

Beautiful Creatures Study Guide

Beautiful Creatures by Kami Garcia and Margaret Stohl

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Plot Summary

Ethan Wate is a teenager who lives in the small town of Gatlin, South Carolina, with his father and their housekeeper Amma, who is also Ethan's primary caregiver. Ethan's mother died not too long ago and he and his father are still struggling. Amma is a Seer and charms around the house are a part of Ethan's life that he seldom dares question because Amma is so serious about them. Ethan has been dreaming of a girl. In the dream, he's trying to save her but she slips away from him.

Ethan arrives for another day at school with his best friend, Wesley Lincoln, known as Link. Link announces there is a new student. Her name is Lena and she's the niece of an eccentric recluse, Macon Ravenwood. When Ethan sees Lena, he recognizes her as the girl from his dreams. Lena is not accepted by the other girls who have a very tight clique and refuse to admit outsiders.

It's soon evident that Lena has also been dreaming of Ethan and she initially resists his overtures of friendship. After awhile, she gives in and they begin spending a great deal of time together. They are both falling in love and their connection is so strong that they can communicate telepathically, even when they are miles apart.

Lena reveals that she's a Caster and that all the members of her family are as well. Ethan isn't really surprised, having known there was something unusual going on from the beginning. He accepts that aspect of her life. Then Lena reveals that she'll be "Claimed" on her sixteenth birthday, just a few weeks away, and that she has no choice in whether she'll become Light or Dark. Ethan refuses to accept that and begins working on a way around it. Lena's family and Amma are against their relationship initially but then Lena's family discovers that Lena and Ethan are so strong together that they can face down Lena's mother, a Dark force that threatens Lena's very life.

On the night of the Claiming, Lena learns she actually has a choice in her Claiming but that choice carries consequences. If she chooses Dark, the Light members of her family will die and Lena will become a different person entirely, without the capability to love anyone, including Ethan. If she chooses Light, the Dark members of her family - including her Uncle Macon who she loves dearly - will die. She then learns that she and Ethan will never be able to have a physical relationship even if she's Light. Lena is upset that she hasn't had time to think through the situation armed with the full knowledge and she blocks out the moon - a vital part in the Claiming ceremony. Meanwhile, Ethan is stabbed and killed. Lena calls on the Casting power to save Ethan but she inadvertently sacrifices Macon's life in return for Ethan's. It seems Lena has avoided the Claiming altogether but Ethan learns the next day that's not the case.



Before: The Middle of Nowhere: Dream On; New Girl; Hole in the Sky; and Collision

Before: The Middle of Nowhere: Dream On; New Girl; Hole in the Sky; and Collision Summary

As the story opens, Ethan Wate is describing his life in Gatlin, South Carolina, where he lives with his father, a writer, who says everyone who remains in Gatlin is either "stupid or stuck." It's a small town where the classrooms at Stonewall Jackson High still have chalkboards and the library has a card catalog. There is a great deal of focus on the Civil War, which is called the War of Northern Aggression by everyone older than sixty. On the night before Ethan is slated to begin his sophomore year of high school, he believes there are no surprises in Gatlin County. He says he later discovers he's wrong.

"Dream On" occurs on September 2. Ethan dreams he is trying to catch a girl who is falling. He doesn't know her but knows he can't live without her. The dream is interrupted by Amma yelling at him to get up. Ethan has had the dream before and he isn't surprised to find he has dirt under his nails, just as had happened in the dream. He also smells lemons and rosemary. He notices a song on his iPod that he hadn't heard before. It's called "Sixteen Moons." When he plays it, he notes the hypnotic quality of the music. Ethan arrives downstairs and Amma serves up his breakfast. His best friend, Wesley Jefferson - known as Link - arrives in his car which is known as the Beater. Ethan tries to play "Sixteen Moons" for Link but the song has disappeared from his iPod.

"New Girl" occurs on September 2. Ethan and Link pass the truant officer at the Stop and Shop. They are five minutes late and Ethan knows Amma will know about it before he gets home. Later in the day, Link tells Ethan there's a new girl in their grade. Link doesn't know but Ethan learns from a girl named Emily that the new girl is the niece of a recluse named Macon Melchizedek Ravenwood. He lives in the town's oldest plantation and is never seen in public. That afternoon, Ethan is on the basketball practice court when a hearse drives back driven Macon's niece.

"A Hole in the Sky" takes place on September 2. That evening, Ethan tells Amma there's a new girl in his class and she says she already knows about Lena Duchannes. Ethan's father, Matthew, joins them for dinner but not for long. Since the death of Ethan's mother, his father has withdrawn completely. He spends all his time in the study. He is a writer and is apparently writing all night and sleeping all day, leaving Amma to care for everything, including Ethan.

The next day, everyone is talking about Lena's arrival at school. However, no one is friendly to her and Ethan says they stay away from her like she's a "rock star" or "a



leper." There's a confrontation during English when Lena drops her notebook and Emily refuses to give it back. Ethan intervenes, returning the book to Lena. Ethan doesn't talk to her for the rest of the week. One day Ethan is in ceramics class when he hears "Sixteen Moons." He immediately falls into a dream state and remembers the dreams of the girl falling. He goes toward the music and finds Lena in the music room, playing the viola. As soon as he enters, he smells lemons and rosemary.

"Collision" is dated September 11. Ethan borrows Link's car and drives away from school, skipping basketball practice. He suddenly sees Lena standing next to her car on the side of the road. She says the car broke down. Ethan tells her he's been dreaming about her and she says he's crazy. He holds out her wrist which has scratch marks - the same as he'd left on the girl in his dreams when he was trying to hood onto her. She says she has a dog and refuses to say she's had the same dreams. He finally convinces her to get into the car and out of the storm.

Ethan knows where she lives. Most people call Ravenwood Manor the Haunted Mansion. Ethan asks why she moved to Gatlin and she says she's lived in lots of places, and that her parents are dead. She says she usually stays with her grandmother but that her grandmother is on a trip, meaning Lena has to stay with her Uncle Macon. Ethan surprises himself by saying his mother is also dead, a fact he usually doesn't mention. When they arrive at the gates of Ravenwood, Lena thanks Ethan for the ride and begins the walk up the drive. Ethan shouts out advice to her about staying out of the focus of the English teacher. When Lena is gone, Ethan catches the smell of rosemary and lemons. He also finds a brass button in the seat and puts it in his pocket.

Before: The Middle of Nowhere; Dream On; New Girl; Hole in the Sky; and Collision Analysis

Amma has apparently been with the Wate family for many years. When Ethan is in trouble with her after being late the first day of school, Amma lectures him. Ethan's father notes the signs of Amma's lecture when he joins them for dinner, which indicates a high level of familiarity. Amma's exact role is never fully explained. She has a home of her own nearby but apparently has devoted her life to Ethan's family.

Ethan's other died in an car accident in the recent past. It's clear that her absence has left a gaping hole in the lives of Ethan and his father. Ethan believes his dad is spending all his time in the study to avoid spending time with Ethan. In truth, Ethan's father is losing touch with reality because his grief is so complete. Ethan eventually learns his father hasn't been working on a book and Matthew says he simply wants to be in the study because it's where he feels close to his dead wife.

The town is very closed to outsiders and Ethan is fully aware of that. He hates it but knows it's a very real situation. He says that certain things are expected. For example, each of the members of the basketball team are expected to sit together at lunch, show up for practice on time, attend specific activities, and invite a cheerleader to the winter formal. Ethan knows that's what others expect of him but he says he is actually having



trouble "showing up" recently. He doesn't fully explain that but it seems he's just battling with the idea that he needs to fit into the social norm in order to be accepted in Gatlin.

The chapters are divided into dates but some of them spill over into other dates. For example, a chapter that begins on September 2 covers more than a week in time and begins detailing the events of September 11 before the end of the chapter. The chapter opens on September 11 with a culmination of the event that began in the previous chapter.

When Ethan and Lena arrive at Ravenwood, the storm is decreasing and the lightning has stopped. Ethan says he believes the lightning is gone for the night and Lena says "there's more where that came from." Lena is referring to the fact that she is creating the lightning herself. It will later be revealed that she's a Natural and has the ability to control the elements, though at this point she is usually out of control and the elements react to her emotions. Lena's response to Ethan is that he's probably right, and that the storm is over for the evening, indicating that her time with Ethan has calmed her and she is no longer so emotionally fraught that she's creating storms.



Broken Glass; Greenbrier; and The Sisters

Broken Glass; Greenbrier; and The Sisters Summary

"Broken Glass" is dated September 12. Ethan wakes the next morning realizing he hasn't had the dream about Lena. Ethan tells Link most of the details of his meeting with Lena the previous evening and Link says Ethan shouldn't tell anyone else because Ethan will be teased for it. In school that day, Lena bumps into Ethan and a light overhead immediately erupts into sparks. In English, Savannah Snow - a popular cheerleader - and several of her followers make fun of Lena. One of them is Emily. When Ethan finds himself trying to be a barrier between the cheerleaders and Lena he hears her voice in his head, telling him it's not possible. At one point, the cheerleaders are whispering stories about Macon Ravenwood luring children to his home where he kills them. Lena goes to the pencil sharpener and is there when a window explodes inward. Lena is bleeding, having been struck with glass, and students immediately begin telling their versions of what happened, including seeing Lena punch the window.

"Greenbrier" is dated September 12. Ethan rushes from the room behind Lena though she whispers in his head that he shouldn't. Ethan stops to borrow Link's car again and heads to Ravenwood Manor. He slows at the gate but is undeterred. The porch is sagging and the steps appear unsafe, prompting Ethan to rush up to the door. He can hear the song, "Sixteen Moons" while he's knocking but no one answers. He goes inside and is surprised to find the house looks like "a page out of a furniture catalogue." There's a large wolf-like dog with very strange, human-like eyes. When the dog growls, Ethan runs out of the house.

Ethan finds himself in a garden and smells lemon and rosemary before he sees Lena. She's obviously been crying. Ethan lays on the ground beside her and says he had to know she was alright. Lena says everyone at the school hates her and Ethan says everyone is jealous that Lena hasn't lived her entire life in Gatlin. He also says she's not afraid to be herself and that everyone in Gatlin is. Part of their conversation is spoken and part of it is not. Ethan confides in Lena that he loves to read but says he doesn't share that with the other students. Ethan then asks what happened in English class and Lena says she isn't sure and that she "sometimes" can't control it. Lena admits that she is having the same dreams as Ethan but says she hadn't wanted to get him caught up in the drama of her life.

Lena and Ethan are touching their hands together and Ethan can feel the shock of their contact. Ethan reaches to the edge of the rock he's sitting on and finds a small object. When his hand comes in contact with it, they are immediately transported from the garden to another place.



It is nighttime in this place and there is a woman named Genevieve who is listening to the Union soldiers as they give the orders to set the plantation houses ablaze. Genevieve knows they will be burning the plantation known as Greenbrier next and that Ravenwood will follow. She smells lemons and knows the lemon orchard is already being destroyed.

Lena and Ethan are then back in the present and Ethan shows Lena the locket that he believes is responsible for transporting them to the other time. There is a date - February 11, which is also Lena's birthday. There are initials, ELW, which are Ethan's initials. They debate what happened and what it means, but they know it was real because their eyes are still burning from the smoke of the fire. Ethan tries to convince Lena to try to visit the scene again but she refuses and heads home.

"The Sisters" takes place on September 12. When Ethan arrives home, the table is set for supper but several people have called Amma with news that Ethan left English class after the incident involving the broken window. Ethan is looking for a way to distract Amma and he brings the locket out of his pocket. She's immediately on guard and Ethan fears she might faint. She instructs him to put it in a small pouch she provides. There are already herbs inside and she instructs him to immediately bury it back where he found it. She insists that he promise to stay away from Lena as well. Ethan leaves the house but doesn't bury the locket.

Saturday morning, Ethan sleeps in for awhile before waking to visit his three elderly aunts as he does every Saturday. They are Mary, Prudence, and Grace, and they live together in Gatlin. Ethan does chores for them and takes them places each week. He asks the aunts about the locket and they tell some of the history of Ravenwood, including that rumor has it that the owner had "made a deal with the Devil" when the Union army marched through Gatlin because it was the only plantation house to survive the fires. Ethan says that Macon Ravenwood never leaves his house but he's contradicted by one of the aunts who says he's often seen at the DAR building in the evening. He also learns the initials on the locket stand for Ethan Carter Wate, Ethan's great-great-great-uncle. Ethan is skeptical, having never seen the name on the family tree but they say it's because he was a deserter.

Ethan takes the aunts to church. While he's waiting for them, he takes the locket out. Lena speaks to him through his mind, telling him to stop. He doesn't listen but is soon in the past. Genevieve is with Ethan. He says he's alright but Genevieve doesn't believe it. Another woman arrives and tells Genevieve the house is burning, and that her mama and sisters are gone. The spell is broken suddenly and Ethan is back in church, sitting between two of his aunts.

Broken Glass; Greenbrier; and The Sisters Analysis

Lena has a number written on her hand, and Ethan doesn't know what that number is until she tells him that it's the number of days until her sixteenth birthday. It's obvious that Lena is stressing over something but at this point she doesn't reveal the details to



Ethan. There's also the clue of the song, "Sixteen Moons," that Ethan keeps hearing. Soon after their first time travel, Lena tells Ethan that her life is too complicated and that she doesn't want him mixed up in it. She says she "might not be here" after her birthday but Ethan refuses to be put off. He says they are already friends, whether Lena wants it or not.

There is electricity between Ethan and Lena each time they touch but this is all being presented from Ethan's point of view and it seems that he is describing the typical teenage emotions of falling in love with Lena. He talks about the electricity and that it seems his heart will stop. The reader is left to believe it's normal and that Ethan is just exaggerating it, as is typical for a teenager. It's not until much later that the reader will learn that Ethan is actually in danger from Lena's touch. The fact that she is not a normal human makes her contact with Ethan impossible without endangering his life. It's a concept that will be explained in more detail near the end of the book.

Amma's reaction to the locket is surprising and isn't explained for some time. Because of her reaction, Ethan doesn't press for answers right that moment. It's only much later that he finds out that Amma knows the story behind the locket and knows that there is dark Casting involved in it.

Amma says several people had called her and she says she can't believe Ethan would skip class and basketball practice, and sully the family name. Ethan says the other students had harassed Lena but Amma says she doesn't know what that has to do with Ethan. This is a typical small town in many ways. Everyone knows Amma is Ethan's primary caregiver. When Ethan is in trouble, everyone calls Amma to tell her.



The Real Boo Radley; A Fork in the Road; The Last Three Rows; and Gathering Days

The Real Boo Radley; A Fork in the Road; The Last Three Rows; and Gathering Days Summary

"The Real Boo Radley" takes place on September 14. Ethan is at home reading and he reaches out mentally to Lena who answers. Later, Ethan dreams he is drowning. He is trying to hold onto Lena and she says she'd warned him he'd have to let her go. Amma wakes him from the dream. On the way to school, Link announces that a "lynch mob" is calling for Lena to be expelled. When they arrive at school, Mrs. Lincoln is talking to the principal. Ethan catches up with Lena and they talk about the most recent scene. He reveals that the ECW is his ancestor and they wonder about the other set of initials, GKD. Lena decides she doesn't want to face the students or the angry parents, and heads home instead. Ethan meets Mrs. Lincoln before he reaches the building and she says Lena will be offered the chance to transfer to any school in the region.

That evening, Ethan tells Amma he's going to the library to work on a project with Link. He hasn't been to the library since his mother died but Amma lets him go without question. The head librarian is Marian Ashcroft, who was Ethan's mother's best friend, fellow writer and researcher. He goes to Ravenwood, hoping to talk to Lena. He encounters Macon who is the epitome of a Southern gentleman, much to Ethan's surprise. He invites Ethan to dinner. Ethan steps inside and discover the house is nothing like the last time he was inside.

Ethan notices a book, carefully wrapped as Marian tends to do and stamped "Gatlin County Library." When Ethan pays attention to it, Macon asks if he knows Marian and Ethan reveals his mom had been Marian's research partner. Macon suddenly realizes Ethan's identity and says he'd known Ethan's mother, which greatly surprises Ethan.

Ethan plans to ask Macon about the locket but the minute he pulls it from his pocket the lights go out and the piano music abruptly stops. Macon asks Ethan to put the locket back in his pocket and as he does so, the lights come back on. The food has all disappeared from the table. Macon says the locket didn't come from the Ravenwood grounds and is upset when he learns Lena has been to the gardens of the neighboring plantation, Greenbrier. He says she isn't safe there but doesn't say why. As Ethan prepares to leave the house, he notes a huge painting has changed. The woman in the painting is now wearing the locket. Lena says she's seen the painting all her life and that the woman in the painting has never before been wearing the locket

:"A Fork in the Road" takes place on September 15. Ethan is driving the hearse that Lena uses for transportation. He challenges her to tell him what he'd witnessed at the



mansion but she says she can't tell him. She says Ethan is the only friend she has in town and that he won't continue to be her friend if she tells him about her family. Ethan stops the car near his house and Lena drives away. Ethan goes inside but Lena returns and asks that he join her outside. He does.

Lena says everyone in her family has some sort of power. She says the family are "Casters," in that they have the ability to cast spells. Ethan feels he'd known something all along but isn't really ready for this conversation. He also doesn't feel he can run out on Lena. Ethan points out that his own father is locked away in his study and knows nothing that's going on in the real world. He compares that to Macon who has also locked himself away from the world and says they aren't so different at all.

"The Last Three Rows" takes place on September 24. Ethan invites Lena to a movie and she agrees. Ethan arrives at the theater to discover Lena has already purchased tickets and that many students from school are also there. Lena chooses to sit in the back and most of the other couples in that section are kissing. Lena reaches into Ethan's pocket for the Milk Duds but finds the locket instead. Almost immediately they are transported back in time.

Genevieve is frantic, realizing her mother is in the burning plantation building. She finds her mother and Evangeline are already dead and Ethan is shot as she's trying to reach her mother. When Lena and Ethan return to the present, the movie is over.

"Gathering Days" takes place on October 9. Everyone has begun to talk about Ethan spending time with Lena. The other members of the basketball team are ignoring Ethan when he's with Lena. Later, a fellow team member, Earl, is chosen to tell Ethan that he needs to stay away from Lena. Ethan refuses to give in to the peer pressure and Link manages to continue to stand by Ethan and even spend some time with Lena without alienating the team.

One afternoon, Ethan and the team members are at the local convenience store when a beautiful girl addresses him. She says her name is Ridley and that she's Lena's cousin. She says there's a family event at Ravenwood and that she was picked by the family to pick up Ethan. He goes with her and finds himself telling her all kinds of things that he would normally have kept to himself. At the house, Ridley continues to keep a grip on Ethan's arm and he realizes the relationship between her and the family is strained. There is initially a refusal to allow Ridley inside but she says it's a long drive for her to take Ethan home and they relent.

Lena tells Ridley her destiny has been determined and that she shouldn't be here. Ethan is introduced to other members of the family, including a youngster named Ryan and her brother, Larkin, who has the ability to make his arms appear to be snakes. Ridley accuses Macon of favoring Lena but he says Ridley has been "Claimed" and favorites has nothing to do with it. Ethan is feeling strange and is unable to do anything but watch the situation unfold. Ridley tells Lena her "relationship is doomed" and that Lena will see that after she's Claimed. Ridley says Lena should tell Ethan that there's no way to know if she's Light or Dark and that she has no choice.



Macon and Ridley's mother, known to Lena as Aunt Del, tell Ridley she has to leave. Ridley continues to refuse and Ethan finds he is unable to even move, let alone help defend Lena from what he now sees as a threat. Lena tells Ridley to get away from "my boyfriend." Ethan takes note of the word just before he passes out.

The Real Boo Radley; A Fork in the Road; The Last Three Rows; and Gathering Days Analysis

Ethan is fully aware there's something strange going on with the house at Ravenwood and he quizzes Lena about it the first time he's inside with Macon present. The furnishings are nothing like they'd been on Ethan's first visit and he asks Lena. She refuses to answer. There's a place set for Ethan at the table and he asks about that as well. He later discovers that Kitchen is more than a room in the house. This is a magical method of food preparation in which meals are created and served without any interference from the people.

The wolf-like dog is named Boo Radley from the character in "The Catcher in the Rye." It will much later be revealed that the dog is actually how Macon sees what's going on in Ravenwood. Whatever Boo sees is available for Macon to see. Boo follows Lena around, obviously serving as a watchdog of sorts over the coming months.



A Crack in the Plaster; The Greats: and Red Sweater

A Crack in the Plaster; The Greats: and Red Sweater Summary

"A Crack in the Plaster" takes place on October 9. Ethan wakes in Lena's bedroom. There is writing all over the walls and Ethan realizes it's Lena's poetry. Lena says most Casters can control their gifts by the time they're nearing sixteen but Lena has little control over hers. She says Aunt Del is a Palimpsest who can "read time," Ridley is a Siren, Larkin is an Illusionist, and her Uncle Barclay is a Shifter. Lena gives Ethan other information about her family as well and expresses that her greatest desire has been to fit in with humans her own age. Lena says that she doesn't want to begin a relationship with Ethan because she fears she will turn Dark and that she won't be capable of love if that happens. Ethan pledges to help her figure out an answer. He admits to himself that he's going to stand by Lena no matter what.

"The Greats" takes place on October 9. Ethan wakes from another dream in which he is unable to hold on to Lena. He hears a noise outside and discovers that Amma is apparently going somewhere. He decides to follow when she gets into the truck with the postmaster, Carlton Eaton, who takes her to Wader's Creek where Amma lives. He has to maneuver through swamp land but he follows as Amma leaves her house and walks to another location where she meets Macon Ravenwood. Amma and Macon are obviously well acquainted. He tells her that Ethan still has the locket and that Ethan and Lena are spending time together. He says Amma has to control Ethan better. Amma counters, saying her family has been "cleaning up messes" for Macon's family for more than a century and that he should never have brought Lena to Ravenwood. Macon says Amma, as a Seer, should have foreseen Ethan and Lena finding the locket and prevented it. Amma says Macon has to show more respect for The Greats and he apologizes. Amma seems to be trying to find out where someone is and Macon accuses Ethan of having power Amma hasn't revealed. Amma comes up with a charm she says might protect Lena.

"Red Sweater" takes place on October 10. Ethan and Lena skip school and Ethan tells about the meeting between Amma and Macon. Ethan says Macon believes he has power because he brought Ridley into Ravenwood and Lena says Macon is right, prompting Ethan to say he's certain he doesn't have any power. They argue and as Lena gets upset a storm rolls in. Ethan convinces Lena to travel with the locket. At first it doesn't work and Ethan is certain the charm from Amma is preventing them from time traveling. When she takes it off, they are back at the plantation and Genevieve is trying to save Ethan. Ethan pledges again that he's going to keep Lena from being Claimed Dark.



A Crack in the Plaster; The Greats: and Red Sweater Analysis

Lena explains that each person in her family is Claimed on his or her sixteenth birthday. That rite of passage is quickly approaching for Lena. She says she doesn't yet know what she will be and that she might be Claimed as Light or Dark. She says she has no control and no choice. Lena says this is why children in her family don't live with their parents. She tells the story of a teenager who was Claimed Dark but her mother couldn't bear to send her away. The situation resulted in serious consequences until she was sent away. What isn't addressed is that the children live with some other relative and there are apparently bonds formed between the children and adults anyway. Macon and Lena are an excellent example. Lena says Macon would do anything for her and that he's exactly what she imagines her father would have been like. Macon is working hard to protect Lena and it seems likely that he would not turn her out even if she were Claimed Dark.

At one point during the conversation between Amma and Macon, Macon says they each have a responsibility, Amma to the Mortals and Macon to the Casters. He then says that if "she Turns, she will dam us all." He's referring to Lena but he doesn't elaborate and it's left to the reader to decide what he means.



Marian the Librarian; Hallow E'en; The Writing on the Wall

Marian the Librarian; Hallow E'en; The Writing on the Wall Summary

"Marian the Librarian" takes place on October 13. Ethan is in the hallway near his father's study when the door unlocks on its own. He wants to go inside to look through his mother's research for clues about Lena's situation and Ethan Carter Wate but he's not allowed inside. When the door opens, he sees the opportunity but Amma stops him. Ethan has never been in the back room of the library where his mother did research with Marian until now. He discovers among her things a picture of the painting of the woman at Ravenwood who Marian says is named Genevieve Duchannes. Marian and Ethan's mother were researching the story of Genevieve and the man she loved, a Confederate soldier. Their relationship doesn't have the approval of their parents. Marian says the locket in the painting is rumored to be a secret betrothal gift. Ethan wants to show Marian the locket and their time travel and Lena gives in. The three of them are quickly at the plantation where Ethan is already dead. Genevieve says she's lost her home and her mother and she can't stand to lose Ethan to. She retrieves a book called *The Book of Moons* and plans to bring Ethan back to life. A woman there, Ivy, warns that the spell has consequences.

They return to the present and Lena is hysterical, believing the visions are a warning that she's going to harm Ethan. Marian tells Lena that she's not yet Claimed, that she's not going to go Dark, and that she's being as melodramatic as Macon. Marian reveals that she's the librarian for the Caster Library and knows a great deal about Lena's family. She is sympathetic to the plight of Ethan and Lena but is bound to remain neutral. She does say they are welcome to visit the Caster Library when it's next open.

"Hallow E'en" takes place on October 31. Ethan stays home to hand out candy to trick-or-treaters. Late that night he answers a knock at the door. It's Mrs. Lincoln with brownies for Ethan. He is immediately on guard though he can't say why and refuses to take the brownies or to let her inside. Soon after, he hears Lena calling for his help and rushes to Ravenwood. Inside, Boo Radley leads Ethan to a room where Lena is on a table and is obviously under some sort of supernatural attack. Aunt Del, Macon and others are around her, chanting, but Aunt Del says "it isn't working" and Macon is obviously afraid. Ethan manages to break through a barrier to reach Lena and the attack comes to an abrupt end.

Lena's family discuss the situation, including whether it means that Ethan has power. They come to the conclusion that he doesn't. Macon's mother says she believes it's the relationship between Ethan and Lena that fought off the attack.



"The Writing on the Wall" takes place on November 1 and Ethan wakes in Lena's bedroom. Sixteen Moons plays on Ethan's phone but the lyrics have changed slightly this time. Ethan tells Lena he's falling in love with her and she writes on the wall that she is also falling.

Marian the Librarian; Hallow E'en; The Writing on the Wall Analysis

After Ethan breaks in on the attack on Lena, he and Lena are both shaken. The following morning they are holding each other and kissing. Ethan describes the electricity of the situation which may seem like a normal teen reaction, but then they are seriously shocked and it's obvious there's something more going on. It's not clear what's happening but Lena's niece, Ryan, steps in and heals them.

There are references to Sarafine and when Lena hears the name, it means nothing to her. When Ridley appeared in the house, she is called by another name once and Ethan doesn't understand until Lena explains. She says they don't know their true names until the Claiming. Each of them is given a name but their real names are used after it's revealed at the Claiming. In Lena's case, her real name has not yet been revealed. She says her grandmother called her Lena Beana when she was very young and the name stuck. Sarafine is actually Lena's mother.



Just Your Average American Holiday; Domus Lunae Libri; It Rhymes with Witch; Lost and Found

Just Your Average American Holiday; Domus Lunae Libri; It Rhymes with Witch; Lost and Found Summary

"Just Your Average American Holiday" takes place on November 27. Amma invites Lena for Thanksgiving dinner. Lena tells Ethan the holiday isn't celebrated at her house. The conversation around the table is sometimes uncomfortable as everyone tries to make up for the fact that Ethan's mother is missing from the gathering. Then everything is frozen except Lena and Amma. Ethan can hear them but can't respond. Amma says The Greats - her own ancestors who help her when she needs them - have frozen time. Amma tells Lena that Sarafine is Lena's mother and that she's coming for Lena. Lena says her mother is dead but Amma says that isn't true. She also tells Lena that she can't have a relationship with Ethan just before time resumes at its normal pace. Amma is flustered when she realizes Ethan heard the conversation but she silences him with a look.

When Lena gets home she confronts Macon, furious that her mother was the entity that attacked her and no one told her. After her tantrum, Macon tells Ethan that for some reason he has the ability to protect Lena. Macon says it will become increasingly dangerous for Lena until her birthday and asks Ethan to help look after her.

"Domus Lunae Libri" takes place on November 28. Marian announces the Caster Library is open from nine that night until six the following morning. Ethan is surprised to learn the entrance to the Caster Library is t the Gatlin Historical Society. Marian warns Ethan that Lena has to be the one to handle the books and that they have to be careful not to get lost in the maze of tunnels where the books are kept. Marian also reveals to Ethan that his mother had once held the job of keeper of the Caster Library. Ethan also learns the tunnels go great lengths to various places in the county, including an opening at Ravenwood.

Lena, Ethan, and Marian travel back to the plantation where they watch Genevieve cast a spell and Ethan return to life. Ethan tells Genevieve he'd always known they'd find a way to be together, then he gives her the locket and dies again. The woman with Genevieve, Ivy, sees that Genevieve's eyes have changed. She consults the spirits and says that Genevieve's insistence on Casting to bring Ethan back has prompted a curse. Every one of her descendants will now be Claimed on the night of their sixteenth birthdays.

Back in the library, Macon and Amma are waiting and are furious. Lena is comatose initially and Macon has to use magic to reach her. Both Amma and Macon are angry



that Marian allowed Lena and Ethan in the library. Marian reveals that the Book of Moons has been missing for many years.

"It Rhymes with Witch" takes place on December 1. Link's mother is fully focused on having Lena expelled from school. They discover that a student group called the "Guardian Angels" has been formed with the goal of making the school safe. Ethan and Lena know this is only an effort to get Lena out of school.

"Lost and Found" takes place on December 6. Ethan is spending Saturday with the aunts. The conversation is erratic as always and one of them says she wants to be buried with her recipe book which prompts Ethan to realize the Book of Moons is probably buried with Genevieve.

Just Your Average American Holiday; Domus Lunae Libri; It Rhymes with Witch; Lost and Found Analysis

Ethan wonders how his mother came to even know about the Caster Library and whether she had been invited to be the librarian by someone or if she'd merely stumbled on the truth as Ethan had. Once they are in the library, Ethan notes that there's mail. He turns to Marian and asks how she gets mail at the Caster Library. She says Carlton Eaton, the postman who had given Amma a ride into the swamps, delivered it just like he delivered mail to everyone else. This is an indication that Carlton knows about the Casters and the magical side of Gatlin and dispels the notion that he might have been merely giving Amma a ride on the night Ethan followed her to Wader's Creek.



Grave Digging; Waist Deep; Melting; When the Saints Go Marching In

Grave Digging; Waist Deep; Melting; When the Saints Go Marching In Summary

"Grave Digging" takes place on December 7. Lena and Ethan go to the cemetery with Aunt Del and one of Lena's cousins, Reece. Lena pleads with Aunt Del to show her what's in the grave. Through Aunt Del, they see the woman named Ivy dropping the book into the grave atop Genevieve's casket. Aunt Del says the book belongs to Genevieve but Genevieve tells them that Ethan and Lena are trying to right a wrong, and that they should take it. They dig it up.

Ethan says it's obvious the book is Dark. It takes his breath away and singses his hands each time he touches it. Lena erases Reece's and Aunt Del's memories and they head back to Ravenwood.

"Waist Deep" takes place on December 8. Ethan and Lena begin reading the book in the hope of finding a way to avoid Lena's Claiming, or to give her a choice. The next day at school, everyone is thinking about the Winter Formal. During lunch, Link asks if Ethan and Lena are attending and they decide they are.

"Melting" takes place on December 13. Ethan is on his way to pick up Lena. Amma provides a beautiful corsage for him to give Lena and sees him off, obviously proud of him though she hasn't given her blessing to his relationship with Lena. Ethan is amazed at how pretty Lena is when he picks her up. They arrive at the dance to discover Ridley is Link's date. Ethan halfheartedly tries to warn Link but realizes Link will never believe him. The girls, including Savannah and Emily, immediately begin to berate Lena. She holds her own to a degree but it's obvious they are going to torment her the entire night. Ridley creates a disaster, turning the fake snow to a watery mess and setting off electrical problems throughout the gym so that everyone runs. When they get home, Macon has Kitchen make a hot drink of Lena.

"When the Saints Go Marching In" takes place on December 16. There's a hearing to determine whether Lena will be expelled. Ethan asks if Macon will be there and Lena says he won't. The entire town has turned out for the event. Savannah Snow's mother is one of those who speaks and she says the window that Lena broke almost "cut my baby to shreds." Link speaks out but Mrs. Lincoln tells him to stop. Mrs. Lincoln says Lena was in an institution prior to her arrival at Gatlin. Lena, speaking in Ethan's head, says it was a private school but Ethan is worried, feeling Mrs. Lincoln wouldn't have made that claim without a means of backing it up. She then says that Lena's mother murdered Lena's father.



Just then Macon arrives with Marian. Macon says education is required and can't be expelled without cause. He says that Savannah and the other girls laying claims against Lena are lying. He then says that if Lena can't attend school, she'll have to be home-schooled. He says if that happens, he'll have to invite some of her cousins to live with him as well to provide the "social aspects of her education." He then says that he has a great deal of money and threatens to "bring in a Wal-Mart" if Lena is expelled. He reveals many secrets about the lives of the various residents and the board president says he believes the issue should be dropped. Marian and Macon leave together.

Grave Digging; Waist Deep; Melting; When the Saints Go Marching In Analysis

Aunt Del has the ability to see things from all times at once. For example, she walks into a room and sees what's happening now but also sees scenes in that same room at various other times throughout history. This is apparently the reason Lena and Ethan take her with them to the cemetery when they are looking for Genevieve's grave and the Book of Moons.

When they are facing Lena's expulsion hearing, Ethan thinks about the fact that "belongs" to Gatlin. He is referring to the fact that he is accepted as one of them as Lena will never be. It's interesting in a way because he hates how they act and how they treat Lena, but he realizes that he is accepted as one of them even though he doesn't like them and even though he is seeing Lena. Ethan is ashamed of their actions but realizes that in Lena's eyes he is at least somewhat like them.

While they are in the gym for Lena's expulsion hearing, Ethan begins to wonder at Mrs. Lincoln's attitude. While he isn't surprised that she is out to get Lena, he is surprised that she's going about it with such a vengeance. It will later be revealed that Sarafine has taken over Mrs. Lincoln's body and it's she who is out to get Lena at this point. It was also Sarafine who showed up at Ethan's house on Halloween.

Macon begins to call out the citizens of Gatlin during the expulsion hearing. He says that he owns the property where the local hotel is and threatens to close the business down. He says if that happens, Mrs. Snow's husband will have to travel out of town to meet his "lady friends" which will mean he'll be late to dinner quite regularly. He then calls out the school board president, saying he's seen the man with a lady seated nearby. He next questions another man, saying he might have to close down a local bar, and if that happens this man will have to find another place to drink while his wife thinks he's at Bible study. Macon obviously knows these things because he has seen them through the eyes of the dog, Boo.



White Christmas; Promise; The Sandman or Something Like Him; The Battle of Honey Hill

White Christmas; Promise; The Sandman or Something Like Him; The Battle of Honey Hill Summary

"White Christmas" takes place on December 19. The other students ignore Lena completely and Ethan quits the basketball team. Ethan and Lena spend as much time as possible going through the Book of Moons as they watch the time till Lena's birthday ticking away. Lena tells Ethan they have less than two months left until her birthday and that she believes it would be easier if they broke off their relationship now. Link announces he's going away over Christmas break with Ridley. Ethan considers telling Link what Ridley really is as well as confiding the rest of the situation, but thinks Link won't believe him. Ethan visits Marian and believes his mother is trying to give him a message. He renews his determination to find a way to save Lena.

When he gets home, Lena is there. She says she doesn't want Ethan hurt when she is Claimed but also doesn't want to see him hurting now. He pleads with her not to shut him out. Later they are in the house when Ethan's dad leaves the study to take a shower. Ethan takes Lena to the study and shows her that the door unlocks itself as if inviting him in. Ethan sees piles of paper - his father's book currently in progress. When he gets closer he discovers there are no words on the pages, just series of squiggly lines. Ethan is hurt and furious, realizing his father has been spending all his time hiding away from Ethan but hasn't been working, as he'd said.

Ethan's dad returns but Lena Casts a spell and locks him out. Ethan shows Lena a book that opens to a specific page. If he turns the page, it flips back to the original page. They figure out that the page numbers are a code and the message they get when they consider all the pages that are opened is "Claim yourself."

"Promise" takes place on January 12. Lena tells Ethan that knowing him makes it more difficult because she has more to lose now than she'd had before she met him. They still don't know what was meant by the message "Claim yourself." The book is large with many Casts, some in other languages, and they have yet to find the answer they seek.

"The Sandman or Something Like Him" takes place on February 4. Lena and Ethan skip school to read more in the book though they are both very tired. Ethan says he really wants to find the correct Cast but isn't certain he'd recognize it even if he finds it. Ethan is dreaming of trying to save Lena from a fire one night. When he wakes, Macon is in his room. Macon reveals that he knows Ethan was dreaming. When Ethan asks if that is



part of Macon's Caster abilities, Macon says he isn't actually a Caster. Ethan believes Macon is a vampire but Macon says that's not the case. He says he "replenishes" the powers he has by taking dreams from mortals. Ethan realizes that Macon has been stealing pieces of his dreams and that's why he never remembers the key pieces of his dreams about Lena. He asks Macon about it but they are interrupted by Amma who demands Macon leave. Macon says Lena isn't ready to see the dreams Ethan is having and that Ethan and Lena are so close that he's taking Ethan's dreams to try to protect Lena. Macon says that Ethan and Lena cannot pursue their relationship because the mortal always "bears the burden" of the relationship.

"The Battle of Honey Hill" takes place on February 2. Ethan realizes they have only six days until Lena's birthday. They try a couple of different ways of finding the correct Cast over the next two days. With only two days left, Lena stops talking. Ethan goes to Ravenwood which has transformed to take on the appearance of a prison. With one day left, family members show up at Ravenwood. Link reveals that he and Ridley are planning a birthday party for Lena. Ethan tries to talk him out of it but Link says Ridley is going to get everyone to come. Meanwhile the town gears up for the re-enactment of the Battle of Honey Hill.

White Christmas; Promise; The Sandman or Something Like Him; The Battle of Honey Hill Analysis

When Ethan confronts his father about the writing, Mr. Wate seems beaten. He says he'd clung to his time in the study because it was there he felt close to his wife. He also says he'd tried to write but that he no longer knows how.

There is an interesting conversation between Macon and Amma in Ethan's bedroom. Ethan is aware that there is some sort of delicate truce between Macon and Amma, and that each knows more about the other than Ethan does. Amma says she won't allow Macon to "feed" off Ethan. She also hints at the darkness in him. Macon says he made the choice of what he is "a long time ago," but that he will never be truly Dark as long as he has Lena. Amma counters, saying that his concern for Lena doesn't change the fact that he's Dark. It's not clear how dangerous Macon is or whether he is controlling it somehow.



Sweet Sixteen; Lollipop Girl

Sweet Sixteen; Lollipop Girl Summary

"Sweet Sixteen" takes place on February 11. The Book of Moons is missing again and Ethan arrives at Ravenwood to discover Lena has locked herself in her room. Lena lets Ethan in and he gives her a necklace. He tells her about the party. Lena's Gramma has arrived at the house and Lena is excited to see her. Link, Ridley, Savannah, and others from school arrive but Macon says Lena can't attend the party because he can't protect her. Link pleads with Ethan to listen to his band, the Holy Rollers, perform. Ethan gives in and Lena appears, saying Larkin helped her sneak out. Link says he wrote a song for Lena and says the title is "Sixteen Moons." They are amazed that Link's band is really good but later learn Ridley is responsible for how good they sound. Lena tells Ethan she loves him and says she wants to be sure he knows, in case something happens to her during the Claiming. He says he loves her as well.

"Lollipop Girl" takes place on February 11. Link says Ethan's father is in on a nearby balcony and that he's threatening to jump. Ethan leaves Lena with Larkin and goes there where he finds Ridley is manipulating the situation. When Ethan asks why Ridley is trying to kill his father, Mitchell, Ridley says she's making sure Ethan won't be nearby to protect Lena. With that statement, Ethan suddenly realizes the key to protecting Lena is for them to be together. He knows their love makes them extraordinarily strong together. Link says something quietly to Lena and she loosens her hold on Mitchell, allowing Ethan to pull him to safety. Link had said she wasn't all bad and Ridley had reacted to that. Ridley says she might be in trouble for not completing her assignment of killing Mitchell. She leaves, saying she'll have to "lay low" for awhile.

Sweet Sixteen; Lollipop Girl Analysis

The birthday party is an interesting aspect of the story on several levels. First, Ridley uses her powers to convince almost the entire student body to attend the party. Another aspect is that Lena desperately wants to attend because this is among the normal rites of teenagers that Lena craves. She wants to be part of the normal activities that most teens take for granted. To a lesser degree, Ethan is feeling this need for "normal." He says he hadn't realized how "small" the problems of normal people are until he faced the possibility of Lena's Claiming.

During the dance, Ethan suddenly realizes that the members of the basketball team are talking to him again and that everyone is friendly as if there was never a problem with Lena. Ethan is looking around for Ridley but can't find her and begins to think it's real. It may be that everyone is over their anger at Ethan and Lena but it's never really clear whether Ridley just started the ball rolling by bringing everyone together or if she's still manipulating everyone.



Family Reunion; The Claiming; Silver Lining

Family Reunion; The Claiming; Silver Lining Summary

"Family Reunion" takes place on February 11. After Ethan is certain his father is being taken to safety where Amma will pick him up, he and Link head back to Lena's. They suddenly encounter Link's mother but soon realize it's actually Sarafine inhabiting Mrs. Lincoln's body. When she steps out of the body, Mrs. Lincoln sinks to the ground but she's alive. Ethan realizes that Sarafine was in Mrs. Lincoln's body when she visited his house with the brownies and when she set out to get Lena kicked out of school. Ethan also discovers that Larkin is a Dark Caster and that he brought Lena to Sarafine. He tells Lena that being Dark is "more fun" than being Light.

Sarafine tells Lena that she has the right to choose whether to be Light and that Macon has chosen not to tell her. Macon arrives as does his brother, a Dark Caster named Hunter. Macon confirms that Lena has a choice but says there are consequences. He doesn't want Lena to consider the consequences when making her decision. Lena learns that if she chooses to go Dark, every Light Caster in her family will die, including her grandmother and Aunt Del. If she chooses Light, every Dark Caster will die - including Macon.

Lena learns that she and Ethan can never have a physical relationship, a fact that Ethan immediately realizes is true. However, Sarafine says that if Lena chooses Dark, the Dark Casters have found a way to make that possible.

"The Claiming" takes place on February 11. Macon says he never told Lena that she couldn't have a physical relationship with any mortal, including Ethan, because Lena had never expressed any real interest in a boy before meeting Ethan. Macon argues that Lena won't be the same person if she chooses to become Dark and so won't be capable of loving Ethan anyway. Hunter and Macon fight and Macon is hurt. Ethan rushes back to the house, planning to get Ryan, Lena's younger cousin who is a healer. Aunt Del and Gramma say it's too dangerous for her to be at the Claiming. Gramma, however, is an empath and she has the ability to take on the powers of other Casters for a brief time. She takes on Ryan's ability as a healer and she and Aunt Del head back with Ethan. Ethan sees the Book of Moons on the way back.

When Ethan arrives at the garden, Sarafine confronts him and stabs him, fatally wounding him. The perspective changes as Ethan dies. Lena rushes to Ethan, uses the Book of Moons, and revives him. Amma arrives and thanks Lena for saving Ethan but points out that Macon has died, the payment required by the Book of Moons. As the moment of midnight arrives and Lena should be claimed, she is causing a raging storm and the moon disappears.



"Silver Lining" takes place on February 12. Ethan is headed home when he notices a new song on his iPod. It's called "Seventeen Moons."

Family Reunion; The Claiming; Silver Lining Analysis

Ethan realizes that Macon was weaker than his brother Hunter because Macon chose to feed only on the dreams of others. It's not clear still whether Macon might have been a full-fledged vampire who just sought to do little harm to others but there are hints to that effect.

Again, Amma's role in the story comes as something of a surprise when she shows up at the scene of the battle between Lena and her mother. When Macon is dead, it's Amma who points out that he died because of Lena's choice to use the Book of Moons to revive Ethan. The scene is very much like the scene between the Ethan Wate of the 1800s and Genevieve. In that case, Ethan lived only a few minutes, long enough to proclaim his love for Genevieve. There's no indication that the Ethan of modern times is going to die as a result of the Cast.

The reader who expected the story to wrap up neatly will be disappointed. Ethan and Lena still can't be together physically, apparently still faced with the fact that a physical union would kill Ethan. Though Lena avoided the decision required of her Claiming by blocking out the moon, the song on Ethan's iPod indicates she will have to face the same decision in a year, on her seventeenth birthday. It seems possible that Lena can continue to block the moon every year but it seems likely there will eventually come a day of reckoning.

There are several issues facing the reader as the story comes to a close. Macon is supposedly Dark but he cares for Lena so much that he overcomes his baser needs to take care of her. However, he tells Lena that if she chooses to become Dark herself, she eventually won't care at all for Ethan and that she may even kill him. It's not clear why Macon was able to overcome his Darkness because of his love for Lena but believes Lena won't be able to do the same. Another issue is that Sarafine and the others who are Dark want their bloodlines to remain pure. That could be the reason the Casters can't have loving physical contact with mortals. However, Sarafine says if Lena is willing to turn Dark, they know a way to allow that to happen. She doesn't elaborate and it may just be a trick. When Lena asks why she would be willing to have the Dark bloodlines diluted by Ethan's presence, she says it's better than having Lena choose to become Light which would kill off the Dark Casters of the family. It's not clear how much of Sarafine's statements are lies but it seems that if there are truths, it would be possible for Lena and Ethan to also figure out a way to make their relationship work.



Characters

Lena Duchannes

A fifteen-year-old girl who is a member of a family of Casters, she is facing her sixteenth birthday and the possibility that she will be claimed as a dark Caster. Lena wants more than anything else to simply be a normal girl living the life of a normal teenager. The problem is that she isn't normal. She is a "Natural" and can control elements of nature. Very early in the story, she creates a storm that blows out the windows of her English classroom. Lena lives with her uncle, Macon Ravenwood, and faces her sixteenth birthday without all the knowledge she needs to make an informed decision. She has typical human emotions. When she discovers that Macon has hidden things from her, she's furious but when Macon dies, she greatly regrets her harsh words and fears that he may never know how much she really loved him. When she falls in love with Ethan Wate, she doesn't know that their love is impossible because she is a Caster. All Lena knows is that she feels a connection to Ethan that she hasn't felt for anyone else. That connection makes Lena stronger and when her mother, Sarafine, attacks her, Lena is able to withstand the assault because of the strength she gets from Ethan. As the story comes to an end, Lena has escaped the claiming but doesn't talk much to Ethan about the new information she's obtained and what they will do about it. This is another important part of Lena's character in that she is often determined to simply ignore anything she doesn't want to face.

Ethan Wate

A teenage boy who dreams about Lena long before he meets her. In his dreams, Lena is slipping away from him and he can't hold onto her. Ethan feels a deep protectiveness toward Lena from the beginning, probably mostly because of the dreams. Ethan's mother died in an accident and Ethan feels that loss acutely. His hurt over losing his mother is intensified because his father withdraws completely, leaving Ethan with only Amma to see to his daily needs, including his emotional needs. Ethan is a strong character and when he's faced with the fact that the basketball team doesn't support his decision to befriend Lena, he quits the team though he's a very good player. He faces the ridicule of the entire school and harassment from most of the town in order to continue seeing Lena. Ethan's dreams are to leave Gatlin and he notes that he doesn't want to end up like his father, staying in the small town with the same people. He believes those who remain in Gatlin are those who didn't have big enough dreams to get out. An interesting aspect of Ethan's character is his willingness to believe Lena when she says she is a Caster, as are the other members of her family. The one aspect of this Ethan won't accept is that Lena has no choice in whether she will become Dark or Light. Ethan says everyone has the right to choose their own destiny and Lena is no different.



Amma

Her real name is Amarie and she is the housekeeper and caregiver in Ethan's home. She is fiercely protective of Ethan and loves him as if he were her own son. She is also a Seer and knows about the magical side of the town. She leans heavily on charms and intervention from a group she refers to only as the "Greats," but she also attends church.

Wesley Lincoln

Known as "Link," he is Ethan's best friend and accepts Lena even when Ethan is being tormented for befriending her. Link is a loyal teenager with dreams of falling in love with a beautiful girl and of becoming a member of a famous band.

Macon Ravenwood

Lena's uncle and guardian, he is Dark though not especially evil. Macon has withheld the information from Lena that she has the ability to choose her fate on the night of the Claiming because her choice carries grave consequences. If Lena chooses to be Light, the Dark members of the family - including Macon - will cease to exist. Macon fears that Lena will be unable to face the decision if she realizes the consequences.

Ridley

Lena's cousin, she is a siren who can literally convince almost anyone to do anything she asks. She uses her power on Ethan to gain entrance into Ravenwood though she's not welcome there by Macon and the other family members. She also bewitches Link and other members of their class in order to hold a birthday party for Lena. When Ridley holds Ethan's father's life in her hands, Link calls on her better side and she allows him to live, though it puts her own life in danger. This is the only real indication that she's not entirely Dark.

Marian

The librarian who was best friends with Ethan's mother and who holds the role of aunt to Ethan though they are no blood kin. Marian is the head of the Gatlin Library used by Mortals but is also the keeper of the library used by the Casters.

Aunt Del

Lena's aunt and Ridley's mother, she is a Light Caster. She sees things as they were in times past as well as the way they are now, which makes her often seem confused.



Gramma

An Empath Caster, she is also Light. She is able to "borrow" the traits of any other Caster for a short period of time. She obviously loves her family deeply and puts in an appearance on Lena's birthday.

Larkin

A Dark Caster who has been living among the family without their realizing that he is Dark. Larkin is able to turn parts of his body into snakes and his arms often morph in the blink of an eye. He leads Lena to the pasture where her mother confronts her just before the time of Lena's Claiming.

Savannah Snow

Link's mother, she is a very proper woman who hates Link's nickname. Her body is inhabited for a great deal of time by Sarafine, Lena's mother, though no one knows this for sure until near the end of the book.

Mitchell

Ethan's father, he has become a recluse since the death of his wife. Mitchell hides away in the study all the time, leaving the room only for dinner and showers, and leaving Ethan in Amma's care.



Objects/Places

Caster

A person who can Cast, or create spells.

Gatlin, South Carolina

Where Ethan lives.

Ravenwood Manor

Where Macon and Lena live, the house is magical and takes on the mood of either Lena or Macon.

Boo Radley

The large wolf/dog owned by Macon. Macon can see through Boo's eyes so knows what's going on in town though he is a recluse until just before Lena's sixteenth birthday.

Kitchen

Literally, the magical kitchen at Ravenwood that prepares meals at the whim of anyone in the room.

The Caster Library

The library located under the DAR building filled with books for Casters.

The Claiming

The moment when a Caster becomes Light or Dark at midnight on their sixteenth birthday. Lena seems to have no choice in her Claiming though she later discovers she does.

Holy Rollers

The name of Link's band.



The Book of Moons

The name of the book Ethan and Lena read with the hope they'll find something Lena can use to avoid becoming Dark.

Wader's Creek

Where Amma lives.



Themes

The Power of Love

There are multiple examples of this theme in the book. Arguably the most important is the love between Ethan and Lena. When Sarafine is trying to break into Ravenwood Manor to attack Lena, Macon and other family members seek to protect her with their magical powers. However, they are unsuccessful and it seems Sarafine might kill Lena. Then Ethan arrives and he is not only able to break through the protective circle of his family, he and Lena combined are a force too strong for Sarafine. This leads several people to believe Ethan has magical powers of his own. Macon goes so far as to accuse Amma of keeping Ethan's power secret from him. It's not until Ridley gets Ethan away from Lena that Ethan realizes the power is in their combined love.

This love is an echo of the love between Ethan's ancestor, Ethan Wate, and Lena's ancestor, Genevieve. The older Ethan returns from the war determined to express his love to Genevieve. When he's fatally wounded, Genevieve goes against her family teachings to bring him back to life. Her action is costly to the family and is the reason Lena believes she doesn't have a choice in her Claiming. The fact that Genevieve was willing to take such a risk is evidence of the love she felt for Ethan.

Finally, the love between Ethan's parents is an important example of this theme because it's the reason Ethan is left so much on his own. When his mother dies, Ethan's father, Mitchell, retreats to the study where he spends all his time. Mitchell claims to be writing a book but Ethan discovers that's not true. While Ethan is hurt that his father has withdrawn so completely, Mitchell says that spending time in the study is the only way he can feel close to his wife.

Belief in the Unbelievable

Ethan believes there is something strange about Lena's family based largely on what he knows about Macon Ravenwood and the rumors that circulate about the family and the family estate. When Ethan begins to question Lena about it, Lena refuses to talk. She eventually tells Ethan she fears he won't be her friend anymore if he learns the truth. What's interesting is that Lena doesn't fear that Ethan won't believe her. She fears he will believe her. When she finally works up the courage to tell Ethan the truth - that she and her family are Casters - Ethan accepts it without question. When Ridley takes control of Ethan and Ethan learns she is a siren, he accepts that as well.

An interesting aspect of this theme is that Ethan isn't really certain of Macon's power. When Ethan finds Macon in his bedroom, he becomes convinced Macon must be a vampire - a theory he'd had for some time. When he asks Macon if that's the truth, Macon says that vampires aren't real. He makes fun of Ethan and says Ethan probably believes in aliens too, and that he "blames television" for the fact that people are willing



to believe in those things. However, Macon is a vampire of sorts and he feeds off dreams. Once Ethan realizes this, he immediately accepts it as fact and accuses Macon of stealing pieces of his dreams which explains why Ethan can't remember specific details that he believes are important.

Another aspect of this theme is seen in the fact that others know about the magical side of Gatlin and accept it as fact. Marian, the county librarian, is also the head of the Caster library. The mailman delivers mail to the Caster library and Ethan learns that his own mother had once served as librarian.

Secrets in a Small Town

Ethan wants to get out of Gatlin because he equates a lifetime in Gatlin to being trapped. Link also wants to get out and each has dreams of how they might accomplish this. Link wants to be a drummer with a band and Ethan hopes to go to college. Both want to leave town at least partly because of the small town way of life.

One day Ethan skips basketball practice to check up on Lena. He feels she's in trouble and goes directly to her. By the time Ethan gets home, Amma has heard of his decision to skip practice. Ethan knew it couldn't be kept secret from Amma because several people would have called to tell Amma, and that Amma is embarrassed. When Ethan arrives home, Amma says she is certain those people couldn't have been talking about "her Ethan" because "her Ethan" would never "sully the family name" by acting in such a way. The fact that gossip travels quickly is another important aspect of this theme. When Macon Ravenwood goes to the disciplinary hearing where Lena may be expelled, he points out transgressions of several people who believed their secrets were safe. When Macon finishes, the board decides they won't take any action against Lena and hope Macon will stop making their secret lives public.

Finally, the Caster library is an example of this theme. Ethan is amazed to discover the library's entrance is near the headquarters of the historical society because the DAR group is very active. Ethan learns that the mailman delivers mail to the Caster library and that his own mother had been head librarian at one time.



Style

Point of View

"Beautiful Creatures" is written in first person from the perspective of Ethan Wate, a teenager living in Gatlin, South Carolina. Ethan believes he knows his town completely until he meets a newcomer, Lena Ravenwood. Ethan tells how he dreamed of Lena long before they actually met and the effect of those dreams. He talks about his feelings, his fears, and his love for Amma and friendship with Link. He also talks about the hurt from losing his mother and having his father withdraw completely from reality. The perspective remains constant until the moment of Ethan's death. Moments after Ethan is stabbed, the perspective switches to Lena as she resurrects Ethan. Soon after Ethan's recovery, the perspective returns to Ethan. The perspective is greatly limited by the use of first person but this serves to keep mysteries alive in the minds of the readers until the author chooses to reveal them. For example, Link's mother arrives at the door of Ethan's house under strange circumstances. Ethan is on alert and seems afraid of her. Because of the limited perspective, the reader is left to assume that Link's mother is a member of the Casters or that she has some other magical role in the story. In fact, she is possessed by Lena's mother, Sarafine, during this time. The author doesn't reveal that until near the end of the book and the reader doesn't know the truth until the author reveals it. Ethan is a reliable narrator though it seems likely that he puts himself and Lena in the best possible light sometimes. The one negative of Ethan's role as narrator is his tendency to accept and believe the magical aspects of the book where most people would be very skeptical and unlikely to believe as quickly as Ethan.

Setting

The story is set in the fictional town of Gatlin, South Carolina. The town and various settings within the town are described in great detail. One of the most important settings is Ravenwood Manor. That huge house is something of a mansion and is magical. When Ethan steps inside for the first time, he's confronted with modern furnishings that completely catch him off-guard. Later, the mansion resembles a centuries-old castle. When Lena is nearing her birthday, the mansion becomes a prison. Another important setting is the Gatlin High School. The school is very typical of public high schools and there are scenes in several of the classrooms and in the hearing to expel Lena is held in the gym. Ethan's house is another of the specific settings. It is a typical middle-class home, two story with a study that is closed to Ethan because it's where his father is working. The Caster Library is another important setting because this is where Ethan and Lena begin their research and it's how Ethan manages to get back to Lena before midnight on the night of the Claiming. When Ethan and Lena go there for the first time, they learn that the library is a huge labyrinth with tunnels that haven't even been charted, according to Marian. The library is underground with an entrance at the DAR building. The majority of the settings are typical of a small town in South Carolina.



Those that aren't believable - such as the mansion and the Caster Library - are appropriate to the story.

The time setting is somewhat different. The story was written in 2009 and it seems likely that the story is set in modern day. The characters have cell phones and depend on technology that exists in modern day. However, Ethan and Lena sometimes travel back in time to the 1800s when the majority of the plantation homes around Galtin are destroyed by the armies of the Civil War. These settings are described only as much as is necessary to set the stage for the scenes that occur here.

Language and Meaning

"Beautiful Creatures" is fairly fast-paced with a only a few passages in which the reader is likely to become bogged down in detail. There is quite a bit of language that is specific to the book. In these cases, the words are typical to everyday language but are used in atypical ways. For example, Lena faces the Claiming. Though Claiming is not an unusual word, it refers to a specific action in the lives of the Casters. There are other references to Binding, being Bound, and Casts. Again, the words themselves are not unusual but they each refer to specific situations and events of this story. In each case, the words that are used in this manner are capitalized. The capitalization is obviously an effort to make the reader aware of the specific use in this story and indicates those words are capitalized in Lena's world. The language is also very specific when Ethan and Lena are reading the Book of Moons. In this book, the words revert to a level of Old English that may be difficult for some readers to understand. For example, there is a passage that refers to the "darkenesse withinne enjoins the darkenesse without and the persone of powere openness to the greate darkenesse." There are not many of these passages and it is not vital that the reader fully understand them in order to understand the book as a whole.

Another important aspect of the language is that the majority of the characters are from the south and they have a typical southern drawl. In many cases, the people talking drop the "g" from the end of words so that "hatching" becomes "hatchin'". The word "of" often becomes "a" so that "one of them" becomes "one a them." This may be confusing to some readers who are not familiar with the way the southern drawl sounds but most readers should be able to phonetically make sense of these dialogues.

Structure

The book is divided into 35 chapters. The first chapter is titled "Before: The Middle of Nowhere." Each of the next 34 chapters begins with a number that indicates a date followed by a title. For example, the second chapter is "9.02: Dream On." The purpose of the first chapter is similar to that of a prologue. The author's decision to title it "Before" is obviously an attempt to make the reader more aware of the dates in the title of the following chapters. There is not one chapter for each date nor is there a limit of only one chapter per date. For example, the chapters that occur on 9.02 are "Dream



On," "New Girl," and "A Hole in the Sky." The story covers the months between September 2 and February 12. The titles are somewhat cryptic and though they may give a hint as to the contents of that chapter, it's more likely the reader can look back and find meaning in the title after reading at least part of the chapter. For example, the chapter titled "9.15: A Fork in the Road," details a meeting between Ethan and Lena in which Ethan gives Lena a choice. Ethan compares that choice to a "fork in the road." Other chapter titles are: "9.11: Collision," "9.12: Broken Glass," "9.12: Greenbrier," "9.12: The Sisters," "9.12: The Real Boo Radley," "9.15: A Fork in the Road," "9.24: The Last Three Rows," "10.09: Gathering Days," "10.09: A Crack in the Plaster," "10.09: The Greats," "10.10: Red Sweater," "10.13: Marian the Librarian," "10.31: Hallow E'en," "11.01: The Writing on the Wall," "11.27: Just Your Average American Holiday," "11.28: Domus Lunae Libri," "12.01: It Rhymes with Witch," "12.06: Lost and Found," "12.07: Grave Digging," "12.08: Waist Deep," "12.13: Melting," "12.16: When the Saints Go Marching In," "12.19: White Christmas," "1.12: Promise," "2.04: The Sandman or Something Like Him," "2.05: The Battle of Honey Hill," "2.11: Sweet Sixteen," "2.11: Lollipop Girl," "2.11: Family Reunion," "2.11: The Claiming," and "2.12: The Silver Lining." The early chapters focus on the building relationship between Lena and Ethan, though Lena insists several times that they can't possibly let the situation evolve. Over the course of the story, they encounter problems and it seems at time that there will be no way for them to be together. The final five chapters occur on Lena's birthday and in the early hours on the day after her birthday.



Quotes

"I didn't want to end up like my dad, living in the same house, in the same small town I'd grown up in, with the same people who had never dreamed their way out of here."

Dream On

"But all he could talk about was playing the drums and moving to New York after graduation and record deals that would probably never happen. And by probably, I mean he was more likely to sink a three-pointer, blindfolded and drunk, from the parking lot of the gym." Dream On

"A whole school couldn't just take down one person like that. A whole town couldn't just take down one family." Greenbrier

"In a few months, Emily will get a new car and Savannah will get a new crown and Eden will dye her hair a new color and Chralotte will get, I don't know, a baby or a tattoo or something, and this will all be ancient history. I was lying and she knew it." Greenbrier

"I was gonna ask Amma, but when I showed her the locket her eyes almost fell out of her head. Like it was triple hexed, soaked in a bucket of voodoo, and wrapped in a curse for good measure." The Real Boo Radley

"If this was a movie, we would've sat down at the table with the guys, and they would've learned some kind of valuable lesson, like not to judge people by the way they look, or that being different was okay. And Lena would have learned that all jocks weren't stupid and shallow." Gathering Days

"A locket that materialized on the neck of a woman in a painting at Ravenwood, which, by the way, is not a haunted mansion, but a perfectly restored house that changes completely every time I go there, to see a girl who burns me and shocks me and shatters me with a single touch." The Greats.

"You could never underestimate the lengths women like Mrs. Lincoln would go to protect their children and their town from the one thing they hated most - anyone different from them. I should know." It Rhymes with Witch

"After Thanksgiving, my father had shut himself in the study, and since Macon and Amma caught us as Lunae Libri, all I was getting from Amma was stinkeye." Grave Digging

"It smelled like desperation and it felt heavy, not just physically but psychically. This was a Dark book; I knew it just from the seconds I managed to hold it before it singed the skin off my fingertips." Grave Digging

"There are no such things as vampires. I suppose you believe in werewolves and aliens, too. I blame television." The Sandman of Something Like Him



"We didn't realize how strong your connection with Ethan was until it was too late." The Claiming

"Well, I don't know what happens when there's no Moon on your birthday on the Sixteenth Year at midnight. It's never happened before, as far as I know." (Amma to Lena) The Claiming

"The gray expanse was just a moment of sunless calm, in between the storm that had changed our lives forever, and the one still to come." Silver Lining



Topics for Discussion

Describe Lena. What kind of character is she? Is she likeable? Believable? What are her biggest strengths and her weaknesses?

Describe Ethan. What kind of character is he? Is he likeable? Believable? What are his biggest strengths and weaknesses?

What is a Caster? What is a Claiming? Why does Lena believe she might not still be in Gatlin after the Claiming? What does she learn about this? Why has she been kept in the dark about it? What happens at the Claiming?

Why does Macon believe Ethan has power? What does Ethan discover is the truth about this? How does Ethan learn this fact? Describe the relationship between Ethan and Lena. How do they meet? Why does Lena initially refuse to allow Ethan to get close to her? What's the end result?

Who is Amma? Who is Macon? Compare the two characters. What are the strengths and weaknesses of each? What are the powers of each? What are their relationships to Ethan and Lena? What is their relationship to each other?

Who is Link? Savannah? Ridley? Larkin? Mitchell? Aunt Del? Mrs. Lincoln? How is each connected to Ethan and/or Lena? What are their roles in the story?

Describe how Ethan and Lena come to know about Genevieve and Ethan, and the curse that led to Lena's inability to choose whether she'll be Light or Dark. Compare Genevieve and Ethan to Lena and Ethan. What are the similarities? What are the differences?