

A Vow of Glory Study Guide

A Vow of Glory by Morgan Rice

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Plot Summary

A Vow of Glory by Morgan Rice is the fifth book in The Sorcerer's Ring series. It covers events between the fall of the McCloud side of the Ring and Gwendolyn's surrender to Andronicus. Themes in the novel include the characteristics of a good leader and allegiance to one's vows. It is a classic story of good versus evil, set in the time when valiant knights still went on quests of bravery and loyalty was an admirable trait.

Gareth has arranged for the Destiny Sword to be stolen and taken out of the Ring. Without this Sword, the Shield that protects the Ring is down, leaving both the McCloud and MacGil territories open to attack. As the novel opens, Andronicus and his million man army has already attacked McCloud's kingdom. Andronicus has taken McCloud prisoner, killed his people and burnt his town. Now he is moving toward MacGil territory. Thor and a group of friends have set out on a quest to retrieve the Destiny Sword and return it to its proper home.

In an effort to escape her brother Gareth and to get refuge from Andronicus, Gwendolyn has taken many of the people from her village to Silesia. Gweyn, whose father has deemed her the next MacGill ruler, is accepted as the new queen of Silesia. She works with advisors and other military men to fortify the city as best they can before Andronicus' men arrive. Though they hold out as long as they can, the people of Silesia are forced to take refuge in the lower parts of their city.

Realizing that he has the advantage, Andronicus offers to let the people of Silesia go free if Gwen will surrender to him. Even though her people advise her not to do so, Gwen surrenders to Andronicus. He goes back on his word, saying that he will kill all of the people anyway despite his promise. At the conclusion of the novel, Andronicus is punishing Gwen by allowing McCloud to rape her in front of all of his people. Meanwhile, Thor and his group have been tricked by three men whom Thor had once thought were his brothers. These men lead Thor and his men into an ambush where they can be arrested by Empire forces.



Chapters 1 - 2

Summary

Chapter One begins with a description of Andronicus' destruction of the McCloud kingdom and his act of deforming McCloud with a brand on his face. Andronicus' men have killed all of the people and set fire to the town before leaving it. He plans to build his own city in the place that was once protected as part of the Ring.

In Chapter Two, Erec stands his ground as troops from Balster come to fight him. He feels justified in the fight because a lord from this place has taken his bride from him. Although the lord had been given a chance to make his wrong actions right, he had not taken advantage of the opportunity. Now he is dead. Erec runs into the battle on foot, having sent his horse to carry Alistair back to Savaria. In the first section of the battle, Erec downs nearly a hundred of the knights but there are two hundred more on their way behind these.

Meanwhile, Alistair is taken back to Savaria by Warkfin. Once there, she bursts into the Duke's private chambers, begging them to send men to help Erec. About a hundred men ride out with Alistair back to where Erec is fighting alone.

Analysis

Chapter One shows evidence of Andronicus' cruelty. Although the people of the city basically surrender to him, he still murders them all. He torments the king by dragging him behind his horse and branding him with the symbol of his own kingdom. Andronicus' act of branding McCloud, as one would brand an animal, is a symbol that McCloud now belongs to him. Andronicus also belittles McCloud by sitting in McCloud's throne and asking him to worship him.

Andronicus' goal is to destroy the Ring, which had been protected before in some way that is not explained. Now that he has razed McCloud's kingdom, Andronicus plans to destroy the other half of this Ring as well. The destruction of the Ring is a goal that has always been in Andronicus' mind, but it has not been attainable until this point.

In Chapter Two, the story changes to that of Alistair and Erec. Erec has apparently just killed the lord who stole his bride from him. Now nearly three hundred men have come after Erec in an attempt to kill him. In what is an unattainable feat, Erec manages to kill one hundred of the men and stay alive while his horse takes to his wife to Savaria for help.

Discussion Question 1

In your opinion, what is the Ring?



Discussion Question 2

Why does Erec feel justified in his fight against the men from Baluster?

Discussion Question 3

What does Andronicus do when he overtakes McCloud's kingdom?

Vocabulary

reveling, demoralized, flailing, raze, egomaniacal, aesthetic, rectify, prevail, stamina, indentured, contingent



Chapters 3 - 4

Summary

In Chapter Three, Thor and his contingent finally reach the shores of the Tartuvian. They are on a mission that will decide the fate of the Ring. They find their ship but are disappointed that six Empire troops are investigating it. In order to keep these troops from alerting the rest of the Empire army to their presence, the group from the Legion decides to take care of the six soldiers. Working together, they kill all but one of the men. As this man rides off, they decide to board the ship and sail out instead of wasting time going after the man. They board the boat and sail off. As they move away from shore, they bring up possible problems ahead. They worry about being able to find the Sword and bring it back.

In Chapter Four, Gareth is destroying his father's study because he knows it is the place that his father loved best. He is smoking opium in an attempt to block out the images of his father's corpse, but it still haunts him. He tries to attack the vision of his father, wishing that he could destroy the memories of the treatment that he received as a child. An attendant tries to help Gareth, but Gareth pushes the boy away and threatens him. Next, Aberthol comes in, telling Gareth they are waiting for him in the council chamber. Gareth tells him to leave,

Gareth slowly remembers that his sister has led most of his court away. They have gone to Silesia because the Shield is down. He is overcome with a desire to kill Gwendolyn. The men in the council chamber are terrified of Gareth. The councilmen tell Gareth that the Canyon has been breached and the million-man army is on its way. They look to Gareth for advice, but Gareth is obsessed with Gwendolyn and tells the men their first order of business is to kill her. As the men voice their outrage at Gareth's decision, a ruffian is dragged into the room. He is one of the men accused of stealing the Destiny Sword. This ruffian tells the men that it was Gareth who hired him and his friends to steal the Sword. Gareth kills the man, an action that one of the commanders tells him is a sign of his guilt. For this reason, the men decide to turn against Gareth but Gareth's forces outnumber them. Gareth orders these men out of his kingdom. After they leave, he also orders his loyal men out of the room.

When all of the men leave, Lord Kultin stands up to Gareth, asking if he did order the Sword to be stolen and why. Kultin realizes that Gareth wants them to be attacked. Gareth only says that some places are not meant to last forever.

Analysis

In these two chapters, it begins to appear that the Destiny Sword, which Gareth seems to have ordered stolen and taken out of the kingdom, is the key that kept the Ring safe. With the Sword missing, this area is open to attack by Andronicus and his army which is



said to be made of one million men. Thor and his friends have gone to try to find the Sword even though they believe that their mission is futile.

Although he does not admit to the crime, it appears that it was Gareth, who has a deep hatred for his father and siblings for some wrong that he feels he has been done, who ordered the Sword to be stolen and hidden. In this section, Gareth acts as if he is crazy. He tears apart his father's study in an attempt to hurt his now dead father. He has been seeing visions of his father's corpse. Even in the library, he sees this image and tries to attack it. In addition to being made crazy by his rage, Gareth is also operating under the influence of opium, a drug to which he has become addicted. While the drug keeps him from thinking clearly, it is mostly Gareth's rage that makes him believe that his main goal is to go after Gwendolyn even though most of his men abandon him after he voices his desires.

Discussion Question 1

Why is the Sword so important?

Discussion Question 2

Why do Thor and his friends think they will not be able to complete their mission?

Discussion Question 3

Describe Gareth's state of mind. Is he thinking clearly? Why or why not?

Vocabulary

perimeter, breached, erratically, ruffian, razed, vengeance, liege, mercenary, purged, fantastical, insinuate, surmise, treason, wield, ramifications



Chapters 5 - 6

Summary

In Chapter Five, Gwendolyn and her followers march to the freedom and safety of Silesia. The people have chosen her as their ruler. She thinks of Thor and his baby that she is carrying. She feels that she is responsible for bolstering the morale of the people who are with her but she feels despondent herself. She wonders what her father would have done in this same situation.

She thinks of her sister Luanda and her mother and wonders what their fates will be. Even though she has not been close to either of these women, she does not want to see them hurt. She tells Srog, Kolk, and Brom that even if Thor and the others do not come back with the Sword, they will still try to stand their ground against Andronicus' army. She tells them that they will not retreat or surrender. When Gwen gets the first glimpse of Silesia, she remembers her father taking her there as a child. The city has an upper half and a lower half built into the canyon walls. Both halves are built of ancient red stone.

In Chapter Six, Thor and his friends are becoming lethargic because of the heat and humidity of the ocean. They have been sailing for days with strange tides carrying them toward their destination. They are almost out of food. Suddenly he notices there is land around them. The boat comes to a sudden stop on the shore. Those aboard notice the land is filled with strange animals. They drop the anchor and hope the boat will still be there when they return.

They hike through the jungle, following a trail. Conval touches one of the fruits on a tree in the jungle. The group hears a growling noise. They are attacked by a huge insect. It grabs O'Connor but then drops the man when Thor hits the insect with a stone. The insect drops O'Connor. Thor commands the group to run. The insect follows them. Thor tries to make a stand against the insect and cuts off one of its claws. The claw regrows. They continue to fight the insect, becoming convinced that they cannot kill it. Just in time, a young boy comes and throws water on the bug, killing it. He chides Thor and his group for trying to out battle what he calls a Gathorbeast.

He tells them that he had seen another group of men carrying a heavy weapon a few days earlier. He offers to point them in the right direction. The boy tells them it is not safe for them to be out after dark. He tells them he can take them to his grandfather's hut though he isn't sure at first if his grandfather will take them in. On the way there, O'Connor steps toward an interesting fruit, starting a mudslide that takes all members of the group with it.



Analysis

In this section of the novel, Gwen and her people are taken to the safety of Silesia. The people see Gwen as their leader. She is not sure how to act in this position. She feels it is her responsibility to bolster the morale of all the people but also understands that their position is desperate if Andronicus' army attacks them. She considers that way that her father might have acted in the same situation in order to determine her own actions. She tells the men that they must not retreat or surrender. Remember this stance as Gwen will go against her own decision later in the book.

Meanwhile, Thor and his friends are not having much luck in their attempts to find the Sword. They have found a boy who believes that he may know which direction the Sword has gone. Even though the boy lives in the area, he is not able to stop the group from getting into trouble with the animals and structure of the land. The landscape of this territory is completely different from anything that Thor and his friends have ever encountered before. They have no knowledge or information about the plants and animals they encounter, many of which are dangerous or poisonous.

Discussion Question 1

Why does Gwen go to Silesia?

Discussion Question 2

What is unusual about Silesia?

Discussion Question 3

Why do Thor and his friends have so much trouble in the Empire Territory?

Vocabulary

entourage, treachery, despondency, impregnable, cacophony, fortifications, replete, dissipated, impenetrable, disembark, ominous, intrude, dexterity



Chapters 7 - 8

Summary

In Chapter Seven, Erec is continuing to fight, but he is getting tired. Suddenly, he sees a group of soldiers attacking from behind. He realizes that it is his own people. Brandt rides up to fight beside Erec. The fight continues until the lord's army is attacked by Covenies. They know the only way these creatures could have gotten into the area is if the Shield is down. The lord's army flees. Erec and his men ride back to Silesia to seal the gates.

In Chapter Eight, Kendrick is proud of the work that he is doing to fortify the walls of outer cities. He is ready to get back home to his sister Gwen to help her oust Gareth. He has been having nightmares of his town burning. A boy calls him telling him that there is something strange coming. He sees smoke coming from the McCloud region. As he is considering what action he should take, Kendrick sees a single rider whom he recognizes as Atme coming toward the town. Atme tells Kendrick the Shield is down and that the Sword has been stolen. Atme also tells Kendrick that King's Court is now under Gareth's control while Gwen has gone to Silesia. Kendrick tells Atme he cannot leave without taking the people of the city with them. Atme argues they will be too slow. Kendrick is determined even as they look at the horizon to see the million man army approaching.

Analysis

In this section, word continues to spread that the area is in trouble. The Sword has been stolen and the Shield has been breached, leaving the area open to attack. The people react with shock and disbelief that they find themselves in a situation in which they had never thought they would be.

Erec gets a good surprise when the Duke's forces come to help him overcome the lord's army, but they are not the ones who conquer the lord's army. As they are fighting, Covenies, who could not have gotten into the area unless the shields were down, begin to attack the lord's men. The lord's men disband, while Erec and his friends head for a safer city.

Discussion Question 1

How does Erec know that the Shield has been breached?

Discussion Question 2

What is Kendrick doing when Atme comes to warn him of the coming danger?



Discussion Question 3

What does Kendrick want to do before he takes refuge in the safety of Silesia?

Vocabulary

valiantly, contingent, parrying, invigorated, cauldrons, premonition, morphed



Chapters 9 - 10

Summary

In Chapter Nine, Gwen and her group enter the city of Silesia. As she enters the gates of the well-enforced city, she thinks they might be able to hold off Andronicus' army here. The happy people of Silesia welcome Gwen and offer her a red silk cloak worn by Silesia's former first lady. The people salute her. Later that day, in her castle chamber, Gwen looks out over the canyon. She thinks of her feelings of insecurity about ruling and wonders what her father would have done in the same situation. She walks up to the roof where she hears a familiar voice. It is Alton, the man whom she hates most. He has snuck past the guards and has come to suggest to her that she needs a king. Gwen tells her that she is not interested in him and is committed to Thor. When she turns her back to him, he grabs her from behind and pushes her toward the edge of the roof. She remembers what her father's fighters taught her and stomps Alton's foot then elbows him in the solar plexus. Just as she is about to pull out her dagger, Steffen hits Alton in the back. Gwen is told by Silesian law, Alton must be put to death. Gwen commands instead that Alton be given the royal right of fighting with the soldiers on the front line.

The men then ask Gwen if she is ready to seal the city gates yet. She requests that they wait and give Kendrick and Thor a chance to get back before they seal the gate. Gwen is also told about escape tunnels under the city intended to keep her safe. She tells the men that she does not plan to use these tunnels. When she tells the men that she will not abandon them, she believes that she sees looks of respect in their eyes.

In Chapter Ten, Thor and the others follow the boy to his grandfather's house. At first the boy is afraid that his grandfather won't let the group stay there. The grandfather at first accuses them of making his grandson bring them. Thor explains their mission and the grandfather calms, saying he believes from Thor's accent that he is who he says he is. They stay there the night with the boy telling Thor and his friends the things that they need to know about some of the animals and the nighttime in the area. The man also tells Thor and his friends why he is alone on Empire territory. He also explains the damage that Andronicus has done to the land in the years that he has been in rule. He has gone to the jungle to escape being captured by Andronicus' army. The grandfather tells Thor and his men that the Sword was taken to Slave City. He warns them that if they go to this city, they risk being captured.

Analysis

Much emphasis is placed on loyalty in this section of the novel. This loyalty comes in the form of Gwen's sense of responsibility to the people of Silesia. Even though she is given the option of an escape route, Gwen tells her men that she plans not to use it. She is also loyal to family as she will not let the gates of the city be sealed until she makes sure that Kendrick and Thor have been given a chance to reach the city. Loyalty



is also shown among those in Thor's group. Even though they are not related by blood, the men treat each other and see each other as brothers. They are family to one another.

The strange insects and environment of this land are other topics that are talked about a great deal in this section of the novel. There are two moons. The light of the first moon burns the skin. The light from the second moon is safe. It can be identified because it is purple. Between the first and second moons, insects called Ethabugs rain from the sky and sound like hail on the roof of the cottage.

Discussion Question 1

How did the boy and his grandfather wind up living in the jungle?

Discussion Question 2

Why is it dangerous for people to be out at night in the jungle?

Discussion Question 3

Why does Alton pay a visit to Gwen?

Vocabulary

meticulously, aura, repulsion, arduous, belligerent, wane



Chapters 11 - 12

Summary

In Chapter Eleven, Hafold discovers that the Queen has been being poisoned with niamroot, causing her catatonic state. The maid tells Hafold that Gareth had ordered her to give the queen the poison but that she hadn't known what she was giving her. Hafold gives the queen an antidote to the poison and she soon begins moving and speaking. Hafold tells her that Gareth had been poisoning her. Although Hafold tells the queen that they need to go to Silesia to take refuge, the queen insists on confronting her son. She finds him sitting in her late husband's destroyed study. Gareth charges his mother with a dagger. She dodges him and knocks him in the head with a statue. She leaves him swearing never to go back to King's Court again.

In Chapter Twelve, Gwendolyn dreams of being a child dancing in a field of flowers with her father. The dream turns dark. The flowers change into thorns. She hears a cry and realizes that it is her baby. When she reaches for the baby a current of water washes the bassinet away, and she cannot reach it. A dragon rises from the water, and a tidal wave threatens to drown Gwen. Gwen wakes and as she is preparing for the day, she sees a rider approaching the castle. A man asks if Gwen wants them to seal the gates but Gwen recognizes the rider as her brother Kendrick.

Gwen and her half-brother greet each other warmly, but Kendrick tells her that they have spotted Andronicus' army riding toward the castle. The people from the town file into the castle behind Kendrick and Gwen tells Srog to begin fortifying the city. As preparations start, Gwen is invited to visit the people in the lower parts of the city. As they move toward the lower parts of the city, Kendrick explains to Gwen why their father chose her as the next ruler instead of any of the other siblings. She appoints Kendrick as the ruler of the armed forces.

Analysis

Gareth's evil nature is complete as the queen's main servant realizes that she is catatonic because her own son is poisoning her. Obviously there is some sort of rift in this family as Gwen has already shown that she did not feel completely loved and accepted by her mother and sister. Now it appears there is also some serious rift between the queen and Gareth. The Queen wonders what she might have done to bring such a monster into the world but Gareth feels justified in the way he has treated her. He says that she loved only Reece and that she would never have acknowledged him if he hadn't gone to such great lengths to get her attention.

Surrender is another topic discussed in this portion of the book. Gwen talks with the men of Silesia about the actions they should take if the men of Andronicus' army do come after them. Srog asks her point blank as they are touring lower Silesia what her



opinion is of surrender. Gwen is overwhelmed with the weight of the question, especially when she is told the Silesians are proud and have never surrendered. As she considers the possible outcomes of surrender as well as those of trying to hold off Andronicus' troops, she realizes she must make a noble decision. She swears to the people that they will not surrender, a decision that she believes earns the respect of the people.

Discussion Question 1

Why does Gareth hate his mother so much?

Discussion Question 2

What do you think Gwen's dream at the beginning of Chapter Twelve means?

Discussion Question 3

If you were Gwen, what decision do you think you would have made? Would you have told the people that surrender was a possibility, or would you have sworn not to surrender?

Vocabulary

catatonic, impervious, interjected, sophistry, tentatively, fathom, surreal



Chapters 13 - 14

Summary

In Chapter Thirteen, the boy leads Thor and his group until they reach the final split in the trail. He points them to the path that will take them to Slave City. He asks only that if they survive their mission, they allow him to try out for the Legion. Although the boy says that having a name is a crime punishable by death, he tells Thor and his men that his secret name is Ario when they ask him.

Soon, the group reaches Slave City where the men and women are packed into the streets working. They are chained together. The group tries to go off the path to keep from being spotted. However, when their legs are grabbed by hands that come up from the ground, they realize what the boy meant when he warned them to stay on the path. They run into the city, hoping they can move quickly enough that they won't be noticed. The slaves, however, stop work and ask who they are. They beg to be released. When Thor and his men refused to do so, the slaves call for the guards. Thor and his men are being surrounded by Empire forces when a slave girl calls them, telling them that she will hide them.

Once the soldiers have gone past, the girl lets the men out, asking them to free her. When Elden challenges her, she tells him that she will lead them out of the city alive if they will free her. She also tells them that she knows where the men who took the sword went. Thor suggests they trust her but it is Elden who steps up and breaks her chains. She leads them out of the city into what Thor believes is an open field. The field instead turns out to be a fire field through which the Empire troops are scared to follow the escapees. The girl tells them if they can make it to the river they will be saved. Just before the river, Thor runs into a fireball and catches fire. Burning, he runs into the river.

In Chapter Fourteen, Lord Kultin has decided to kill Gareth and take the throne himself. He is sickened by what Gareth has become. Kultin finds the King's private chamber is empty, however, and Kultin spots the trap door through which Gareth had escaped. He looks out the window to see Andronicus' army slaughtering the townspeople. One of the men sees Kultin and throws a spear, killing him.

Analysis

Luckily, Thor and his friends befriend the right slave who is able to get them out of Slave City alive. Chapter Thirteen is a cliffhanger as Thor bursts into flames just before reaching the river. It is uncertain how the others might have fared on their run through the fire field.

Meanwhile, Lord Kultin has decided to put Gareth out of his misery and take over the throne. To Kultin's surprise, however, the king has slipped away through a secret escape tunnel. He has little time to consider his position when he realizes that



Andronicus' army has invaded their land. A soldier throws a spear, killing Kultin as he is still trying to determine how Gareth escaped.

Discussion Question 1

Why has the boy helped Thor and his friends?

Discussion Question 2

Why is Kultin so surprised that Gareth is gone?

Discussion Question 3

What is the biggest threat to Andronicus and his men in Slave City?

Vocabulary

arid, behest, monotony, candor, mercenary, keeled



Chapters 15 - 16

Summary

In Chapter Fifteen, Erec and the others ride in through the gates of Savaria just in time to escape the Covenies. These creatures easily tear the gates of the city off their hinges. Although the archers are able to kill several of the creatures with arrows, more and more come to work at the iron bars. Erec and Brandt leave the city by the back way, deciding to try to attack the creatures from the back as well. Even though Erec and Brandt fight valiantly, they are still being overcome by the creatures at the end of the chapter.

In Chapter Sixteen, Selese decides to go after Reece. Even though she had spurned him, she realizes that she loves him just as he loves her. She is preparing herself to leave when she hears the noise of thousands of insects running away. She realizes they are running from Andronicus' army and hurries to wake the sleeping villagers. Although she wants to run with the insects, she stays until she has made sure all the villagers are awake and on their way to Silesia before she joins them.

Analysis

It seems that Erec and Brandt have met the end of the road as they battle the Covenies in Chapter Fifteen.

Chapter Sixteen picks up a new thread in the story introducing Selese, the girl who spurned Reece. Even as she is preparing to go out in search of Reece, she spots Andronicus' army marching toward their village. Showing her great love for her fellow villagers, she makes sure all of the people are warned of the coming danger and are out of the village before she takes the opportunity to flee.

Discussion Question 1

Why do Erec and Brandt leave the city walls to fight the Covenies?

Discussion Question 2

Where is Selese planning to go when she sees Andronicus' army coming?

Discussion Question 3

Why did Selese spurn Reece? Why has she decided now she wants to pursue him?

Vocabulary

implore, façade, ambush, mantra, spurned



Chapters 17 - 18

Summary

In Chapter Seventeen, Godfrey is in the tavern, drowning his fear of Andronicus' army in liquor. He wishes that he were brave, instead of feeling overwhelmed by coming danger. He feels that unlike the other times, this time everything will not be okay. He can hardly believe the Shield is down. He feels he has wasted his life in the pub but doesn't know what to do to correct his misdeeds. Although the others in the pub talk about their reasons for not fighting, Godfrey feels as if he is abandoning his sister and brother. He thinks of the way that his sister saved his life but even this memory is not enough to get him up off his barstool. Then Illepra, the healer who had saved his life, to whom he'd promised to change his ways, confronts him in the bar. Illepra chides Godfrey and all those in the bar for being selfish in indulging themselves and not thinking about the people who were preparing to sacrifice their lives for them. After she leaves, Godfrey begins to feel a strange sense of pride. He begins to feel less afraid and suddenly jumps up and runs toward the door. He tells those who ask him that he is going to help his sister or die trying.

In Chapter Eighteen, Gwen, Srog, Kendrick, Brom, Kolk, and the generals have just finished a discussion about plans to fortify the city, provisions for food and water, and contingency plans for retreat. The only topics they do not cover are defeat and surrender. They have heard that Andronicus and his men are coming, that they have even attacked King's Court. Gwen is surprised to see her sister, Luanda, and her husband Bronson, walking in their direction with a small group of soldiers. The two have come to seek refuge in Silesia. Even in her defeated state, Luanda is offended that she should have to respect her younger sister as queen and leader.

After Gwen's sister and brother-in-law leave her presence, a woman runs, crying to see the queen. She explains that her daughters have been left in their village because they are sick. She doesn't want them to be alone when the army attacks and asks for men to be sent after them. Although Gwen doesn't think the trip is wise, Kendrick and Atme step forward to accept the mission. Gwen warns them that if they don't make it back to the city in time and the gates are closed, they cannot be re-opened. Kendrick insists on being allowed to go and Gwen promises to keep the gates open as long as she can for him. As she watches Kendrick and Atme ride away, she prays for Thor to be returned to her. Argon comes to her telling her that Thor is safe now but that his destiny is murky. As Gwen continues to question Argon, his answers are vague. He does tell her that she the greatest ruler the Ring has ever had.

Analysis

Loyalty is a main idea touched upon in this section of chapters. Not only is Kendrick loyal to the people whom he serves, Gwen is also loyal to her own family. Even though



some believed it was foolish for Kendrick and Atme to go out and try to rescue the two sick girls who had been left in a nearby village, Kendrick is so loyal to the people in his area that he cannot imagine not trying to rescue the girls and allowing them to die alone and afraid. Atme, always a loyal friend, goes with Kendrick to assist him in his quest. Meanwhile, Gwen has promised Kendrick to hold the gates of the city open until the last moment so that he can find protection in the walls of the city. Her loyalty to her brother keeps her outside the city, keeping watch for him to make sure that he is not left in danger.

Also, notice the simplicity of the characters. Generally, characters are either good or evil. For instance, when Kendrick decides to go after the girls, he is doing exactly what the reader would have predicted. He is always the brave knight who seems to think that no quest is without merit. Other characters, such as Gareth, are described as being all bad. He has tried to poison his mother and is more worried about killing his sister and getting revenge on her than protecting his people. When his mother confronts him about the poisoning, Gareth tries to kill her outright. He seems to have no sense of morality to tell him that his actions are wrong, he is motivated only by his own emotions and desires.

Discussion Question 1

With what does Godfrey struggle while he is in the bar?

Discussion Question 2

How does Luanda react when she learns that Gwendolyn is Queen in Silesia?

Discussion Question 3

Why do Kendrick and Atme agree to go after the lady's sick daughters even though it puts their lives in jeopardy?

Vocabulary

compatriots, mettle, fathom, inertia, advocate, oblivious, dissipate, presume, condescension, empathize, foreboding, supine, calamitous, circumvented, demean, deference, cynic



Chapters 19 - 20

Summary

In Chapter Nineteen, Thor wakes up on the bank of the river. He sees all of them there, including the girl from Slave City. As he is trying to remember exactly what has happened to him, he hears the voices of Drake, Dross and Durs. The three men tell Thor that the Legion has sent them because they have gotten a map from one of the thieves detailing where the Sword has been taken. As they describe the route they must take, the slave girl indicates she believes they are going the wrong way. She tells them that the river will lead to their death.

Despite her warnings, Thor and his friends go with Drake, Dross, and Durs down the river. Even as Thor follows the three men who he had once thought were his brothers, he wonders if he is going in the right direction. Indra warns them that they will give in to Andronicus one way or another. As the group continues to paddle they begin to hear soft music. Indra warns them it is the music of the Sentions. She says the women will lure them to their island then kill them and eat them. Even as Indra tries to warn him, Thor finds himself being drawn in by the music. The men paddle the boat to the island and the women led them deep into the island. Even though he is aware that Indra has been bound and gagged, he has no desire to go back and help her. He feels as if he has finally found his true home.

In Chapter Twenty, Gwen, and Steffen keep watch for Kendrick. Meanwhile, the men work to fortify Silesia. A trumpet sounds. Gwen looks to see a carriage coming from the direction of King's Court. She is surprised when she sees her mother step out of the carriage. She is flooded with a variety of emotions. She hopes that her mother has not come with the intention of telling her how to rule. Despite her dislike for her mother, Gwen allows her to take shelter in Silesia and even arranges for the healer to take care of her. The former queen leaves her daughter after she tells her that her husband's decision to leave Gwen in charge was the only good decision that he ever made.

Gwen hugs Aberthol, her father's advisor, when he gets out of the carriage. Aberthol sadly tells Gwen of the destruction of the books and papers stored in the House of Scholars. Aberthol tries to comfort Gwen saying they will get all of the books back. Gwen agrees with him though she knows that rebuilding the House of Scholars and gathering all of the books that had once been there will not happen.

Analysis

In this section of the novel, Drake, Dross, and Durs enter the picture. Even though Thor doesn't trust the three men, he still allows himself to believe that they intend to help him and his men. Reece is suspicious of the three because they didn't volunteer to help with the mission and came only when they were commanded. There seems to be suspicion



between all of the men that the three brothers don't really intend to help at all. They are only there because they have been told to come.

Meanwhile, it becomes more and more obvious to Thor that Elden has feelings for Indra. Elden tries to convince Indra that she is free, but Indra tells him no one is really free. She says that even the Ring will be overtaken. Indra believes that everything and everyone will answer to Andronicus.

The words that Gwen's mother says to Gwen are important in this section of the novel. Gwen and her mother have apparently not had a good relationship. Gwen's mother seems concerned that her daughter will not allow her refuge in Silesia; but, Gwen tells her mother that she is not vindictive. Her mother tells her that she believes Gwen's father made a good decision in deciding to put her in charge of his kingdom. These are the only kind words that Gwen remembers her father ever speaking about her.

Discussion Question 1

Why do Thor and his friends suspect that Drake, Dross and Durs are trying to manipulate them when they show up in Empire territory with a map showing where the Sword is located?

Discussion Question 2

How does Gwen's mother react to her daughter's role as queen?

Discussion Question 3

Why is Gwen so sad to learn that the House of Scholars has been destroyed?

Vocabulary

myriad, vindictive, prerogative, palpable, catapults



Chapters 21 - 22

Summary

In Chapter Twenty-one, as Kendrick and Atme reach the town, they see Andronicus' scouts coming from the opposite direction. They ride through the town and find the two sick girls. They are overtaken by the soldiers and manage to fight off the scouts but hear the rumble of Andronicus' army coming. They put the girls on their horses and ride toward Silesia.

Gwen, meanwhile, continues to watch for Kendrick. She hears rumbling and is frightened to see Andronicus' army on the horizon. Brom and Steffen encourage her to go inside the city and allow the gates to be sealed. Just at the last moment, Gwen sees Kendrick and Atme riding back. They all race back into the city just before the gates slam shut. Andronicus' men first slam into the gates with their shields, then use a battering ram. Gwen's men use arrows to kill the men using the battering ram but others come forward to take their places. The Legion forces continue to kill Empire forces with arrows and burning tar. More men come to replace those who are killed. Soon they are throwing flaming boulders over the walls of the city.

Gwen is surprised when her brother Godfrey comes up telling the men that he wants to join the fighting. Kendrick sets him up with a bow. Godfrey is nervous but surprised when one of his arrows actually hits an Empire soldier. Although Gwen is proud of her brother, her heart sinks when she sees the Empire forces bringing ladders up to the walls of the city. The Silesians try to set fire to the ladders but not all are successful. Empire soldiers begin to climb over the walls.

Gwen saves the life of Godfrey by chopping off the hand of an Empire soldier who is clinging to him. The two then push an Empire ladder off the wall of the city. So many men have made it over the walls that the men begin hand-to-hand combat. Steffen tries to get Gwen inside the city but before he can move her to safety she is attacked by an Empire soldier whom she kills. Godfrey kills another man who is trying to harm Gwen. Suddenly there is a large cheer and the Empire troops break down the gates. Gwen orders the men to retreat to the inner walls of the city. Empire soldiers fall into a trap as the Legion men retreat. The Empire forces don't even bother to build a bridge. They walk over the heads of the men who have drowned in the moat. The water has oil in it so the Legion forces can shoot fire into it setting the surface of the water on fire. Despite the fire, the Empire forces keep coming. Gwen and the others are horrified when they realize the Empire forces have broken down the inner gate.

In Chapter Twenty-two, the women continue to lead Thor and the others into the island. Thor cannot gain control over his mind. The woman lays him in a hammock, then begins to wrap twine around him until he is completely bound. The woman tells him that his days are over, that he will serve as their next meal. Thor and his friends watch as the women roast a strange man over the fire. They prepare to roast Thor, but Krohn attacks,



biting one of the women. He will not let anyone get close to Thor even though the women begin poking him with spears. Indra calls to Krohn to help her get free. He does so. Once Indra is free, she begins killing the women until she can get to Thor and his friends to untie them. They run back to their boat and manage to escape the sirens.

After the group escapes, the women begin to argue among themselves. They don't know if they are going the right way or not. Indra insists they are not. She says they are headed toward their deaths. Elden gets angry when Durs calls Indra a slave girl. It is at this point that Thor knows for certain that Elden is falling in love with Indra. Indra indicates that they should trust her as she had just saved their lives. Even though Thor feels they are going in the wrong direction, he decides to continue following the map until the following day. If they have not made progress by then, Thor says they will turn around. Indra indicates they won't live that long.

They paddle through a place that Indra calls the Wastelands. Indra tells them the falls aren't far away. By the time they reach the falls, it is too late to turn around. The drop is at least fifty feet. At the bottom of the falls, Thor struggles to reach the surface. When he does, he sees his friends struggling to do the same. He finally spots Krohn as the cat goes underwater, a look of fear on his face. He swims for Krohn toward the bottom, grabbing him and pulling him up to the surface of the lake. Reece help him get Krohn back to the boat. As the boat continues further into the Underworld, the group in the boat is attacked by strange reptiles. The reptiles stop attacking only when a huge sea monster surfaces, threatening the lives of all those in the boat.

Analysis

Suspension of belief is a requirement for this novel as many of the people succeed in unbelievable circumstances. Surprisingly, Atme and Kendrick are able to defeat twelve of the Empire troops sent to the village as scouts. Then they are able to get back to the city of Silesia with these girls who are too weak to even stand up before Andronicus' army arrives. Meanwhile, Thor and his group of friends survive the fall over a waterfall. This happens after Indra and Krohn save the men from the Sirens. At this point it seems that nothing can get the heroes of this novel down.

Also, during this section Gwen and her troops begin their defense of Silesia against Andronicus' forces. Although they are badly outnumbered, the soldiers from Silesia are able to make an adequate stand against the larger army. Still, even with all of the booby traps and defenses they have planned, Andronicus' forces are able to break into even the innermost part of the city.

Discussion Question 1

How does Godfrey redeem himself during the battle with Andronicus?



Discussion Question 2

How do the men escape from the sirens?

Discussion Question 3

Why does Thor continue to follow the map that Durs, Drake and Doss have even though he doesn't trust them and doesn't believe they are going the right direction?

Vocabulary

suggestible, pervasive, topographical



Chapters 23 - 24

Summary

In Chapter Twenty-three, Gwen is shocked that the battle is moving along so quickly as she and the men are forced to make a controlled retreat further into Silesia. As the Empire forces continue to beat down the Silesians, they decide it is time to move to lower Silesia. They are finally safe here, protected by a field of spikes, but Gwen knows they only have a limited amount of provisions.

In Chapter Twenty-four, as the men in the boat face the sea monster, Thor prays. He feels a heat rising in his body. An orb of light shoots out of his hands and lands in the monster's mouth, killing it. As the boat continues through the Underworld, Indra tells Thor that he is the man that she has heard about. She tells him that he is the son of the Druid, the chosen one. She has learned about him from ancient legends. Although Thor insists that he is no different from anyone else, Indra insists that he is special. The current grows stronger. Indra tells the group they are entering the Cave of Devils. The land is made of flesh eating worms, so they have no choice but to go through. Inside the cave the men are attacked by the army of the undead. Indra says it will do no good to fight the army as they cannot be killed. Although they shatter the skeletons, the skeletons begin repairing themselves. Thor orders the men back to the boats and they manage to get out of the cavern just in time to escape the undead.

Analysis

Despite their best efforts, Gwen and her army have been forced to retreat into the furthest part of Silesia. Now, because they have such a limited amount of food, Gwen and the other leaders know that they will not be able to survive for long. Still, they swear that they will not surrender.

Meanwhile, Thor and the others were facing death at the mercy of a huge sea monster when Thor pulls strength from inside of him and shoots the monster with orbs of light, killing it. Seeing his actions, Indra tells Thor that he is the chosen one, claiming that she has heard legends about him all of her life.

Discussion Question 1

What limits how long the Silesians can remain in their protected state from Andronicus' forces?

Discussion Question 2

How does Thor kill the sea monster?



Discussion Question 3

Discuss Thor's reaction to the claims that Indra makes about him after he kills the sea monster.

Vocabulary

emanated, nostalgically, fatalistic



Chapters 25 - 26

Summary

In Chapter Twenty-five, the Empire forces are quiet which Gwen and the other Silesians find almost more ominous than the fighting. Although Gwen knows that she did well in fending off Andronicus' army as well as she did, she still feels like a failure. Andronicus suddenly calls for Gwendolyn out of the stillness. He makes an offer telling her that if she will surrender, he will leave the people of Silesia alone and allow them to live in peace in his kingdom. He warns that if he does not get an answer from Gwen by the following morning, he will destroy the city and all its inhabitants. Srog, Kendrick, Steffen, and Kolk all warn Gwen that Andronicus is lying, they do not want her to serve Andronicus on their behalf.

As Gwendolyn watches the sun set, she realizes that she has made up her mind. She decides to go to Andronicus at dawn, while there was no one else around to stop her. She wants the baby she carries to live and wants to avoid further bloodshed. Although she wishes that Thor would appear with the Sword, she knows that this will not happen. Argon comes to pay his respects, knowing that her mind is already made up. He tells her that he is going because times are shifting. He also lets her know that Thor is still alive. Since he does not tell her if Thor is safe, Gwen begs him to save Thor. Argon tells her that he has already saved Thor once on her behalf. Now, she must repay. Before he disappears, he tells her that she has done the gods proud.

In Chapter Twenty-six, as the creature is about to kill Erec, it is suddenly hit by an orb of light. It is Alistair, fighting off the creatures with light orbs coming from her hands. She also saves Brandt. At the conclusion of the chapter Erec asks Alistair about her identity.

Analysis

In this section of the novel, Gwen has a decision to make. Andronicus has offered to let Gwen's people go free if she will surrender. Gwen is willing to do anything that it takes to save her baby and save her people from unnecessary bloodshed. She does not seem to consider seriously that Andronicus will not keep his word, even with his reputation. Gwen's trusted advisors warn her that Andronicus will probably go back on his word, but Gwen seems to be seriously considering his offer.

In this section, Alistair saves Erec from the Covenies in the same way that Thor fights off the sea monster. When Alistair shoots the orbs from her hands, Erec responds to her in the same way Indra had reacted to Thor. Erec simply asks his new bride who she really is.



Discussion Question 1

What do you believe is the connection between Thor and Alistair?

Discussion Question 2

Why do you think that Andronicus is offering Gwen to set her people free if she surrenders? Do you think he is serious in his offer?

Discussion Question 3

What can be made of Argon's final visit with Gwen? What is he trying to tell her?

Vocabulary

disfigured, discerning, demarcated, malicious, nullified



Chapters 27 - 28

Summary

In Chapter Twenty-seven, Gwen surrenders to Andronicus. She is forced to kneel before him and take a vow of allegiance to the Empire. When Gwen tells Andronicus to let her people go as he had promised, he smiles and tells her that he takes greater pleasure in lying than telling the truth. Gwen is angry as she realizes the people will be killed or made slaves despite her sacrifice. He intends to make an example of her because she and her army attempted to defy him. He calls for McCloud to torment Gwen for him. He has intentions of McCloud raping Gwen with all of the Empire soldiers watching. As she struggles against the man, she believes that she hears Estopheles circling overhead, screeching. She tries to imagine that she is somewhere else.

In Chapter Twenty-eight, Thor stands in a field over which Estopheles is circling. He sees a person lying in the grass. When he reaches it, it is Gwen, her body covered in blood. He screams and wakes up in the boat. Suddenly, the river comes to an end. The three brothers claim that they are close to their destination and lead them off, away from the boat. They reach a place that Indra refers to as the Crossroads of the Dead. Thor notices the three brothers backing away from them; but, before he can process the information, Thor and his friends are grabbed and bound by Empire soldiers. Durs steps forward with a sword, aiming it at Thor's exposed neck. Thor believes that his time has come. He wants nothing more than the opportunity to see Gwen again.

Analysis

Just as Gwen's advisors have suspected, Andronicus is not being honest in his offer to Gwen. Since she has gone to surrender to Andronicus alone, she has no one to help her now that she realizes that she has been tricked. To make matters worse, Andronicus gives her to King McCloud, an enemy of her family, to rape. He suggests that maybe she will get pregnant and it will be a boy, a blending of the McCloud and MacGil blood lines. Andronicus does not realize that Gwen is already carrying Thor's baby.

Estopheles' screeching connects both what is being done to Gwen by Andronicus and McCloud and what Thor sees in his dream. Thor sees the dead and bloody body of Gwen lying in a field in his dream. He believes that it is his fault that Gwen is dead because he went away and left her alone. Later, in real life, when Durs is holding his sword to Thor's neck and Thor believes that he is about to die, he wishes that he could see Gwen again.

It is obvious that this novel is part of a series as the writer leaves both Gwen and Thor in questionable circumstances. Thor is about to be killed and Gwen is being raped by McCloud. It can only be assumed that both Gwen and Thor are saved in the next



installment of the series, but the question of how the two are saved is what draws the reader to the next book in the series.

Discussion Question 1

Is Gwen foolish or wise for surrendering to Andronicus? Explain your reasoning.

Discussion Question 2

To what have Drake, Durs and Dross really been leading Thor and his friends?

Discussion Question 3

What does Thor's dream mean?

Vocabulary

disfigured, discerning, demarcated, malicious, nullified



Characters

Thorgrin

Thorgrin is the hero of the novel. He is Gwen's boyfriend and the father of the child that she is carrying. Thor is accompanied by a white leopard named Krohn. Krohn appears to be Thor's best friend as he mirrors Thor's emotions as well as his concern for Gwen.

Thor and his friends have gone on a quest into Empire territory to retrieve the Destiny Sword and repair the Ring, which will cause Andronicus' army to be defeated. Thor is the leader of a group that has gone to retrieve the Destiny Sword. Most who have heard of the mission believe that it is a suicide quest. Thor and his group are assisted by a young boy who teaches them about the insects and climate of the Empire territory. He also leads them to the path that will take them to Slave City, where the boy believes the Sword has been taken. Thor promises the boy that he will recommend him to the legion when he gets old enough.

After Thor and his friends escape from Slave City, Thor is encountered by three men whom he had once believed were his brother but who were always hateful to him. Now they claim to be there to help the group find the Destiny Sword. Although Thor has his doubts about the intentions of Drake, Doss and Durs, he follows them anyway. Thor continues following the directions of the three even though Indra tries to convince him that they are going the wrong direction. During the time that Gwen is surrendering to Empire forces and being attacked by McCloud, Thor has a dream that he finds her dead in a field. After his dream, he feels guilty for leaving her alone. At the end of the novel, Thor and his friends are arrested by Empire forces as Drake, Doss, and Durs were sent to bring the group of friends to a certain spot where they could be ambushed and arrested. Thor is on the verge of being killed when the novel closes.

Gwendolyn

Gwendolyn is one of the main characters and heroine of the novel. She is chosen by her father, who was king of King's Court, to lead his people after his death. At the beginning of the novel, Gwen has left half of the people from King's Court to Silesia to take refuge not only from Andronicus and his army but also from her brother, Gareth. The people of Silesia accept Gwen as their leader and present her with the red cloak worn by their former Queen.

Gwen is pregnant with Thor's baby. Although she knows that it is unlikely that Thor will survive his quest into Empire territory and bring back the Destiny Sword that will save them all, she holds out hope that he will return. Because of the child growing within her, she has a greater desire to live, which may explain why she decides to surrender to Andronicus even though her advisers try to tell her that Andronicus is lying to her when he tells her that he will free the people. Throughout the battle with Andronicus' army



Gwen stays on the front line with her troops often assisting the men even though they ask her to retreat to a safer location. Even though she is a woman, the military leaders admire her and follow her leadership without question.

At the conclusion of the novel, Gwen has surrendered to Andronicus and learns that he was, indeed, lying when he told her that he would let her people live freely. Instead, Andronicus decides to make an example of Gwen because she and her people tried to make a stand against his army. He brings out King McCloud, one of Gwen's family's enemies, to rape Gwen in front of the soldiers.

Andronicus

Andronicus is the antagonist of the novel. He is taking advantage of the Shield being down and is leading his million-man army on a rampage across the Ring. He kills the people in the villages that he conquers and then burns what he doesn't pillage. He has taken King McCloud as a prisoner because he wants to let him lose some weight before cutting off his head and shrinking it to add to the necklace of heads he wears around his neck. He punishes McCloud by tying the king to his horse and dragging the man through his own kingdom to his throne. Andronicus then sits in McCloud's throne and commands that he pay homage to him. He also brands McCloud's face with the symbol of his kingdom, a sign that McCloud is the property of Andronicus. Later in the novel, Andronicus tricks Gwen by telling her that if she surrenders to him, he will let her people live freely. After Gwen has surrendered to him, Andronicus decides to punish her by allowing King McCloud to rape her.

Kendrick

Although Kendrick is Gwen's half-brother, she is closer to him than her other siblings. She makes Kendrick the ruler of her armed forces, and he serves as one of her close advisers. At the beginning of the novel, Kendrick is at an outpost in a distant village helping to rebuild that city. He feels it is right to lead by example and often takes on dangerous missions, such as rescuing the sick girls from a nearby village even though Andronicus' forces are nearly upon them, because he believes it is his duty. Although he puts himself in these dangerous situations, Kendrick is not injured or killed and is always able to overcome his enemies. It is Kendrick who explains to Gwen the characteristics that she has that caused their father to choose her as the leader instead of another of the siblings.

Alton

Alton is the third cousin of Gwen's parents. He has spent much of his life trying to convince Gwen that she should be with him and not Thor. In this novel, he talks his way past Gwen's guards to suggest to her that she needs him as a king. As usual, she rejects his offer. Alton threatens to throw Gwen from the precipice on which they are standing but he does not calculate on Gwen's ability to defend herself. She manages to



free herself from him then Steffen, hearing Alton's cries, takes the man into custody. Although assaulting the queen is an automatic death sentence, Gwen decides that Alton's punishment will be to fight on the front lines of the battle, as the royalty, which he claims to be, does.

Gareth

Gareth is Gwendolyn's brother. Gareth hates Gwen because his father left Gwen in power. Gareth is addicted to opium and determined to destroy his father's kingdom because he hated his father so much. It is learned that Gareth is the one who arranged for the Destiny Sword to be stolen and taken out of the territory, leaving the Ring open to attack by Andronicus' army. Gareth is also responsible for poisoning his mother. When his mother tries to confront Gareth about the poisoning, he tries to kill her. Just before Andronicus' army is about to attack King's Court, Lord Kultin decides to kill Gareth and take charge of the kingdom himself. Gareth, however, has disappeared. His location is unknown at the end of the novel.

Queen MacGil

Queen MacGill is the mother to Gwendolyn, Godfrey, Gareth, Reece, and Luanda. She is in a catatonic state at the beginning of the novel because she is being poisoned by her son Gareth. When Queen MacGill's servant realizes she is being poisoned by niamroot, she gives the queen the antidote which brings her back to animation immediately. After Queen MacGill confronts her son about his attempt to kill her, she and her servant take refuge in Silesia. Although she has always been cold and haughty to Gwen, she surprises her daughter by telling her that Gwen's father, her former husband, made a good decision when he left Gwen in power.

Erec

In this novel, Erec fights against the Lord of Baluster's army after that lord stole his bride and Erec stole her back, apparently killing the lord in the process. Erec and his men are about to be slain in the battle when the lord's army is attacked by Covenies, which cause the lord's army to scatter. Erec and his men hurry back to the city of Savaria where they attempt to battle the Covenies, who are now attacking them. Erec and his friend, Brandt, go behind the Covenies, hoping to distract them from the city and divide their forces. Just as Erec is about to be killed by these forces, Alistair saves him by killing the huge creatures with orbs of light that emit from her hands.

King McCloud

King McCloud was the ruler over the Eastern kingdom of the Ring. At the beginning of the novel his being paraded through the streets of his kingdom as Andronicus has just taken him captive. McCloud is an enemy of Gwen's family, the MacGils. Andronicus



brands McCloud's face with the symbol of his kingdom then holds the man captive until he can be thinned down and his head shrunken for Andronicus' necklace of heads. When Andronicus wants to punish Gwen at the end of the novel, it is McCloud that he calls to rape Gwen.

Srog

Srog controls the stronghold of the West. He is also one of the commanders of the Silesian army that welcomes Gwen and people in Silesia. He had been loyalty to Gwen's father and now transfers this loyalty to Gwen. Srog is described as being a "man's man." He is one of Gwen's close advisors during the battle with Andronicus' forces. It is Srog who leads Gwen on her tour of Silesia and introduces her to the people. When Gwen is faced with the decision of serving Andronicus so the others can go free, it is Srog who tells her that he doesn't want her to sacrifice herself for them.

Lord Kultin

Lord Kultin is the leader of Gareth's private, paid soldiers. Kultin stands behind Gareth when Gareth tells the people of King's Court that they must go after Gwen and kill her. After the soldiers who have chosen to separate from Gareth are gone, Kultin creates a plan to kill Gareth and take over as ruler. When he enters Gareth's chamber, however, he finds that Gareth has escaped the castle through a secret passage. As Kultin tries to decide what to do next, he is killed when an Empire soldier throws a sword at him through one of the windows in the room.

Ario

Ario is the young boy who saves Thor and his friends from the Gator Beast which they encounter when they first enter Empire territory. The boy takes them to his grandfather's hut for shelter for the night and teaches them about the animals and plants from which they need to stay away. He also accompanies them along the path until they have reached the last fork in the trail before Slave City. He asks nothing in return but that they consider him for use in the Legion when he grows old enough.

Luanda

Luanda is Gwen's older sister. She left the MacGill side of the ring to marry Bronson, King McCloud's son. They come to Silesia seeking refuge from Andronicus and his army. Even though Luanda is asking Gwen a favor, she is haughty and hateful when she learns that Gwen has been chosen as ruler. She believes that she should be ruler because she is older, but Gwen's advisers make it clear to her that this attitude will not be tolerated.



Argon

Argon appears to be some sort of god or apparition who serves as an adviser for the ruling member of the MacGill family. Argon appears twice in this novel, once as Gwen watches Kendrick ride away to rescue the two sick girls and the second time before Gwen surrenders to Andronicus. He is the one who has told her that she must die a little death in exchange for having asked him to save Thor's life. Before he leaves Gwen, Argon tells her that she has done the gods proud.

Steffen

Steffen is one of Gwen's advisers and bodyguards. He is the one who punches Alton in the back when he tries to hurt Gwen when she refuses to marry him. Steffen stands next to Gwen during the attack by Andronicus' army. He is the one who suggests to Gwen that she not consider Andronicus' offer to free the people if she will surrender. He tells her that it is probably a false offer.

Alistair

Alistair is Erec's new wife. It is because of her that Erec is engaged in battle with forces from Lord Baluster. Erec sends Alistair back to Savaria for her safety during the battle. She also bursts into the Duke's chambers, requesting help for her husband. Later, in a battle against the Covenies, Alistair shows up out of nowhere to protect her husband from the huge beasts by killing them with orbs of light that shoot out of her hands.

Selese

Selese is a woman who is in love with Reece but has spurned the love of the king's son. In this novel, she decides to find Reece and tell him of her affection for him. Before she can leave her village, however, she notices Andronicus' army bearing down. She wakes her fellow villagers and makes sure everyone is safely away from the village before she leaves.

Illepra

Illepra is a healer. She is the love interest of Gwen's brother Godfrey. While Godfrey is hiding from his fear in the pub in Silesia, Illepra comes to him to voice her displeasure for the way that he is acting. She tells him that she is displeased that he saved him just to have him drink in a pub when danger is near. When Gwen's mother comes to find refuge in Silesia, she is sent to Illepra for medical care.



Drake, Dross and Durs

Drake, Dross, and Durs are men whom Thor has been raised to believe are his brothers. The three men offer to help Thor find the sword, saying they have a map that one of the thieves who stole and hid the Sword has drawn. In reality, the men have been hired to lead Thor and his friends into a trap.

Krohn

Krohn is a rare white leopard who is Thor's constant companion. Krohn is able to understand and follow commands given him by his human companions. In many cases Krohn saves the day with his quick actions. At the end of the novel, Krohn tries to comfort Thor as he, too, senses that something is wrong with Gwen.

Aberthol

Aberthol is the man who served as an adviser to Gwen and Gareth's father. Aberthol tries to help Gareth but Gareth only desires to kill Gwendolyn. Although Aberthol stays at King's Court after Gwen and part of the people leave, he seeks refuge in Silesia when Queen MacGill and her servant travel there.

Atme

Atme is Kendrick's close friend. It is Atme who rides to Kendrick where he is repairing a wall in a distant village to let him know that the Shield is down and the Destiny Sword has been stolen. Atme often accompanies Kendrick on his travels including Kendrick's trip to a village to rescue the two sick girls who had been left behind.

Ario's Grandfather

Although Ario's grandfather is living in Empire territory, he was originally from the Ring. He had decided to make a clean start after tragedy struck in his life in the Ring. He allows Thor and his friends shelter for the night after his grandson brings them to his cottage.

Bronson

Bronson is the husband of Luanda and son of King McCloud. Although the McClouds and MacGills and been enemies, Bronson promises to fight for the MacGills and Silesia if Gwen will allow him and Luanda refuge in Silesia. Bronson had lost a hand as a result of his father's cruelty.



Indra

Indra is the slave whom Elden rescues from Slave City. She promises to help Thor and his friends get out of Slave City safely. She also promises them she will help them find the Sword. Indra suggests to Thor that they not trust Drake, Dross, and Durs because she believes they are leading the men in the wrong direction.

Sentions

The Sentions are sirens who live on an island in the river on which Thor and his friends are sailing. Indra tries to warn Thor that the sirens will lure them in to eat them, but the men will not listen. Indra is the only one not affected by the song of the Sentions so she is the one who has to save them from the evil women.

Hafold

Hafold is Queen MacGill's leading servant. It is Hafold who sees the servant girl putting a white powder in the queen's drink and realizes that she is being poisoned. She gives Queen MacGill the antidote that brings her back to her former self.

Brandt

Brandt is one of Erec's close friends. He is one of the men who leads the contingent of troops out of Savaria to help Erec. He fights by Erec's side in this battle as well as the battle against the Covenies.

Elden

Elden is one of the men who accompanies Thor on his quest to recover the Destiny Sword. It is Elden who frees the slave, Indra, and later shows signs that he is falling in love with her as she tries to get her to talk to him.

Conven and Conval

Conven and Conval are twin brothers who accompany Thor on his quest to retrieve the Destiny Sword from Empire Territory.



Symbols and Symbolism

The Ring

The Ring is an area made up of the MacGill and McCloud kingdoms.

The Destiny Sword

The Destiny Sword is stolen from the Ring on the command of Gareth. Thor and his friends go on a quest to retrieve this Sword from Empire territory.

A Ship

Thor and his friends find this ship that they use as their ride to Empire territory moored on the shores of the Tartuvian.

Gathorbeast

A Gathorbeast is the overgrown insect that attacks Thor and the others on Empire territory. Their efforts to fight off the insect are ineffective until a young boy throws water on the animal.

Covenies

It is Covenies that attack the lord's army as they are attacking Erec and his friends. While Erec is glad the lord's army dissipates, he knows that the Covenies couldn't have gotten into the area unless the Shield was down.

Niamroot

Niamroot is the poison that Gareth is using to keep his mother in a catatonic state.

A Scarlet Silk Cloak

When Gwen enters the city of Silesia, she is given scarlet silk cloak, which belongs to the city's former first lady.

A Field of Iron Spikes

This field of iron spikes is the last line of defense the people of Silesia have against Andronicus' army.



Settings

Savaria

Savaria is the city to which Alistair rides in order to get troops to help Erec.

Duke's Private Chamber

The Duke's private chamber is the part of the castle into which Alistair forces her way into in order to get troops to help Erec.

Tartuvian

The Tartuvian is the ocean over which Thor and his friends sail in order to reach the Empire territory to which the Sword had supposedly been taken.

Silesia

Silesia is the ancient city to which Gwen and her people retreat for protection from Gareth and Andronicus' army.

King's Court

King's Court is the name used to refer to King MacGill's castle.

Slave City

Slave City is the place in Empire territory in which Thor and his friends find themselves in their search for the Sword. They free Indra from the city because she promises that she can help them get out of the city alive and can help them locate the sword.

Fire Mines

The fire mines keep the Empire forces from catching Thor and his friends as they run from Slave City.

The House of the Sick

It is in the House of the Sick that the woman tells Gwen that her daughters have been left. Kendrick goes to this house and rescues the girls.



Land of the Undead

The Land of the Undead is one of the places through which Thor and his friends travel on their way to try to locate the Sword.

Crossroads of the Dead

Crossroads of the Dead is the location where Durs, Dross, and Drake hand Thor and the others over to the Empire forces.



Themes and Motifs

Family Relationships

Family relationships, or perhaps more properly, bad family relationships is a theme in this novel. These bad family relationships first surface when it appears that Gareth is going crazy not only because of his opium addiction but also because he keeps having hallucinations of his dead and decomposing father. It can be assumed that Gareth and his father were not close when his father was alive as Gareth is so consumed with a hatred for his father that it makes him want to destroy everything that his father loved. Gareth not only hated his father, but he obviously also hates Gwen as well. He believes that it is more important to kill Gwen because she has been given the rule, than it is to prepare the people in his land to face Andronicus' army. Not only did Gareth not like his sister or his father, he didn't like his mother either as he has been having her poisoned in an attempt to keep her in a catatonic state.

Gwen as well suffers from bad family relations. Her older sister Luanda had never liked Gwen. As quickly as she could, she married a man from the other side of the Ring, moving away from her family. Now that Andronicus has attacked the McCloud territory, Luanda has no choice but to seek solace in Silesia. Even though Gwen has granted her sister refuge in Silesia, Luanda is offended when she realizes that Gwen has been made ruler. It is only after the men insist on Luanda showing her sister the respect that she deserves that Luanda relents.

Thor is also plagued by bad family relationships. Three men whom he had thought were his brothers meet him in Empire territory claiming that they have been sent to help him in retrieving the Sword. Thor does not trust these men as they have been hateful to him all through his life. Thor should have trusted his gut feeling as it turns out that the three men were hired to lead him and his friends to Empire forces where it appears they are about to be killed.

Leadership

The characteristics that define a good leader make up another important theme in this novel. As a female, younger sibling, Gwen struggles with her feelings of inadequacy. However, her father has commanded that she be the next leader of his kingdom. When she arrives in Silesia, Gwen is quickly accepted as the leader there though she doesn't believe that she is worthy of the honor.

When her brother, Kendrick arrives in Silesia, he reminds her that there is more to a good leader than just being a man or being the oldest in a family. He tells her that a leader needs wisdom, knowledge, temperance, compassion, and insight. He assures her that she has all of these things.



Gwen also shows her ability to be a good leader when she decides to surrender to Andronicus because she believes that he will do as he has promised. Gwen believes this action is the best way to keep her people from being harmed any further. She does what she feels is best, even though it goes against her what her advisers believe to be best. Gwen is perhaps naïve in her belief that even Andronicus will do as he has promised, but she does have the best interests of her people at heart.

Loyalty

Loyalty is a characteristic that is very important in this novel. Friends are called upon to be loyal to one another as they fight against enemy forces. Atme, for instance, stays loyal to Kendrick when Kendrick rides out to try to save the two sick girls even though it is believed the two men will not make it back to the city of Silesia before the gates must be closed against Andronicus and his army. Similarly, Brandt is loyal to Erec and follows him out of the city of Savaria to try to distract the Covenies.

Thor and his friends also show a great deal of loyalty to one another. Although they are related to one another only as Legion soldiers, they consider each other to be brothers. They protect and stand up for each other just as if they were related. One interesting member of the group that shows unbelievable loyalty is Krohn. This white leopard is able to understand what his human friends say and follow their commands.



Styles

Point of View

This novel is told from the third person point of view of an omniscient narrator. It is apparent that the narrator is omniscient because he is able to follow Thor and his friends as they travel to Empire territory at the same time that Gwen and her troops are first traveling to Silesia, and then fighting off Andronicus' army. The narrator focuses mainly on Gwen and Thor.

The majority of this novel is told through exposition as the narrator describes surroundings, strange insects and landscapes, and characters' thoughts. There is also a good deal of dialogue where characters discuss situations and options.

Language and Meaning

The language is that of a supernatural novel filled with armed combat. The author takes time to describe the battles, which usually team one or two of the heroes of the novel against large numbers of the enemy. The heroes use the arms of the age of the knights in shining armor. They dress in chain mail and carry swords, flails and bows and arrows. They have none of the high tech equipment that people in science fiction novels usually do. Thor and Alistair, however, are able to shoot orbs of light out of their hands, giving the novel its science fiction feel.

The strange insects and plants that Thor and his friends encounter while they are in Empire territory are described in the novel. These creatures have unusual names like Gathorbeasts and Covenies. Other important terms in the novel include the Ring, some sort of protected area where the MacGils and McClouds live. This Ring is protected by a Shield that is in some way connected to a Destiny Sword. This sword has been stolen from the area and taken into Empire territory, an action that opens the Ring up to attack by enemies.

Structure

This novel is divided into twenty-eight chapters. It is part of a series of books that follows the adventures of Gwen, Thor, Erec, and Alistair. Each chapter addresses a different topic. For instance, Chapter One tells about Andronicus' abuse of McCloud. Chapter Two switches to Erec and Alistair. Then, Chapter Three moves on to Thor and his friends. At least four different story lines are addressed in the novel. One of these deals with Thor and his quest to retrieve the Sword and one deals with Gwen, her new leadership and the battle with Andronicus. Erec and Alistair's story appears to be a more insignificant story line in this particular book but is obviously still important because Alistair and Thor share the same unusual ability to emit orbs of light from their hands. The story line involving Gareth is another secondary story. Yet another, even more

minor story line in this book is the love between Selese and Reece. In fact, only one chapter in the novel deals with Selese.

In order to keep readers interested, all of the story lines in the novel end in a cliffhanger. The characters are either threatened with death, as is the situation with Thor and Gwen; missing, as is the case with Gareth; or just in a shocking situation, such as Erec who finds himself when Alistair saves him from being killed by the Covenies.



Quotes

He had been given a chance to meet his death in the most honorable way, and that was a gift. He had taken a vow of glory, and today, his vow was demanding its due.

-- Narrator (Chapter 2 paragraph 4)

Importance: This vow of glory mentioned in the quote was taken by Erec. He faces the army of a lord whom he had killed because this lord stole his bride. Now, he feels he will lose his life in this battle even though he feels justified in having caused it.

We will send all of our forces after her, to slaughter her and those with her before they reach Silesia,' Gareth announced.

-- Gareth (Chapter 4 paragraph 69)

Importance: When Gareth speaks of his intentions to kill his sister instead of focusing his intention on the approaching Empire army, many of his troops will not stand with him. The only ones who stay despite his crazy intentions are Lord Kultin and his private fighters.

Gwen also felt inspired and humbled to be chosen to rule, to lead this huge contingent of people.

-- Narrator (Chapter 5 paragraph 2)

Importance: Although she does not feel prepared, Gwen is aware that the people are looking to her as their leader as they take refuge in Silesia. She worries that she will not be adequate, but she tries to think of what her father would do in the same situation.

The lord's army was being attacked from the rear by a huge group of creatures.

-- Narrator (Chapter 7 paragraph 34)

Importance: While this large group of Covenies saves Erec and his men from their enemy's forces, they are doubly afraid because they know these creatures would not be there if the shield were not down.

The Empire, the Canyon,' Atme breathed, gasping. 'The shield is down.

-- Atme (Chapter 8 paragraph 24)

Importance: These are Atme's words to Kendrick as he bears the bad news that the kingdom is no longer protected from Andronicus' forces.

Deep in her heart, she hoped beyond hope that Thor would return with the Sword and rescue them all.

-- Gwendolyn (Chapter 9 paragraph 5)

Importance: Although Gwendolyn hopes that Thor's quest to retrieve the Destiny Sword



will be successful and the war with Andronicus ended with no bloodshed, she fears this will not be the case.

A great ruler is forged of wisdom. Knowledge. Temperance. Compassion. Insight. And it is you who possess all of those qualities.

-- Kendrick (Chapter 12 paragraph 85)

Importance: Kendrick, Gwendolyn's brother, tries to convince her with these words that she possesses the qualities needed to be a great leader.

We may all die here together,' she said, her voice booming with confidence. 'But we will not surrender. We will never surrender.

-- Gwendolyn (Chapter 12 paragraph 155)

Importance: Although Gwendolyn swears to her people that she will never allow them to surrender, she goes back on her word when Andronicus offers her the ability to surrender and free her people.

You needn't repay me,' he said. 'I like having the company. It gets lonely out here. Besides, I hate the Empire and would like to see you defeat them and free us from this existence.

-- Ario (Chapter 13 paragraph 9)

Importance: The young boy whom Thor and his friends meet in the Empire tells them that he has helped because he hopes that the Empire will lose its power so that he and his grandfather can live freely.

Lord Kultin marched with purpose down the stone corridors of King's Court, his dozens of soldiers behind him, looking forward to betraying Gareth, slicing his throat, and seizing his throne for himself.

-- Narrator (Chapter 14 paragraph 1)

Importance: While Gareth has had visions of leading his forces against Gwendolyn and taking the rule from her, Lord Kultin, the paid leader of Gareth's private soldiers, has his own ambitions of killing Gareth and making himself ruler.

That was the way he had always been, since his youth: when hard times came, he was unable to face them. Instead, he would retreat to the ale house and drown his sorrows.

-- Narrator (Chapter 17 paragraph 2)

Importance: The quote describes Godfrey, another of Gwendolyn's siblings, who has always been a coward, choosing to drink in the bars instead of facing hard times.

I made a grave mistake,' Luanda said, 'in going to the McCloud side of the Ring.

-- Luanda (Chapter 18 paragraph 14)

Importance: When Luanda comes to Gwendolyn asking for refuge, she explains to her



sister that she realizes now that her move to the McCloud side of the Ring was very foolish.

You are the son of the Druid. The Chosen One. I have heard tales about you. Great tales.

-- Indra (Chapter 24 paragraph 16)

Importance: When Indra, the girl whom Thor and his group rescued from Slave City sees the way that he is able to throw balls of fire from his hands, she realizes that he is the one whom she has heard stories about all of her life.

When we joined the Legion,' he said, 'and then the Silver, we took a vow. It was a vow to fight, even when there was no chance left to win. It was a vow of honor. A vow of glory. That is what we have achieved here today. Not victory, but glory.

-- Kendrick (Chapter 25 paragraph 29)

Importance: These are Kendrick's words for Gwendolyn and the people of Silesia. Although they have not succeeded in overcoming Andronicus' forces, they have fought in a way that has been worthy of their vows.