SOFTWARE & TECH

What Is The Cinder About

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Introduction: Unlocking the Sci-Fi Fairy Tale

If you have stumbled upon the title **Cinder** in a bookstore or on a reading list, you might be wondering: **What Is The Cinder About?** At first glance, it appears to be a futuristic retelling of the classic Cinderella story. But that description barely scratches the surface. Published in 2012, *Cinder* is the first book in Marissa Meyer's wildly popular **The Lunar Chronicles** series—a blend of science fiction, fantasy, romance, and dystopian elements that has captivated millions of readers worldwide. In this comprehensive article, we will explore the plot, characters, themes, and the unique world-building that makes *Cinder* so compelling. Whether you are a new reader curious about the series or a fan looking for a deeper analysis, this guide will provide everything you need to know about what *Cinder* is really about.

Overview of the World in Cinder

The story is set in a futuristic version of Earth, approximately a century after World War IV. Society has rebuilt itself with advanced technology, including hovercars, androids, and a networked global society. However, the world is plagued by a deadly and incurable disease known as **letumosis** (often called the blue plague because of the blue rash it causes). The population lives under the constant threat of quarantine and death. Adding to the tension, humanity has made contact with the **Lunars**, a race of humans who colonised the moon centuries ago. Lunars possess the ability to manipulate bioelectricity, allowing them to control others' thoughts, emotions, and perceptions—a power called **glamour**. The relationship between Earth and Luna is fraught with mistrust and political intrigue, and a looming war is on the horizon.

In the midst of this chaotic world, we meet our heroine: *Cinder*, a sixteen-year-old cyborg living in New Beijing (the capital of a powerful Eastern Commonwealth). As a cyborg, she is considered a second-class citizen—part human, part machine—and is often treated as property rather than a person. She works as a mechanic, a trade she excels at because of her robotic enhancements. But her life takes an unexpected turn when she crosses paths with Prince Kai, the heir to the throne, and becomes entangled in a conspiracy that could decide the fate of the Earth.

Detailed Plot Summary: What Happens in Cinder?

The Mechanic Meets the Prince

The story begins with Cinder fixing malfunctioning androids at her booth in the New Beijing market. She is a gifted mechanic, capable of repairing even the most advanced technology. Her stepmother, Adri, and stepsister, Peony, treat her poorly—Adri despises her because Cinder is a cyborg (a constant reminder of the accident that killed Cinder's adopted father). Peony, however, is kind and the only family member who shows her affection. One day, Prince Kai arrives at Cinder's booth, accompanied by his android, Iko (who will later become a beloved character). Kai asks Cinder to repair his personal android because he suspects someone is trying to hack into the royal systems. Cinder agrees, intrigued by the prince's charm and urgency.

The Plague Strikes Home

Soon after, Peony contracts letumosis. In a panic, Adri blames Cinder and forces her to volunteer for plague

research as punishment. But during the medical examination, the doctors discover that Cinder is not just any cyborg—she is *immune* to letumosis. This revelation sparks interest from the highest levels of government, including the royal family and the scientists working on a cure. Meanwhile, Cinder is visited by the mysterious and menacing Queen Levana of Luna, who uses her glamour to manipulate everyone around her. Queen Levana wants to marry Prince Kai to secure an alliance with Earth, but Kai is reluctant. Levana sees Cinder as a potential obstacle—and a valuable asset.

Cinder's True Identity

The central mystery of *Cinder* revolves around her past. Through flashbacks and discoveries, we learn that Cinder was not born a cyborg; she was extensively modified after a fire that killed the Lunar princess Selene, who was supposedly assassinated as an infant. As the plot unfolds, shocking truths come to light: Cinder is actually Princess Selene, the missing heir to the Lunar throne. She was smuggled to Earth as a child and given a new identity, but her cyborg modifications were part of a cover-up. Her immunity to letumosis is a side effect of Lunar genetic engineering. Queen Levana wants Cinder dead so she can maintain her grip on Luna's throne. But if Cinder's true identity is revealed, she could become a rallying point for rebellion.

The Betrayal and the Escape

The climax of *Cinder* is a dramatic series of events. Cinder is captured and prepared for a deadly research experiment, but she escapes with the help of a Lunar stranger named Wolf (who becomes a major character in later books). Prince Kai, who has developed feelings for Cinder, discovers her true identity but feels manipulated. In a tragic turn, Cinder is forced to flee Earth to avoid execution, leaving Kai behind to deal with Queen Levana's looming invasion. The book ends on a cliffhanger: Cinder has accepted her role as Selene, but she is alone, hunted, and determined to reclaim her birthright.

Key Characters in Cinder

- Linh Cinder / Princess Selene – The protagonist, a cyborg mechanic with a secret royal heritage. She is intelligent, resourceful, and fiercely independent, yet struggles with her identity and worth as a cyborg.
- Prince Kai – The young emperor of the Eastern Commonwealth, torn between his duty to his people and his personal feelings. He is kind, diplomatic, but increasingly cornered by Levana's demands.
- Queen Levana – The villain, ruler of Luna. She is ruthless, manipulative, and uses her glamour to control others. Her obsession with beauty and power makes her one of YA literature's most memorable antagonists.
- Adri – Cinder's stepmother; a cruel woman who treats Cinder as less than human. She embodies the "wicked stepmother" archetype but with a sci-fi twist.
- Peony – Cinder's stepsister, the only one who treats her with kindness. Her illness is a major catalyst for the plot.
- Dr. Erland – A scientist involved in plague research who becomes a mentor and reveals Cinder's true heritage. He has his own secrets tied to Luna.
- Iko – Cinder's android friend, who has a malfunctioning personality chip that gives her a quirky, vain, and loyal personality. She provides comic relief and emotional support.

Themes and Symbolism in Cinder

Identity and Humanity

One of the central themes is what it means to be human. As a cyborg, Cinder is constantly dehumanised by society. She is seen as a tool, not a person. The story explores how technology can both enhance and diminish identity. Cinder's journey is about accepting her whole self—the organic and the mechanical, the human and the

Lunar. Her growth challenges the reader to reconsider prejudice and the definition of humanity.

Class and Social Inequality

The futuristic world of *Cinder*is strictly divided by class. Cyborgs are at the bottom of the social ladder, often used as unpaid labour or experimental subjects. Lunars are feared and discriminated against because of their glamour powers. The plague exacerbates these inequalities, as the wealthy can afford protection while the poor perish. The story critiques systemic oppression and the way societies treat the "other."

Fairytale Reimagined

Marissa Meyer cleverly weaves the original Cinderella story into a sci-fi narrative. The ball becomes a royal gala where Cinder meets Kai; the glass slipper is replaced by a mechanical foot; the fairy godmother is a doctor and a young boy; and the stroke of midnight is a deadly deadline. Yet the story is not a simple retelling—it subverts expectations. Cinder is not a passive princess waiting for rescue; she saves herself and others. The romance is complicated by politics and secrets.

Choice and Power

Throughout the novel, characters are forced to make impossible choices. Cinder chooses to risk her life to save Peony; Kai must choose between love and his kingdom; Levana chooses ruthlessness. The book asks: what would you do when power is in your grasp? And what are you willing to sacrifice for freedom?

The Lunar Chronicles Series as a Whole

Cinder is the first of four books in **The Lunar Chronicles**, each based on a different fairy tale. The series continues with *Scarlet* (Little Red Riding Hood), *Cress* (Rapunzel), and *Winter* (Snow White). There is also a companion novel, *Fairest*, which is a prequel focused on Queen Levana, and *Stars Above*, a collection of short stories. The books are interconnected, with characters and plotlines converging as the rebellion against Levana intensifies. Readers who enjoy *Cinder*will find an expansive universe with diverse heroes, thrilling space battles, and a satisfying overarching story about overthrowing a tyrant.

Why Cinder Stands Out in Young Adult Literature

There are several reasons why *Cinder*has become a modern classic. First, the world-building is exceptionally detailed—New Beijing feels alive with its market scenes, royal palace, and plague-ridden hospitals. The blend of Eastern and Western influences adds a refreshing cultural layer not often seen in YA dystopia. Second, the characters are well-developed, especially Cinder, who is both relatable and aspirational. She is flawed, sometimes stubborn, but always trying to do what is right. Third, the romance is slow-burn and believable, not instant love. Finally, the pacing is tight: every chapter reveals new information or raises the stakes, making it a true page-turner.

Conclusion: The Enduring Appeal of Cinder

So, to answer the question **What Is The Cinder About**—it is a thrilling sci-fi reimagining of Cinderella that explores identity, power, and love against a backdrop of plague and political conspiracy. It launches a beloved series that continues to resonate because it asks timeless questions: Who are we when the world tells us we are nothing? And how far will we go to reclaim our place in the stars? Whether you are reading it for the first time or revisiting it, *Cinder* offers a rich, thought-provoking experience that blends the best of fairy tales with futuristic vision. If you haven't yet started **The Lunar Chronicles**, now is the perfect moment to begin this unforgettable journey.

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