



## The Wisdom and Valor Treasury: A Windflower Saga Collection

**Aleksandra Layland**

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*Dialogue and jokes are a treasury highlight, making it both modern and lighthearted.*

Aleksandra Layland's *The Wisdom and Valor Treasury* collects adventure-filled fantasy stories set in the world of the Kimbrian and Kimberlee people—one novel and three novellas total. From marriages to wars, the novellas cover every aspect of the lives of Leofric, Keridwen, and their people.

*The Art of War, The Path of Peace* is the dominant part of the collection, a novel that occupies about half the book. Its story opens with an arranged marriage between a mercenary warlord, Leofric, and a duchess nun, Keridwen. They are an unlikely pair, and only Leofric knows the true reason for their marriage—a sinister plot by the Royal Council.

While the novellas can be read independently, they are best read together. *The Art of War, The Path of Peace* introduces the main characters, whose backstories are further explored in the later novellas. The last story, *Swords of Ansgar*, is a satisfying generational conclusion that includes an ode to Leofric and Keridwen's great-granddaughter.

The character list is wide and varied. Some characters are discussed in passing before being introduced into the action of the stories. This leads to some muddled moments, particularly if the novellas are read independently, though when read as a whole, the treasury's stories, histories, and relationships come to feel cohesive.

Each chapter is dedicated to either a main event within the Kimbrian world—battles, marriages, and coups—or to a main Kimbrian or Kimberlee character, including the central cast of Gethin, Leofric, and Keridwen.

In form, this allows for more depth with individual characterizations and helps drive the plot forward. However, particularly in *The Art of War, The Path of Peace*, some chapters run long and are inundated with too many details. The shorter chapters of the later stories result in a steadier flow.

Dialogue and jokes are a treasury highlight. Rather than stick with antiquated vernacular, language is modern, with a few “mayhaps” and “nincompoops” thrown in for good measure. Sexual innuendo is scattered throughout, keeping things lighthearted even in the midst of war; none of it becomes too crude.

Gender roles are often touched upon, though they are not a main theme; women characters serve as prostitutes and maids but also act as ruling leaders and heads of armies. Thought processes are modernized similarly. For instance, the outlying society of Kimberlee places heavy emphasis on women's higher education, leading to a more relatable story line.

*The Wisdom and Valor Treasury* is a fun, expansive fantasy collection made exciting with its modern themes.

JENNIFER MILLER (July 14, 2017)

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