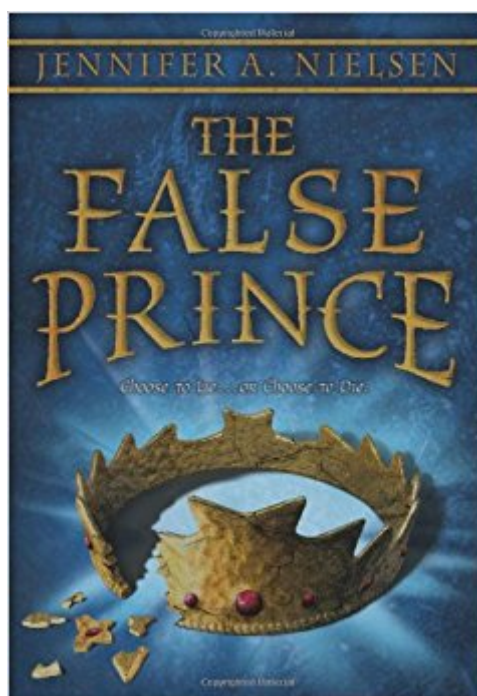


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The False Prince (The Ascendance Trilogy, Book 1): Book 1 Of The Ascendance Trilogy



Synopsis

Choose to lie...or choose to die. In a discontent kingdom, civil war is brewing. To unify the divided people, Conner, a nobleman of the court, devises a cunning plan to find an impersonator of the king's long-lost son and install him as a puppet prince. Four orphans are recruited to compete for the role, including a defiant boy named Sage. Sage knows that Conner's motives are more than questionable, yet his life balances on a sword's point -- he must be chosen to play the prince or he will certainly be killed. But Sage's rivals have their own agendas as well. As Sage moves from a rundown orphanage to Conner's sumptuous palace, layer upon layer of treachery and deceit unfold, until finally, a truth is revealed that, in the end, may very well prove more dangerous than all of the lies taken together. An extraordinary adventure filled with danger and action, lies and deadly truths that will have readers clinging to the edge of their seats.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Exclusive: A Q&A with Jennifer A. Nielsen Question: What inspired you to write The False Prince?

Nielsen: I had the general idea for The False Prince for some time, but could never find the right protagonist to carry the weight of the story I wanted to tell. The central character, Sage, was found in the words of a song called Guaranteed, by the great Eddie Vedder. It said, "I knew all the rules, but the rules did not know me, guaranteed." From that line, I had the instant image of a defiant but charismatic boy who always stays a step ahead of the game, and where other players have no clue that all the rules are very quietly being rewritten. Q: Where did

Sage's voice come from? Nielsen: Sage came to me as a complete character, as fully developed as if he had been a real person. So writing *The False Prince* wasn't really about creating him, but instead, it was the experience of discovering him as the story unfolded. There were several moments when I knew what was waiting for Sage if he didn't back down, and yet, he never would. So I gritted my teeth and let things unfold the only way they could with him. As I work on the sequels, he continues to surprise, amuse, and shock me. He's the most complex character I've ever written, and I'm always thrilled to get feedback from readers who are as fascinated by him as I am.

Q: Was the setting or any of the other characters inspired by real people or places? Nielsen: Sage is very much his own person, and as a whole, is completely unique. However, there is one trait of his that I borrowed from a student I had when I was a high school debate teacher years ago. He was popular, brilliant, charming, and an amazingly talented thief. At the start of every ride to a tournament, he would steal the watch off of the bus driver's wrist, then keep it for the entire trip. As he left the bus at the end, he would hand the watch back to the driver, explaining it must have fallen to the floor. Then the driver always thanked him for being such a great and honest kid. I should've been angry, but I never was because he just pulled off his scams that well.

Q: Where do you like to go to write? Nielsen: I'll write anywhere. I work out scenes in my head while driving or in the shower, and pick up inspiration from events I notice each day. I try to always keep a pen and extra paper handy so that if something occurs to me I can write it down and not risk losing it (I hate it when I know there was something I thought of earlier that I had loved, but now can't remember it!). My favorite places for actual writing aren't very exciting. I love to write curled up on a loveseat beneath a sunny window. And nearly every night I'll print out pages I've worked on in the day and edit them in bed before I fall asleep.

Q: Have you always wanted to be a writer? When did you first know this is what you wanted to do? Nielsen: I've written for as long as I can remember, but the idea that I could turn that into a career never seemed real to me. I never knew any authors growing up, and as far as I could tell, they were mythical people who lived like the *Great Gatsby* on the other side of the country, or who had lived a hundred years ago. So I wrote as a hobby, then planned on other careers that real people had, such as being a detective, or working somewhere in the theater, or being a teacher. That all changed after my oldest child was born and I stayed home to care for him. Suddenly, I had a lot more time on my hands, which I filled with reading. But it wasn't long before the stories in my head became more interesting than the books in my hand, and I realized that I wanted to hold a book of my own. That was when I decided to seriously pursue writing as a career. It's the perfect place for me to be now, and I

can't imagine being happier anywhere else. --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

This first book in a planned trilogy is action-oriented fantasy, but don't expect magical creatures. Instead, it revolves around political intrigue (à la Megan Whalen Turner's *The Thief*, 1996). Sage is a street-savvy orphan, and along with two other boys he is recruited by Conner, a nobleman who wants to remake them in the image of their country's lost prince, a victim of pirates and presumed dead. The task is urgent, as the rest of the royal family has been murdered and civil war seems imminent. As the boys, chosen for their passing resemblance to Prince Jaron, compete to assume a new identity and the throne, Sage discovers some unpleasant truths about their host, beyond his treasonous plans to pass one of them off as royalty. Sage is a likable hero full of smart-alecky snarkiness. Especially appealing are the friendships he forges: one with his bodyguard and teacher; another with a mute serving girl. Though lacking in subtlety, Nielsen's plot twists keep coming, and readers will want to see how they play out as Sage's adventures continue. Grades 4-7. --Karen Cruze --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

First, at the risk of sounding like a gushing manic, let me say that this book is amazing and wonderful. Seriously, it is on my list of absolute favorite reads ever. And I read a lot. Anyway, with that out of the way, I'll get on to the plot. The story takes place in Carthya, a kingdom with a problem. A rather large one. The King, Queen, and Crown Prince have been murdered, leaving the country both kingless and heirless. This basically leaves the throne open for anyone with the strength to take it, and there is more than one noble who believes that he has that power; or at least who would like to try anyway. And that means that civil war is all but certain. Nor will the kingdoms at Carthya's borders let such an opportunity, such a weakness, pass them by. Because of this and various other reasons, the news has so far been kept from the general populace, but it's only a matter of time before it all comes to a head. Enter Lord Bevin Conner, a self-proclaimed patriot with a plan to avoid all of this. You see, although the King, Queen, and Crown Prince are dead, there was, once, a younger prince. Several years ago, his ship was attacked and sunk by pirates. There were no survivors. However, although everyone knows that the young prince must have died in that attack, his body never washed ashore, so there is, technically, the slight possibility that he lived. At least, there is no one to say that he didn't. Conner's plan is simple: Find a boy to pretend to be the prince and put him on the throne. In aid of this, he scours the kingdom's orphanages for boys of the right age and appearance, brings them to live with him, and begins to train them. In two weeks, he

will choose the one he believes most capable of becoming, well, the false prince. The others, the ones that don't get chosen? Well, they are too dangerous, they know too much... One of the boys pulled into this scheme is Sage, the main character. Ok, sure, he's been accused (not without cause) of making his way through theft and lies, but underneath all of that, he isn't actually a bad person. He has absolutely no desire for a throne and has every intention of fighting Conner to the end. For while Conner and the other boys seem to be able to convince themselves that 'desperate times call for desperate measures' and all that (of course, it doesn't hurt that they all see something to gain through it, too), Sage sees it for the treason it is. But what choice does he have? If he refuses to go along with it, if he doesn't get chosen, then he will die. And if there's one thing Sage learnt on the streets and in the orphanage, it was to survive. Can he do it? Can he win? Without completely giving in to Conner and his plan? Personally, I think the plot alone is enough to hold anyone's interest. It is well-paced and action-packed. Yes, the whole 'competition that only one can survive' thing smacks of The Hunger Games, but that is the only resemblance. Since the 'competition' doesn't consist of the boys actually killing one another, although death is a definite possibility, the story is less dark. True, Sage has a knack for getting into trouble and accumulates multiple, mostly minor, non-accidental injuries over the course of the book, but I don't think those scenes, although tense, will unduly trouble more than the youngest readers. But, it's Sage who makes the story. He had me hooked from the first paragraph. Running away from a knife-wielding butcher, a stolen roast under one arm, is funny enough, perhaps because it is such an unexpected thing for someone to do. But then to comment that it is harder than it looks, "More slippery than I'd anticipated...I vowed to get it wrapped next time. Then steal it." That is just flat-out hilarious. Sage is clever, witty, and delightfully antagonistic. Not to mention stubborn. He doesn't exactly get dragged into the scheme kicking and screaming, but he certainly ensures that it is neither easy nor pleasant for those forcing him along. If his quick comebacks and asides don't make you laugh more than once, there is something seriously wrong with you. Sage is a complex and intriguing character, with a very interesting way of telling the story. And I loved how his fight isn't just external, but includes internal turmoil as well. This book is simply written enough to appeal to younger readers, yet it is also complex and contains enough twists and turns to appeal to adults (I ought to know. I am one). I would highly recommend reading this book. It's clever, intriguing, fast-paced, and funny; what more could anyone ask for? For those interested, I've also listened to the audiobook. The narrator does an amazing job.

Wow, just finished this book and pretty much did not put it down. I can't remember who

recommended it either, but thanks. It takes place in "a faraway land" and is the story of an orphan boy, Sage, who is taken from the orphanage by a nobleman who has also "taken" three other boys from similar situations. As Sage learns bit by bit on the trip just why they have been taken, the plan seems unbelievable and not a little bit terrifying. When Connor reveals some of the details on the way to his holdings, one of the boys says he would not be able to do it. It is chilling and an indication of what is to come when the three are standing there as he is told he can leave and see an arrow strike him in the back and he is dead. Suddenly they know they will compete with each other and only one will be allowed to live. The others will know too much. The changes that the relationship between each of them go through as the book progresses are constant surprises. This is a different story than I have ever read and really would not have wanted details before I read it. Let me just say it is a wonderfully well written tale that takes place in just two weeks time where three boys have many different twists occur in their lives. Their two guards play a large part as does a mute serving girl. Connor was brilliantly written as someone who at times appears, in spite of the fact he is obviously capable of murder, to be dedicated to the kingdom and one who is doing bad things for the good of the realm - or is he? I wavered back and forth on this many times. But about Sage. He is an unforgettable character who at times reminded me of Han in the Seven Realms series and even a bit like Jace from TMI. He manages a wise crack whether appropriate or not and is very much the cleverest of the cast. He concedes to no one and manages to get himself into trouble over and over. We get to see into his insecurities at times (like when he has a sword at his throat or is being beaten by someone he knows wants to kill him). He constantly manages resourceful ways to pull things out in the end. As the book was drawing to a close I wished it was not a stand alone. It isn't! I just ordered The Runaway King and this is to be a trilogy. Really good story telling and I loved Sage. I did find one thing a bit amusing. Not sure if it was there on purpose or the author just did not know. This is a fantasy land and as they usually are, a land of kings and carriages, castles and swords. So Sage has gone to the stable and chooses "a quarterhorse named Poco" for the ride. Since there is a very famous American Quarter Horse named Poco (which of course is a Spanish word) this startled me as being a little bit out of the time and place frame. Great story. There is no romance in this book although there is a friendship with a serving girl and a Princess, so who knows in the next book.

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