.

## **Sister Felicity**

This is the name of the elderly woman who took care of Justin and Hugh monastery's healer.

## **Alice**

This woman is Nicholaa's maid. She tells her mistress how kind Royce is when he takes over the household.

## **Lawrence**

This man is a strong and loyal warrior of Royce's. He is Royce's second in command and is also his friend.

## **Sir Clayton**

This character is the king's herald.



## **Sir Samuel**

This individual is the queen's healer. He gives Nicolaa special treatment for her burns.

## **Sir Hannibal**

This is the second knight that tried to conquer Nicholaa's castle. She defeated him

## **Sir Michael**

This is the third knight that tried to conquer Nicholaa's castle. She defeated him.

## **Lady Millicent**

This is Ulric's aunt. She takes him into her household and showers him with love.

## **Baron Duncan**

This is Ulric's uncle. He is Millicent's husband. He welcomes the child into his household.





## Objects/Places

### Sling

This is what Nicolaa uses to harm Royce as he attacks her household.

### Hand

This is what Justin loses. He feels as if he is useless without it, but Royce teaches him differently.

### London

This is where Royce is supposed to bring the prize.

### The prize

This is what Royce is supposed to bring back to the king. Nicolaa is really the prize, and she is supposed to be awarded to a noble.

### Sword

This is what Ingelram offers to Royce because he felt terrible for letting the Baron down.

### Knife

This is what is left for Nicolaa so she can kill Royce. She says she couldn't hold it even if she wanted to.

### Arrow

This is what Nicolaa throws herself in front of. Her brother Thurston was using it to get at Royce.

### Wine

This is an integral part of Nicolaa's plan on the night she told him her secrets about Ulric and Thurston.



# Themes

## There is More Than One Type of Beauty

Royce is a well-built, strong man who is patient and loyal. There are many who fear him and don't want to take a chance getting to know him because they are repulsed by the scar on his face. When Nicolaa meets him, she doesn't seem to notice his scar. She is angry at him, but it has nothing to do with his looks. When the queen talks with her and asks what she thinks about Royce, Nicolaa says that she finds him vain. This humors the queen, and she knows that their match will be a good one because Nicolaa sees beyond the external experience of the man and appreciates what's inside of him. His closest friends are delighted to note that Nicolaa does this as well. When the scar is brought to her attention, Nicola calls it a mark of valor.

Although the scarring doesn't bother Nicolaa in relation to Royce, she is bothered by the scarring on her own arms, finding it ugly and worrying that it will repulse Royce. Royce is stunned by her beauty in general, and the scarring on her hands doesn't bother him at all. It's especially meaningful to him that he knows she received the scars while saving the child of her perceived enemy.

Guy is just the opposite of the two heroes of the story. Outwardly, he is very beautiful, but inwardly he is not. He lets jealousy eat at him and focuses on getting revenge on Royce, who always seems to do better than he does in life. He is also mean to the soldiers who are under his command, gaining their fear rather than their loyalty.

## Politics Divide People Who Might Really Get Along

Royce is a Norman who goes on a mission for his Norman king. As part of business for the king, he takes over a Saxon household and brings the woman in the household to his king as a prize. This prize is Nicolaa.

Nicolaa has grown up despising the Normans. When she is brought to London, she talks with other Saxons who tell her that the Normans aren't that bad, and she should give them a chance. The political situation in the country has changed, and the Saxons will not win so it's in her best interest to get along with the Normans.

She doesn't want to listen to this advice, and she doesn't want to have anything to do with the king and queen. Still, when a Norman child catches on fire, Nicolaa risks her own safety to help the child. She also helps take care of a Norman soldier when he is healing at the Abbey. These are all people who could get along well, but politics separates them. The Saxons and Normans learn to overcome their political prejudice and get along as humans.

Nicola is not happy with the political situation that has made her lose her household. The Normans seem to understand that, and although they use the politics of the time to



take over her household, they are careful to treat those in the household with respect. In doing so, the members of the household eventually come to care about them and want to work with them. They are able to overcome the political disparities between the Norman and Saxon groups and come to appreciate each other and work together as a cohesive unit.

## **Physical Handicaps Don't Have to Hold One Down**

Nicolaa is a woman, and in her time it is not common for a woman to have any sort of military training or experience. She does not let this hold her back, however, and she is very handy with a slingshot and with a bow and arrow. Her brother, Justin, is injured in battle. He loses a hand. As a result, he also loses his will to live. He survives in spite of himself, and Royce takes over his training.

Royce teaches him that having a handicap does not make a person unfit for battle. It's true that it means that they are perceived as weaker and must constantly be prepared for attacks on their weak area. However, their weakness can also be the strength since others will expect them to be weaker, and they can counter attacks in creative ways that are not expected by their opponents.

# Style

## Point of View

The novel is recounted in third-person and omniscient narration. The narrator clearly sees all that is going on outwardly and in the minds of the two main characters, Nicolaa and Royce. This allows the reader to gain insight into the struggles and motivations within the main characters. Because of this point of view, the reader understands that Royce really loves Nicolaa, but he doesn't understand how to show her his love. At first he doesn't even want to acknowledge it to himself. The reader also sees Nicolaa's inward struggle to really act on the faith and trust she verbalizes in regards to her husband.

This makes the reader connect with the main characters because they are very real people with strength and flaws. Third-person omniscient narration also allows the reader to feel the emotional turmoil Nicolaa feels as she adjusts to her home coming under the leadership of others.

## Setting

This story takes place in England in the year 1066. It's a time of great unrest as the Normans and Saxons fight each other for power. It's a time where females are considered weaker than men. This is essential to the storyline because Nicolaa, as a lesser person, meets Royce when he searches for her in order to bring her to the king as a prize. True to the times, she finds sanctuary in the church, and they must travel for days on horseback to arrive in London. This allows them time to get to know each other better in a natural manner.

## Language and Meaning

Although this story takes place in 1066, the author uses generally modern language. The words that stand out as true to the time are words referring to clothing items and weaponry. For example, at one point the author states that Nicolaa is dressed in deep blue chainse and bliaut. Since the language is not cumbersome in its antiquity, it's easier for the reader to follow the storyline, becoming immersed in it.

Most of the dialogue revolves around the two main characters, but the other characters are strong as well. Clarise often offers advice, and other sub characters show closeness to the main characters through teasing and the offering of more advice.

## Structure

This novel consists of 18 chapters. The story flows in a chronological order. Each chapter ranges from approximately 20 pages to approximate 30 pages. They are labeled numerically with written word rather than digits. Each chapter shows emotional growth and connection between the main characters and within the main character's own selves. The climax of the story occurs in the last chapter. All the tiny pieces form together to create the conflict and a realistic and pleasing resolution.



## Quotes

"'I should have killed you when I had the chance,' she whispered" (Chapter 2, p. 41).

"If she was going to survive with her spirit intact under Norman rule, she would have to be more docile" (Chapter 4, p. 83).

"'Mark of valor?' he repeated. 'What an unusual way of looking at the imperfection'" (Chapter 5, p. 114).

"'Boys have perfection,' Nicholaa answered. 'I chose a man'" (Chapter 5, p. 115).

"He didn't just care about her. He was falling in love with the woman" (Chapter 9, p. 180).

"He silenced her with a long kiss. When he pulled back, she frowned up at him. He couldn't have been more pleased. In his mind, his wife was already on the road to recovery" (Chapter 9, p. 185).

"'Why must you complicate everything?' she asked. 'This is my plan, not yours. We have to do it my way. You're confusing me with all your questions'" (Chapter 10, p. 207).

"'A woman can't do anything about her appearance,' he said. 'Either she's pretty or she isn't. But her character is quite another matter'" (Chapter 11, p. 235).

"She had Royce's protection, aye. But she wanted his love" (Chapter 12, p. 284).

"Nicholaa?" His voice was a bare whisper. "Yes?" she whispered back. "You belong with me" (Chapter 13, p. 309).

"Royce reacted as though he'd just been struck. Hell, he thought to himself, he'd been acting just like Justin. From the beginning the holding was his, not Nicholaa's; the servants belonged to him, not her...and after a time she'd finally conceded" (Chapter 15, p. 345).

"'God help me.' Her gaze flew to his. 'He already helped me,' she whispered. 'He gave me you'" (Chapter 16, p. 363).



## Topics for Discussion

What was the political situation like between the Saxons and the Normans?

Why was it unusual for Nicolaa to run her household and use a sling?

What were different ways Nicolaa showed cunning throughout the story?

Why did Royce have such a difficult time showing his love for Nicolaa?

Describe the relationship between Nicolaa and the rest of her family members.

Describe the importance of the chess set both before and after the queen was burned.

How did Justin show mental and physical growth throughout the story?