

The Will of the Empress Study Guide

The Will of the Empress by Tamora Pierce

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Plot Summary

"The Will of the Empress" by Tamora Pierce is a fictional account of four young mages who find themselves pitted against an Empress who hopes to increase her holdings by forcing them to remain within her empirical boundaries. Though young, the mages are strong, and have a combined power that few mages of extensive experience have seen before. Their age causes many to underestimate them, and though as they become adults, they stray from each other and explore other realms, any confrontation or threat posed against one will bring the wrath of four in return.

The first foray from their home in Summersea is an experience that Daja, Briar and Tris will never forget. Sandry is the only one who stays behind, having responsibilities that prevent her from exploring the world like them. She is her Uncle Vedris's right hand person, and handles his estate and books when he is unable to do so himself. Though jealous, she encourages the others to leave her behind. When they return, things have changed. To begin with, the mental channel they've shared since they were young children is closed to Sandry, and when she questions the block, they tell her in different ways that they've grown up, and don't necessarily want to share everything with each other anymore. As such, she is surprised to find that they are willing to accompany her to check on her holdings in Namorn. Her cousin the Empress has been exerting pressure on Ambros, who manages her holdings by raising taxes beyond what can be paid, forcing Sandry as the liege lord to return and petition for a decrease. Before she can arrive however, the Empress reduces the taxes again, and welcomes her warmly, if not totally sincerely.

Secure with her quasi siblings, they are wined and dined, and offered positions of power and wealth in return for their agreements to stay and pledge fealty to Her Majesty, Empress Berenene, but none of them have any real desire to stay. The more they resist, the more pressure is exerted. To complicate matters, Sandry is wealthy enough to attract the attentions of all eligible bachelors hoping to gain land and title by forcing her into a marriage contract by way of kidnapping - an acceptable if abominable practice in Namorn. Three separate attempts are made, and by sticking together, are thwarted. The second attempt happens right in the castle itself, and no longer feeling safe or secure, Sandry announces they are going home. The others are willing and happy to leave, but the Empress is not amused. She charges her mages with the task of keeping her there by isolating the mage she believes is the strongest - Tris. Though spells are cast, traps are set, and mages employed to help, none are strong enough to face these four young mages once they join power. In an exciting conclusion, Sandry and her siblings must overcome the most powerful mage in Namorn - Ishabal, who has constructed a wall to retain them.



Chapter 1

Chapter 1 Summary

"The Will of the Empress" by Tamora Pierce is a fictional account of four young mages who find themselves pitted against an Empress who hopes to increase her holdings by forcing them to remain within her empirical boundaries. Though young, the mages are strong, and have a combined power that few mages of extensive experience have seen before. Their age causes many to underestimate them, and though as they become adults, they stray from each other and explore other realms, any confrontation or threat posed against one will bring the wrath of four in return.

Lady Sandrilene fa Toren just turned sixteen. She is a thread mage, and by the age of thirteen had already earned the right to practice as an adult. Daja and her teacher Frostpine are a week from home when he reminds her that unless she is willing to pledge herself and take her vows, she can no longer stay at Discipline Cottage. He offers to put her up, and she realizes that Briar and Tris will be in the same situation when they return. Sandry is the first to visit Daja's new house and forge on Cheeseman Street. Daja hasn't opened their mental connection yet, and admits she's felt Sandry trying, but isn't ready to face having been cast out or have charity offered. Sandry's Uncle invites Daja for supper the next night. Tris arrives and reluctantly turns her student, Glaki, over to Lark for rearing at Winding Circle temple. She has to leave her dog, Little Bear, with them as well, and her head aches. She arrives at Daja's house, feeling like a poor relation, and offers to clean the house for her keep. At first Briar is grandly welcomed home at the temple, but Lark soon informs him that he can't stay either. Rosethorn offers to put him up for a few nights but uncomfortable, he makes his way outside to the garden path, and among the plants and vines, is finally able to sleep. When nightmares wake him, Rosethorn is there, and knows he will not be able to stay. She comments on his lack of mental communication with his sisters, and he admits he hasn't told them he's returned yet. He doesn't want them to see the horrors in his mind and has no idea how to clean it. Rosethorn hugs him, saying nothing. Tris wanders further afield, listening to and learning to control the images she sees and hears. She offers to go to Rainen Alley to buy metal polish for Daja, and as soon as she steps into the wind from the East Gate, she knows Briar is coming and changes direction. If she hurries, she can have his favorite cookies waiting when he arrives. Tris sets the table for four, and prepares all of Briars' favorite foods. Sandry arrives and notes that Briar is there, having shut her out as the other two had. To Tris everything feels wrong. They should be at Discipline Cottage together as usual. Daja tells her softly that things change and they have also. Now, as adults, they keep their secrets, their wounds and their minds secret for safety's sake.



Chapter 1 Analysis

Sandry is disappointed that none of her foster brothers or sisters have managed to make it home for her birthday. She presses each knot in turn in the thread circle she made for them. The lumps are all cold to the touch, telling her that they were all still far out of range. Though young, she knows her own mind, and can be stubborn. A package arrives, and for a moment she is hopeful, but it is only an accounting of her estate in Namorn, sent to her by her cousin Ambros who looks after those details for her. When she is disappointed, her great uncle Duke Vedris IV reminds her that she should have at least as much interest in her own affairs as she does in his. Feeling properly chastised, she opens the parcel. Beginning with Daja, Sandry's brother and sisters return to Emelan. Daja's homecoming is strained by the fact that she is only recently made aware that she can't return to Discipline Cottage in the Winding Circle temple she called home. For Tris, the strain relates more to the increase on the wind - more conversations, more visions, more incoming overall. Though she'd worked to increase her ability in this area the entire time she was away, it is still a surprise to her senses. When Briar returns, at first his homecoming is grand. Then he discovers that he is unable to stay at Discipline Cottage either, and that in fact his room had already been given away. He is offered the use of Rosethorn's room temporarily, but he is unable to get comfortable, even after rearranging her pallet to the floor. Finally, he gives up and taking his bedroll he sleeps outside in the garden. The temple bells at midnight set off the usual nightmare as Briar struggles again and again through shouts of warriors, flames, people shrieking and the scents of smoke and blood. He wakes gasping, sweat streaming, and he hugs his knees and cries. Rosethorn is nearby in the shadows, and knows he won't be able to stay in the temple. Even just seeing the different colored robes makes him jumpy, he admits to her, knowing she is one that he can tell the whole truth to. He resolves to see if Daja has room for him and assures her that his student Evvy will be fine once her instructions begin. Rosethorn suggests he see a soul-healer for the dreams, but he brushes her off. The next day he sets out for Daja's and Tris becomes aware of him even as he is passing through the East Gate. She returns to Daja's and begins baking his favorite spice cookies. That night, she makes dinner for the four of them. When Sandry arrives, the tension is palpable as she questions the fact that they are closing their minds to her. She hadn't even been aware of the fact that Briar had returned, and her feelings are hurt (putting it mildly). She had so looked forward to their return, missing the way things had been and missing them terribly. To have them come home as emotional strangers is almost worse than just losing them to distance and time. The fact that they are not in Discipline Cottage also takes a toll as they all try to adjust to their new relationships.



Chapter 2

Chapter 2 Summary

Duke Vedris rides into the courtyard at Daja's and is soon settled inside with tea. Chime flies in and drops a bag of fish roe pearls into Daja's lap before settling on Duke Vedris' shoulder, resting her head against his cheek. Vedris opens a packet and puts it on his knee for Chime who purrs and walks down his chest to eat the gold dust as though it is grain, then flies to the window seat to nap. He tells them that Sandry has been ignoring her holdings in Namorn. Lately the Empress has been blackmailing Ambros who runs things for her, and now she insists on traveling there. Vedris asks if any or all of them will accompany her to Namorn. To his relief, they all agree to go. The next morning Sandry arrives with her guards and a cart filled with bolts of cloth. Briar is the only one home, and he prepares his shakkans to take them to Winding Circle so Rosethorn can look after them in his absence. Since Daja had once been a Trader, the four of them are welcome at the Trader campfires - a fact Briar smugly enjoys as they travel with the Third Caravan Saralan. Tris is restless at night, moving constantly, and wakes all she travels with. On the seventh day they reach the river Erynwhit - the border between Emelan and Gansar. As they are crossing the river, Tris suddenly stops, holding the reins of her mount so hard the horse twists and fights. Daja asks her to ease up, but instead she pulls her horse around and gallops back to where the road and water meet. She stands in the stirrups, removing her glasses and begins to shout for all to cross as fast as they can. She loosens her braids and using lightning from them, she hurries them while Daja curses. Then they hear it themselves, and scramble up the steep road on the other side just as a wall of water, stones and trees thunder down the canyon. Sandry reminds Tris that had she opened their usual bonds, she could have warned them without the lightning. Tris asks her to go away and leave her alone with the vile headache that her magic use had left behind. A voice behind Sandry chastises her. The caravan's leader approaches Tris drawing Sandry's attention to the fact that she is pale and sweating, and offers her a quiet, dark place to lie down.

Chapter 2 Analysis

Duke Vedris rides into the courtyard just in time to hear Daja complaining that Chime has stolen her fish roe pearls, and Briar shouting that Chime cannot roost in his shakkans. Vedris admits he has a favor to ask of Daja, Tris and Briar. To his great relief, they all agree to join Sandry as she goes to Namorn to check on her holdings there, and deal with the blackmailing being done by the Empress to get her to return. Sandry is still stinging from their lack of contact. Briar tries to explain that their adult minds are not neat and orderly, and Sandry blames them all for leaving her behind to stay a child while they all grew up without her. Already they are arguing, and the trip has yet to begin. Sandry wonders aloud why Briar agreed to come, and he simply admits that His Grace had asked and that was enough. The bickering between Sandry and her siblings continues as they travel, though they try to keep their arguments to themselves. On the



seventh day, they are crossing the river Erynwhit when Tris suddenly becomes agitated. She kicks her horse suddenly into a gallop out of the water, and begins to shout for all to hurry across. When they don't respond quickly enough, she undoes her braids and uses her lightning to help them along, all the while shouting at them to hurry. They barely make it across before the wall of water, trees and stones thunders down the canyon. For a moment, Briar fights competing images in his head, seeing bodies and worse instead of trees and rocks. He forces himself to sort out the difference while Daja tries to apologize to Tris for yelling at her. Tris simply sends her away, too exhausted to listen, or to accept an apology now. Briar reminds Daja that Tris was likely terrified, and usually responded that way to the first nice voice she heard afterward. Then he offers to intervene and Daja smiles, remembering the truth in what he'd said. She wonders how many other things she's forgotten in their absence. Sandry meanwhile is livid, but remembers her Uncle's advice not to express anger in public as it is a sure way to make enemies, and destroy friendships. The trader mimander is humiliated, having assured them there was no problem just a moment before. Once they find a wide cove to collect themselves, the mimander gives Tris a piece of his mind, telling her she should have announced what she had 'seen' instead of causing a panic. He uses a term of insult on her when she tells him there wasn't time, and Tris responds in kind, offending him on several fronts. Sandry is next to give Tris a piece of her mind, but Tris tells her she has a vile headache and asks to be left alone. The caravan's leader approaches, and turns on Sandry asking her how she could ignore the fact that Tris saved their lives, and is now sweating and pale, suffering from the effort. She offers Tris her wagon and headache powder to ease her discomfort, leaving Sandry feeling like a heel.



Chapters 3 and 4

Chapters 3 and 4 Summary

The four of them could have entered Dancruan quietly, but Chime sees a magpie and gives chase. They wait for her while the Caravan goes ahead without them. Sandry enjoys the brief respite as does Briar, stretched out on the grass. A horn blows and he asks Tris to call Chime back. Tris closes her book and announces Chime is returning, chased by nobles and their falconers. Daja tells Sandry that Tris appears to be seeing things on the wind as well as hearing them these days, but Sandry reminds her that even her teacher Niko, one of the best sight mages worldwide, is unable to do that. Briar encourages them to mount their horses as Chime comes over the rise. The party of riders arrives, and for a moment the four are a cohesive group again. Then Sandry realizes who they are addressing, and dismounts to curtsy deeply to her cousin, the Empress of Namorn. She introduces her foster siblings and Berenene warns her that she is not sufficiently protected against kidnappers who would target a wealthy young maiden of her position. Later, Berenene reviews the information she has on Sandry, Tris, Daja and Briar, looking for weaknesses. One thing is for certain. Any of these gifted mages would be an asset to Namorn, and to her.

Though her friends are aware that Sandry is wealthy, they are all somewhat taken back by the degree of wealth that greets them in Namorn. Tris listens to the conversations on the wind, and feels acutely out of place. They spend the first day apart, recharging their internal batteries. Sometime after midnight, Briar wakes to the sound of horses. He joins Wenoura in the kitchen as Saghad Ambros comes in, and introduces himself. Sandry joins them soon afterward, having woven a magic web around the house with her at its center so that she would be aware of anyone coming or going that did not belong. Though Sandry has made it clear that they are returning to Emelan in the fall, Ambros tells her that the Empress has made it clear that she'd like Sandry and her friends to stay. In fact, she has already put considerable effort into finding Sandry a husband to help bind her to her holdings in Namorn. Sandry laughs.

Chapters 3 and 4 Analysis

Chime manages to draw attention to their arrival in Dancruan, and the Empress herself is part of the hunt that Chime is accused of interrupting. Sandry and the others follow protocols, bowing and curtsying while Empress Berenene announces that they will come to the palace in two days time. The Empress is concerned with Sandry's lack of guard, suggesting that as a young, unmarried woman of some financial wealth, she should be more concerned with her safety. Sandry and the others are unconcerned, but the Empress insists that Dancruan isn't like Emelan. They head back to the castle, and Sandry, Briar, Tris and Daja go to Sandry's holdings. Empress Berenene uses the time before they come to the castle to hone up on the information she'd managed to glean from various sources. The more she learned about the four young mages, the more she



believed they would all be an asset if they served her. She resolves to do all she can to ensure that as many of them stay as possible. She especially favors Briar. He would be a wonderful addition to gardening efforts.

The ride to Sandry's is an eye opener for Briar, Tris and Daja. There are guards who bow as they open the gates and let them into the courtyard. Despite knowing that Sandry is a clehame or noble is in no way preparation for the Landreg home. Almost an army of servants are bowing in matching liveries. The rooms prepared for the mages are suitable for royalty - plush and comfortable in every way. Tris takes a room on the top floor to give her access to the winds from farther away, and spends some time just enjoying solitude. They all retire early, but sounds of horses wakes Briar after midnight, and some investigation reveals that Wenoura is in the kitchen preparing food. Saghad Ambros sits down to eat, and Sandry joins him. When she expresses a lack of interest in court politics because after the summer she will be gone again, Ambros is disappointed. He'd presumed that Sandry would stay on a s well. He assures her that the Empress is quite persuasive, but Sandry is equally sure that she can be made to see reason regardless. Ambros tries to make the idea attractive, but Sandry has commitments and obligations in Emelan, and isn't willing to give them up.



Chapter 5

Chapter 5 Summary

The next day, dressed in finery Sandry made for them, the four mages go to the castle. A herald announces them using their correct titles - Clehame Sandrilene fa Toren; Viynain Briar Moss; Viymeses Daja Kisubo; and lastly Trisana Chandler. They take out and display the medallions they'd kept hidden. Courtiers watch their entrance, and Daja notices most of them are young men, all keeping an eye on the Empress. Bidisa Rizuka enters with a gift from the Yanjing emperor that the Empress wants Sandry to look at. Sandry looks closely, impressed by the silk threads twined to make new colors. She is about to touch it when her instincts shriek a warning. She uses her night light crystal to look more closely, and then notices a second layer containing pincers that attach themselves to magic. She yanks her power free, realizing that whoever wore this garment would be fine until a scratch or cut allowed poison to be delivered to the blood stream where it would surely kill the wearer. The empress asks Sandry what she should do with it and Sandry makes a suggestion that pleases her. She introduces Saghad Jakuben fer Pennun, Sandry's neighbor outside Kilcoin. He is one of two men - the other is Jakuben fer Pennum - that the Empress has chosen to court and marry Sandry so she stays in the kingdom. Daja and Rizuka chat while Tris discovers a library and curls up with a book out of sight, hoping no one will notice her absence. Briar talks briefly with Quenaill before the Empress approaches. She tells him about some of her failures and successes in the garden, and gives Briar a tour. While she doesn't have time to oversee each garden, her greenhouses are a matter of personal pride.

Chapter 5 Analysis

Sandry and the others keep their medallions hidden as a rule, preferring not to announce and explain their status as mages over and over again, but when the herald announces them by their titles, they have little choice but to display their accomplishment. Producing them, they go inside. Once introduced, Sandry's skills are immediately tested when Bidisa Rizuka enters a gift the Yanjing emperor had sent to her cousin who wanted to know what she should do with it, and how to respond to it. Sandry admires the craft that went into it, and seeing the danger as well, she suggests that perhaps the ambassador to Yanjing would appreciate a taste of his homeland. The dangerous cloth could be given to him as a token of affection. The Empress loves the idea. Rizuka notices Daja's brass hand, and invites her to tell the story that goes with it. Daja is happy to do so. Meanwhile, Tris is somewhat overwhelmed by the amount of gossip and garbage going on. She hangs back when all the others head out to the gardens, deciding to see if she can find a library. Briar endures the childish games other mages play as they introduce themselves, delivering stronger than necessary handshakes to see how he would respond. Ignoring it at first, he soon gets fed up and confronts the next one who does it, suggesting he grow up. Like the others, Briar is not interested in the games being played to gauge his strength. Berenene watches this all



unfold, and then takes Briar on a tour of her greenhouses. She is particularly proud of only some of her gardens, most of them contained in the greenhouses. The others, while nice, are more for show and display. She finds them impersonal, but she enjoys those she sets aside for her own personal enjoyment. She shows him Pygmy water lilies and tells him she was trying to grow a red variety, hoping to entice him to stay, but Briar is the first to insist that by the end of the summer, he'd be gone with the others. She tells him that's too bad, and promises not to try to change his mind.



Chapter 6

Chapter 6 Summary

Sandry notices the courtiers in the garden all pay close attention to the Empress and Briar. Pershan fer Roth introduces himself and Sandry introduces him to Daja who confirms their intentions to leave in the autumn. Inside the greenhouse the plants notice Briar right away and the ones closest lean towards him. She takes him further inside where the plants continue to migrate to him. He allows some power to trickle into them all, and continues in the successive greenhouses as well. The Empress takes him to her shakkans - the largest collection he's seen anywhere except the imperial palace in Yanjing. Her accomplishments include a miniature forest of Quoy maples, miniature apple trees, rhododendrons and more. Outside, Daja and the others continue to wait until the Empress and Briar finally emerged. Then they all go inside for refreshments. Ishabal is asked to retrieve Tris, but when she finds her, Tris claims a storm is brewing on the Syth. Ishabal is skeptical, as none of their weather mages predicted it but Tris is insistent so Ishabal agrees to escort her to the outer wall via a series of covered walkways. Tris questions the lack of open air, and Ishabal explains that with extreme winters it isn't practical. Immediately Ishabal sees Tris is right, and expresses concern that the fishing fleet will get to shore safely. Tris takes off her glasses, adjusting her focus so that she can 'see'. The Empress joins them along with Daja, Sandry and Briar having learned Tris predicted a storm. Ishabal turns the air in front of them into a large scrying glass so they can all see, and Tris asks if she plans to do anything, but it is not her area of expertise. Tris unravels a braid and lets a wind loose to help the fishing fleet. She spins out the wind mingling Sandry's magic with her own, and when she is sure the fleet has docked, she calls it back to her, trapping the wind in her braid again, and tying it securely. She sways and Briar helps her sit. Briar can tell Tris doesn't want to explain, so he suggests they go for refreshments.

Chapter 6 Analysis

Sandry watches as the courtiers plainly display their envy or jealousy as the Empress and Briar enter the greenhouses. Pershan fer Roth introduces himself and after some polite banter he realizes that Sandry really believes she can defy the Empress and return to Emelan in the autumn. He tries to explain that Her Imperial Majesty is unbeatable, even suggesting he would marry her himself, but Sandry is adamant about her intentions. In the greenhouse, Briar apologizes to the Empress when she notices that the plants are all actively trying to get closer to him, asking them to stop before they get him in trouble. Misinterpreting, they become defensive, but he chastises them, reminding them who looks after them. The Empress asks him if this is common, and he admits that until they get used to him being there, they behave like excited children. He distracts her from further questions by noticing her palms. Then she shows him her collections of shakkans and the sheer scope and amount of miniatures is amazing. She has even managed to create an entire forest of Quoy maples and he spends time with



them all before he realizes that she has moved on. He finds her again in the back of the greenhouse, and is relieved to see that she doesn't feel snubbed by his lack of attention to her. Instead, she seems pleased with his interest, and offers him a position of considerable power, suggesting that together they could create amazing things. They go in for refreshments, the Empress sending Ishabal to ensure Tris joined them. Tris is on her way down and after explaining her desire to see a storm on the Syth, Ishabal skeptically joins her on the outer wall. There the storm is visible and Ishabal admits her arrogance. She opens up a large scrying window that burns Tris with its unexpected brightness. She adjusts her eyes and watches the ships as they try to reach shore in the storm. Though the distance is considerable, Tris can't watch them drown so despite the fact that now the Empress, Sandry, Briar, and Daja had joined them she opens a braid and begins to direct the wind she wants. An east wind, it balks at first that it is headed south, but Tris tells it to trust her, that she would help when the time was right to help the sailors fill their sails. The wind seemed happy with the explanation and a short time afterward she begins pulling hard, helping it turn. They watch as the sailors manage to get to shore, and then as Tris reels the wind back in until the next time it was needed. Exhausted, she ties it carefully and mentally tells Briar that she doesn't want the attention. Taking the hint, he suggests they all go down for refreshments now.



Chapter 7

Chapter 7 Summary

Refreshments are served on the terrace and Sandy notices that Tris takes a little longer to get there. Ambros manages to persuade Sandy to visit her inherited lands without further delay and she agrees to leave in the morning. She tells the Empress, suggesting even she will agree that Sandy should tend her holdings without delay. The Empress does, adding they should return as soon as possible. In fact, she decides, she'll send some people with Sandy to guard and entertain her, volunteering Jak, Fin, Rizu and Caidlene. In the morning, Shan is also saddled and ready to ride part way with them. She takes the opportunity to introduce Briar and Tris. A man approaches them babbling about game pieces and Shan is about to dispatch him when Daja realizes he is the same man who helped her in Kugisko. She asks them to go ahead without her and when they are out of earshot, Zhegorz babbles on about game pieces and Daja realizes that he's likely starving. They go through the open servant's gate at Landreg House where she insists Zhegorz either speak sensibly or be quiet. She takes him to the bathhouse telling him to stay until she came back for him. Then she leaves in search of clothing and food. Sandy is ready to settle in with a book for a little while but Briar and Tris follow her in. They argue over Sandy's inability to consult them regarding changes that affect them, and manage to reduce her to tears. Daja helps Zhegorz to settle in, and explains that though he hears voices, he is not crazy. In fact, Tris hears them too. Zhegorz is stunned, and relieved when Tris announces he'll be going with them in the morning. Chime flies over and Zhegorz asks if they are all decked in marvels. Briar offers to let Zhegorz sleep in his room, introducing himself. Sandy joins them and Tris announces her intentions to take Zhegorz back to Winding Circle in the fall. Briar has trouble sleeping that night. Zhegorz wakes him from a familiar nightmare and Briar makes them both some sleepy tea. When Zhegorz drops off again, he sits with his shakkan, letting it calm him. The maid finds him there the next morning, surrounded by clippings.

Chapter 7 Analysis

Sandy keeps an eye on Tris, noting that it takes her longer to arrive and that some of Daja's new friends flinched when she neared. Quenail and Ishabal join her for a moment before going to sit with the Empress. Jak is still talking about hunting to Sandy when she returns her attention to him and she brushes him off, admitting she doesn't care for the sport at all. Ambros has convinced her that it is time for her to see to her holdings, and she agrees to leave the following morning. The Empress, upon hearing of their departure, insists on sending four of her courtiers with them and there is no way to get out of taking them without being rude, so Sandy tells them they will leave at dawn. Sandy is pleasantly surprised to see that Shan is also waiting with saddled horse as he is the only one that Sandy is even vaguely interested in spending more time with. As they ride through the gate, Sandy comments on the attentiveness of the guards. Shan



explains that the Empress rotates them frequently to keep them fresh and tuned to any chance of kidnapping as is traditional in Namorn tradition. He is about to explain further when a man comes running out at them, babbling about game pieces. Shan is ready to dispatch him but Daja recognizes the man and stops him. She insists the others go on ahead and that she'll join them shortly. Once they are safely out of hearing, she warns Zhegorz who Sandry is. He already knows he tells her, but the great lady will still use them all as game pieces. Daja takes him through the open servants gate at Landreg House, warning him to either behave and speak sanely, or to be quiet. She puts him in the bathhouse to clean up, instructing him to remain there while she find him some clothing and food. Sandry wants only to be alone for a time. She heads for the book room, thinking she can just unwind, but Tris and Briar follow her in. They both want to know why they weren't consulted about leaving the castle for yet another long ride, angry that they were simply told and expected to obey. She tells them resentfully that if their mental connection were still open, they would have easily been informed but they badger her until she is in tears. Tris resents them too and leaves at the sight of them with Briar on her heels. As he is leaving, Briar adds the parting shot that he will see her at dawn, and calling her 'my fine lady', sarcastically. Sandry is reaching her emotional limits, and is homesick as well. She misses the link they shared as children and resents that she is now being shut out. Tris changes and going back down runs into Ambros fer Landreg. She joins him and informs him of the extra people who came along for the ride, and Daja's extra friend. Wenoura, the cook, makes soup for Zhegorz while Daja tries to understand what brought him to her. Listening to their conversation, Tris gleans that Zhegorz might harbor the same magic she does. When he begins to panic about the fact that they are leaving in the morning, Tris tells him everything will be fine as he is going to join them. He is even more shocked to learn that Tris is like him - hearing and seeing voices as well though she still kept some of her abilities under wraps for fear that her friends would see her in a different light, or begin to treat her differently. Briar offers to let Zhegorz sleep in his room, and later, when Zhegorz wakes him from another nightmare - a fact he has been keeping from the others as well.



Chapter 8

Chapter 8 Summary

The four courtiers sent along by the Empress arrive at dawn on schedule. Rain begins and Tris forms a barrier around them, keeping them dry without losing her place in the book she is reading. They stop at an inn well past midday for a meal, and once on the road again for an hour or so, Briar asks when they will reach Sandry's land. Ambros tells him they've been riding on her estate since the highway. They finally begin to see isolated houses and orchards, and then herds of mules the family is famous for breeding and selling. That amuses Daja, Tris and Briar. They reach a stone bridge Sandry remembers crossing the river over before, but it was damaged by heavy flooding, and the rate of taxes made it impossible to repair. After a time, they approach a good sized village with a bakery, smithy, a mill, an inn and a temple along with housing for nearly five hundred families. Landreg Castle is just beyond and someone begins to ring the temple bell and people came out of everywhere to stand at the roadside as they pass. Sandry and the others ride to the Castle where servants and the Landreg family bustle around them. Zhegorz freezes as they discuss where he will sleep and Briar immediately solves the issue by again insisting he stay with him. Tris notices and drags him away from the others to tell him that he isn't mad. He is gifted and the voices he hears and the visions he sees are all things that Tris sees as well - she just isn't prepared to share that with her siblings yet. Zhegorz slowly relaxes as he absorbs what she is telling him. Everyone feels better after cleaning up, and eating. Later, Sandry is asleep as soon as her head hits the pillow, but then someone wakes her and Sandry almost attacks when she registers the woman in front of her is crying and begging for her help. Sandry can't understand why she hasn't petitioned before, once she hears the woman's story of kidnap and marriage, but only Sandry or her mother could help by law. Sandry sets Gudruny up on a trundle bed meant for a maid in her room, and promises to set things right in the morning.

Chapter 8 Analysis

As they are getting ready to leave the following morning, Ambros asks Sandry in what capacity Zhegorz will be traveling with them. He will have to have a title of some sort, and tired, Sandry tells Ambros that Zhegorz is her secretary. It takes the full day to get to Landreg's Castle where they will stay - longer than usual because of a bridge that was no longer usable. Sandry is appalled to realize that it is largely the sum sent to her each year and the taxes imposed on her because of her continued absence that made it impossible to repair the bridge. She asks him to see to it as soon as is possible, and to pay back any money lenders as well, telling him that for the next three years, she is to be sent nothing, and will document her wishes to that effect. When they reach the gates, people inside everywhere drop what they are doing and line the roads as they pass. Sandry is confused at first, but Ambros reminds her that as Clehame, it is their duty to greet her when she returns, as it is his duty to inform them of any such imminent



return, which of course he had. Sandry is embarrassed by the display, and asks why such nonsense has to be put up with on her own land especially, but she is immediately corrected. The behavior of those in her care is something that must be maintained so that they never forget by whose grace they exist so comfortably. Sandry still can't get her head around the archaic and time wasting custom, knowing that Uncle Vedris would not hear of it in Emelan. Here, she is warned, if she didn't keep to law and order on her own land even, another nobleman would be within his right to do it for her. Horrified, she is quiet. They reach the end of their journey, and meet Ambros's wife and children. Tris has to spend a minute with Zhegorz as the myriad of sights and sounds begin to overwhelm him. She takes him aside and tells him he isn't crazy, but in fact gifted in the same way as she is. He calms, and they go inside where they clean up, eat, and talk for a while. Later, after Sandry has fallen asleep, she is wakened by one of the villagers. Gudruny begs her not to call the servants to have her removed, and tells her the story of her kidnap marriage. She tells Sandry about the abuse that followed, and the two children they have together. Then she begs Sandry as her liege lord to set aside the marriage. Sandry is livid and asks why Gudruny stayed so long, but Gudruny explains that only her liege lord could set aside such a marriage, and Sandry's mother had ridden by her twice over the years ignoring her petitions. Embarrassed by her mother's behavior, Sandry promises Gudruny that they will put things right in the morning. The custom is one that Sandry had never heard of before, but finds barbaric at best.



Chapter 9

Chapter 9 Summary

In the morning Daja is wakened to the sounds of a man shouting. Briar and Tris both come out as well, and Tris insists the man explain himself. Ambros and his wife are wakened as well as Halmar spouts his indignation. Sandry marches out with Gudruny in tow. Sandry tells Halmar that Gudruny petitioned her for freedom from him, and she has granted it. After Sandry has him hauled away, Ambros tells her that she should still have him flogged for his disrespect, but Sandry has other ideas. She immediately hires Gudruny as her maid and assigns her children as pages. She asks that a few soldiers be sent to help her pack. Rizu suggests a morning ride and several of the others agree to go. Inside, Sandry tells Daja the story of Gudruny, and then at Daja's suggestion, she leaves to inform the housekeeper that Gudruny and her children will need space. After she is gone, Daja delivers a thinly veiled warning to Gudruny about the consequences of trying to take advantage of Sandry, or hurt her in any way. Gudruny is terrified, but stands her ground, having nowhere else to go. Daja tells her a little bit about them all before Sandry returns at which point Gudruny promises Sandry she will never regret this day. Though Tris never went along, the others amused themselves for the next two days, traveling around the lands that Sandry reigned over. Tris worked with Zhegorz while Sandry dealt with books and the state of her holdings. Tris happens to see the records and comments that their largest problem seems to be the ever increasing taxes from the Empress with the exception of this year when she knew Sandry was coming. In truth, people on her lands were made to pay for her continued absence. Since only the landholder can appeal imperial courts for tax relief, the Empress simply kept raising the taxes until Sandry came. Pofkim seems to have suffered most and Sandry asks to be taken there the following day. When she witnesses first hand the damage done by previous flooding, she insists that Ambros take the family jewels and sell them to see to repairs at once. Then she dismounts and gets to know some of those who live there.

Chapter 9 Analysis

Gudruny's husband Halmar shows up the following morning and wakes the entire household. Soldiers hold him back as he vents about Ambros harboring his wife. When Sandry comes outside, Briar, Tris and Daja can tell that she is in one of those moods where there will be no crossing her. She asks him to confirm his identity before telling him that as liege lord she is dissolving their marriage effective immediately. Halmar sputters and is indignant to the last, and Sandry, rather than have him flogged for his insubordination, she simply has him taken from her sight. Then she hires Gudruny as her personal maid and appoints her children as pages. Jak catches Sandry in full force and calling her a spitfire in the morning, he muses that anyone who marries her would have his hands full. Sandry sticks out her tongue. Ealaga wryly tells Ambros that he'd warned her things with the clehame at home would be different but now she sees how serious he was. Suggesting the catapults be inspected, she gets laughs from the others.



Sandry still can't believe her mother was so uncaring and that Gudruny could have petitioned her twice without getting a response. For the first time she realizes that no matter whether she stays or returns to Emelan, she will be letting someone down. When Sandry breaks protocol and goes down to tell the housekeeper there would be extra mouths to feed and beds required, Daja gives Gudruny just a small window into who they all were, and warns her that if any harm or woe came to Sandry that was caused by her, she would answer to all of them. Gudruny understands, but having no where else to go, she simply stands there and shakes. They are all busy for the next two days. Sandry gets to know the inner and outer castle; Tris works tirelessly with Zhegorz; and the rest spend their time exploring Sandry's holdings on horseback. Tris finds Sandry pouring over books and looking over her shoulder she notices some anomalies in the Imperial taxes. She shows them to Sandry who can then see that as a result, work in a flood ravaged area had not been accomplished. Determined to make things right, she insists on going the next morning. Pofkim welcomed Sandry, Tris, Ambros, and Tris who immediately assigns her unworn jewelry to pay for the repairs required .



Chapter 10

Chapter 10 Summary

Tris holds Chime and as the villagers admire the little dragon, it begins to purr happily. She can smell the earth, and the river, butter in a churn and soap being made somewhere. She hands Chime off to a young girl and walks over to the river. Closing her eyes, she uses her gift to examine the foundation and can see that the river is prying it all apart. She uses her magic to pull rocks to the surface from all over the area, amused with the issue of doing it without terrifying the villagers. Sandry approaches her, telling her the villagers are frightened, and she works to force the remaining power back into her braids. With help, she struggles to get up, and looking down realizes that she has sunk into the ground up to her waist. The villagers love how the mud just brushes off the clothing Tris wears. They go down to inspect the work, and can see that it will remain for decades. They leave and cresting the ridge Tris can smell something is wrong. Within two miles, twenty men come out from an outcropping, forming a circle around their group and insisting on taking Sandry for a quick marriage ceremony. She pushes to the front of the group and uses her gift to undo every seam in every piece of clothing they have - then their tack, saddles, boots and everything else. The weave in their clothes opens at her request and Sandry sends them naked and scurrying off. Sandry voices her opinion and Ambros cites the law on the subject - lax at best unless murder is committed. Sandry can scarcely believe it when Tris asks her if she feels as though she can beat a mage like Quenail or Ishabal, and can't help but answer that with the bond they used to have, without hesitation. She leaves Tris there, galloping back to the castle. Later Tris tells Briar and Daja, who are not surprised. When Rizu joins them, Daja decides she can be trusted and glosses over the details of their past together. A tray is sent up to Sandry for dinner when she won't come down. Fin comes up to tell her that he'd be happy to personally bring those who tried to kidnap her back for her dispensation. She declines gracefully and manages to convince him to leave. Then Jak arrives and tries to convince her of the benefits of marriage. She sends him on his way, and still restless, decides to write to her Uncle Vedris to confirm her return date home. After that, she knows she will sleep.

Chapter 10 Analysis

Chime amuses the villagers while Tris is drawn to the water. She sends feelers into the banks at the bridge and can see that the river is not long from overcoming the structure. She sits and begins drawing stones to the surface, gently shaking the dirt so that the villagers weren't terrified by her actions. She enjoys the complexity of the challenge - bringing enough rocks up gently and placing them in such a way as to ensure sound construction, using just enough warmth to manipulate the earth, but not to turn it all to jello. When Sandry touches her shoulder, hours have passed and she tiredly winds up the last braid carefully. Sandry helps her out of the dirt she'd sunk into, and brushes it from her clothing. The villagers overcome some of the fear generated by the shaking



ground to examine the clothing that repelled the dirt, wrinkles, and looked indestructible. When they leave, Tris senses problems on the wind some time before they are surrounded by some of the less than noble men in the area. Bidis fer Holm and Saghad fer Haugh, Ambros explains, are two of the least savory of the so-called nobles. Dymytur is undeterred by Ambros and Sandry is losing her patience. Without considering the guards, Sandry pushed to the front of the group and called the stitching from every piece of clothing they wore, tack they used and leather work they had. They talk on the way back, Sandry venting as Ambros explains that these men would not be punished even if they were brought to justice. Sandry refuses to be treated like a victim, and considers herself to be anything but a weakling. Tris questions how she'd do against powerful mages like Quenaill or Ishabal which Sandry would have considered easy with their former mental link, and says so. Humiliated enough, she rides ahead to Landreg Castle. Later, Sandry feels selfish, proud, humiliated, frustrated, disgusted, ashamed and homesick all at the same time. Dinner is sent to her room, but Sandry isn't hungry. Fin and Jak both stop by, each spouting their own agenda designed to link them to Sandry. Knowing she would be awake for a long time unless she did something, she took out her paper and pen and wrote Uncle Vedris to let him know when she intended to return to Emelan.



Chapters 11 and 12

Chapters 11 and 12 Summary

Empress Berenene discusses the attempt to kidnap Sandry with Ishabal Ladyhammer at Sablaliz Palace. She also receives a report regarding the new river walls in Pofkim. She decides it's time to pay the Landreg Castle a visit. Sandry is working on some stitching for Ealaga when Daja's tells her to spruce up and join her company. Daja lets Sandry watch through her eyes and notices as Sandry does that Shan has come as well. Briar is in the cold room when Tris finds him to tell him the Empress has arrived. He hurries out but she takes her time, renewing the cold spells on the room. Zhegorz hides in the closet in Briar's room, afraid of the Empress. As soon as she is able, Sandry slips away. Shan joins her and Sandry suggests they go for a quick ride, but Shan is afraid to be seen with Sandry alone. Sandry asks him why he has no interest in courting her. Laughing, Shan tells her he isn't on the approved list of suitors, but that he'd like for them to be friends. Daja can't help but notice how close Shan is to the Empress and hopes that Sandry isn't headed for heartbreak. Rizu reveals that Berenene and Shan are bed mates for now. The Empress calls Sandry over and announces her intentions to take them all for a hunt the following day, but Sandry declines, telling her that none of them really hunt, so instead she invites them to join her at Dragonstone, and they accept.

Ambros and Ealaga join them and Berenene takes them on a tour. She offers Briar a position as chief gardener. He wanders down the stone stairs to the pools of water below. Daja watches four men who she remembers complained loudest when Briar was invited in the greenhouse. She sends a message down to him, but gets no answer, so she pings his location and follows. She finds them in a circle around Briar and can't help but think they need a lesson or two in manners. Briar tells Daja he can handle it alone, thrumming with anger, and Daja offers five to one odds goading the leader, Olfeon, into accepting the challenge. Briar takes off his boots, and removes the eight knives secreted on his person. Shan shows up and tells the others that if they hurt Berenene's new pet gardener, she will be livid. Daja realizes that Briar has learned a lot while away. When it is over, Daja tells them she expects payment by day's end. Shan leads Sandry and Quen down the stairs - Sandry to fix the clothing and Quen to see to their wounds so that the Empress will be none the wiser. After a week of riding back and forth between Sablaliz and Landreg, Sandry admits that keeping up is killing them. The Empress is returning to Dancruan and asks the others to join her. Sandy cannot gracefully refuse.

Chapters 11 and 12 Analysis

Empress Berenene is more than a little bit angry with fer Holm and fer Haugh for their attack on Sandry. Though Ishabal Ladyhammer believes that having to run through the countryside naked is punishment enough, Berenene is not inclined to be so forgiving.



She can't get over the fact that they would poach from her garden. Sandry and her sibling mages were here for Berenene's amusement. She also gets a report regarding the bridge supports in Pofkim, and then decides it is time to pay Sandry and her siblings a visit. Ishalab is given every confidence by the Empress, but Isha isn't sure. She just doesn't have enough information to make an informed judgement where the young mages' abilities are concerned. Sandry is pleased to see that Shan is with the Empress, and takes extra care with her dress before going down to see them. Rizu and Daja talk about returning to Emelan. Rizu doesn't understand why Daja can't stay in Dancruan with her, while Daja would rather that Rizu join her in Emelan. It doesn't take long before Sandry is feeling smothered by the attention being paid to her. She ducks out to the garden and it isn't long before Shan joins her. He tries to convince her that she'd like a life at court, and would find enough to keep her amused, but Sandry disagrees, and tells him she will be gone after Wort Moon. When she invites him to go for a quick ride, Shan becomes nervous and tells her that the Empress wouldn't approve. In fact, he wouldn't dare. Worried that she'll miss his presence, he excuses himself and returns to her side. When Daja comments that Shan and the Empress seem close, Rizu laughs and informs her that they are much more than close. He is her consort, until she tires of him. He's been her favorite pet for five weeks now. The Empress calls Sandry over and invites her and the others for a hunt the following day and though she left little room for argument, Sandry found a way to communicate that neither she nor the others were interested in hunting. The Empress yields, and instead plans a trip to Dragonstone to see the fortress that she has been remaking into a stone garden. Sandry accepts as do her siblings.

They leave at dawn, and the trip is worth the ride as they marvel at the stone gardens that are the Empress's personal pride and joy. Briar tells her that her talents are wasted, and she tells him to feel free to put his touch on anything that requires it in his mind. He is acutely aware of the privilege she's just bestowed on him. She even asks if he could do better with magic, but Briar tells her that magic doesn't improve everything. He wouldn't change what she had done any more than he would change her. Berenene is surprised, and offers to make him her chief gardener. Caidy watches him watches the Empress walk away, and immediately chastises him for flirting with Berenene. He tries to look sorry and resolves to do something to please her again. He'd much rather bed someone attainable than someone that required constant worship. The Empress's attentions however bring Briar the envy of others. In particular, the Master of the Armory who with his friends corners Briar down by the water pools. He challenges the one with the most bravado to a duel, and Daja offers five to one odds on Briar who wins easily without magic. Sandry and Quen are led down by Shan to heal them and fix their clothing before the Empress notices. The Empress, after a week decides to return to the palace and insists that Sandry and her friends join her. She cannot gracefully refuse. Zhegorz is so terrified that Briar and Tris approach Daja to see if she can craft anything for him to help. Daja creates a pair of living metal ear pieces. Inserting them in his ears, she begins to recite her favorite Trader story and is surprised when he immediately recognizes it. Next she gives him the glasses she fashioned, also from the living metal of her hand, and Tris kisses her cheek and thanks her.



Chapter 13

Chapter 13 Summary

Zhegorz is so thrilled with his new glasses and eyepieces that he pronounces himself cured, but Tris and Briar quickly banish that notion. They reach the Landreg town house and unpack, and the next day Sandry, Tris, Daja, Briar and Gudruny return to the palace where extra maids and footmen are assigned to them. Tris is given a suite with a library, and Ishabal visits to offer her the opportunity to create a library of her own should she stay. Tris knows that to be employed eventually means being asked to wage war. She asks for time to consider, and the deal is sweetened considerably. Once Ishabal leaves, Tris redoubles her resolve to go to Lightbridge school no matter what she is offered and she absolutely refuses to use magic for battle. A welcoming party is thrown and they all attend. Tris and Quen talk about Lightbridge and a teacher they both studied under while Daja sits with Rizu. Sandry is dancing with Fin when Rizu summons the courage to kiss Daja and their open connection transmits a surge of tenderness, and heat. She steadies herself, throwing up a barrier to their connection and asks Fin for some shaved ice. After he leaves, Shan taps her on the shoulder and invites her to join him outside. She does, and barely gets her breath before he leans in and kisses her, taking her right into that state again. She pulls away, and apologizes blaming the music and the heat before hurrying back inside. She finds Jak and suggests they dance. He obliges and she continues to dance until her feet are sore and then retires to her rooms. Gudruny helps her out of her clothes and into a bath. Then, after her hair is brushed, she gets into bed and chastises herself for her behavior with Shan. Meanwhile, Fin does not take the rejection well. Feeling as though Sandry got rid of him on a pretext, he paces and considers his options. He decided that he isn't going to wait for her to come around. Instead, he puts pen to paper and writes to his uncle to ask for his help in kidnapping Sandry.

Chapter 13 Analysis

Sandry is pleased to see that repairs are actively underway as they leave for Dancruan. Tris asks her what she is going to do about her estate and its vulnerability to taxation by the Empress. Tris doesn't think Sandry is doing enough to ensure Ambros isn't caught between her and Berenene, and Sandry loses her temper, telling Tris she has no idea of the responsibility of being noble born and how many generations she would disappoint if their lands were taken or given away. Tris tells her she is glad not to be noble and rides ahead. Zhegorz begins the trip pulling his hat down low and trying to hide himself, and gradually comes out of his shell, sitting up tall and taking an interest in his surroundings. Briar asks him how his new ear buds and glasses were working, and Zhegorz beams. He pronounces himself cured, and is quickly corrected. Tris tells him that he needs to learn how to control it. They get to Landreg townhouse, and spend the first night there before cleaning up and heading to the castle where each of them is given lavish accommodations, and a maid. Sandry balks, but Gudruny takes her aside and explains



the folly of her behavior, saying she will become a standing joke among the servants without such attentions. Sandry relents and they settle in, comparing notes afterward in Sandry's suite. Tris is visited by Ishabal, and offered the proverbial keys to the kingdom which in Tris's case would be the library, as well as other enticements if she would come and work for the Empress. Tris asks for time to consider, but already knows that the only reason the Empress wants her is to make her into a war mage should the need arrive and Tris flatly refuses to kill anyone with her magic. That night, an intimate party is thrown for them, which is lavish and crowded by their standards. Over the course of the night, Daja unravels her feelings for Rizu after Rizu boldly kisses her, and with their connection open, manages to heat not only Daja's passion but Sandry's as well. Dancing with Fin at the time, she is overwhelmed by her intensity, and tells Fin she has to sit. She asks him for shaved ice, but while he is gone, Shan invites her to come outside where it is cooler. She does so and a short time later, Shan kisses her and makes her head spin with unresolved feelings related to Daja's passion. Having closed off their link leaving only a thread, she hurries back in and grabs Jak, taking him out on the dance floor. She dances until she no longer can, and then excuses herself and heads for her suite. Fin is not to be dismissed lightly however, and rages around his suite, fuming at Sandry for snubbing him so severely, and then dancing with Jak instead. He aims to make her pay for her behavior, and pens a letter to his uncle to ask for his help in kidnapping her and forcing marriage on her.



Chapter 14

Chapter 14 Summary

Briar escapes the party, considering it a waste of time, and heads out into the gardens. He asks Berenene if she minds him reshaping some of her trees, and she agrees offering him the position of imperial gardener, and promising him the title of noble, estates of his own and a dukedom. The next day, the Empress takes Sandry and the others out on her private ship to enjoy a quiet afternoon. Chime entertains them and Sandry watches as the Empress talks to Briar and Tris, and Rizu sits with Daja - their intimate joy obvious. Sandry and her siblings have a quiet dinner together and Briar works on reshaping a miniature willow for Berenene. For the next two weeks, the four mages are kept busy with the schedule the Empress creates. Sandry naps before the Lairan ambassador's ball and later, Fin arrives as her escort. He leads her through a back corridor, saying the Empress wants her to enter beside her to greet the ambassador and when she turns to him, she finds her face covered with a wet cloth, sinking immediately into unconsciousness. When she wakes, she is sitting in the dark with her knees drawn up, her head aching. There is little room to move her arms and a faint glimmer of magical signs near her face, and on each side, designed to confine a stitch witch's power. She tries not to panic as childhood fears return, but loses the battle and screams herself hoarse. She hears Fin's voice outside and remembers the special entrance he'd guided her to. He tells her that once she's signed a marriage contract, and of course agrees to the constraints that ensure she won't ever turn on her husband as a mage, she can rejoin her friends. When he leaves, she tries in vain to get out. Then she remembers that she still retains some of her siblings magic as well. She sinks into her core, and finds the thread for Daja, but pulling it gets no answer. Forcing herself to stay calm, she seeks her connection with Tris and is jolted. That leaves only Briar. Grabbing his knot in her thread circle, she pinches it and shrieks his name. Briar is not amused. Then he realizes that she is in a magic box. He begins to follow the thin thread that binds them while Sandry fills him in. He calls on Tris, opening his mind to her, and she forgets her anger telling Briar she'll be right there.

Chapter 14 Analysis

Briar sends a message to Tris when he senses her near, inviting her to join him in the Empress's greenhouse, but she declines already amused. He goes to the shakkan greenhouse, using the note of permission Berenene gave him to get in. He works with her miniatures until finally tired, he stretches out, using his mage kit as a pillow. Berenene is amused when she discovers him there the next morning. The next day, on Berenene's private ship, Tris helps by keeping the sails full, despite the nervous crew. Later they have a quiet dinner together for a change and Rizu joins them. After she and Daja leave, Briar expresses his disappointment that Daja had invited her at all claiming that Rizu is Berenene's first and as such would report all back to her. Sandry chastises him for his attitude, reminding him that he hasn't even rejoined their circle mentally yet,



so his complaints carried little weight. in never mentions the fact that Sandry deserted him at the dance, and Shan shows no sign of having kissed her. Zhegorz is calming considerably, with the use of his special spectacles, and manages to take out one ear bud at a time to listen without panic. On the day of the Lairan ambassador's ball, Fin comes to escort Sandry to the dance, claiming the Empress wanted her to stand by her on the receiving line to explain the circuitous route he takes her on, but before she can question him too much, she finds her face pressed into a damp cloth, and her mind goes black. When she wakes, she is in a dark, confined space, barely able to move arms and legs. Panic wells up, and unable to restrain herself, she screams until she is hoarse. She hears Fin's voice, and his unusual route to the ball comes back to her as he explains that once she is his wife, she can go free. She hurls every insult and curse she can think of at him before he leaves her guarded and returns to the dance. She tries to free herself, but then remembers her magical connection to the others. She finds Daja's thread easily in her mind, but Daja is with Rizu, and the connection is closed. Next she tries Tris but gets jolted, so she finally resorts to Briar, despite their still closed connection. She takes her circle string out of the pouch around her neck and shrieks his name. He is livid at first, and then realizes she is in a box, and settles down to look for her, interrupting Tris to join him.



Chapters 15 and 16

Chapters 15 and 16 Summary

Briar takes out two knives and waits for Tris to arrive. When she does, they descend for some time, talking to Sandry mentally to keep her calm. Tris thrusts open the next door and quickly binds each guard with a ring of lightning around their necks. Another door leads to a cove underneath the cliff and Tris realizes they planned to escape by boat. Briar touches the box, calling the life in the planks and it soon falls apart, then Tris transports them to Berenene's wing of the castle. Ishabal gives the Empress a note from Sandry requesting an immediate audience, telling her that Sandry looks battered. The Empress is stunned when she learns the truth. As Sandry explains, Tris takes out a long braid and Ishabal warns Berenene she is using magic. Tris tells the Empress that the palace has rats - big ones, coming up through tunnels below, and promises to close the holes up so that the Empress can sleep in peace. The Empress listens to Sandry's account and swears she had no prior knowledge of the offense, promising justice will be swift. Sandry tells her she hopes so as she and her siblings will be leaving as soon as possible for Emelan. When they leave her, the Empress instructs Quen to arrest Fin and his accomplices, and the head of the Mages' Society, Fin's uncle, who had also helped. When he leaves, the Empress asks Ishabal to do something about Tris, so that the others will be less cocky. The three mages clean up and head for bed, each aware that the Empress will not let them leave easily. Briar returns the seedlings to the Empress's greenhouse meets her on the way out, handing her back the written keys.

The next morning, Daja learns from Rizu that Fin and his uncle were both arrested for high treason. Sandry tells Daja that she is leaving the palace as soon as she can be packed, and will leave the region within a week. Rizu leaves and an hour later Daja follows, stunned. She finds Rizu sitting at her desk, no signs of packing and knows she will not go. They get back to the Landreg town house where Daja retreats to her room, telling Zhegorz to stay away from her which he interprets as a permanent command. Tris discovers him cowering in his room and goes to deal with Daja. Jak shows up and swears he had no knowledge or hand in her kidnapping, swearing he would never do such a vile thing. By nightfall, everyone is exhausted, and Tris heads upstairs. At the top step she feels a pocket of cold air, almost slimy, just before her foot slips and she cartwheels down the stairs.

Chapters 15 and 16 Analysis

Briar tells Sandry they have to wait for Tris, and she shudders in the box. He pretends not to notice, talking to her about Yanjing to distract her. When Tris arrives, they make short work of entering, and then freeing Sandry from her small prison. Trembling with outrage, Tris binds the guards, and then transports herself, Sandry and Briar to the Empress's wing where they send word to her that they request an immediate audience. Berenene learns on the way that Sandry is battered in appearance, and entering the



room where they wait, she sees that there was no exaggeration. Sandry is hoarse, and tells the Empress what happened. Berenene keeps her face neutral, although inside she is livid that any of her people would dare such a thing within her walls. She assures Sandry that justice will be swift, and Sandry tells her that suits her fine as they will leave as soon as is possible for Emelan. Meanwhile, Tris looses a braid and calmly closes the tunnel that Sandry was taken down to ensure it is never used in that manner again. When they leave her, the Empress asks Quen to see to Fin and his uncle's arrest, along with their accomplices and when he is gone, she instructs Ishabal to do something subtle to take Tris out of the equation, making the others easier to deal with. Briar, unable to sleep, returns the seedlings to the Empress's greenhouse, putting things in order and saying his goodbyes. The Empress is there as he is leaving, and asks if there is anything she can do to persuade him to stay. By way of an answer, he puts the key to the greenhouses in her hand and excuses himself.

Daja learns about the previous nights' events the next morning when she discovers Sandry packing and learns that Fin and his uncle have been arrested for high treason. Sandry explains, leaving little out, and making sure that Daja feels the barbs attached to Sandry's monologue as she describes trying to reach her for help. Feeling guilty, Rizu leaves and Daja spends another hour with Sandry before going to pack her things, hoping that Rizu will be joining them. As soon as she sees Rizu at her desk, Daja knows the truth. Though Rizu claims to love her, her love of her life with the Empress is greater. Stifling the sobs stuck in her chest, she retreats to her room to pack. They go back to Landreg town house where the packing continues. Ambros tries to talk Sandry out of leaving, having hoped she'd stay for good, but Briar tells him there is no point. Sandry would never feel safe there. Jak arrives later, swearing he had nothing to do with her kidnapping, and they believe him. Later, Jak leaves, Tris heads upstairs to retire. At the top step a cold pocket of air reaches her just as her foot leaves the top stair and rather than simply falling, she cartwheels down the stairs.



Chapters 17 and 18

Chapters 17 and 18 Summary

Tris is unconscious and the healers are sent for. They take Tris upstairs while Ambros calls for a mage to discern whether or not a spell was used, explaining Ishabal is quite accomplished at curses made to look like accidents. Ambros suggests that with Tris confined, perhaps the others would be easier to convince to stay, and even with the help of healers it would be weeks before Tris could travel. The healer emerges just after two and tells them that Tris has five broken ribs, a broken collarbone, dislocated shoulder, broken cheekbone, one arm broken in two places, left ankle broken, right leg broken in three places, two cracks in her skull, a broken wrist, dislocated hip, and several broken fingers and toes. The healer says a curse of this kind was constructed so that she would survive and that only one mage exists with that skill level. At Tris's request, they go in to see her and she insists that they leave without her, before they all get stuck, promising to catch up when she can. They reluctantly agree, and Tris barely wakes for the next two days. Shan shows up just as they are ready to leave. Without warning, he kisses her and proposes. Sandry knows better now, and Ambros enters to reinforce her refusal. Tris wakes to find Zhegorz beside her, unwilling to leave with the others, but she convinces him that they will need his special gifts if they are to get home safely. When they leave the next morning, Zhegorz rides in front, although obviously uncomfortable both on horseback and so exposed.

The next morning Ishabal discovers Quen and Shan are both absent with separate excuses. Quen surprises Shan outside his estate, offering his aid in kidnapping Sandry. Shan reveals the ambush he has planned for her and they arrive days in advance settling in to wait. Berenene is livid. She instructs Ishabal to pass word around court that she is headed for the Carakathy Hills to relax. She insists a guard be put on Trisana who gets out of bed for the first time that same day. Ealaga tells her the Empress, Ishabal, and even Quen are gone and Tris knows what they are up to. She tries to contact them, but is too weak. It takes her all day to pack and then an hour before dawn, she lowers her saddlebags down to the ground. By the time she tries to get on her mount, Ambros arrives. He saddles his horse, despite her objections, and as they leave the house gates, he remembers the mages watching the house. While Chime distracts them, Tris releases a gale force wind, knocking them out in the process. Meanwhile, Zhegorz is taking his job as a mage seriously. He tells them about every conversation he hears, and insists he hears plots of betrayal. When they finally reach the Inn, as planned, they are told there is no room, but that the Canyon Inn will undoubtedly accommodate them. They reach the Inn and settle themselves, each seeking a little privacy. Briar goes down to the river but Zhegorz soon finds him. They don't speak Imperial, he insists, but they are talking about weddings. He leaves and Briar returns to the Inn for his shakkan while Daja takes Gudruny's children hiking. After dinner, no one can keep their eyes open. Briar falls into bed, but then he remembers this feeling. He creates hooked thorns to pierce the mist parting the clouds that surround him. He reaches out and touches his shakkan, burning the rest of the clouds



away and realizes that someone powerful is trying to keep him asleep. He checks and finds Sandry missing again, apologizing to Zhegorz in his mind. He takes a vial from his kit called 'wake the dead' and inhales deeply from it to keep from succumbing to the charm written on her mattress. He wakes Daja, explaining the sleep spell used on them and she pulls out her mage kit, ready to go.

Chapters 17 and 18 Analysis

Sandry doesn't want to believe that this is anything more than a bad accident, but Briar reminds her that like himself, they'd all been taught how to fall, and Tris would never have cartwheeled down a flight of stairs without some help. Ambros calls it a 'well crafted curse' and at first Sandry is adamant that they won't leave without her, but Tris has other ideas. She refuses sleeping powders until she's talked to them all, and tells them that she wants them to leave as planned without her. She convinces Sandry last, reminding her that the longer she stays, the more likely it is that the Empress will find a way to make her stay a permanent one. For the next two days, Tris sleeps most of the time with Zhegorz at her bedside. When she wakes to find him there, he refuses to leave her but again she makes perfect sense. She explains that without her, the other three are much more vulnerable, and asks him to begin pulling his weight as a mage. She tells him to go with them, eliciting his promise that he will be their eyes and ears on the road, giving them as much notice of danger as possible. Fearful of going, and fearful of failure, he agrees. The next morning he rides in the front of the line, despite his obvious discomfort both on horseback and with his exposure.

Berenene is irritable. Parents of young women in her realm are questioning their safety at her castle, and mages are questioning the arrest of their leader. Unfair though it is, she blames Sandry, believing it is time the young woman learned her place and her duty. She sends for Shan, deciding that hunting will relax her only to be told that Shan left earlier that morning on the trail of a white stag in the Hobin Forest. As Shan and his group are leaving Roth estates, Quen arrives, and swears he is only there to help Shan in his efforts to kidnap Sandry on the trail home. His plan is to take Sandry as they are leaving Dancruan, when her guard would be down, and then forge alliance with the Mages' Society and in the Nobel Assembly. Then, he figures, Berenene will have to accept them as a couple. Berenene is livid. It feels as though her entire court is doing as they please these days. It would hardly be good for her people to see her losing control of them, so she announces her intention to go hunting in the Carakathy Hills where she keeps a hunting lodge, and leaves with only her most trusted people and Ishabal of course. Tris is also up and around, determined to get moving as soon as possible, especially after she learns that the Empress has gone 'hunting' near the border, and Ishabal, Quen, and Shan are also gone. She tries to reach them through their mental connections but isn't yet strong enough. Desperate to be of some help to them, she manages to pack her saddlebags and use her power to lower them out the window. She navigates the stairs with care, leaving a note for Ambros and his wife, but isn't out of the stable before Ambros shows up. He tries to talk her out of going, but when he sees that won't work, he saddles his own mount to go along, and Tris is in no condition to argue. They get out of the gate, at first forgetting about the spies left to watch her, but Tris



dispatches a whirlwind that soon has them unconscious beside their horses, and they ride out safely. Meanwhile, Sandry and her party have been diverted as per Shan's plan to the Canyon Inn where once again magic has been used to take her in the night. Briar realizes it first, recognizing the sleeping spell as it begins to overcome him. He avoids it by using his 'wake the dead' herbs and then gets Daja up the same way, thinking about the myriad of ways in which he will have to apologize to Zhegorz.



Chapters 19 and 20

Chapters 19 and 20 Summary

Briar and Daja go downstairs. The entire household is asleep. They head to the stables, but encounter something like living jello. Quen brags that his spells are layered and some are even reversed. Then Briar remembers Rosethorn teaching him not to try to break another power but to use his own. Daja follows suit and soon they are free, and Quen is confined to a cage of thorns, vines and living metal. Part of his power linked to Sandry, and without its hold, she wakes. Shan's voice brags about potions and spell patterns Quen gave him to keep Sandry docile. They are just stopping to water the horses when she hears Daja's voice. Soon Sandry has the entire party strung up in cocoons made from their own clothing, rewoven to keep them safe until someone finds them. The Empress has already reached her hunting lodge when she hears how Quen and Shan are found, and insists Ishabal raise the border against them. Isha reminds her that Quen had been unable to break out of the cage created without a mage's assistance, and suggests instead they announce that Sandry and her friends are returning home, making it seem as though they left with tails tucked. Berenene remains insistent. At the Canyon Inn, all three mages apologize to Zhegorz. Ambros and Tris make good time, her strength returning more each day. She is able to talk to the others now who keep telling her that Zhegorz is agitated by a wall of glass. She knows she must be closer to help. Sandry sends Gudruny, Zhegorz and her children ahead to pass through and wait for them at Ratey's Inn. Then she sends the soldiers home, thanking them for their service.

Ishabal is standing on the wall as Zhegorz said. Daja easily dispatch the soldiers. The three mages join hands and for an hour they struggle without success. Tris is still a day away, but joins in when Sandry pulls out their thread circle. Sandry anchors them. Briar grabs his knot and thrusts his magic into the earth, drawing power from every living thing. Daja sinks hers into the veins of metal, laughing with the sheer power of it. Tris becomes part of the wind channeling power as the three mages walk into the barrier, weaving nets inside and forcing them open. The barrier shatters in each direction for a mile. Sandry opens her hand and the thread is gone. In its place, a lump in the center of her palm. She presses it and it sinks painfully below the surface and disappears. The same happens for the others as well. Ishabal, still tied to the wall when it broke, is gray faced on the ground with little magic left. Ishabal asks Sandry if she intends on taking the throne now, but surprised, Sandry replies that all she wants is to go home. She warns Ishabal that if any attempt is made to stop Tris from crossing, they will be waiting, and Ishabal truthfully reveals she has no power left and plans to be as far from Tris as possible when she crosses. They are all starving, and meeting up with Gudruny, Zhegorz and her children, they go into Ratey's to eat. Gudruny hires rooms for them, and unable to even finish their meals, they sleep through noon the next day. Tris arrives after sunset, worn out, and thanks Zhegorz for helping them. He tells her that he liked being useful. Ambros leaves to buy supplies for the homeward trip and Sandry embroiders something still niggling at her. She talks with her siblings through their



connection and discovers the source of her irritation. Ambros is still returning unprotected and at the Empress's mercy. Later that night, she asks them to keep Ambros from leaving in the morning. Sandry finally returns, asking Ambros to join her privately. Later, the advocate comes out insisting that Sandry is mad and Ambros looks overwhelmed. She had turned her holdings in their entirety over to him, making him a Count and sole heir, and giving him all the power he needs to fend off the Empress. Zhegorz decides that he'd rather return with Ambros than go to Winding Circle Temple, and Ambros agrees. After dinner, Ambros announces that he plans to confer with his fellow nobles to abolish the forced marriage of unprotected women. That night in bed Sandry feels a familiar tug and follows it to a summer's afternoon at Winding Circle. Tris, Daja and Briar are relaxing and Sandry is amazed that it all feels so real. Briar admits that he learned this skill while locked up in Gyongxe. They each reveal a small bit of the reasons that they kept her out mentally, and they are finally a circle willingly again and the representation of Winding Circle would always be there for the four of them.

Chapters 19 and 20 Analysis

Briar is glad that it is Daja of the three who is with him. She is level-headed and solid both in body and mind. On the way to the stables, they find themselves encased, but separate in a gel like substance. One man is busy preparing vegetables, and tells them they can live for weeks inside it, kept a yard apart and encased. He claims to have tested it on a criminal awaiting execution. He can't hold them, and leave, he says, but would sure like to know how they breached his sleeping spell. Briar and Daja communicate mentally and they both try to reach Sandry without success. He tells them they should really consider employment with Berenene. He taps into all the plants around him, turning them to vines and they finally break through the living gloves twining themselves around them both. Daja calls on her living metal hand, drawing strength from the kitchen fires, spinning out wires that follow Briars' vines. Quen tries to renew the spells without success and then using plant magic again he weaves a cage of vines thick with thorns. Daja again sends wire along the same paths, reinforcing his cage and calling light to the creation to further drain his power. The seed ball Briar used had been created to withstand both mages and hill shamans. They manage to easily crush Quen's last shield finally leaving him naked of power inside their cage. They call out to Sandry who is also waking. Sandry tells them not to worry. The charms are all tied to her with ribbons, as though someone didn't realize that ribbons are also cloth, and her magic is intact, she adds. She sinks into it and the knots that hold her all undo at once. She gathers herself and stands thrusting out her power and fusing their sleeves together. She uses more thread to make gags, stopping all efforts to create more magic by the mages with them. As their cocoons finish, she seeks appropriate places to display them, without damaging trees of course. She places Shan on a large rock and reweaves saddle blankets to ensure he will remain there. Then she helps herself to their food, and Shan's horse, telling the others she is on her way.



Characters

Lady Sandrilene fa Toren (Sandry)

Sandry has just turned sixteen years of age. She has cornflower bright blue eyes, and a button shaped nose. Her skin is pale and still has a light tint of bronze leftover from the summer. Her hair is light brown as well, and worn neatly braided, pinned up in a coronet gilded with streaks of the sun. Her cheeks still have the plumpness of youth, offset by a round and almost mulish chin. Sandry is a mage. She and her foster brothers and sisters received their certification as mages at the age of thirteen - younger than anyone else ever has. Even very gifted mages have considered themselves fortunate to get their medallions at the age of twenty-one. Considered a 'stitch witch', Sandry is able to make clothing that is made from material from her own weaving. She wears only her own designs, sewn herself. Sandry is able to create healing bandages; clothes that disguise the wearer; and even clothing that turns on the wearer.

Sandry is an ambient mage. After begin caught in an earthquake with her three friends, she used her talents as a stitch witch to link their magic together, increasing their individual powers by magnitudes. She is able to communicate with her friends over great distances when they open their mental links with each other. At the age of fourteen, Sandry began running her paternal great uncle's house and lands.

Her mother, Clehame Amiliane had willed to Sandry a sizable holding which included a yearly stipend that is to be sent to her without fail.

Daja Kisubo

Daja is a large young woman with a wide mouth and glossy brown skin. She has large, perceptive eyes of brown and tames her wiry black hair into long thin braids that she wraps and coils, then pins towards the back of her head. Her neck is a muscled column, solid like the rest of her. Daja is sixteen years of age, having celebrated her birthday on the thirteenth day of the Seed Moon. It is the age at which it is time for temple students to either take their vows, or leave Winding Circle. Daja has one hand that is made of brass and is bonded to her as though it is another skin. Daja is an ambient mage.

A smith, Daja has bonds to fire that are intense, but do not translate to her temperament, as she is slow to anger. From the excess metal of her hand, she has made a living metal leg, gloves that make handling fire possible, and even a living metal tree that lives and blooms copper roses. She has close ties to the Goldsmiths' Guild and alliances with the Kugisko's Mages' Society. Politically, she is every bit as powerful as Sandry.

When she discovers that as of the age of sixteen she is no longer able to stay in Discipline - the place she'd always considered home - she feels as lost as when she'd



been declared an outcast after she'd been the only shipwreck survivor and despite being cast out by the Traders, she still carries a staff, and dresses like a Trader.

Daja becomes nervous when there is talk of boys or sex. She can't understand why she is so adverse to it. She'd tried kissing, and petting, but always felt uncomfortable. All that changes when she meets

Briar Moss

Briar is about five foot nine inches in height and is built with broad shoulders. He has bronze skin and black, glossy hair that he keeps cropped to just an inch in length. Briar has gray-green eyes which turn a darker shade of green when he is flirting. His nose is little more than a thin blade with a firm chin below a sensitive mouth. He has what appears to be flower tattoos on his hands but a closer look would reveal that they are not only under the skin but the nails as well, and they move, grow, send out new leaves and blossom. This phenomenon came about as a result of his attempts to give himself a small plant tattoo using materials from Sandry's sewing basket. The result is a permanent connection to plants that will last his lifetime. Another skill Briar has is his ability to adjust his sight to see the finer magics in use around him. It is a skill that has taken practice and discipline to master.

Briar still has nightmares that are triggered by sights and sounds from his time in Gyongxe. His dreams are filled with warriors, blood, fire and people shrieking. He had once destroyed a noble Chammuran family home in just a few hours without touching the city around it. Briar is an ambient mage. His handsome appearance and approachable demeanor make him almost irresistible to most women, and as such, Droughtwort - used to make a man sterile for days - is one of his favorite plants. Briar is eighteen, to the best of anyone's knowledge, but even he isn't sure.

When Briar gets flustered, frustrated or angry, he often reverts to using a street language he used when he was young, including expressions such as 'Bag' to refer to someone who is rich;

Trisana Chandler

Tris is a short redhead who is on the plump side. She wears her hair up in a collection of braids that are coiled into a silk net that is pinned behind her head. Two thin braids are loose, framing her face. She has a long nose, and storm gray eyes that are considered her best feature. She sometimes wears blue tinted glasses which enable her to cut the flow of pictures that ride each gust of wind. She is lightly freckled, and pale skinned. On her shoulder, a small glass creature sits on its hind legs, one paw clutching her braid. Tris is sharp tempered, but a good friend if you are in need. Tris is an ambient mage. A merchant's daughter, she is a weather witch of considerable skill. She can manipulate wind, call rain to her, find water for arid fields and farms, and help ships by supplying wind when needed. Unconfirmed rumors include that she once destroyed a fleet of



pirates using lightning, has caused a hailstorm indoors, and when her father punished her she had been known to make him sink into the earth.

When Tris had started learning to see visions, she was lucky to see anything for more than a second or two. Now, having studied two years, the clarity and duration has improved, but only slightly, and she averages one or two images each time. While they traveled, fewer images made it easier, but a flood of images came at her as they entered Summersea harbor that was so strong that she vomited over the rail.

Ambros fer Landreg

Sandry's cousin, Ambros is the man who is looking after Sandry's affairs and accounts in Namorn. He regularly sends her packages of itemized accounting. He is the saghad of her estate.

Ealaga fa Landreg

Saghada Landreg is Ambros's wife and the love of his life. Together, they have four children. She is supportive and warm, and does all she can to help her husband.

Duke Vedris IV

Sandry's great uncle, the Duke has an aura of authority and power. His great niece Sandry was a product of his wayward nephew and a wealthy noblewoman who came from Namorn. He is a strongly built man in his mid-fifties, with a fleshy face. Sandry has been running his household and lands since she was thirteen years old. There is much speculation that he intends to name Lady Sandrilene as his successor.

Berenene dor Ocmore

The Empress of Namorn, Berenene is a striking woman. She has russet colored hair which she often wears curled and coiled, and then pinned in a tumble. Her ivory-colored skin sets off her large brown eyes. She has an intriguing mouth with a stubborn, square chin and just the slightest slip of a nose. She has a shapely figure and a commanding presence. Her voice is soft, and warm.

The Empress is a cousin of Sandry's and is famed as an amateur gardener. She took the throne at the age of eighteen and now controls the largest empire east of Yanjing and north of the Pebbled Sea. Now, stalled by the Endless Sea to the west and the Sea of Grass to the east, she will have to find new distractions for her people to keep them occupied and too busy to consider uprising or revolt.



Dedicate Initiate Frostpine

Dedicated Frostpine is of wiry build, his cable like muscles lining his body. His head is a bald crown with his hair wild around it, kept much like his beard. He wears his Fire Dedicate's crimson robes. Frostpine is Daja's teacher

Chime

Chime is a small, mage-made glass dragon who has a voice that chinks similar to that of the ring of pure crystal. It likes to eat things that it thinks will make its flames colorful, and throws them up when they don't. Tris somehow understands Chime, and manages to intuit how he feels. Chime was accidentally created when a new mage - a glass blower - had an accident.

Quenail Shieldsman

One of Empress Berenese's mages, he is taller than most others around and was considered a prodigy when he was given his mage's medallion at the age of twenty one. Quen tries to stop the young mages from leaving Namorn, but despite his best spells and efforts, he is unable to confine them to the area.

Rizuka fa Dalach

Empress Berenene's Mistress of the Wardrobe, and overseer of the liveries for the entirety of the palace staff, Rizu is also a Baroness. She opens Daja's eyes to the fact that she likes women instead of men, falling in love with her in their short time together, but Rizu is unwilling to leave her empirical station in order to follow Daja and love to Emelan.

Ishabal Ladyhammer

Vymese Ishabal Ladyhammer is a sixty year old woman who is the chief of Empress Berenese's court mages. She has silver hair, and her dark eyes are set deep in her face. Her nose is straight, and her mouth has an elegant curve that is unadorned with makeup as is the rest of her face. She has a power that blazes from her in her simply white and black dress.

Jakuben fer Pennun

Saghad Jakuben, or Jak as he is referred to by most, is an attractive young man who lives just outside the town of Kilcoin, and is one of Sandry's nearest neighbors. His is a large, and broad shouldered man with chestnut colored eyes and black hair. He has an



infectious smile, and boyish voice. Jak is the only suitor who does not attempt to kidnap Sandry to force her hand in a marriage contract.

Finlach fer Hurich

Finlach is a red haired young man with a handsome face. Fin is one of two men chosen by the Empress to court Sandry and marry her if possible. He takes matters into his own hands after feeling as though Sandry snubbed him at a castle dance, and kidnaps Sandry. He enlists the help of his Uncle to confine her and restrict the use of her magic, but underestimates her connection to her siblings who come to her rescue.

Pershan fer Roth

Shan is the Master of the Hunt. Shan is the third person to try to kidnap Sandry. He tries to propose to her first, claiming he is sure he can make her happy, and insisting that the fact that he is also still sleeping with the Empress has nothing to do with his feelings for her. When Sandry turns him down, he kidnaps her on the road home. He is also unsuccessful, despite help from one of the most powerful mages in the realm. He is later found, along with his co-conspirators, confined to cocoons made from their own clothing and saddle blankets rewoven to encase them securely.

Zhegorz

Zhegorz met Daja for the first time in Kugisko where he aided her as she saved a group of crazy people from a burning building. He finds her again when Daja goes with Sandry to her holdings in Namorn. Once she's helped him to clean up and gotten him food, he tells her that he managed to get out of the hospital by convincing them that he sane for a whole week. Then he made his way to Namorn. Zhegorz hears voices and sees visions. Over the years, many mages tried to 'cure' him with one spell or another, or potions along with truth spells to reveal secrets. He was first told he was insane on his fifteenth birthday, when he was sent to Yorgiry's House because he was talking to the voices he heard. Now, at the age of fifty two or so, he is lean and wild eyed. His eyes are dark and bright, and his dark hair looks like he cut it himself with a cleaver. Zhegorz is a mage who has been misdiagnosed his entire life. Now, with help from Tris and Daja, he is beginning to realize that he is not crazy and in fact may be useful. When Sandry, Daja and Briar leave, he is tasked by Tris to lead the way for them, and warn them of any dangers he sees or hears on the wind.

Bennet Ladradrun

The man who was setting fires in Kugisko, Bennet was supposed to be a friend of Daja's. When he was arrested and sentenced to die by fire, Daja couldn't let him suffer that way and intervened, accelerating the fire.



Lark

Daja's foster mother.

Gudruny Iarun

Once lovely without doubt, her hair is coarse and brown, a riot tumbling out of pins. Her nose has the look of one that has been broken and her dark eyes are haggard. Deep lines form brackets on both sides of her face framing her nose and wide mouth. Gudruny is a victim of kidnap marriage and she sneaks into Sandry's room and hides until she can catch Sandry alone and beg her to rescind the marriage and annul her ties to the man who abuses her - her husband Halmar. They have two children together. Gudruny becomes Sandry's personal maid and her children Sandry's pages. When Sandry leaves Namorn, Gudruny and her children go with her.



Objects/Places

Duke's Citadel

Located in Summersea, Emelan, this is the name of Duke Vedris IV who is Sandry's great uncle. Sandry lives with him and helps him to keep his books in order.

Winding Circle Temple

The temple in Emelan where novices are taught the magic arts. It is where Sandry, Daja, Briar and Tris earned their medallions at the unheard of age of 13. Temple habits include color coding such as red for fire, yellow for air, green for earth, blue for water and white for novice.

Discipline Cottage

The section of housing in which Daja and her brothers and sister lived while they were educated at the Winding Circle Temple.

Summersea, Emelan

The district in which Sandry, Tris, Briar and Daja attended Winding Circle, and grew up together. Located on the Pebble Sea, it is where they all return after traveling.

Cheeseman Street

The street on which Daja buys a house and forge when she returns to discover she is now too old for Discipline.

University of Lightbridge

Where Tris plans to attend school so that she can get a license to practice plain street magic.

Erynwhit

The river that is the border between Gansar and Emelan.



Master Mimander

The name given to a Trader who spends his or her entire life studying one particular aspect of magic. The specialty they select is chosen when they are young, and they learn all they can about it.

Mollyno Forest

The forest located just outside of Dancruan where Chime chases a Magpie and forces the four to wait for her while the rest of the Third Caravan Saralan continues into Dancruan without them.

Third Caravan Saralan

The Trader Caravan that Tris, Sandry, Briar and Daja travel to Dancruan with from Emelan.

Dancruan

The Capital of the Namorn Empire.

Syth

A vast lake on the edges of Dancruan.

Emelan

The district in which Sandry and her siblings grew up and still consider.

Landreg Castle

Where Sandry and the others stay while on her land.

Kidnap Marriage

A custom in Namorn that dates back to the old Haidheltac which was the seed country from which the entire empire of Namorn had come. It is a way of forcing marriage on an unwilling bride, kidnapping and confining her until she either agrees or dies.



Pofkim

A small town within her holdings, Pofkim is situated in a small hollow on both sides of a river that is churning as it passes in its self created channel. Just in the hills on the other side of the river are the clay pits that support them. The footing is too steep for anything but sheep to graze and flood marks can clearly be seen on walls and on the bridge. Sandry uses her family's heirloom jewelry as a way to pay for their repairs, instructing Ambros to see that it is done.

Sablaliz Palace

The alternate palace the Empress Berenene sometimes stays at which is just twenty miles from Landreg Castle.

Trader Staff

Carried by Traders and by Daja, a trader staff is marked from top to bottom with events from that person's life.

Dragonstone

A fortress left over from the old Haidheltac empire where the Empress grew up as a child, and now is creating a rock garden out of the ruins.

Landreg Townhouse

The house kept in Dancruan for Sandry's family and staff as a place to stay when it is too late to journey back to the castle, or just want to be closer to the city.

Penchi Silk

Made by worms found in wild trees instead of farmed, the threads are not as smooth, but the small imperfections are done in a different pattern for each family so that messages can be sent in the weave right under everyone else's nose without anyone knowing.

Yanjing

Called the Empire of Silk, it is a place where Briar traveled to and saw many of the horrors he now closes his mind off because of.

Carakathy Hills

Located near Lake Glaise and the Olart border, it is where the Empress has a residence which she uses as a hunting lodge.



Themes

Noble Responsibility

"The Will of the Empress" is a story that touches on the differences between two distinct classes of people in a day and age when class and perception were crucial to maintaining order and peace. The Empress of Namorn uses her considerable power to force Sandry to leave the home she knows in Emelan and journey to Namorn to deal with the holdings left to her by her mother. It is the Empress's wish that Sandry remain in Namorn so that her considerable wealth will remain there as well. To encourage her presence, the Empress simply continues to raise the taxes on her land until she is forced to personally attend in order to object - something her uncle Ambros is unable to do on her behalf. When news of her imminent arrival reaches the Empress, she immediately lowers the taxes again, and begins her campaign to keep Sandry in the region. Sandry, also a noble and of considerable wealth, takes in the condition of the people who live in the village surrounding Landreg Castle where her family once lived. She notices that upkeep has not been maintained, damage caused by flooding not repaired, and learns quickly that her mother had left provisions that she be given a yearly sum first - before anything else occurs on their land. She put an immediate stop to that income, instructing her Uncle to use it to make repairs and repay any outstanding debts. She continues her un-noble like behavior when they arrive at Landreg Castle and she objects to the citizens turning out to pay their respects to her. Ambros tries to explain that nobility must be enforced. If it is not, a slippery slope can ensue. Another nobleman can actually enforce the rules on her land if she seems reluctant to do so herself. While it may be a matter of order and stature, Sandry would prefer they respect the person she is, and not the title she holds. The Empress on the other hand is a different kind of noble. She enjoys her status, using it to her advantage at every turn. Her concern for her citizens extends only as far as they are able to keep her in the manner to which she has become accustomed. She refuses to take a husband, convinced that she would only be giving her power away. She uses marriage like a tool, hoping to ensnare Sandry one way or the other with a courtier of her choosing. The responsibility of nobles to their subjects is one that Sandry takes seriously while her cousin the Empress watches as all others take her seriously.

Freedom Of Choice

Sandry hasn't traveled from Emelan before, and as such is somewhat naive about the ways in which some people will treat each other. Tris, Briar and Daja have spent enough time getting an education in that area that they are now unwilling to share mentally like they once had what they had seen and how they responded to it. Sandry, on the other hand, has enjoyed a certain security in her adult life. Living in the Duke's Citadel in Summersea with her Uncle Vedris had provided her with respect by association - something she then earned in her own right - and as a noblewoman in a civilized region, her safety was fairly assured and her personal privacy respected. Such is not the case



when Sandry reaches Namorn. There she goes from respected noblewoman to bait. Her position as a young noble woman of marrying age with tremendous assets puts her high on the list of noblemen and rogues alike. All are aware that by their archaic laws and customs, they simply have to capture her and hold her till she signs a marriage contract in blood. Once that is done, she is considered lawfully wed unless her marriage is annulled by someone with more authority like the Empress. This kind of marriage is considered commonplace in Namorn regardless of position or status. The idea that Sandry would have the right to choose a husband and whether or not she wanted to be married is laughable. This is Sandry's education in lawful behavior where marriage is concerned.

Lessons In Humility

The Empress of Namorn, Berenene, is a woman who is used to getting her own way. She is an unwed woman with considerable wealth and power, and as such is constantly fawned over by her subjects, nobles and mages alike. She has several residences, and uses the people around her like chattel to do with as she pleases. Those who cross her soon discover that she can be vindictive. When Sandry defies her efforts to keep her in Namorn, and thereby her wealth as well, the Empress is livid. Several attempts are made by those under her to force the issue, but each effort is met with increasing resistance. Finally, tired of having to watch her every move, Sandry announces they will return to Emelan early, but that goes against the Empress's wishes. She uses every underhanded trick she can think of to change their minds, but her efforts are thwarted again and again. The Empress, learning that yet another effort failed, decides to go to the border herself. Taking her strongest mage, Ishabal, with her, she reaches the border ahead of Sandry and her party, and instructs Ishabal to erect the magical border to stop them from leaving. Ishabal expresses her reservations for the first time admitting that she may not be able to stop them, but the Empress is persistent. She refuses to believe that these 'children' can defy her. In the end, not only do Sandry and her friends manage to get through the magical border, but in doing so drain Ishabal so completely of power that she will be useless for some time, magically speaking. The Empress finally gets a taste of what it is like not to get her own way, and despite being able to take the throne from her if she desired, Sandry announces her only intention - as it had always been - was to return home.



Style

Point of View

"The Will of the Empress" is told from the first person point of view of mages Sandrilene fa Toren, Briar Moss, Daja Kisubo, and Trisana Chandler. Each of them have occasion to tell the continuing story from their point of view as they watch events unfold in front of them. Each character has an opportunity to reveal intimate things about themselves, and the way that they feel about themselves and each other. Each of the mages has had experiences that tested them both physically and mentally, and forced them to put their power to use. Each has responded to dire circumstances in ways that they are not always proud of. As such, the author gives each of these four characters an opportunity to purge their demons to a degree, sharing their trials in part with their siblings and in part with others. They began as four mages who were bound to such a degree that they could talk to each other mentally, even over distances, and their magic mingled to a degree. For example, Tris used some of Sandry's thread witchery to handle the wind she sent to help the sailors on the Syth. Their experiences separate them mentally for a time, but crisis once again brings them together as they join forces to defeat the magical wall erected to keep them from leaving Namorn.

Setting

"The Will of the Empress" begins its story in the district of Summersea in Emelan. This is where Sandry and her siblings spent their childhoods and return to considering it home. Briar, Daja and Tris return to Summersea after traveling for a time only to be asked to leave again. Ambros fer Landreg sends Sandry the accounting for her holdings in Namorn, and suggests she come personally, so Sandry's Uncle Vedris asks Briar, Tris and Daja to accompany her. They leave the next morning, bound for Namorn. They spend the first few days in the Namornian city of Dancruan - the capital of the Namorn Empire. Sandry and her siblings spend some of their time at the castle, staying at the Landreg House estate in Dancruan, and then travel by horseback to Landreg Castle. When the Empress spends a few days at Sablaliz Palace, she insists that Sandry and her family join them. The Empress even takes them to Dragonstone in Namorn where she herself grew up before becoming Empress. From there, she talks them all into returning to the castle in Dancruan, but when Sandry is kidnapped for marriage right from the inside of the castle. The incident requires that Briar and Tris rescue her, and when they do, Sandry has had enough. All she wants to do is pack and return to Emelan where things are normal.

Language and Meaning

"The Will of the Empress" by Tamora Pierce is a story written to reflect life as it was when kings and queens reigned the land, and wizards cast spells, weaving events to



suit them if they are able. The story is told in modern English, but is interspersed with words and phrases that tie back to the time it portrayed. Sandry and her three adopted siblings are gifted. Sandry is a thread witch. She is able to create garments that don't wrinkle, and that shake off dirt like a dog shedding water. She can just as easily undo any threads in any weave or seam, able to dress or undress anything made with a weave or a stitch. Tris is a weather mage. She wears her hair in braids, each with it's own weather anomaly that she controls simply by undoing the correct braid. Briar is a plant mage, able to encourage growth from anything that contains plant matter. Daja is a metal mage, able to forge living metal such as prosthesis and more. These all lend to a story that is spiced with words and expressions such as Saati meaning a true and heartfelt friend for life; Clehame meaning Countess, Ravvikki - a Namornese word for young woman or Ravvotki for young man, prosy meaning bookish or fussy, and dozens of exasperated expressions including Lakik's teeth or Mila's blessings. Shakkan is the word used to describe a miniature tree, and of course Mages who are wizards by any other name. These all lend to the authenticity of the story, and make for a richer and more interesting read.

Structure

"The Will of the Empress" by Tamora Pierce is a fictional novel of 340 pages in length. It is divided into twenty chapters which range in length from nine to twenty one pages with the average being approximately ten and a half pages. There is no further naming or identification of the chapters themselves. The first chapter introduces Sandrilene fa Toren who is a clehame, or countess; Daja Kisubo; Trisana Chandler; and Briar Moss. Having grown up together, these four formed a bond that was forged from love and necessity. The second chapter reveals Sandry's need to travel to her holdings in Namorn, and Duke Vedris's request that her foster siblings go along to ensure her safety. They of course agree. In the third chapter, Sandry and her siblings meet the Empress after a miniature glass dragon traveling with Tris interrupts their hunt. Chapters four sees them settled in Landreg House and chapters five through seven are an education in Castle etiquette for all four of them. First Briar reveals his inner strength when visiting the royal greenhouses and all the plants within labor to get closer to him in chapter six and in chapter seven Tris realizes a storm is brewing on the Syth and ends up using her powers to save a fleet of fishing boats caught out in the storm. In chapter seven, Sandry tells the Empress they will be leaving for Landreg Castle in the morning. Chapter eight deals with the issue of kidnapping for marriage, and Sandry's right as liege lord to set aside said marriage. In Chapter ten, Tris reveals some of her power when she repairs a bridge by drawing up stones gently from within the earth and using them to reinforce and rebuild the structure and a group of men try to kidnap Sandry for marriage. She responds by undoing all the threads in their garments, saddles, tack, and leatherwork and then sent them on their way. In chapter eleven, the Empress visits Sandry at Landreg Castle. In chapter twelve, Sandry and her siblings return to the castle in Dancruan with the Empress where in a subsequent chapter Fin tries to kidnap Sandry for marriage. Briar and Tris rescue her and she makes the decision to leave for Emeran immediately. The Empress uses her mages to stop them, but her efforts are not strong enough to hold them. Sandry gives the estate and all its holdings to Ambros,

making him the liege lord of Landreg. Zhegorz returns to Landreg Castle with Ambros and Sandry and her siblings return to Emelan.



Quotes

"Unless you are prepared to give your vows to the gods of the Living Circle, you will not be permitted to stay at Discipline." Chp 1, Pg 11

Frostpine to Daja as they reach the Emelan/Anderran border, heading home.

"Would you like it if Sandry walked freely in your mind, among all the things you have been and done?" Chp 2 Pg 25

Tris to Duke Vedris when he is curious about the mental connection Sandry had with her brother and sisters before they left.

"If you'd ever been hunted by a pack of nobles, you wouldn't be so nice about what you call them." Chp 1, Pg 50

Briar to Daja after their first encounter with the Empress Berenene and her hunting entourage.

"I'm a nice safe little green mage, all bestrewn with flowers and weeds and things." Chp 5, Pg 76

Briar to Quenail in response to his protective instincts where the Empress is concerned.

"Her Imperial Majesty set her pretty boys to courting you, and the moment she isn't her to make them hop, hey start sulking about her and ignoring you." Chp 6, Pg 80

Sandry's first introduction to Shan.

"No one would have known if you'd spoken to me the way we used to talk to each other." Chp 7, Pg. 107

Sandry to Briar and Tris when they ambush her for telling them about the upcoming day's trip to Landreg Castle instead of just asking them first.

"If you try to change the rituals for the way in which we live, you undermine all order, not just in your small corner of it." Chp 8, Pg. 127

Ambros to Sandry when she is disturbed by the fact that the people on her land line up to bow and curtsy as she rides by.

"Either I'm so important that the squeaks of a beetle like him aren't worth my attention, or I'm not important, which means I can't hire his former wife as my maid and her children as my pages." Chp 9, Pg. 142

Sandry to Ambros after she frees Gudruny from her tyrannical husband.

"Maybe if you had women you didn't treat as slaves, your clothes would hold up better." Chp 10, Pg 163

Sandry to the first group of kidnappers who try to force her into marriage, and whom she swiftly undresses by unraveling every seam on every garment they have to teach them some manners.



"Is Emelan so much more filled with diversions and interesting people, compared with here?" Chp 11, Pg 180

Rizu to Daja when she questions the fact that she and her siblings seem to have no interest in the goings on of court while there are thousands who would give a right arm for the invitations they are getting.

"Please, my lady, they're already sneering at me and saying I can't be very good, if I haven't taught you what's due to your station." Chp 13, Pg 211

Gudruny to Sandry when Sandry tries to refuse more services shes feels she has no use of.

"Her Imperial Majesty has asked me to take you by a side route to the entrance she uses - she wants you beside her when she greets the ambassador." Chp 14, Pg. 232
Fin to Sandry as he gives her the excuse he crafted to get her to go with him down a seldom used hallway enabling him to kidnap her.

"It's like standing on a moving platform, the way I shape the winds, only you can't see the platform." Chp 15, Pg 242

Tris to Briar and Sandry as she explains how she can get them upstairs without climbing.

"A very few are so good that they can place a curse in a hidden place, where even those who see magic won't see it." Chp 17, Pg 273

Ealaga to Briar and Daja to explain why they insist on calling in a mage to see if a curse was used on the stairs when Tris cartwheeled down.

"All of your neighbors will know you tried to keep them, and failed." Chp 19, Pg. 313

Ishabal to the Empress as she tries to explain why they shouldn't try to contain Sandry and her siblings using the magical barrier.



Topics for Discussion

How is Sandry encouraged to personally attend to the matters of her holdings in Namorn? What pressure is exerted? Who exerts this pressure, and for what reason?

What does Empress Berenene offer Briar to get him to stay with her in Dancruan? What enticements does she offer him? What is tempting about the offer to him? How does he respond to the offer and why?

What does Daja realize while she is visiting the Empress with Sandry and the others? Who opens Daja's eyes? What happens as a result? What does Daja want to have happen? Who breaks Daja's heart and why?

What measures are taken to coerce Sandry into remaining in Dancruan or at least in the Namorn region? What kind of life is offered to her? Who does the Empress try to set Sandry up with and what efforts are made?

Who hides in Sandry's room until well after dark to talk to her? What risk is she taking, and why is she willing to take it? What story does she tell Sandry? What does she ask of Sandry? Does Sandry have the power to do so? Why or why not? What is the outcome?

Who makes the first attempt to circumvent her permission or agreement? Where does this happen? What is the outcome? Who tries the second time? What is the outcome? Is there a third attempt? If so, what happens?

What law or custom makes taking a young woman hostage acceptable behavior in Namorn? Who is ultimately responsible for allowing this custom to stand and why does it?

Who is considered to be the most worrisome of all the young mages in the Empress's opinion? Who does she enlist to help her even the odds somewhat? What happens as a result? What impact does it have?

Whose aid is enlisted when Tris is unable to leave at the same time as the others? What help is required, and why of him specifically? Why is this such a big deal for him and how does he manage?

What happens when the Empress discovers that Quen and Shan are both gone? What is her biggest concern? What does she instruct Ishabal to do and where do they go?

What condition is Quen found in after his encounter with mages Briar and Daja? What condition are Shan and his party found in? Who is responsible in each case?

What does the Empress insist be done when she hears of the fate of her other 'pets'? Why does Ishabal balk? What reasonable alternative does she offer? What is the Empress's decision and for what reason?



How do Sandry, Briar, Tris and Daja defeat the final obstacle to their leaving Namorn? Whose power is used and how? What happens to the circle that represented that power? What happens to Ishabal and why?