

The Wishsong of Shannara Study Guide

The Wishsong of Shannara by Terry Brooks

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Plot Summary

"The Wishsong of Shannara" is the third novel in a series that features members of the Ohmsford family completing quests to save the Four Lands. In this novel, Brin Ohmsford and her brother, Jair, were born with Elven magic they call the wishsong. Brin is able to alter nature with her wishsong, while Jair can only create illusions. Their father has forbidden them from using the magic, but sometimes they still perform magic in secret.

Brin and Jair think the magic is merely a toy, until the day the Druid Allanon arrives. He asks Brin to help him destroy the Ildatch, a book of dark magic that overpowers any who try to use it. Mord Wraiths, also known as dark walkers, guard the Ildatch and they are searching for Allanon. Gnomes and other creatures also protect the dark magic, because they are under its spell.

Brin, Allanon, and family friend Rone Leah make their way toward Graymark castle and the Maelmord, with many side adventures along the way to battle monsters and fight the dark magic. Brin struggles not to use her wishsong, once she realizes it can be used for harm. She worries that she will lose herself and lose her ability to control the magic. More than once Brin is forced to use the wishsong to do harm to her enemies, and she is horrified by the sense of glee she feels afterward. Allanon adds magic to Rone's sword, the Sword of Leah, and Rone becomes obsessed with the magic it contains. When Allanon is dying after being attacked by a Jachyra, Brin promises him that she will destroy the Ildatch. Brin and Rone meet an old man named Cogle, who is familiar with the land around the Maelmord. He reluctantly agrees to help Brin reach her destination, along with his adopted granddaughter, Kimber, and their giant cat, Whisper.

Brin's brother Jair is left behind when Brin and Rone leave on their quest, because he is young and he must explain Brin's absence to their parents. But then Jair encounters a Gnome and Mord Wraiths searching his house, and he realizes he must leave for his own safety. He takes his father's Elfstones and travels toward Rone's homeland, Leah. He hopes to find help for Brin and also plans to send word to his parents, but he is taken prisoner by the same Gnome he had seen previously. The Gnome, named Slanter, eventually becomes Jair's friend and protector. Others join Jair's group, including a Weapons Master, Garet Jax; a Dwarf, Elb Foraker; a Prince of Elves, Edain Elesedil; and a Borderman, Helt. Jair is visited in a vision by the King of the Silver River. The King offers Jair magic to help Brin, in exchange for Jair's Elfstones. Jair reluctantly agrees. The King tells Jair to travel to Heaven's Well, near Graymark castle and the Maelmord. The King gives Jair a pouch of Silver Dust so Jair can remove the poisons from the Silver River. The King also gives Jair three things to assist him in helping Brin: first, a vision crystal, through which Jair can see an image of his sister; second, extra strength to anyone who helps Jair during his quest; and third, the power to use the wishsong one time only to create reality instead of illusion.

Brin finally reaches the Maelmord, tricking her companions so that she can finish her quest alone. The Maelmord is a living, breathing forest, and Brin realizes that she must



join with it rather than fight it. As she uses her wishsong, Brin feels her own self slipping away. When she reaches the Ildatch at last, her former self is all but gone and she is in danger of joining with the book's dark magic forever.

Jair throws the Silver Dust and the vision crystal into Heaven's Well, just in time to see an image of Brin clutching the Ildatch and looking transformed by its evil. He uses his one chance to create reality with his wishsong, traveling to join Brin and remind her of her humanity. Brin destroys the Ildatch, thereby destroying the dark magic, the Mord Wraiths, and the Maelmord.



Chapter I, II

Chapter I, II Summary

"The Wishsong of Shannara" chronicles the parallel journeys of Brin and her younger brother, Jair, both of whom were born with special Elven magic they call the wishsong. Brin is recruited by a Druid named Allanon to destroy the Ildatch, a book of black magic in the Maelmord near Graymark castle. Jair travels to Heaven's Well near Graymark, at the request of the King of the Silver River, to help save Brin from destruction. Both Brin and Jair gather allies, fight battles, endure hardships, and grow up along the way, and they ultimately destroy the Ildatch and its oppressive hold over the Four Lands.

In Chapter I, Autumn approaches in the Four Lands. Brin Ohmsford admires the maple tree in her yard, remembering when, as a child, she had used a wishsong to turn the tree's leaves from summer green to autumn crimson. Her father Wil had been furious, because he does not fully trust Elven magic. The tree took three years to recover. Brin and her brother Jair learned to never use the wishsong in the presence of their parents. Brin is tall and slender, resembling her mother, Eretria.

More than twenty years prior, Wil Ohmsford had used Elfstones on a quest. Afterward, he hid the Elfstones so they could never be used again. Wil didn't know at the time how using Elven magic might affect him. Only later did he realize that his children and generations to come would bear the results, the magic of the wishsong.

Brin is able to wish for something, sing about it, and then make it happen. She can make herself a part of any living thing, entice a wild bird to land on her wrist, soothe an angry dog. She calls this magic the wishsong. Her song is always unplanned and unrehearsed. Brin suspects that her brother Jair knows where the Elfstones are hidden.

Brin's parents prepare for their annual fall pilgrimage to the outlying communities south of Shady Vale. Wil is a Healer and Eretria is a skilled aide. Twice a year they travel to help the sick and injured even though they have no obligation to do so. They help out of a sense of duty. Rone Leah, a family friend who is in love with Brin, has come to look after Brin and Jair. Brin promises her mother, Eretria, that she will look after Jair and that neither of them will use the wishsong while her parents are away.

Rone, Brin, and Jair go hiking after Wil and Eretria depart. Rone mentions rumors of evil black walkers, also known as Mord Wraiths. He is reluctant to camp anywhere but the Vale, close to Brin and Jair's home. Rone is a prince, if in name only, the great-grandson of Menion Leah, and he carries the Sword of Leah. When the three arrive home after their hike, a light is on in their front room. Cautiously they enter and find a man, over seven feet tall, wearing a black cowl. They recognize him as a Druid named Allanon.



In Chapter II, no one had seen Allanon for twenty years or so. He is the last of the Druids. He had led others, including Brin's father, Wil, on famous adventures in the past to save the Four Lands. Allanon seeks Brin for help now in finding the Ildatch, a book of dark magic. The book's evil magic subverts all, creating the black walkers or Mord Wraiths. Gnomes are currently under the influence of the dark magic as well. Their stronghold is Graymark fortress. Allanon had tried to retrieve and destroy the Ildatch, but even his strong magic was not enough to overcome the dark magic of the Maelmord, a swamp forest, where the book is hidden. Allanon believes Brin could enter the Maelmord by using her wishsong. Allanon explains that the black walkers will surely seek and destroy the Ohmsford family, because they possess the Elfstones and because Brin and Jair have the magic of the wishsong, so Brin must help him. Brin trusts Allanon, because her father once went on a quest with him, but she also remembers that her father distrusts the use of magic. Jair wants to accompany Brin and Allanon on their adventure, but Allanon explains he must stay behind to explain and look after his parents. Brin realizes she must go with Allanon. Her father would not approve, but in her position he would have gone. She knows that if she waits to ask for permission, Wil will either want to come along or go in her stead. She tells Allanon she and Rone will go with him in the morning.

Chapter I, II Analysis

The first chapters of the book introduce the two main characters, Brin and Jair Ohmsford, along with several important supporting characters. Brin and Jair are typical young people, struggling to find their own identities under the watchful eyes of their parents. Brin and Jair rebel sometimes, especially Jair, using the wishsong when their parents are not looking.

The Druid Allanon asks Brin for help on a quest, knowing that if she agrees she must defy her parents. Brin struggles with her wish to obey her parents, when in fact her father had joined with Allanon in a similar urgent quest when he was young. The Ohmsford family has a history of such quests. Allanon impresses upon Brin the importance of destroying the Ildatch, to protect not only the Four Lands, but also the Ohmsford family. Brin weighs her options with great maturity. She finally agrees to accompany Allanon, knowing that her father would disapprove and would probably go in her place.



Chapter III, IV

Chapter III, IV Summary

In Chapter III, while Rone retrieves horses for the journey, Jair helps Brin pack. Jair is resentful, because he wants to accompany Allanon, Brin, and Rone. Allanon reminds Jair that he must stay behind to warn and protect his parents. Also, Jair must explain Brin's absence by telling everyone she has gone with Rone to his home in Leah. Jair confesses that he knows where their father hid the Elfstones, and suggests that Brin should take them with her for extra protection. Brin refuses. Jair doesn't understand why Brin is willing to use the wishsong but not the Elfstones, since their father had forbidden both.

After the three travelers depart, Jair goes to his family's inn. He doesn't want to stay home alone, where Wraiths or Gnomes might come looking for Allanon. Jair realizes his father will want to follow Brin when he hears of her quest, and this thought cheers him. Perhaps he will be able to go on the adventure after all, with his father. At the inn Jair hears people talk of the Mord Wraiths, which can kill with just a glance. On the following day Jair practices with his wishsong. He doesn't understand why his parents disapprove, when the magic is as much a part of him as his arms and legs. He sees no danger in it. On his way to dinner at the inn he sees a yellow-faced Gnome. Worried that other Gnomes or worse might be at his house, looking for the Elfstones, Jair decides to go and check. When Jair starts to cut through the forest toward his house, the Gnome appears again. The Gnome recognizes Jair Ohmsford. The Gnome confronts Jair, asking him about Allanon, reaching for him. Jair uses his wishsong for the first time on a human, creating the illusion of snakes entwined on the Gnome's arms. He then knocks the Gnome unconscious with a large limb and locks him in a wood bin. Jair knows he is not safe. Jair knows he must leave, and he makes up a story so he will not be missed at the inn. He then runs to his house. He uses his wishsong to make himself invisible, part of the forest, and makes his way toward the house. He passes by several Gnomes, unseen. Inside the house Jair senses an evil presence, a Mord Wraith. Terrified, he grabs the Elfstones from their hiding place in the stone hearth. The Gnome he had knocked out earlier enters the house and speaks to the Mord Wraith. Jair runs out of the house and into the forest.

In Chapter IV, Jair makes his way to Leah, to see Rone's father who is the king. He plans to ask for patrols to warn his parents, so everyone can gather for safety in Leah until Brin and her companions return. Jair uses skills he had once learned from a tracker to hide his trail, in case someone is following. All night he travels, then sleeps for a few hours by the banks of a river. He wakes up at sunset, concerned that he had slept so long, giving his pursuers, if any, too much time to gain ground. He realizes, with shock, that he might never see his sister again. Jair builds a raft to hold his supplies, then crosses the river. He moves upstream in the water while crossing, to throw trackers off of his trail. Leah is still two days away. Jair is proud of his progress until he sees something moving across the river, from where he had come. He continues cautiously



on his way, finally coming to a hunting lodge he had visited in the past with Rone. He finds a bed in the empty lodge and falls asleep. Later he is awakened by the sound of boots, and he sees the front door hanging open. He hears a familiar voice just before he is knocked unconscious.

Chapter III, IV Analysis

Brin is perhaps naïve, assuming that her younger brother will obey her command to stay behind in Shady Vale, when she is setting the example of defying their parents. Nevertheless, Jair obeys Brin's instructions until he encounters Gnomes and a Mord Wraith in person, in their family home. He then has no choice but to leave, beginning his own journey to fight against the dark magic.

Jair shows great resourcefulness, using the wishsong to become invisible, stealing the Elfstones in the presence of a Mord Wraith, using the wishsong to conjure an illusion of snakes and using his tracking skills to avoid being followed. Things seem almost too easy, in fact, until the Gnome he had tricked returns the favor, knocking Jair unconscious.



Chapter V, VI

Chapter V, VI Summary

In Chapter V, four days into their journey, Allanon has yet to reveal much information to Brin and Rone about their journey. During the day he rides ahead, alone, and at night he stays awake, keeping guard. Allanon neither eats nor sleeps. On the fourth evening, without warning, Allanon leaves Brin and Rone alone. The story goes that Allanon and the Warlock Lord had both learned fairie magic long ago, but the Warlock Lord, unlike Allanon, was corrupted by that magic. Brin's father would argue that point, believing that Allanon is also a victim of the magic and its power. Brin only knows that she senses a deep sadness in Allanon. Rone tells Brin he does not trust Allanon. Why, he wonders, does Allanon always seem to need the help of the Ohmsford family to fight evil? In the past, Brin's father Wil and Shea Ohmsford before him had been called upon by Allanon, as Brin is now being called. Brin isn't sure if she fully trusts Allanon, but she knows that he needs her help. Rone confesses that he not only wants to protect Brin, but also wants to prove himself worthy of carrying his great-grandfather Menion Leah's sword. Brin reveals that she wants to learn more about her power of the wishsong. The two fall asleep without noticing that Allanon has returned.

The following morning, Allanon announces a change of plan. Allanon has been summoned by his father, the Druid known as Bremen, who is no longer living. His shade, or apparition, appears to Allanon over the waters of the Hadeshorn. Sometimes Bremen reveals information about the future. They must go to him before continuing on their journey. Rone objects, questioning why Allanon, so mighty, needs the help of Brin and her wishsong, when everyone knows the wishsong is a mere toy. Allanon offers to show Rone and Brin something of the wishsong's true power. In the forest, Allanon asks Brin to use the wishsong to part some thick brush, to make a path. She doubts her ability. Allanon reminds her that she has used the wishsong to alter plant behavior in the past. Brin sings, and the brush parts. Allanon next asks her to untangle an elm from an oak, entwined in such a way as to stunt the elm's growth. Brin does not think her magic is strong enough, and yet when she sings the elm struggles to pull free. It cannot, and it eventually pulls itself into pieces. Brin's magic is powerful indeed, able to help and also to destroy. Brin is angry. She insists she will never use the wishsong to kill. Rone is angry too, and he wants to abandon Allanon. Brin realizes they must continue on. She wonders if she could kill with the wishsong to save someone's life. She and Rone kiss.

In Chapter VI, when Jair wakes, he is trussed to a tree and gagged. The Gnome is wary of Jair because of his magic, but he also admires Jair. The Gnome had thought only the Mord Wraiths, could scare him, and so he is curious about the magic of the wishsong. The Gnome offers to remove the gag so Jair can eat, if Jair promises not to use his magic. Jair nods. The Gnome, named Slanter, explains that he is a tracker. Slanter no longer fits in with other Gnomes because he has seen so much of the Four Lands. Slanter had been tracking Allanon, along with a group of Gnome Hunters and a walker, ever since Allanon had tried to enter the Maelmord. But then Jair crossed Slanter's path.



Jair suddenly worries that the Gnome may have found the Elfstones hidden in his tunic, but he cannot check because his arms are bound. Slanter explains that the Mord Wraith has continued north after Allanon, but the remaining Gnomes will arrive soon to question Jair about Allanon and the wishsong. A Gnome chieftain, named Spilk, will kill Jair if he does not like the information Jair gives him. Slanter gives his word that he will try to get Jair released rather than killed, after the questioning. Slanter believes strongly in the value of a man's word. Jair worries as he drifts off to sleep, because no one knows where he is or that he is in danger.

The next morning, Slanter unties Jair from the tree but leaves his hands and feet bound. Spilk asks Jair his name, and then asks why Allanon was in his home. When Jair does not answer, Spilk swings his cudgel at Jair's feet, knocking him to the ground. Jair lies that Allanon had come for Wil and the Elfstones, and that Allanon and Wil had gone east, while his mother and sister had gone south. Spilk then asks about Jair's magic. Jair hesitates, and Spilk swings his cudgel once again. Spilk asks Jair to show him the magic. Slanter warns Spilk that that might not be a good idea. Spilk ignores Slanter and swings the cudgel at Jair's head. Full of anger and pain, Jair sings a wishsong to create the illusion of big gray spiders crawling on all of the Gnomes. Jair's anger dies along with his song, and then Spilk attacks Jair. The Gnomes decide to take Jair to see the Mord Wraiths, to show them his magic, but they are afraid of Jair. Slanter is amused by Jair, who had only showed the magic because Spilk requested it. Slanter apologizes to his Valeman friend as they walk along, tied together belt to belt.

Chapter V, VI Analysis

Brin and Rone discuss their feelings about Allanon. They are both frustrated because he keeps so many secrets. Brin senses a deep sadness within Allanon, and she wants to trust him. Rone, on the other hand, does not.

Rone reveals that he has a personal mission to accomplish during Brin's quest. He wants to prove himself worthy to carry his great-grandfather's sword, the Sword of Leah. Brin and Rone are confidantes, sharing a closeness that gives them strength. This is contrasted with the aloofness of Allanon, who generally walks alone.

Brin is terrified when Allanon helps her to see the force and power of the wishsong. She vows that she will never use the magic to do harm. Her hesitation foreshadows a dilemma Brin will face, whether or not to use the wishsong while completing her quest, and her hesitation stands in contrast with Rone's eagerness to try his sword in battle.

Slanter and Jair forge the first bonds of friendship out of mutual respect and sense of honor. It becomes clear how different Slanter is from his fellow Gnomes, when Spilk and his men question Jair about his magic. Spilk is brutal, whereas Slanter treats Jair as a human being. Slanter is amused, in fact, when Jair uses his wishsong to terrify the other Gnomes with the illusion of hairy spiders. Even though Slanter escorts with Jair to meet the Mord Wraiths, as Spilk commands him to do, it is evident that his loyalty lies with the boy rather than with the Gnomes.



Chapter VII, VIII

Chapter VII, VIII Summary

In Chapter VII, for two days Jair accompanies the Gnomes in a forced march, with ropes digging into his skin and his feet blistered. He hides his discomfort, waiting for the moment when he might escape. Before dinner on the second night, Slanter secretly applies healing salve to Jair's blistered feet. Then Slanter says a dark walker is nearby, waiting to question Jair on the following day. Jair wonders if Slanter might help him escape. Jair asks Slanter why he is with the other Gnomes, since he is nothing like them. Slanter explains that the Mord Wraiths have control of the Eastland, spreading to other lands, and it is no time for a Gnome to be anything but a Gnome. Slanter loosens the ropes around Jair's arms for a few moments, after Jair promises not to escape, and Jair is able to verify that he still has the Elfstones. Slanter binds him again, and Jair again asks Slanter to let him escape.

While marching to meet the Mord Wraith, the group encounters a man dressed in black. Spilk tells the man to mind his own business. Slanter seems to recognize the man. The man asks why the Gnomes have a Valeman bound and gagged, then says maybe it doesn't concern him, after all. He starts to walk away. But then he stops. Slanter pulls Jair away from the other Gnomes and tells Jair to stay behind him. When the man asks the Gnomes to release Jair, Spilk attacks. The man counters the attack, downing Spilk and several other Gnomes. One Gnome lunges for Jair, but Slanter blocks the Gnome's way and the man in black makes the kill. The only remaining Gnome besides Slanter runs away. Slanter explains that the other Gnomes were not his friends and he releases Jair. Jair is lucky, says Slanter, to be rescued by Gareth Jax.

In Chapter VIII, Jair knows many tales of Gareth Jax, the Weapons Master, who has never lost a battle. He is a legend, an assassin, a mercenary with no loyalties. Gareth Jax notices that Spilk is still alive. They tie him to a tree for wolves to find. Slanter then tells Gareth Jax all about recent events, including Jair's lie about his father traveling east with Allanon. Gareth Jax decides Jair must travel east with him, to be safe, and the Gnome can go wherever he wants. Jair protests, not wanting to go east, but he does not reveal the fact that his sister is actually Allanon's travel companion. He is overruled. Slanter starts to say goodbye, and Jair thanks him for his help along the way. Slanter doesn't want to be praised, doesn't want to admit that he feels a bond with Jair. Then they remember that a Mord Wraith is still waiting to question Jair about his magic. Jair begs Slanter to come with them at least part of the way east, to get past the dark walker. Slanter reluctantly agrees to take them to the border of Culhaven, but no further, because he does not want to deal with Dwarves. Jair wonders about his companions, one he doesn't trust and one he fears, but the road makes for strange companions. That same evening, the Mord Wraith finds Spilk tied to a tree. Spilk explains what happened and begs for his freedom. Instead, the dark walker places a black-gloved hand on the Gnome's head, followed by an explosion of red fire.



Chapter VII, VIII Analysis

These chapters further cement the odd relationship between Jair and Slanter. Slanter helps Jair when the other Gnomes are not looking, loosening his bindings and applying salve to Jair's blistered feet. Slanter is taking a risk, for clearly the other Gnomes would punish him for such disloyalty. Slanter only pretends to be with the other Gnomes out of self-preservation, he explains, because the Mord Wraiths have control over the land where Gnomes live. Slanter has proven that he is loyal and compassionate underneath his gruff exterior, and so he is an excellent travel companion for Jair.

These chapters also introduce Gareth Jax, a larger-than-life hero known as a Weapons Master. He rescues Jair easily, with a little help from Slanter, and then he decides to take Jair with him for the boy's own protection. The need for such protection is illustrated by the scene between Spilk and the Mord Wraith, in which Spilk begs for his life and the Mord Wraith shows no mercy.

For the first of what will be many times, Slanter tries to say goodbye to Jair but ends up staying by his side. Slanter is unwilling to accept praise, quick to complain, and reluctant to share his true feelings.



Chapter IX, X

Chapter IX, X Summary

In Chapter IX, at the waters of the Hadeshorn, Allanon summons the shade of his father while Brin and Rone wait nearby. The two are suspicious of the Druid because he keeps so many secrets. The robed figure of Bremen appears over the water, and Allanon feels his cold embrace like death. When Bremen returns to the water, Allanon drops to his knees and Brin runs to him. In his eyes she sees anguish, fear, and disbelief, soon replaced by anger because Brin was supposed to wait for Allanon to return. Bremen had told Allanon that the end is coming, and that Brin will be both savior and destroyer. Bremen also said that the former home of the Druids, Paranor, has been taken by Mord Wraiths who seek the secrets it contains. Allanon, Brin, and Rone must destroy Paranor before continuing on their journey to the Maelmord.

Allanon has finally had enough of Rone's continued doubt. If Rone wants to be Brin's protector, Allanon declares, then he shall have the power to do so. He tells Rone to dip the Sword of Leah in the Hadeshorn. Rone complies, although he is frightened, and when he removes the sword the polished iron blade is black. Water ripples are visible beneath the surface of the sword. Allanon then points blue fire at the blade, giving Rone power to block the magic of the Mord Wraiths. Rone must now protect Brin until the end of their quest. Brin is angry about the burden Allanon has placed on Rone. Allanon disappears in an explosion of red fire.

Meanwhile, further south, Jair is foggy, perhaps walking in his sleep as he hikes through a swamp with Slanter and Gareth Jax. A Log Dweller emerges from the swamp, attacking Jair. Slanter shoves Jair out of the way and Gareth Jax kills the creature.

Allanon protects himself from the red fire by shielding himself within an aura. The attacker is a Mord Wraith. Without thinking, Rone uses his sword to stop the flow of flame from the Mord Wraith to Allanon, and the flame falls from the Druid like shards of glass. Allanon throws blue flame at the Mord Wraith, turning it to ash. Rone is astounded by his sword's newfound power. Allanon acknowledges that Rone is indeed Brin's protector and, this one time, Allanon's as well. But they must continue on to Paranor.

In Chapter X, a day later, Jair and his companions reach the Silver River and they follow it to the east. Slanter goes to gather wood for a fire, lashing out when Jair offers to help. Jair wishes the Gnome would talk more, as he had done before Gareth Jax joined them. Jair asks Gareth Jax why he had bothered to rescue Jair from the Gnomes. Gareth Jax admits that Jair interests him, because clearly the Gnomes had been afraid of him and his magic. Slanter interests him too, because he is not like most Gnomes and Jair cares about him. Jair finally falls asleep, wondering when Slanter will return with the firewood.



In the woods, Slanter plans to leave Jair and go his own way. He is fond of Jair and intrigued by his magic, but Slanter does not want to travel into land occupied by Dwarves. Gnomes are at war with Dwarves, at present, even though Slanter is not involved in the battle.

Jair dreams of himself and Brin on horseback, being endlessly chased by a variety of creatures. Eventually Brin is consumed by a dark monster and Jair awakens. Slanter has not returned, and yet the fire has been built up. A thin, frail old man in white robes appears and smiles. Jair recognizes the King of the Silver River, a friend of Jair's father and great-grandfather. The King shows Jair mental images of Mord Wraiths poisoning the Silver River, the poison traveling throughout the Four Lands. Jair asks if Allanon and Brin will stop the poison once they destroy the Mord Wraiths. The King replies that Brin and Allanon will fail: "They are leaves in the wind. They will both be lost" (page 116). The King adds that Jair has the power to save her, but he must give up the Elfstones. Jair refuses, but the King explains that they do not belong to Jair and their magic only works for one to whom they are freely given. In exchange for the Elfstones, the King gives Jair a pouch of Silver Dust, to restore the Silver River at its source, Heaven's Well. Then Jair will find a way to give Brin back to herself. The King also gives Jair items for the mind, the body, and the heart. For the mind, a vision crystal. By using the wishsong, Jair can see his sister in it. For the body, strength to all who travel with Jair. For the heart, one time only Jair can use the wishsong to create reality rather than illusion. Jair is to use this special wishsong at Heaven's Well, after sprinkling the Silver Dust into the river and throwing the vision crystal after. Only then will he find his answer, regarding how to help his sister Brin.

Chapter IX, X Analysis

The shade of Bremen, Allanon's father, says that Brin is destined to be both savior and destroyer, clearly foreshadowing events which will occur in the climax of the novel. Brin and the reader are left to wonder about the meaning of Bremen's words.

The act of summoning a shade, conversing with the dead, adds a supernatural tone to the novel that is not tinged with danger. Bremen's shade is good, not evil. Not all supernatural or magical creatures are evil, just as not all magic is dark.

Rone has an opportunity to fulfill his dream of proving himself worthy to carry the Sword of Leah. With Allanon's help, the sword gains the power to combat dark magic. Rone tests his courage and the sword's power when Allanon is attacked by a Mord Wraith. Rone is pleasantly shocked by the sword's power, but Brin is angry. She worries for Rone, as for herself, that the self can be overshadowed by magic.

Garet Jax reveals that Jair interests him because the Gnomes were afraid of his magic. Garet Jax and Slanter have no such fear. Jair, revealing a certain lack of maturity, merely wonders why Slanter is so quiet when other people are around.



Pivotal events take place while Jair sleeps that night, when he is visited by the King of the Silver River. Per the King's instructions, Jair must reach Heaven's Well before Brin reaches the Maelmord, because without Jair's help Brin will be lost like leaves in the wind. The twin quests are now set. The journeys of the two siblings will continue along parallel courses until the climax of the novel, when they converge.



Chapter XI, XII, XIII

Chapter XI, XII, XIII Summary

In Chapter XI, when Jair wakes in the morning, he imagines the visit from the King of the Silver River was only a dream. But then he finds the chain around his neck, from which hangs the vision crystal. Gareth Jax tells him that Slanter is gone. Gnomes, says Gareth Jax, are not very reliable. Jair is disappointed that Slanter left without even saying goodbye, but he has more immediate concerns as well. While Jair and Gareth Jax have breakfast, Jair wonders how to explain about his need to go to Heaven's Well with Gareth Jax as his protector. Apparently the King did not appear in a dream to Gareth Jax. Suddenly Slanter appears. He claims that he had been scouting all night, but Jair and Gareth Jax know he is lying, and that he simply decided not to abandon Jair after all. Then Jair realizes that the King might have brought both Slanter and Gareth Jax to him, to help him with his mission. Jair decides to tell the two everything, the whole story, including not only the visit from the King but also the fact that his sister Brin is the one heading to the Maelmord with Allanon. Gareth Jax questions what would happen if he chooses not to be Jair's protector, and Jair admits he does not know. Slanter is angry, not wanting to believe Jair's story. Slanter swears he will not go east even if Jair has a thousand crystals or a mountain of Silver Dust. Gareth Jax examines the Silver Dust, but it looks like ordinary sand. He suggests Jair try to use the crystal. Jair doesn't know how, but he tries anyway. Brin's face appears in the crystal, framed by mountains. Slanter, still stubborn, says that Jair can go to Heaven's Well alone. With so much magic, he reasons, Jair shouldn't need help. Gareth Jax decides they should all continue to Culhaven as planned, tell the Dwarves Jair's story, and see what they say about it. Jair and Gareth Jax start off on their trek, leaving Slanter behind. Finally Slanter follows, muttering to himself.

In Chapter XII, for days Brin, Rone, and Allanon ride their horses toward Paranor. Brin has a premonition of impending disaster. She has a sudden feeling of Jair's touch, even though that is impossible. He is safe at Shady Vale, unless something has found him while searching for Allanon. Brin worries that Allanon would keep it secret from her, even if he knew that Jair was in danger. Allanon is focused solely on their mission. Brin and Rone love each other, but she worries he will be consumed by the power Allanon granted him through the Sword of Leah. Brin believes all of them will be destroyed.

Allanon and the others dismount and leave their horses behind. On foot they make their way to the cliffs of Paranor, which lead to the Keep of the Druids' castle in days gone by. Inside they hear the grinding of machinery. Allanon explains that the castle must be destroyed, to prevent the Mord Wraiths from finding the secrets stored within. They must enter the Keep through passages that the Gnomes and Mord Wraiths have not found, use the secret powers of the Druids to cause destruction of the Keep, then escape quickly before the Keep collapses. Above all, Brin must be kept safe so she can go to the Maelmord and retrieve the Ildatch.



In Chapter XIII, at the cliffs of Paranor, Allanon opens a secret door. Allanon, Brin, and Rone enter a chamber, then begin climbing a stairway leading deep inside the mountain, leading to the Keep. They pass through the furnace room with rumbling machinery, then continue up more stairs. Allanon opens secret locks. Brin still feels a premonition of doom. They come to a dead end with a stone wall, the secret entrance to the Keep, in which Allanon opens another secret door. In a study in the Keep, Allanon fills with rage at the disarray. Books and papers are torn, the floor has been pulled up, and many things are broken. Allanon opens a hidden vault and studies a huge volume of Druid history. Meanwhile, voices come and go on the other side of a door, then someone tries to open it. Rone pulls the door open suddenly and pulls a Gnome inside. He knocks the Gnome unconscious. Allanon returns his book to the secret vault and the three continue on their mission within the Keep. The Gnome Rone had knocked out wakes up and cries out in alarm. Footsteps can be heard then, all around them. Steam and fire come from Allanon as he uses his magic to churn the waters far below. He tells Brin and Rone to run for their lives, because the Keep is about to fall. Gnomes and Mord Wraiths appear, only to be destroyed by Allanon. Rone uses his sword to defend himself and Brin. Once the three pass the furnace room, they hear a wailing sound. "It begins!" says Allanon (page 143). They run on until they are once again on the other side of the secret door at the base of the cliff. Dawn breaks as the three ride away on their horses. Looking behind them, they see only green mist where the Druids' Keep once stood. Brin is confused because, despite her premonition, she and her friends are alive. Brin, Rone, and Allanon resume their journey to the Maelmord.

Chapter XI, XII, XIII Analysis

Jair thinks the visit from the King of the Silver River was a dream, until he finds the Silver Dust and vision crystal the King had given him. He does not question the magic or the journey he must make in order to save his sister. He sees his quest as an exciting adventure, without fully considering the danger it will entail.

Slanter threatens to leave Jair a couple more times but then relents, showing the conflict he feels between remaining a loner and wanting to help the boy.

Brin feels the presence of Jair when he tries out the vision crystal, but she does not understand why. She worries that Allanon will not tell her, even if Jair is in danger, because he does not want to jeopardize their mission to destroy the Ildatch. Brin worries that all of them will be sacrificed before their quest is done.

Allanon, Brin, and Rone make a detour to destroy the Druid fortress known as Paranor, to lock away the Druids' knowledge forever. Dramatic as this destruction may be, it serves as a warning. Destroying the Ildatch will be much more dramatic, much more dangerous, much more difficult.



Chapter XIV, XV

Chapter XIV, XV Summary

In Chapter XIV, Jair, Gareth Jax, and Slanter continue toward Culhaven. Nearby, the water of the Silver River is murky, with dead fish, rodents, and birds. Jair wishes his companions would talk more, but they are mostly silent. They pass by groups of Dwarves, none of whom offer a greeting. In the center of town they are stopped by a Dwarf patrol, then a Dwarf named Elb Foraker comes to greet Gareth Jax. He had asked Gareth Jax to come to Culhaven. Foraker is surprised to learn that Allanon is still alive. Like the Ohmsfords, he had not seen Allanon for twenty years. Gareth Jax wants Jair to speak before the Dwarf Council of Elders that evening, to tell his story. Reluctantly, Elb Foraker agrees to make the request. Jair and Slanter have a conversation, similar to others, about why Slanter should or should not continue to help Jair.

Jair stands before the Dwarf Council of Elders, along with an audience of other Dwarves, Elves, and Bordermen, but he hesitates to speak. Browerk the Elder assures him that everyone in attendance is committed to the fight against the Mord Wraiths. Jair then tells his story in detail. Some doubt what he has to say, because no one has seen Allanon for twenty years, and no one has ever spoken with the King of the Silver River. To prove himself, Jair uses the wishsong to conjure a shade of Allanon. Browerk acknowledges that the image is indeed the Druid. Some now believe, but others worry that it is a trick of the Mord Wraiths. All agree that whoever assists Jair must volunteer. Gareth Jax steps forward, then Elb Foraker, then a giant Borderman named Helt, and finally a Prince of the Elves named Edain Elessedil. Some try to convince Edain to change his mind, but he wants to repay a service done to his family by Jair's father. To Slanter's outrage, Gareth Jax nominates him to join the party as well.

In Chapter XV, on the following morning, Browerk is there to see the party off. He promises Jair that he will send a party to warn Jair's parents of the danger they face. The little company includes Slanter, Gareth Jax, Elb Foraker, Edain Elessedil, and Borderman Helt, all of whom have pledged to protect Jair Ohmsford. Slanter is still unhappy, blaming Jair. Helt explains to Jair that Slanter is really angry with himself and doesn't want to admit that he cares about Jair. The next day, during their trek east, Jair and Edain Elessedil develop a bond. Edain tells Jair that Helt used to be a tracker and he has superior night vision.

Later Gareth Jax explains to Jair that he is always looking for a challenge worthy of a Weapons Master. He had a vision or a dream the same night that the King of the Silver River visited Jair. In his vision he was told he must battle a thing of fire, a battle to the death, the greatest battle of his life. Gareth Jax explains that he will protect Jair until the conclusion of his quest, but when the time comes to battle the creature of fire, he must accept that challenge. Jair uses the vision crystal once again, to see how Brin is doing. Behind her are the Dragon's Teeth Mountains and the Anar, and she is with Rone and Allanon.



Chapter XIV, XV Analysis

Jair's little company is assembled in this section of the book, with each man offering his own talents and his own code of honor. Each man will, of course, have an important role to play in helping Jair reach Heaven's Well in time to save Brin. Helt, for example, has superior night vision. The group shows unity, despite the fact that they come from different backgrounds. They consist of one half-Elf-half-man, one Gnome, one Weapons Master, one Borderman, one Elf, and one Dwarf. If everyone in the Four Lands could have worked together in such a fashion, then perhaps dark magic would not have taken hold.

Echoing Rone's desire to prove himself worthy of the Sword of Leah, Gareth Jax seeks to find the ultimate adversary. The King of the Silver River has promised Gareth Jax such a battle, in fact, but until that time Gareth Jax will be Jair's protector. A battle near the climax of the book is thus foreshadowed.



Chapter XVI, XVII, XVIII

Chapter XVI, XVII, XVIII Summary

In Chapter XVI, four days away from Culhaven, the little company arrives at a gorge known as the Wedge. Foraker slips away to explore, then returns to say the bridge across is guarded and secured by Gnomes. The group is shocked, because they had thought this part of the country was still safe to cross, protected by Dwarves. Avoiding the bridge, however, would add at least three days to their journey. They scout the area to formulate a plan. On the near side of the bridge are many Gnomes and a campsite. At the far end, a dozen more Gnomes stand guard. Foraker explains that Dwarves build bridges with pins that can be removed to destroy them if necessary. They agree that Gareth Jax will sneak across under the bridge, then kill the guards on the other side. Others will cross in groups, fighting the Gnomes with arrows. Finally the bridge will be dropped into the gorge. After nightfall, they set off. Then Jair realizes he has a better plan. In the dark and rain, he could use the wishsong to make all six of them appear to be a group of Gnomes crossing the bridge. His plan works. At the far side of the bridge they attack and kill the Gnomes and then, as others start to cross the bridge, Foraker and Gareth Jax pull out the bridge pins, dropping Gnomes into the gorge.

In Chapter XVII, the little company travels on until Foraker hears a sound with his keen Elf hearing. A battle is being fought at Capaal. From a vantage point atop a cliff, the group sees a Gnome army attacking Capaal, with Dwarves defending. Foraker explains that the Dwarves could escape through underground tunnels, but they will stay to protect the locks and dams. Without the Dwarves, the Gnomes would spread the foul waters of the Silver River throughout the land. The Dwarf, Elb Foraker, explains how the group might navigate around the battle, then says his goodbyes. Gareth Jax is outraged, saying Foraker cannot break his pact to help Jair. Foraker explains that he must warn his fellow Dwarves that the Wedge bridge is gone. Edain Elessedil offers to shoot an arrow with a warning message into the Dwarves' fortress, if he can get close enough. After nightfall, they carry out the plan, but with Helt shooting the arrow due to his superior strength and night vision. Jair is dismayed by the sheer number of Gnomes attacking Capaal. The group travels on, anxious to be done with the exposed cliff and descend into the forest below. But then, up ahead, they discover another Gnome army. Their way is blocked, and behind them they hear someone approaching.

In Chapter XVIII, the little company press themselves into the cliff rocks, hoping the Gnome party will pass without seeing them. Almost all of them do pass, but a straggler sees something. Gareth Jax and the others attack, killing all but one Gnome who runs away. They hear shouts from below and decide to turn back the way from which they came. More Gnomes attack and Helt falls over a ledge. The rest of Jair's group is nowhere to be seen. Then Gareth Jax appears, and the two scramble along ledges in the cliff until they reach a dead end. Gareth Jax says they must jump into the waters of the Cillidellan River below.



Elb Foraker and Edain Elessedil scramble up the cliff together, fighting Gnomes, until the Prince, Edain Elessedil, is hit in the shoulder with a dart. Foraker carries Elessedil a short distance to a secret tunnel. Foraker tends to his friend's injury, then the two make their way down the hidden staircase toward Capaal.

After Helt falls, he tumbles down the cliff and lands in a tangle of brush. Then he realizes Slanter has fallen with him. There seems to be no way out, other than descending into the Gnome encampment. Slanter realizes they can do just that, since Slanter is a Gnome and the giant Helt could easily be disguised as a dark walker. The two walk boldly, with some Gnomes eyeing them suspiciously, but they make their way to the gates of Capaal. At first the Dwarves won't let them in, until they see Helt. The Dwarves pull them in and point weapons at them. Slanter says Helt should try to explain their story.

Jair hits the water and sees images of his past before he blacks out. Garet Jax pulls him from the water to safety, then Jair falls asleep.

Chapter XVI, XVII, XVIII Analysis

At the Wedge. Jair and his companions show extraordinary teamwork. With a little help from Jair's wishsong, they use their cunning and their strength to overpower a much larger group of Gnomes.

The group witnesses the enormity of the battle between Gnomes and Dwarves, in which the Gnomes are under the influence of dark magic and the Dwarves struggle to preserve the Four Lands. Elb Foraker struggles with his vow to see Jair safely to Heaven's Well when he sees his fellow Dwarves in battle. Once his companions find a way to send them a message, warning them of a bridge down, Foraker is willing to continue. Doing the honorable thing is often a struggle, and determining which course of action is the most honorable can be difficult.

Jair and Garet Jax are separated from the rest of their group during a Gnome attack, and Jair exhibits great bravery by jumping from a cliff into the water far below.

The members of the group show great ingenuity and courage, but they must reunite to continue their quest.



Chapter XIX, XX, XXI

Chapter XIX, XX, XXI Summary

In Chapter XIX, Jair is awakened roughly, to his surprise, by Slanter. Everyone is safe, says Slanter, but Slanter resents being locked away in a room in the Dwarf fortress with Jair just because he is a Gnome. Jair notices, looking through a window, that the Gnome army is not currently attacking. Slanter could have woke him up sooner, says Jair, but Slanter responds that he didn't know what was wrong with Jair and didn't want to take chances. Jair smiles, knowing Slanter does care about him. Suddenly Jair panics, realizing the gazing crystal and pouch are missing. Slanter tells him that Gareth Jax has the items. Fully an hour after Jair knocks on the door to leave the room, he and Slanter are escorted through the Dwarf fortress to a garden terrace. Edain Elesedil meets up with them, saying that Gareth Jax and Helt are scouting outside the fortress. Jair worries to himself that if anything happens to Gareth Jax, the magic he needs to save Brin will be gone. Foraker joins the group and they have dinner, then Foraker rummages in his pockets for Jair's pouch and gazing crystal. Foraker tells Slanter that he had been locked up for his own safety, even though everyone in their group vouched for him, because the Dwarves are understandably wary of Gnomes.

Foraker wants Slanter to visit an imprisoned Mwellret named Stythys with him, to test whether or not he is telling the truth about ways to destroy the Mord Wraiths. Mwellrets are mutant descendants of Trolls, who had been forced to live in swamps until they constructed Graymark with slave labor. This Mwellret has been driven from Graymark castle by the dark walkers and has sworn revenge. Slanter wants no contact with the Mwellret, because Mwellrets had enslaved Gnomes in the past, but then he reluctantly agrees.

In Chapter XX, Slanter goes to visit the Mwellret, along with Foraker, Elesedil, and Jair. Stythys, who prefers darkness and speaks with a hiss, tells how the Wraiths drove him and the other Mwellrets from Graymark and hints of ways to reenter Graymark. Jair, excited, speaks. Stythys instantly recognizes the magic in his voice and commands Jair to show it to him. Jair is silent until Stythys uses his power to make Jair sing. Flashes of color appear in the room, then Jair sinks to his knees. Jair and his friends leave the cell, with Stythys telling them they will be sorry, they will come back to hear more about the Wraiths.

In Chapter XXI, Jair takes a tour of the locks and dams with Foraker while Slanter corrects errors in the Dwarves' maps. Foraker explains that, without the locks and dams, there would be flooding and the poison of the Silver River would spread more rapidly. Jair asks why the Dwarves aren't getting more help from other lands. Foraker explains that some help is on the way, but Man in the Southland, where Jair lives, is too isolationist and wrapped up in petty bickering to send help.



Later that night Gareth Jax and Helt return. They have found a path north, away from the fortress. Also, the Gnomes are silently lined up along the shores of the Cillidellan, apparently waiting for a signal. The Dwarves are on the battlements, ready. Then comes news that Stythys, the Mwellret, has escaped. Gareth Jax says the group must leave immediately, but just then a great wail comes from the Gnome army. Slanter knows the sound. They are summoning the dark magic, but they need the Mord Wraiths to obtain it. As the group looks outside, they see three Mord Wraiths standing on the banks of the river.

Chapter XIX, XX, XXI Analysis

Perhaps the magic of the King of the Silver River plays a role in reuniting Jair's little company.

Slanter resents being locked up in the Dwarf fortress, just because he is a Gnome, even though the decision had been made for Slanter's protection. Slanter is stereotyped by the Dwarves, even though he is very different from most Gnomes and has proved himself loyal to those fighting against the Gnomes and Mord Wraiths.

Stythys the Mwellret looks evil, lurking in the dark, and his evil is emphasized by the author in his hissing dialogue, featuring extra s's. Slanter warns the others that Stythys cannot be trusted, and Stythys proves the truth of the warning by possessing Jair and forcing him to sing. Stythys wants control of Jair's magic, even though Jair was born with it and cannot share.

Outside the fortress, another example of someone controlling someone else with magic can be seen. The Gnomes summon the Mord Wraiths who control them.



Chapter XXII, XXIII

Chapter XXII, XXIII Summary

In Chapter XXII, the three Mord Wraiths dip the tips of their staffs into the Cillidellan as the Gnomes go silent. The waters churn and boil with red fire, then the Gnomes shout with glee. Slanter explains that this is the summons. A huge creature rose from the depths, with tentacles, razor teeth, scales, spines, and red eyes. It is more than one hundred feet long, forty feet across. It is a Kraken, a creature that cannot normally survive in fresh water. Gareth Jax, Helt, and Edain Elesedil stand ready with their weapons, and Gareth Jax orders Slanter to take Jair to safety. Slanter warns that the Kraken is too much for them to battle, born of evil. Dwarves die as the Kraken batters them with its tentacles. The creature fastens its suckers to the fortress gate and pulls it down. Gnomes rush into the fortress. Helt fires two arrows at a Mord Wraith. The robed being staggers for a moment, steadies himself, then pulls the arrows out and crushes them. The Mord Wraith shoots fire, which hits Helt and Foraker. The Kraken uses its tentacles to block the Dwarves' main path of escape, but the Dwarves fight back, hacking at the tentacles. The Kraken smashes the Dwarf commander. Jair and Slanter try to escape, with debris raining down. Jair sees Slanter at his feet, unconscious. Then Jair sees Gareth Jax run at the Kraken with astonishing speed, dodging tentacles and burying his spear into the creature's open maw. Next Gareth Jax jabs a lance into the Kraken's eye, on into its brain. The Kraken fights, and Gareth Jax forces the lance still further. The Kraken sinks into the river, carrying the Weapons Master with it. Slanter revives, then he and Jair escape into a dark stairway. They run back the way they had entered the fortress, with Jair dismayed that their four friends are gone forever. Then Jair is knocked to the ground while Slanter runs on, unknowing. Stythys covers Jair's mouth with a scaly hand and drags him through an open door.

Slanter scrambles out of a Dwarf tunnel, into mountains north of Capaal. He had studied the Dwarves' maps carefully, and that was how he knew the way. Slanter thinks it's just as well the mission to Heaven's Well is over, for he had always said they would fail. He is free to go his own way. And yet, he doesn't like not knowing what had happened to Jair. The boy had saved, thought the Gnome, a high compliment.

In Chapter XXIII, Allanon, Rone, and Brin continue in the rain on their journey east toward the Anar, to the Maelmord. Brin fights against exhaustion and the premonition which haunts her. She feels a sense of aloneness and withdraws into herself. Rone's new power had created a distance between him and Brin, and a new kinship with Allanon. Brin even feels a disconnect with her purpose, of finding the Ildatch. They arrive at Storlock, where her father had trained many years ago to become a Healer, and where Wil Ohmsford first met Allanon. The white-robed Stors don't speak, but they lead Brin, Rone, and Allanon to separate rooms to bathe, eat, and rest. Allanon summons Brin and Rone to his room, to tell them about his father, Bremen. Bremen had fought against another Druid, Brona, who had fallen under the spell of old faerie magic. Brona would later become the Warlock Lord. Bremen forged the Sword of Shannara to



destroy Brona, but his mission failed. Bremen made Allanon his son and gave them both extended life, to wait for the return of Brona, but when Bremen could wait no more he tied himself to this life and to Allanon as a shade. Bremen cannot rest until the Ildatch, containing the dark magic, is destroyed. Allanon reveals that when he last spoke to the shade of Bremen, Bremen said it would be their last time meeting in this world. Not only that, but Allanon's time in the Four Lands must come to an end. After they leave Allanon, Brin and Rone hold each other close. He admits that he is afraid. Alone in his room, Allanon reflects that he has told Brin and Rone more than he had ever told anyone, and yet he has not told them all.

Chapter XXII, XXIII Analysis

The Mord Wraiths summon a greater creature yet, a Kraken. Jair's companions show great bravery against such an overwhelming opponent, in addition to the army of Gnomes and the occasional Mord Wraith. Jair's friends are not invincible, however. Four of them seem to be gone, with only Jair and Slanter remaining. When Stythys grabs Jair, he is utterly alone with his enemy. The adventure is no longer just a game.

Brin, too, feels alone, even though she is with Allanon and Rone. They do not share her anguish about the wishsong. Rone, in fact, is drawn to Allanon since they share a common power to fight the Mord Wraiths.

Allanon finally shares more of himself with Brin and Rone, revealing that he had been chosen by Bremen to destroy the Ildatch. Allanon also reveals that his time is nearly done. This clearly foreshadows the death of Allanon, leaving the questions unanswered as to how he will die and how Brin will carry out her quest without him.

Brin and Rone share a moment as a young couple in love, and Rone opens up enough to tell Brin that he is afraid. But being afraid does not mean he is unworthy to carry the Sword of Leah. In fact, admitting fear is a sign of bravery.



Chapter XXIV, XXV

Chapter XXIV, XXV Summary

In Chapter XXIV, the next morning Allanon, Brin, and Rone leave the silent Stors. Allanon warns that the journey ahead will be treacherous. Wraiths will be watching, Gnomes will be seeking. The three must take a difficult, less predictable path. That evening Allanon leaves them for a while, and Brin confesses that something seems wrong. She feels as if she is being watched and that something terrible will happen. Rone says they were both bound to change, with everything that has happened and being away from home for so long, but Brin insists there is something more. Allanon returns after the two had fallen asleep. He worries about Brin, because everything depends on her and she doesn't understand the full power of the wishsong. She sees it only in human terms, and the magic is not human.

The next day the three ride on, past a waterfall, then Allanon brings his horse to a halt without warning. Allanon smiles sadly and Brin is terrified. They see a creature, red and muscled, with hooked claws and gleaming yellow eyes. Allanon says it is what was promised, a Jachyra, a creature from another age. It had been locked away long ago with faerie magic, and only equally strong magic could have brought it back again now. The Wraiths had placed it here, anticipating that Allanon and Brin might travel this way. Allanon forces Brin and Rone to promise they will not interfere in this battle, which is his alone, and then he leaves them.

In Chapter XXV, Allanon and the Jachyra face each other, and then the creature attacks. Allanon shoots blue flames at the beast, but the beast is unharmed. It lunges again and injures Allanon. The two continue the fight, and it becomes apparent that the Jachyra feeds on pain. Rone tries to hold the horses, but they bolt. Allanon engulfs the Jachyra in a net of flame, but eventually the beast escapes, unharmed. Then the Jachyra leaps onto Allanon, tearing through his flesh. Rone runs at the creature with his sword, forgetting his promise to Allanon. He plunges his sword into the Jachyra, and the creature tosses Rone aside in a heap. The Jachyra removes the Sword of Leah and throws it into the Chard Rush River. Allanon is on his feet once more. He lets the Jachyra charge at him, then forces the beast onto its back. Allanon forces its jaws open, thrusts his hands into its throat, and burned the creature from the inside with blue flame. The Jachyra explodes in a flash of light. Brin checks on Rone, then goes to Allanon. He is dying. He explains that the Jachyra fed on its own pain and the pain of others. Bremen had told Allanon that he would die before the Ildatch was destroyed, and nothing Brin does will change that. She must carry the magic with her, magic that can be used for good or for evil, and she must carry on without him. Also, Rone's sword will be recovered, he says, for the magic requires that it be in human hands. He dips his fingers in his own blood and touches them to Brin's forehead. She feels a rush of exhilaration. Allanon asks Brin to help him to his feet, and he walks to the river's edge. Allanon tells Brin she should come here to find him again after she completes her quest,



then he summons the shade of Bremen from the water. The shade of Allanon's father takes him in his arms and carries him down into the water.

Chapter XXIV, XXV Analysis

Brin worries about being watched, sensing eyes on her but unable to discern the source. She also knows that something terrible is about to happen. Her fear is justified on the following day when Allanon falls to a Jachyra, a terrible beast from the faerie past, reborn with dark magic. The Jachyra thrives on pain, making it all but impossible to destroy. Allanon thrusts his arms inside the beast to burn it from the inside out, and it explodes in a flash of light, but not before Rone is injured when he defies Allanon's command to stay out of the battle.

Allanon dies a noble death, reassuring Brin and binding himself to her in a blood pact. He tells her to carry on without him and to come back to this place when the Ildatch has been destroyed. And so Allanon leaves Brin, but his spirit remains. The shade of Bremen carries Allanon down, into the water, a tender moment of grief between father and son.



Chapter XXVI, XXVII

Chapter XXVI, XXVII Summary

In Chapter XXVI, bound and gagged, Jair is marched along the fetid Silver River by the Mwellret Stythys. Other prisoners also march along with their captors toward the Anar. Jair is feverish and he hallucinates about his lost friends and family. Voices whisper that Jair should remember what he must do, but sometimes he cannot. When they stop for the night, the Mwellret forces Jair to drink medicine for the fever. Stythys takes Jair to the Gnome prisons at Dun Fee Aran, to stay a prisoner until he shares the magic of the wishsong. Jair cannot share the magic he was born with, but he worries that Stythys will force him to use it against his will, as he had done before in the Dwarf fortress. Jair's guard in the prison is a deaf and mute Gnome who is immune to Jair's wishsong. Jair despairs, alone in his cell, thinking for the first time that he might fail in his quest. He wonders what his friends would do in his position, but nothing comes to mind. He uses the wishsong and the vision crystal to see Brin's face, and she is haggard and in despair.

In Chapter XXVII, Brin walks eastward with the feverish and incoherent Rone leaning on her. She sees light in the distance. She isn't sure what to do, with Rone seriously injured and Allanon gone. The source of the lights is the Rooker Trading Center. Brin opens the door. The men inside stare as she and Rone stand there. Someone says they are ghosts; someone else says if they were ghosts they wouldn't have needed to open the door. Brin lies, saying that they lost their horses in a fall in the mountains, and Rone was already feverish when that happened. Stebb, the owner of the trading center, gives each of them an ale. Most of the rest of the men chuckle and grin in a menacing way. Only Stebb and a woodsman named Jeft seem friendly. Stebb offers a tonic to help with Rone's fever and says the two may sleep in a tack room in his stable. Brin starts to cry, and Jeft warns her not to let the other men see her in such a state. Stebb warns her to keep the latch locked while she and Rone are in the tack room. Brin worries that Rone will not survive the fever brought on by the Jachyra's poison. Suddenly the dangerous men who had been drinking in the trading center break down the door of the tack room. They grab Brin and hurt her, while she struggles against her urge to use her knife against them. Anger rushes over her and she sings a terrible wishsong, making the men cover their ears in agony. Blood runs from their mouths, ears, and noses as they run away. Stebb sees the terrible scene from a distance and learns to fear Brin. Brin worries that the wishsong will destroy her, for it can make her kill. Turning to Rone, she sees that he might be dying. Remembering Allanon's words, that she is both destroyer and savior, she sings to remove Rone's fever. Eventually the Jachyra's poison rises from him as a red mist, and his breathing returns to normal. She falls asleep, holding Rone close.



Chapter XXVI, XXVII Analysis

Jair is alone and feverish, imprisoned by Stythys in a cell. Jair's situation seems hopeless, since he cannot escape and no one knows where he is. Stythys was even cunning enough to choose a deaf guard for Jair, a guard that cannot hear Jair's wishsong.

Rone, too, is feverish, overcome by poison from the Jachyra. Brin, too, is alone, for Rone is incoherent and Allanon is dead.

Jair and Brin are in equally desperate situations, equally alone, equally unsure what to do next.

Brin uses her wishsong to ward off enemies who would have hurt her and Rone, and she despairs at the notion that she has done harm with her magic. But then she uses the same magic to help Rone, drawing poison and fever from him in a red vapor. The same magic, the same wishsong, can be used to do harm or to heal. The choice is up to the one who holds the magic.



Chapter XXVIII, XXIX, XXX

Chapter XXVIII, XXIX, XXX Summary

In Chapter XXVIII, Brin and Rone stay for two days in the tack room, while Rone regains his strength. Stebb provides them with food, drink, and supplies, but he won't look Brin in the eye. Brin realizes that he would have helped them anyway, out of generosity, but he feels more urgency about it now because he is afraid of Brin and her magic. Brin doesn't tell Rone of the blood pact between herself and Allanon. She also doesn't tell him of the times she used the wishsong, to do harm to others and to save Rone. She vows not to use the magic to do harm ever again. Brin also worries that Rone seems lost without the Sword of Leah. Brin questions Stebb about the land to the east, and asks if anyone could offer her some guidance. Stebb hesitates, out of fear, then says his friend Jeft might be able to help, if Brin promises that she means him no harm. Brin sadly explains that she is still the same girl Stebb had helped on their first night there, but he responds that it doesn't seem that way to him. There is nothing for Brin to do but walk away.

The next day Brin and Rone leave the trading center in search of Jeft the woodsman. When they find his house and ask for his help, he says they are crazy to travel further east, because men disappear from there like smoke. He sees their determination, however, and sends them in search of a ninety-year-old man called Cogle. Cogle is an odd duck, Jeft warns, perhaps more trouble than he is worth, and Jeft hasn't seen him for two years. Jeft gives Brin and Rone some supplies and they depart.

In Chapter XXIX, while resting after a meal, Brin has the feeling that Jair is watching her. But of course, she knows that is impossible. Later Brin and Rone find an old man on his hands and knees scolding some unknown person, threatening to use his magic, wishing he had left the person back on the moor, commanding the person to show himself. He sees Brin and Rone, and tells him to go on their way. The man says the whole valley is his home. He then resumes looking for someone named Whisper, and says he has never heard of Cogle. Brin is sure the man is Cogle, but Rone is impatient, sure that the man is crazy. Then Whisper appears, a ten-foot-long gray and black moor cat. The old man says Whisper might want to eat them for dinner, but then the cat disappears again, into thin air. Brin pleads with him for help, saying it's vitally important they find Cogle. The old man points to the spot where he buried Cogle a year ago.

In Chapter XXX, Brin senses that the man is lying. Then a voice calls out for her grandfather and Whisper reappears. The girl has dark hair in ringlets, and she asks Brin and Rone why they are looking for Cogle. The girl asks Whisper to track Brin. Brin stands still, in fear, while the cat sniffs her, then Brin sings and the cat lay at her feet. The girl is surprised anyone could do that, and the old man says she is a devil. Next Whisper tracks Rone and tugs on his boot playfully. The girl decides that Brin and Rone are trustworthy, and introduces herself as Kimber Boh. Her grandfather stamps his foot,



angrily, as Kimber explains that her grandfather sometimes plays a game in which he buries his old self and starts over. The old man is, in fact, Cogle. Cogle stubbornly refuses to be a good host to their guests, saying Kimber can do so if she pleases. Kimber offers them lodging in exchange for stories about where they come from, because Kimber rarely has the chance to speak with other people.

Chapter XXVIII, XXIX, XXX Analysis

Brin is devastated that Stebb, who had been kind to her and Rone, is afraid of her now because of her wishsong. Stebb knows the other men were out to harm Brin, and yet he cannot forget the horror of seeing them bleed from the nose, mouth, and eyes because of Brin's song. She vows that she will not do harm with the magic ever again. Of course, throughout the remainder of the novel Brin's vow is destined to be tested.

Brin and Rone learn of a man named Cogle who is eccentric but might be able to help them find their way on their quest. Brin worries about Rone, because he is more concerned about finding his sword than about destroying the Ildatch.

Brin and Rone meet the three who will accompany them on the remainder of their quest, Cogle, Kimber, and Whisper. Cogle is something like Slanter, slow to trust and quick to complain. Kimber is the intermediary who brings them all together. She has incredible social skills for a girl who rarely sees people. Her goodness and compassion shine from within.



Chapter XXXI, XXXII

Chapter XXXI, XXXII Summary

In Chapter XXXI, after dinner, Cogleine goes out for his evening walk. Kimber tells Brin and Rone how she was found by Cogleine after her parents were killed by Gnome raiders, and how Cogleine found Whisper after he was injured in a fight. He adopted them both, and Kimber learned how to talk to Whisper. She asks if Brin will teach her how to use the wishsong, but Brin explains she was born with it. Kimber explains that Whisper doesn't really disappear, he just changes his coloring to match his surroundings. Whisper likes to taunt Cogleine by disappearing until the man yells himself hoarse. Brin explains why she and Rone must travel east and why they seek Cogleine's help. Cogleine answers that even if he did help, they wouldn't be able to scale the cliffs at Ravenshorn. Brin says they will find a way. Rone interjects that he will not go until they find the Sword of Leah, and Brin says he must forget about the sword. Brin worries, silently, that the magic of the sword will destroy Rone, just as she worries that the wishsong will destroy her. Kimber suggests that maybe the Grimpond could help. The Grimpond is an avatar that likes to play games, either lying or hiding the truth in riddles. But perhaps it could offer advice about where to find Rone's sword. Perhaps it could also offer advice about how to scale the cliffs at Ravenshorn, unseen. All agree that Brin will try, and Cogleine cackles.

In Chapter XXXII, to Kimber's embarrassment, on the following morning Cogleine continues to cackle at the notion of Brin questioning the Grimpond. When the group reaches the pond, Kimber explains that it will only speak to one person. Brin must go alone. Brin must try to trick the Grimpond into telling her the truth, perhaps with help from the wishsong. When Brin approaches the shade appears, wearing a gray cowl. When it lifts his head it has red eyes and the face of Brin.

Jair spends his second day as a prisoner of the Mwellret Stythys. Jair realizes that no one will come to rescue him, for his friends are lost, dead, or scattered, and no one knows where he is. Occasionally the Mwellret comes, but Jair vows never to share his magic. Alone, he decides to use the vision crystal once more. He sees Brin standing before a pond, looking at a hooded shade. The image turns and Jair sees that the shade also has the face of Brin. But then Jair hears a rustling. The Mwellret is in his cell.

The Grimpond speaks to Brin of the Ildatch, a book which draws all to it for its magic, then corrupts them with its evil. The Grimpond says that some use song as black magic. Brin responds that she would never use dark magic and the Grimpond agrees, explaining that dark magic uses people. The Grimpond speaks of eyes that follow her, and of the fact that Allanon died a fool, trapped by the dark magic of the Mord Wraiths. Then it tells of Rone, who will be destroyed by the magic he seeks and who will lead Brin to a similar fate. Brin shall meet her death in the pit of dark, "within the breast of the magic" she seeks to destroy (page 344). Brin asks how to get to the pit of the Maelmord, but the shade refuses to answer. Brin merely seats herself on the shore,



wordlessly. Then she sings, forming a chrysalis around the shade before it notices. Once the Grimpond is imprisoned, Brin sings of human feelings, the touch of a hand, the sensation of love, all but forgotten by the Grimpond. Then Brin withdraws the feelings, to the Grimpond's dismay. Brin sings of her questions, and the Grimpond responds that the way into the Maelmord is through the sewers of Graymark. Next Brin sings questions about Rone's sword, and the Grimpond says that Spider Gnomes pulled the sword from the Chard Rush River. Brin releases the Grimpond, along with a last note of forgetfulness, leaving the Grimpond as it was before Brin reminded it of its humanity. The Grimpond knows it has been tricked somehow and, in revenge, shows Brin an image of a figure crouched in a darkened cell.

Stythys saw Jair use the gazing crystal. Stythys commands Jair to look in his eyes, but Jair knows that if he does, he will be under Stythys' control. But the urge to look is almost too much for Jair. He squeezes the crystal in his hand, concentrating on the pain.

Brin sees the Grimpond's image of Jair and the Mwellret. As the shade departs, it reminds Brin that she is both savior and destroyer, and that the magic uses all.

Chapter XXXI, XXXII Analysis

Hope returns for Brin, because Cogle has knowledge of the terrain leading to the Maelmord. The Grimpond also holds the potential to help, even though it lies and speaks in riddles. The Grimpond appears to Brin in her own image, but with glowing eyes. Brin is, in a sense, speaking with herself or a part of herself. Brin uses all of her cunning, along with the wishsong, to learn where to find Rone's sword and how to get to the Maelmord. She traps the Grimpond and touches its humanity in order to learn its secrets. Ironically, such humanity is what Brin is afraid she will lose by the end of her quest.

Jair sees Brin talking with a shade of herself, by using the vision crystal in his cell Jair inadvertently reveals his magic to the Mwellret at the same time. Brin, at the Grimpond, sees an image of Jair in his cell with the Mwellret. The sister and brother are far apart and yet joined in their journey.



Chapter XXXIII, XXXIV, XXXV

Chapter XXXIII, XXXIV, XXXV Summary

In Chapter XXXIII, Stythys presses Jair for his magic, and Jair has nowhere to run. Then the Gnome guard enters the cell. Annoyed, Stythys waves the guard away, but he does not go. When the guard reaches Jair, he realizes it is not the deaf Gnome, but rather Slanter. Suddenly Gareth Jax presses a sword to Stythys' throat. Slanter releases Jair from his shackles and the group leaves, with Stythys a prisoner. Slanter wishes they would leave the Mwellret behind, but Foraker thinks he might be useful. Jair is thrilled to learn that everyone from their little company is alive. Slanter explains that he waited by the cliffs of Capaal, which had been their plan, and the others eventually arrived. Then they tracked the Mwellret to the prison, where they found Jair. Jair marvels that the Gnome rescued Jair when he could have gone his own way, free. When the group of six reunites, Jair sees Edain Elessedil's injured face. The Elven Prince brushes them off. Stythys is to lead the group into the Ravenshorn, and if he deceives them, Slanter will be allowed to do whatever he wishes to the Mwellret. A group of Gnome Hunters attacks Jair and his friends and Stythys tries to escape, but the Gnome Hunters are sent running and Stythys is restrained. After more battles with Gnomes, Jair's little company escapes the prison and renews the journey toward Graymark.

In Chapter XXXIV, Brin does not share with her friends everything the Grimpond had told her. She only tells them that Spider Gnomes have Rone's sword and that the way to the Maelmord is through the sewers of Graymark. She wonders about Jair, if he is really in danger from the strange robed creature she saw, or if he is safe at home. She understands that her fate is predetermined, but wonders if perhaps she could spare Rone by going to the Maelmord alone. Brin repeats to Rone, Kimber, and Cogleine what the Grimpond had said, that Spider Gnomes have Rone's sword and that sewers are the best passage into the Maelmord, and then she adds that the Grimpond foretold of Brin's death in the Maelmord. Rone insists that Brin will not go alone, that he will continue on as her protector. Brin starts to cry, and to everyone's surprise Cogleine comforts her. He says that he and Whisper will help Brin, because they can't have tears like those. Cogleine says Kimber must stay behind, but she reminds him that sometimes he can be forgetful, and Whisper responds best to the commands of Kimber. Brin and Rone are shocked that suddenly three unlikely strangers want to accompany them. Rone asks what they would do to fight off the walkers, and Cogleine refers to magic contained in pouches he carries. Brin starts to object, but then remembers she and Rone had journeyed to Hearthstone for just the sort of help being offered.

In Chapter XXXV, Brin, Rone, and their three companions depart at dawn to find the Spider Gnomes. They travel through oppressive heat to where Cogleine knows the Spider Gnomes will be living at that season. When they find the Spider Gnomes, Whisper tracks the sword, based on Rone's scent. Kimber communicates with Whisper when he returns, then announces that the cat has found the sword. Brin is not happy



about the news. The group sneaks into the encampment of the Spider Gnomes. Whisper frightens some, and they scatter. Cogline throws black powder into a campfire and creates an explosion. Whisper leaps to a platform that contains the Spider Gnomes' treasures, including the Sword of Leah. The group flees, chased by Spider Gnomes. Brin falls behind and a Spider Gnome is on top of her. She uses the wishsong to fling it from her, shattering it. She feels a sense of glee at the destruction she caused, and then she is horror-stricken. She runs, shouting for Rone.

Chapter XXXIII, XXXIV, XXXV Analysis

All is not lost for Jair, despite how hopeless his situation seems, for Slanter's Gnome identity allows him to enter Jair's cell disguised as the deaf Gnome guard. The larger-than-life Gareth Jax also appears and captures Stythys. The remainder of their group of six soon join them. These events seem miraculous, but perhaps, once again, the magic of the King of the Silver River is at work.

Brin worries about Rone, about Jair, about herself. She makes the decision to enter the Maelmord alone when the time comes, so as not to endanger anyone else. She does not yet comprehend, or will not yet accept, the fact that others want to help and sometimes the threads of destiny are intertwined.

Brin cries when she relates some of what the Grimpond told her, and her tears crack the tough exterior of Cogline. He vows, in his eccentric way, that he will help Brin complete her quest.

Rone's susceptibility to the magic of his sword is evident when he gets it back from the Spider Gnomes. He runs off, forgetting Brin, once it is in his hands. Brin, meanwhile, is forced to break her vow and use her wishsong to kill a Spider Gnome that is trying to kill her. She feels a sense of glee at the destruction. The glee is part of her dark side, the part of her that wants to embrace the magic of the Ildatch.



Chapter XXXVI, XXXVII

Chapter XXXVI, XXXVII Summary

In Chapter XXXVI, Brin is lost in the woods. She always knew the possibility existed that she would use the wishsong to kill. But the sense of glee she felt when that happened terrifies her. Under the flood of emotion, such as fear, she does not have full control over the power of the wishsong. She vows that she will not use the magic again, except for the one last time in the Maelmord when she completes her quest as she had promised Allanon. She senses that something is following her, first one and then more. Cogleine had mentioned Werebeasts. Lost, Brin keeps moving in the hope that she will find an end to the mist of the moor. Images appear to her, first of Allanon and then of Rone, but the images are deceptions. Next she sees a terrible monster, twice her size, and she prepares to break her vow from moments before not to use the wishsong. Then the thing changes into her father, then her mother, and the wishsong is stuck in Brin's throat. Suddenly the Werebeast is attacked by Whisper. The others arrive and Rone dispatches the creature with his sword. He apologizes to Brin, explaining that when he got the sword he could think of nothing else and he just ran. Brin understands. He promises he will never leave her again. Brin does not mention that she plans to leave him.

In Chapter XXXVII, at last Jair and his companions reach the Ravenshorn. They discuss how to get to Graymark without being seen by the dark walkers. Gareth Jax pressures Stythys for advice, and Stythys suggests the Caves of Night. This infuriates Slanter, because in the past Mwellrets had thrown many Gnomes into the Caves of Night, so they would be killed by mouths of rock called Procks. Stythys promises to guide them through in exchange for his freedom. Gareth Jax warns Stythys that if the group meets a bad fate, Stythys will share that fate. At the entrance to the cave, Stythys explains that his magic will light the way inside. Gareth Jax ties a rope between himself and Stythys. In the darkness of the cave, Stythys summons a Fire Wake, an iridescent ball of fire, to light the way. The smell in the cave is terrible, and soon they encounter the Procks. Everyone steps carefully. Suddenly Stythys hurls the Fire Wake into the group, leaps for Jair, and holds a knife to his throat. Slanter reminds everyone he had said the Mwellret couldn't be trusted. Stythys tells Slanter to cut the rope that connects him to Gareth Jax. Jair and the others exchange looks, and as Slanter steps forward Jair sings a wishsong. Spiders seem to crawl on Stythys' arm and he pulls away. Jair is free and the Fire Wake scatters. Slanter and Stythys struggle, dangerously near the Procks, until at last Gareth Jax pulls Slanter free. Stythys falls into the open mouth of a Prock, disappearing with a terrible grinding sound. The Fire Wake disappears, leaving the group in darkness. Even Helt is blind, for night vision requires at least a small amount of light. Then Jair realizes he can use the vision crystal to make light. He sings and the light shines bright, showing Brin's face. Using the glow of the crystal and Helt's night vision, the group navigates their way out of the caves.



Chapter XXXVI, XXXVII Analysis

Again Brin vows she will never use the wishsong to commit violence. In fact, she vows she will never use it at all, except at the Maelmord. Her vow is no sooner made than tested. A Werebeast follows her, but shows itself in the shape of people Brin loves. The wishsong sticks in Brin's throat. Only at the moment of attack does the Werebeast appear in its own form. Whisper and Rone dispatch the creature, but Rone cannot apologize enough for leaving Brin behind. He admits that he forgot all else once the Sword of Leah was in his hand. Brin renews her vow to leave Rone behind before she enters the Maelmord, but this vow may not hold more weight than her vow to never use the wishsong.

The Caves of Night test the trust of Jair and his friends, and their trust is indeed misplaced in Stythys. Stythys earns his fate when he is consumed by Procks. Appropriately, Jair's wishsong helps the group find their way out of the Caves of Night. The wishsong, especially when it conjures the face of Brin in the vision crystal, is a thing of hope and beauty.



Chapter XXVIII, XXXIX

Chapter XXVIII, XXXIX Summary

In Chapter XXVIII, Whisper leads Brin and the others out of the misty moor. Kimber rebukes Brin for not staying with the group, and she lets the remark pass. Brin used to worry that the wishsong wouldn't be strong enough to counter the Maelmord, but now she worries that the result will be cataclysmic. She vows again that she will face the Maelmord alone. Cogleine speaks of old magic called Earth Power or Chemics, combining elements from the earth for different results. He carries such potions in his pouches, and he feels ready to do battle with the dark walkers. As they progress on their journey, they begin to smell the stench of Graymark's sewers. At the entrance to the sewers, Cogleine produces an ointment that dulls the smell when rubbed into the nostrils. Next he produces flameless torches, made from wood dipped in a silver substance. When they reach a grate that blocks their path, Cogleine uses his magic to dissolve it. As they climb, they hear many unidentifiable sounds. They come to a stretch of rock overlooking a chasm. To the right a passageway curves upward, continuing the path of the sewer. To the left a path runs downward, to a bridge across the chasm, leading to a tunnel. Brin knows instinctively that the left path is correct, but the others say right. Brin agrees, without understanding why, then realizes this is her opportunity to leave the others behind. She uses the wishsong gently to create an image of herself, then runs back the way she had come. She crosses the bridge to the tunnel, then turns around and uses the wishsong to destroy the bridge. She cannot go back and the others cannot follow. Kimber realizes first that Brin tricked them. She tells Whisper to track Brin, and the others follow. Rone is angry, not understanding why Brin would go off without the group. At the broken bridge, Rone rashly considers jumping across. Kimber stops him, sending Whisper instead. The cat makes the jump easily and enters the tunnel. Kimber says the rest of them should try to find another way to reach Brin.

In Chapter XXXIX, Jair and his friends finally exit the Caves of Night. Jair feels confidence as the group makes its way through the mountains, drawing strength from the five men who have stood by him. At last, Graymark is visible. They also see the Croagh, a suspended stairway high above Graymark, which leads to both Heaven's Well and the Maelmord. Helt comments that Graymark seems empty. Slanter explains that the things inside want him to think that, and also, the dark walkers usually rest during the day. Slanter knows the place is full of Mord Wraiths, Gnomes, and a few other things as well. They decide to use another mountain cave to reach the depths of Graymark, in order to reach the Croagh. None of them like the idea of another dark, enclosed space, but it is their best option. Before they start, Jair sings to the vision crystal once again.

Brin pauses in the tunnel, once again with the feeling she is being watched. For some unexplainable reason, she feels that it is Jair. Then she hears something moving behind her. She is relieved to see Whisper. Brin appreciates how difficult the decision must have been for Kimber, to send her cat to help Brin. And yet, she does not want to



endanger the cat. She tells him to go back, but he will not. She uses a gentle wishsong to convince him. She continues, and the tunnel ends at another chasm with a wider bridge across. In the distance she can see the Maelmord, she can feel its touch, she can hear its whisper. Almost across the bridge, a black creature rises from a crevice below. It looks somewhat human, but sculpted from clay. Brin knows she must use the wishsong, and yet she remembers her vow. While she hesitates, the creature attacks, but Whisper counters the blow. Whisper had shaken off Brin's wishsong in favor of his mistress' command. Brin watches, fearful for Whisper, but she cannot use the wishsong. But then she can't remember why not. She decides to flee, hoping the creature will follow her and leave Whisper, but then a second creature appears. Whisper saves Brin yet again, but now he has two creatures to battle. Whisper is injured. He continues fighting but he is losing strength, about to be pushed off the bridge into the chasm. Brin uses the wishsong at last. It is a new and terrible sound, flinging the creatures off the bridge, convulsing, down into the chasm. She feels the sense of glee once again and realizes she barrier she had put in place against use of the wishsong is gone. She hugs Whisper and cries.

Using the vision crystal, Jair and his friends see Brin on the bridge with the black creatures. Slanter says the creatures are Mutens, made of dark magic to guard the sewers of Graymark. Slanter says Brin is closer to the Maelmord than they are. They pledge that they are as one, determined to help Jair reach Heaven's Well in time to help Brin.

Chapter XXVIII, XXXIX Analysis

Brin had once worried that her magic might not be strong enough in the Maelmord, but now she fears it will be cataclysmic. She does not know how to control its power and she has no one to turn to for advice. She is sorry to see that Cogline possesses knowledge of magic, for her hope had been that the end of the Ildatch would bring the end of all magic. She realizes now that there will always be magic. She does not stop to consider that perhaps the world needs a touch of magic.

Brin makes the move she had vowed to make, deceiving her friends and heading to the Maelmord without them. She even destroys a bridge behind her, so they cannot follow and she cannot change her mind. But Brin doesn't consider the power and determination of friendship, which is every bit as strong as dark magic. Kimber sends her beloved moor cat, Whisper, to help and protect Brin.

The reader may disagree with Brin's decision to let Whisper fight two black creatures and suffer injuries when the wishsong is hers to use. Brin does not want to harm another creature, and yet she stands by while the loyal cat Whisper is mauled. She does ultimately use the wishsong, then she hugs Whisper, then she cries. At that moment, the final barrier Brin had put in place is gone, and she is ready to either defend herself or lose herself in her magic.

Tension mounts when Jair and his friends see, through the vision crystal, that Brin is closer to the Maelmord than they are. The two parallel paths are about to converge, but timing is crucial.



Chapter XL, XLI, XLII

Chapter XL, XLI, XLII Summary

In Chapter XL, Jair and his companions make their way through the cellars of Graymark. A giant batlike creature attacks the group, and Helt suffers serious injury to his eyes and face. He follows the others, but slowly. Gnomes are approaching, and the group rushes for a gate that will lead to the Croagh.

Brin and Whisper travel through the alcove at the far end of the bridge, then arrive at a ledge overlooking the lower part of the Croagh which leads down to the pit of the Maelmord. Brin realizes with a shock that the Maelmord is breathing, alive. Brin uses her wishsong to explain to Whisper that he should accompany her no further. He should wait where he is, and stop Kimber and the others from following Brin. Brin promises to return, if possible. She doesn't force the cat, she merely explains in her song. Whisper seems to understand and Brin begins her descent into the Maelmord.

In Chapter XLI, Jair's friends surround him, fighting off Gnomes, and Jair feels curiously detached. They make their way toward the gate. Helt flings himself into the blockhouse. Jair is shot in the shoulder with a dart. Slanter removes the dart and Jair almost passes out. The others prepare to pass through the gate, but Jair realizes Helt isn't coming. Helt stays behind and jams the gate, facing certain death. Jair screams as Gnomes swarm over Helt and kill him. Gareth Jax explains that Helt was dying anyway, due to poison from the bat creature that had wounded him. Helt had chosen his own way to die.

Whisper disappears as another black creature approaches, then he attacks when the time is right. The creature falls into the valley below, and Whisper sees the forest make a swallowing motion. Then two more black creatures and a Mord Wraith approach, and it is too late for Whisper to hide.

Jair has trouble advancing with the others through Graymark, and Slanter reminds him that pain means he is alive. After battling more Gnomes, both Elb Foraker and Edain Elesedil are severely wounded. Elesedil can go no further, and Foraker wants to stay behind with him, in spite of Jair's objections. They remind him that everyone pledged to get Jair to Heaven's Well, no matter what. Jair, Slanter, and Gareth Jax must continue. Soon the three exit the keep and begin climbing the Croagh, upward to Heaven's Well.

Chapter XLII: Brin descends the stone steps of the Croagh toward the Maelmord. The weeds and vines are disproportionately large, and everything is a dull, grayish color. The foliage rises and falls, as if breathing. She reflects that the magic has wrought a change in her, or that perhaps she hasn't changed all, but now clearly understands what she had been all along. She wonders if she will be strong enough to part the vegetation of the Maelmord, and if so, what path she should create. Then she remembers words told to her by the Grimpond and by Allanon, that she is both savior and destroyer, and that she should look within herself. She realizes she shouldn't try to fight the Maelmord,



but rather, become one with it. She sings the wishsong, entwining and caressing the Maelmord. She becomes immersed in her song, forgetting her companions along the way, almost forgetting her purpose. She feels the same sense of glee that she had felt when harming other creatures with the wishsong, and she feels herself unraveling. She feels that the Maelmord wants her.

Rone, Kimber, and Cogline try to find a way out of the Graymark sewers. They come upon a bridge across a chasm, and they see blood on the bridge. In the distance, Kimber hears Whisper scream. They run toward the sound and find Whisper in combat with two black creatures, with a Mord Wraith looking on. Kimber rushes to help Whisper and the Mord Wraith points red fire toward her, but he misses his target. Rone catches a blast of red fire with his sword. Cogline hurls something at the Mord Wraith, causing an explosion. Rone dispatches the Mord Wraith and the black creatures with his sword. When the smoke clears, Kimber and Rone find Cogline buried under some rubble but unharmed. Rone prepares to cross the bridge and go down into the Maelmord after Brin, but Whisper blocks his path. Kimber communicates with her cat. She then tells Rone that Brin used the wishsong to make Whisper her sentry, to keep Rone from passing. Not only that, but Whisper's instinct says that is the right choice. Rone cannot pass, and neither can Kimber.

Brin feels euphoria as she continues deeper into the Maelmord. Branches caress her. Only a tiny part of her realizes that she should be horrified. She almost ceases to exist. Only a small part of her, deep inside, is protected from joining with the Maelmord. A spark of memory tells her to find the Ildatch. She hears something scream as it falls from above into the Maelmord. As the thing is consumed by the forest, Brin savors its death and tastes its blood, then she longs for more. Then for a moment she sees Allanon, reminding her to use caution. The Maelmord ripples, disturbed. It senses a disconnect between itself and Brin. She uses the wishsong to reassure the Maelmord and join with it once again. She reaches a clearing with a crumbling tower. Brin knows that the Ildatch is inside.

Chapter XL, XLI, XLII Analysis

Brin and Whisper have a special bond. Just as Kimber can communicate with the moor cat, so can Brin, by using her wishsong. Brin explains to Whisper that he must wait where he is while Brin continues, and he must not let Rone, Cogline, or Kimber come after her. Rone does not understand why Whisper won't let him pass, but Kimber realizes that both Brin's wishsong and Whisper's instinct guide the cat to block Rone's way.

Helt shows great bravery, sacrificing himself to save his friends. Jair has trouble understanding this concept, and he wants to return for Helt. Foraker and Ellesedil also stay behind, due to injuries, and Jair has trouble leaving them. Slanter reminds Jair of their vow. Their sacrifice will be meaningless if Jair stays behind to help his friends, gets killed, and fails to save Brin. Jair must learn to make decisions as a man, not a boy.



Brin prepares to enter the Maelmord, which turns out to be a living, breathing forest. Brin must achieve what she had been fighting, that is, she must give in to the magic and become one with the Maelmord. Allanon, with all of his magic, had been unable to enter the Maelmord because he had approached it as an adversary. Brin is embraced because she becomes a part of it. She keeps only one tiny part of her wrapped away, protected from the dark magic.



Chapter XLIII, XLIV, XLV

Chapter XLIII, XLIV, XLV Summary

In Chapter XLIII, still singing the wishsong, Brin enters the tower, leaving the heat and stench of the Maelmord. She almost floats as she climbs the stairway inside the tower. She reaches the domed rotunda and her wishsong turns into a whisper. In the middle of the room, on an altar, is the Ildatch. The wishsong turns to a venomous hiss as she approaches the heart of evil. The book looks ancient and worn. Brin touches it and her wishsong dies. The Ildatch whispers to her that she is the dark child, and that the book has always been waiting for her to come. The tiny, protected part within Brin is terrified. A burning sensation travels from her fingers to her arms. She opens the book and, even though it is written in ancient script, knowledge passes from it to her, then fades. The Ildatch has shown her only a hint of the power she could have. The Ildatch says that they are two lives joined.

Rone is furious that Whisper continues to block his path. Then he, Kimber, and Cogle see a line of Mord Wraiths descending the Croagh from Graymark.

Brin feels a strong urge to use the Ildatch. The Ildatch says that it is neither good nor evil, but merely a gathering of wisdom through the ages. Its power joined with the wishsong would enable Brin to make the world as she wishes. Brin does not want to destroy the Ildatch, it continues, but rather those who stand behind her. She turns to see a group of Mord Wraiths, hesitating because they see Brin's hands on the Ildatch. The Ildatch commands Brin to destroy the dark walkers and she does so, with the wishsong. They simply cease to be. Brin feels the last part of her old self falling away and she holds the book over her head. Within her, the power builds.

In Chapter XLIV, Jair, along with Gareth Jax and Slanter, climbs the steps of the Croagh toward Heaven's Well. His strength is failing, due to fatigue and his wound. At the summit of the Croagh they encounter a creature, red with yellow eyes. It is a Jachyra. Gareth Jax exclaims that the creature is like the one in his dream, the battle he was promised. Slanter warns him against the fight, but Gareth Jax reminds him that he is the Weapons Master. Gareth Jax tells Slanter to take Jair into the cavern, to Heaven's Well, when the creature attacks. But Jair refuses to go. More than once Slanter tries to drag him away, and finally he hits Jair on the chin, knocking him unconscious.

When Jair awakens in the cavern, Slanter is angry. He reminds Jair that they are not playing a game, that everyone took a pledge, and that he does not have the right to jeopardize the quest that others have died to help him accomplish. Slanter shoves Jair forward. He is tired of teaching Jair lessons that he should have learned already. He reminds Jair that no one is left to protect them from the dark walkers and they must hurry. Jair is ashamed. He realizes that his intentions might have been good, but his judgment was poor.



Jair and Slanter reach Heaven's Well. Somehow water is pumped upward into this basin of water that drains into the canyons below, to flow and become the Silver River. The water is blackened with poison, and the stench of the Maelmord rises from below. Jair opens his pouch and throws the Silver Dust into the well. The dust shimmers and a silver flash makes Jair and Slanter shield their eyes. The water explodes skyward and rains down, cleaning the Silver River. Following the instructions given to him by the King of the Silver River, Jair next throws the vision crystal into the well. A brighter flash frightens the two, but then the surface of the water becomes smooth and reveals a tower room, along with a feeling of oppression, and then the face of his sister, Brin.

Brin feels eyes looking at her, and she tells them to stay away from her, the dark child. But the tiny part of her within recognizes the eyes and seeks their help. Scattered memories return, and the part of her under the spell of the Ildatch crushes them, one by one. She feels the death of herself, as the Grimpond had foretold, and yet she cannot release the Ildatch.

Jair sees the image of his sister, but she is twisted into something evil. She is lost to herself, as the King of the Silver River had foretold. Jair wonders why she is alone, without Allanon or Rone. Jair has failed Brin by being too late. Then he remembers the final magic given to him by the king. Once and only once, Jair can use the wishsong to create not illusion, but reality. While Slanter protests, Jair begins to sing. The water surges upward and Jair disappears.

In Chapter XLV, as Jair plummets along the surface of his wishsong, he sees images of his friends. He hears the Maelmord breathing as he plunges into it. He is in the tower room with Brin, as he had seen on the surface of Heaven's Well. Brin is a distortion of her former self. For a moment Brin recognizes Jair, but then the recognition is gone. The Ildatch whispers to her that Jair is evil, a deception of the Mord Wraiths, and she must destroy him. Jair sees hatred in her eyes and creates a false image of himself with the wishsong, just in time to escape her attack. The tower rocks from the force. Jair realizes he must separate Brin from the Ildatch, and he sings to her that the book is too heavy. Brin shatters his song. Next Jair uses the wishsong to make the book seem to be on fire. Brin reacts, then hugs the book tighter. He tries a series of sensations in quick succession, hot and cold, dark and light. Brin is confused, but Jair is tiring. Jair brings forth an image of Allanon, commanding Brin to drop the book. Brin whispers to the Ildatch in desperation. Jair does not know what else to do. Then he realizes that he must use reality and not illusion.

Rone battles against the Mord Wraiths on the Croagh, but there are too many. He calls to Cogleine for help. Whisper attacks one black walker. Cogleine throws crystals at the Mord Wraiths, and part of the Croagh is torn away. Rone destroys two with his sword, but soon he is surrounded.

Brin clutches the Ildatch close, wondering why she cannot destroy the thing that has taken the form of her brother. She feels joined with the Ildatch, yet incomplete. Suddenly she sees dozens of images of Jair, all over the room. She sings, destroying the images one by one, but suddenly she feels arms wrapped around her, warm and alive. All of her



memories come flooding back. The voice of the Ildatch is desperate, calling Brin the dark child, but she knows she is not. Jair tells her he loves her. Brin throws the book to the floor, breaking its binding and scattering its pages. She uses the wishsong to turn the remnants to dust.

The dark walkers surrounding Rone suddenly draw back, writhing, shrieking, and convulsing. Flames burst from them and they disintegrate. Kimber asks Rone what happened to the Mord Wraiths, and Rone responds that it was Brin. Then the earth tremors.

The tower shudders around Brin as Jair slips away. He tries to tell her something, but then he is gone. Everything created by the magic of the Ildatch is dying, but Brin vows to live. She runs from the empty room.

Chapter XLIII, XLIV, XLV Analysis

In the tower in the Maelmord, Brin embraces the Ildatch. Its destruction had been the focus of her quest, but now its existence is intertwined with her own. She does not object when the Ildatch calls her the dark child. At the command of the Ildatch, Brin easily makes Mord Wraiths disappear as if they had no power. Brin holds the book over head and the power within her builds. The Ildatch promises that Brin can make the world whatever she wants it to be, but the Ildatch actually wants to absorb Brin into itself.

Jair, Gareth Jax, and Slanter encounter a Jachyra at the summit of the Croagh. This is the same sort of creature that took the life of Allanon, and it is the ultimate foe Gareth Jax has been seeking. Once more, not yet absorbing the lesson the men have tried to teach him, Jair fights to stay and help Gareth Jax rather than continuing on his quest. Slanter knocks Jair out and carries him off in order to get him away from the Weapons Master. Jair is ashamed when Slanter admonishes him, and at last the lesson about sacrifice is learned. The others sacrificed themselves so Jair could save Brin. He reaches Heaven's Well at last, ready to use his wisdom and magic. He uses his wishsong to create the reality of being in the tower with Brin and the Ildatch.

Brin once again feels eyes looking at her, and at last the parallel journeys of Brin and Jair converge. The small protected part of her recognizes that it is Jair. She feels the death of herself as she fights the memories Jair presents, just as the Grimpond had foretold. Brin fights the images of Jair, but she cannot fight the flood of human emotion that comes when he touches her. Just as Brin had overwhelmed the Grimpond with the human touch, so has Jair overwhelmed what remains of Brin. With that humanity Brin gains the strength to destroy the Ildatch.



Chapter XLVI, XLVII, XLVIII

Chapter XLVI, XLVII, XLVIII Summary

In Chapter XLVI, Slanter sees the water explode once again at Heaven's Well, and then Jair reappears. Jair says he couldn't bring Brin out, but had to leave her. He tells Slanter how he needed to touch Brin to remind her of who she was, and that she finally destroyed the Ildatch, but then the magic broke and he had to leave her. Slanter says Jair did all he could and hugs him. He tells Jair that he has sand. That is Slanter's highest praise, then he mutters something about no one knowing what they are doing in all the confusion. Then they feel the earth shake. Jair and Slanter descend the steps of the Croagh to find Brin and help her. They come upon Gareth Jax, dead, with his sword still in his hand. Slanter remarks that he finally found something that could beat him, which he had been seeking all of his life. Jair would cry, but he has no tears. Jair is sure that Gareth Jax beat the red thing, but the dark magic took it away when the Ildatch was destroyed.

Brin runs through the Maelmord. It is no longer breathing. She has no sense of direction and cannot find the Croagh. The Maelmord starts to crumble under her feet. She feels unreasonable anger at Jair for leaving her, then realizes he probably had no choice. Or perhaps Jair hadn't really been there at all. She screams for Jair, then continues on. She vows to go on as long as she can. And then Whisper appears. Whisper leads Brin through the maze of the Maelmord as it falls around them. They start to climb the Croagh as it begins to crumble. Whisper and Brin reach the cliff, where Kimber, Rone, and Cogline are waiting. In Rone's arms, Brin knows she is safe.

Moments later, Jair and Slanter arrive from the other direction, from the Croagh. Brin says it was Jair, after all, who saved her. Rone jokingly chastises Jair for not staying in the Vale, for never doing what he is told. Slanter hangs back, muttering about the odd bunch. The earth tremors again and all of the Croagh is destroyed. Then the Maelmord sinks, as if swallowed by quicksand, gone forever.

In Chapter XLVII, Brin stands on the shore of the Chard Rush. During the journey there, the group had found and buried the bodies of Borderman Helt, Elb Foraker, and Edain Elesedil. They could not reach Gareth Jax, because the Croagh had crumbled, but all agreed that it was right he should rest where mortals could no longer go. All of the survivors traveled with Brin to the spot where Allanon had died, so she could keep her promise to him. Brin is not sure how to summon him, but the waters froth and the shade of Allanon appears. Brin tells him that the Ildatch is destroyed. He replies that it was destroyed not only by Elven magic and the wishsong, but also by love. Allanon says he failed her by not warning her enough of the corrupting power of the Ildatch. The wishsong could, and still can, make Brin into whatever she wishes to be. He continues, saying that the trust of the Druids now rests with her, but she should not be frightened. No harm will come to her because of that fact. Generations from now, the children of the house of Shannara will once again be called upon to use their magic. She says she



does not want this, and he repeats that she should not be afraid. He advises her to put the magic aside and never use it again, and then he disappears. Brin vows to always remember him.

In Chapter XLVIII, in the future, magic fades from the Four Lands. Fewer and fewer believe that Druids once walked among them.

After Allanon disappears into the river, the group of friends disbands. Kimber says she will miss them, and Cogline reluctantly agrees. Brin says she is grateful to them all, including Whisper. Rone tells Whisper he was wrong about him, and thanks Whisper for saving their lives. Jair says goodbye to Slanter, then invites Slanter to come back home with him. Slanter refuses, remarking that Gnomes probably won't be welcome in the Lower Anar for a long time.

More than a week later Brin, Jair, and Rone arrive at the Ohmsford's home. Jair wonders how they will explain everything that has happened. Eretria, Brin and Jair's mother, rushes toward them. She calls to Wil, who joins them. They exchange greetings, then Wil asks them who was the old man they had sent. He had come from Leah, saying that Brin, Jair, and Rone had gone to the highlands for a few weeks, and not to worry. Wil remarks that there was something familiar about the old man. Jair suddenly has an idea and runs to check the hiding place in the hearth. Sure enough, the Elfstones are there. Brin says to her parents that she and Jair have something to tell them.

Chapter XLVI, XLVII, XLVIII Analysis

After Brin destroys the Ildatch, Jair cannot maintain his presence in the tower with her. He is brought back to Heaven's Well where Slanter is waiting. Jair cries at the idea of leaving Brin, but this is different from the times Jair had left his friends behind to do battle.

Slanter and Jair find Gareth Jax, dead, but the reader and Jair are left to decide whether or not the Weapons Master was victorious in his final battle. He is a hero, either way.

Whisper the moor cat rescues Brin from the Maelmord, no longer held back by the wishsong or by instinct. The Maelmord is dying, along with the Mord Wraiths and the dark magic. Brin is, after all, both destroyer and savior, as it was foretold.

When Brin visits the shade of Allanon, he remarks that the Ildatch was destroyed not only by Elven magic, but also by love. He is correct, because without the love of Jair, Brin would have been lost forever and the Ildatch would have survived. Allanon had not allowed for the role love would play in the destruction of the dark magic.

Of course, if Brin had obeyed her parents, and if Jair had obeyed his parents and Brin, they would not have begun their journeys and would not have destroyed the Ildatch. Brin and Jair have grown up in many ways since they first disobeyed their parents early in the novel. They have become responsible and thoughtful decision-makers.



Back at home, Wil and Eretria ask about the strangely familiar old man who had come to visit them from Leah. Hearing this, Jair runs to check the hearth and finds the Elfstones in their usual hiding place. The strangely familiar visitor had been the King of the Silver River.



Characters

Brin Ohmsford

Brin Ohmsford is a Valegirl and part Elf. She lives with her family in Shady Vale, in Southland. She is beautiful, with long black hair, dusky skin, and black eyes. Brin's parents are Eretria and Wil. Brin resembles her mother. She has her father's temperament, cool, self-assured, and disciplined. Brin has the power of the wishsong, a remnant of her father's use of Elven magic in the past. She uses the wishsong occasionally, as a toy, against her father's wishes.

Brin is summoned by a Druid, Allanon, to perform a quest to save the Four Lands. Her father and another ancestor had performed similar such quests in the past. Allanon explains that the wishsong is more powerful than Brin realizes, and she must use it to help destroy the Ildatch, a book of evil magic.

Brin leaves with Allanon and her friend, Rone, without her parents' knowledge. Brin is in love with Rone, and she trusts him to keep her safe. During the quest Brin struggles to master the wishsong, without allowing it to consume her.

Jair Ohmsford

Jair Ohmsford is the younger brother of Brin, son of Eretria and Wil. He too is part Elf, with blond hair, blue eyes, and pointy ears. He has the power of the wishsong, like his sister, but his results are only illusion. His nickname, given to him by Rone Leah, is tiger.

Jair is frustrated when Brin, Rone, and the Druid Allanon depart on a quest without him. He is too young, they say, and he must look out for his parents' safety, given the danger that threatens their land. Jair encounters a Gnome and a Mord Wraith scouting his home, and he become swept up in Brin's quest, on a separate path.

Along the way Jair meets new friends, tests his courage, and grows from a boy into a man.

Eretria Ohmsford

Eretria Ohmsford is the wife of Wil, mother of Brin and Jair. She has long black hair and looks younger than her age. She is a skilled aide to her husband, who is a Healer.

Wil Ohmsford

Wil Ohmsford is the husband of Eretria, father of Brin and Jair. He is a Healer, traveling twice a year to outlying communities to help the sick and injured. The Druid Allanon had



given Elfstones to Wil years ago, to help him use Elven magic on a quest to save the Four Lands. Wil swore to never again use such magic, but his children were born with Elven traits. He forbade his children from using the wishsong, but they do so anyway.

Rone Leah

Rone Leah, a Prince of Leah, lives in the highlands. He is a friend of the Ohmsford family. He has rust-colored hair and gray eyes, and he is in love with Brin. Wil and Eretria Ohmsford ask Rone to look after Brin and Jair while they are away, but when the Druid Allanon arrives with a quest for Brin to perform, Rone insists he must accompany her to keep her safe.

Rone carries the Sword of Leah in tribute to his great-grandfather, and he hopes to someday live up to that man's legacy. Allanon adds magic to Rone's sword, to help him serve as Brin's protector. Rone struggles not to be overpowered by the sword's magic, much as Brin struggles not to be overpowered by her wishsong.

Allanon

Allanon is a Druid, over seven feet tall. He wears a black cowl. His black hair and beard are streaked with gray, and his all-seeing eyes are deep-set and penetrating. He once led Wil Ohmsford on a quest, and in this novel he requests assistance from Brin Ohmsford because she has the power of the wishsong.

Allanon feels the burden of being the last Druid, and he keeps many secrets. His father, Bremen, appears to him only as a shade, trapped between life and death in order to advise Allanon in his quest to destroy the Ildatch and lock away its dark magic. Allanon recruits Brin Ohmsford to help him, because she possesses the great power of the wishsong. He does his best to show her what her magic can do, and helps her to understand that she is destined to be both savior and destroyer.

Slanter

Slanter is a stocky, yellow-faced Gnome, something of an outcast from his own kind. He has traveled far and wide and he is a tracker. He meets Jair while searching for Allanon. Slanter is tricked by Jair, who uses the wishsong to create the illusion of snakes coiling on the Gnome's arms. Later Slanter tracks Jair and takes him prisoner. Slanter grudgingly comes to care about Jair and even helps him on his quest to save his sister, Brin.

Garet Jax

Garet Jax is a Weapons Master, dressed all in black, with a face creased by sun and wind, light hair turning silver, and flint gray eyes. Garet Jax rescues Jair from a group of



Gnomes, with some help from Slanter, and they team up to help Jair save his sister, Brin. Gareth Jax' main quest is to find a worthy adversary, since he has never lost a battle.

King of the Silver River

The King of the Silver River appears before Jair in a dream or a vision. He offers magic that will allow Jair to help Brin, in exchange for the Elfstones Jair had taken from his father's hiding place. The king is old and frail, with white hair and beard, and he wears white robes.

Elb Foraker

Elb Foraker is a bald, black-bearded Dwarf. He is a friend of Gareth Jax. He joins Jair on his quest to save Brin.

Edain Elesedil

Edain Elesedil is a Prince of the Elves. He is tall, blond, and fair-skinned. He joins Jair, Slanter, and others on the quest to save Brin.

Helt

Helt is a giant Borderman who agrees to assist Jair on his quest to reach the Heaven's Well. He used to be a tracker. He is very strong and has superior night vision.

Stythys

Stythys is a Mwellret. Mwellrets are Trolls, mutated from men and women after the Great Wars had exposed them to energy sources many years ago. Mwellrets look like reptiles and have the ability to shapeshift, to lengthen or shorten parts of their bodies at will. Stythys tries to steal the power of Jair's wishsong.

Cogline

Cogline is an old man, probably in his nineties, thin with wispy white hair. He lives in Hearthstone. He is eccentric and possesses old magic. He found a girl named Kimber Boh, after her parents had been killed by Gnome raiders, and adopted her as his granddaughter. Brin and Rone seek the help of Cogline as they travel east to destroy the Ildatch.



Kimber Boh

Kimber Boh is the adopted granddaughter of Cogline. Her parents had been killed by Gnome raiders when she was a little girl. Kimber is the mistress of Whisper, a giant cat. Kimber has long dark hair in ringlets, a freckled pixie face, and dark, intelligent eyes. She convinces Cogline to help Brin and Rone.

Whisper

Whisper is a giant moor cat, gray and black, with deep blue eyes. He is able to disappear and appear at will. The cat measures over ten feet. He listens to his mistress, Kimber, more than anyone else, but he also bonds with Brin and her wishsong.



Objects/Places

Four Lands

"The Wishsong of Shannara" takes place in the Four Lands. The main characters travel from their home in Southland to destroy dark magic in Eastland.

Wishsong

The wishsong is a bit of Elven magic. Brin and Jair Ohmsford were born with the wishsong as a result of their father, Wil, having used Elven magic on a quest when he was young. Brin can manipulate nature with her wishsong, while Jair only has the ability to create illusions. Both think the magic is mainly a toy until the day the Druid Allanon asks Brin to use her wishsong to save the Four Lands from dark magic.

Elfstones

Wil Ohmsford used the Elfstones years ago to help save the Four Lands, but afterward he hid them away, vowing to never use Elven magic again. Unbeknownst to him, his son Jair takes the Elfstones when he begins a quest to save his sister, Brin.

Ildatch

The Ildatch is a book of magic, created in the time of xxx. Whoever tries to master the magic contained within, becomes corrupted by it. The Ildatch is located in the middle of the Maelmord, which is guarded by Mord Wraiths, Gnomes under their influence, and other terrifying creatures created with dark magic.

Maelmord

The Maelmord is a living, breathing, gray forest, within which is hidden the Ildatch, a book of dark magic. Not even the Druid Allanon has magic powerful enough to allow him to enter the Maelmord. Brin's quest is to use her wishsong to enter the Maelmord and find the Ildatch.

Mord Wraiths

Mord Wraiths, also known as dark walkers, are faceless, and skeletal. They wear black robes with hoods and carry gray staffs. They have great power, creating a sense of despair around them and destroying enemies in a burst of flame. They are the creation of the dark magic contained in the Ildatch.



Shade

A shade is an apparition of someone who once lived but has not quite crossed over to the other side. Shades are summoned from bodies of water. Allanon's father, Bremen, appears as a shade; later on, Allanon does so as well.

Paranor

Paranor is the former stronghold of the Druids, and it still contains wisdom of the ages and magic. Allanon, Brin, and Rone seek to destroy Paranor, to prevent the Mord Wraiths from finding the magic within.

Sword of Leah

Rone Leah carries the Sword of Leah. It had been used by Rone's great-grandfather, and Rone seeks to live up to his image. Allanon adds magic to the sword, instructing Rone to dip it in the waters of the Hadeshorn. The sword then contains magic to deflect attacks from Mord Wraiths and other dark magic.

Heaven's Well

Heaven's Well is the source of the Silver River, located in Eastland by Graymark castle. Jair's quest is to toss Silver Dust and the vision crystal into the well, in order to clean the Silver River and rescue his sister, Brin.

Silver Dust

The King of the Silver River gives Silver Dust to Jair. The dust looks like ordinary sand, but when it is thrown into Heaven's Well, it will clean the fouled waters of the Silver River.

Vision Crystal

The vision crystal is a special magic, given to Jair by the King of the Silver River. When Jair uses his wishsong he is able to see an image of his sister, Brin, wherever she may be.

Grimpond

The Grimpond is a special shade or apparition, all that is left of someone who lived long ago. The Grimpond has wisdom and knowledge of the future, but the Grimpond sometimes speaks in lies and riddles.

Jachyra

A Jachyra is a dangerous creature formed from dark magic. It is red and muscled, with hooked claws and gleaming yellow eyes. It is a creature from another age, locked away long ago with fairie magic, brought back to life again to protect the dark magic of the Ildatch. The Jachyra becomes the ultimate adversary for two important characters in the novel.



Themes

Ethics of Using Magic

Throughout the novel, Brin struggles with the ethics of using her wishsong. Growing up, her father had ordered her not to use her magic. She had thought it was only a toy, but the Druid Allanon shows her that it is potentially a force for much more, including great destruction. During her journey to the Maelmord, Brin repeatedly vows not to use her magic because she feels it starting to overwhelm her, but then something threatens and she breaks her vow. She is troubled by the sense of glee she feels after taking another life, even though her life had been threatened moments before. Ultimately Brin and Jair use their wishsong to destroy the dark magic of the Ildatch, but only when they combine that magic with love.

Racism

In "The Wishsong of Shannara," different groups live separately and shun the notion of unity. Men live in one section of the Four Lands, Dwarves in another, Trolls in another, and so on. The dark magic and the Mord Wraiths take hold in Eastland, where Gnomes happen to live, and so the Gnomes become the pawns of the Mord Wraiths by default. Slanter the Gnome is shunned by his own kind after he becomes well-traveled, different from the other Gnomes. He tries to fit in when the Gnomes gain control of more and more land, but he is cannot. Eventually Slanter fights against the Gnome army and the Mord Wraiths, along with Jair and assorted companions. And yet, throughout the novel, Slanter is judged by others on the basis that he is a Gnome. Jair and his friends offer a great example of different types coming together, because their group includes a Man and Elf hybrid, a Gnome, an Elf, a Dwarf, a Weapons Master, and a Borderman. They work together, relying on each others' strengths, becoming a whole greater than the sum of its parts.

Destiny vs. Free Will

Throughout the novel, Brin and Jair are told of their destiny as if it were set in stone. Allanon, the shades, and the King of the Silver River foretell the future as if there is no room for free will. Brin agrees to go with Allanon to destroy the Ildatch, but if she had decided not to disobey her parents, she would not have become the destroyer and savior as was foretold. If Allanon had chosen a different route toward the Maelmord, he would not have been killed by the Jachyra as was foretold. If Jair and his friends had made different decisions along the way, Jair would not have reached Heaven's Well just in time to save Brin from losing herself to the Ildatch, as was foretold. And yet, the shades foretell the future with a certain vagueness, supposedly to allow for a variety of possibilities. It is hard to see how free will fits into the world of the Four Lands, but perhaps free will has already been factored in, somehow, in predictions of the future.

After all, those who choose the path of goodness are ultimately admired and rewarded, even if they face hardships along the way.

Style

Point of View

"The Wishsong of Shannara" is written from the viewpoint of an omniscient narrator. Most of the story is told through the eyes of Brin and Jair, but occasionally other characters come to the fore, including Allanon and Slanter. The narrator steps back from the story frequently, to provide extensive descriptions of setting or historical context, since this novel is the third in a series.

Setting

"The Wishsong of Shannara" takes place in the Four Lands, which are inhabited by a variety of races who each tend to congregate with their own kind. Men, for example, live in Southland, while Gnomes live in Eastland. The novel features a map of the entire Four Lands and another map of Eastland, where much of the action takes place. The author provides long, vivid descriptions of each new terrain and structure, allowing the reader to formulate detailed mental images of the world inhabited by Brin and Jair Ohmsford.

Language and Meaning

The characters in the novel speak English, with minor variations to reflect their personalities and experiences. Terry Brooks uses his characters' dialogue and reactions to describe the strange creatures and objects, such as the Mord Wraith, the Ildatch, and the Jachyra, rather than stopping the flow of the story to explain to the reader directly. The character with the most striking speech patterns is Stythys, the Mwellret, who speaks with a hiss. Whenever a hiss occurs, it is multiplied by two for emphasis.

Structure

The novel is constructed with two main plots, one following the adventures of Brin, the other following the adventures of her brother, Jair. The two threads converge at the end, at the climax of the novel. The actions of Brin and Jair can be compared and contrasted as the story progresses, for additional insight into their similarities and differences.



Quotes

"It had been midsummer and she had used the wishsong to turn the tree's summer green to autumn crimson; in her child's mind, it seemed perfectly all right to do so, since red was a far prettier color than green. Her father had been furious; it had taken almost three years for the tree to come back again after the shock to its system. That had been the last time either she or Jair had used the magic when their parents were about" (Chapter I, p. 2).

"He thought again about his father's continual admonition to forgo use of the Elven magic. His father just didn't understand. The magic was a part of him, and using it was as natural as using his arms and legs. He couldn't pretend it wasn't there any more than he could pretend they weren't" (Chapter III, p. 31).

"Something was wrong. He could sense it more than describe it—it was a feeling that ran cold to the bone. Something was wrong. The house...the house was not right; it was different...He stayed silent, waiting for his senses to reveal what lay hidden from him. As he stood, he grew slowly aware that something else was in the house with him, something terrible, something so evil that just its presence permeated the air with fear. Whatever it was, it seemed to be everywhere at once, a hideous, black pall that hung across the Ohmsford home like a death shroud. A thing, his mind whispered, a thing...A Mord Wraith." (Chapter III, p. 38).

"Allanon! He was an enigma that defied resolution. Committed to the preservation of the land, he was a friend to her people, a benefactor to the races, and a protector against evil they could not alone withstand. Yet what friend used people as Allanon did? Why keep so carefully concealed the reasons for all he did? He seemed at times as much enemy, malefactor, and destroyer as that which he claimed to stand against" (Chapter V, p. 49).

"Good or bad, black or white, the magic was the same in the sense that its power was rooted in the strength, wisdom, and purpose of the user" (Chapter V, p. 50).

"There is power in you of a sort that transcends any that has gone before—latent perhaps, yet the potential is unmistakable. Consider for a moment the nature of this magic you wield. The wishsong can change the behavior of any living thing! Can you not see what that means? Supple brush can be made to part for you, giving you access where there was none before. Unbending trees can be made to part as well, though they shatter with the effort. If you can bring color to leaves, you can also drain it away. If you can cause flowers to bloom, you can also cause them to wilt. If you can give life, Brin, you can also take it away" (Chapter V, p. 57).

"Even with a Gnome, his word was still his word, and it meant something when he gave it. One's word was a matter of honor. It was not a thing that could be bandied about when convenient or slipped on and off like clothing to match changes in the weather. If



he went back on it even once, that opened the door to a flood of excuses for going back on it every time thereafter" (Chapter VII, p. 78).

"Well, you don't know the Mord Wraiths like I do. You haven't lived among them. You haven't seen what they can do.' He took a deep breath. 'They're like something stolen from the dark - as if each were a bit of night broken off. When they pass, you never see them. You never hear them. You just sense them -you feel their coming'" (Chapter VIII, p. 91).

"There are threads that bind us all, you see, but they are knotted. The thread you hold is the one that will pull the rest free" (Chapter X, p. 117).

"Thus it was written within the histories; thus it was foretold,' Allanon continued quietly. 'Bremen's shade knew the truth. Older than the time of the Keep was the magic conceived to close her away. Now she is gone, drawn back into the stone of the mountain, and with her all those she trapped within.' There was a terrible sadness in the dark face. 'So it ends. Paranor is lost'" (Chapter XIII, p. 144).

"What purpose is there in being a Weapons Master if not to test the skill that the name implies? I test my skills every day of my life; I look for ways to see that the skill does not fail me. It never does, of course, but I keep looking" (Chapter XV, p. 166).

"Wraithss,' the other whispered. 'Stythyss knowss. Walkerss that desstroy. Come from out of the pitss, from the black hole of the Maelmord. From death! Climbss to Heaven'ss Well to poission the waterss of the Ssilver River. Poission the land. Desstroy it! Comess into Graymark, doess the evil. Comess to drive uss from our homess. Ensslave uss'" (Chapter XX, p. 216).

"He turned and looked down at the sleeping Valegirl. She was the one upon whom everything would depend. She would not believe that, of course, or the truth about the power of the wishsong, for she chose to see the Elven magic in human terms, and the magic had never been human. He had shown her what it could be - just a glimpse of the limits to which it could be taken, for she could stand no more, he sensed" (Chapter XXIV, p. 256).

"Power to heal; power to destroy - she had seen them both. Must she be as dependent on the magic as Rone now seemed to be? Between her and the Elven magic, which was to be master" Chapter XXVIII, p. 298).

"Brin went cold. 'I am not of their kind!' she snapped. 'I do not use the dark magic!' The Grimpond laughed. 'Nor does any, Valegirl. The magic uses them. There is the key of all that you seek. There is all you need know'" (Chapter XXXII, p. 343).

"Am I to judge what is true and what is not, where we speak of what is yet to be?'The Grimpond's voice was low and taunting. 'The book of your life lies open before me, though there are pages yet to write. What shall be written shall be written by you, not by words that I may speak. You are the last of three, each to live in the shadow of the others, each to seek to be free of that shadow, each to grow apart therefrom and then to



reach back to the ones who went before. Yet your reach is darkest on the land"
(Chapter XXXII, p. 344).

"Her eyes closed against the light and her hands clasped into fists of rage. She had done what she had said she would never do. She had taken another human life, wrenching it away in a frenzy of fear and anger, using the wishsong to do it. Allanon had warned her that it could happen. She could hear the whisper of his caution: 'Valegirl, the wishsong is power like nothing that I have ever seen. The magic can give life, and the magic can take life away'" (Chapter XXXVI, p. 378).

"The task entrusted to her by Allanon was to penetrate the forest barrier that protected the Ildatch and to see to it that the book of dark magic was destroyed. She would do this by pitting the magic of the wishsong against the magic of the Maelmord. Once she had wondered if such a thing were even possible. Now she wondered not if such a thing were possible, but if such a thing would prove cataclysmic. The power of the magics unleashed would be awesome—a match not of white magic against dark as she had once envisioned, but a match of magics equally dark in tone and effect" (Chapter XXXVII, p. 401).

"She, herself, was no longer the girl she had been, for the magic had made her over into something new and terrible. She winced at the admission she could now freely make. She was changed, and the magic had wrought it. She shook her head. Well, perhaps it was not change, after all, that she had experienced, but merely insight. Perhaps learning of the frightening extent of the wishsong's power had but shown her what had always been there and she was who she had always been and had not changed at all. Perhaps it was simply that now she understood" (Chapter XLII, p. 448).

"The euphoria, the exhilaration brought on by the frightening power of the wishsong, threatened to steal her away from herself completely, to strip her of her sanity and make her forever the thing she pretended to be. All the strange and marvelous imaginings were but trappings of a madness that would destroy her. All that remained of the one she once had been was that small bit of self that she still kept wrapped carefully within. All else had become the child of the Maelmord" (Chapter XLII, p. 457).



Topics for Discussion

Are the main characters in the novel pawns in a great plan, or do they have free will? Is Brin destined to be the third Ohmsford to complete a quest at Allanon's bidding, or does she have the option to refuse? Is Brin destined to be the savior and the destroyer, no matter what choices she makes? Is Jair guaranteed success in his quest to rescue Brin, no matter what? Are all of the evil characters and creatures in the novel pawns of the Ildatch, or do they make their own choices?

What is the wishsong? Why did Wil Ohmsford forbid his children from using the wishsong? Why do Brin and Jair disobey him? How does the power of Brin's wishsong differ from Jair's? How does Brin's understanding of the wishsong change as the novel progresses? Why is Brin reluctant to use the wishsong to harm another, even to defend herself or someone she cares about?

Why does Terry Brooks focus so much attention on the past history of the Four Lands, the Ohmsfords, Allanon, and past battles against evil? Does "The Wishsong of Shannara" stand on its own, or should it be read only after reading the first two books in the trilogy?

What are Mord Wraiths? What makes them so dangerous? Why do they disappear when Brin destroys the Ildatch? Is all evil in the Four Lands connected with the Ildatch? Why or why not?

What is the nature of the relationship between Brin and Rone? What are Rone's motivations for joining Brin on her quest? Why is Rone's sword so important to him? Why does Brin worry that Rone will lose himself to the magic of the Sword of Leah? Why does Rone exhibit hostility to others who try to help Brin during her quest?

Do the extensive narratives about setting add to or detract from the flow of the story? Do the extensive historical references illuminate or distract from the plot?

List the individuals who accompany Brin as she makes her way to the Maelmord. How does each contribute to her success? List the individuals who accompany Jair as he makes his way to Heaven's Well. How does each contribute to his success?

How does Brin become entangled with the Maelmord? Is the Maelmord a collection of plants, or is it one living being? Why is Brin able to enter it when the powerful Allanon was not? What is the danger for Brin, in joining herself with the Maelmord?

What is the main theme of "The Wishsong of Shannara?" What lessons should the reader take away after reading the novel? Are the conflicts faced by the characters in the novel universal, or are they specific to those characters in the Four Lands? How do the problems of the Four Lands compare with the problems of the real world?