

The Reckoning Study Guide

The Reckoning by Sharon Kay Penman

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Plot Summary

The Reckoning by Sharon Kay Penman is a work of historical fiction detailing the relationship between England and Wales between the years of 1271 and 1283. The novel begins in the Evesham Abbey in England in January of 1271, five years after Simon de Montfort dies in the battle of Evesham. Simon de Montfort is the Earl of Leicester, and brother-in-law of the English King Henry. He rebels against the king and is defeated by the king's son, Prince Edward. Prince Edward ascends the throne of England after his father's death and is called the greatest warrior in all of Christendom because of his defeat of the brilliant militant Simon de Montfort.

King Edward rules England from the shadows, impatiently waiting for King Henry's death. When he finally takes the throne, he seeks to expand England's borders. He rules England as a tyrant; cruel, cunning, and viewed by all as empowered by God's blessings. Generations of English kings have sought to capture bordering Wales and Edward soon declares war there as well.

The Prince of Wales, Llewelyn ap Gruffydd, holds a tentative grip on his lands and people. Wales is an autonomous kingdom with its own customs and laws, misunderstood by the English government. Unlike England, Welsh law divides inheritance between the sons and even recognizes illegitimate heirs. This custom fosters fratricide when the brothers are unable or unwilling to share, and divides the land of the royal house into fragments ruled equally by brothers. Llewelyn is the victim of brotherly jealousy after the death of his father, and must defend his claim against three brothers. Llewelyn is victorious, but his family is splintered. Loyalty from the Welsh people is hard to win because of conflicting powers, but following the guidance of his grandfather, Llewelyn inspires his people to unite against the English invasion.

Llewelyn ap Gruffydd fights three wars against England. His life is in a constant state of war. Since he has declared himself Prince of Wales, his life has been consumed by planning for, fighting, or recovering from war. He finds victory in his first war and sees the borders of Wales grow to where they were during the reign of his grandfather. However, the victory is short lived. During the second war, King Edward is aided by Llewelyn's brother Davydd, and Llewelyn is forced to surrender. Border lands are once again controlled by England, and Llewelyn watches his life's work crumble. Thirty years of struggle and fighting for nothing. England takes back all Llewelyn has won.

Llewelyn's surrender is made a little sweeter because King Edward allows him to meet and receive his bride into Wales. Edward has been holding Llewelyn's wife as a hostage, a wife Llewelyn loves but has never seen, as leverage during the war. After Llewelyn's surrender, he takes his wife to his home in Wales and attempts to live as a proper English vassal. Davydd, King Edward's ally in the second war, now seeks to join with Llewelyn to return their sacred Wales to its former glory. Another war is inevitable, but Llewelyn develops a strategy that involves waiting until the right time to rebel against the Crown. Davydd disagrees. The third war begins and Llewelyn is killed in battle. Davydd becomes the last true Prince of Wales, a title he holds only a short time

before being executed by King Edward for treason. After Davydd, the title Prince of Wales is reserved for the heir to the English Crown.



Chapters 1, Evesham Abby, England, January 1271- 3, Siena, Tuscany, March 1271

Chapters 1, Evesham Abby, England, January 1271- 3, Siena, Tuscany, March 1271 Summary

The Reckoning by Sharon Kay Penman is a fictional account of the royal houses of Wales and England between the years of 1271 and 1283. Wales is in a constant state of war with an invading England. Penman creates a vivid story of the people, motivations, and heartbreak behind the battles. The novel begins five years after the battle of Evesham in which the rebel Simon de Montfort is defeated by his nephew the English Prince Edward, called Ned in childhood by his cousins. Edward allows his uncle's body to be mutilated and the parts are shipped across the country as souvenirs. The de Montfort family is in chaos after this battle and can never forgive their cousin for his brutality.

Chapter 1 begins with the fourteen-year-old orphan Hugh de Whitton under the care of Brother Damian at Evesham Abbey. Hugh's father dies fighting with the rebel Simon de Montfort during the battle of Evesham. Hugh offers to help the monk carry candles into the sacristy and they are surprised to encounter Bran, Simon's son. He is wounded and in danger, being pursued by agents of the English King Henry. Hugh, a young lad with no prospects for the future, soon to be forced to leave the care of the Abbey, volunteers to guide Bran across the border into Wales. The Prince of Wales, Llewelyn ap Gruffydd, was a supporter of Simon, and will provide shelter and protection for Simon's son.

The action then moves to Wales, into Llewelyn's court, and introduces the tension between Llewelyn and his brothers. Llewelyn inherits his land and position in Wales with his brothers. In keeping with the Welsh tradition, the brothers do not share easily. Llewelyn's older brother, Owain, has been imprisoned by Llewelyn in Dolbadarn Castle for fifteen years. The youngest brother, Rhodri, has been exiled and lives in England. Davydd has rebelled twice against Llewelyn. The first time he is forgiven. The second time he is exiled to England for four years.

Davydd returns to Wales from exile at the behest of King Edward as a condition of the Treaty of Montgomery in 1267. He is admitted to Llewelyn's court but not yet trusted. Davydd is known for his superior verbal sparring abilities, which he often uses to manipulate. Soon after Bran's arrival in Wales, Davydd turns the conversation to Bran's spurned sister, Ellen. Llewelyn has a marriage pact, a plight troth, with Ellen that he refuses to honor after Simon's death. He cannot marry the daughter of an English rebel after the rebellion is stopped, an unavoidable decision, but one he regrets nonetheless.



In chapter 2, Bran and Hugh return to his mother's home in exile. Nell de Montfort, sister to a king and raised in palaces, now rents a cottage on the grounds of a convent as the widow of a rebel, supported by her friend the French Queen Marguerite. Bran has a brief tryst with Dame Juliana, his mistress and his sister's lady-in-waiting, and leaves for Italy with Hugh.

In chapter 3, Bran is going to Italy to meet his brother Guy de Montfort, King Philippe of France, and King Charles of Sicily. The kings are making their way home from the Crusades, visiting Guy's father-in-law, the Count of Sovana and Pitigliano. While in Italy Hugh receives a birthday present in Siena's best whorehouse. Henry of Almain, first cousin to King Edward, Guy and Bran appear in Italy. Henry, called Hal by his cousins in childhood, betrayed Simon. Guy murders him in a church in Viterbo claiming that it is justice for the battle of Evesham, even though Hal was not at that battle. Guy and Bran are outlaws, condemned by King Henry and the Church for this violent murder.

Chapters 1, Evesham Abby, England, January 1271- 3, Siena, Tuscany, March 1271 Analysis

Chapter one introduces the source of the main conflict between the characters. The battle of Evesham destroys the de Montfort family, and demonstrates the remarkable cruelty of Prince Edward. Hugh is introduced as an innocent, eager young man destined to become an adopted member of the de Monfort family. His father dies fighting for Simon and he is intimately familiar with the family. He knows Bran on sight, even though they have never met, and Hugh never hesitates to offer his assistance.

Chapter 1 also introduces the royal family of Wales and explains the internal struggles of the kingdom. The relationship between Llewelyn and Davydd is one of the most complicated of the novel. The brothers both love and hate each other and struggle with trust throughout the novel. Davydd believes Llewelyn should wear a halo instead of a crown and this is a source of envy and frustration for Davydd. The arrival of Bran sparks Llewelyn's guilt over forsaking Ellen, which demonstrates the depths of Llewelyn's sense of duty and honor and foreshadowing their future marriage.

In chapter 2, Bran's brief visit with Juliana shows the depths of the despair and guilt he feels about failing his father in battle. He drinks heavily, has nightmares and will not allow Juliana to get close. Juliana loves him fully, but he cannot allow her into the darkness with him.

In chapter 3, Bran is willing to commit murder in an attempt to appease the ghosts he carries. Guy says he must not let their father down again, and Bran follows him knowing that this murder is unjustified. He becomes an outlaw, condemned by the Church and God because he cannot refuse his brother.



Chapters 4, Montargis, France, April 1271- 7, Castell Y Bere, Wales, December 1272

Chapters 4, Montargis, France, April 1271- 7, Castell Y Bere, Wales, December 1272 Summary

In chapter 4, Queen Marguerite brings Nell the news of Hal's murder. Amaury, the youngest de Montfort brother, has also been implicated in the murder. Amaury is a priest serving hundreds of miles away from Viterbo in Padua, but he must also suffer for the sins of his brothers.

Edmund Plantagenet, the Earl of Leicester and Lancaster, younger brother of Prince Edward arrives in Palermo, Italy to greet his brother. Prince Edward has come in response to Hal's murder and vows to hunt the de Montfort brothers mercilessly. Eleanora, Prince Edward's wife has joined him, leaving behind three small children at home, children she will not see for years.

In chapter 5, Bran leaves Guy, sickened by the gory murder. A small band of knights follow Bran, but one by one they leave him as Bran roams aimlessly around. Hugh refuses to leave him, and convinces him to seek out the Pope to plead his case and reverse the excommunication. Bran is suffering with Tertian fever, a fever that returns every three days. They race toward the Pope, but do not make the journey in time. Bran dies in Genoa.

Hugh travels more than a thousand miles back to Montargis to tell Nell of her son's death. He is rewarded for his loyalty with a position in Nell's household as Ellen's guard. He is placed in the service of Sir Olivier and promised that he will be knighted when he comes of age.

In chapter 6, Edward has taken a trip to the Holy Land on Crusade. Edward receives a messenger from the Emir. The messenger has been coming with letters from the Emir for weeks claiming that he is considering converting to Christianity. The messenger is comfortable, has gotten friendly with the guards, and is admitted to the prince without being searched. He stabs Edward with a poison dagger, a lethal blow to any other man. Edward refuses to die. Doctors cut away diseased flesh from Edward's arm, and Edward recovers from the assassination attempt. The recovery strengthens Edward's resolve that he alone is blessed by God and is doing God's work in expanding the reaches of the great land of England.

In chapter 7, Llewelyn is courted by Arwenna. She is beautiful and conceited and wants only to be a prince's wife. She wants to become pregnant, which would ensure her future as either Llewelyn's wife or concubine. Either way, she would be comfortably



protected and provided for by Llewelyn. She has no time to set her trap however. Caitlin, Llewelyn's niece, one of Davydd's illegitimate daughters, needs his attention. She is pushed aside by Arwenna, a move the woman will regret. Caitlin, a lover of all animals, is attempting to rescue a cat. When she is unable to speak to her uncle to get his assistance, she attempts to help the cat on her own. Caitlin is injured in a fall, and Arwenna is removed from the household when Llewelyn finds she ignored Caitlin's request to see him.

Chapters 4, Montargis, France, April 1271- 7, Castell Y Bere, Wales, December 1272 Analysis

In chapter 4, Prince Edward's version of justice is clear. Amaury, a priest, bedridden with a fever, is accused and convicted for conspiracy to commit Hal's murder. Amaury is a victim, guilty of the blood he shares with his brothers. The ideas of brotherhood and kinship are two of the main themes of this novel. The characters struggle with the blood bonds they share believing that they should be stronger than any other, but often discovering that these bonds break just as easily.

This chapter also introduces the relationship between Edward and his wife Eleanora. Edward is clearly satisfied in bed by his wife, evidenced by her many pregnancies. Eleanora is devoted to her husband, but less devoted to her children. She has chosen to follow her husband to Italy, leaving three small children at home. She chooses her husband first.

In chapter 5, Hugh demonstrates his loyalty by refusing to leave Bran. Bran gives him money for his service and provokes a fight by telling Hugh he wants nothing more to do with him. Bran has been drinking heavily since leaving Guy, and he sinks deeper into depression every day. Hugh admires Bran, and his admiration is suffocating Bran. The young man leaves briefly, bitterly hurt by his hero. When he returns, he discovers why Bran wanted him to go. Bran believes he will die and wants to die alone. Hugh, concerned for Bran's soul, refuses to let him die outside God's grace. After Bran dies, Hugh could return home to Evesham, but he is bound by duty to tell Bran's mother.

In chapter 6, Edward's character is further developed. His encounter with the poison dagger makes him feel like he is truly blessed and chosen by God. His motivation for later seeking to occupy Wales is understandable after witnessing his experience with the assassin.

In chapter 7, Llewelyn's love for his niece is obvious. Many men seek pleasures of the flesh above all others, but Llewelyn does not want empty relationships. After the scene with Caitlin, Arwenna disappears. Llewelyn needs and desires a companion, not a beautiful trophy.



Chapters 8, Melun, France, August 1273 - 10, Rhuddlan Castle, Wales, October 1274

Chapters 8, Melun, France, August 1273 - 10, Rhuddlan Castle, Wales, October 1274 Summary

In chapter 8, Nell travels to Melun to ask for help from the new King of England, Edward. King Edward agrees that she was mistreated by his father and Edward restores the dower lands from her first marriage. He also advances her two hundred pounds to make up for the lost income she suffered. He does not agree to allow Amaury to return to England. Amaury is still to be arrested for a crime he did not commit if his path crosses Edward's.

Amaury visits Nell and Ellen in Montargis and discovers that his mother is suffering the first stages of dropsy, a fatal condition. Amaury, a papal chaplain, tells Nell that Guy has made penitence to the Pope and has been placed in comfortable confinement as a prisoner of the Church. Within a few years, he will be back in God's grace and forgiven by the Church for the murder of his cousin. Nell tells him that she fears for Ellen, all the regrets of her life are for Ellen, and she cannot die without securing her a husband.

In chapter 9, Davydd plans to murder Llewelyn with the help of Gruffydd ap Gwenwynwyn, Lord of Powys. The plan is that Davydd will allow Gruffydd's son Owen de la Pole and his men past Llewelyn's guards. Llewelyn has built Dolforwyn Castle in Powys territory, angering both the Powys lords and England because the castle is also perilously close to the English stronghold at Montgomery. Once Davydd secures admittance for the men, Owen de la Pole will murder the Prince. The night of the murder, rain pours down causing a mudslide on the Powys border. Davydd laughs to think that God is also on Llewelyn's side and makes no further attempts to take Llewelyn's life or power.

When Davydd relates the tale to Owain, Owain advises Davydd to flee to England because the truth will surely come out. Davydd would rather wait and see. He is confident that he can convince Llewelyn of anything. Llewelyn makes an impassioned speech about the future of Wales and begins to truly convert Davydd to his cause. However, it is too late. Llewelyn soon learns of the plot against him. He holds Owen de la Pole as a hostage to secure Gruffydd's future loyalty. Davydd is summoned to defend himself.

In chapter 10, Davydd arrives to a castle full of spectators waiting to hear him defend himself against the conspiracy charges. Llewelyn's only evidence against his brother is a witness claiming to have seen Davydd enter into two secret meetings with Gruffydd ap Gwenwynwyn. Davydd laughs at the accusations and claims he can produce a witness



to his whereabouts on the days in question. The council convenes, agreeing to see Davydd's witnesses at Martinmas. Llewelyn then agrees to see Davydd privately.

Davydd feigns indignation when he meets with Llewelyn, claims he has been wronged, accused without cause or proof. He accuses Llewelyn of acting impulsively, willing to believe anything of him without question. Seven years Davydd has been an ally of Llewelyn, served on Llewelyn's council, welcome at Llewelyn's court. They have had no arguments, no falling out. The previous betrayals are easily explained away by Davydd. The first was to claim what was rightfully his when he banded with Owain to take back their land. The second alliance with the English King was to free Owain. However, that was years ago. Then he asks the question that Llewelyn does not want to answer. If Tudur or Einion had been accused, would Llewelyn believe it of them? Llewelyn admits he would not have believed it of them; he trusts them. However, Davydd's question haunts Llewelyn and makes him believe Davydd might be telling the truth.

Later a monk from the abbey of Ystrad Marchell in Powys comes to speak with Llewelyn. The young monk tells Llewelyn that he saw Davydd meeting with Gruffydd. He overheard enough of the conversation for Llewelyn to be sure that it was indeed Davydd. Llewelyn believed Davydd's lies. He sends Tudur to get a confession from the young Owen. Owen reveals that it was an assassination plot, not an honorable battle that was being planned, and confirms that Davydd was involved. Davydd flees to England with Gruffydd close behind him. Llewelyn burns Gruffydd's castle at Trallwng to the ground and claims the Powys lands. King Edward provides handsomely for the pair of traitors, and soon they are sending raids across the border. Davydd's treachery leaves Llewelyn with no heir.

Chapters 8, Melun, France, August 1273 - 10, Rhuddlan Castle, Wales, October 1274 Analysis

In chapter 8, Edward steps outside his character to show kindness to his aunt Nell. Until now, Edward has been cruel and unfeeling. In this chapter, the reader gets a glimpse into the good inside Edward. This goodness makes Edward a three-dimensional character. He believes himself to be fair and just. He is doing God's work conquering heathen lands, and has no problem coming to his aunt's aid.

In chapter 9, Davydd is conflicted about his quest for power and the love he feels for his brother. He does not want to kill his brother, but in the end, his hunger for power is greater than brotherhood. This chapter also illustrates the divided loyalties of the people of Wales. The Powys lords like Gruffydd do not accept Llewelyn as their Prince. They lead their lands, and resent Llewelyn invading their territory.

In chapter 10, the issue of trust is the most important. Davydd is untrustworthy. He has conspired to assassinate his brother, but Davydd is a convincing liar. He is so convincing that when he later has a true change of heart and regrets this betrayal, Llewelyn is haunted by this night. Llewelyn believed his brother because he wanted to believe him, and now he looks foolish. When Davydd finally wants to defend Wales,

Llewelyn must search through Davydd's lies. Llewelyn is unable to trust Davydd and they do not band together against the English like they should.



Chapters 11, Montargis, France, March 1275 - 13, The Cog Holy Cross, off the Isles of Scilly, January 1276

Chapters 11, Montargis, France, March 1275 - 13, The Cog Holy Cross, off the Isles of Scilly, January 1276 Summary

In chapter 11, Llewelyn needs an heir. He sends an unexpected messenger to Nell de Montfort asking for Ellen's hand in marriage. Llewelyn seeks to honor the plight troth he broke, and in marrying the daughter of a rebel, he will outrage Edward. Two months after the arrangements are made, Nell dies.

King Edward summons Llewelyn to do homage to him as a vassal to liege lord. Llewelyn is unable to do homage as long as Edward provides shelter for Davydd and Gruffydd. The King, as the liege lord, has a duty to provide protection to the vassal. King Edward is in breach of that duty, but he does not see it that way. If Llewelyn does not do homage, he will be at war with the King. If he does, he shows he is weak to his enemies and to the King. Llewelyn is not weak, so he refuses and prepares for war.

In chapter 12, Ellen is sailing across the English Channel in the Holy Cross cog on her way to meet her husband in Wales. Amaury has insisted on escorting her even though he is in danger so close to England. They sail in winter believing it will be safer because pirates will be less likely to attack in the harsh weather. They do not know that pirates have been stopping every ship on orders of the King. The cog is attacked and Llewelyn's knights are not able to hold them off.

In chapter 13, every knight on the ship is killed by the pirates. Thomas the Archdeacon, the lead pirate, confronts Ellen. Amaury is hurt and Ellen defiantly tells Thomas that if he dies, she will tell Edward he raped her. Thomas is no fool, so he allows her to tend to her brother. Only the ship's crew, Ellen, Juliana and Amaury are allowed to live. Hugh has been knighted before setting sail, but Brian, the ship's captain, claims he is a crewman. Hugh is stranded with Brian and the crew, but Juliana remains with Ellen. Ellen is taken to Bristle Castle and Amaury is taken to the prison Corfe Castle, where prisoners are sent to be forgotten.

Edward tells Ellen that she should not be distressed. She will get to be with Llewelyn as soon as he makes amends for not doing the homage Edward requires. Ellen knows that she is the bait to lure Llewelyn into war. When Ellen asks after Amaury, she receives no answer and knows that Edward intends to never let him go.



Chapters 11, Montargis, France, March 1275 - 13, The Cog Holy Cross, off the Isles of Scilly, January 1276 Analysis

In chapter 11, the characters are firmly set on a course for war. Llewelyn's proposal of marriage to Ellen is both an act of honor for Llewelyn and an act he knows will anger Edward. Llewelyn has been pressured by Edward. Edward knows Llewelyn cannot pledge homage and fealty to him while Davydd and Gruffydd are safely at Edward's court. The demand from Edward is a deliberate attempt to humble Llewelyn before his people. Llewelyn knows he is facing a war with the King and his marriage is another act of defiance. Ellen has given up hope that Llewelyn will send for her, but she has never stopped loving the idea of him.

In chapter 12, Ellen speaks of the dangers Amaury faces accompanying her on this journey into Wales foreshadowing his capture and confinement. This chapter further develops Ellen's character when she shows remarkable courage standing up to the pirates. The Welsh Princess steps outside the bounds of proper society to wield a knife and threaten black mail. She is not the passive woman typical of the time.

In chapter 13, Hugh is saved by his years at the orphanage. He is born the son of lord, but his father fights on the wrong side of the battlefield. His father loses his life and Hugh loses his inheritance. He has lived as an orphan, dependent on charity. Although his loyalty to the de Montforts has earned him knighthood, he does not have the attitude of a knight and Brian responds to Hugh's youthful openness. They easily become friends and Brian does not allow Hugh to die with the other knights. After Ellen is captured, Edward shows remarkable irony. He cannot hurt the sister of his dear friend and cousin Henry, but he can lock Henry's brother away without flinching. Edward feels no remorse. He is confident that forcing Llewelyn into war is the right thing to do. He is not conflicted over keeping Ellen as his prisoner while feigning concern for her well-being.



Chapters 14, Bristol, England, January 1276 - 16, Worcester, England, September 1276

Chapters 14, Bristol, England, January 1276 - 16, Worcester, England, September 1276 Summary

In chapter 14, the crew of the cog Holy Cross is stranded in Bristol. Hugh owes his life to Brian. Hugh acts like a commoner without the superior attitude of knights and nobility, so he is able to gain Brian's trust and friendship. Hugh needs a horse because he is determined to follow Ellen. Hugh has no money, but Brian tells him of Jewish money-lenders. Edward has segregated the Jews. They are thought to be evil servants of the devil and Christians will not do business with the Jews. The interest from money-lending is their only source of income, until Edward outlaws it. The King cancels the debts of Christians and leaves the Jews with no means of survival. The money-lending business has been forced underground, but Brian helps Hugh find a Jewish man willing to loan. Issac ben Asher gives Hugh the money for a horse and supplies because Hugh treats the man's son like a person instead of an agent of the devil. Hugh rides into Wales to tell Llewelyn of the kidnapping and then heads for Windsor Castle in search of his lady.

In chapter 15, Amaury's prison cell is decorated with only a small pallet. Since he is a priest, Amaury receives the pity of his guards and they treat him kindly. Hugh gains access to the prison dressed as a friar and smuggles books, candles, and basic necessities to Amaury. Amaury resigns himself to life as a prisoner, knowing that Edward will not easily be convinced to release him.

When Hugh reaches Windsor, again disguised as a friar, he speaks with people at the castle to learn all he can about Ellen's situation. He patiently waits for his opportunity and finally meets Ellen in the garden. He is able to smuggle letters to her from Llewelyn and Amaury. Hugh crafts a plan to help Ellen escape, but he is captured by the King's guards. Hugh is taken to Lincoln's Palace to speak with the King. When the King hears Hugh's story, he is impressed with Hugh's loyalty to his lady. He tells Hugh that he will be imprisoned in Bristol Castle. Leaving the great hall, Davydd whispers that Hugh should remind the King of Lewes.

At Lewes, Simon de Montfort wins a great victory and captures King Henry. Edward surrenders to Simon, taking a great risk, rather than forsaking his father and fleeing with the other men. Hugh claims the King is not so different from himself. As a result of this, King Edward offers Hugh a choice. Go to Bristol, or pledge loyalty to the King and enter the King's service as a knight. Hugh is torn, but assured that when Ellen is released, he will be free to travel with her to Wales.



In chapter 16, King Edward gives his cousin Elizabeth de Ferrers in marriage to Davydd. Elizabeth's father robbed and pillaged his neighbors during the civil war between King Henry and Simon de Montfort. He is arrested and Elizabeth has few marriage prospects. King Edward seeks to marry her to Davydd so he can unite Davydd more firmly to the English cause in the coming war against the Welsh. Elizabeth's father is abusive and brutal, so Davydd wins her love easily by simply showing her patience and kindness. Edward declares war on Wales in November.

Chapters 14, Bristol, England, January 1276 - 16, Worcester, England, September 1276 Analysis

In chapter 14, Hugh again displays humility. The other Christian men in his group are condemning the Jews while they ask a Jew for help, but Hugh speaks honestly to the man. The men create an alias and a story to tell the money-lender, but when the time comes, Hugh tells the man the truth. He says he cannot lie to him and then ask him for money. Hugh is a man of honor and a man of his word. As a result of Hugh's truthfulness, and the respect he shows in the man's home, the man lends Hugh the money he needs to get to Ellen. Hugh's devotion to Ellen is rare and admired by those around him.

In chapter 15, Amaury's imprisonment shows Edward's lack of justice and fairness. Edward knows Amaury had no part in the murder of Hal, but Edward is unable to punish Bran or Guy. Bran is dead and Guy is safely hidden away in Italy, so Edward's vengeance must rest on Amaury.

Hugh's loyalty is once again rewarded, but Hugh is not sure he wants the reward. He is conflicted about pledging allegiance to the enemy of his Lady and her husband. A lesser man would have accepted a job with the King over a prison sentence without question, but Hugh is a man of conscience.

In chapter 16, the marriage of Davydd to Elizabeth de Ferrers is just the first of many bribes the King offers Davydd. King Edward hopes to anger Elizabeth's father by making the marital arrangements himself and hopes to satisfy Davydd's desire for money since he will be in control of Elizabeth's lands. Elizabeth does not want the marriage. She says that she will not be yoked to a rebel because he will drag her down with him, words that foreshadow Davydd's defeat and echo in his ears at the close of the novel.



Chapters 17, Windsor Castle, England, May 1277 - 20, Rhuddlan Castle, Wales, November 1277

Chapters 17, Windsor Castle, England, May 1277 - 20, Rhuddlan Castle, Wales, November 1277 Summary

In chapter 17, Ellen is still hopeful that she will be able to sway Edward to release her and Amaury. Blanche, Edmund's wife and Ellen's childhood friend, advises Ellen to flirt with Edward. Smile at him and get on his good side so he will listen, she advises. Ellen says she will try, but does not know if she can be successful. When she looks at Edward, all she sees is Amaury in shackles.

Davydd enjoys verbally sparring with the King. During one match the King marvels at Davydd's ability to bewitch women. Davydd looks around the hall looking to ask a woman what women look for in a man. He finds the prettiest woman to answer the question, Ellen. She stares coldly at him until Edward introduces them. Surprised by his blunder, understanding now why she is cold, he raises a glass to toast his brother's bride. Ellen raises her glass and pours it onto the floor at Davydd's feet. Much to Edward's amusement, Davydd is speechless. Ellen then discovers the Pope is working to get Amaury transferred into the custody of the church and that he has placed Wales under Interdict. Prince Llewelyn has been excommunicated.

In chapter 18, Llewelyn speaks with a prisoner. Rhys ap Gruffydd, member of one of the great families of Gwynedd, is brought to Llewelyn in chains. The man is a traitor, captured on his way to surrender to King Edward. After seeing Rhys, Llewelyn takes a moment to walk through the Abbey. This church is where those of the royal house of Wales are buried. His grandfather and the wife he loved, Joanna, and all their sons are buried there. Standing among his family's tombs, Llewelyn and Tudur discuss surrender. Llewelyn still has hope that they can win the war, but he concedes that he fears God might be English.

In Chapter 19, Edward rewards Davydd for his service with one-half of Gwynedd to be divided between Davydd and his brother Owain. Davydd is stricken with guilt by this payment for his betrayal and begins to wonder if Wales will survive. In September, the English take the island of Mon, where the Welsh grow their wheat. Llewelyn knows the war is over, and sends word to Edward of his surrender. Llewelyn loses land, power and the homage of all but five lords of Gwynedd. He is allowed to keep the title of Prince of Wales.

In chapter 20, Llewelyn meets King Edward to surrender publically. Llewelyn swears fealty to the King, but Edward requests that he come to the Christmas court in Westminster Castle in London to swear homage. Llewelyn knows that London is where



Bristol Castle is located, the prison where his father died as a prisoner of the English Crown. When Llewelyn asks about Ellen's release, Edward merely says that it will be soon. The conditions of the surrender include a requirement that Llewelyn release his political prisoners. Llewelyn, Davydd, and Owain are in the same room for the first time in many years. Davydd begins his attempt to tell Llewelyn of his regrets, but Llewelyn does not listen.

Chapters 17, Windsor Castle, England, May 1277 - 20, Rhuddlan Castle, Wales, November 1277 Analysis

In chapter 17, Edward reveals that he is truly fond of Ellen. He cares for her, but is not willing for her to be married to a Welsh rebel. Edward believes he is acting honorably holding Ellen hostage. Edward speaks of the past wars with Wales. They have suffered defeat for generations in repeated attempts to take over, but this time will be different. Edward plans to turn the people against each other so they cannot unite to defeat him. He knows their tricks and is comfortable with their tactics. England is wealthy with many more soldiers available to fight a war. Edward has time to regroup and rethink his strategy, but Llewelyn must always be on the defensive.

In chapter 18, the betrayal of Rhys ap Gruffydd is a symbol of the problem with the Welsh people during this war. They are afraid of the powerful King of England. The common people and nobility alike did not want to make such a powerful, spiteful enemy. The King holds grudges that last lifetimes and being on the wrong side could cost a man his life. At any hint that the Welsh might lose, men run to pledge fealty to England in an attempt to save themselves. Llewelyn knows that surrender to the King will be the end of Wales and the discussion of surrender foreshadows the difficult decision Llewelyn is forced to make.

In chapter 19, Edward's war tactics are severe. He proves that he has paid attention during the previous wars and he is not willing to be defeated again. When Davydd receives his reward, he is speechless, which is not something Davydd often feels. He has struggled with his betrayal of his brother, and looking at the document that rewards him for Llewelyn's defeat, he is stricken with guilt. Davydd has always been able to act without thinking about consequences. His conscience does not plague him like other men. He is able to hide behind his witty comments, never taking any responsibility for his actions. If someone is offended or hurt by Davydd, then it is the other man's fault for being so easily offended or injured. Now, looking at this deed from the King, Davydd realizes that his actions may destroy Wales. He realizes that some things are greater than his own selfish desires.

In chapter 20, Bristol Castle is the symbol of England's power and King Edward's dishonesty. Llewelyn's father is imprisoned and dies at Bristol Castle, and Llewelyn is preoccupied with Bristol while in London. Llewelyn is convinced that King Edward is attempting to deceive him, and knows that he might possibly live out his life as a prisoner. Davydd attempts to make Llewelyn believe that he has had a change of heart, but past betrayals and forgiveness prevent Llewelyn from being able to believe Davydd.



Chapters 21, Westminster, England, December 1277 - 23, Worcester, England, October 1278

Chapters 21, Westminster, England, December 1277 - 23, Worcester, England, October 1278 Summary

In chapter 21, Llewelyn arrives at Westminster and does homage to the King of England. After homage, Edward agrees to meet Llewelyn at the tower to discuss Ellen's release. Llewelyn is still suspicious of Edward's intentions fearing that Edwards will lock him in the Tower as a prisoner. When Llewelyn arrives, he is surprised by being allowed to meet his wife. Edward views this meeting as proof to Llewelyn that he has only good intentions. Edward does not release Ellen, but promises that her release will come soon. Llewelyn does not like hearing Ellen call Edward "Ned" and "dearest cousin." She seems comfortable and friendly with Edward and Llewelyn does not understand that she does this out of necessity.

In chapter 22, Ellen learns that King Edward will release her when he gives her the royal wedding he promised. That wedding will not come for many months. Llewelyn receives word that his youngest brother Rhodri has filed a suit against him for a share of Gwynedd. Ten months after the peace treaty and Llewelyn's surrender, Edward has established strongholds in Wales. Llewelyn meets Edward at Rhuddlan Castle to discuss Rhodri's case. The King makes a show of listening to Rhodri, but then honors Llewelyn's claim that Rhodri sold the land for one thousand marks. Edward's move to honor the deed Llewelyn presents is an attempt to show Llewelyn that Edward intends to protect him as is a liege lord's duty. Llewelyn is then informed of Davydd's good news. Elizabeth has given him a son. Edward also sets a wedding date at last for Llewelyn and Ellen for October.

In chapter 23, the wedding day finally arrives. Edward surprises Llewelyn with a charter that states Llewelyn can no longer offer sanctuary to the King's enemies, precisely what the King did to Llewelyn that caused Llewelyn to refuse homage and eventually lead to the war. Llewelyn is outraged and his mood is foul for his wedding day, just as Edward intended.

Ellen notices Llewelyn's distraction and turns to Edward to help her get Llewelyn alone so they can speak. Llewelyn can hold his anger no longer and confronts Ellen about her familiarity and friendliness with his enemy. Ellen explains how she hates Edward but had to make him believe she was his friend. She tells Llewelyn that had they not been married, she may have given Edward everything she had if it meant freedom for Amaury. Llewelyn then understands her situation and her strength, and they vow to forget Edward so they can enjoy their wedding. Davydd again makes attempts to show that he is loyal to Wales to no avail.



Chapters 21, Westminster, England, December 1277 - 23, Worcester, England, October 1278 Analysis

In chapter 21, Davydd and Elizabeth are at the Christmas court. Davydd makes the mistake of claiming that they are there at Elizabeth's request. Davydd wants Llewelyn to believe that he regrets the betrayal. Davydd wants to join Llewelyn against the king, but Llewelyn does not believe him. When Elizabeth speaks to Llewelyn, she confesses that she hates King Edward's court, reinforcing Llewelyn's belief that Davydd is a deceitful liar who cannot be trusted.

In chapter 22, King Edward's treatment of Rhodri's claim is an attempt to show Llewelyn that he will act as a leige lord should. After the meeting, Edward says that the leige lord's responsibility is to protect the vassal's holdings. He then asks why Llewelyn doubted his claim would be upheld. Edward is attempting to manipulate Llewelyn into allowing his guard down. Llewelyn is too smart to ever trust the King.

In chapter 23, Edward shows his true character once again. He needs Llewelyn to understand and acknowledge that the King of England is superior. King Edward is goading Llewelyn in an attempt to dampen the festive day. Llewelyn and Ellen have been forced to wait years to be together as husband and wife, and Edward wants to remind them of his power. Edward can take away their happiness any time he chooses.



Chapters 24, Abbey of Aberconwy, Wales, September 1279 - 26, Sherborne Castle, Dorsetshire, England, March 1281

Chapters 24, Abbey of Aberconwy, Wales, September 1279 - 26, Sherborne Castle, Dorsetshire, England, March 1281 Summary

In chapter 24, Llewelyn encounters Davydd at the Abbey. Davydd has moved his family back to Wales, to the land granted to him by the King. Llewelyn is having trouble receiving justice in the English courts for his claim regarding Arwystli. Davydd has been summoned to the English court to defend himself against an English knight. Welshmen are fast discovering that there is no justice in the English court for them. Edward claims that he will uphold Welsh law when the suit concerned Welsh lands, but it is clear to these men that Edward lied. Davydd and Llewelyn argue about past grievances, and Llewelyn begins to believe that Davydd's regret is honest.

Llewelyn arrives home to Dolwyddelan a few days early. Hugh and Caitlin ride off together; they have become close friends. Ellen is not waiting for Llewelyn and he soon discovers she is absent because she is grieving that she has failed again to become pregnant. When he finds her, he assures her that while he wants an heir, he loves her. He will not turn her away because she does not give him a son.

In chapter 25, Hugh arrives at the guest hospice of the Cistercian abbey where Ellen is waiting for word of Amaury's condition. Hugh has taken him more books and gifts from Ellen and Llewelyn. Amaury has been moved to Sherborne where he is much more comfortable. Caitlin is overjoyed at the return of her friend, but her joy is short lived. Ellen has taken a young, beautiful widow into her service, and Hugh is in love at first sight. Caitlin is angry and Ellen notices for the first time that they have been blind to her feelings for Hugh. Hugh sees Caitlin as a little sister and does not notice her jealousy. Hugh marries the young Elund within the month.

Davydd arrives with Elizabeth and their two sons to Llewelyn's court on their way to see Owain who is sick. With no inns in Wales, visitors are always expected and never turned away. Davydd is there when Llewelyn returns early from a hunting trip. The stag Llewelyn's men wounded crosses into English territory. The English steal the stag and beat the hunters. Llewelyn can barely contain his anger, but he does. He returns home with his men. The English settlers are growing bolder and Welsh grievances are piling up. Llewelyn knows that rebellion is inevitable. Davydd is urging men forward, while



Llewelyn is holding them back. Llewelyn knows that to win against the King of England, they must strike at the right time leaving nothing to chance.

In chapter 26, Amaury is concerned about the Pope's death. The church has had no Pope for six months and no one has been pressuring the King on his behalf. He worries that the new Pope will not be so touched by his plight. Amaury has little time to dwell on his lack of hope. Ellen pays him a visit. Ellen reveals that Hugh and Elund are already unhappy, less than a year after the wedding. Elund is not clever and Hugh has grown tired of her. Hugh is a man of honor, so he will never speak of it, but Ellen knows it is true.

Llewelyn finally receives word from Edward about Arwystli. The King's commission has decided that the case will not be decided using Welsh law. The King will not be abiding by the terms of the treaty.

Chapters 24, Abbey of Aberconwy, Wales, September 1279 - 26, Sherborne Castle, Dorsetshire, England, March 1281 Analysis

In chapter 24, Llewelyn is assured of King Edward's dishonesty. He knows that the King cannot be trusted, but now he is feeling the frustrations of English law. Davydd has tried to show Llewelyn that he is finally on the side of Wales. Unity is what Wales needs to defeat the English and reconciliation between the leaders can lead the people to unity. Ellen's obsession with becoming pregnant foreshadows the later pregnancy.

In chapter 25, Davydd's response to Llewelyn's speech about the future of Wales shows that his conversion is real. The unrest the men show foreshadows the coming war and shows that the stakes for this war are higher. Davydd's disagreement with Llewelyn about the timing of the rebellion foreshadows his last betrayal. Davydd is not a man of patience and he gives little thought to consequences.

In chapter 26, Amaury is losing hope. He is a man of faith and has never blamed his brothers for his situation. King Edward has unjustly imprisoned him, but Amaury has held his anger. He is now suffering with bouts of depression and anger. He was sure Edward would release him, but now his faith falters. The depression, anger, and hopelessness Amaury expresses in this chapter further develops his character.



Chapters 27, Hafod-y-Ilan, Nanhwynain, Wales, September 1281 - 29, Llanfaes, Wales, March 1282

Chapters 27, Hafod-y-Ilan, Nanhwynain, Wales, September 1281 - 29, Llanfaes, Wales, March 1282 Summary

In chapter 27, Llewelyn reveals to his council that he plans to make Roger de Mortimer his ally. Roger de Mortimer is Ellen's sworn enemy for what he did to her father's body, but Llewelyn is sure she will understand. Llewelyn is wrong and the argument about Roger is the first real fight of their marriage. Llewelyn leaves the castle, seeking to leave his cold, angry wife behind him.

On the road, he meets Davydd. Davydd astutely determines the reason Llewelyn is travelling alone. They share a meal on the road and Davydd informs Llewelyn that their brother Rhodri has taken an English wife. They go together to visit their uncle Einion who lives nearby, Llewelyn still reluctant to go home. After a day with Einion, Llewelyn finally heads home. Ellen realizes that she must accept his alliance with Roger and Llewelyn enters into a treaty of peace with him the following month. In early December, Ellen surprises Llewelyn with the news that she is pregnant and they decide to name the child Bran.

In chapter 28, men come to Llewelyn to voice their accusations against the King of England. They are complaints that Llewelyn knows well. Llewelyn makes an impassioned speech outlining his reasons for why they must wait for war. It is a war they cannot afford to lose. They must prepare and wait for the King to be away. He has trips planned for France and the Holy Land. They will strike when he is far away and unable to get into Wales quickly.

Elund surprises Ellen with the news that she is divorcing Hugh. Her brother has come to take her home. Ellen is aghast, but Caitlin defends Elund saying that divorce is allowed under Welsh law. Caitlin is happy that Hugh will be free of his wife. Davydd and Elizabeth attend Llewelyn's Christmas court and learn of Ellen's pregnancy.

In chapter 29, Caitlin finds Hugh flirting with a girl from town. She throws cider in his face and finally admits her feelings for him. She has grown tired of waiting for him to see it himself. He admits that he loves her too, but they can never marry. Llewelyn and Ellen will not allow a landless knight to marry a daughter of the royal house. Llewelyn learns that someone is planning a raid on the King's mines, a raid that would signal the beginning of the rebellion. That person uses Llewelyn's name to make his plans, and Llewelyn fears it is Davydd.



Chapters 27, Hafod-y-Ilan, Nanhwynain, Wales, September 1281 - 29, Llanfaes, Wales, March 1282 Analysis

In chapter 27, Ellen shows her devotion to her husband. Llewelyn says that she should have more devotion for the living than the dead and Ellen finally agrees. The fact that she can side with her husband over her dead father shows remarkable growth in her character. Until this moment, her family has been controlled by the battle of Evesham. She is no longer controlled by this battle and is able to support her husband in his devotion to Wales. When Llewelyn discovers that Ellen is pregnant, it seems that Wales may have a future. Llewelyn is able to have hope.

In chapter 28, Llewelyn displays his tactical abilities. He is planning a war, but he needs the support of his men. His assessments of the needs and abilities are correct, and his resolve to humble himself while waiting for the proper time is commendable. He is a man of honor with the ability to put the needs of his kingdom ahead of his own.

In chapter 29, Davydd is the only person bold enough to use Llewelyn's name. Llewelyn knows that if he cannot stop the raid and the rumors of the raid, war will be inevitable. However, Llewelyn feels no urgency in the situation, a fatal mistake.



Chapters 30, Llanfaes, Wales, March 1282 - 33, Abner, Wales, June 1282

Chapters 30, Llanfaes, Wales, March 1282 - 33, Abner, Wales, June 1282 Summary

In chapter 30, Llewelyn is awakened on Palm Sunday to learn that Davydd has planned an attack on the King. Llewelyn sets out for Davydd's castle vowing to stop the rebellion. He is too late. Elizabeth is alone at the castle. Davydd has already attacked Hawarden Castle. By the time Llewelyn arrives at Hawarden, the raid is over. The war has begun, and King Edward is only two days away in Devizes, a town on the Welsh border. Davydd has provoked the wrath of the church by attacking on a holy day and the King has time to rally troops to stop quickly stop the rebellion. Llewelyn has no choice. He must fight Davydd's war.

In chapter 31, Amaury is released from prison. His fears about the new Pope are unfounded. He will not relent and the King finally agrees to give Amaury his freedom. Amaury must agree to never again come to England. Ellen is heavy with child, and angry that Llewelyn has been forced into a war with England.

In chapter 32, Llewelyn has taken a break from the battlefield because the time of the birth is near. He awakes to find the day is here. Ellen takes to her bed for the birth with her midwife, Juliana, Elizabeth, and Caitlin in assistance. The birth is not an easy one. Ellen gives birth to a baby girl. She bleeds heavily, but the midwife is able to stop the bleeding. When Llewelyn finds Elizabeth in the chapel, he knows the birth is not going well. He bursts into Ellen's room, but Ellen is unconscious. She wakes briefly a few times, but a fever overtakes her. She dies of childbed fever, never knowing she did not give birth to a son.

In chapter 33, Juliana leaves Llewelyn's court. She wants to return to France finding it too difficult to remain in Wales without Ellen. Llewelyn secures a safe passage from the King so she can travel through the war-torn land. Hugh escorts Juliana to France. He asks Caitlin to come with him, but she refuses to leave her uncle. Hugh sees Juliana safely to France, and sets out in search of Amaury. He finds Amaury in Rome and tells him of Ellen's death.

Chapters 30, Llanfaes, Wales, March 1282 - 33, Abner, Wales, June 1282 Analysis

In chapter 30, Llewelyn learns that Davydd has planned an attack, and he is too late to stop it. The war has begun, and it is not the war Llewelyn so carefully planned. Davydd



chooses a holy day to begin a war. He attacks when Wales is not ready. This is a war Wales cannot win, and a war they cannot afford to lose.

Ellen speaks to her dead mother. She implores her mother to help her and asks her how she survived her father's last year in rebellion. Nell believed that Simon would be victorious, while Ellen admits that she does not believe Llewelyn will win his war. Ellen's admission foreshadows the great failure of this war.

In chapter 31, Amaury wants to visit his sister. He senses that he may never see her again foreshadowing her death.

In chapter 32, Ellen's death changes Llewelyn. He cannot overcome his grief. Davydd and Elizabeth, once jealous of Ellen's pregnancy, are humbled. The couple hope that Davydd or one of Davydd's sons will be the heir; Llewelyn's son will ruin their plans. When Ellen dies in childbirth, inheritance no longer seems as important. Both Davydd and Edward begin to fear more for the safety of their wives after being confronted with the reality of Llewelyn in his grief.

In chapter 33, Hugh leaves Caitlin. True to his character, he must tell Amaury in person about Ellen.



34, Aber, Wales, October 1282 - 36, Cwm-hir Abbey, Wales, December 1282

34, Aber, Wales, October 1282 - 36, Cwm-hir Abbey, Wales, December 1282 Summary

In chapter 34, Edward is using his full power to fight the rebels in Wales. Edward sends John Peckham, Archbishop of Canterbury to Llewelyn to negotiate peace. A truce is called while negotiations take place. Edward uses the truce to complete his bridge from Mon to the mainland. He intends to use the bridge to attack from behind. With the bridge complete, he ignores the truce and sends his army across. Llewelyn's army is waiting and there are few survivors of the battle. The bridge is completely destroyed. Edward and Edmund argue about the war when word comes of the failed bridge attack. Edmund says that this war will cost a hundred and fifty pounds, seven times more than the last Welsh war. Edward reluctantly agrees to attempt to make peace with Wales.

In chapter 35, Brother John returns to Aber with another offer of peace from King Edward. This time instead of demanding Llewelyn's complete and total surrender, he offers Llewelyn an English earldom. The King wants Davydd to join the crusades in the Holy Land, only returning when Edward wishes. Davydd and Llewelyn do not know who should be more offended by the King's offer. Llewelyn still mourns for Ellen, and his decisions are becoming more reckless. He cares little for his own safety.

In chapter 36, Llewelyn ventures south to secure the loyalty of the men there. These Welshmen want to be on Llewelyn's side, but they fear their English overlords. Llewelyn hopes he can rally them behind him with his presence. Llewelyn takes two young men to the meeting in a grange barn. On their way back to his army, Llewelyn is attacked and killed. As he lies dying, he names Davydd as his heir.

34, Aber, Wales, October 1282 - 36, Cwm-hir Abbey, Wales, December 1282 Analysis

In chapter 34, Edward again shows he is a man of no character. He dishonestly sends a monk to Llewelyn under the disguise of a truce that he has no intention of keeping. Llewelyn is smarter than Edward's men, and is waiting. Llewelyn is a stronger warrior and better leader than Edward expects or wants to admit.

In chapter 35, Edward's offer of peace demonstrates his lack of understanding. Edward feels he is offering a reward to the rebel Llewelyn. An earldom for a rebel is an unheard of prize. However, Llewelyn does not view himself or his kingdom as just another vassal of the King. Llewelyn wants to rule using his own laws and customs. He does not want the oppression of English law. The men do not have the same view of this war and

Edward is unable to see Llewelyn's perspective. A compromise is impossible. Someone must lose this war.

In chapter 36, Llewelyn names Davydd as his heir in a final act of forgiveness. He trusts Davydd with his greatest possessions, his kingdom and his daughter. Davydd is absolved of his past transgressions and Llewelyn believes Davydd will save Wales.



Chapters 37, Dolwyddelan, Wales, December 1282 - 40, Shrewsbury, England, October 1283

Chapters 37, Dolwyddelan, Wales, December 1282 - 40, Shrewsbury, England, October 1283 Summary

In chapter 37, Davydd learns of Llewelyn's death. Men lament that the loss of Llewelyn is the loss of Wales, and Davydd has trouble rallying the men behind him. They are not willing to die for him the way they were willing to die for Llewelyn.

In chapter 38, Hugh is with Amaury planning his trip back to Wales for Caitlin. An unexpected visit from a group of monks delights Hugh when he discovers that one of the monks is Caitlin. The White Monks of Aberconwy Abbey disguise her and help her get out of Wales. She brings Hugh word of Llewelyn's death, and Hugh and Caitlin soon marry. Amaury gives Hugh one of his manors in Angouleme in return for his loyal service.

In chapter 39, Welsh resistance collapses under Davydd's leadership. Davydd and his family are betrayed by the Welsh seeking the King's favor since the war is surely lost. Davydd, Elizabeth, their sons, their newborn daughter, and Llewelyn's daughter are taken to Rhuddlan Castle to face King Edward. Davydd's trial takes one day and he is convicted of treason. The King wants Davydd's execution to be a memorable one. He will be dragged behind a horse to the gallows. He will to be hanged, as was the customary punishment for treason, but he will be cut down before he died. He will then be disemboweled and the entrails burned while Davydd is forced to watch. Then he will be beheaded and quartered.

Elizabeth is imprisoned in Rhuddlan, her sons taken to Bristol Castle to live out their lives as prisoners, and the baby girls taken to nunneries.

In chapter 40, Caitlin is on a journey to see her father before he dies. She and Hugh arrive too late. Elizabeth has been transferred to Chester, a better holding cell than her last one in Rhuddlan. She tells Hugh that she never meant to sacrifice her sons. She never thought they would become prisoners. She knew Davydd would be executed if he lost the war, but she believed King Edward would raise her sons at his court. A five-year-old and three-year-old are no threat to a King. She knows that the king will never release them. They will live out their lives as prisoners of the Crown.



Chapters 37, Dolwyddelan, Wales, December 1282 - 40, Shrewsbury, England, October 1283 Analysis

In chapter 37, the people of Wales know the war is over. They know Wales is finished, foreshadowing the end that is near. The men will not unite and die for Davydd, but Davydd refuses to give up. He is full of pride and has convinced himself that he is a better man than his brother. He refuses to accept that Llewelyn had a gift that he does not possess.

In chapter 38, the monks demonstrate the loyalty inspired by Llewelyn even in death. These White Monks risk their lives to get their Prince's niece out of the kingdom. Davydd does not inspire his men the way Llewelyn did. Since he cannot unite his people, he will lose his kingdom.

In chapter 39, Davydd's ineffectual leadership is no surprise. Just as Llewelyn discovered, Welshmen have fragile loyalties. The soldiers must be rallied and inspired, something Davydd is unable to do. Davydd is not a charismatic leader; he is a wise-cracking sidekick. He hungers for power, and now that he has it, he is unable to control it. Edward's cruelty in condemning Davydd is unmatched. Edward is heartless, unsympathetic and unapologetic.

In chapter 40, Edward is again revealed to be an uncaring, vicious dictator. Davydd's sons pose no threat to him, but he keeps them prisoners for the rest of their lives. Like Elizabeth says, they are young enough that he could teach them anything. They do not need to know about Wales or Davydd. They will forget. Edward could raise them to be anything he wants, but he chooses to steal their lives. They are punished for the sins of their father.



Characters

Llewelyn ap Gruffydd

Llewelyn ap Gruffydd is the Prince of Wales. Under Welsh law, the kingdom is divided and split between the sons in a succession in contrast to English law, which grants the succession to the oldest son. Sharing Wales is not easy for Gruffydd's sons, and they go to war with each other. Owain, the eldest son, is imprisoned by his brother Llewelyn and locked away in Dolbadarn Castle. Davydd is Llewelyn's favorite brother. Twice Davydd has rebelled, but he has been forgiven. The youngest brother Rhodri rebels with Davydd and Owain, but his lands are confiscated and he is forced to leave Wales.

Llewelyn is a staunch supporter of Simon de Montfort, an English rebel. He is betrothed to Simon's daughter when the rebel is killed during the battle at Evesham. When Simon's war is lost, Llewelyn breaks the engagement and the 12-year-old Ellen's heart. When Davydd betrays Llewelyn a third and final time, Llewelyn is left without an heir. He has never married, has no sons, and had named the traitor Davydd as heir. In a rush to marry, he requests that Ellen marry him and alleviate the guilt he has felt since he broke his promise to her after the battle at Evesham.

Llewelyn is an honorable man. He is true to his word, easy to forgive, and a strong, inspiring leader. Davydd refers to him often as a saint in jealous tirades, but even Davydd admires Llewelyn's integrity. Llewelyn is possessed by his grandfather's dream of a united Wales, and that dream is his ultimate downfall. He inspires and unites his people, but England is an insatiable enemy. The Welsh people love Llewelyn. When Llewelyn dies, his people lament that it is also the end of Wales. Llewelyn dies on the battlefield fighting against the English King for the freedom of Wales. He finds the moments before death to be a relief from the burden of his responsibility to his kingdom and from his grief over Ellen's death. He has no doubts that Wales will survive without him. He is wrong.

King Edward

Son of King Henry, Edward Plantagenet rules England while he waits for his father to die. Cruel, commanding, and calculating, Edward is called the greatest warrior in Christendom. Edward is the nephew of Simon de Montfort and is responsible for Simon's death and dismemberment, a brutality the de Montfort family will never forgive. When Edward ascends to the throne after Henry's death, he is called a Crusader King. He makes several pilgrimages to the Holy Land to participate in the crusades and seeks to expand his kingdom. He controls his vassals with a heavy hand.

Like many English kings before him, he views himself as God's chosen king, doing the work of the Almighty on earth. King Edward abuses the church and the Pope, using excommunication as a weapon. Members of the church believe the Pope can condemn



a man, removing him from God's grace, assuring his eternity in Hell. Edward's enemies are afraid of both his wrath and the wrath of God, not willing to risk their eternal souls to rebel against the King.

Edward is stabbed by an assassin's poison tipped dagger, and against all odds, he refuses to die. The doctor cuts away the infected flesh on his arm, and miraculously Edward survives the attack. This survival cements Edward's self-understanding as God's chosen ambassador.

Edward has no qualms about going to war. He holds his cousin, Ellen de Montfort as a hostage with no remorse. He imprisons Amaury de Montfort without cause, punishing him for the sins of his brother, and never expresses a moment of guilt. He devises an imaginative punishment for Davydd that makes men shudder, a punishment designed to prolong suffering and inflict great pain. Edward feels no sympathy for Llewelyn or the Welsh people badly abused by English settlers, unable to see his fault or his contributions to the suffering. He alone is superior, and all around him should be happy to take the crumbs he offers.

Ellen de Montfort

Ellen de Montfort is the daughter of Simon and Nell de Montfort. She is a rare beauty who follows her mother into exile in France after the death of her father. She is twelve years old and engaged to the Prince of Wales, Llewelyn ap Gruffydd. After the death of Simon, the de Montforts lose their lands, their money, and their titles. As expected, Llewelyn breaks the engagement, but Ellen has romantic dreams that he will one day come for her. As the years pass, she accepts that he will not come. Her prospects for marriage are slim because her family no longer has a dowry of lands and income to offer prospective husbands.

As her mother's health begins to fail and the family knows she is dying, a letter arrives from Llewelyn. He has been plagued by guilt about Ellen and how he abandoned her in her time of need. Llewelyn needs to marry and would like Ellen to be his wife. After Nell's dies, Ellen and Llewelyn marry by proxy in Paris. They have never seen each other.

On her way to meet her new husband, Ellen is captured by her cousin, King Edward. He imprisons her brother Amaury unjustly, and takes Ellen to his court. Ellen shows bravery and cunning while a prisoner of the Crown, even cutting a threatening pirate with a knife. King Edward forces Llewelyn into war and receives his surrender. Llewelyn pledges fidelity to the English King and gives up lands and power. After years of imprisonment, Ellen meets her husband and King Edward gives her a royal wedding.

Caitlin, Llewelyn's niece, does not want Ellen to join them in Wales. Ellen is beautiful, and in Caitlin's experience, beautiful women are vain, uninteresting and cruel. Ellen is not. She is kind and loves Llewelyn. They find happiness together that neither of them



expected. Ellen is loyal and devoted to Llewelyn. She becomes his fiercest supporter, and in return, wins the love and support of Llewelyn's household and subjects.

After years of marriage, Ellen fails to give Llewelyn a son and heir. Llewelyn admits that he desires a son, but that he wants his wife more and eases her fears that he will leave her to take another wife. When Ellen does become pregnant, Davydd forces his brother into another dangerous war with England.

Childbirth is difficult for Ellen, but she is determined to give Llewelyn a healthy baby. She never falters in her resolve, never complains about the pain. She dies of childbed fever and Llewelyn never recovers from the heartbreak.

Queen Eleanora

Queen Eleanora of England is King Edward's wife. She is Spanish and foreign to the English people. Edward's subjects never truly accept her. She is aloof, distant, and seems largely uncaring. She has a large number of children with Edward, which the characters in the novel claim is a testament to Edward's satisfaction with her and the passion they have together. She loves Edward with devotion that she does not show her children. When Eleanor is first introduced in the novel, she has left three small children at home to follow Edward on a crusade. She is willing to not see them for years while she follows Edward, and her oldest son dies while they are away. Many of their children die as babies or small children. The surviving children are sickly all their lives.

Hugh de Whitton

Hugh de Whitton is a young orphan of fifteen. He is living with the Monks in Evesham. His father, an English Lord, is killed at the battle of Evesham, fighting for Simon de Montfort. Hugh knows the history and feels he is connected to the de Montfort family. When Bran de Montfort stumbles into the Abbey, Hugh recognizes him and knows he should be the one to help him. Bran is wounded, weak and being hunted by the King. Hugh leads him into Wales.

Hugh becomes Bran's squire and follows him to France, and then to Italy. He stays with Bran as he is dying from fever, earning him a life-long position in the de Montfort household. After Bran, Hugh becomes the protector of Ellen, and Ellen has him knighted before leaving for Wales. When Ellen is captured, Hugh is determined to find her. He needs a horse and his new friends know that he will steal one if he must to get to Ellen. Even in theft, though he has honor, because they know that he will return it when his mission is completed and get himself hanged. Instead of stealing, he borrows money from a Jewish money-lender, who gives him the money because Hugh treats the Jew's son like a human. Hugh is a Knight, but does not have the haughty attitude of nobility. Hugh is courteous, caring, and honorable.

Hugh and Caitlin want to marry, but Llewelyn and Ellen will not allow it. Hugh is landless and Caitlin is a royal daughter, so a marriage is unthinkable. After Ellen dies, Hugh is



honor bound to escort Dame Juliana to France and give Amaury news of Ellen's death. He vows to return for Caitlin. He is willing to risk his life to get back to her. Caitlin surprises Hugh by leaving Wales to find him. They marry and settle safely in France.

Davydd ap Gruffydd

Davydd ap Gruffydd is a younger brother of Llewelyn ap Gruffydd. He fights alongside his brother Owain in rebellion against Llewelyn. Owain is imprisoned, but Davydd is forgiven. Davydd rebels a second time and is exiled to England. He is again forgiven after a few years and returns to Llewelyn's court. Without a son, Llewelyn makes Davydd his heir, but Davydd is still not satisfied. Davydd plots to kill Llewelyn, but immediately regrets the plot. When the murder is thwarted because of a mudslide, Davydd gives up his plans to overthrow Llewelyn. Llewelyn discovers the murder plans and confronts Davydd, but Davydd has a cunning wit and quick tongue. He is able to temporarily convince Llewelyn that he has been unfairly accused. He flees to the court of King Edward where he is welcomed as an enemy of Llewelyn.

Davydd helps Edward wage a victorious war against Wales. In exchange for his help, Edward awards him Owain's freedom, lands in Wales, and an English bride. Just before Llewelyn's surrender, Davydd regrets his actions. He has a habit of speaking and acting before thinking, and it has been his downfall. He can never regain his brother's trust and has placed Wales in the hands of the English King.

Davydd returns to Wales after the war and attempts to reconcile with Llewelyn. Llewelyn can never trust him because he knows Davydd has an uncanny ability to talk his way out of trouble. He can twist empty words convincingly, but Llewelyn has seen his betrayal three times. Davydd cannot stomach the injustices he is forced to witness in Wales. English lords are vile and Welsh citizens can find no justice in English courts. Llewelyn agrees that war is inevitable, but wants to wait for the right time to strike. Davydd disagrees, and using Llewelyn's name to rally the soldiers, he attacks the English on Palm Sunday in 1282, the Church's most holy day.

This final war with the English, Davydd's war, is the end of Wales. Llewelyn dies in battle, leaving Davydd as his heir. Davydd is Prince of Wales just a few months before he is captured by King Edward. Davydd's pride will not allow him to surrender, and he is dragged to England to face Edward's trial and cruel punishments.

Elizabeth de Ferrers

Elizabeth de Ferrers is a cousin of King Edward. Edward gives her in marriage to Davydd, a marriage she does not want. She has been abused and does not wish to be tied to a rebel who will eventually fall from grace, bringing her with him. Davydd wins her over easily by showing her simple kindness, and soon he finds that he loves her too. Davydd claims that if she marries him, she might one day wear a crown, words that haunt him as he is led to his death for treason. After Davydd's death, Elizabeth is a prisoner of the English Crown.



Caitlin

Caitlin is one of six illegitimate daughters of Davydd. Her mother dies in childbirth, so she is sent to Llewelyn's court to be raised. She loves her uncle, and Llewelyn adores her. He takes her everywhere he goes. She despises her father for his attempts to murder her uncle, but seeks to make peace with him before he dies. Caitlin loves Hugh, and waits for him when he is married to Elund. When Elund leaves Hugh, she again waits for Hugh to mourn the death of his marriage. She finally tires of waiting and reveals her feelings to Hugh, but a marriage is unthinkable since she is a member of the royal house and he is a landless knight. When Llewelyn dies on the battlefield, Wales no longer holds Caitlin and she escapes the war ridden kingdom in search of Hugh. They marry and settle in France.

Edmund Plantagenet

Edmund Plantagenet is King Edward's kinder brother. He often serves as Edward's conscience, but his influence is limited. He supports his brother and will do anything his brother asks of him. Unlike Edward however, Edmund cares about those around him. He genuinely likes Ellen, questions Edward about why he is holding her so long. Edmund argues on Amaury's behalf to the king and expresses regret when he hears of Llewelyn's death. Edward has no regrets believing that those who challenge him get what they deserve. Edmund attempts to make Edward see the other side of the argument, but Edward is blind to the plight of his enemies, unable to see the grievances they have suffered that have forced rebellion.

Edmund receives the title of Count of Leicester and the de Montfort lands after the battle of Evesham. Amaury audaciously sues Edmund for the return of his lands when he is released from Edward's prison, an act of rebellion in itself. Amaury infuriates Edward, but Amaury is safely in France.

Blanche d' Artois

Blanche d' Artois is the cousin of the French King Philippe and childhood friend of Ellen de Montfort. She marries Edmund Plantagenet. Blanche's appearance with Edmund is a comfort to Ellen. Ellen's confinement is relatively comfortable and she is allowed to attend parties at Edward's court even as a hostage. Blanche is at these parties and dinners with Edmund and the women are allowed time together. Blanche does all she can to ease Ellen's suffering, and even suggests that Ellen flirt with Edward so he will not be so harsh with her.

Amaury de Montfort

Amaury de Montfort is the son of Simon and Nell de Montfort, brother of Henry, Bran, Guy, and Ellen. Amaury is a priest who is imprisoned for over six years by King Edward



without cause. Guy de Montfort murders his cousin Hal in retribution for Evesham, even though Hal had nothing to do with that battle. Guy is out of the King's reach, so Amaury is punished. The Pope campaigns relentlessly for Amaury's release, and eventually King Edward relents. Edward expresses no guilt or remorse for robbing Amaury of years.

Dame Juliana

Dame Juliana is Ellen's lady-in-waiting. She is in love with Bran, and when Bran dies, Juliana can find no solace. She is devoted to Ellen and follows her to Wales. Beautiful and voluptuous, Juliana is adored by many suitors, but she shows no interest in any of them. She mourns for Bran and gives her life in service to Ellen. Juliana returns to France after Ellen's death, and finally marries, twelve years after Bran's death.

Owain ap Gruffydd

Owain ap Gruffydd is the older brother of Llewelyn ap Gruffydd. Unsatisfied with his inheritance, he leads his younger brothers, Davydd and Rhodri, in a rebellion against Llewelyn. The rebellion fails and Owain is imprisoned by Llewelyn. Owain spends years imprisoned in Dolbadarn Castle, released as an old man as terms of Llewelyn's surrender after the second war between Wales and England. Owain is treated well as a royal prisoner, a testimony to Llewelyn's fairness and in contrast to most political prisoners of King Edward.

Roger de Mortimer

Roger de Mortimer is a Marcher lord and ally of King Edward. He is responsible for the mutilation of Simon de Montfort's body, and he sends Simon's head to his wife as a keepsake of the battle. Simon's head is put on the gate of Mortimer's Wigmore Castle. Roger de Mortimer causes the first real argument between Llewelyn and Ellen when Llewelyn needs Roger's support against King Edward. Roger's allegiance is for sale to the highest bidder and Llewelyn needs him to win against the Crown.

Einion ap Caradog

Einion ap Caradog is Llewelyn ap Gruffydd's uncle, the youngest brother of his mother. He attempts to make peace between the brothers in vain. He remains Llewelyn's advisor and confidant, advising him to be leery of Davydd's promises of loyalty after the murder plot is discovered.

Nell de Montfort

Nell de Montfort is the Countess of Leicester, wife of Simon de Montfort, sister of King Henry and King Richard. She is exiled in France after the death of her husband. Queen



Marguerite of France becomes her close friend and ensures that her needs are met. Nell loses a son and husband at Evesham, loses a son to fever, and sees a son excommunicated from the church for murder. Her only remaining son, a priest, is hunted by King Edward, and her only daughter has no hopes for marriage because they have no lands to offer as a dowry. She wants to see her daughter married and protected before she dies, so she fights her deteriorating health. Llewelyn honors his betrothal to Ellen and Nell dies peacefully.

Simon de Montfort

Simon de Montfort is the Earl of Leicester. He leads a rebellion against his brother-in-law, the English King Henry, which ends in his death at Evesham. His family is exiled, stripped of their land and titles. Prince Edward, who later becomes King Edward, leads the attack that defeats Simon, earning the young prince glory as a great warrior.

Bran de Montfort

Bran de Montfort is the son of Simon de Montfort. He is to bring soldiers to Simon's aid in Evesham, and arrives too late. He is haunted by the images of his slain brother and father. Bran questions his loyalties and suffers with guilt over his failure to arrive in time for that battle. His brother Guy seeks to take vengeance from their cousin Hal in Italy, and Bran blindly follows knowing that it is wrong but unable to let another brother down. Guy murders Hal and a priest in a church in front of the congregation, earning him King Edward's wrath. Guy and Bran are excommunicated by the church and hunted relentlessly by King Edward. Bran leaves Guy to visit the Pope, seeking to return to God's grace. Hugh de Whitton never leaves Bran's side, and watches him die of fever. Hugh's loyalty to Bran earns him a special place in the de Montfort household.

Guy de Montfort

Guy de Montfort is the son of Simon de Montfort and Vicar of Florence. He fights with his father in the battle of Evesham, and blames his brother Bran for the battle's failure. Like Bran, he is haunted by images and ghosts of that battle, and when his cousin Hal appears in Italy, he is overcome by the desire to kill him. Henry of Almain, called Hal, is the son of King Richard and first cousin to the de Montforts and King Edward. Hal once supports Simon de Montfort in the rebellion, but then changes loyalty to King Edward. Hal is not at the battle of Evesham, but Guy cannot forgive Hal's betrayal of his father. Guy kills Hal publicly in a church and flees with his powerful father-in-law, the Count of Savana and Pitigliano.

Henry de Montfort

Henry de Montfort dies with his father at Evesham. Bran is plagued with guilt over how he failed his brother and father in this battle.



Maude Clifford

Maude Clifford is the granddaughter of Llewelyn Farr, cousin to both Llewelyn ap Gruffydd and Ellen de Montfort. Widowed at a young age, she is then kidnapped by the ruthless John Giffard who seeks to claim the lands of her dead husband. She is raped and forced into marriage by Clifford who locates a priest willing to overlook the obvious coercion for a price. Her pleas to the English King for help go unheeded, and once she is pregnant, she gives up hope for escape.

Elund

Elund is Hugh de Witton's first wife. She is a Welsh beauty who Hugh desires to marry the first time he sees her. She is not intelligent or interesting, and the heated relationship soon grows cold. Under Welsh law, a woman can seek a divorce for a number of reasons and Elund leaves the marriage. Hugh, an Englishman, is astonished when she leaves, believing marriage is a lifetime bond. He mourns the loss of honor and what he believes to be the displeasure of God more than he mourns the loss of his wife.

Llewelyn Fawr

Llewelyn Fawr is the grandfather of Llewelyn ap Gruffydd. He is loved by his grandson, but hated by Llewelyn's father and mother. Llewelyn's love for his grandfather places strain on his relationship with his parents. Llewelyn Fawr struggles to unite Wales and his grandson shares his idealistic vision of their homeland.

Queen Marguerite

Queen Marguerite of France provides comfort for Nell de Montfort in exile, becoming Nell's closest friend.



Objects/Places

Evesham

Evesham is a small town in England where a fateful battle takes place between King Henry and The Earl of Leicester Simon de Montfort five years before the beginning of *The Reckoning* by Sharon Kay Penman. This battle ends the civil war in England and results in the death of the hero rebel Simon de Montfort. Simon is defeated by a dubious trick of Prince Edward, Simon's nephew. Edward intercepts and defeats Simon's son Bran on his way to the battle. Flying Bran's banners, Edward sweeps down on Simon's waiting army and wins the battle before Simon figures out what happened. Edward shows remarkably cruelty to his uncle when he allows his men to mutilate Simon's body. Body parts are sent home as keepsakes of the battle and the remaining corpse thrown to the dogs. What is left of the body is buried by the monks at the High Altar, but Edward's men return. Simon's body is exhumed and buried in unhallowed ground. Simon's youngest son Amaury is forced to appeal to the Pope to get Simon's body moved to consecrated ground. This battle sets Prince Edward, later King Edward, against the de Montfort family.

Dolwyddelan Castle

Dolwyddelan Castle is Llewelyn's favorite castle in Wales. Llewelyn spends the best moments of his childhood there with his grandfather Llewelyn Fawr and his beloved wife Joanna. Dolwyddelan is located twelve miles south of Trefriw and is where Llewelyn stores his chests, money and jewels.

Vassal

A vassal lord is under the protection and in the service of his liege lord. The vassal owes his liege loyalty, fealty and must provide monetary payments.

Liege Lord

The liege lord is the superior lord, receiving payments and loyalty from his vassals. The vassals are expected to fight under the leadership of his liege and defer to the leadership of the liege. In exchange, the vassal receives the protection of the liege.

Gwynedd

Gwynedd is the realm of Wales inherited by Llewelyn ap Gruffydd and his brothers. The brothers have fought each other for control of the area since the death of their father. Welsh law stipulates that sons inherit the father's land equally upon his death and the



sons are left to fight amongst themselves for control. Gwynedd is the source of all the frustration and conflict between Llewelyn and his brothers. Llewelyn wins the early battles for control of the land, but is forced to protect his winnings against his brothers and the English King.

Excommunication

Excommunication is the favorite weapon of the church and the King of England. The Pope hopes to stay in the good graces of the King. At the King's whim, people and kingdoms are removed from God's grace. During the Middle Ages, the Pope and the Church control salvation more than God. The Church teaches that it is the only bridge between the sinning human and God. If a person dies while excommunicated, that person is believed to be condemned to Hell. The threat of eternal hellfire is often enough to reconcile the rebel to the King. Wales however, is widely viewed to be a land that is more heathen than Christian. The monks and priests in Wales do not believe in the King of England's ability to send a soul to hell. Excommunication is not as effective against the Welsh as it is in other areas. The Welsh understand that excommunication by the Pope is a condemnation of the English King, not a condemnation by God.

Plight troth

A plight troth is a betrothal or engagement. The plight troth is a promise of marriage forged before the young bride has reached the age of marriage. Llewelyn ap Gruffydd is Simon de Montfort's ally in his war against King Henry and the two men form a marriage pact between Llewelyn and Simon's daughter Ellen. When Simon is killed in battle, ending the civil war in England, Llewelyn is forced to disavow the plight troth to avoid the wrath of England. Llewelyn does not marry and regrets leaving the young Ellen in her time of need. Years later, when war between Wales and England is inevitable, Llewelyn is in dire need of an heir. He needs a wife and the only woman he considers is Ellen, honoring the plight troth of long ago.

Aberconwy Abbey

Aberconwy Abbey is a house of White Cistercian Monks who are devoted to Llewelyn. After Llewelyn's death, the monks have one last brave mission to honor their Prince. The monks smuggle Caitlin, Llewelyn's niece, out of Wales in the midst of the war. They get her safely to Hugh where she marries and settles happily in France, out of the reach of King Edward.

Rhuddlan Castle

Rhuddlan Castle is a castle in Wales that is captured and used by King Edward. Rhuddlan castle is the setting for Llewelyn's surrender to King Edward and where Davydd's trial takes place.



Shrewsbury Castle

Shrewsbury Castle is where Davydd is held while awaiting his death sentence.

Chester Castle

Chester Castle is the location of Elizabeth's final prison at the end of the novel. Her confinement in Chester is much more comfortable than her surroundings in her Rhuddlan prison cell.

Bristol Castle

Bristol Castle is a fortified prison in London, England where political prisoners are often taken. Llewelyn's father dies in Bristol Castle. Ellen is confined in this heavily guarded tower while she is Edward's hostage and Davydd's sons spend their lives as prisoners in Bristol.



Themes

Vengeance

Vengeance is a recurring theme in this novel that is used to move the action forward. One act of horror demands another until both sides are bloody and no one is innocent. The first act of vengeance that sets the action of the novel in motion involves the de Montfort brothers.

The de Montforts play as children with their cousins Ned and Hal. They love each other, but as they grow into men, their loyalties are tested. Bran and Guy are so overcome by the need for vengeance that they murder their cousin Hal in cold blood on the altar in a church. Distraught over the death of their father on the Evesham battlefield, the brothers seek to take blood wherever they can. Their dear cousin is not at the battle of Evesham, but he betrays their father and that is enough. When he appears in Italy, they risk their lives and their immortal souls to retaliate against the cousin who wrongs their father. For their act, they earn the anger of their cousin Ned, King Edward of England.

King Edward seeks vengeance and when it is out of reach, another innocent is sacrificed. Amaury, the youngest de Montfort brother, receives the brunt of Edward's anger. Had he been able to capture Guy or Bran, their punishment would have been much more severe. Since Amaury is only guilty by blood, Edward imprisons him for six years then exiles him from England for the rest of his life. Amaury loses his freedom and his homeland because his brothers seek vengeance and the King is forced to retaliate.

Coming of Age

The reader follows Hugh de Witton from boyhood to adulthood through the pages of this novel. The story begins with Hugh as a fourteen-year-old orphan living with the monks in an Abbey in Evesham. He is generous and open, but has no hope for the future. He will soon be forced to leave the care of the monks and will be destitute in the world with nothing. When Bran enters the Abbey wounded, Hugh is amazed at his good fortune. Bran will lead him to adventure.

Bran does lead him to adventure, and Hugh finds himself becoming a man on his fifteenth birthday in a Sicilian whorehouse. He is nervous and fumbling and struggling with the knowledge of mortal sin. He learns from Bran that God can forgive more than a few sins. When Bran dies, Hugh discovers purpose. He is forced by his sense of duty and honor to travel thousands of miles to deliver the news to Bran's mother, and later when the Lady Ellen is kidnapped, Hugh's honor takes him to Wales to deliver that news to Llewelyn. The wide-eyed youth knows the shackles of duty and it gives him purpose.

By the end of the novel, Hugh becomes a man. He grieves the end of his first marriage and the disgrace of a divorce. He learns from the foolishness of marrying for lust. He



grieves for Bran, for Nell, and for Ellen. Finally with Caitlin, married and safe, he discovers true love and becomes the man of his own manor.

Marital Love and Passion

This novel is filled with the preoccupation of marital love, passion, and the devotion of wives to their husbands. The relationships of Llewelyn and Ellen, Edward and Eleanora, Davydd and Elizabeth, and Edmund and Blanche are explored in detail.

Llewelyn and Ellen remain devoted to each other through years of separation, even when they have never met. Llewelyn wants and needs an heir. A son is more important to royalty in the Middle Ages than anything else, but Llewelyn tells his wife that he needs her. He needs her more than he needs a son. When Ellen dies, Llewelyn is unable to deal with his grief and recklessly devotes himself to dangerous missions during the war. Llewelyn tells Ellen that Wales is more important than their marriage. In the end, he is relieved by death. Wales will survive, but he wants to join Ellen in death.

Eleanora leaves small children to follow her husband on crusades. Many comments are made by various characters that Eleanora's multiple pregnancies are evidence of Edward's satisfaction in his wife's bed. After Ellen dies, Edward confesses that he has looked at Eleanora's pregnancies differently. He cannot bear to be away from her because he fears the pregnancies will kill her.

Davydd has had many mistresses, but never a wife. He cares for no one except himself, so when he finds himself in love with his wife, he is genuinely surprised. Elizabeth is completely devoted to her husband. Even when he shows himself to be a rebel, the one thing she knows will destroy her life, she cannot stop loving him. Davydd comments that Elizabeth has done nothing wrong except love the man she was forced to marry. Elizabeth never blames Davydd for taking her freedom and losing her children. She loves him until the end.

Edmund humors his wife more than men of his time often did. He remains faithful to her, and brings her when he travels. Edmund defers to her opinions, and seeks her guidance. Often, acting as Edward's conscience, Edmund allows his wife to steer him in moral directions.



Style

Point of View

The point of view of the novel is limited omniscient in third person voice. The first narrator is Hugh and he is the only character carried from the first chapter of the novel to the last. Nearly every character in the novel is given the opportunity to be the narrator at some point, but the story is told mainly from the perspective of the main characters Llewelyn, Ellen, Edward and Hugh. Limited thoughts and emotions are shared with the reader by each narrator, but the bulk of this information is given in dialogue and physical character traits.

The author chooses to allow the actions, faces and physical interactions of the characters to express emotional states and the reader is forced to infer motivations. The human experiences of this novel are complex and intense, so this detached technique allows the author to guide the reader with a light touch. A first person story with heavy insight into the inner thoughts of the characters would be too sentimental to be effective. For example, when Ellen dies, the description of Llewelyn's face and position by the bed is enough. The scene would have been destroyed by Llewelyn's inner thoughts of his life without his bride. The reader can imagine those thoughts effectively enough. The words unwritten then become much more powerful.

Setting

This novel is set mainly in England and Wales between the years of 1271 and 1283 with a few journeys to France, Italy and the Holy Land. The novel begins in a small town in England, and the reader quickly learns that England is not a friendly place. England is rich, powerful and controlling. The people of England rally behind their King, both because they love and fear him. The King of England is a crusading King believing that he has a duty to God to conquer and control surrounding lands.

Unlike England, Wales has too many internal conflicts to be concerned with conquering its neighbors. The Welsh are a segregated people, loyal to their lords more than to their prince, unwilling to unite behind a leader for a single cause. The main source of the disunity is rooted in a Welsh law that divides the land between the heirs of the royal house. People are forced to have divided loyalties or show no loyalty to the royal sons because being an ally to the wrong heir in the battle for power can be disastrous. The result is that the common person aligns with the lord of his manor alone, allowing the nobility to fight amongst themselves. Llewelyn attempts to unite Wales behind him, knowing that a divided Wales cannot withstand an English assault.

France is used as a safe haven for the characters, a place of safety from the English King. Nell de Montfort is exiled from England and lives out her remaining years comfortably in France. Amaury, also in exile, finds France a welcoming environment.



Hugh and Caitlin escape King Edward's hunt for Davydd's daughters by making their home in France.

Language and Meaning

The language of this novel is formal, in reflection of the society represented within its pages. The archaic vocabulary is cumbersome at first, but adds a depth to the novel not otherwise achievable. The author is able to weave both ancient English and ancient Welsh words seamlessly into the text in a way that makes the meaning of these words clear while still giving the reader the feeling of authenticity. The effect is that the reader is absorbed into the story, but does not forget that he is experiencing another time and place while reading.

The formality of this royal society is demonstrated by the rigid, formal language in the novel. The Middle Ages world portrayed in this novel is a time of highly structured society in which even husbands and wives are expected to maintain an appropriate distance. Enemies are required to be pleasant and follow the customs of polite society. The characters uphold these customs even when speaking to enemies when their words are polite, but their meaning is clearly not. The hidden meaning behind the formal words underscores the difficulty faced by the Welsh. Outsiders in the English world, the Welsh must disguise their feelings and their true agenda while smiling at the King.

Structure

The novel consists of forty chapters titled with the place and time of the first event of the chapter. Each chapter has an average of twenty pages with some chapters as long as thirty pages. The novel has little exposition. Most of the story is propelled through action and dialogue.

The plot of the novel is complicated. The main plot is the Welsh struggle to maintain autonomy against the English invaders. The Welsh are a proud people with a rich history that they want to preserve and pass on to their children. They know that if England takes over, their cities will become English hamlets, their history lost. Many subplots at once overshadow and enhance the main plot. Llewelyn and Ellen have a love affair that crosses many miles and unfriendly borders. Amaury struggles as a prisoner of King Edward. Davydd seeks to reconcile with his brother and attempts to understand his own betrayal. The many subplots keep the story interesting and feed the main plot as the novel progresses.

The action in the novel moves quickly. Vast amounts of time may move in the space of a few sentences, or the same year can span several chapters. The story moves mainly through dialogue and more than once the reader is stunned by the information a character reveals through conversation. Dialogue is also used to provide the reader with the background history necessary to understand the action, but these conversations do not feel contrived as is often the case when this technique is used.



Quotes

But to be honest, lad, few men could endure an entire summer of drought; we all need a little rain in our lives.

Chap. 3, Siena, Tuscany, March 1271, p. 33.

For nearly two months, he'd had his quest to sustain him, his determination to bring word of Bran's death to Montargis. It had served as a lifeline, something to cling to even in the depths of despair.

Chap. 5, Talamone, the Maremma, Tuscany, May 1271, p. 70.

Never forget, Llewelyn, that the world's greatest fool is a Welshman who trusts an English King.

Chap. 7, Castell Y Bere, Wales, December 1272, p. 85.

She'd never understood why her church held humility to be a virtue, had never sought to curb her prideful nature, and as a result, she'd had little practice in cultivating the modest demeanor, the demure bearing that her society demanded of its women.

Chap. 8, Melun, France, August 1273, p. 90.

After one voyage from Wissant to Dover, when his ship was blown back into the harbor three times by ill winds, he told me that sailors ought not to be allowed to testify in court, for any man who freely chose a life at sea could not have his full wits about him.

Chap. 12, The English Channel, Off the Coast of Cornwall, January 1276, p. 150.

It did not seem real to him, any of it, and as he knelt before Edward, he found himself thinking that, of all the unlikely turns his life had taken in the past five years, nothing could be more improbable than this, that he should be pledging his fealty to the King of England himself, and all because on a cold January eve, he'd offered to help Brother Damian carry candles into the sacristy at Evesham Abbey.

Chap. 15, Corfe Castle, England, March 1276, p. 216.

Poor Wales, so far from Heaven, so close to England.

Chap. 20, Rhuddlan Castle, Wales, November 1277, p. 272.

I had to make him believe I bore him no grudge. If I could have bought Amaury's freedom with my smiles, I'd have given him every one I had. If we had not been wed I might have offered more than smiles.

Chap. 22, Windsor Castle, England, January 1278, p. 326.

After a moment, she said, "Guy told me that my uncle Henry pleaded with my father to surrender at Evesham, insisting that it was sheer madness to offer resistance when defeat was certain. My father said...he said, "I pity the man who has nothing in his life worth dying for."

Chap. 25, Abereiddon, Wales, July 1280, p. 381.



The old man said that on the Day of Direst Judgment, no race but the Welsh would give answer to the Almighty for this small corner of the earth.

Chap. 40, Shrewsbury, England, October 1283, p. 583.

Whatever mistakes I've made in the past, I know full well who the enemy is. Not you, Llewelyn...Edward!

Chap. 30, Llanfaes, Wales, March 1282, p. 454.

For if pride was to be his deliverance, it had also been his downfall.

Chap. 39, Shrewsbury, England, October 1283, p. 564.



Topics for Discussion

Vengeance is used as the motivator for much of the action in this novel. Identify three characters who use vengeance as their motivation and discuss the outcome of their actions.

Foreshadowing in this novel is used subtly and sparingly. Identify and discuss three occasions of foreshadowing.

The narrator comments that Davydd's pride is both his downfall and his salvation. Discuss why and how this statement is true or false.

Why did Llewelyn risk his marriage to align himself with Roger de Mortimer? Was he correct to do so?

Is King Edward inherently evil? Why? Discuss his redeeming qualities if any exist.

Who does Llewelyn name as his heir and why? Is this heir a surprise or expected?

After many wars between England and Wales, why is this the final war. Why does Wales fall into the hands of the English and how does King Edward ensure that Wales will not rebel again?