

The Royal Ranger Study Guide

The Royal Ranger by John A. Flanagan

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Plot Summary

The Royal Ranger – The Ranger's Apprentice by John A. Flanagan is the story of a princess who becomes the first female King's Ranger in the history of the kingdom of Araluen. Princess Madelyn, or Maddie as she is known, is a spoiled and privileged princess. She is a fifteen-year-old who finds the life of a princess boring. She is adept at tracking and hunting with her leather sling loaded with lead balls. Against her parent's orders, she sneaks out at night and hunts in the dark forest. She gives her prey to the sentries who appreciate the fresh fowl and game.

Maddie's parents confront her about her dangerous behavior. There are bears and other creatures in the forest as well as brigands and outlaws. She is particularly vulnerable to kidnapping because of her position in the monarchy. She is a royal princess and she is next in line to rule the kingdom following the ascension of her mother, Princess Cassandra, who soon take the throne because her father, King Duncan, is old and very ill and there is no hope for his recovery.

But Maddie is rebellious and argues with her parents about how she spends her time. She is not interested in sitting in her ivory tower sewing and doing needlework and polishing her tiara. She wants some excitement and drama in her life.

Will Treaty is a legendary and heroic King's Ranger. He was once a happy-go-lucky fellow but his wife was murdered and he is obsessed with avenging her death. He runs the risk of being suspended from the Ranger Corps because he has rejected missions and only wants to focus on finding and bringing to justice the murderers of his wife. Gilan, the Commandant of the Rangers, wants the old Will back and wants to find a way to shake him out of his doldrums.

Gilan (who heads the King's Rangers) and Halt (a wise, retired Ranger) devise a plan that will help both Maddie and Will. Halt is the first to suggest the controversial idea. He recommends that Maddie be named the first female Ranger and apprentice under Will. By training under Will, Maddie will learn discipline and will come to understand what dedication, humility and loyalty all mean. As for Will, he will be distracted from his grief by having a young trainee to challenge. She is sure to challenge him in many ways.

Although both parties are reluctant and unsure at first, they embark on this unusual undertaking. Maddie has to learn to leave her life of privilege behind and become subservient to Will who creates a stringent training program for her. At first she balks at doing menial chores and cleaning up after herself, but she learns that being a Ranger is more than just shooting straight. She comes to recognize that a Ranger is fit in mind, body and spirit.

Gilan sends them on a mission to find out who murdered another Ranger. Their investigation leads to unexpected results. Maddie proves herself to be worthy of the title of King's Ranger. Her parents are proud of her and reinstate her as a princess. Maddie understands the responsibility of being a princess and is dedicated to the kingdom, but

her first request after becoming a royal again is to be able to finish her Ranger training with Will.



Chapters 1 - 11

Summary

Chapter 1

There had been a poor harvest in Scanlon Estate. The farmers, laborers, and fruit pickers weren't doing well. The next harvest was three months away. There wasn't enough food for everyone. Squire Dennis of Scanlon was a wise, kindhearted man. He knew that if there wasn't enough food, his workers would leave the estate. Then, he would be shorthanded for the next harvest. So, he saw to it that his workers had enough to eat by paying for their food from his personal wealth. By doing this, he was sure he would earn the loyalty of his workers.

The food for the workers was set up in the kitchen in the parkland in front of the house. The food was cooked inside the manor and brought out to this temporary kitchen. Out of pride, those workers who could contribute some money did so. A wagoner, a big man with blond hair who was armed with a dagger, entered the food station at dusk. He was looked at suspiciously. He was hungry but he'd have to pay. Free food was only for the farm hands. He offered only three pfennigs, but the steward suspected he had more. Since the steward didn't feel like an argument he allowed the wagoner to eat. If he wanted ale, it would cost him more. The wagoner was rude and didn't even thank the steward for the food and drink. The steward thought it was best to let him eat and then be gone.

The wagoner sat by himself at a table but seemed to be constantly searching the crowd for someone. A serving girl noticed a cloaked figure standing behind the wagoner. He seemed to have appeared from nowhere. The cloak was that of a Ranger and its cowl hid the stranger's face. The Ranger pulled a heavy saxe knife from beneath his cloak and rested it on the wagoner's shoulder. He told him not to turn around. Others recognized the stranger as a Ranger. Hearing that a Ranger was standing behind him, the wagoner slumped over. The Ranger called the man, "Henry Wheeler." The man looked fearful and claimed to be "Henry Carrier," but the Ranger didn't buy it. The Ranger mentioned the Wyvern Inn in Anselm Fief which evoked a look of guilt on the wagoner's face.

The ranger mentioned an event that had occurred at the inn eighteen months before. It involved a man named Jory Ruhl. The wagoner claimed to know nothing about it. The Ranger accused him of setting the inn on fire and killing a woman who saved a young peasant girl who had been trapped inside. The wagoner drew his dagger, and the Ranger his saxe knife. A fight ensued in which the Ranger soon got the better of the wagoner. The wagoner lay dead on the floor. The Ranger, Will Treaty, told the steward that he fell on his knife.

Chapter 2



Day was dawning on Castle Araluen. It was a peaceful kingdom, but King Duncan was ever cautious. He knew that war could break out at any time and ordered that sentries be posted at the lookouts on the wall at all times. Two sentries saw the young fifteen-year-old girl dressed in hunting attire returning to the castle. Her parents didn't like their daughter, Princess Madelyn or Maddie as she was known, sneaking out to hunt. But, the sentries enjoyed the spoils of her hunt which she always shared with them. They were careful not to brag about their good fortune to avoid enraging her mother, the Princess Regent Cassandra, or her father, Sir Horace, the premier knight of the kingdom.

The sentries, Len and Gordon, greeted her. As usual her parents didn't know that she had sneaked out. The sentries reminded her that the forest had its dangers. But she was safe, she told them, armed with her sling and saxe knife. She gave them two pigeons and a large hare. Since only royals and Rangers could hunt and cook hare, Maddie told them she would tell anyone who asked that she gave them the hare.

After Maddie walked off, Gordon reminded Len that Princess Cassandra used to sneak out just like her daughter did now. The Princess had been quite a tomboy.

Chapter 3

Maddie sneaked into the royal chambers, but her mother was there waiting. She confronted Maddie about where she'd been. It was amazing how much Maddie resembled her mother. Both were short in stature and slight in build. They had the same green eyes and the same mass of blonde hair. Maddie told her mother that she'd just been to the kitchen for a snack. But, Cassandra knew better. The argument that ensued was typical of that between a mother and young teen daughter. Cassandra reminded Maddie that there were bears in the forest-- not to mention the bandits and outlaws. Maddie could be kidnapped for ransom.

Horace, Maddie's father, was awakened by their voices. He was disappointed by but somewhat resigned to his daughter's behavior. Maddie had more luck getting her father on her side than she had with her mother. But he had also grown tired of her defiance. She was the heir to the Araluen throne. Maddie pointed out that if she were a boy, Horace would be teaching her to hunt and fight. If she became queen, how could she lead her men into battle if she didn't know the first thing about it, she asked him. She pointed out that Cassandra had fought alongside Horace in battle. Maddie's grandfather had told her that Cassandra used to sneak out to practice her sling just like Maddie did. Besides, Maddie was bored. She needed some excitement in her life.

Horace said they could possibly work something out. But, he became angered when Maddie pressed him about what and when. He confined her to her room for an entire week. A sentry would be stationed at her door to see that she didn't leave her room. When she sassied him back, Horace made it two weeks.

Chapter 4



Halt and Pauline stopped their horses when Castle Araluen came into sight. Pauline found it impressive, but Halt would never trade it for Castle Redmont. It wasn't as physically impressive as Castle Araluen, and it was less formal. Yet, it was where he and Pauline had revealed their devotion to one another. Halt was retired but was still the most famous Ranger in the Kingdom. Toting his massive longbow, he was a formidable opponent for any bandit or highwayman.

Pauline found it odd that Halt's former apprentice had summoned him to Castle Araluen. It had been three years since Crowley, the Ranger Commandant, had passed away. Halt had no interest in taking over the role of Ranger Commandant. The administrative responsibilities were not for him. The position was given to Gilan by unanimous approval of his peers. He was young but able. He and Will Treaty were considered the two most highly regarded among the younger Rangers. Will was passed over for the leadership role. He was a lot like Halt—both men were known to act independently and bend the rules a bit when they saw fit. Pauline didn't believe that Gilan was calling upon Halt to go on a mission. Perhaps the request for their presence at the castle was of a personal nature. Maybe Jenny, who had initially rejected him, had finally agreed to marry him.

As they approached the castle, the drawbridge was lowered. They were recognized and welcomed by the sentries. They were met by Kane, the current Commandant-in-Training. Gilan was tied up with his apprentice warriors. Halt reluctantly allowed the stable boy to tend his prized horse. Kane led Halt and Pauline to their keep tower suite of rooms. While Pauline took a bath, Halt visited King Duncan. He was shocked to see how the old king had deteriorated since he last saw him. King Duncan asked Halt to watch over Cassandra. It was difficult for her to run the kingdom alone. The King knew he would not recover and felt comfort that Cassandra had Horace by her side. She would need the support of Halt, Horace and Will after he passed. He knew that Cassandra was strong and that her daughter was apparently taking after her. King Duncan had drifted off by the time Halt crossed the room to leave.

Chapter 5

Halt and Pauline met with Gilan. The two friends were glad to see each other and exchanged good natured barbs back and forth. Finally, Halt asked why Pauline asked why they had been summoned there. Gilan led them to the royal apartments where they would all meet with Cassandra and Horace. Cassandra and Horace were delighted to see Halt and Pauline. Maddie stepped in for a moment to say hello but Halt immediately sensed the tension between parents and daughter. After she left, Cassandra and Horace talked about how exasperating it was to deal with Maddie. Horace told them how Maddie sneaked out to hunt at night and gave her prey to the guards. Pauline encouraged Cassandra and Horace to be a little more understanding and patient with Maddie. Halt teased Cassandra about her risky adventures when she was Maddie's age. Gilan redirected the conversation to the real reason that Halt and Pauline were summoned. He was very worried about Will.

Chapter 6



It had been eighteen months since Alyss' death. Will had not smiled or laughed once since then. He had been such a cheerful, happy person before her death. But Alyss was his soul-mate. She was killed when she tried to save a young girl who was in Wyvern Inn when it burned to the ground. The fire had been caused by the mercenary Jory Ruhl and his gang of criminals. Ruhl's men had set fire to the inn as a distraction when an attempt was being made by the sheriff and his posse to arrest them. Unfortunately, Alyss was staying at the inn at the time. She able to save the young girl who was in the burning inn but was unable to save herself. It was harder on Will because he wasn't able to bury Alyss. A funeral would have given Will some closure.

Will was on a personal quest for revenge against Ruhl and his men. He was obsessed and consumed with avenging Alyss' death. Cassandra was terribly upset because Will was like a brother to her. She felt she had lost him... there was no sign of the Will she knew and loved since Alyss' passing. He refused two assignments Gilan had given him in an effort to take his mind off revenge. If Will refused another mission, Gilan would have to suspend him from the Rangers which would kill him. Will had already captured three of the five gang members. He caught Henry Wheeler just a week before. Wheeler wound up dead but Will brought the other two in for trial and sentencing. Ruhl himself was still at large.

Gilan suggested that they stage an intervention. If they all talked to Will, maybe he'd snap out of his current mindset. Horace was dubious whether just "talking" would be effective. Will needed a new focus. Pauline suggested that he take on an apprentice. Gilan was afraid he'd refuse such an assignment. Halt picked up on the idea and suggested that he might not say no if Maddie were offered to him as his apprentice.

Chapter 7

Everyone disagreed with Halt's idea all at once. She was too young – she was a girl – she was a princess! Halt pointed out that if Cassandra had a son, she wouldn't hesitate to have him apprentice with Will. She would want him prepared to rule the kingdom someday. Horace agreed that a son would be in the army learning how to fight and battle. Halt recognized that Maddie couldn't join the army but she could join the Rangers. She would learn to command, make decisions, and develop battle skills. Halt did not deny to Cassandra that there would be danger in such a scenario. But, being a trained Ranger would make her less vulnerable to kidnappers and criminals.

Halt added that Maddie could trip and fall on the way to needlepoint class and break her neck. With Will she would be in good hands. Cassandra Halt was right; Will was Maddie's godfather. He would die before he let any harm come to her. Cassandra and Horace had already expressed their belief that Maddie needed discipline in her life. What better way to get it than to be an apprentice under Will? Pauline said that it was a good idea all around because no monarch could rule from an ivory tower.

Gilan pointed out that Maddie would be the first female Ranger. Halt acknowledged that she would be at some disadvantage with her fellow male Rangers, but she would also have some advantages. What she lacked in muscle she could make up in speed and



agility. Halt asked Cassandra and Horace to allow Maddie out of her room for an hour. He had something he wanted her to show Gilan.

Chapter 8

Maddie watched with great curiosity as Halt set two old jousting helmets on fence posts a good distance away from her and Gilan. Halt asked Gilan to shoot an arrow from his long bow at one of the helmets. Gilan's arrow struck about forehead level. Halt asked Maddie to take a shot at the second helmet. She took a lead ball from her belt pouch and placed it in her sling. She focused on the target, swung the sling several times, and released the ball. Her missile struck the second helmet and sent it spinning. Then Halt challenged Maddie to see how many shots she could get off in a minute. Halt stopped Maddie when she got off six shots, five of which hit the target.

Halt told her that her parents were worried about her. She didn't know why they had to treat her like a precious princess all the time. But, she was a princess, Halt reminded her. Halt suggested they go back inside and allow her parents to tell her what ideas they had been considering about her future.

Chapter 9

Maddie entered her parents' chambers alone. Horace said they wanted to talk to her about her future. They couldn't have her running wild and taking risks. She needed order and discipline in her life. No more excuses. They had made up their mind. Maddie expected more rules and regulations, but her heart leaped when Horace told her that they intended to send her to Will as his apprentice. She would be trained as a Ranger. She loved Will and couldn't believe her good fortune. She was astounded that she would be the first girl Ranger. She would be living at Castle Redmont with Will. Cassandra told her that life as an apprentice wouldn't be easy. Maddie would do her best. She wanted her parents to be proud of her.

Gilan and Halt rode up to Will's cabin in the wooded area below Castle Redmont. Will stepped out of his cabin and greeted his old friends. The inside of the cabin was in disarray. Will made some coffee and told his guests to have a seat. Will told Halt and Gilan he knew why they were there. They were going to tell him to snap out of the doldrums. He was a mess, but he didn't care about anything other than seeing Jory Ruhl on the end of a noose. He was unmoved when Gilan told him that the Corps needed him.

Chapter 10

Halt stood in anger. He asked his former apprentice how he could turn his back on the Corps. They were all sorry about Alyss. They all loved her. Will had to move on even though he would always love her and cherish her memory. Will could return to his Ranger duties after he found Ruhl and brought him to justice. They needed Will now. He was a leader and a person who could make a difference in the world. He was a hero to thousands of people who looked up to him and relied upon him.



Horace and Cassandra were asking for his help. Halt told Will about the problems they were having with Maddie. Gilan told Will that they wanted Will to train her as an apprentice. Halt handed Will a letter that Cassandra and Horace had written to him. Will said he would give them his answer the next day. Will read the letter privately.

Cassandra and Horace explained the problems they were having with Maddie and how the future of the kingdom at risk. She was untrained and vulnerable to kidnapping and worse. She needed to be removed from a life of privilege to understand the realities of the world. At the same time, his training would hone her skills and develop her self-discipline. King Duncan was very ill and Cassandra was under a great deal of stress having to run the kingdom in his place. If something happened to Cassandra, Maddie would be the ruler but was not up to the challenge. Out of friendship, Cassandra asked that Will help them.

In a separate note, Horace wrote of his concern for his daughter's health and safety. They were unable to control her and needed the help of a friend. He mentioned the extra document included in the letter and told Will to use it if necessary. He looked at the other document which was brief and to the point and quite surprising. He thought of Alyss. He knew that she would have wanted him to help his friends. This was a request he could not refuse.

Chapter 11

Maddie was late arriving at Will's cabin. Will gave up waiting outside for her and went inside the cabin to study Ranger reports on the movement of criminals. He thought he might be able to detect activity that could be attributed to Jory Ruhl. Sable, Will's trusty dog, reacted to a noise that only he heard. Will looked outside to see Maddie emerging from a clump of trees. Another girl around the same age had accompanied her. From the way the girls were attired, Will assumed the other girl was Maddie's maid. Two soldiers on horseback followed the girls and carried their valises.

Will greeted Maddie with a stoic face. He told her she was late and had disobeyed her first order as a Ranger. Maddie had failed to read the letter that Gilan had given her. She thought it was a letter of farewell. She didn't realize it was her orders. Rose-Jean, the maid, was perplexed. Maddie had told her that were off on a holiday. She sensed that there was a lot more than that involved. When Maddie explained that she stopped by to see Arald and Sandra, Will corrected her – to a Ranger they were Baron Arald and Lady Sandra.

Will took Maddie aside and told her emphatically that she wasn't on a holiday. He also told her to not call him "Uncle" and just call him "Will." She was his apprentice, and he was her mentor and trainer. She reminded him that she was the Royal Princess of Araluen. He responded that he was a King's Ranger and that he answered only to the King. Her rank was meaningless to him. He also told her that Rangers did not have maids and that Rose-Jean would not be staying.



Analysis

Chapter 1

A wagoner bullies his way into the free meal tent that is being sponsored by Squire Dennis of Scanlon. He is presented as rude and rugged and is obviously not one of the “good guys.” A Ranger appears and accuses the wagoner of being responsible for the death of a Courier woman who burned to death in a fire that he and his gang started. The wagoner appears to be visibly shaken when he realizes that he is being confronted by a Ranger. His reaction indicates that the Rangers are respected and even feared.

The Ranger represents the kingdom and represents good versus the evil of the wagoner. The King’s Ranger is Will Treaty. Although he has authority to arrest the man, he kills him during a struggle. Will Treaty does not seem to regret having killed the wagoner and appears to be bent on revenge. At this point, it is not clear if the revenge he seeks is the King’s business or if it is personal in nature.

Chapter 2

Conflict exists between Princess Madelyn or Maddie and her parents, the Princess Regent Cassandra and Lord Horace. Like a typical fifteen-year-old, Maddie rebels against her parents’ rules. She has an adventurous spirit and sneaks out at night to hunt in the forest. At her age she feels immortal and believes that nothing will happen to her. Her parents recognize the danger of a young girl hunting in the dark forest. This chapter foreshadows a clash between daughter and parents that is sure to erupt in succeeding chapters and play a role in the story line.

Chapter 3

It is apparent that Maddie knows that her parents disapprove of her nighttime hunting treks in the forest. She lies to her mother and father, telling them that she was just getting a snack in the kitchen. But, of course, they know better and remind her of the dangers that lurk in the forest. Not only are there dangerous bears and other animals, there are outlaws who could do her harm. She is particularly vulnerable because she is a princess and heir to the throne. Maddie has not fully realized the responsibility of her role in the kingdom. She could be kidnapped for a ransom. Maddie’s parents try to impress upon her the importance of her position in the kingdom. But, like any young teen, she wants a more exciting life. Though many young girls would disagree, she does not feel the life of a princess meets that criteria.

Chapter 4

The Araluen Kingdom is in crisis which probably explains why Maddie’s parents are so concerned with her careless behavior. King Duncan is ill and his death is imminent. Once he passes, Princess Cassandra will take over as ruler. Although there is peace now, a transition to a new monarch could tempt some pretenders to challenge the new Queen. If something were to happen to Cassandra, Maddie would become the ruler.



Lifelong friends, Halt and Pauline, were summoned to the castle but they don't know why. Halt is a retired Ranger and is a close friend to Cassandra and Horace. He always vowed to serve his king but he truly does not want to take on a new mission if it involves returning to the Rangers.

Chapter 5

Halt immediately senses that there is conflict between Maddie and her parents. He has an understanding heart and encourages them to be a little more understanding with the youngster. He reminds Cassandra that she was very much like the rebellious teenager. It's something that Cassandra may not want to hear but knows it's true. But Gilan has another problem child – Will Treaty. He is worried about him. Perhaps his concern has something to do with his encounter with the wagoner and the fire at the inn that caused the death of a woman.

Chapter 6

It now becomes clearer why Will is set on avenging the death of the woman in the fire. The woman was Alyss, his wife and soul-mate. She had died heroically when she ran into the fire to rescue a young girl. She was successful in getting the child out but she perished in the fire. The fire had been set by Jory Ruhl and his gang.

Will has been completely transformed by the tragedy. He was a happy-go-lucky man but now he is filled with anger and rage. Gilan is the leader of the Rangers and he wants the others to intervene and help Will get over his obsessive behavior.

Halt shows his wisdom when he blends two problems together and fashions one solution that will fix both. Maddie needs discipline in her life and Will needs something to live for other than revenge. He suggests that Maddie become a Ranger apprentice and that Will be her mentor. It is a controversial even unheard of proposition. But it could be just what both Will and Maddie need.

Chapter 7

Halt's intuition about Maddie is keener than that of her own parents. He knows that Maddie is not the type of girl who is happy to stay in her ivory tower to sew and do needlepoint and polish her tiara all day. Gilan wants to help Will return to his former self and, as leader of the Rangers, he needs Will's skills and abilities to defend the kingdom. Gilan shows his wisdom as a leader when he recognizes that even though Maddie will not be as big and strong as her male counterparts, she would have the advantages of speed and agility.

Chapter 8

Halt is a great mediator. He allows Maddie to show off her skills with weapons but at the same time he sternly reminds her of her duties as a princess. She may become a Ranger but she will always be a princess and her duty is to the kingdom. He shows his



respect for Maddie's parents by allowing them to tell Maddie about a surprising matter involving her.

Chapter 9

This chapter underscores how quickly and unexpectedly things can change in one's life. Maddie's rebelliousness resulted first in confinement to her room. Then it led to a place and experience she never would have dreamed of – her chance to be the first female Ranger and to train under Will Treaty. Knowing that she's still in the doghouse, she tries to hide her glee over the news so that her parents don't think they're rewarding her and change their minds.

Chapter 10

Halt again becomes the diplomat who wins Will over to the idea of having Maddie as his apprentice. Will is depressed over the loss of his wife. He cannot fathom ever being happy again and the thought of putting up with a spoiled princess and having the responsibility of making a Ranger out of her is the last thing Will wants to do. Halt and Gilan appeal to Will's sense of duty and his oath as a King's Ranger. The written appeal from Cassandra and Horace and the knowledge that Alyss would have wanted him to help them makes it impossible for him to reject the offer. But he accepts it reluctantly. His first priority of avenging Alyss' death remains the same.

Chapter 11

The old adage to be careful what you ask for because you just might get it applies here. It is a rude awakening for Maddie when she realizes that she is just an apprentice to Will. She thinks back to her life as a princess in her castle and, perhaps, regrets the behavior that led her to Will's rustic cabin in the woods. She recognizes that life was a lot easier being a princess than it will be as a Ranger apprentice. She will have no maid and no vast wardrobe. She will have to do chores and obey Will. Although Will has affection for Maddie, he knows that in order for her to become a good Ranger, he must separate her from her spoiled life and break her of her privileged demeanor.

Discussion Question 1

Why does Squire Dennis provide free food for the people?

Discussion Question 2

Who was the woman that was killed in the fire at the inn?

Discussion Question 3

Why does Will finally agree to take Maddie on as his apprentice?



Vocabulary

accumulated, kindhearted, harvest, porridge, misnomer, wagoner, gauntlets, scabbard, pfennig, preemptive, rummaged, mottled, peripheral, abject, ominous, sentries, blithering, litany, brigands, protocol, surreptitiously, erratically, mollycoddle, subterfuge, poignant, festooned



Chapters 12 - 22

Summary

Chapter 12

Will showed Maddie to the small room where she would be staying. While she checked out her room, Will made chicken stew for dinner. After she ate, she returned to her room. Will promised that the next day would be a big day. Maddie had a hard time falling to sleep. She was upset at how grim and cranky her uncle was. She was also battling a lack of confidence. Her parents were both so accomplished. Could she ever measure up?

Maddie woke the next morning not knowing where she was at first. Will told the "Princess" that she had to use the outside washroom and that breakfast was in ten minutes. She shivered as she washed up with the icy cold water in the washhouse. Will made scrambled eggs and bacon for breakfast. Maddie didn't like eggs or bacon. She was accustomed to a special air-cured ham that was made for the royal family. He offered her an apple, but Maddie told him that the cook always peeled and sliced them for her. He picked up his saxe knife and brought it down on the apple. He told her to consider it sliced.

Maddie liked the bread which, Will told her, she would be fetching from the baker in Wensley each day. He also informed her that she would be making her bed and cleaning up after herself each day. Maddie didn't see why she should have to live like a peasant. Will reminded Maddie that she wasn't a princess for the time being. She was a Ranger's apprentice. Will recalled a similar comment from Halt when he was the apprentice. Maddie smirked at the small enclosure where Will said she could keep her clothes. It would barely fit a fraction of the clothes she brought with her. He told her not to worry. Those clothes were already on their way back to Castle Araluen with Rose-Jean.

Chapter 13

Jenny and Will were talking outside an eating area in front of her restaurant. She wondered whether Will was being too tough on Maddie. Will responded that Maddie needed it; she was spoiled and willful. She recommended that he not overdo his demands on her. Maddie was just returning from Mistress Buttersby who was fitting her for her uniforms. Mistress Buttersby gave Maddie the smallest uniforms she had, but Maddie still swam in them. She had showed her how to take them in, but Maddie feared it would take her forever.

Before she opened her own restaurant, Jenny had been a cook at the palace, a commoner. Maddie told Jenny that it wasn't proper for her to address her by her first name. She should call her "Princess" or "Your Highness." Jenny said she'd keep it in



mind and went back inside the restaurant. Will didn't like how Maddie had spoken to Jenny. She was a good friend of Will and her parents. It was time that Maddie learned a lesson. Will led her back to his cabin and pulled an envelope from his desk and handed it to her. It was the document that had been included in the letter to Will. In the document, Cassandra and Horace disinherited Maddie and stripped her of her titles and privileges for the time being.

Will explained that Maddie's parents didn't hate her. They were doing this for her own good so she would take the training seriously. She was shocked to learn that her apprenticeship with Will would last a year. Will told Maddie to put on one of her uniforms and meet him outside. When she stepped outside, he told her that she would run while he rode alongside on his horse Tug. She ran/walked for eight kilometers. Will decided that she was in a fit condition.

Chapter 14

The next morning Will was surprised to wake up to the smell of bacon. Maddie had made bacon and eggs for him. Although everything was burned, he was happy that she was trying. The coffee she made was slightly discolored water. He didn't want to discourage her, so he didn't complain. As it turned out, she put three spoonfuls of coffee beans into boiling water. She didn't realize the beans had to be ground. She realized she had failed at breakfast. Will had to stifle his laughter. She felt bad; but, he told her it was a good first try. In fact, she did something for him that he really needed. She made him laugh.

Training that day would be with the weapons she would be using for the next year. The first weapon that Will pulled out was a double scabbard that was mounted on a leather belt. The saxe was the larger of the two knives. The saxe was a Ranger's standard weapon. She liked the light feel of the weapon. It was sharper than all the weapons in the kingdom except for Horace's sword which was harder and sharper than any blade in Araluen or even throughout the continent. That was something that Maddie didn't know about her father. The second knife on the scabbard was smaller. Maddie would learn to throw this knife. Next she would be introduced to the Rangers' principal weapon – the bow.

Chapter 15

Maddie had never seen such an unusual bow. It was shorter than most bows and had a bizarre shape. It formed a wide, flattened w-shape. Will explained that the weapon was a curved bow designed to produce extra arrow speed with less effort. It was heavy weighing in at fifty pounds. Will had made the bow himself. Maddie wanted to learn how to make her own bow. She had shot a bow before but it was nothing like this weapon. Will showed her how to string it. He warned her to always make sure the bow was properly seated before release. It wasn't easy to master but he was sure Maddie could do it. The release was completely different on this bow than on a standard bow. With his guidance she practiced how to stand and position herself. Will retrieved an arrow and told her to insert the arrow into the bow and aim at a hay bale. Her first arrow traveled a



short distance straight into the ground. She tried again and did better getting closer to her target. He told her to shoot twenty more times. Her back and shoulders were already aching.

Chapter 16

Maddie wound up shooting some forty arrows. Her back, shoulder and upper arm muscles ached and cramped and kept her awake. She saw light under the door and peeked out. She saw Will pouring over paperwork and talking to himself about where Ruhl might be. By the end of the first week of practice, Maddie was much-improved in both technique and strength. Will told her to focus on her accuracy which would only improve with hours and hours of practice. She noticed all week how Will was preoccupied with reports from other Rangers in other fiefs.

In addition to the bow, Maddie was practicing with the saxe knife and the throwing knife. Will explained to her how their mottled uniforms blended into the wooded background. He told her that by standing perfectly still that it was hard to spot a Ranger in the forest. He told her that the basic rule was: trust the cloak.

Will found Maddie eager to learn and adventurous like her mother. She was certainly more suited to stalking and shooting than to sewing. Although she was improving, she still had an attitude and a petulance that had to be tempered. He was pleased with her interest in the bow and in her proficiency in stringing it.

Will wanted to see how good she was with her sling. She was a little rusty because she hadn't used the sling since she came there. Will set up five poles with old helmets on top of each one at staggered distances away. Maddie liked using lead balls instead of stone because of their consistent weight and size. She made the balls herself with a mold she had. He told her to hit each of the five helmets using only five lead balls. Maddie did pretty well and only missed one helmet. However, if she missed one advancing enemy, she wouldn't be doing pretty well. She'd be pretty dead.

Chapter 17

Will included practice with her sling a regular part of Maddie's daily sessions. He counseled her on how to stay calm while in battle. It was better to proceed slowly and hit all the targets than to rush and miss even one. Maddie was improving her skills by the day. Will had her practice as though enemies were both retreating and descending upon her. She had improved her performance and was hitting 19 of 20 shots and then finally 20 of 20. Will encouraged her by telling her she could be very good. Next, he'd get her a Ranger horse. Sundancer, the horse she came on, wouldn't be suitable for Ranger duty. She was sure that Sundancer could run rings around any Ranger horse. They saddled up their horses and took off to Derrylon ford. Will said they would see how well Sundancer would do.

Chapter 18



Maddie had to slow Sundancer's pace in order to stay in tandem with the slower Tug, Will's Ranger horse. Sundancer was an Arridan thoroughbred, the fastest breed in the world. Will sensed that Maddie and Sundancer were eager to run. He gave her tacit approval to go ahead of him. She dug her heels into Sundancer's side and told Will she'd see him at the ford. Maddie loved the speed and the wind in her face. She had always heard how people were in awe of Ranger horses. Seeing one up close now, she didn't understand why they were so admired. Tug was short and gray and dumpy. Inspired by her pride in Sundancer and her own riding skill, she vowed to make it to the ford in half the time as Will and Tug. As often was the case, Will and Tug were able to communicate their thoughts to one another. He wanted to put Sundancer and Maddie in their place.

After galloping wildly for a long stretch, Sundancer faltered. Maddie had ridden him too hard. She dismounted and gave him some water from her water skin. She took a square of old blanket from her pack and rubbed him down. She led him to a grassy area and let him graze for a short while. She decided to walk with him as they headed for the ford. Soon, Will and Tug not only caught up with them but passed them by. Will whispered to Tug that she didn't mistreat her horse. He'd make a Ranger out of her yet.

Chapter 19

While Sundancer's abilities were obvious, Will wasn't sure just how fast Tug could run. He had seen him run plenty of times, but he only ran as fast as he had to run. When Will was on a mission with Cassandra some years before to rescue the Skandian Oberjarl, Will had to match Tug in a race against an Arridan stallion called Sandstorm, a champion of the Bedullin herd. Initially, Sandstorm was ahead, but Ranger horses were bred for their enormous stamina. Soon the horses were neck and neck. Rangers have to know that their horses can outlast their enemies' horses. Will announced that he and Maddie would be going to see Young Bob who was their senior horse breeder. He had a Ranger horse ready for Maddie.

Young Bob was old and bald. He was called Young Bob because his father was known as Old Bob. After a few pleasantries, he pointed out that there had never been a girl Ranger before. She told him she was enjoying her training. Maddie's horse was stocky with short legs like Tug. He was a piebald – marked with irregular black and white splotches. Maddie had always admired piebalds. She immediately liked the horse and thought he was beautiful. His name was Bumper.

Chapter 20

Maddie took the saddle off Sundancer and placed it on Bumper. As she placed the bridle and saddle on Bumper, she could swear that he was trying to speak to her. Maddie wasn't concerned about riding Bumper. She had ridden many horses. Bumper looked calm and gentle. As soon as Maddie settled into the saddle, she had the surprise of her life. He took off and began bucking and trying to throw her off. He finally thrust his rear quarters into the air and Maddie went flying. Young Bob explained that Bumper was trained to buck and throw off anyone who didn't use his "permission phrase." All Ranger



horses had a code phrase. Tug's phrase was "Do you mind?" which could come in handy if Maddie ever had to ride him. Bumper's phrase was "Don't break me." Maddie only had to whisper the phrase into Bumper's ear just once and he'd let her ride him any time from then on. She whispered the words to Bumper. As promised, she had no problem mounting and riding him. He was very responsive to her commands. When Bumper took off running, Maddie had never experienced such speed. Will asked Young Bob if Bellerophon was around.

Chapter 21

Young Bob worked with Maddie in getting her acquainted with her horse. She adored Sundancer but Bumper seemed to be an extension of herself. When Maddie returned from a run with Bumper, she was surprised to see Will riding bareback on an old gray horse. Will told Maddie that the horse was Bellerophon, an old friend and his first Ranger horse. After lunch, Young Bob excused himself. He had to say goodbye to Bumper. He always became very attached to all the Ranger horses.

Maddie rode Bumper out and led Sundancer with a light halter. Maddie and Will discussed their Ranger horses and what a unique experience it was to have one. Maddie asked him if he ever felt that his horse was talking to him. Although he had the same sensation, he never had discussed it with anyone and wasn't ready to discuss it with Maddie yet.

Chapter 22

Training with Bumper was added to Maddie's daily practice. She felt more and more that he was an extension of herself. Will also ran her through fitness sessions that including long runs, unarmed combat, tracking, and camouflage lessons. They tracked animals. Will always reminded her to "trust the cloak" if she thought she'd been spotted. She rode Bumper on her daily trips for bread in Wensley Village where she had become something of a celebrity. The people were intrigued by the small girl who was the first girl to become a Ranger. She was an object of awe to the kids in the village who were her own age. She enjoyed her celebrity as any girl her age would. When she had free time she'd visit the village and spend time with them playing games and coaching the boys in archery and fishing. Will cautioned her not to get too close to them. She had to maintain the mystique of a Ranger.

Privately, Will thought spending time with kids her own age was good for her. Having Maddie around was good for Will whose grief was beginning to fade. Maddie brought Jenny a bouquet of flowers and apologized for being rude to her. Jenny held no grudge and warmly accepted her apology. Maddie brought Jenny the fresh game she killed during her practice sessions for her restaurant. One day riding back after she got the daily bread, two friends stopped her. Lucy and Gordon invited her to a party and cookout. With Will away with Halt and Pauline, Maddie had a free day and was happy to accept their invitation. One of the boys would be bringing a cask of wine. She was hesitant about the wine, but she figured she deserved a chance to let her hair down and relax.



Analysis

Chapter 12

Maddie has more lessons on what it is NOT to be a princess. Just like any spoiled and privileged child, she wants what she wants. She wants the freedom and excitement of hunting in the dark and honing her skills with weapons. However, she also wants a maid to clean up after her and a royal cook to prepare her special air-cured ham just the way she likes it. She likes the bread that Will has but doesn't like the notion that she will be the one who fetches it each morning from the baker. Princesses don't "fetch" things, but Ranger apprentices do. Although she is excited and intrigued by the turn of events, she has not fully accepted her new reality. Will has no intention of allowing her to pick and choose which part of being a Ranger's apprentice she likes. She's got to learn to be humble and obedient.

Chapter 13

Part of Maddie's adjustment to her new life is not all her fault. She is a princess and has been a princess all her life. She knows no other existence – yet. When she corrects Jenny by telling her that she should be addressed as "Your Highness" or "Princess" she is just following a protocol that she has been taught all her life. She really isn't being rude.

Will decides that he must show Maddie the letter from her parents that she has been temporarily disinherited by her parents. She is technically no longer a princess. Will knows that her parents are merely trying to help with her transition and have no intention of permanently disinheriting her. But, Maddie needs to be shaken a bit in order for her to understand that the training is serious and important.

Chapter 14

Maddie is young and very flexible, and she quickly understands that she must change and leave her life of privilege behind her at least for the time being. What stimulates her into cooperating more than anything is the chance to learn to use Ranger weapons. She is naturally attracted and skilled in the use of the sling and is eager to develop her skills using more advanced weaponry. Will is pleased that Maddie is finally taking her training serious.

Chapter 15

Will is impressed with Maddie's natural talents and her tenacious approach toward her training. He knows that he is putting her through the paces when he has her practice with the fifty pound bow that presents quite a challenge for the young, slightly built girl. Will knows that Maddie will only do well if she is challenged and decides to start out her training with one of the most difficult weapons. He knows that she must be able to master the crossbow if she is to succeed as a Ranger.



Chapter 16

By applying herself and approaching Will and her training in a more humble and subservient manner, Maddie makes great progress in her training by the end of the very first week. Will is able to introduce her to a full range of skills that she must perfect. There are aspects of her past life as a royal that still linger but Will is understanding and keeps working at building her spirit as a Ranger and leaving her princess persona behind.

The risk involved in becoming a Ranger is made clear to Maddie when she hits four out of five targets. Her satisfaction with her performance is debunked when Will points out that if a Ranger only takes out four of five enemies, he is a dead Ranger.

Chapter 17

Maddie's condescending ways return on the subject of horses. She is proud of her beautiful Arrida steed. She doesn't believe that her horse is less suitable for Ranger duty than the dumpy, stocky little horses are like, Tug, Will's horse. Will knows that appreciating the unique qualities of Ranger horses is something else that Maddie is going to have to learn.

Chapter 18

Maddie is beginning to learn that there is more to a horse than its beauty and speed. Although she puts Will's chunky little horse, Tug, down she sees that he has more stamina and lasting power than Sundancer. What she doesn't know is that the Rangers have an ability to communicate with their horses which probably comes in handy during a Ranger's battle with his enemies. Maddie is learning a lot but she still has more to learn. Becoming a Ranger is not just being skilled at weaponry it is also an internal and spiritual transition that she will acquire with time and with the right attitude.

Chapter 19

The Ranger horses have an almost magical quality about them. Tug communicates with Will although no words are spoken. When Maddie asks how fast Tug can run – obviously thinking that the stocky little horse can't run very fast – Will responds that he doesn't know. All he knows is that Tug can run as fast as he needs to which hints at the horse's unlimited potential. But Maddie's doubts about Ranger horses all disappear when she sees her Ranger horse, Bumper, and falls in love with him.

Chapter 20

Maddie catches on rather quickly that there is a magic about the Ranger horses. She thinks she's imagining things when Bumper seems to be talking to her. Her respect for the Corps and for the horses greatly increases after getting her own Ranger horse. The Ranger horses are highly trained just as their masters are. They will not allow anyone to ride them without whispering the secret code to them. This prevents an enemy from mounting and riding a Ranger horse.



Chapter 21

Will is pleased when Maddie asks him if he ever thinks Tug is talking him. Will knows that she has already bonded with Bumper. The horse shows his trust in her or else he wouldn't be trying to communicate with her.

Chapter 22

Maddie is doing well enough that Will expands her training even more. While Will is good for Maddie, she is good for him, too. He will never forget what happened to his wife and will never abandon his quest to avenge her death, but Maddie has brought a new purpose in his life.

Maddie encounters another challenge when she becomes too chummy with the village kids. Staying remote and distant from others is part of the Ranger's oath. If she does not maintain this distance from others, she will be vulnerable and open to exploitation and become less effective. It is another aspect of being a Ranger that she learns the hard way.

Discussion Question 1

Why is it difficult for Maddie to adjust to her life as a Ranger's apprentice?

Discussion Question 2

Why isn't Maddie rude when she tells Jenny how she should address her?

Discussion Question 3

What is magical about Ranger horses?

Vocabulary

bumptiousness, encumbered, verandah, edible, commendable, forestalled, insipid, crestfallen, saxe, pommel, petulance, symmetry, exultant, chagrin, disconcerted, disdainfully, tacit, wizened, placid, paddock, cantered, monosyllabic, lineage



Chapters 23 - 33

Summary

Chapter 23

Will felt guilty leaving Maddie alone for the weekend. She assured him she'd be fine and would probably turn in early. As soon as he left, Maddie took her saddle pack and bent it into the shape of a sleeping person and covered it up in her bed – just in case Will came home early and checked on her. She walked to the village because if Bumper was gone when Will returned, it would be a dead giveaway. She sneaked by Jenny's restaurant pulling her cloak close around her – “trust the cloak” she remembered. She joined Lucy, Gordon and Martin near the stable behind the inn who were all sitting around a small fire.

They feasted on lamb skewers and game pies. Martin handed her a wood mug filled with wine. She took a big swig. She thought it was sour but pretended that she liked it. As soon as her mug was empty, Martin filled it up again. As the wine flowed and the evening wore on, Maddie became a little tipsy. Everything was funny but suddenly, Will's voice cut through the joviality and asked her what she thought she was doing. She stood and swayed back and forth. Will demanded that the kids turn over the wine cask which he thrust on the ground and broke into pieces. Will promised that he would inform all their parents about their little party. As he walked the wobbly Maddie away, he ordered the other kids to go home.

Even though she was drunk, she realized that her prestige in the village had suffered. After a short distance, she fell to her knees and threw up. As Will rode Tug home, he forced Maddie to walk alongside. He promised they would talk in the morning.

Chapter 24

Maddie woke the next morning with a dry mouth and a hangover. Her head throbbed when she tried to walk. Will was making breakfast and insisted that it would be good for Maddie to eat. She barely made it off the verandah to the water well. She poured water in her mouth from the bucket with a scoop. She couldn't get enough cold water. Although she didn't want to eat, she felt better after a few sips of milk and some bread with jam.

Will was unsympathetic about Maddie's condition and required her to practice her archery. She did so poorly that Will gave her an easier task – splitting a stack of logs with an ax. After chopping the wood, Will had her run through the obstacle course which was an awful experience given her condition. Will reminded her that he wasn't punishing her – the wine was. She vowed to never drink again.

When Maddie returned to the cabin, she was drawn to the aroma of fresh coffee brewing. Will had told her that all Rangers drank coffee. She had never even wanted to



try it before. It was the first time that Maddie wanted to drink some and it seemed to help what ailed her. Will said there might be hope for her yet.

Chapter 25

In the afternoon, Will went a little easier on Maddie. She did her laundry and sewed up a rip in her uniform. He also introduced her to the Courier's code and gave her several exercises to do. The close work made her headache return. She was worried that she had lost Will's trust and might not ever be able to recapture it. Will wanted the names of her friends, but Maddie refused to give them to him. Whoever obtained the cask of wine needed to be punished he told her. He didn't press her. He would recognize the kids when he saw them again. Will lectured her on the importance of the aloofness that the Rangers had to maintain. She could have friends but should not be overly social with them. She would make strong friendships within the Rangers Corps. It was time for Maddie to grow up.

Maddie turned in early but woke sometime after midnight. The low murmur of voices had awoken her. The lights were all out in the cabin. As she listened more closely, it was actually one high-pitched voice that she heard. She stepped carefully into the main room and saw that the cabin door was wide open. She stepped back into her room and drew her saxe from her scabbard. There she spotted Will and his dog Sable sitting on the front stairs. He was lamenting about Alyss and how much he missed her. She was everything to him. Will sensed that Sable was telling him that he would eventually heal. He told Sable that he thanked the heavens for Maddie. She was a distraction and the only bright spot in his life. She had all the natural attributes to make an excellent Ranger. She could be an example to girls and open up the Corps to more females. She hurried off when he rose to come back inside. He crossed to his room and didn't see her hiding in the shadows.

As she fell back asleep, she vowed that she would never let Will down again.

Chapter 26

Maddie was back to normal four days after her drinking party. She apologized to Will for her behavior and vowed to never drink alcohol again. One afternoon, Tug and Bumper sounded an alert. Someone was approaching. When Will opened the door, a small, thin man was standing on the porch. He looked to be about sixty and wore a farmer's smock. He introduced himself as Arnold Clum of Split Oak farm. He had farmed there most of his life. They grew vegetables, raised sheep, and had laying hens.

Clum had twenty to thirty hens and one rooster. Something was taking his chickens and eggs. The critter was the size of a small dog and quick as a snake. Arnold's wife suggest he come and ask Will to help him. Will agreed to help. He told Maddie that part of what they do is help people in trouble.

Chapter 27



Arnold and his wife Aggie greeted the Rangers when they rode up. Will and Maddie were led to a ramshackle chicken coop. Arnold showed them the fence where the critter entered the area. Will could tell from the fresh tracks that the animal was a pine marten, an animal similar to a weasel or a mink but with large claws. At dusk, Will and Maddie found a spot to secrete themselves where they could keep watch on the henhouse. Maddie armed herself with a sling and Will with his bow.

Will spotted the marten scurrying out of a clump of bushes. As the marten balanced on top of the fence protecting the henhouse, Maddie swung her sling around several times and released her shot. It hit the marten and hurled it backward off the fence. With one shot, Maddie had killed the predator. Maddie knelt down and skinned the marten and presented the pelt to Aggie. She could make a warm neck warmer from it.

On their way back to the cabin, Will told Maddie that he was impressed with her skills and with the nice gesture of giving the valuable pelt to Aggie.

Chapter 28

When they returned to the cabin, Gilan was there waiting for them. He could tell that Maddie's attitude had changed, that she was self-deprecating and more helpful. While Maddie took the horses to the stable, Will and Gilan talked. Gilan planned to stop by Jenny's restaurant to pay her a visit. Will filled Gilan in on Maddie's training. He told him that she had been doing well and was eager to learn and improve. Will felt she was ready to go on a mission. He told Gilan that he had been forced to use the letter from Cassandra and Horace in which they disinherited her. Gilan silently observed that Will's demeanor had greatly improved as well. The haunted look and tension had faded from his face.

Gilan wanted them to go on a mission to Trelleth Fief where a Ranger had been killed. It looked like an accident but Gilan suspected that it was murder. Will knew Liam the Ranger who had been killed. Gilan wanted them to investigate the circumstances surrounding Liam's death.

Chapter 29

They left early in the morning and reached Trelleth Fief in the afternoon of the second day. Will said they would first look at the scene of the accident and then talk to Wendell Gatt, the farmer who found the Ranger's body. They came upon a blacksmith and asked directions to the Gatt farm. The blacksmith was obviously curious about the young girl in a Ranger's uniform. As they approached the well-maintained farm, Mrs. Gatt emerged from the farmhouse. Mrs. Gatt welcomed them and assumed that they had come to look into the death of the Ranger. Her husband, who found the Ranger's body, was out in the field and due back soon. Will decided they would ride out into the field and find him. They had a few questions for him.

Wendell Gatt was not as accommodating as his wife. He said he was too busy to leave the field to show them where he found the Ranger's body. Will threatened to arrest and



charge Gatt if he refused to help them. Gatt then agreed to take them to the scene of the accident.

Chapter 30

Gatt had found Liam on the side of a road near two good-sized trees. Gatt had figured he fell off his horse and broke his neck. Will doubted it because like all Rangers, Liam was an excellent rider, his horse was solid and he never drank alcohol. Will thanked Gatt and told him he could return to his work. Will could see the tracks of Liam's horse, Acorn, in the soft terrain. It was obvious that something made the horse stumble or spook as they approached the trees.

Maddie noticed that something had cut into the bark on one of the trees. As they looked closely at the other tree, they saw a faint mark that matched the one on the other tree. Will plucked a white thread from the cut. It might have been a fiber from a rope. Perhaps someone stretched a rope across the path and tripped the galloping Acorn. Will decided they needed to have a look at Acorn who was stabled at the Castle Trelleth. Will thought it best if they kept a low profile. If Baron Scully recognized Maddie it could ruin their investigation. While Will went to the castle to see Acorn, Maddie stayed at Liam's cabin. Will told her to go through Liam's papers. There could be a clue as to what he was working on.

When Will returned he told Maddie that there was a cut on Acorn's leg that could have been caused by a rope. Will spotted a loose floorboard and inserted the tip of his saxe knife under it and pulled the board up. There was a sheaf of papers inside.

Chapter 31

Inside the sheaf was a map of the area surrounding Castle Trelleth. There were three villages and a name by each one. The name Peter Williscroft was written next to Boyletown; the name Carrie Clover was written next to Dangers Crossing; and, the name Maurice Spoker was written next to Esseldon. On another paper, there were details about the sizes of each village. On the last piece of paper, the three names were listed again with dates and their ages next to them. Peter was 12, Carrie was 14, and Maurice was 11. Will thought maybe the children had been killed or kidnapped and that Liam was investigating the crimes. Maddie figured that the information must have been important since Liam went to the trouble of hiding it in the floorboards.

Will told Maddie that he would be posing as an itinerant worker and she as his daughter. Will had gotten a hand cart and some raggedy clothes from the castle to use in their disguise. When they reached the villages, they would hide their horses in the woods nearby. They would start out in Danvers Crossing which was the closest village.

Chapter 32

Danvers Crossing was situated on a river surrounded by farms and boasted a flour mill. The village had, among other establishments, a blacksmith, a tannery and a tavern/inn in addition to the homes of the townspeople. After scanning the area, Will decided that



they begin their investigation in the tavern. Will ordered a small ale for himself, water for Maddie and chicken stew for them to share. Will told the innkeeper that he was looking for work. There were some repairs that needed to be done in the tavern. The innkeeper's name was Rob Danvers. The town had been named for his great-grandfather.

Will asked if someone could keep an eye on Maddie while he worked. He heard that the daughter of a family had moved away. Perhaps this family could help him out. Rob said that he was speaking of Carrie Clover. She hadn't moved away; she had disappeared a few weeks before. Since the parents mistreated the girl and beat her, the innkeeper thought perhaps she had just run off.

Chapter 33

Will and Maddie stayed two days but learned little more about Carrie Clover. Maddie became friendly with the village children and raised the matter. The kids confirmed Rob Danver's belief that someone took her. But the kids were reluctant to say much more. An older boy spoke out and said that Carrie was taken by a river wight – an evil river spirit. The younger boy was hushed up when he said there was no such thing as a river wight. One of the girls mentioned the "story man" which drew Maddie's curiosity.

Later, she told Will about her conversation with the village children. He'd never heard of a river wight either. He heard of barrow wights, spirits that hung around graves. Maddie was fairly certain that the kids were lying about a river wight taking Carrie Clover. Will became curious when Maddie mentioned a "story man." He decided he'd ask about him in the tavern later. It was Maddie's turn to check on the horses. But she was spooked by tales of river wights and story men so she asked Will to go with her.

In the tavern that night, Will asked Rob if there was a story man or spinner living in the village. Rob answered that there was no permanent story man, although occasionally one passed through. Will sensed that Rob wanted to say more but held his tongue.

Analysis

Chapter 23

Will has no children and learns that one can't trust a teenage girl who is left all alone to do as she pleases. Although Maddie is really not interested in drinking alcohol, she is a typical youngster and caves to peer pressure and drinks the wine. It makes her feel free and liberated until she is caught red-handed by Will who tracks her down. Although he seems to be angry, he understands her behavior more than he lets on. Will was young once, too.

Even though she's tipsy, Maddie has enough awareness to realize that she may have besmirched her image and that of the Rangers with her reckless behavior. It may be a lesson well-learned.



Chapter 24

Will knows that Maddie doesn't feel very good the next morning. But, he drives her just as hard as on any other day of practice. She hangs in like a trooper. Finally, Will realizes that Maddie isn't going to accomplish much, and he shows his human side by letting her off the hook a bit. She is miserable enough. He realizes that he doesn't have to lecture her. He knows that she will never want to feel this horrible again and that Maddie will learn more from her mistakes than from her successes.

Chapter 25

Maddie is committed to being a Ranger. She fears that her behavior has caused her to lose Will's respect, something that she had been fighting to attain. Will doesn't want to alienate Maddie from her friends in town so he doesn't press her for their names. He secretly admires her loyalty to her friends. She now realizes that to be a valuable Ranger she must put her responsibility before any friendships she might make on the outside.

Maddie gains insight into Will's deepest feelings and thoughts when she overhears him telling Sable, his dog, how miserable he is without Alyss and how Maddie has brought purpose back to his life. She is flattered by his feelings for her which makes her vow to never disappoint him again.

Chapter 26

Maddie learns another Ranger lesson. She doesn't understand why a Ranger would take on the job of killing a barnyard critter that is stealing a farmer's chickens and eggs. Will explains that chickens and eggs don't seem that important to a princess, but they are everything to the farmer. It is a Ranger's responsibility to help people who need help. It is not their job to judge how important it is.

Chapter 27

Maddie demonstrates that her training is taking hold in more ways than one. Her sharpshooter skills bring the pesky marten down but Maddie shows a richer understanding of what it means to be a Ranger. Maddie impresses Will with her kindness when she gives the marten's rich pelt to the farmer's wife. It was a valuable item for the farmer's wife to have. By behaving in such a charitable way, the reputation of the Ranger Corps is strengthened.

Chapter 28

Galin is happy to see that the plan to help both Will and Maddie is working. He is impressed with Maddie's progress and her more demure demeanor. He is also thrilled to see that Will is coming out of his deep depression. Gilan is so pleased with Maddie's progress that he feels comfortable sending her on an important mission with Will.

Chapter 29



Will shows another side of what it means to be a Ranger. The fact that Rangers have to get tough even with law-abiding citizens comes to the forefront in the encounter with the farmer who found the dead body of a fellow Ranger. When the farmer tells Will he doesn't have time to leave his work on the farm, Will threatens him with arrest. Although Will wouldn't have arrested him, his warning was enough to make the farmer cooperate. This lesson may be an important one for Maddie.

Chapter 30

Will demonstrates his superior tracking ability when he studies the spot where Liam's body was found. Maddie shows her intelligence and acumen when she notices marks on the trees that were caused by a rope that probably tripped the Ranger and caused his death. Will's investigative experience and training leads to the discovery of some secret papers in Liam's cabin. The papers could provide some clues about what case Liam was working on and could lead to those who are responsible for his death.

Chapter 31

When Liam's secret papers reveal the names of children, Will fears that there may be some dark plot afoot involving the kidnapping or even killing of children. Liam's notes tell Will that they must act immediately. More children could be in jeopardy. Maddie learns from this incident that Rangers have to sometimes disguise themselves and present other identities to get to the bottom of things. She is beginning to understand that people fear Rangers and that at times more can be learned if they keep their true identities hidden.

Chapter 32

Through their stealth investigative abilities, Will and Maddie are able to learn quite a bit about the case that Liam was working on before his death. They believe that it involved a horrid crime or else Liam wouldn't have been murdered. In the first village they visit, they discover a crucial bit of information when they hear that a little girl had disappeared.

Chapter 33

Maddie proves her unique value in the investigation of the missing children. She performs a task that Will would be unable to do without her. Since she is a female and a young teen, she is able to infiltrate a group of village children and learn that a strange man known as the story man had recently been in town. Although the kids don't reveal anything in words, from their body language and behavior, Maddie is certain that something about this man frightened them. She just doesn't know what.

Discussion Question 1

Why did Maddie drink wine at the party with the village kids when she really didn't want to do so?



Discussion Question 2

How does Maddie show both her Ranger skills and a deeper understanding of what it means to be a Ranger in the incident with the farmers and the marten?

Discussion Question 3

How do Will and Maddie figure out what happened to Liam, what caused his death, and what he was working on before he died?

Vocabulary

feigned, sallies, profound, witticism, engender, slaked, ravenous, albeit, vestiges, infallible, threadbare, proximity, apothecary, dilapidated, gentry, fixation, florid, incapacitated, itinerant, ubiquitous, malign, raconteur



Chapters 34 - 44

Summary

Chapter 34

Esseldon was smaller than Danvers Crossing and wasn't situated on a river. Will made arrangements to stay in the stable to underscore his wandering itinerant persona. Jerome, the innkeeper, didn't give Will much hope for the possibility of work. After they settled in, Maddie left the stable to mix in with the local kids. Will took off ostensibly to look for work; but, in reality, he wanted to see what he could find out about the missing children. Maddie found a group of kids throwing stones at a wooden raft in a pond. Most of the stones missed their target. Maddie asked the kids if she could have a go at it. Maddie had to ante in two pennies. Whoever hit the target first would win the pot. She put a good-sized stone in her sling, swung it around and released it. It hit the target so hard that it caused a gaping hole in the center of the raft where a large water spout gushed out.

Maddie wouldn't take the money because she was at an unfair advantage with her sling. The boys were curious about the sling so she showed them how to use it. Maddie asked the two girls sitting nearby if they wanted to try it. They were hesitant but she encouraged them to try. The kids enjoyed using the sling and all had a good time. Later she asked them if there was a story man in town – someone who told ghost stories. There was an obvious discomfort among the kids. One of the girls finally spoke up and said there was no story man in Esseldon. They made plans to meet the next day. Maddie promised to show them how to make their own slings.

Chapter 35

Will was told by the innkeeper that there was no storyteller in Esseldon. But, the innkeeper had heard of a story man who came from Danvers Crossing. The innkeeper described him. He wore a colorful cloak and scarlet shoes. He was very theatrical and wore bells on his wrists and ankles. He told the village kids ghost stories. The story man had been in Esseldon a few weeks before, only a few days before the Spoker boy disappeared. The innkeeper said that the kid probably ran off because his father beat him. Will asked him if Maddie could stay in one of his rooms while he was gone for a day trying to find work in the surrounding area. The innkeeper said she could take the attic room.

Will told Maddie that he would ride to Boyletown to learn if the story man had been there. They focused on the fact that the two missing children, Carrie and Maurice, both had been abused by their parents. He told Maddie to keep trying to learn more from the other kids while he was gone. When she met with the kids the next day, David took her aside. He warned her not to mention the story man and to not tell her father about him. The story man had told them things and warned them not to repeat them to any adults.



If they did, something bad might happen to them. At first the story man told them old folk lore stories that they'd heard before. Then he told them about The Stealer of the Night who was a mysterious figure dressed all in black. He appeared in villages out of nowhere and took children never to be seen again. David thought that the Stealer had taken Maurice.

Chapter 36

The Stealer stripped the flesh off a chicken leg and then complained that it wasn't properly cooked. Harold replied that he never had claimed to be a cook. The Stealer threw the chicken leg in the bushes and told Harold to get him some cheese, ale and bread. The leader of the kidnapers was dressed all in black, the color he wore when he stole children. He was tall and well-built and his hair was almost white.

There were nine men in the temporary camp including the story man. And, there were five children, ages ten to fourteen chained together under a tree. The gang had been abducting children in Trelleth Fief for several months. They targeted children who were mistreated by their parents because everyone would assume that the children ran away. The story man scared the children and warned them not to say anything about the Stealer. When the Stealer came into their houses, they were afraid to call for help. The Stealer and his gang had operated in other fiefs perpetrating the same crimes.

A scout rode into camp and told the Stealer that a young girl in Esseldon was asking a lot of questions about the story man and about the missing boy. The Stealer decided that the girl should learn what happened to nosy people. The Stealer ordered Benito, a bitter man who'd been badly injured in a fight years before, to travel to Esseldon to frighten the girl off or kill her.

Chapter 37

After hearing the stories about the mysterious Stealer, Maddie was happy to spend the night in the attic room in the inn. Even though she was safer inside, she was alert to every sound. She had her saxe knife close and ready to grab. As Will had suggested, she helped Jerome around in the inn through closing time. Noticing that the doors were thick and solid, she helped him lock up. It was cold sleeping in the attic, and she was nervous thinking about the Stealer. With her saxe knife under her pillow, she finally fell asleep.

Maddie woke later. She opened her eyes but made no other movement. She sensed a presence in the room. A man's voice told her not to move and to leave her weapon under her pillow. Maddie didn't move and pretended to be asleep. The voice told her to stop asking questions about the story man. She finally whispered that she understood. The man told her not to try to follow him as he left her room.

Maddie lay there for a moment. She had to act. She was a Ranger and couldn't let the Corps down. She got up and put her saxe in her sheath and grabbed her sling. She armed her sling with a lead projectile and carefully went down the stairs. She opened the door a crack and slipped through. She glanced around the street looking for any



movement. She stepped on a sharp stone in her stocking feet. As she bent over to remove the stone, a missile whirred over her head. The sharp stone had saved her life. She saw her attacker preparing to fire another projectile. She got off a shot first and heard a muted cry and saw the figure stagger and fall on his back. As she approached the fallen man, she drew her saxe. The man was dead. She was numb and a little nauseated. She had killed a man. But, she knew that it was him or her.

The man was dressed all in black and appeared to be foreign with his dark, swarthy complexion. In a sack under his cloak, she found a heavy brass disk with four blades set around it. She recognized it as an Iberian weapon, an assassin's weapon. She felt more fortunate than ever that she had avoided being hit with that ominous weapon. She found some papers in his sack and took them with her.

If she reported the man's death, her identity as well as Will's would be exposed. The investigation would be lost. She decided to leave the man there without a word to anyone. The man's body was found early the next morning. The villagers all wondered what had happened to him. His black apparel told them he'd probably been up to no good. No one connected him to Maddie.

Chapter 38

Will returned that night after dark. He hid his weapons in his hand cart and joined others who had gathered in the tavern. He told Jerome that he'd been unable to find any work. Jerome told Will about the dead body that had been found. When Will heard that the man had been killed by a huge wound to his forehead, he immediately thought the weapon of choice may have been a sling. He thought of Maddie. Jerome told him the man was a foreigner and was undoubtedly up to no good.

Maddie entered the tavern carrying trays of food to serve to the customers. She spotted Will sitting at the bar. After she served the food, she motioned Will to meet her outside. She told him that she had killed the man. She was filled with tension and conflict and began to sob. Will comforted her as she told him about the events of the previous evening. He marveled at how brave she had been. He could see that her training had been successful. She acted on Ranger instincts. Will was certain that the dead man had been working with the Stealer. Will assured her that she had done the right thing. She would have been killed if she hadn't struck first.

Maddie told Will about the papers she found which included a map. He wanted to see it immediately. He learned in Boyletown that the story man had been there a couple days before Peter Williscroft's disappearance. The boy was mistreated just like the others.

Chapter 39

In the attic room, Will and Maddie studied the map carefully. Six crosses were drawn on the paper. Each cross was numbered. The one word written on the paper was "Pueblo." She remembered from her classes that "pueblo" meant "villages" in Iberian. Three of the crosses represented the villages where children had been kidnapped. Will concluded



that the other three crosses represented villages that the Stealer planned to travel to in the future. They had to take action.

They donned their Ranger cloaks, retrieved their weapons, made their way out of the village and headed for their horses. They quickly saddled and mounted their steeds and took off in a smooth canter. They came to a pond and let the horses drink after riding for an hour. Will believed that the Stealer was the head of a slave ring. The dead man was Iberian, and there was an active slave trade in Iberion. Slavery was outlawed in Iberion, but the Stealer and his men probably sold children in the slave market in Socorro, a city-kingdom on the west coast of Arrida. The story man probably infiltrated the villages and learned which kids were mistreated so the gang knew which kids to target. They were heading for a village by the name of Willow Vale to see if the story man had been there yet and to try to learn which kinds were being abused by their families.

Chapter 40

Fernald Creasy, the owner of the Tubby Duck Inn in Willow Vale had drunk too much ale the night before. He was coping with fatigue and a hangover as he began to prepare the inn for the day. He was startled by the sudden appearance of a cloaked figure. It was Will who explained that he was a King's Ranger on official business. Will learned that no children had gone missing from Willow Vale. He asked him about children who were suspected of being abused. Immediately, he thought of Violet Carter who was thirteen and couldn't seem to do anything good enough to please her parents. Fernald confirmed that a story man in a colorful costume had been through the village a few days before. Will told Fernald to keep their discussion to himself. If he even breathed a word of it to anyone, Will would arrest him and throw him in the dungeon and have his inn torn down plank by plank. He didn't relish bullying or scaring the man, but the man's silence was essential.

That night Will sat in the tall grass behind the Carter house, and Maddie positioned herself across the street. After several hours, Maddie thought that the Stealer wasn't coming but Will's instincts told him that he would be there that night.

Chapter 41

Will heard the voices of two men who were casing the Carter house. One whispered that there was no one around. Will saw that they were wearing black when they emerged from the shadows. Will thought of the terror that Violet would soon experience. Unfortunately, he had to allow her to be kidnapped. If he apprehended just these two men, the rest of the gang would disappear with the kids they had already kidnapped. Will would let them abduct the girl and then he and Maddie would follow them to their camp and capture the entire gang and rescue the children. He watched closely as the Stealer eased a widow open on the Carter House and climbed in. Only minutes passed and Violet in a white nightgown was being passed out the window to the other man.

Violet was gagged with a piece of cloth and was crying. The Stealer laughed and boasted about how well Victor, the story man, was scaring the children and making



them vulnerable. The other man said that Victor was just doing what he, Jory, had told him to do. Will's head snapped around at the mention of Jory's name. The Stealer stepped into the moonlight, and Will could see that he was indeed Jory Ruhl, the man he had been hunting down for causing Alyss' death. Though he was tempted to apprehend him right then, he had to be patient. Ruhl would lead them to the other missing children. Ruhl said that Violet was the tenth and last that Eligio had contracted them to abduct. They were heading for Hawkshead Bay. The ship that would take the children away was due in three days.

Will overheard Jory and the other man talk about how Liam's snooping had slowed them up. He stayed behind and let the men walk off. He could easily track them. Maddie came scurrying across the street. She had seen the men and the abduction take place, too. He filled her in about what he'd heard and said they'd be tracking the Stealer and the other man who would be heading to Hawkshead Bay. Will explained that he had been pursuing Ruhl. He was the man who had killed his wife.

Chapter 42

They returned to their horses and bedded down for a few hours. They would have no trouble catching up with Ruhl who would be collecting the other stolen kids and would be slowed down on his journey to the bay. Will had located Hawkshead Bay on his map and was about a day's ride away. Will and Maddie would beat the kidnappers there. They could probably expect to have quite a battle.

Will and Maddie followed the path to the bay. Will used his instincts, experience and skills to stay on track. Nearing the bay, they saw that there wasn't much cover for them as they lay in wait for the Stealer and his gang. They found a small copse of trees and decided to leave their horses there and go the rest of the way on foot. They crouched down on the edge of a cliff that overlooked the bay. They spied four large tents on the beach and a fireplace and tables and benches. They saw a roughly honed piece of timber that had been placed across an opening on a cliff wall. It was probably where the hostages would be kept. Will spotted a track leading from the cave down to the beach. Will told Maddie that she would be leading the hostages back up that cliff track while he and his trusty bow was keeping the gang busy.

Chapter 43

In late afternoon, the gang showed up with their bound captives. Ruhl and two of his men including the story man were riding small ponies. The children were tied together by a long rope that was strung through metal rings on the leather collars around their necks. There were nine gang members and probably more in the camp and on the ship. The odds were tipping in the gang's direction but Will said he had more than enough arrows to make up the difference. The children were unbound one at a time and led into the cave. Will kept his eye on Ruhl who was watching the process while eating and laughing and having a good time. When all ten prisoners were in the cave, the rudimentary door was closed and locked shut.



Later in the evening, food and water were brought up to the cave. After the gang settled in for the night, Will told Maddie that they'd come back at dawn and figure a way to get the kids out. They would take turns watching the beach throughout the night.

Chapter 44

When Maddie woke the next morning, Will's bedroll was empty. She strung her bow and donned her belt that was laden with her saxe, throwing knife and a pouch with her lead shots. She slipped a quiver over her shoulder and lastly pulled on her cape. She slowly and cautiously made her way to the cliff. She remembered to "trust the cloak" as Will had often told her. She knew where Will was supposed to be but saw no sign of him at first. Then she saw his raised hand in the tall grass to signal where she was.

They peered down on the beach and saw the ship. It was a long, narrow ship that was built for speed. There was a wooden cage in the center of the deck. Will was certain the ship wouldn't go out for hours. It needed high tide to slip out, and the gang would want to travel at night to avoid detection. Will told her to study the ship and the distances between the beach and ship until she could picture it in her mind. He had a plan for that night which he promised her she would love. She wasn't so sure that she would exactly "love" it.

Analysis

Chapter 34

Maddie shows her maturity when she does target practice with the village kids. Although she is a trained Ranger and could out shoot the kids, she doesn't take advantage. She refuses to take the money that they had set aside up for the winner. She is patient with the boys and shows them how to use a sling without lording it over them. Being a girl herself, she understands why the girls are reluctant to try their hands at the sling. She encourages them and hopes that her shooting skills inspire the other young girls.

Chapter 35

Both Maddie and Will learn that there was a story man at the second village they stopped at. Being good investigators, it doesn't take them long to determine that there is a connection between the incidents in both towns. The fact that there's another missing child in the second town confirms to the Rangers that they are on to something and that the paperwork they found in Liam's cabin was not a false lead. A more ominous threat emerges in the story when one of the boys tells Maddie that there is a Stealer of the Night who took children. Maddie knows that "Stealer of the Night" is just a fancy way of saying "kidnapper."

Chapter 36

The kidnappers are frustrated. They had rid themselves of one bothersome Ranger who was nosing around. Now they apparently had a young girl who was asking too many



questions. They probably didn't think the girl was a Ranger because there were no female Rangers – that is until Maddie became an apprentice. If the kidnappers knew that two Rangers were on their trail, they may have hightailed it out while they could. Unknown to Maddie, her life is very much on the line.

Chapter 37

Maddie soon learns that she is indeed in danger. The Stealer sent one of his thugs to scare her, and it worked. She is very frightened. After the menacing individual leaves her with the warning to stop asking questions, her training and oath to the Ranger Corps kicks in. She could not allow this person who was probably connected to the kidnapping ring go. She had to pursue him. It was her duty and it was what Will would do.

Maddie proves to be a tenacious and brave fighter. Once it is obvious that he intends to kill her, she strikes first. And despite her belief that this man is a kidnapper and worse, she feels badly. It is the first person she killed. It is a natural reaction that anyone would have.

Deciding what to do about his body leaves Maddie conflicted. But, in the end, she does the right thing. It isn't the most humane thing to do to just let his dead body lie in the middle of the street, but she has to consider priorities. If she were to report his death, her identity and Will's would be revealed. The investigation would be damaged. Finding and rescuing the children that had been taken were her first priorities.

Chapter 38

Will is sympathetic when Maddie tells him how upset she is that she had killed another human being. He understands. As a young Ranger, he no doubt had experienced a similar reaction when he first killed another person. He stresses that she could do nothing else. If she hadn't killed the man, it would be Maddie lying dead in the street. She had done the right thing for herself, for the kingdom, the Corps and most importantly for the children.

Chapter 39

The urgency of the matter becomes evident when Will concludes that the kidnappers had hit three villages and have plans to hit three more. He knows of an active slave trading operation and suspects that the kidnappers would be taking the children to sell to the slavers. He figures that the story man is sent ahead of the others to learn which children are the most vulnerable in each village and therefore the easiest targets. These men are greedy and heartless kidnappers who sell a pound of flesh without compunction. Maddie's first mission with Rangers is a challenge in that she is dealing with the worst kind of people imaginable.

Chapter 40

Will is forced to use his strong arm tactics with the inn owner in Willow Vale. It is crucial that the man not tell anyone that he was visited by a Ranger who was inquiring about



missing children. If word got out and the story man and the Stealer of the Night learned that they were being tracked by Rangers, they would take the kids they already had and leave the country. Those children would be lost forever.

Chapter 41

Will knows that he has to be patient and allow one more child to be abducted. If he had stopped the two men from kidnapping Violet, the other children would be lost. They would be sold to a slave trader in another country. His goal is to save all the children and return them home. He will apprehend and arrest the kidnappers and end their criminal operation.

Will shows the maximum restraint when he discovers that the Stealer of the Night is none other than Jory Ruhl, the man responsible for his wife's death and the man he had been hunting for eighteen months. He is naturally tempted to attack him on the spot. However, saving the children is of paramount importance. As a Ranger, he cannot put his personal vendetta before the safety of children.

Chapter 42

Will puts his tracking skills to use in following Ruhl and the other kidnappers. The field training that Will had subjected Maddie to was coming in handy in real time. She is able to apply what she learned in training on a real-life mission. It is a good thing that she is a quick study!

Will and Maddie's plan of attack begins to materialize when they find the camp and see where the children are caged. They would both play an important role in the rescue. Maddie knows that there is danger ahead but she had internalized the Ranger's oath and understands what her responsibilities and first priorities are. She may have been a princess first; but, her most recent title is Ranger.

Chapter 43

Will is not encouraged when he sees that he and Maddie are outnumbered by three to one. But they are highly trained and as such superior to the ordinary criminal like Ruhl and his gang. The cruelty with which the children are being treated wears on Will and Maddie as they watch the camp overnight.

Chapter 44

Will surmises that the slave ship won't weigh anchor until the night's high tide. So, they can leave undetected. Will teaches Maddie another Ranger skill. She has to commit every detail about the slave boat to memory. It is essential for their plans to go off smoothly. Maddie is being realistic when she reacts to Will's statement that she'll "love" his plans to rescue the children. She wasn't so sure she'd really "love" them.



Discussion Question 1

How was Maddie a good example to the village children who were target practicing?

Discussion Question 2

How did the story man keep the children quiet about the scary tales he was telling the village children?

Discussion Question 3

Why did Will and Maddie disguise themselves when they went on the mission to rescue the children?

Vocabulary

feigning, dismissive, alchemy, sinister, contagious, stratagem, galvanized, projectile, impetus, prosaic, bravado, oblique, diaphanous, reconnoitered, copse, chivvying, cohorts, incautious, bulwark



Chapters 45 - Epilogue

Summary

Chapter 45

Will's plan was to make his way down the cliffs on the side away from the hostage cave. As soon as he reached the beach, he would begin shooting fire arrows at the ship. There were always a lot of tarred roped and dry canvas on ships both of which were highly flammable. The entire gang would rush to the ship to try to put out the fire. He'd lead them back to the cliffs in the opposite direction. They wouldn't rush him because of the continuing barrage of arrows. Maddie would be stationed at the bottom of the path when he began his assault. As he led the gang away, Maddie would snatch the keys hanging on a support post on the cook's mess tent, run up the cliff path and unlock the cave prison. The gang members would be too busy to notice her activities. If someone should happen to spot her, Will told her that she had to remember that these men were all killers. She'd have to shoot them without hesitation.

Will and Maddie would meet back at the top of the cliff. If something went wrong, Maddie was to travel with the children to Ambleton and find the sheriff. Will would light his fire arrows with a "dark lantern" that he would take with him. This lantern did not emit much light and therefore would not draw the attention of the gang members. Maddie marveled at how Will thought of everything. He responded that no matter how thorough the plan, something was always forgotten.

Chapter 46

Maddie crouched at the top of the path as the gang finished eating dinner in the mess tent. Knowing that Will was positioning himself for the assault on the ship, she began making her way down the path toward the cave. She was not making much noise but the gang was loud and rowdy and probably wouldn't have heard her any way. She reached a spot where she would wait for the fireworks to begin. As she waited, she worried that Will could have fallen and hurt himself. She didn't know what she would do if he failed to fulfill his part. How could she save the children alone? She did have two dozen arrows in her quiver and could start shooting and take the gang by surprise. But, she knew trying to rescue the children by herself was next to impossible.

Then she saw a quick flash of light. It was Will using his dark lantern to light an arrow. Then she saw the pinpoint glow on the tip of an arrow. The first arrow didn't start a fire on the ship. The second arrow was spotted by the story man. The third arrow hit near the base of the mast and a bright flame suddenly flared up on the sail. The Iberian captain shouted that someone was trying to burn his ship and called for help. The crew and the gang members began splashing seawater on the growing fire. Another fire arrow set a large coil of tarred rope on fire.



When Maddie was sure that everyone was distracted by the fire, she rushed over to the cook's tent and grabbed the keys and ran toward the cave. Ruhl searched the area for the source of the arrows. Another arrow buried itself in one of the men who stumbled and collapsed on the deck. Ruhl tussled with the captain who had severed the anchor rope and was taking off. The captain wasn't going to risk his ship. He would return the next day to see if Ruhl was able the capture and stop the archers.

Chapter 47

Maddie reached the cave and fumbled in the dark with the keys. She told the kids to be quiet and that she was there to help them. She heard Ruhl and his men running her way, but they were after their weapons not her. She pushed herself against the dark cliff wall and went unnoticed as they passed by. Will admired his handiwork as the ship retreated out to sea. His job now was to keep the gang members distracted while Maddie released the kids from their cave prison. Will was spotted and was assaulted by crossbow arrows that all missed their target. Will returned fire and struck the crossbowman in the chest. Ruhl led his men to the dark figure he spotted at the crest of the cliff.

Maddie struggled with the old rusty lock but finally was able to open it. She told the kids she was a friend and there to help them. They couldn't see her in the dark and were still afraid. She pulled off her cloak and showed them that she was a girl and told them that she was a Ranger and an apprentice to Will Treaty. They were finally convinced that she was a friend and they followed her out of the cave. The story man saw the kids moving up the pathway and took off after them.

Will continued to allow himself to be spotted by Ruhl and the gang, luring them away from the cave. Maddie heard the story man running after them. She took a lead ball from her pouch and loaded her sling. The children began to cry out in terror when they saw the story man approaching. He caught up and grabbed the last girl in line. Maddie warned the story man to let her go. Tim Stoker lunged for the story man forcing him to release the girl. The story man grabbed Tim by the collar and brought the blade of his knife across the boy's throat. Maddie had no choice put the take a shot. She had to be accurate and hit the story man and not Tim. The lead shot hit the story man in the arm. He dropped his knife and Tim got away. The story man stumbled and fell off the cliff pathway onto the rocks below. Maddie told Tim what a brave boy he was and got the kids moving up the pathway again.

Chapter 48

Maddie and the children made it safely to the top of the cliff. The kids said they were all taken in the middle of the night by the Stealer. Maddie told them that the Stealer was a slave trader and just a man not an evil spirit who would come back to get them. All ten children new Will Treaty. She told them that he was chasing the Stealer and his men away from them. Will would capture and kill the Stealer. Maddie whistled for Bumper and Tug. She helped six children up on the two horses. Maddie and the other four



children would walk or jog alongside the horses. The kids would take turns on the horses.

As the night wore on, Will continued to play his game of cat and mouse with Ruhl and his gang. As he led the criminals further and further away, Will felt satisfied that Maddie and the children were able to escape to safety. As the day started to dawn, it was time for Will to make himself scarce. It would be more difficult to elude his pursuers in the daylight.

Chapter 49

The children were exhausted from their long journey. Even when they were a great distance away from the bay, Maddie continued to look over her shoulder to make sure no one was pursuing them. She learned from Will that any plan could go wrong. She encouraged the children to keep going. She had been alternating the kids on the horses but they were so tired they began to argue over who got to ride.

Early the next morning, Ruhl finally realized that he'd been duped. The cloaked figure had obviously given them the slip. Ruhl was angered that he'd been fooled and wound up blaming his men for being incompetent. Enrico, one of the sailors who had stayed behind after the ship took off told Ruhl that he was a tracker – the best in his province. He was sure that he could track the man and find out where he'd gone.

Chapter 50

Maddie let the children take a ten minute break. Even the kids riding the horses were exhausted. Suddenly, Tim saw that someone was coming. She feared it was Ruhl or one of his men. But it would be the direction that Will would be coming from, too. Maddie kept a watch on the figure and when he came closer, she saw that it was Will. She felt that now everything would be okay.

Will complimented Maddie on rescuing the children. She pointed out that they still had a long way to go and that the children were exhausted. He assured her that Ruhl and his men were miles away from them. They'd be safe, he told her, unless one of them was a tracker. But they still had to be on their guard.

Enrico discovered where Will had doubled back. Ruhl promised the tracker gold if he tracked the sniper down. Enrico was sure that he had picked up the right track.

Will let the children eat and drink and rest for an hour. They had to get moving again before the heat of day slowed them down. The kids grumbled about resuming their trek but they were soon on their way. By the afternoon, Maddie wasn't sure how long they could keep pushing the children. Suddenly, Rob who was riding Bumper called out to Will and Maddie that someone was coming.

Chapter 51



Maddie saw that there were at least a dozen figures moving toward them. One of the kids recognized one of the men as the Stealer. Terror struck the children. Will told Maddie to run with the children. He would stay back and hold the slavers off. Maddie feared that Will would be killed. Will told Maddie to find a hiding place off the road at sunset. Although Will was tempted to kill Ruhl first, he knew he had to take out the tracker first so he couldn't lead the slavers to the kids. But Will would ultimately have his revenge on Ruhl. Will had secreted himself off the road and aimed his crossbow at the approaching gang. Soon Will got off a shot at the tracker and then another at Ruhl.

Enrico was killed at once. Ruhl with his crossbow in hand, rolled off the road and hid in the tall grass. The other men sought shelter, too. Will had seen Ruhl escape into the grass and pursued him. Will shot an arrow at another slaver and hit him in his neck. When he saw three men advancing toward him, Will took off running down the road in the direction of Maddie and the children. He continued to shoot at the slavers as they were in hot pursuit of him. Ruhl emerged from the grass and ordered his men to take Will alive.

Chapter 52

Maddie was still plodding along, urging the children on and keeping an eye on all of them so none of them dropped out into the tall grass to take a rest. She knew she should be looking for a hiding place, but there weren't many options in the open country they were traveling through. She was worried about Will. Had they captured and tortured him or killed him? She spotted some caves at the base of the cliffs; it would be the perfect hiding place. She led the kids to the caves and found one that was large enough to accommodate all the children, the horses and Maddie herself. Maddie and the kids were able to sleep without fear. Tug and Bumper would warn them if anyone was coming.

The gang members encircled Will realizing that he was out of arrows. They began to close on him from all sides. He clutched his throwing knife as he glared at Ruhl. His opponents were armed with spears and crossbows. He was waiting until Ruhl got closer before he threw the knife into his heart. But, he had waited too long. A noose of rope tightened around his arms from behind. Ruhl recognized Will as the Ranger who had been tracking down and capturing his men. Will reminded him why – they had killed his wife. Despite the fact that he was tied up, Will told Ruhl that he was going to kill him. Ruhl ordered his men to take Will back to camp. In honor of Will's wife, he would burn Will to death.

Chapter 53

When Maddie woke, she saw two men on the road. She was glad she had hidden the children in the cave. She had no doubt who the men were. Their presence was an indication that Will had been captured. He was probably dead. She would take her revenge on Ruhl starting with the two men who were on the road. But the men abruptly turned around and headed back toward the bay. Maddie wanted to go after Will but she couldn't desert the children. Yet, how could she desert him? She struggled with what to



do. She decided she couldn't live with herself if she didn't find out what happened to Will. She put Tim Stoker in charge of the kids. They would be safe there and she'd be back for them the next day.

Maddie gathered her weapons and donned her cloak. She mounted Bumper and told Tug to follow them. After riding for a while, she spotted Will's discarded bow in the brush. Maddie thought that he might have been taken prisoner and rode one. She saw the two slavers when she crested a small hill. One of the men aimed his crossbow at her. Bumper out-maneuvered the arrow's trajectory and Maddie shot an arrow striking the archer who fell to the ground. The other man ran at her with a spear. She reloaded and took him out with an arrow. Maddie didn't slow down until she was close to the bay. She dismounted Bumper and ordered the horses to stay put. She crawled to the edge of the cliff and looked down over the bay.

Chapter 54

Will is tied to a stake on the beach. He had been tied up for several hours, and his limbs were going numb. He had tried his best to wrest himself free but to no avail. If his circulation was cut off much longer, he'd lose toes and fingers. Ruhl and his gang were down a ways on the beach sitting around a fire and drinking. Ruhl stood and headed over to Will. He was carrying a flaming torch with him. It would be the third time he taunted Will with fire. This time Ruhl dripped the torch end close to the oil-soaked wood surrounding Will. He told Will to beg for mercy. One of the other men told Ruhl to get it over with and set Will on fire. Ruhl raged at the man. Will was his prisoner and he would do as he pleased with him. Ruhl and the other slaver didn't notice the movement in the shapeless rocks.

Maddie had slipped quietly down the cliff path to the beach. She watched as the Stealer taunted Will. She knew that he would soon carry out his threat. Ruhl and the returned to their drinking, and Maddie crawled over to Will. Using her saxe she sliced through the rope around Will's legs. As she cut him free, he felt the pain of recirculation in his numb extremities. The slavers spotted Will as he lurched forward from the stake. They saw another figure standing behind him. Ruhl ordered his men to kill them both. Maddie shot one of the men with a lead ball from her sling. After she killed the second slaver, the other three took off running. Ruhl was focused on Will who was leaning against the stake, all cramped up and unable to move. Ruhl picked up a small javelin and hurled it at Will. Maddie moved Will out of the way. Just as Maddie was loading her sling, Ruhl struck her in the thigh with another small javelin. Blood began to stream down her leg and tears from her eyes. Her vision was blurry and she felt herself losing consciousness from the pain and trauma. Ruhl picked up a flaming torch and headed toward Will. She tried to reach out to Will but everything went black.

Chapter 55

Will lay across a stack of firewood unable to stand even though he saw Ruhl heading right for him. This time he would set Will on fire and Will would be unable to stop him. As he struggled to recover, he spotted Maddie's saxe that was lying nearby in the sand. He



grabbed the blade end of the knife and threw it hitting Ruhl hilt first in the forehead above his eye. It was painful but not lethal. Ruhl became disoriented and tripped on a branch. He wound up in a prone position on top of the oil-soaked wood, his flaming torch underneath him. The wood ignited quickly and he was on fire. He screamed as the flames enveloped him. The fire threatened Will, but he was able to drag himself away to safety. It wasn't long before Ruhl's screams for help were silenced.

Will frantically looked around for Maddie. He dropped to his knees in horror when he saw that a javelin was buried in her leg and she was motionless. He found a weak pulse but knew he had to stop the bleeding if she were to survive. He whistled for the horses which he knew had to be close by. He always carried a medical kit in his saddlebags. He saw Bumper and Tug at the edge of the cliff and told them to stay. They'd never make it down the path. He'd have to carry Maddie up the cliff path. Working through his cramps he limped over to Maddie. He took a strip of her hem and tied it around her thigh like a tourniquet. He had to break off the end of the javelin to carry her up the pathway. He couldn't pull the javelin out until he had his medical kit. She woke briefly when he snapped off the end of the javelin but then fell silent again.

Will picked Maddie up and staggered toward the cliff path. It was difficult in his weakened condition, but he concentrated on just one step at a time. Once on top of the cliff with Tug and Bumper, he lay Maddie down in the soft grass, built a small fire and retrieved the medical kit. He put the tip of his throwing knife in the fire until he glowed red-hot. He eased the knife into the wound and slid it down to the javelin's barb. It took him several times but finally he worked the javelin free and pulled it out. He treated the wound with a healing ointment and stitched it up with a needle and silk thread. The bleeding eventually slowed. It was touch and go. Maddie's breathing was faint and her pulse was light. He kept whispering "don't die, Maddie."

Will drifted off and woke to Maddie's voice. She was hungry and wanted breakfast. He laughed and cried. He was so relieved that he hadn't lost her. Some of his tears were for Alyss – tears he had never allowed himself to shed. It was daylight when Tim Stocker found them. He was worried about Maddie and Will. After he saw that they were all right, he asked them to take him and the other kids home.

Epilogue

Six Months Later

The Rangers had assembled for the annual Gathering. Gilan announced the appointments and promotions for a year. Before he excused everyone for the feast, there was one more item of business. He announced that Cassandra and Horace were there as their honored guests. He told the group that it took Maddie, the first female Ranger, only nine months to prove her worth instead of the usual twelve months. Gilan told the group how Maddie had saved Will's life and about Will and Maddie's rescue of the kidnapped children and their breaking up a slave smuggling ring. As Maddie made her way to the podium, her parents were beaming with pride.



After the feast, Maddie stood with her loved ones – her parents, Halt and Pauline, Gilan and Will. Cassandra produced a parchment. It was her reinstatement as a royal princess of Araluen. She had earned it. She was grateful, but she asked if she could finish her training with Will. Horace and Cassandra understood. Rangers were different. There was no answer for Maddie other than to say yes.

Analysis

Chapter 45

Perhaps setting the ship on fire was symbolic of the fire that killed Will's wife. It is not coincidental that part of the rescue plan involves fire. He can avenge his wife's murder in a way and rescue the children. Recovering the children is something that his wife would have wanted him to do.

There is an ominous tone in Will's words after Maddie compliments him on his organizational skills. She tells him that he has thought of everything in the planning of the rescue operation. He is wise and has been through many such missions before. He warns her that there is always the unexpected.

Chapter 46

All of Maddie's training is paying off. She learned to track and camouflage herself in the woods. And she learned to trust the cloak. The many miles she was required to run made her fit and agile. She darts to the mess tent unnoticed and grabs the keys to the cave prison and battles with the slavers, all confirming that her many hours of training and practice have made her a valuable asset to the Rangers Corps.

The one thing that Will failed to plan for was that the Ruhl gang would have a tracker. Had he thought of that possibility, he would have covered his tracks, thrown off the gang and led them in a different direction. But, as he said, there is always something that is missed in planning.

Chapter 47

Maddie is tenacious in carrying out her part of the rescue plan. Despite the danger, she is a trained Ranger and has learned to stay focused on the mission's goal. She learned the "tough talk" from Will and it comes in handy when she has to bully the children a bit to get them to cooperate with her. It is understandable that a dark figure in a cloak telling them to come with her is frightening to the already terrorized children. But her "girl" identity helps out. She shows the kids that she is a young girl, just a little older than they are. When she mentions Will Treaty's name, they feel more at ease. He is a legendary figure and a hero to the youngsters.

Chapter 48



Maddie knows that it's important the kids no longer fear the Stealer. She dispels the legend of the Stealer of the Night. She tells them that he is just a man – an evil man but just a man. He does not have magical powers and he won't come back to haunt them as they sleep. Maddie was smart to bring both horses so that the kids could take turn riding on their long journey.

Chapter 49

The bad news for Will and his mission is that Ruhl has a tracker named Enrico. Enrico is one of the sailors who was left behind to help him. He was the best tracker in his province. Will and Maddie will now be tracked and their rescue mission is in serious jeopardy as are their lives and the lives of the children.

Chapter 50

Not knowing that he is being tracked, Will leads the slavers right back to the children. Will let down his guard and allowed the children to rest too long. He is a mighty ranger but he has a soft-heart and has great sympathy for what the children had been through. Just when Will and Maddie are getting comfortable and daring to think that the nightmare is over, one of the kids sees a large group of men heading their way. The nightmare is not over.

Chapter 51

Just a short while after Maddie assured the kids that they didn't have to worry about The Stealer of the Night coming back to haunt them, they are all terrorized again when they see him and his gang coming toward them. There was no time to explain that things didn't always go the way they were planned to go. Maddie and the kids run for cover but Will stays behind to fend off the advancing gang. Maddie fears that Will could lose his life; he is so outnumbered. But she knows she has to soldier on and bring the kids to safety.

Chapter 52

Maddie shows her resourcefulness and her retention ability. She had remembered seeing a series of caves on their way to the bay. She quickly decides that hiding in one of the caves will be the safest place for her and the kids. The children are exhausted from their trek and need to rest and have a good night's sleep. Will held off the gang as long as he could but he was in peril when he ran out of arrows. He is captured and Ruhl vows to burn him to death in honor of his dead wife. Ruhl laughs at the bound Will when he tells him that he will kill him.

Chapter 53

Maddie is torn between her mission to save the children and her devotion to Will. They both need her and she quickly figures out a way to help the children and Will. She puts the oldest boy in charge of the kids. She had noticed his leadership skills and feels that



he will keep them hidden and safe. It is her duty to help a fellow Ranger – especially the mentor who trained her.

Chapter 54

Maddie sees that she has to act quickly. Although Ruhl had been taunting Will with his threats to set him on fire, Maddie is aware that eventually he will follow through on his threat. He is drunk and evil and in a rage over the fact that he has lost the children and more important the gold he would have gotten for them from the slave traders. Maddie is able to push Will out of the way when Ruhl throws a javelin at him. But, she is not as lucky and is not able to evade an attack from the Stealer of the Night. Ruhl catches her in the leg with another javelin. She is bleeding profusely and passes out. If she doesn't get medical attention, she will not survive the wound.

Chapter 55

Maddie saved Will's life. After he recovers from his ordeal, it is his turn to save her life. He knows that she will not survive through the night unless the bleeding stops. The Rangers are in such great condition that even in his weakened condition, he is strong enough to carry Maddie up the entire cliff pathway so that he can tend to her wounds.

Will can't bear the thought of being without Maddie. She is that one bright spot in his life. She had given him new purpose. Losing Maddie would bring back all the misery that he was made to endure after his wife was murdered. Will would suffer from guilt over Maddie's death because his plan had not worked out the way it was supposed to. He led her into danger and he was not able to protect her from harm.

When he sees that she is going to survive, a flood of tears pours out of him. They were the tears that he repressed over his wife's death. He had never allowed himself to properly grieve over her. Instead, he was filled with anger and revenge that only worsened his emotional state.

Epilogue

Although Maddie has been reinstated as a royal princess and heir to the throne, she is most concerned about continuing her training with Will. She has found her real purpose in life. She has learned to be responsible and will fulfill her duties as both a Queen someday and as a Ranger. Her parents finally understand her. She is a Ranger, and Rangers are different from most people.

Discussion Question 1

Why did Will want to set the slave ship on fire?



Discussion Question 2

After searching for Jory Ruhl for eighteen months, why didn't Will attack him immediately after he found him?

Discussion Question 3

How did Maddie save Will's life and how did Will save Maddie's life?

Vocabulary

surreptitiously, tantalizing, mewling, ubiquitous, henchmen, culvert, zenith, torpor, outflank, camber, peripheral, sardonically, morbid, emboldened, flagon, pandemonium, transfixed, demonic, inarticulate, lugubrious



Characters

Maddie

Princess Madelyn, or Maddie as she is known, is a spoiled and privileged princess in the Kingdom of Araluen. She is a fifteen-year-old who finds her life as a princess to be boring. She likes to track and hunt animals in the forest at night. She sneaks out in the dark to follow this pursuit much to the dismay of her parents.

Maddie's parents scold her about her dangerous behavior. There are many perils in the forest, such as bears and other dangerous animals. She is particularly vulnerable to kidnapping because of her position in the monarchy. There are outlaws and brigands in the forest who could abduct her for ransom. Maddie must take her position as a royal princess seriously because she is an heir to the throne. However, Maddie cannot see spending her days sewing and doing needlework with her ladies-in-waiting. She wants excitement and drama in her life.

Maddie's parents and a group of close friends devise an unconventional plan that will teach her discipline and what it means to be committed and dedicated to a cause. She will be named a Ranger apprentice and will train under Will Treaty who is a legendary and heroic King's Ranger. Will is in grief over the loss of his wife; and, it is felt that training Maddie will be a good distraction for him.

Maddie doesn't fully understand that she is leaving her life of privilege completely behind. So, she brings a maid and a full wardrobe with her to Will's cabin to start training. At first she balks at doing menial chores and adhering to Will's orders and requirements; but, she begins to come around and recognizes that a successful Ranger is the total package – helpful, brave, kind, skilled and willing to serve the kingdom.

Will Treaty

Will Treaty is a legendary and heroic King's Ranger. He was a happy-go-lucky man until his wife Alyss was killed in a fire that was intentionally set by a criminal named Jory Ruhl and his gang of thugs. Eighteen months after her death, he is still filled with rage and bitterness and is obsessed with tracking down and bringing to justice every member of the gang, especially its leader, Jory Ruhl.

Will is on the verge of being suspended from the Ranger Corps because of his obsession with hunting down his wife's murderers. He has declined to take several missions because of his personal vendetta. Gilan, the Ranger Commandant, wants to bring Will out of his doldrums and turns to mutual friends for a solution. Maddie is a royal princess who lacks discipline and an idea is sparked that will help both Will and Maddie.



Gilan asks Will to take on Maddie and train her as a Ranger apprentice. At first, Will is reluctant to agree to this arrangement; but, Maddie's parents are his friends. They plead with him to train their daughter. Will knows that his wife would have wanted him to help his friends. Will finds a talented and eager trainee in Maddie, and the two eventually form a strong bond as fellow Rangers.

Gilan assigns them to an investigative mission. They are to find the murderer of a fellow Ranger. During this investigation, Will is able to finally confront Jory Ruhl and his gang. With the help of Maddie, he is able to break up a kidnapping operation in which children are being abducted and sold as slaves.

Princess Cassandra

Princess Cassandra is Maddie's mother and the heir apparent to the throne of Araluen. She is concerned that her rebellious daughter doesn't take her position in the monarchy seriously. She is also worried that her daughter exposes herself to danger while hunting in the forest at night.

Sir Horace

Sir Horace is the husband of Princess Cassandra and the father of Maddie. He understands his daughter's need for excitement in her life; but, he also worries that her rebellious attitude will lead to trouble for her.

King Duncan

King Duncan is the ruler of Araluen. He is very ill and is not expected to live. He is worried about his daughter Cassandra taking over the crown. He asks that the Rangers help and support her when she becomes the queen.

Gilan

Gilan was named the new Ranger Commandant. He heads the King's Rangers and is concerned about one of his men, Will Treaty, who is obsessed with tracking down the murderers of his wife. Gilan fears that he will be forced to suspend Will from the Rangers for shirking his other duties.

Halt

Halt is a retired King's Ranger. He is summoned to the King's castle by Gilan, the commandant of the Rangers, to help in an intervention with Will Treaty, a Ranger who is obsessed with finding his wife's killers. Halt thinks of a solution that will help both Will and Princess Maddie. She is having problems with her royal parents.



The Story Man

The Story Man worked for the slavers. He would visit villages and gather kids around to tell them scary stories about The Stealer of the Night. His job was to find the most vulnerable kids in the village to target for kidnapping.

Jory Ruhl

Jory Ruhl is a criminal and the leader of the gang that killed Will Treaty's wife. Will has been tracking down Ruhl for eighteen months when he discovers that Ruhl is the leader of a kidnapping ring that is abducting children to sell into slavery.

Enrico

Enrico is a sailor from the slaving ship who is also an outstanding tracker. He is able to track Will down and lead Jory Ruhl and his gang of slavers to Will, Maddie, and the children they had rescued.



Symbols and Symbolism

Maddie's Sling

Before she became a Ranger apprentice, Maddie was adept at hunting for game with her leather sling armed with lead balls. After she went through training, the Rangers included the sling as one of their standard weapons.

The Ranger Crossbow

The Ranger Crossbow had an unusual shape and was very heavy. It weighed fifty pounds and was quite a challenge for the young and slightly-built Maddie to learn how to use it effectively.

The Letter

To convince Maddie to take her Ranger training seriously, her parents wrote a letter disinheriting her. They temporarily took her status as princess and heir apparent from her so that she would cooperate with Will during her training.

Tug

Tug was Will's horse. He was a stocky gray horse that appeared to be old and slow; but, he could run as fast as necessary. Will could communicate telepathically with Tug and was able to tactically maneuver in battle to avoid harm.

Bumper

Bumper was Will's Ranger horse. He was a piebald with black and white splotches. He was short and stocky. Maddie fell in love with him the moment she saw him. She was able to communicate telepathically with Bumper.

The Ranger Cloak

Part of the Ranger uniform is the Ranger Cloak. It has a magical element and can help Rangers go undetected. Will repeatedly tells Maddie to "trust the cloak" when she is in trouble.



The Wine Cask

When Will discovered Maddie drinking wine at a party, he picked up the wine cask and threw it to the ground, breaking it into several pieces.

Fire Arrows

Will decides to use fire arrows when he assaults the slavers. He shoots flaming arrows onto the deck of the slave ship and sets it on fire.

The Slaver's Boat

The slaver's boat is narrow and sleek and speedy. In the center of the deck is a wooden cage where captured children are kept while they are being transported to the slave market in another land.

The Cave Prison

Before the children are boarded onto the slave ship to be transported to the slave market, they are locked up in a prison that is fashioned out of a cave on the wall of a cliff near the bay.



Settings

The Kingdom of Araluen

Maddie is a princess in the Kingdom of Araluen. Araluen is a faraway, fictional land that existed long ago. The royal family lives in the Castle Araluen and rules over the Squires who have authority over the fiefs that comprise the Kingdom.

Will's Cabin

Maddie travels to Will's cabin in a wooded area of the Kingdom. She stays at the cabin for her training as an apprentice Ranger. She has her own private room and there are stables for the horses. Will trains her in the skills of tracking and camouflage and weaponry in the nearby woods.

The Gatt Farm

Maddie and Will help a farmer who is losing his chickens and eggs to a predatory animal that sneaks into the barnyard. Maddie takes out the creature, a marten, with one shot from her sling.

Hawkshead Bay

The children who were abducted by the slavers were taken to a prison cave on a cliff above Hawkshead Bay. A slaver ship was anchored in the bay waiting to take the children away to a slave market.

Wyvern Inn

Will Treaty's wife was killed in a fire that was intentionally set by a gang of criminals. She died at the Wyvern Inn which was located in Anselm Fief in the Kingdom of Araluen.



Themes and Motifs

Humility

While it is understandable that a royal princess is not naturally humble because of her upbringing and position, the story of *The Royal Ranger – The Ranger’s Apprentice* tells the story of Princess Maddie who is given no option other than to learn to be humble and understand the value of humility. Maddie is presented as an independent-thinking young teenager who defies her parents’ rules. She finds life as a royal boring and wants excitement and drama in her life. She gets what she wants most unexpectedly.

When she begins her training as the first female Ranger apprentice, she quickly learns the meaning of all or nothing at all. To be an apprentice and to learn what it means to be a Ranger, she must leave her royal past far behind her. The transition isn’t necessarily an easy one for her. She is spoiled and privileged. She wants to cherry pick the parts of Ranger training that she likes. She wants to learn to use the Ranger Crossbow and wear the Ranger cloak and ride the Ranger horses; but, she doesn’t want to clean up after herself, do chores, or obey Will Treaty, her mentor.

For Maddie to be an effective ranger, she must humble herself and be willing to serve the cause and not her personal whims. She brings a maid and a full wardrobe along with her to Will’s cabin in the woods where she will be training. She quickly learns that an apprentice is a lowly personage and does not have maids or fancy ball gowns. Maddie has to give up her former life of privilege completely in order to withstand the rigors of Ranger training and to be able to fully embrace what it means to be a King’s Ranger.

Dedication

In “*The Royal Ranger*” Maddie learns the true meaning of dedication and that there are different ways to express and apply it as a guiding force no matter what role one plays in life. Maddie is a princess and was born into privilege. Everything was given to her and she wanted for nothing. Life was, therefore, effortless for her both physically and spiritually. As she matured, her parents saw the spoiled and rebellious child that they had raised. Although she knew she was a princess, she didn’t know what that really meant beyond having ladies-in-waiting and tiaras and always having her way.

As a princess and an heir to the throne, Maddie didn’t understand that she was responsible for the kingdom and its people. She didn’t realize that while others may bow to her, she was serving them. While the people of her kingdom were loyal to her, she didn’t recognize that she had to be dedicated to their welfare.

In the end, Maddie learned what it meant to be dedicated to a cause. She came to see the importance of putting herself last and putting others, including those who she ruled, before her. She didn’t learn this lesson in the castle. She was taught about what it



meant to be dedicated when she became an apprentice in the King's Rangers Corps. Maddie's parents were wise to take their daughter out of her environment of privilege and even temporarily strip her of her royal title so that she could learn how to commit to something beyond herself.

Being a warrior in the field taught Maddie that it was essential to focus on the mission and the goal to be accomplished. She learned that removing herself and her needs and wants from the task to be done was the only way to true success. Her training as a Ranger was so much more than a physical challenge. In fact, the physical part was probably the easiest part of her training. Being selfless and subservient to the mission and embracing the spiritual aspect of becoming a Ranger were lessons well-learned. Having learned these lessons, she would be able to transfer to her role and responsibilities as a princess and someday as an effective ruler of the kingdom.

Abuse

A subplot in *The Royal Ranger – The Ranger's Apprentice* involves abuse, particularly the abuse of children which is exposed by Will and Maddie when they are given a mission to investigate the death of a fellow King's Ranger. Although initially the investigation centers around the circumstances surrounding the murder of the Ranger, it eventually leads to a kidnapping ring that is operating in the villages of the kingdom.

Will and Maddie discover some paperwork in the deceased Ranger's cabin that provides evidence that young children are being abducted from their homes in the middle of the night. The criminals who are kidnapping the children have plans to sell them in the slave market. Part of their cruel plot involves sending a story man into the villages who tells the young stories ghost stories. By interacting with them, he makes a judgment as to which children to target for abduction. The kidnappers focus on taking children who are abused and mistreated by their parents. Their thinking is that the authorities in the village won't suspect foul play and assume that the children ran away from an abusive home and therefore won't try to find them.

Will and Maddie are able to find the children and rescue them from the kidnappers. Not surprisingly, the slavers mistreat the children, too. They chained, bound, and imprisoned the children. They fed them only one meal a day. While it is gratifying that the children were rescued from the kidnappers and would not face a life of slavery, the author does not deal with what will happen to the children when they are returned to their parents who abused them. Allowing their abusive parents to take them back is not a good outcome for them. It seems the author failed to tie up this loose end and could have created a better ending for the children.

Styles

Point of View

The Royal Ranger is written in the third person limited omniscient. Writing the story from this point of view allows the reader to learn the thoughts, fears, beliefs and motivations of the main characters in the story. The “limited” omniscient presents only the point of view of the major characters in the story.

This point of view is important in this story of a young royal princess who becomes the first female Ranger and is an apprentice under a legendary and heroic Ranger. These two main characters have their own demons to deal with. The reader learns that Maddie, the princess, does not find life very exciting as a royal and that she is in conflict with her parents over her reckless behavior. She wants excitement and drama in her life. She loves hunting, tracking, and weaponry. She is not your regular royal princess by any measure.

Will Treaty is obsessed with pursuing the murderers of his wife who was killed in a fire that was intentionally set. Will is on the verge of being suspended from the Rangers because of this obsession. He is shirking his other duties.

The point of view of both these characters is crucial in understanding the main story line and various subplots of this story. From their personal reflections, the reader gains insight into the tortured Ranger who has lost his soul-mate and the young vibrant princess who aspires to be more than a royal. Their thoughts and motivations also show how the two characters are good for each other and how their relationship changes and enriches each of them.

Language and Meaning

The novel takes place in an undetermined time in a fictional land called Araluen. The Kingdom is separated into fiefs. There are numerous references to the royal family including the old ruler, King Duncan, who is the current monarch. There is mention of Princesses, Knights, Squires and the heir apparent to the throne. The royal family is protected by sentries who stand guard at every side of the castle. The King’s Rangers are a group of highly trained soldiers who protect the crown and serve the King. The Rangers are heroic and legendary. They are highly skilled in the crossbow, saxe knife, and throwing knife. They carry their weapons on a scabbard.

Maddie – or the Princess Madelyn as she is officially known – becomes an apprentice in the Rangers Corps. She is the first female to become a Ranger. She has a natural affinity for tracking and hunting and is adept at using her leather sling and lead balls to bring down her prey. Maddie trains under the celebrated Ranger named Will Treaty. He teaches her to use the standard weapons of the Corps and trains her in tracking and camouflage tactics. Part of the Ranger uniform is a cloak. There is a magical nature to



the cloak; it helps the Ranger hide from the enemy – sort of like the invisible cloak of Harry Potter fame. Will tells Maddie repeatedly to “trust the cloak” whenever she is in need or help or in peril. Ranger horses can communicate telepathically. The horses are short and stocky. Maddie’s horse Bumper is a piebald which means that it has a coat of black and white splotches.

Maddie and Will are tracking down a gang of kidnapers. The legend that surrounds these criminals includes a Story Man who tells the kids scary ghost stories and The Stealer of the Night who sneaks in and abducts the children. The children are taken to be sold as slaves. The children are kept in a cave prison on a cliff near a bay of the sea. A sleek narrow slave ship is used to transport the children away to be sold in the slave market in another land. There is a wooden cage in the middle of the deck where the children are kept during the voyage.

Structure

The Royal Ranger is separated into fifty-five medium-length chapters which are followed by an epilogue. The story unfolds in a mainly chronological manner. There are no flashback sequences only references to past incidents. For example, when the character, Will Treaty, is first introduced he appears to be stoic and distracted – a man with no humor and in fact an angry man with a violent streak. When the reader learns that Will lost his wife in a fire started by criminals just eighteen months before, a deeper understanding of this character is attained. He was described by other characters as once happy-go-lucky; but, after the tragedy, he is obsessed with only revenge and bringing the guilty to justice.

Will Treaty and Princess Madelyn, or Maddie as she is called, are the two main characters. They are treated as co-protagonists who have a story together as well as individual stories. While the story begins on two tracks, the stories of the two protagonists ultimately merge into one story.

As described above, Will is presented as a grieving widower who is bent on avenging his wife’s death. Maddie is initially presented as a spoiled and privileged royal princess. Although these two main characters do not seem to have much in common at first, a relationship develops between them that by story’s end elevates each of them. Will finds new purpose in life, and Maddie learns what it means to be selfless and to put others before herself.



Quotes

No one ever died from being too careful.

-- King Duncan (Chapter 2 paragraph Page 40)

Importance: King Duncan's land had been at peace for years. However, he knew that could change at any time. He was always cautious.

Len was trying to equate the current Princess Cassandra—the caretaker rule of the kingdom—with the picture his companion had drawn of a wild, adventurous tomboy terrorizing the castle guards.

-- Len (Chapter 2 paragraph Page 51)

Importance: The sentry was trying to imagine the royal and dignified Princess Cassandra as a tomboy when she was her daughter Maddie's age.

Think about it. Could Maddie be in safer hands? Will loves her. He's her godfather. He looks upon her as his niece, of not his surrogate daughter. You'd be entrusting her to his care. And you know he would die before he let any harm come to her.

-- Halt (Chapter 7 paragraph Page 175)

Importance: Halt is trying to convince Cassandra and Horace to allow Maddie to train under Will Treaty as a Ranger. They are having problems with her rebellious nature and Halt thinks Will can tame her spirit.

You're a spoiled and arrogant brat who needs to be taught a lesson.

-- Will (Chapter 13 paragraph Page 310)

Importance: Will was exasperated with his new apprentice. Maddie thought she should be treated like a princess even though she was being trained as a Ranger.

Trust the cloak.

-- Will (Chapter 16 paragraph Page 390)

Importance: While training Maddie, Will told her how their mottled uniform and cloak could make them blend into the background and allow them to go basically undetected.

Better to hit the enemy late than miss him entirely.

-- Maddie (Chapter 17 paragraph Page 417)

Importance: Will is teaching Maddie to be more concerned with accuracy than with speed as she practices her weapons drills during her training.

I mean... do you ever get the feeling that your horse is talking to you?

-- Maddie (Chapter 21 paragraph Page 536)



Importance: Maddie has just been given Bumper, her Ranger horse, and realizes that there is something magical about him.

She stepped closer to the bank and peered into the smooth, fast-running water, trying to see if there was, in fact, a river wight visible. Then she realized that she had no idea what such a creature might look like.

-- Narrator (Chapter 33 paragraph Page 805)

Importance: Maddie had just been told that a river wight had stolen one of the village children away in Danver's Crossing. Though she didn't believe that there was such a creature, it none the less frightened her – she was just a child herself.

That storyteller was here all right. I'd bet my life on it.

-- Maddie (Chapter 35 paragraph Page 846)

Importance: Will and Maddie were pursuing an elusive storyteller where children had gone missing. The statement foretells the danger that she would be facing herself.

Ruhl and the other two horsemen dismounted to lead the way down the cliff path. The line of prisoners followed them. It was obviously difficult going with their hands tied, and with the heavy rope linking them. If one slipped, the two on either side would be dragged down as well.

-- Narrator (Chapter 43 paragraph Page 1,047)

Importance: This quote captures the peril that the abducted children were subjected to by the slavers who were planning to take them to another land to sell into slavery.

Speed is the enemy of stealth, Will had told her. You're better to move slowly and silently than to rush about making noise.

-- Maddie (Chapter 44 paragraph Page 1,065)

Importance: Maddie recalled this from Will when she approached the kidnappers. She and Will planned to apprehend the gang and rescue the stolen children.

His first order of business was to get rid of the tracker, to give Maddie and the children a better chance of escaping. His own person revenge would have to wait – although not for too long.

-- Will (Chapter 52 paragraph Page 1,247)

Importance: Will's first duty was to protect Maddie and the kidnapped children whom they had rescued. He would wait to deal with Ruhl who had killed Will's wife. However, Will would ultimately have his revenge.