

# The Riddle of Princess Sophia

(Prologue to *Three Floating Coffins*)



## Learning Packet

# The Riddle of Princess Sophia

by Rebecca Lang

Once upon a time, in the Kingdom of the Seven Isles, a hard-hearted king sought to rid the land of magic. He spent the days of his youth scouring his kingdom, killing those who knew of it, even turning against his own brothers and sisters (for in those days, every member of the royal family was a sorcerer by nature). At last content that his work was done, the king settled down to enjoy his twilight years.

Now the king had a daughter who had come to him late in life, Princess Sophia, his sole heir and joy. Her eyes were as blue as the summer waves, her hair shone like polished oak, and her gentle smile caused even the most grizzled soldier to break into a toothsome grin. Aside from this, Princess Sophia was also intelligent and curious. She spent many days hunting the castle for books and many nights listening to the oldest servants whisper of times long past.

“Father,” she asked one day, “is it true that our ancestors used to wield<sup>1</sup> great magic; indeed, even you? Why have I never seen you use this magic? And when will I come into magic of my own?”

The king’s face bloated with rage.

“Who has told you these things?” he demanded.

The little child trembled. “I-I read it in the green book that sits on the highest shelf in the library.”

Immediately, the king ordered the book be taken outside and burned. As Sophia watched flames erupt from the cover, she cried bitter tears.

“Why did you do that?” she asked her father. “Why do you hate magic?”

“Magic is evil,” the king replied in a cold voice. “The last of it shall die with me. Now forget

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<sup>1</sup> to use effectively

you ever knew of it, and be happy, my daughter.”

But Princess Sophia could not forget. Magic was beauty and magic was power; she did not believe it was evil, except that the hearts of men made it so. She swore that one day she would restore magic to the land. But she shut her mouth and uttered no word of it to the king.

Day by day, the princess grew in beauty and wisdom, and soon it came time for her to take a husband. The king, who cherished his daughter, was loathe to give her away, declaring one *suitor*<sup>2</sup> too poor, one too stingy, one too cowardly. Princess Sophia spied an opportunity to keep her secret vow.

“Father,” she said, “I agree with you that the man who marries me must be of the highest quality. Therefore, I offer this *proposal*<sup>3</sup>: that no man shall marry me, but he who brings me a *trinket*<sup>4</sup> worth all of the Seven Isles that can fit in the palm of my hand.”

The king was pleased with his daughter’s cleverness.

“Let it be so,” he said.

Word spread, and soon kings, princes, merchant-barons, and treasure hunters flocked to King’s Isle to present their most precious baubles to the princess. But Princess Sophia rejected them all.

“Your gift is costly,” she said to each, “but it will not buy a kingdom.”

Now it happened that, less than a day’s sail away, a shepherd by the name of Eustachius lived on Olive Isle. Though born of noble blood, Eustachius’ family had lost their title, and he and his older brothers made a living off the sweat of their brow. Still, Eustachius was a brave, cheerful man for whom life held no bitterness.

“I will solve the riddle,” he told his brothers, “for I am determined to marry the princess.”

“You cannot hope to answer it yourself,” said the middle brother.

“The Red Witch will help you,” said the eldest.

Although the king had tried to eliminate all those who knew the secrets of magic, one had escaped his *wrath*<sup>5</sup>. Robed in the rags of a beggar, the Red Witch lived quietly under a bridge in the Isle of Wine. Eustachius sought her advice.

“Do you know the answer to the princess’ riddle?” he asked.

“Go to the Isle of Darkness,” the Red Witch said. “A creature of the king’s own making has swallowed the most precious magic of all. Slay the beast. Remove the magic from its belly, and

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<sup>2</sup> A man who courts/ wishes to marry a woman

<sup>3</sup> A plan, a suggestion, or a deal

<sup>4</sup> A small decoration or piece of jewelry, usually with little value

<sup>5</sup> Anger

Princess Sophia will give you her hand in marriage.”

“I will do as you say,” Eustachius said.

“Wait,” the Red Witch cried. “This creature is strong in magic. No ordinary blade will pierce its hide. Take this.”

The Red Witch held out a sword with a broad straight blade made of gleaming iron.

“The Blade of Negation will aid you on your quest.”

Eustachius accepted the sword. He set out for the Isle of Darkness, and his two older brothers joined him.

Mystery has always *shrouded*<sup>6</sup> the Isle of Darkness. Those who stumble upon it either turn away in fright or else step foot on land and are never seen again. But Eustachius and his brothers were not discouraged.

What horrors they saw, what creatures they met, what bloody battle ensued—these things no one knows, for Eustachius would not speak of them. All that is known for sure is that three brothers left for the Isle of Darkness, but only one ever returned.

After departing the Isle of Darkness, Eustachius sailed straight for the castle. He thundered into the halls, his sword in his belt, a box in his hand.

“I have brought a gift for the princess.”

“Let me see it,” said the king.

“I will present it to her alone.”

The king summoned his daughter. The sight of her beauty stung Eustachius through the heart.

“Princess,” he said softly, “I have solved your riddle.”

He opened the box and lifted out a blue *amulet*<sup>7</sup> on a gold chain. At a glance, it seemed a plain trinket, something a peasant might buy to ward off evil spirits. But as he placed it gently in the princess’ palm, the amulet burst into light, glowing as radiant as a fallen star.

Sophia looked at Eustachius with tears in her eyes.

“You did it,” she whispered. “You brought back magic.”

“Magic!” bellowed the king. “No! I will have no magic in my land. Guards, seize him!”

But Sophia acted first. She took her shepherd champion by the hand, and the two of them fled down the hallway. The guards followed them around a corner and came to an abrupt halt. Princess and shepherd had vanished. They were nowhere to be seen.

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<sup>6</sup> Wrapped, covered, or hid from view

<sup>7</sup> An object worn to keep evil away; a magic item

“My own daughter defies me,” the king raged. “So be it. You will see the evil that magic can do.”

And he called forth his own store of magic and created monsters, each one darker than the next. He stitched tiger claw and horse hoof and falcon wing together and unleashed these *unfathomable*<sup>8</sup> horrors upon the isles.

Eustachius slew them with the Blade of Negation. But the beasts terrified those who would help the princess, and the king’s guards followed the trail of screams. Sophia and Eustachius were driven from one isle to the next, until at last they had nowhere to go but the Isle of Lost Souls, a *barren*<sup>9</sup> clump of rock where nothing grows or lives. Three took shelter there: Sophia, Eustachius, and the princess’ most loyal servant.

Against these three, the king sent his navy. The crown jewel of the fleet was a massive black warship drawn by hundreds of oars and crimson triangular sails. As the king stood on deck and stared at the Isle of Lost Souls, he noticed a golden speck on the blue sky. The speck drew closer, and men began to scream.

“Dragon! Dragon!”

The golden dragon had the muscular body of a snake and shimmering bat wings. Archers drew their bows and fired arrows enough to blacken the sky, but none could pierce the dragon’s scales, which were harder than any armor. The king glared at the dragon in hatred, then suddenly grew pale.

“Stop, stop!” he shouted to the archers. “My daughter is riding the dragon!”

Indeed, Princess Sophia clung to the dragon’s back, the wind whipping her veil and hair in all directions. The dragon landed on the deck. Princess Sophia stepped up to the king and looked him in the eye.

“Father,” she said, “I’ve come to offer you a truce. At your command, my future husband and I will leave the kingdom and never return. But you must turn back now and leave us alone. If you do not, you will surely be destroyed.”

“Are you threatening me?”

“I am only speaking the truth. Turn back or die.”

The king looked at the princess with flint in his eyes. “While you possess magic, you are no longer my daughter. If you do not surrender now, you will die.”

He signaled his archers.

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<sup>8</sup> Not fathomed; something that can’t be understood or measured

<sup>9</sup> Not producing offspring; a land where plants can’t grow

The dragon roared so loud the planks shook, and the archers quivered in fear. Princess Sophia jumped onto its back, and the dragon flew her back safely to the Isle of Lost Souls.

That night a terrible storm came. The wind snarled like an angry lion, and white lightning cracked the sky. Giant waves tossed the warship like a child tosses an egg, and the black ship smashed into a thousand pieces. Many men perished, and more would have died, but for the golden dragon that dove beneath the waves to rescue them. But the dragon did not reach the king in time, who tangled in a net and drowned.

The soldiers and the sailors who remained pledged their loyalty to Princess Sophia and her shepherd champion. She and Eustachius returned to King's Isle, and preparations were made for a royal wedding.

And so would end this tale, except for one last strange *occurrence*<sup>10</sup>.

Princess Sophia disappeared. For three days, no one could find her, not her guards, not her maids, not her groom. Then suddenly, on the day of her wedding, she re-emerged from her room, dressed and beaming, as though nothing had happened. But all those who witnessed her wedding noticed that no amulet hung around her neck.

Queen Sophia and King Eustachius ruled the Seven Isles together, and while they lived, they were happy. But the amulet of magic was never seen again. Rumor has it, the queen hid it somewhere in the Seven Isles, and there it waits for a worthy successor to retrieve it once more. But as to where she hid the amulet or why—*that* no one knows, for that is the final riddle of Queen Sophia.

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<sup>10</sup> Something that occurs; something that happened

# Riddles

## What is a Riddle?

*A riddle is a question, a rhyme, or a statement made to get unexpected or clever answers. Riddles are word puzzles that try to trick you.*

## Example

What begins with an “e,” ends with an “e,” but has only 1 letter in it?

**Answer:** An envelope

## Can You Solve These Riddles?

**#1**

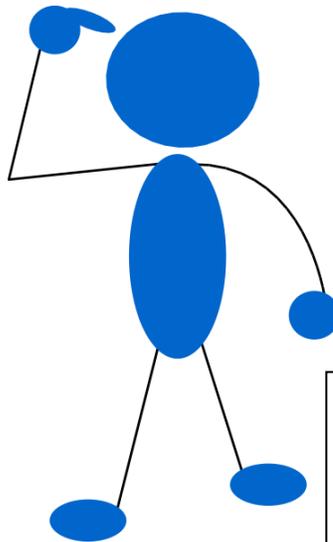
What has hands but doesn't  
clap?

**#3**

What word is spelled wrong in  
every dictionary?

**#4**

A box without hinges, key or lid,  
Yet golden treasure inside is hid.



**#2**

If a red house is made of red  
bricks, and a yellow house is  
made of yellow bricks, what is  
a greenhouse made of?

**#5**

Little Nancy Etticoat,  
In a white petticoat  
And a red nose,  
The longer she stands  
The shorter she grows!

## Write Your Own Riddle

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## Answers

1. A clock
2. Glass
3. The word “wrong”
4. An egg
5. A candle



## **“The Riddle of Princess Sophia” Comprehension Questions**



1. How does the king feel about magic? How do you know?
2. Who is Sophia? What is she like?
3. How does Sophia feel about magic? Why doesn't she tell her father about her feelings?
4. What is Sophia's riddle? What makes it a riddle?
5. Who is Eustachius? What is he like?
6. How does Eustachius solve the riddle?
7. What do you think happened on the Isle of Darkness?
8. What was the answer to the riddle? Why is it the answer?
9. What happens when the king sees magic? How does he react?
10. What is the truce that Sophia offers to her father? Does he accept it?
11. How does the story end?
12. What powers do you think the amulet has? What makes it magic?
13. Is the riddle effective? Why or why not?
14. What do you think the princess did with the amulet?
15. What would you do with a magic amulet?

## **“The Riddle of Princess Sophia”**

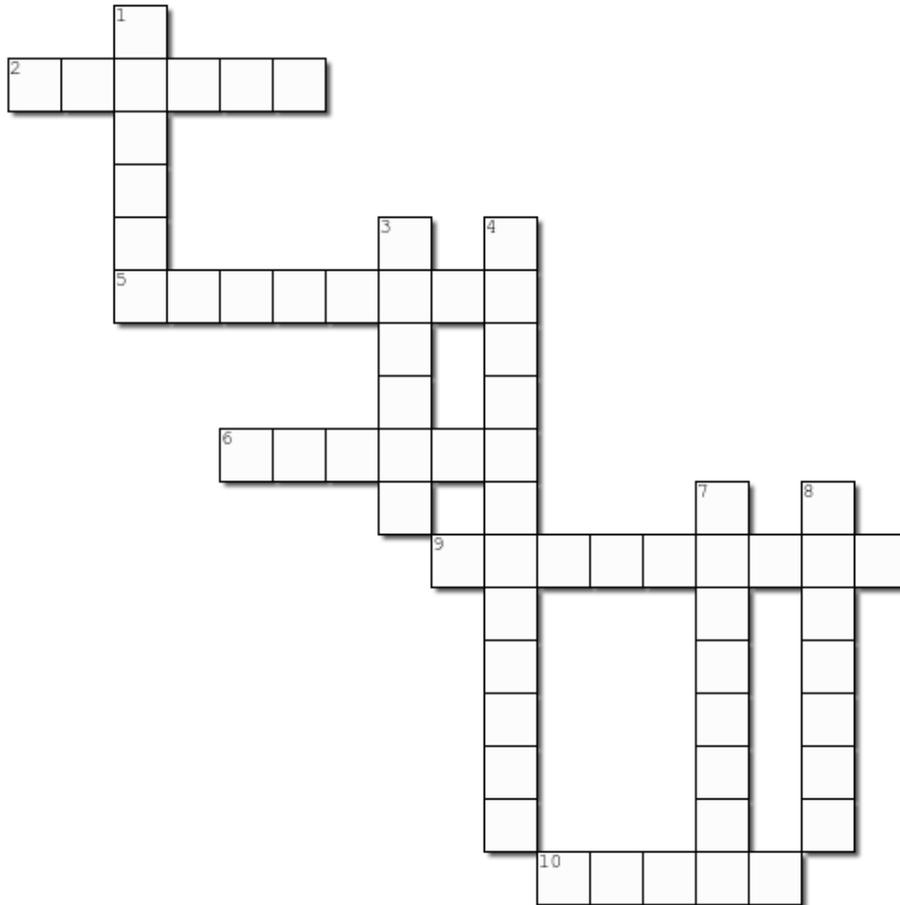
### **Possible Answers**

1. The king hates magic. You can tell because he destroys people and things with magic.
2. Sophia is the king’s only daughter. She is beautiful, intelligent, and curious.
3. Sophia likes magic. She thinks it’s beautiful. She doesn’t tell her father because she knows he hates magic.
4. Sophia’s riddle is to bring her a trinket worth the kingdom that can fit into the palm of her hand. It’s a riddle because no one knows what can be so small, but so valuable.
5. Eustachius is a shepherd. He is cheerful and kind.
6. Eustachius solves the riddle by asking the
7. Various answers. (The real answer is in *Three Floating Coffins*).
8. The magic was the answer to the riddle. It’s the answer because, although it is small, it has magic, which is very valuable.
9. The king is angry. He tries to have his guards capture Eustachius and his daughter. When they escape, he sends monsters after them.
10. Sophia tells her father that she and Eustachius will go away if the king leaves. The king does not accept it.
11. The king drowns when a storm hits his ship, Sophia and Eustachius gets married, and Sophia hides the amulet.
12. Various answers.
13. Various answers.
14. Various answers. (The real answer is in *Three Floating Coffins*).
15. Various answers.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

# The Riddle of Princess Sophia Crossword Puzzle

Complete the crossword puzzle below



Created using the Crossword Maker on TheTeachersCorner.net

- dragon   trinket   barren   sorcerers   amulet   riddle   proposal   negation   wield
- unfathomable

## Across

2. The Isle of Lost Souls was a \_\_\_\_\_ rock where nothing grew.
5. Eustachius' sword was called the Blade of \_\_\_\_\_.
6. Eustachius gave this to Princess Sophia
9. Sophia's ancestors used to be this
10. to use effectively

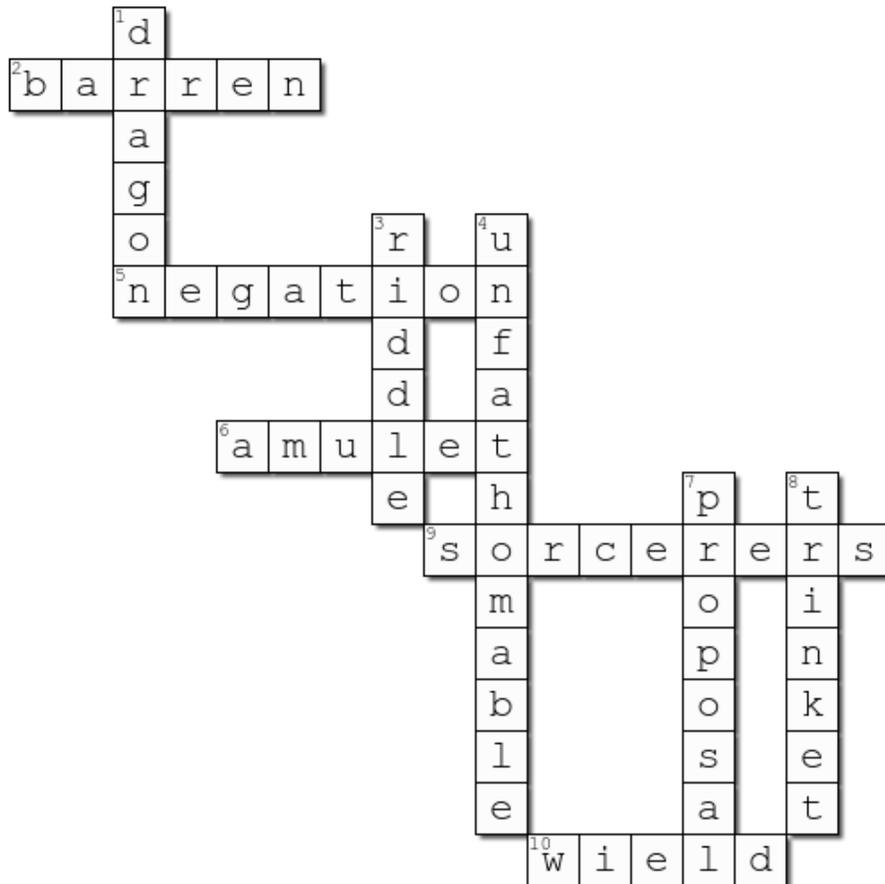
## Down

1. Princess Sophia rode this to her father's ship
3. Princess Sophia told her suitors a \_\_\_\_\_.
4. something you can't understand
7. a plan, scheme, or deal
8. an item (like jewelry) that's worth much money

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

# The Riddle of Princess Sophia Crossword Puzzle

Complete the crossword puzzle below



Created using the Crossword Maker on TheTeachersCorner.net

dragon trinket barren sorcerers amulet riddle proposal negation wield  
unfathomable

## Across

2. The Isle of Lost Souls was a \_\_\_\_\_ rock where nothing grew. (**barren**)
5. Eustachius' sword was called the Blade of \_\_\_\_\_. (**negation**)
6. Eustachius gave this to Princess Sophia (**amulet**)
9. Sophia's ancestors used to be this (**sorcerers**)
10. to use effectively (**wield**)

## Down

1. Princess Sophia rode this to her father's ship (**dragon**)
3. Princess Sophia told her suitors a \_\_\_\_\_. (**riddle**)
4. something you can't understand (**unfathomable**)
7. a plan, scheme, or deal (**proposal**)
8. an item (like jewelry) that's worth much money (**trinket**)

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Created with TheTeachersCorner.net Word Search Maker

# Riddle of Princess Sophia Word Search

Find the words

E T S H L Q C T X T I D E C E F T S A R  
B W P R R T Z C O E R U K R Z E G Z U T  
Y C N O W Z T S C G W H E N K U B B T G  
L I C S W F J N C N H R L N R Z Y G S A  
V G E H U F E S O G E T I P T I K Y R C  
I A Z R Z R G U T C I R W R M X L A T Z  
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M F S U Q O H Y Y V W Q H B E Q K P Z G  
C V M H M C N O G A R D R T D K D W O M  
B A T A T I A B X G H Z T O A A S V D C  
F C B T J J D X Y A S U I T O R J H C W  
Q L T M Y G L M A U A F N O H W S I W G  
E J B A R R E N S S E C N I R P N S U Y  
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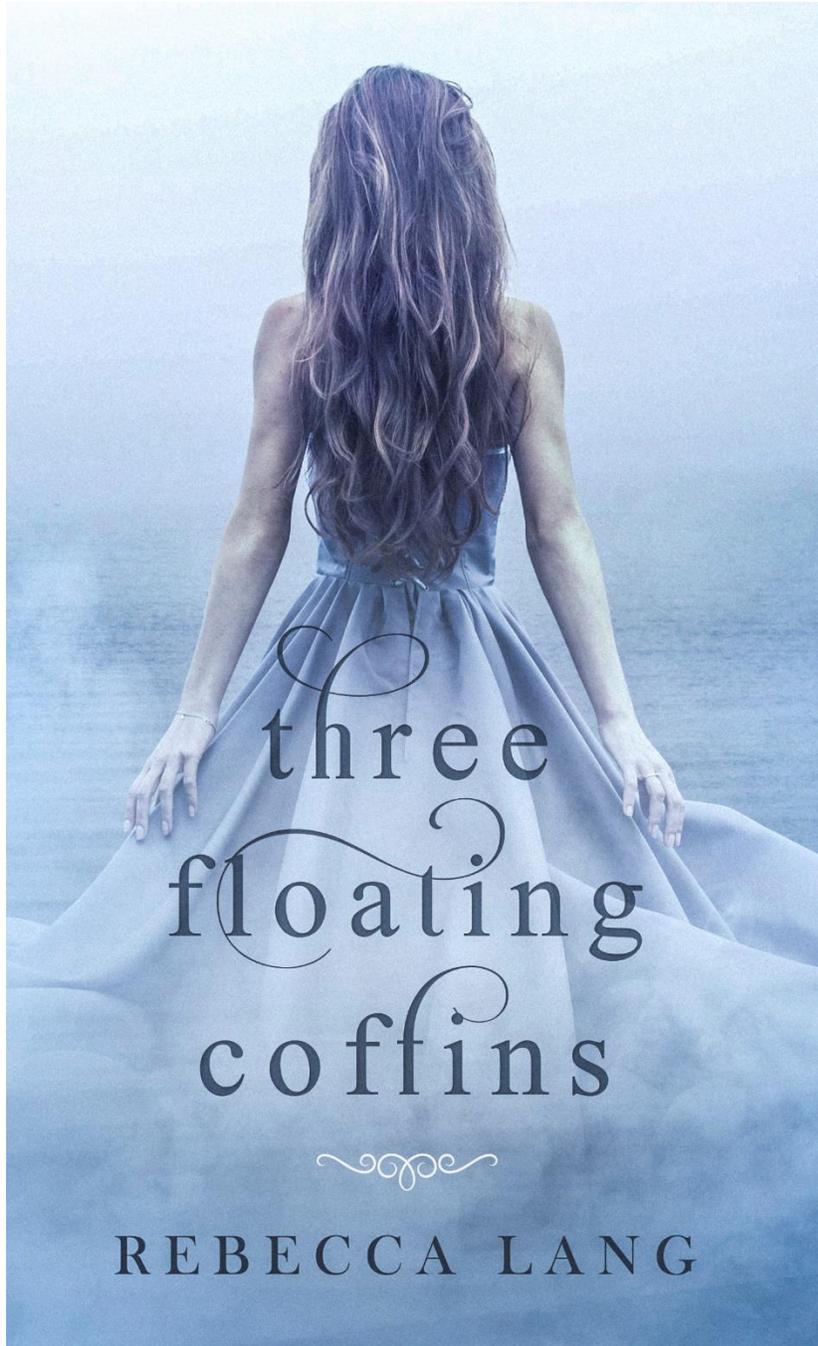
WIELD  
TRINKET  
AMULET  
OCCURRENCE  
KING  
ISLE

SUITOR  
WRATH  
UNFATHOMABLE  
PRINCESS  
MAGIC

PROPOSAL  
SHROUDED  
BARREN  
SORCERER  
DRAGON



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What happens when  
you can no longer  
trust your family?

This is what 13-year old Odele wonders when she and her two older sisters are sealed in coffins and cast into the sea by their father, the King of the Seven Isles. A priest has prophesied that one of the princesses holds magic that will destroy the kingdom. Only Odele knows the truth. The priest is lying.

On the run and unsure of who she can trust, Odele undertakes a journey to find the one thing that may defeat the evil priest: a magical amulet her mother hid years ago somewhere in the Seven Isles. Hunting Odele are the priest's twin daughters, witches who control dragons made of wind and water. With time running out, Odele must pry open the secrets of the past before she loses her family forever.

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