

OUTLINE FOR

Diplomacy of Wolves

Book One of the MIRROR OF THE DEAD Trilogy

by Holly Lisle

Kate Galweigh, a young woman who carries the Karnee curse, (see background), and who will be killed for her aberrance if discovered, has finally convinced her parents that she can control the effects of the curse, and has won the freedom to represent her Family, the Galweighs---one of the five powerful Families in Ibera---in its diplomatic missions throughout Ibera. On her first mission, she is acting as chaperone to her cousin, Tippa, who is to wed for political purposes. While trying to extricate Tippa from a trap intended to humiliate her and shame the Galweighs, Kate uncovers a deeper and more deadly plot by the Sabirs and the Dottiraghs (two of the other Five Families) to destroy the Galweighs and take over their holdings.

At the party, she crosses paths with Ry Sabir, first son of the head of the Sabir Family, who is, like her, Karnee. Their chemistry compels them toward each other even as the enmity between their Families will push them away. Their first meeting is only the crossing of scent-paths, and it alone is enough to almost throw Kate into a Shift, which would unmask her as Karnee in front of everyone and result in her death by immediate and public stoning.

But she escapes from the party intact, and after an out-of-control and unplanned second meeting with Ry Sabir in the hills above the city of Halles, returns to her Family's embassy, where she manages to inform key members of the Galweigh diplomatic team about the details of the plot she has uncovered. They react with effectiveness and decision, pulling their people out of Halles and back to Calimekka, and substituting disguised soldiers at the wedding ... and by doing so they fall into the hands of the Sabirs, who planned to double-cross the Dottiraghs and destroy both them and the Galweighs by getting the Dottiragh and Galweigh armies tied up in the wedding basin in Halles (where they could be firebombed by the Sabir air crews) while the Families, understrength and undefended, hid in their Houses, easy prey for the Sabir ground forces.

The Sabirs plan has much of its intended effect---the Dottiraghs are destroyed, the Galweighs nearly so---but a combination of magical repercussions and Galweigh protective spells shatters the Sabir magical elite and transforms their sacrifice, a young cousin of Kate's named Danya Galweigh, into a monster who vanishes from the place where she was sacrificed. The immense magical shockwave does one further thing --- something that seems like nothing, yet in fact is the biggest and most disastrous thing that happens on Matrin since the First Wizards' War; it travels halfway around the world and triggers a device

called the Mirror of the Dead, a thousand-plus-year-old magical artifact created by the few wizards who survived the near-total devastation of that ancient war. The Mirror of the Dead exists as a gate for the souls of those long-dead wizards to return to civilization and to reclaim human form. When they do, they intend to try once again for the immortality and godlike power they hungered for and nearly destroyed their world to achieve a thousand years earlier.

The first problem for the wizards is that the Mirror of the Dead---which they set to awaken/summon them when sufficiently controllable magic again existed in the world to permit them to continue with their work---is halfway around the world from the one civilization where sufficient magical resources exist. The second problem is that most of the world's 'human' population is no longer recognizably human (from magical fallout after the Wizard's War has populated the world with magically mutated exotics.) The 'human' humans remain concentrated in and around Ibera, though a few outposts have established themselves in other regions. Over the rest of Matrin, however, magical technology is limited, and populations worldwide are hostile to normal humans, weird and unusable to the wizards for a number of reasons, or just not appealing to them as subjects for their work. So the wizards need to have someone take the Mirror of the Dead to Ibera.

To do this, each of them reaches out for one person that he or she can guide. The wizards can find likely 'candidates' wherever they might be, and can make themselves heard as disembodied voices. Three wizards choose the three Sabir Wolves who raped Danya: Crispin, Andrew, and Anwyn Sabir. These three want to establish a strong power base with the strongest magical Family, which has now become the Sabirs---and the amoral philosophy of the three Sabir Wolves they've chosen suits them. One wizard picks Kate Galweigh, because she is Karnee and strong, and because her deep love for her Family will give her a reason to brave fearful dangers if she thinks she can help them by doing so; a second chooses Ry Sabir for many of the same reasons. A third chooses Danya because she is hungry for revenge, and because her unborn son will have tremendous magical potential, and the wizard wants the baby's body. (Danya doesn't even know she's pregnant until some time after her Voice contacts her).

The wizards begin guiding their chosen people. Kate's wizard sends her to retrieve the Mirror of the Dead and carry it back to Calimekka. Kate becomes aware of the presence of this Voice, but of course doesn't suspect that its true purpose is harmful to her and her world. The Voice tells her that it can help her bring peace to Ibera and to what remains of her Family, so that the survivors need not die in endless fighting. Kate's all for that. So, on the advice of the Voice, she hires a ship to take her

across the ocean, and pays the captain with money she stole from a cadet branch of the Galweighs that was mostly unaffected by the disaster. The ship she is able to get is crewed by smugglers and pirates, and led by Ian Draclas, who is the illegitimate half-brother of Ry Sabir and a bitter enemy of his. (Kate doesn't find out about Ian's pedigree yet---he has kept his ties to Family well-hidden even from his associates and crew.)

She and the crew, and a young white wizard named Hasmal, and her uncle Hardin (who is a wizard of the same school as Hasmal, and who will come back into play in a major way in books two and three) take off across the sea. Hardin leaves the expedition when it reaches the Dalvian Islands and stops to take on supplies for the ocean voyage ahead. Supposedly he intends to take another ship back to his home in the Imumbarra Isles. Kate, meanwhile, works secretly with Hasmal to learn Winding Path magic, which is the non-destructive form he uses. In spite of her deep reservations about the use of magic in any form (see background on magic), Hasmal convinces her that she must learn it for her own protection. He is a visionary, and an oracle, and though he doesn't have clear visions of the future, he can see that if she doesn't learn the forms of protection he can teach her, she'll die, and most of the world with her. He doesn't tell her this, however. He keeps the most terrible of his visions to himself.

Kate and the ship captain, Ian Draclas, become involved, though this involvement causes some tension between captain and crew.

While Kate is working with Hasmal and traveling toward her unknown destination, Ry takes one of the Family ships and a crew of loyal Family retainers and is tracking her across the ocean, using the link their shared Karnee bond has formed between them to follow her. He plans her capture, though what he intends to do with her once he has her even he isn't certain. He has become obsessed with her---a result of the magical pull effected by their opposite strains of Karnee---and has become irrational on the subject of her. His moods and obsessions are further fueled by magic cast at him by his Family, (though the three Sabir Wolves who will be main villains in the second and third books are actually urging moderation on their Family, and suggesting that they capture Kate instead of killing her). The Sabir Wolves send spells intended to make Ry hunt Kate down, take whatever she has found, and kill her. As far as they're concerned, she is a daughter of the enemy, and no matter how much Ry might want her, the Wolves are determined that he won't have her. They can see no good coming from her survival in any situation.

Both the surviving Sabir and Galweigh wizards do know that Kate is after something of major import. The three Wolves in contact with the ancient wizards know more. They alone know that

the artifact is going to permit the ancient wizards to dominate humanity---this because the wizards have enlisted them as full confidantes; all three are more than willing to sell out everyone else in their world for their own slice of immortality. But for the rest of the Wolves, the shielding with which the Mirror of the Dead surrounds itself keeps them from determining its purpose, its import, or much of its origin. Both Families believe that the Mirror will give them enormous power if they can obtain and control it, and that it is of ancient make---and both are determined to have it, no matter what the cost.

Back to Kate, whose problems aren't limited to finding an ancient artifact on an unexplored continent while being hunted by the obsessed and dangerous son of her Family's hereditary enemies. That single passionate contact with Ry Sabir back in Halles has had a drastic effect on her metabolism. The same part of the Karnee Curse that draws him to her also draws her to him, in mind as well as in body, and pushes her to the edge of her self-control. Her metabolism stays on high, and she finds all her appetites raging, her moods out of control, and her Shifts unpredictable in onset, type and duration---and this puts her life in danger from the crew, who may be pirates and brigands but who are all fully human, and who would no more suffer a shapechanger to live than they would a wizard if they discovered either of those in their midst.

To further complicate her life, her relationship with Ian isn't all that it seems, either. While he does feel a genuine physical attraction to Kate, his main purpose in taking her on as a passenger was that she was willing to finance and provision a journey he wanted to take anyway. And that hasn't changed, despite their intimacy. He has a journal he acquired from a previous explorer of the far continent of North Novtierra, and the journal (which he stole) lists locations of Ancient cities where he might find artifacts to sell, and other things that could make his fortune. He has discovered a portion of the secret of her Karnee curse, though he knows nothing about Hasmal's being a wizard, nor about Kate's studies into magic, nor about the Voice that is guiding her. Still, he knows enough about what she is that he figures he'll be able to use the knowledge to control her at a later point, should such control prove necessary. Meanwhile, he keeps her around and close (in every way) because he knows she's going after something big, but he knows that even she isn't sure what it is, or where, and he knows he'll never find it without her. He wants this thing she dreams about at night. He figures once he gets it, he'll leave her and Hasmal and some supplies (well, maybe some supplies) along a shipping lane where they're likely to get rescued, and then he and his crew will sail off without them.

Kate is unsuspecting of Ian's duplicity. She has too much else to occupy her attention. She does know that Ry Sabir is nearby. She discovers that the survivors among her Family are acting against her back in Calimekka. And she has to deal with a violent storm at sea, and a sea-haunting, and she must work on her magic and fight against the magnetic ache of her invisible link to Ry.

The ship nears the far continent, and Kate feels the growing excitement in the Voice that speaks to her. Her relationship with the other people aboard the ship seem to become less tense. Then, while sailing through the Chain of Gamion, a ring of islands heavy with magic, a sea monster attacks the ship. While the crew attempts to fight it off by conventional means, the monster grabs a sailor off the deck. Kate, not thinking of the consequences, shifts into her water-predator form and attacks the monster, and at risk of her own life saves the sailor. Meanwhile Hasmal places a magical shield around the ship that causes the monster to forget the ship exists. But both Kate and Hasmal have exposed themselves to the crew as monsters instead of true humans.

Some of the crew want to throw Kate and Hasmal off the ship into the sea immediately. Others want to kill them. Even the man whose life Kate saved wants her off the ship, though he is in favor of marooning her someplace. Ian calms the crew down and says he won't allow any harm to come to either passenger. He

means "until they've found whatever they're after" but he doesn't make that clear to the crew, who decide he's gone soft on monsters. The crew begins to turn against him, too.

While this is going on in the new lands to the far east, Danya is in the southern part of the continent of Ynjarval (same continent that contains Ibera) in the Veral Territories, which are basically magic-poisoned wastelands, following her own Voice. Danya almost dies from the injuries she suffered at the hands of the Sabirs. But the wizard who has chosen her helps her find ways of surviving in the brutal cold and dangerous terrain. He also promises her that she will obtain power and revenge against the people who destroyed her, and she's in favor of that. Further, while she won't give the Voice she hears her own body, (though he offers to make her immortal if she does) she does swear in blood that he can have the body of her unborn child, who was conceived in rape, and whom she hates. So this Ancient now has a guarantee of a magically strong young body, and because he'll have the assistance and agreement of the mother in taking it, he doesn't even have to have the Mirror.

(The unborn child, incidentally, will become Luercas, the archvillain of the series, who will have a powerful body born of the mating of wizards and magic run amok and the demonic soul of the ancient wizard, Luercas, with whom Danya makes her deal.)

The wizard works with Danya, leading her to a tribe of Scarred folk deep in the magic-twisted badlands, and helping her to force them to take her in. She heals, grows strong, and eventually fights the chief of the tribe and kills him, taking over leadership herself. Once she's the leader, she begins raising both an army and a band of wild wizards, with the Ancient directing her and helping her to draw in other tribes by giving her information she needs to either win them to her cause or conquer them outright. She becomes a charismatic leader, and in spite of her advancing pregnancy, successfully fights off two attempts to overthrow her. By doing so, she gains even more converts.

She makes both friends and enemies among her allies, and develops magical strength and finesse. And she still burns inside for revenge against the Sabirs, as well as against her own family, the Galweighs, for not ransoming her while they could. She sells her followers on her goal of revenge by painting a picture of Ibera to the north as the promised land, ripe for invasion, and withheld from her people because they are not true humans. Her closest advisors, her captains and lieutenants, become infected with her desire to sweep through the warm, lush, rich north, and they spread this hunger to their underlings.

Back to Kate, who has finally found her way to the distant shore of North Novtierra, and who, listening to the Voice that

guides her, takes her people south along the coast---and through dangerous territories inhabited by nightmarish beasts and Scarred once-human monsters. The ship never puts ashore for fresh water or anything else; the territory simply looks too deadly. At last Kate guides everyone to the ruins of a gorgeous ancient city built onto the side of a mountain that runs down to the sea.

The place has a natural harbor, and the ship can dock fairly close to the shore. Under cover of darkness, Kate, Ian, Hasmal, and two crew members debark in one of the dinghies, and when the five of them reach the beach, the two armed crew members stay behind to guard the dinghy. The other three climb the mountain into the ruins to search for the Artifact.

The crew, however, cares nothing about any artifact or treasure the three might find. They figure that no treasure could be worth a return trip with a monster, a wizard and a captain who has lost his mind. They consider themselves lucky that their three problems have so neatly removed themselves from the ship. As soon as Kate, Hasmal, and Ian are well out of earshot, the two crewmen on the beach steal the dinghy back to the ship, and the ship lifts anchor and sails away, stranding them.

Up in the abandoned city, the Voice leads Kate to the Mirror, and the three try to figure out what to do with it. It's a delicate platinum band about six feet in diameter, covered with carvings and glowing softly in the center. It rests on a lovely

tripod that is awkward to lift and seems too delicate to tolerate much handling. They make a carrier for the whole contraption, then have to hide from hunters who have come into the city following their scent. When they elude the hunters and escape the city, they reach the beach to discover that they've been stranded.

Then the hunters attack again, and this time Kate, Ian, and Hasmal are cornered, with no place to hide. The three of them make a stand, with Kate in Karnee form, Hasmal doing wizardry, and Ian fighting with standard weapons. Ian is injured, Kate is injured, and Hasmal manages to keep the creatures at bay with magic, but he's weakening, and if he doesn't get relief soon, Ian will die.

The Mirror of the Dead flashes, and suddenly the leaders in the attack turn on their own people and kill them, then kill themselves.

Hasmal and Kate both felt the Mirror's magic, and didn't like the feel of it at all, but all of their auguries say that they must have this artifact if they and their world are to survive. They have to help Ian, then get to someplace safe before some other Novtierran hazard comes charging up the beach or down the side of the mountain.

While they are fighting on land and cleaning up the subsequent mess, Ry Sabir and his crew are attacking the ship that Kate had so recently been on. In the battle, half of Ry's crew is

killed, the ship Kate was on is burned and sunk at sea, going down with all hands, and Ry's ship is damaged. It limps into the harbor with its complement of wounded and dead, having failed to find either Kate or the artifact.

Kate feels Ry coming, and sets a trap for him. He comes in at her, not wary, completely under the spell of the Karnee bond, and she captures him ... but she and Hasmal and Ian are in turn surrounded by the rest of Ry's surviving crew. Kate forces an agreement on Ry, and she and Hasmal and Ian are promised safe passage on the ship, and sole custody of the artifact until they reach civilization again. The hatred between half-brothers Ian and Ry, which was evidently fierce before, becomes even more pronounced when Ry discovers that Kate is sleeping with Ian. The ship starts back toward Ibera, but it travels under a cloud.

Back in civilization, meanwhile, the Sabirs and the Galweighs have discovered that they are in grave danger. Their auguries have pointed to a deadly force marching toward them from the south (Danya's army), and to danger from Kate and Ry to the east.

Back in Calimekka, the two Families, led by the three wizard-allied Sabir Wolves, come to a truce---they'll band together to fight off the oncoming threats, and put their hatreds behind them for the duration of the war. And they'll put their joint resources into retrieving the Mirror of the Dead from Kate and Ry, and into making sure that both of them die before they can step

foot on Iberan soil again. Even as they're agreeing to work together, both Families are trying to figure out a way to get the upper hand and crush each other.

At the end of the first book, Kate has the artifact, and is headed home, but faces a dilemma; she knows that her Family is working against her, and while she is determined to help them, she senses that if she takes the Mirror back to Calimekka, she will regret her decision. She and Hasmal do a divination, and determine that the best place for them to go (in spite of what the Voice says, and what Ry and his crew want, and what she had planned) is to Manarkas, which is the continent that lies to the north of Ynjarval.

But she can't convince Ry that this is what they must do. They're on a course for Calimekka, and Kate, in what should be her moment of triumph, and in spite of knowing that she has the artifact in her possession that will help her save her world, feels a sick dread about what will happen when she arrives. She keeps her shields up and at the same time tries to divine the purpose of the artifact, and how she is supposed to use it, and what it is supposed to be able to do for her and her people, but it has shields, too, and keeps its secrets well.

END BOOK ONE

SHORT OUTLINE FOR

Vengeance of Dragons

Book 2 of the MIRROR OF THE DEAD Trilogy

by Holly Lisle

The book opens with Kate, Ian, and Hasmal stealing over the side of Ry Sabir's ship in the middle of the night, hauling the Mirror of the Dead and preparing to steal the dinghy and sail for Manarkas because Ry refuses to change course away from Calimekka. But as they prepare to cast off, the Mirror of the Dead sets off a light show that alerts the crew, which takes the Mirror of the Dead back, plus all the provisions the three of them had taken ... then casts Kate, Hasmal, and Ian adrift.

But Ry and his men don't get to keep the Mirror of the Dead, either. The three Sabir Wolves who were influential in the alliance between the Galweighs and the Sabirs in Book 1 (Crispin, Andrew and Anwyn) arrive by airible and destroy the ship and everyone on board and steal the Mirror of the Dead back to the city. Only Ry Sabir manages to escape, by Shifting and swimming away underwater. He homes in on Kate and joins them as they drag themselves onto an uninhabited island along the equator.

While the quartet of reluctant allies tries to figure out how to get itself home to reclaim the Mirror of the Dead before it can do whatever it's going to do, the Wolves take the Mirror of the Dead to the people of Calimekka, as instructed, and the Mirror spews forth about a thousand Wizards' souls into the best of the

bodies gathered there, ousting the souls that belonged to those bodies at the same time. The souls take over many of the Wolves, as well as key people from all representative power groups in Calimekka, and a few who are just strong and healthy and beautiful. There is no apparent external change in these people, because the Ancient souls are subtle, but changes start taking place in the way things are done all over the city.

At about this time, Danya reaches time to give birth. She gathers the midwives, and after a terrible labor, gives birth to a son who is a perfect human infant in appearance. She honors her agreement with the Voice (which is the wizard Luercas) and installs the wizard in the infant's body in her son's body in a grisly ceremony that requires the deaths of two criminals as sacrifices, and the removal of the infant's own soul. Danya sees her son die as the wizard takes him over, and feels a moment of satisfaction, that she has had the first part of her revenge and destroyed the actual offspring of the rapists. Then she clears the room and the infant speaks to her, telling her what she must do for the next year, while he grows ... and telling her how she will be consort of the world that they will come to rule.

Her "son", who names himself Luercas (his name a thousand years before), grows much faster than a normal child (a result of the wizard's magic and the kid's natural potential and the invisible aberrations caused by the events that took place during

Danya's pregnancy). He grows at the rate of about two years per month---(though he won't age at a proportionate rate; once his body reaches adult prime, it will just stay that way). So that at the end of the second book, he'll be about twenty years old physically.

And we see him working with Danya: the two of them sacrificing anyone who crosses them in order to feed him the magic he needs to continue his incredible growth; the two of them plotting the destruction of the magic-users in Ibera, including Luercas's old enemies; Luercas training Danya in ever-more difficult magical techniques. And we see Luercas, as he grows older, beginning to prey on the young women in Danya's control ... and we see Danya, who had no one to stand up for her in her moment of desperate need, finding another sort of revenge by supplying him with these young women.

Meanwhile, Kate, Hasmal, Ian and Ry receive a magical message from Kate's Uncle Hardin, and discover that in Calimekka the Ancients are now running things, and are in the process of carrying out the plan they started well over a thousand years ago--a plan so violently opposed by many of Ancient wizards' contemporaries that humanity fought a 'war to end all wars' over it, and almost blew the planet apart. They are building a Shangri-La for themselves, a fantasyland in which they are to be

immortals with god-like powers, and everyone else is to be their slave.

A thousand years earlier, their attempt to enslave everyone around them was stopped by thousands of wizards like Hasmal and Hardin---white wizards who sacrificed themselves to destroy the spells the dark wizards, or Dragons, cast. Now, because in this new world research into magic has been forbidden, and thus carried out only in secret by those with the worst of motives, thousands of white wizards don't exist to stop them. Only Kate and Hasmal and a few scattered others do.

Kate and Hasmal rid Kate of her Voice; they manage to trap it in a tiny, jury-rigged version of the Mirror of the Dead. But they know they won't be able to capture and contain the rest of the wizards one at a time. They'll be stopped before they can complete the task. They need help. Hasmal looks into the future and sees that he and Kate are going to have to split up---there are a few wizards who might be able to help them in the northern part of Manarkas, and some in the western part, near Old Jirin and the New Territories. They divide up their few supplies, devise a rather limited magical means to stay in touch with each other and with Hardin, and prepare to head out the next day. Ry is to go with Hasmal, Ian with Kate.

But then Ian goes out to stand watch that night and doesn't come back. We find out later that he took off for Calimekka with

the information on Kate's and her colleagues' plans, and that he's sold out his own people. He is already known to some of the people in power in Calimekka, having dealt with them in his days as a smuggler and pirate, and he has the bloodlines and the obvious motives to join their side; he hates his half-brother and will do anything to see him crushed. Ian rises through the ranks while our guys are fighting for their lives, and eventually makes it into the outer circle of the Ancients as an advisor on current technology. (The Ancients are trying to rebuild their own technology, and having to start from a very low level.)

Kate, Hasmal and Ry have no idea what has happened to Ian, though, and they waste a couple of days trying to find him, or some sign of him. He did a good job of hiding his trail, and they can't. At last they have to give up, assuming that something awful happened to him, and they set out on their separate missions. However, Ry decides at the last minute to go with Kate--as he reasonably points out, their combined abilities with magic are about equal to Hasmal's alone, and in Karnee form they'll be able to keep up with each other and cover more ground. Time, Kate's divinations say again and again, is running out.

It's only when they do a final check of their supplies before leaving that they discover the miniature Mirror, with its captive wizard, is gone. Then they suspect that they've been betrayed. Nothing to do but go on.

Where do I go from here?

Now we see Hardin among his own people, in the Imumbarra Isles, raising a small cadre of primitive wizards to go against the huge force in Calimekka.

And we see Kate and Ian, moving from east to west across Manarkas on their way to the magic-changed area around Lake Jirin, finding little help and a lot of trouble, gradually growing to depend on each other, learning trust. And we watch Hasmal, alone, traveling up the Varhees River toward the northern edge of the Twincities Sea, being stalked and captured by the Scarred Manarkans, winning them over to his side, and finally putting together a small force of his own.

The three groups manage to arrange a gathering in Heymar, on the northern shore of the Dalvian Sea, which separates them from Calimekka. And once there, they develop a dangerous plan for recapturing the Mirror of the Dead and re-imprisoning the ancient Wizards in it until the artifact can be destroyed and the wizards' souls released into the Well of Souls, where they should have gone in the first place.

They and their white-wizard strike force sail to Calimekka and enter the city shielded by their magic. They search the city, and Kate and Ry locate the Mirror of the Dead. While they try to steal it, Hasmal leads the other wizards in creating diversions around the city.

These diversions seem to work at drawing the wizards away from the Mirror of the Dead, but this is only an illusion. The wizards have, in fact, been watching and waiting for such an attack, and they capture both Kate and Ry.

The Wizards have succeeded in scavenging pieces of old magical technology and fabricating new ones, and they are ready to set up to cast their long-awaited spell, a spell that is to give them immortality by feeding them the life energy of the people around them, and that is to change the world into a sort of Shangri-La for them, one where all creatures breathe only to serve them. Ry and Kate are to be their main sacrifices, because they embody magic in several forms, and will be great sources of power.

But Ian, who has been under cover among the wizards all this time, comes to the rescue, having spent most of his time among them figuring out just how to best screw up what they were doing. He succeeds, and he and Kate and Ry escape, taking the Mirror of the Dead with them.

When Ry tells our heroes what they're up against, they don't have a lot of time to make their move. The part of the spell that he screwed up was the most difficult to manufacture that he could get to, but what was made once can be made a second time, and while they have the Mirror of the Dead, there still remains the problem of getting the wizards within reach of it so that their souls can be pulled out of the bodies that don't belong to them

and, possibly, returned to the souls who once inhabited them. The white wizards know what they're up against now, and they know what will happen to them and their entire world if they fail to stop the Dragons, but they don't know what to do to stop the Dragons without smashing the world (which happened in the First Wizard War). Limited by lack of knowledge and resources, they scramble for answers.

While they're scrambling and experimenting, the ancient wizards and the remainder of the Wolves dig them out, destroy their stronghold, and capture Hasmal. This leaves the heroes without the best of their own wizards.

Kate and Ry and Hardin refuse to despair. They fall back, regroup, and lead the rest of their small force in attempting a rescue. They fail.

The Dragons torture Hasmal, hoping to extract information from him before using him as a sacrifice to power the spell that they once again have ready to go. But Hasmal doesn't give them what they want. Instead, he finds an answer to destroying them, then releases his spirit and dies. He's out of their reach.

He temporarily rejoins his living friends, and tells them what he's discovered about destroying the cabal of ancient wizards by using the magic of the Mirror of the Dead. This information allows them to start building a weapon and a plan that might work.

Hasmal connects with his Kate and Ry as a Voice; he does not reconstitute in the body of someone else. When they know everything he can tell them, he accepts his death and his new place in the eternal cycle of life, and leaves them to fight without him.

When the weapon is built, Ry and Kate and Hardin set the trap ... but the wizards don't fall for it. So they set a different trap, this time baited with themselves as the offering. The wizards attack, and the good guys set off their weapon. Many of Kate's small force of wizards die many heroes die, but all of the wizards are captured.

Kate and Ry destroy the Mirror of the Dead, then celebrate, and Calimekka celebrates with them.

Meanwhile, down in the Veral territories, Luercas turns to Danya and says, "There, didn't I tell you? My old enemies are out of the way, the fertile warm lands lie before us, and now only a few shepherds guard the sheep, and they've destroyed the only weapon we needed to fear.

END BOOK 2

SHORT OUTLINE FOR

Courage of Falcons

Book 3 of the MIRROR OF THE DEAD Trilogy

By Holly Lisle

Celebration in Calimekka, with Hardin receiving the top seat in the new, unified city.

Calimekkans discover that Kate and Ry are Karnee, and public sentiment turns against them---white wizards people will deal with if they must, but not shapechangers. They try to kill them, and both flee, flying north in Karnee form.

Danya and Luercas and their horde move on Ibera. Destruction, devastation, disaster. People we like die. Cities laid waste. The ravaging hordes and the horrors of war and occupation.

The Calimekkans see this horrible new force coming at them and demand that Hardin stop it. He and those white wizards that remain try---and are smashed by the deadly magic leveled against them. Hardin barely escapes with his life ... and when he fails, Calimekka brings back into power the few surviving Wolves who know the magic of the dark path and can use it. They offer sacrifices from their own number to ward off the approaching evil; first convicted criminals, then troublemakers, then people they don't like very much, and finally anyone who isn't fast enough to point a finger at someone else.

But while the Calimekkans are running their city into oblivion, and while Luercas and Danya and their hordes sit outside the city gates, waiting out a siege which they only need time to win, Hardin, traveling with Ian, is out hunting for Kate and Ry.

He isn't the only one. Luercas has identified the two of them as a possible source of resistance, and has his hunters after them, too.

Kate and Ry didn't give up on their world or their people. They're trying desperately to develop a spell that will permit them to create a Mirror of the Dead that will only pull a soul in and not let it out, that will not use any negative magic, and that will not set off any sort of deadly reaction like the spells the ancient white wizards used to stop Luercas the first time. Luercas, of course, is not hampered by any of these niceties in his war against Calimekka or his hunt of them.

Hardin finds Kate by using the same sort of communication they used while trying to find white wizards to stand against the ancient wizards. They rendezvous in Icta Draclas in Galwegia (which lies on the western peninsula of South Novtierra). This is a hard land, full of the Scarred, adventurers, escaped criminals, and pioneers hoping to acquire fertile land and a livelihood away from the strictures of Iberan society. Now, of course, it also is home to refugees from the Iberan wars, and is a hotbed of intrigue.

Ry and Kate are by this time inseparable---very much in love and a couple. Together, however, they make too tempting a target, since they are, by all omens and divinations, their world's single absolutely necessary ingredient in overcoming Luercas and Danya. They also represent an impossible loss if they are both killed. Hardin points this out to them, and, anguished, they travel away from each other, so that if one is captured or killed the other will still be able to work against the enemy.

Apart, miserable, afraid for each other, they find magical ways to transcend the limitations of their bodies so that they can be together in spirit. And through this magic, they come up with the single way that they can capture and hold Luercas's soul without destroying anything, without resorting to evil. They have to draw it into the new Mirror of the Dead with their own souls. Neither is willing to let the other die, so both agree that they will go together, and they bring Hardin into their pact, making him swear that he will destroy the new Mirror once all three are inside of it, so that no one will ever be able to release Luercas.

Meanwhile, Luercas has taken Calimekka, and has killed all three of the dark Wolves (Crispin, Anwyn, and Andrew) in satisfyingly gory ways in order to raise additional power and to make sure that no one else in the city dares to stand against him. So Danya gets her revenge ... but not for long, because the effort

of magically searching the entire planet for Kate and Ry takes so much out of Luercas that he uses her as his next power locus.

He finds them about the same time that they figure out how they're going to get him.

Hardin agrees to act as the destroyer of the new Mirror, and both Kate and Ry rejoin so that they can be together again one last time in body as well as spirit. Then they prepare themselves for their self-sacrifice, and drop into the trances that will allow them to separate spirit from body and lure Luercas into the Mirror of the Dead.

They succeed in drawing his spirit to them, and are ready to go through the one-way gate they've created, (which doesn't look like a trap, but is), when the spirit of Hardin blocks them, takes on Luercas's spirit, and goes careening into the gate locked in battle with him.

They awake to find themselves still alive and in their bodies, with Hardin's body on the floor beside the Mirror of the Dead. They destroy the Mirror, saying goodbye to Kate's uncle at the same time.

Kate and Ry don't return to the city. They build a new life for themselves in Icta Draclas, looking to the future instead of the past.

END BOOK THREE

Themes of the three books.

1. Transcendent love that overcomes all obstacles
2. Courage and self-sacrifice as a part of love
3. The recognition that dearly-held beliefs and cherished dogmas can be destructive of self and world
4. Evil as a real, eternal, recurring force

The main story: one woman's growth from child to woman, her courage in the face of terrible danger, and her love of her world and the people in it.

Secondary stories:

1. The love story of Kate and Ry ---- this will move through distrust and long-buried hatreds and will grow through shared suffering, humor, and passion.

2. Hardin's growth from a humorous, manipulative charmer to a man who will sacrifice himself for the love of his niece and her soul-mate, and for the good of his world.

3. Ry's growth from a young wizard pointed by his family toward dark magic and power-seeking into a man who, transformed through love, offers everything to save the world he once wanted to rule.

4. The growth of Hasmal from coward to hero ---- and from minor magician to master of a non-lethal kind of magic. He will be the first great practitioner of this kind of magic, and will leave it as his legacy when he dies.

5. The growth of Ian from mercenary to idealist ---- though he will still retain his rakish character, and when the war is over, will be available for a part in further stories.

6. The redemption of the warring factions of Galweigh and Sabir, of Veral creatures and standard humans, of high classes and low classes, by their embracing of a common cause, and through self-sacrifice.

7. Luercas and Danya, and the ancient wizards, and the three dark Wolves, and their descent from petty evil to hellish malignancy---and through them, a look at the way that evil sees itself as misunderstood good, and justifies its actions---most of the time---as being for the good of the many, at the expense of the few.