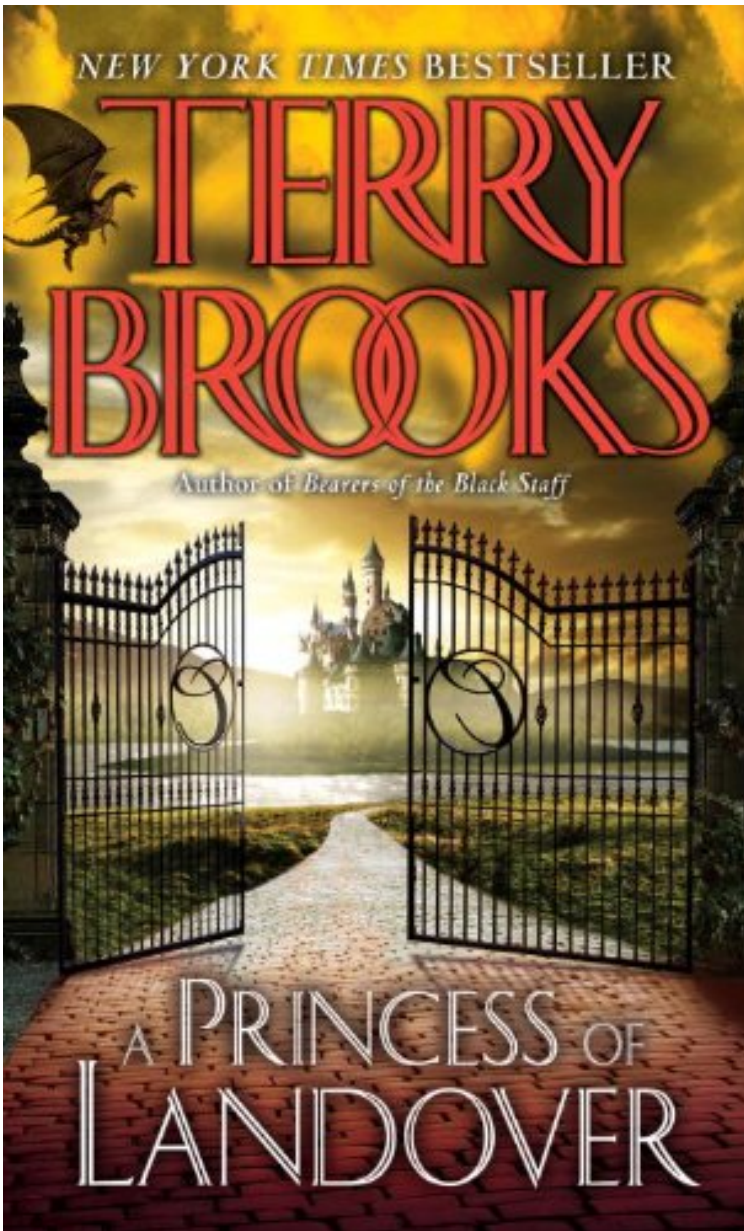


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A Princess of Landover



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Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurBONUS: This edition contains an excerpt from Terry Brooks's Bearers of the Black Staff. Ben Holiday, mere mortal turned monarch of the magic kingdom of Landover, has grappled with numerous contenders for his throne, but nothing could have prepared him for the most daunting of challengers: his headstrong teenage daughter, Mistaya. After getting suspended from an exclusive private school in our world, Mistaya is determined to resume her real education learning sorcery from court wizard Questor Thews whether her parents like it or not. Then, horrified that a repulsive Landover nobleman seeks

to marry her, Mistaya decides that the only way to run her own life is to run away from home. So begins an eventful odyssey peppered with a formidable dragon, recalcitrant Gnomes, an inscrutable magic cat, a handsome librarian, a sinister sorcerer, and more than a few narrow escapes as fate draws Landovers intrepid princess into the thick of a mystery that will put her mettle to the test and possibly bring the kingdom to its knees.

Chapter One
It's All Happening at the Zoo

The crow with the red eyes sat on the highest branch of the farthest tree at the very back of the aviary, dreaming its dark and terrible dreams. Had there been substance to those dreams, they would have scalded the earth and melted the iron bars and steel-mesh netting that held it prisoner. Had there been substance, they would have burned a hole in the very air and opened a passage to that other world, the world to which the crow belonged and desperately needed to return. But the dreams were ethereal and served only to pass the time and grow ever darker as the days wore on and the crow remained trapped. The crow was Nightshade, Witch of the Deep Fell, and she had been absent from Landover, trapped in her current form, for more than five years. She thought about it every day of her captivity. She sat on this branch, aloof and apart from the other birds, the ones that lacked the capacity for critical thinking, the ones that found some measure of happiness and contentment in their pitiful condition. There was nothing of either happiness or contentment for her, only the bitter memories of what had been and what might never be again. Her lost world. Her stolen life. Her true identity. Everything that had been hers before she sought to use the girl child of the King and Queen for her own purposes. Mistaya Holiday, Princess of Landover, was the child of three worlds and of parents who knew nothing of what she needed or what she could become, who knew only to keep her from a destiny that would have made her the witch's own. Even the sound of her name in the silent roil of the witch's thoughts was like the burn of acid, and her rage and hatred fed on it anew. It never lessened, never cooled, and she was quite certain that until the child was dead or hers once more, it never would. She might be kept a prisoner in this cage for a thousand years and might never regain her true form, and still there would be no peace for her. In her tortured mind, the witch replayed the last moments of her old life, the way it had all been, had all ended, and had suddenly become the nightmare she now endured. The child had been hers: subverted and won over, committed to her new teacher of dark magic. Then everything had gone wrong. Set against the girl by circumstances and events beyond her control, she had tried to make the child understand and had failed. Confronted by the child's parents and allies, she had fought back with magic that had somehow been turned against her. Instead of the child being sentenced for insubordination and disobedience to banishment in a foreign world, she had been dispatched instead, made over into the form of her familiar. She had tried endlessly to reason out what had happened to make things go so wrong, but even after all these years she could not be certain. The other birds avoided the crow with the red eyes. They sensed that it was not like them, that it was a very different species, that it was dangerous and to be feared. They kept far away from it and left it alone. Now and then, one of them erred and came too close. That one served as an object lesson to the others of what might happen if they failed to be careful. It was never pretty. It was seldom even quick. The other birds tried not to make mistakes around the crow with the red eyes. Which was the best that Nightshade, Witch of the Deep Fell, could expect if she failed to escape. Vince stood at the edge of the enclosure and studied the odd bird just as he had been studying her for the better part of the five years following her abrupt and mysterious appearance. Every day, right after he got off work unless there was a pressing reason to get home to his family he stopped for a look. He couldn't have explained why, even if pressed to do so. Woodland Park Zoo was filled with strange and exotic creatures, some of them species so rare that they had never been seen in the wild. The crow with the red eyes was one of these. Whether she was truly a species apart or simply an aberration was something ornithologists and experts in related areas had been trying to determine from the beginning, all without success. It didn't matter much to Vince. He just found the crow intriguing and liked watching it. What he didn't much care for was the way the crow seemed to like watching him, those red eyes so intent and filled with some unreadable emotion. He wished he knew its story, but he never would, of course. Crows couldn't talk or even think much. They just reacted to the instincts they were born with. They just knew how to survive. How did you get here? Vince asked softly, speaking only to himself, watching the bird watching him. It had popped up at the local animal shelter, not there one day and there the next, come out of nowhere. He still wondered how that could be possible. The shelter was a closed compound, and birds didn't just fly in or out. But this one had. Somehow. The experts had tried to trap it repeatedly after it had been transported to the zoo, hoping to get close enough to study it more carefully. But they should have thought of that before they released it to the aviary. All their efforts had failed. The bird seemed to know their intentions ahead of time and avoid all their clumsy attempts to get their hands on it. They had to

content themselves with studying it from afar, which they did until more pressing and fruitful pursuits had turned their heads another way. If the bird had not been a bird, but one of the big cats or lumbering giants of the African veldt, it would have gotten more attention, Vince thought. There would have been more money for research, more public interest, something to drive the effort to learn its origins. Vince knew how things worked at the zoo. The squeaky wheel got the grease. Vince watched the bird some more, perched way up there in the branches, a Queen over her subjects. So regal. So contemptuous, almost. As if it knew how much better it was than the others. He shook his head. Birds didn't think like that. It was stupid to think they did. He glanced at his watch. Time to be getting home. The wife and kids would be waiting dinner. There was a game on TV tonight that he wanted to see. He stretched, yawned. Tomorrow was another workday. He was walking away, headed for the parking lot and his car, when something made him glance back. The crow with the red eyes was watching him still, following his movements. Vince shook his head, uneasy. He didn't like that sort of intense scrutiny, especially not from a bird. There was something creepy about it. Like it was stalking him or something. Like it would hunt him down and kill him if were set free. He quit looking at it and walked on, chiding himself for such foolish thinking. It was just a bird, after all. It was only a bird.

Revue de presse Sweet, charming and skillful . . . an enjoyable journey, a helluva ride. January magazine Fans of Brook's magic kingdom of Landover will welcome this title. . . . There are plenty of treats. Publishers Weekly Fun and engaging. Kirkus sFrom the Paperback edition.