

Bone Gap Study Guide

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Contents

Bone Gap Study Guide.....	1
Contents.....	2
Plot Summary.....	3
MAY: MILK MOON, Roadkill, Run and Showdown.....	4
MAY: MILK MOON, Jump, The Night Mare, The Promise Ring.....	7
MAY: MILK MOON, Storming the Castle, Sees the Fire, Just Like the Rest of Us.....	9
JUNE: STRAWBERRY MOON, Lost, Good for You, Get Real.....	12
JUNE: STRAWBERRY MOON, No One is Fine, Sidetracked, The Whole Picture.....	15
JUNE: STRAWBERRY MOON, Questions, The Lamb, Blindside, The Dead.....	18
JULY THUNDER MOON, Punched, The Ballad of Charlie Valentine, The Fields.....	23
JULY THUNDER MOON, Crows, Slaughter, Sunrise.....	27
AUGUST: GREEN CORN MOON, The People of Bone Gap.....	30
Characters.....	32
Symbols and Symbolism.....	35
Settings.....	37
Themes and Motifs.....	39
Styles.....	42
Quotes.....	44



Plot Summary

Sean and Finn O'Sullivan are brothers who live in a small Midwestern town called Bone Gap. Their father is dead and their mother ran off to marry a man she met on the Internet so Sean has been working and caring for Finn ever since. People and things seem to disappear in Bone Gap into the real and magical gaps of the area. Finn is especially susceptible to the gaps, having always had a dreamy personality. Sean and Finn's lives are changed for the better when a beautiful girl named Roza shows up battered and bruised one day. She accepts the brothers' kindness and soon she and Sean fall in love. But one day Roza is abducted at a fair and Finn is the only witness, however he can't identify the man's face so there are no real clues to pursue and the people in town don't believe him. Everyone assumes that Roza wanted to leave because there are all kinds of gaps, real or imagined, through which people disappear. Finn begins dating Petey Willis, a beekeeper's daughter whom most people consider to be very homely. All the while, Finn has experiences of a horse that magically arrives in the barn and nature elements such as corn and crows which speak to him. Petey does some research and learns that Finn has a condition called face blindness and that is why he can't recall the kidnapper's face and Petey thinks it is also the reason he can fall in love with a homely girl like her. Knowing this, Finn determines to find Roza and his search takes him into a magical world of horror ruled by the kidnapper. Roza is only able to escape when she slashes her face with the jagged edge of a mirror and is no longer valuable to the evil man. Roza and Finn escape back to the world of Bone Gap and life can go on as before.



MAY: MILK MOON, Roadkill, Run and Showdown

Summary

In "Roadkill," Finn O'Sullivan walks home from the school bus stop and notices that the corn talks to him, saying "here, here, here." His friend, Miguel, always says that he hates the corn because it seems alive and scary. Finn doesn't sleep much anymore because he always has nightmares about the day Roza was kidnapped. Finn sees the five Rude brothers walking on the road too and they bully him, calling him names like Moonface, and then they beat him up. People in town love Finn's brother, Sean, because Sean loved Roza and Finn wants them all to know that he loved her too. When the Rude brothers finally leave, Finn collects his things including his college prep test books. Finn arrives home, cleans up his wounds and begins working in the small garden patch. Roza had taught them how to grow vegetables but everything looks withered since she's been gone.

Finn enters the apartment adjacent to their house that Roza had stayed in and he is shocked to see that everything that had been Roza's has been removed. Old Charlie Valentine from across the road interrupts Finn's thoughts with one of his tall tales that Finn has grown weary of. Their conversation turns to Roza and how Finn couldn't provide a good description of the kidnapper's face and nobody in town believed his story. People think Roza must have wanted to leave and it's time to stop mooning about it. Finn starts dinner for him and Sean who notices Finn's injuries from the Rude brothers and stitches Finn's eyebrow after they eat. Sean has been an EMT for a few years and had worked as an emergency room tech at the time that their mother left two years ago to marry an orthodontist in Oregon whom she met on the Internet. Sean put his hopes of becoming a doctor aside and decided to stay with Finn until he graduated high school.

The chapter "Run" is told from Roza's perspective. Roza is being held prisoner in a suburban house and sees no one except her kidnapper who asks her the same question every day: "Are you in love with me yet?" The man never answers any of Roza's questions but has provided everything she might need in the way of food and clothing except she has no shoes so she can't run away. The man repeatedly tells Roza that she is very beautiful and that he wants to marry her. Roza tries everything to escape but the house is locked like a fortress.

The chapter "Showdown" is told from Finn's perspective. Finn attends a showdown which is basically a farm animal judging event. Finn recalls searching the muddy fields where Roza was kidnapped for some sign of her or the kidnapper but never found anything. Finn had been questioned by the police chief, Jonas Apple, but all Finn could recall was how the man moved which was of no real help at all. Sean silently blames Finn for Roza's kidnapping and the rest of the town figure that she left in the same



mysterious way that she came. Finn runs into Mrs. Lonogan, the former principal of Bone Gap Elementary School, and they talk about the fence mending job that Finn and his friend, Miguel, will be working on at her farm this summer.

Finn asks Miguel if he'll help him with his college prep essays but Miguel doesn't like to do that kind of work in the summer. Miguel's family is into a practice called orienteering in which they get dropped off in a strange field, city or other location and have to figure their way out with only a compass. Miguel's family lives in a big farmhouse and he thinks it is a ghost that eats all their cookies. Finn and Miguel walk down to the Chat n Chew diner where a beekeeper's daughter named Priscilla Willis is trying to calm and remove a swarm of bees. One of the Rude brothers taunts Priscilla, who prefers to be called Petey, for spending all her time with insects and looking like a giant bee herself.

Analysis

The author sets the basic elements of the story in this section. Finn and Sean O'Sullivan are brothers who live with each other because their mother left them to move to Oregon to marry an orthodontist she met on the Internet. For a brief time, they had a beautiful girl named Roza living in the apartment adjacent to their house but she was kidnapped while attending a fair. Finn had been with Roza when she was kidnapped but can't recall any of the kidnapper's facial features to help with the investigation. Sean had loved Roza and is angry with Finn that he hasn't been of any more help in trying to find her.

The author also introduces the elements of magical realism which will expand as the book continues. Finn can hear the corn speak to him and even the crows talk to him sometimes. Finn has always been regarded as being a little bit different because he seems so dreamy all the time. She also tells the reader that Finn's friend, Miguel, lives in a big farmhouse which is supposedly haunted and where cookies disappear at night, probably eaten by a ghost. Miguel's family also participates in a practice called orienteering in which they are left in a strange location with nothing but a compass and have to find their way out. This activity serves as foreshadowing because it will become important to Roza's story later in the book. It also plays into the overall aura of mystery and intrigue that permeates the town in which there seem to be many secrets and unexplained events. It is unusual that Manuel's family enjoys being disoriented when most people prefer clarity in their lives.

The author also has fun with the Rude brothers' name because it is an apt description. They are bowlegged bullies who torment almost everyone in town and are, in essence, rude to the core.

Discussion Question 1

How can Finn hear the corn and the crows talking to him?



Discussion Question 2

Why do the people of Bone Gap think it would be natural if Roza had chosen to leave instead of actually being kidnapped?

Discussion Question 3

Why does Sean blame Finn for Roza's kidnapping?

Vocabulary

balmy, psychos, cawing, extinct, bowlegged, asphalt, calamity, inconsolable, ramshackle, frantic, impatience, rummaged, plunked, vicious, suture, cavernous, bland, scruples, chastised, hunkered, verdant, visage, sprawling, untethered, flailing, delirious, tether, indignant, elaborate, torso, commentary, shaman



MAY: MILK MOON, Jump, The Night Mare, The Promise Ring

Summary

In "Jump," Roza wanders around the house which is stocked with food and items for her comfort but she is desperately unhappy. She thinks about Sean and wonders when her kidnapper will return. When Roza catches a show on TV she sees a man looking for something under the bed and notices the rails that keep the mattress in place. Roza runs upstairs to a bedroom and takes one of the wooden slats from the bed frame and rushes back downstairs and tries to smash the front window. Unfortunately she only dents the special glass. Roza then runs upstairs again, breaks one of the bedroom windows, climbs out onto a tree branch which then snaps. Roza hits the ground and looks up to see a fierce dog staring at her.

The chapter, "The Night Mare," is told from Finn's perspective. Finn and Miguel begin the repair work on Mrs. Lonogan's farm fence. Miguel tells Finn that a girl named Amber Hass likes Finn and she is riding her bike in the area to catch a glimpse of him. Finn is not particularly interested and suggests that maybe she is actually interested in Miguel. Later that night, Finn studies his college prep books at the kitchen table because he can't sleep even though he's exhausted. Soon Finn hears the repeated whinnying of a horse and goes out to the barn to find a beautiful, black mare. The horse wears a bitless bridle but no saddle and Finn notices that there are a dozen bales of hay stacked in the barn. Finn has no idea where the horse has come from and doesn't know how he can afford to keep her.

Finn has never ridden a horse this big, but he manages to stay on her after being thrown only three times. The horse suddenly bolts away and Finn hangs on as best he can before the mare slows down to walk past the cemetery and Miguel's house and then past Petey's house where her beekeeper mother, Mel Willis, has the Hippie Queen Honey business. Finn can see that someone is sitting near a fire at the Willis house and realizes it is Petey. Finn feels awkward because he thinks Petey is good looking even though most other people say she is homely. Finn and Petey eat s'mores and talk about their college application essays. Finn tells Petey that he can't sleep because he can't stop thinking about Roza and says he is crazy about her but not in the way that people think.

The chapter, The Promise Ring, is told from Finn's perspective. Nearly a year ago, Finn is awakened in the night by a spring storm and went to the barn to check on some new swallows when he spots a girl hiding there. She is wearing a dirty sweatshirt and only one flip flop. Finn tries to determine if the girl is hurt but she won't talk. Finn gets Sean who wants to send the girl to the hospital but she refuses to go. Finn walks the girl into the house and Sean gets his medical bag and attempts to check her for injuries. Sean finds only a couple broken toes but the girl still refuses to go to the hospital for x-rays.



Sean and Finn offer the girl an apartment that is adjacent to their house and she is moved by their generosity. The girl accepts and tells them her name is Roza. Roza stays for eight months cooking and working in the garden. Sean buys a promise ring to give to Roza.

Analysis

The theme of Myths and Magic begin to take shape in this section. All along, Finn has heard the corn whispering to him and he has conversations with crows but the sudden appearance of the black mare in the barn brings mystical events closer to the surface. Finn has no idea where the horse and the bales of hay have come from. The horse almost seems to communicate with Finn through sounds and movements and the horse magically leads Finn to Petey's house, past the cemetery and Miguel's haunted house. It's almost as if the horse has come from another world and she knows that Finn instinctively wants to know Petey better so the horse takes Finn to see her.

The author also explains how Roza entered Sean and Finn's lives when Finn finds the injured girl hiding out in their barn one day. During the eight months that Roza stays in the apartment as a result of their kindness, she brings a level of caring to the boys that they have lacked since their mother left. She cooks and bakes and also works in the garden. Both Sean and Finn fall in love with her and Sean buys a promise ring with the intent of asking her to marry him one day.

Discussion Question 1

Why is Rosa unhappy at the house even though she has all the food she could eat and beautiful clothes and modern furnishings she could want?

Discussion Question 2

What does Finn mean when he says he is crazy about Roza but not in the way people think?

Discussion Question 3

Why does Roza feel that it's okay to stay at the apartment offered by Sean and Finn?

Vocabulary

despair, enormous, abutted, ordinances, hoarding, thud, nicker, bitless, preoccupied, nudge, muted, dormant, silhouetted, comply, etching, spigot, nuzzled, careening, fathomless, exasperated, hysterical, swooping, lurched, planks, stethoscope, clucking, flexed, random, quizzical, rummaged, goulash, pierogi



MAY: MILK MOON, Storming the Castle, Sees the Fire, Just Like the Rest of Us

Summary

In "Storming the Castle," Roza awakens in a cold castle instead of the suburban house. She's dressed in an elaborate brocade dress and her arms are bandaged from her attempted window escape at the house. Roza is attended by maids and cooks, and even though she can't escape, she is glad to have people to talk to. The kidnapper still asks her if she's in love with him yet and she avoids answering him. He tells her that he wants her because she is the most beautiful woman in the world. Roza contends that that's now who she is but he just stares at her.

Roza grew up in a small town in Poland where she lived with her grandmother she called Babcia who always encouraged Roza to travel. Roza didn't want to leave because she was in love with a boy named Otto. However, Babcia thought that Otto was a meathead and Roza deserved someone better. Babcia also told Roza that there would be men who would tell her she was beautiful but they would not really see her. Babcia thinks she needs an adventure to find a boy who would listen to her and really see her. Otto dumps Roza when she refuses to drop out of college. Other boys followed Otto and they all told Roza she was beautiful but none of them were really interested in her as a person. Roza was accepted at an American university in Chicago so Babcia gave her money she had been saving for Roza.

Back in the present the kidnapper attempts to seduce Roza but she is repulsed and rejects him. The man wants to know what would please Roza, and she wants the mean dog who almost killed her at the house.

The chapter "Sees the Fire" is told from Finn's perspective. Charlie Valentine comes to ask for Finn and Sean's help because one of his chickens escaped. Charlie keeps his chickens in his house. While Sean is helping Charlie, Finn fixes supper. Sean returns home later, never having found the chicken. He thinks that the chicken has lived up to her name, Runaround Sue, and has taken off for good. Finn thinks that Bone Gap is cursed somehow and recalls how the police chief's wife ran away leaving a Post-It note for her husband. Later that night, Finn decides to take the horse out for a ride and she takes him to Petey's house again, even leading Finn to Petey's bedroom window so he could rap on it and get her attention.

Petey climbs out her bedroom window and joins Finn on the horse which took off at a trot but quickly built up speed. The mare then heads through the cemetery which is shrouded in fog and Finn and Petey both see a misty figure gliding over the tops of the headstones. The horse trots on until she reaches the entrance to a long path through a dark woods unfamiliar to both Finn and Petey. The mare takes off increasing her speed through the forest and exits to a big field and then over a cliff. Finn holds on tight to



Petey and eventually the horse is on solid ground again, trotting back toward Petey's house where Finn kisses Petey before he returns home.

The chapter "Just Like the Rest of Us" is told from Roza's perspective. Roza feeds the ferocious dog eel pie every day until it becomes her pet and she names him Rus because of his reddish hair. Roza tells Rus the story of how she came to America to study with a group of other students from Poland. As she was trying to pass through customs at the airport, the official taunted her for her beauty and flirted with her and she was afraid she would become separated from the others. Roza makes friends with another one of the girls named Karolina who is unhappy because she had to leave her boyfriend in Poland. Roza's roommate, Honorata, has come to America to find a rich husband and escape Poland forever. Roza is shocked by how cold and bleak Chicago is and misses her grandmother.

Roza studies botany in a greenhouse classroom taught by a visiting professor from central Illinois. The boys in the Polish group of students begin to call Roza "Mama" because she cooks delicious food for them. One of the boys, Bob, favors Roza but she is not interested in his romantic overtures. Roza continues to learn about plants and her professor tells her about white baneberry that could cause cardiac arrest and how she wishes she had some to force into obnoxious Bob's mouth. When Roza returns home one evening, the room is locked because Honorata and Bob are having sex.

Back in the present day, Roza slips a knife in the folds of her brocade gown when her kidnapper looks away from her for a few seconds.

Analysis

The theme of Myth and Magic continues as Roza is now imprisoned in a castle instead of the suburban house she had been kept in before. She has all the things that a princess would have but she is still a prisoner of her kidnapper who wants her to love him. There is also a mystical quality to the ride that Finn and Petey take on the mare during the night. They see a ghostlike entity in the cemetery and proceed through a dark forest before running off the edge of a cliff. They know that these things didn't really happen but they seemed so real at the time that they could have been possible.

The theme of disappearances becomes more important in this section. The obvious disappearance is Roza who has been kidnapped and now she seems to be held in an impenetrable castle with no hope of escape. The author has stated that people tend to disappear through the gaps in Bone Gap and that has been true for Sean and Finn. Roza has disappeared and their mother left a few years ago, never to return. The wife of the police chief just left one day, leaving her husband just a Post-It note. Now, Charlie Valentine's chicken, Runaround Sue, has disappeared. The people of Bone Gap seem resigned to this phenomenon and don't really pursue the missing people for very long.

The theme of Beauty also becomes important in this section. Roza has been pursued because of her beauty, but boys don't like it when she asserts her intelligence too. Roza



is harassed by the airport customs officer because she is beautiful and the kidnapper took her because she is beautiful. All these men have power over Roza and try to control her because they covet her beauty. They don't really care who she is as a person and Roza begins to understand what Babcia meant about meeting the right kind of men for her.

The author uses foreshadowing when she talks about Roza's professor showing her the white baneberry which can cause cardiac arrest if ingested. This will become important in the story of Roza's kidnapping later in the book.

Discussion Question 1

Why is Roza's imprisonment in the castle slightly better than being held in the suburban house?

Discussion Question 2

What type of men does Babcia think that Roza should meet in the world?

Discussion Question 3

How does the author use mystical realism in the book?

Vocabulary

armoire, brocade, elaborate, curtsied, falconers, foray, discern, abuzz, wager, fearsome, mortar, inhabitants, concertina, meathead, pathetic, hideous, bile, peering, anxiety, seize, jittery, yanked, ahold, faltering, dusky, etched, otherworldly, trembling, vigil, eel, contentedly, carcass, drone, baneberry, concealment,



JUNE: STRAWBERRY MOON, Lost, Good for You, Get Real

Summary

In "Lost," Finn and Miguel's progress on the fence project progresses slowly and Miguel asks Finn where he goes on the horse every night but Finn keeps his secret. Every night Finn and the night mare ride to Petey's house where they would eat s'mores and talk about school and the college essays. Often times they would ride the mare to places that they knew were too incredible to be real and when they returned to Petey's Finn would kiss her until they were dazed even more. Eventually Finn tells Miguel that he has been seeing Petey and Miguel understands because Petey is hot in her own way.

One night Finn walks home from Petey's house and stops at Charlie Valentine's where he sees a man standing in the shadows. Finn recognizes the shape of the man as the one who had kidnapped Roza. Finn demands to know where Roza is but the man just taunts Finn about Petey and disappears into the night. Finn chases after his SUV but he wasn't fast enough to catch him. Finn runs to Jonas Apple's house to tell him that the man had reappeared but Jonas is incredulous of Finn's story. Finn tells Jonas that the man has been spying on other people in the area.

The chapter "Good For You" is written from Sean's perspective. Sean sits at the kitchen table with a sketch and thinks about how drawing was a talent he had since he was little. His mother always praised his artwork and he saved it until his truck driver father would get home and Sean would show it to him. Mr. O'Sullivan was only home for a couple weekends a month so their time together was very limited. Mr. O'Sullivan died in a traffic accident in Ohio when Sean was 12-years-old. In the present, Finn tells Sean that he saw the man who took Roza but Sean doesn't believe him.

"Get Real" is told from Petey's perspective. Petey sits in her bedroom waiting for Finn to appear but he is late. Petey flips through a book called Get Real about sex and relationships that her mother got for her. Petey thinks about the things she hates: her name, her face, and a horrible party. Petey knows that she is not attractive like her mother and the people in Bone Gap won't let her forget it. Petey's body developed and the boys wanted her for that but not for herself as a person. Petey's mother tried to encourage her that there would be a boy someday who would love her for who she is and Petey wants so much to believe this.

When Finn finally arrives, she invites him into her bedroom where he kneels in front of her and puts his head in her lap. Petey waits for Finn to make the next move but, instead, he tells her that he saw the man who took Roza sneaking around Charlie Valentine's house. Finn can describe the way the man move but still can't remember his face. Petey recalls the stories told by people in town that Finn is too strange to have



helped Roza when she needed him most. Finally, Petey tells Finn that she believes him about the man and they make love.

Analysis

Finn once again encounters the man who kidnapped Roza and he still can't identify the man's face, only the way he moves. It's not clear why the man reappears in the area or why he has been spying on Finn and the others. Finn is frustrated because no one except Petey believes him; the people in the town think Finn is just an odd boy who is too dreamy to have helped Roza. It bothers Finn that his credibility is questioned but he loves Petey for trusting what he tells her.

The author presents background information on the O'Sullivan family from Sean's perspective which sheds some light on why Sean is the way he is. Sean has artistic talent but ever since he had so many responsibilities thrust on him, he has had to push his creativity into the background in order to survive. Perhaps Sean could be as dreamy as Finn but he doesn't have the luxury of indulging in fantasies.

The theme of Beauty is important in Petey's story. Petey is not considered to be attractive at all and she is taunted by cruel people in town. Just as the beautiful Roza is not seen for who she is as a complete person, Petey don't get past people's perceptions of her looks and don't know her for who she is as an authentic person. Finn is the first boy who has ever taken an interest in Petey romantically and she sometimes wonders if something is wrong with him because his views differ radically from the others in town.

Discussion Question 1

In what ways do Petey's mother and Roza's Babcia think alike in terms of finding the appropriate men for Petey and Roza?

Discussion Question 2

What are Sean's thoughts about his life regarding what he has given up because he has faced major losses in his life?

Discussion Question 3

How are Petey and Roza similar in their experiences with people, mostly men, even though one is considered to be very beautiful and the other thought to be ugly?

Vocabulary

spliced, mare, chrysalis, alleged, perpetual, daze, considerations, thoroughfare, declaration, dishonorable, swarm, dismantled, myopic, burrowed, swarm, slack, midst, maroon, reminiscing, erupted, sketch, enveloping, scalpel, wariness, enraged, lunatic, absurdly, hiss, topical, clasp, dampen, gesture, anesthetic, suture, disconcerting, alto, daubed, ointment



JUNE: STRAWBERRY MOON, No One is Fine, Sidetracked, The Whole Picture

Summary

In "No One is Fine," Roza hides the knife under a loose stone in the floor and she looks at it every night before going to sleep. Roza dreams about bees and walking out into a woods where she encounters Karolina, Honorata and Priscilla Willis. All three drink honey from a jar that Priscilla has brought with her. Roza then also sips some honey. Priscilla then asks Roza when she is going to do something with that knife.

When Roza awakes she tastes honey on her lips. Roza practices using the knife as a weapon. Roza recalls how her money began to run out when she was studying in Chicago and took a job with her botany professor cleaning the greenhouse in the evenings and weekends. After Roza had worked there for a month, the professor began to give her little gifts which made her uncomfortable. On the last day of the summer session, the professor offered to give Roza a ride home. As they drive, the professor tells Roza that she is the most beautiful creature he has ever seen and he speeds up, driving to an exit far out of the city. He turns down a long country lane with cornfields on both sides. When the professor refuses to stop the car, Roza throws herself out and hides among the corn.

Roza recalls that the corn had hidden her for awhile and even Sean and Finn had protected her but the man found her again. Roza tucks the knife into a fold in her skirt and then watches with disgust as the man eats his dinner. Even though she finds the man revolting, she draws him closer to her and then plunges the knife into his throat as far as it will go.

"Sidetracked" is told from Finn's perspective. Finn and Miguel continue to work on the fence and Miguel chastises Finn for not telling him that he saw the kidnapper again. Miguel knows because everybody in Bone Gap is talking about it. Later that day, Finn waits for Petey at the Chat 'n' Chew diner, watching the black mare waiting outside. Finn had wanted to meet Petey in public so everyone would know how much she meant to him. As Finn talks to Darla, the waitress, and Jonas Apple, he begins to think that meeting Petey here is a bad idea. When Petey arrives, all the people in the diner begin to talk about her and Finn.

Suddenly they see Finn's horse startle and take off down the road. Finn runs outside, jumps on Petey's moped and chases the horse, hoping to get her stopped before she reaches the highway and runs into traffic. Finally after a wild chase, Finn is able to swerve in front of the mare but ends up skidding across the pavement, wounding his leg. The mare rears up and lands her hoof firmly on Finn's heart as he lies on the road. Finn opens his eyes to see Petey's mother bending over him, followed soon by Sean in



the rescue vehicle. Sean takes Finn to the hospital and chastises Finn for scaring the horse into running away and putting lots of people in danger.

The chapter "The Whole Picture" is told from Petey's perspective. Petey and her mother had taken the mare back to the O'Sullivan's barn and call the vet to come check her out. When her mother goes to the barn with the vet, Petey roams the house, letting herself into Sean's bedroom where she flips through Sean's sketch book. Petey is particularly struck by the sketches of Roza. When Petey enters Finn's room she discovers a cat and kittens and wonders how the mother tells them apart. Petey looks around the room at the pictures with no people in them and thinks about how Finn has a hard time remembering people's faces. It occurs to Petey to search something online on her phone and she tries to accept the information she finds.

Analysis

Bees are a symbol related to many of the women in the story. Obviously Petey and her mother are beekeepers, and in Roza's dream, she, Karolina and Honorata all drink honey while sitting in the woods. Bees are associated with fertility, the feminine, motherhood and growth so it is natural that the women and bees are aligned. The female queen bee populates the hive and is often the only one remaining in the spring to build a new hive for the season. In humans, it is women who give birth and take care of the home so the author is showing the typical feminine roles as she associates these characters to the bees. In a more literal view, the honey is sweet and all these characters wish for a better, sweeter life for themselves than the ones they are currently experiencing.

At last, we learn who Roza's kidnapper is: her botany professor. Based on Roza's recollections, it is clear that he had planned the abduction for quite awhile, getting to know Roza, offering her a job and bringing her gifts in attempts to ingratiate himself to her. The professor catches Roza in an unguarded moment and then reveals his dark side. Roza's survival instincts are strong, though, and she is able to elude him at least for a little while during her stay with Sean and Finn until he finds her again and takes her from the fair.

The author ends "The Whole Picture" with a sense of intrigue because Petey has found something on the Internet that tells her about Finn and she is unnerved by what she has read but it is not yet revealed to the reader.

Discussion Question 1

What is the significance of Roza's dream in which she, Karolina, Honorata, and Priscilla drink honey in the woods?



Discussion Question 2

Why does the black mare get startled and run away from the diner toward the highway?

Discussion Question 3

How had Roza's botany professor tried to build a sense of trust with her?

Vocabulary

spliced, deadbeat, perpetual, daze, thoroughfare, massacre, skein, myopic, cue, burrowed, alighted, drones, swarm, dishonorable, reminiscing, shucked, drench, cackles, wafting, lurched, crescendo, enveloping, espresso, unmoored, phlebotomist, enraged, lunatic, suture, explicit, binaries, wisp, incessant, rasp, dank, intact, crescendo, manga, lanky,



JUNE: STRAWBERRY MOON, Questions, The Lamb, Blindside, The Dead

Summary

In "Questions," Finn is kept overnight in the hospital for observation and falls asleep and dreams of the day Roza was kidnapped. Sean, Finn and Roza had gone to a spring festival and Sean is called away for a medical emergency. Finn leaves Roza to get them some cider and cookies but she is gone when he returns. He looks all over the grounds and finally spots her in the parking lot with a tall man he had never seen before. Finn calls out to Roza and she smiles and tells him that she has to go now. The man says that he is Roza's husband and restrains Finn when he tries to find out what is going on. Roza declares that the man has never hurt her and Roza gets into his SUV and disappears. Finn is not able to tell Jonas Apple what the man looked like, not even the smallest detail.

Finn wakes up to the sound of a deep voice telling him that he has to eat something. Finn protests and the voice says that Finn's brother wants him to eat. Finn states that his brother hates him for losing Roza and the voice says that Roza had wanted to leave. The voice wants to know why Roza loved Sean and Finn lists some reasons but the voice is intrigued that one of the reasons is that Sean asks the right questions but Finn doesn't. The voice gets garbled and when Finn comes to completely there is no one there.

"The Lamb" is told from Roza's perspective. Roza awakens but realizes she is no longer in the castle but in a small comfortable room. She looks out the window and even though it looks like home she knows it really isn't. Roza dresses and enters the kitchen to the delightful smells of breakfast and thinks the old woman is her Babcia but she isn't. After she eats, Roza is able to go outside and walk through the village toward the rolling hills covered in wildflowers. Roza falls at the top of a hill and isn't sure if she is here or falling out of the SUV into a cornfield. She then recalls running through that cornfield trying to elude the professor when she falls and hears voices all around her. She looks up to see a woman and her children who are disgruntled with their orienteering experience.

Roza stows away in the back of the family's van and stays there long after the family has returned home. When night falls, she exits the van and limps around the yard looking for a garden to dig something to eat but there was nothing. She finally gets the nerve to creep into the family's kitchen and took some food from the refrigerator. She nearly faints when the oldest boy enters the kitchen wearing his pajamas, but he is sleepwalking and isn't startled that she is there. She tells him that she is a ghost and he tells her that the corn said that if she were to follow the stream going east, she will find a barn with a slanted roof. Roza exits the house and follows the stream until she finds the barn, enters and falls asleep.



When Roza awakens, she sees a beautiful boy standing over her asking her questions. Then an older boy comes in and they try to find out what had happened to her and if she is hurt. They offered her the use of an apartment and she wept with gratitude. The next day the older boys checks her ankles, ribs and wrists but nothing is broken but a couple toes. Roza recovers during her stay and she cooks for the boys and even brings their garden back to life. Roza comes back to the present and the man brings her a lamb to cheer her. She marvels that she had not killed him when she had stabbed him.

"Blindside" is told from Finn's perspective. Sean picks up Finn at the hospital and drops him off at home before leaving. Finn hobbles around the house and goes to the barn to make sure the mare isn't mad at him. He wishes he had a gift to give to Petey since she was mad when he was hurt last night. Finn remembers a decorated box that had belonged to his mother and that now holds bandages and swabs. Finn empties the box and tucks in a note he wrote for Petey and heads to her house on the horse. Finn can tell that Petey is mad at him but she won't tell him why so Finn gives her the box with the note and she is visibly touched. Finn thanks Petey for taking care of the mare and apologizes if he damaged her moped.

They make love by the fire and Finn doesn't understand why Petey is crying when they finish. Petey dresses quickly and shoves a stack of photos at Finn, telling him to identify the people in them but he can't distinguish who they are, even a graduation picture of himself. Petey tells Finn that she thinks he is face blind which means he can't recognize faces the way other people can. Face blind people can't process the image of a face and store it in their memory for later; instead they remember physical attributes and movement. Petey thinks Finn can see her because many face blind people sometimes recognize really unusual or ugly people and Petey knows that she's ugly. Petey begins to cry again and refuses to listen when Finn tells her he loves her so he decides that it's just best to leave.

"The Dead" is told from Roza's perspective. Roza settles into a routine in the little cottage. The man would bring a lamb every afternoon for her to pet and love and he began to ask her questions about herself. She asks if she can have a garden and the next morning she finds an elaborate garden planted with all types of plants. She tells him that she wants to create the garden herself so that garden is uprooted and she is supplied with all the things she needs to plant her own. She recalls working in the garden with Sean when they first started to fall in love. She also remembers being startled at the sight of the professor at the spring fair when he took her away from Sean and Finn. He had held out a handful of white baneberry and threatens that if she doesn't come with him, he will find a way to kill Sean and Finn so she went with him to save the boys.

She wonders why Sean never came for her but thinks that maybe he couldn't, that it was just too much work. Or maybe she went with the man because he was like all the others she had ever known and Sean was too good to be true. When she asks the man where she is he tells her it is called The Fields, they are everywhere and nowhere, and he can make them look however he wants. The man tells her a myth about a young man who went to the Land of the Dead to find his wife and he plays such a lovely song



that the Lord of the Dead grants his wish to take her back with him. However, the young man could not look back to see if his wife was following him; he had to trust that she was there. The young man did look back, though, and his wife was forced to stay, proving that he didn't really love her completely or he wouldn't have taken that risk.

Roza wants to know if she is dead but he tells her she isn't although everyone else there is. The man has known so many people for so many lifetimes that he has become bored but Roza has inspired him to build something new. Roza still refuses to believe that the man wants her simply because she is the most beautiful and he tells her that countries have gone to war over a beautiful woman. The man had hoped Roza would love him but if that can't be, his love for her will have to be enough. Roza threatens to kill herself and he tells her that it's all the same to him.

Analysis

The author at last provides the circumstances surrounding Roza's abduction at the festival. Finn is shocked that Roza would leave them but, then again, women have a habit of leaving in their world. And it's possible that Roza had wanted to leave just like the man had said. The man then visits Finn in the hospital while he is still groggy from pain medications and tries to determine why Roza had loved Sean so that he might emulate whatever it was that Sean did. That's why the man tells Rosa that he is asking all the questions about her; he wants her to know that he is trying to ask the right questions because that will help Roza fall in love with him.

This section also reveals that the man, who is probably the devil, can create environments of his choosing such as the house, the castle and the cottage where he has imprisoned Roza. He has created places that he thought would be pleasing to her and make her love him. The author also reveals the circumstances that led Roza to Sean and Finn's house. She had made her way through cornfields until she comes upon Miguel's family at the end of an orienteering session and she hides in their van and ends up at their house. The sleepwalking Miguel tells Roza that the corn has said that she should follow the stream to the O'Sullivan's barn and when she does this she finds safety and comfort. It is symbolic that Miguel mentions that the corn had told him how Roza could find the barn. Corn is a basic plant and fundamental food, making it a source of nutrition, health, harvest and protection. The corn knows that Roza will be safe when she is in the care of the O'Sullivan boys.

Roza finds the O'Sullivan's to be beautiful and good and she weeps for their kindness toward her. It would seem that not only has Roza escaped the evil professor but she has also found the kind of boys that her Babcia had wanted for her: boys who are interested in her as a person, not only for her beauty. They would ask her questions in order to know her better and that's what Sean especially does. Finn notes this and later tells the man that this is what Sean does but the man can't replicate the behavior because he isn't authentic in his feelings for Roza as Sean is.



The author also provides a reason for why Finn isn't able to recall any features of Roza's kidnapper. Petey has done some research online and tested Finn with some photos and tells him that he is face blind, a condition in which a person can't recall the details of faces. Face blind people are more aware of body shapes and movements instead of faces. This is a relief in a way for Finn who now has an explanation of why he couldn't identify Roza's kidnapper but in another way he is upset because Petey thinks the only reason he wants to be with her is because he can't really see how ugly she is. This makes Finn wonder what real beauty is but it may take some work to get Petey to understand this.

The theme of Myths and Magic is important in this section. The man tells Roza a story about a young man who loses his wife in the Land of the Dead because he didn't trust that she was behind him when they were granted permission to leave by the Lord of the Dead. This is the myth of Hades, king of the underworld in Greek mythology. Some other Greek gods such as Hermes and Hecate visited the underworld occasionally but very rarely did mortal men ever visit. One such man was Orpheus who desperately wanted to save his wife, Eurydice, from an eternity in the underworld so he played a beautiful song on his lyre for Hades and Persephone. Both of these gods took pity on Orpheus and agreed to let Eurydice leave with the condition that Orpheus never look back. Unfortunately, Orpheus did look back to make sure Eurydice was following him and she was lost to him forever.

The situation of Roza's kidnapping by the evil professor is similar to the Greek myth of Hades abducting Persephone. Hades was king of the underworld but didn't have a queen. When he was among some mortals one day, the god, Eros, shot an arrow dipped in love potion at him to make him fall in love with the first person he saw. A girl named Persephone was that person. Hades fell in love with her and wanted her so badly that he abducted her one day while she was out picking flowers. Persephone was the daughter of the goddess, Demeter, who ruled plants, the harvest, and the seasons. Demeter was so consumed with grief by her daughter's abduction that she refused to allow crops to grow. It was agreed that Persephone could return to earth if she hadn't eaten anything in the underworld but, unfortunately, she had eaten six pomegranate seeds. It's not clear whether Persephone was tricked or whether she knew about it and had fallen in love with Hades and wanted to stay. Whatever the reason, Persephone returns to the underworld six months each year and Demeter sends the fall and winter seasons in protest. Likewise, Roza is kidnapped by an evil man because she is beautiful and he must have her. The crops don't grow well that summer and even Finn notices that their garden has wilted terribly since she has gone. While she is gone, Roza tries to work on a garden because she loves the feel of the soil and loves to make things grow.

One other element that relates to the myth and magic theme is that the kidnapper tells Roza that they are in "The Fields" when she asks where she is. In mythology, the underworld ruled by Hades was divided into three fields: Elysian, Tartarus, and Asphodal. When a person reached the underworld, he was sent to one of the fields based on how he lived his life. People who lived good lives were sent to the Elysian fields to live in eternal happiness; those who were morally corrupt were sent to Tartarus;



and those who fell somewhere in the middle were sent to Asphodal. In the book, the kidnapper says that he can change the fields to be anything or anywhere he wants indicating that he has the power, just like Hades in the underworld, to determine people's fates just as he is doing with Rosa's.

Discussion Question 1

What is the significance of Roza coming upon Miguel's family as they are ending an orienteering session?

Discussion Question 2

Why does the kidnapper come to Finn's hospital room to talk to him?

Discussion Question 3

Why is Petey so upset when she finds out that Finn is face blind?

Vocabulary

antiseptic, gelatinous, barren, malfunctioning, reluctant, cavernous, glimpsed, babcia, chasm, loco, beckoned, dazed, deported, disconcerting, predicament, comprehend, fevered, wisp, clenched, assaulted, pawed, prosopagnosia



JULY THUNDER MOON, Punched, The Ballad of Charlie Valentine, The Fields

Summary

In "Punched," Finn reviews the documents about face blindness and understands now that there is some reason for his inability to recognize faces. For so many years, people have said he is spacey and careless and it has always hurt him and now he has some proof for his behavior. This doesn't make Finn feel better though because Roza is still gone. Sean comes home and Finn thinks he could explain everything to him but Finn knows that Sean already thinks Finn is weird so nothing would change. Finn confronts Sean about his not continuing to look for Roza and he knows that Sean thinks that Roza had actually wanted to leave. Sean gets angry and confronts Finn about seeing Petey because people in town say that Finn is only using her. Finn lunges at Sean and they fight and he again challenges Sean for not doing more to find Roza. Finn storms out, determined to do what he can for Roza and heads to Charlie Valentine's, the last place he saw the man who moved like a cornstalk.

The Chapter, "The Ballad of Charlie Valentine," is told from Charlie's perspective. Charlie Valentine sits in his house with a chicken on his lap and waits for the knock on the door. Charlie thinks about his life and the fact that that is not his real name but he doesn't remember what it is. Charlie knows he's soft and all the people in town know it too. Charlie remembers being a boy living on a farm and helping out with the horses until one of the horses died and he learned that he couldn't protect the things he loved. Charlie left the farm and came to Bone Gap, drawn to it because it seemed to be a magical place, and that there were places where a person could hide.

Charlie had married a woman named Sally and they were together for 36 years but she left. Charlie still has his daughter, grandchildren and great-grandchildren but they terrified him because if he loved them too much he would lose them. It was only when Roza came that he learned to feel anything again. He loved to talk to her about her home in Poland and he liked that she seemed safe with Sean and Finn. After Roza disappeared, Sean and Finn visibly changed. And when the night mare showed up, Charlie is reminded of all the stupid mistakes he had ever made in his life.

Suddenly, Finn barges into Charlie's house demanding to know where the man who moves like a cornstalk is but Charlie doesn't know. Finn contends that Charlie knows who the kidnapper is and never tried to help Roza but Charlie says it's complicated. The man has taken Roza to a place that neither Finn nor anyone else can go and even if he could find it, he would probably not find his way back. Charlie says that he had hoped the horse would have cheered Finn who is outraged that Charlie thinks a horse could replace Roza. Charlie then tells Finn that he'll tell him everything that he can.



Charlie tells Finn that there are gaps in Bone Gap that are not typical gaps made of rocks or mountains. The gaps he is talking about are places you can lose yourself if you believe they're there. Charlie says he thinks of the man who took Roza as the Scare Crow. Charlie then states that Finn isn't the one he expected and Finn tells him he is here because of Roza and because Sean can't be. Charlie tells Finn that Finn can find Roza if he can find the gap. The only other thing that Charlie can tell Finn is that the Scare Crow is a betting man.

"The Fields" is told from Finn's perspective. Finn heads out into the dark night but has no idea where to go. If Charlie hadn't ridden the night mare and experienced the gaps Charlie had mentioned, he would have thought Charlie was crazy. Finn recalls seeing the ghostly mist over the cemetery and thinks that might be the place to find a gap so he heads in that direction. Finn doesn't find anything there so he heads back to the main road and ends up back at his own barn which he finds empty. Finn grabs a big flashlight and starts looking around, not sure of what he's looking for. Then it occurs to him that he needs to get to a cornfield and he runs to the first one he encounters. He runs through it until the corn begins to whisper to him and he keeps running until he comes across a stream carved into the plants.

Finn wades into the water until it gets deeper and he is rushed away and he sees black shapes underneath the water and feels the scrape of teeth, skin and bones as he is tossed about. He thinks he sees a boat and a skull faced man but he is moving too fast to know for sure. Finally Finn is no longer in the water but in the middle of a big field and he pushes through wheat, corn and grasses to find a road and it reminds him of Bone Gap. Finn sees a line of trucks rumbling past him and asks a crow where he is but the crow cackles and takes off. Finn follows the crow which leads him to a fairgrounds and Finn pushes his way through crowds of people and he wonders if he can find Roza there.

Several women approach Finn and tell him that they are Roza, but Finn pushes on and comes to a juggler who tells Finn that he'll never find Roza. Finn picks up one of the juggler's swords and threatens the juggler to tell him where Roza is but the sword turns into a snake and slithers under a tent. Finn follows and enters a house of mirrors reflecting his own image and prattling on with all the bad names the people in Bone Gap had always called Finn. Finn falls into one of the mirrors causing a domino effect and he retrieves a shard of glass and steps through a hole in the tent. Finn is barraged by taunts from all types of people claiming that he'll never find Roza. Suddenly the Scare Crow is standing next to Finn and the world around him begins to spin and flip upside down and all the people are now hanging unconscious like animals on slaughterhouse hooks. The Scare Crow tells Finn that he'll never find Roza but Finn is determined to look at all of the hanging people until he does. Finn is concerned that he won't be able to recognize Roza's face but he begins the arduous task of sorting through the bodies.



Analysis

The theme of Seeing and Being Seen is important in this section. Finn finally learns that he is face blind which accounts for his inability to identify people by their facial characteristics. This not only alters the way he sees people but also alters the way other people see him. For years, people in town have called Finn negative names because he seems spacey or careless and that's not the case. He just sees things differently. He doesn't focus on typical beauty or ugliness, he sees the whole person, which is a healthier way to view people anyway. During all the time Finn has been made to feel bad for his shortcomings, he is really the one who has a more authentic view of people and takes a higher view of them.

This section is also important in that more is revealed about Charlie Valentine. Charlie represents love in the story. He says he can't remember his real name but the author gives him the name of Valentine, which symbolizes what he stands for. In Bone Gap, Charlie is known for having lots of girlfriends and loving different types of women which might show that he is very loving but actually he no longer commits to any one person because whoever or whatever he has loved in the past has been destroyed or left him. As a boy, Charlie loved horses until his favorite dies and he first realizes that he can't save those that he loves. In Bone Gap, Charlie marries a woman but he loves her too much and she eventually leaves. Now Charlie has grandchildren and great-grandchildren but he avoids them because he loves them so much that he's afraid he will destroy them too. Charlie can't even leave his chickens out in the yard because he loves them and lets them live in his house. Roza had been the only person who could safely rouse any feelings in Charlie for a long time and her disappearance has been hard on him too. Charlie gives Finn the mare in the hopes that it will make him happy just as horses once made Charlie happy. Finn instinctively knows that Charlie, through love, will be the one to help him find Roza and Charlie knows that it is the one with the biggest heart who will not give up on trying to find Roza. Charlie is surprised that it is not Sean because Sean was supposed to have loved Roza but it is Finn who sees the magical in things and knows that love makes almost anything possible.

When Finn slips through the gap in an attempt to find Roza, he is entering the underworld. In Greek and Roman mythology, the River Styx forms the boundary between earth and the underworld which is ruled by Hades. The River Styx also has a ferryman who transports the souls of the newly dead across the river into the underworld and Finn thinks he sees a boat and a skull faced man as he is carried on the water. Finn ultimately encounters the Scare Crow who is really Hades, the professor, Roza's kidnapper, and he challenges Finn to find Roza among all the lost souls there.

Discussion Question 1

Why doesn't Finn feel any better about learning that he is face blind and there's a reason he can't remember faces?



Discussion Question 2

In what ways does Charlie Valentine symbolize love in the story?

Discussion Question 3

Why does Charlie Valentine call the kidnapper the Scare Crow?

Vocabulary

snorted, vibrant, tubers, humiliated, stammered, ravenous, bleating, merciless, wretched, thoroughbred, wretched, fated, typical, insistence, coalescing, mausoleums, collective, canting, sepia, twined, shambled, runoff, writhed, indistinguishable, mime, undulating, axis, docile



JULY THUNDER MOON, Crows, Slaughter, Sunrise

Summary

In "Crows," Petey is feeling low because Finn didn't show up last night and her mother is concerned about her. Petey is worried that there will be a cure for Finn's face blindness one day and he will see how ugly she really is and won't come around anymore. Petey tells her mother that she'll be okay and her mother asks her to take some honey and cookies to the cafe. Petey is shocked when she encounters the Rude brothers at the cafe and they are all very nice to her. Inside the cafe, Darla and Jonas Apple jump us to help Petey with the box of sweets even though she normally carries the order in by herself. Darla and Jonas are glad that Petey isn't meeting Finn today because he's not quite right and they don't want him using Petey. Petey takes offense at their statements and runs out and hops on her moped to escape.

Petey heads to Finn's house, and Sean tells her that Finn left in the middle of the night and he had figured he had been with Petey. Petey helps Sean pull toilet paper from trees in their front yard which had been decorated with the tissue some time during the night. Petey tells Sean that she thinks whoever toilet papered the house did it for her benefit because they assumed that Finn had been using her. Petey can see that Sean's been in a fight and he tells her that Finn had hit him. Petey then asks Sean if Finn had told her about his face blindness and Sean admits that he hasn't told him anything. Sean goes into the house to read Finn's face blindness paperwork and Petey stays outside where the crows release the toilet paper strands from the highest branches, letting it fall on Petey's shoulders.

"Slaughter" is told from Roza's perspective. Roza squirms to try to free herself from her hanging upside down position and notices that those around her aren't squirming because they're dead. Roza wishes Sean would come rescue her and she regrets that she never told him she loved him when she had the chance. Roza can sense that the man is coming but it turns out to be Finn. Suddenly Roza breaks free from her hanging position and Finn catches her. Then the earth and sky flip back to their normal positions and all the people fall to the ground.

The man appears and states that he is impressed that Finn was able to find Roza. The man had agreed to let Roza go if Finn found her but he never said anything about letting Finn go; so if Roza leaves, Finn must stay. Roza knows that she'll never be able to find her way out to get help for Finn and she would never forgive herself if she left Finn here. Just then Roza catches a glimpse of the shard of mirror glass in Finn's back pocket. She asks the man that if she weren't as beautiful, would he let her go. Roza then pulls the piece of glass from Finn's pocket and slices one side of her face from her ear to the corner of her mouth. The man is in shock at Roza's action and he can't heal her face in spite of his attempts.



Soon the fields begin to turn dark and the people begin to morph with elongating limbs and they crawl like insects; wings sprout from their backs and their mouths turn into mandibles. The creatures swarm at the man and Finn and Roza run to avoid them and the nearby corn grows higher to hide them. They run until they can run no more and splash into the river which carries them away until it spills them out on the familiar road.

The chapter "Sunrise" is told from Finn's perspective. Finn and Roza walk down the dark road toward town. Finn tells Roza that they thought she had wanted to leave them but now he knows that she had to go to protect them. When they reach Finn's house, they see many of the townspeople waiting for them. Roza asks Sean to stitch the cut on her face and he resists but she insists that he do it himself and not take her to the hospital. Finn pulls the drapes to give them some privacy and moves to sit next to Petey who tells him about how everyone had been so nice to her at the diner because they felt sorry for her because Finn had been using her. That made Petey re-think everything and she came to Finn's house to find him but found Sean instead, cleaning up toilet papered trees that she thinks the Rude brothers did.

Petey also tells Finn that she had told Sean about Finn's condition and that led them to Charlie Valentine's because that's the last place Finn had seen the man who had taken Roza. Charlie had told them a lot of weird things they didn't understand but the bottom line is that Finn is a hero now. Petey apologizes for not believing Finn when he told her she was beautiful and he forgives her.

When Finn awakens the next day he sees Roza brushing the coat of the mare which she claims is her Babcia's horse. Roza tells Finn that she's going back to Poland soon to see her Babcia but that she'll come back.

Analysis

The theme of Beauty is important in this section. Petey is concerned that the only reason that Finn has said he loves her is because he is face blind and can't really see that she is ugly. Finn has assured her that she is beautiful to him but she doesn't believe him. So many people have been so rude and insensitive to Petey about her looks that she thinks it is impossible for someone to think she is beautiful. Finn sees Petey as a complete person and her looks are really irrelevant to him. He loves her soul and how she makes him feel so things like superficial beauty aren't that important. It's just difficult for Petey to understand this though because most of the world is interested in physical beauty above everything else.

The theme of Beauty is also important in Roza's release from her kidnapper. Roza had been kidnapped by the man because she was the most beautiful woman he had ever seen. When she confirms that with him again and knows that he won't ever release her because of her beauty, she makes the decision to slash her face with the shard of mirror glass so that she will no longer be perfectly beautiful. The man is horrified that Roza has destroyed her beauty and she is able to escape his evil world. Sean, however, still



thinks Roza is beautiful in spite of her now scarred face and he loves her as a complete person.

It is ironic that the man says that Roza may leave but Finn must stay behind so Roza is the one to rescue Finn this time just as he has come to rescue her. Roza had saved both Sean and Finn from harm when the man threatened to harm them at the time of her kidnapping and she is still trying to save Finn from harm. Roza clearly is beautiful inside as well as out which makes her a sincere, authentic person.

Discussion Question 1

Why are people in town being especially nice to Petey all of a sudden?

Discussion Question 2

Why does Roza slash her face with the shard of mirror glass?

Discussion Question 3

What does Finn finally realize about why Roza had left him and Sean?

Vocabulary

scorching, nuclear, spork, repulsion, confide, annihilate, mourning, pondering, roiled, endearing, disconcerting, endearing, festooning, chivalrous, haiku, cackled, woozy, hiss, crouching, shard, vain, moldering, seething, skittered, bedraggled, leverage



AUGUST: GREEN CORN MOON, The People of Bone Gap

Summary

In the final chapter, "The People of Bone Gap," the townspeople have different versions of how Finn found Roza and Jonas Apple puts out an all points bulletin for the man but Roza says the man won't be kidnapping anyone ever again. The people in town decide to throw a masquerade party and the highlight is a game in which people are to guess other people's identities. Jonas Apple would put a bee sticker on them for each one they got right and the one with the most stickers is the winner. By the end of the night, Finn is covered in bee stickers.

Finn can hear people whispering about him; that they always thought he was nutty but now they think Jonas Apple should have paid attention to what Finn had said all along about Roza's kidnapping. Sean tells Finn that Roza is leaving for Poland next month. Even though Sean doesn't want her to go, Roza really needs to see her Babcia. Roza gives Sean and Finn some cookies with pomegranate filling. Finn notices that the trees are filling up with green leaves and gardens are looking lush again.

Finn sees Petey and they walk off together. Petey notices that Sean seems so much happier lately and Finn says it's because of a pretty special girl. Finn says the girl is pretty enough but he has found his own girl. Petey flirts with Finn and they take off into a cornfield, laughing.

Analysis

The author concludes the story with a masquerade party where people's faces are hidden, supporting the theme of Seeing and Being Seen. People can be seen and not really understood for who they are when one just looks at the superficial aspects of that person. Finn wins the contest at the end of the night because he is the only one who can see people for who they are as a whole and not just what their faces look like.

It is symbolic that Roza gives Sean and Finn cookies with pomegranate filling because in the Greek myth about Persephone, she ate pomegranate seeds which kept her in the underworld with Hades until her mother, Demeter, negotiated her release in the spring and summer seasons.

Discussion Question 1

Why do the people in town change their opinions of Finn since Roza has returned?



Discussion Question 2

Why does Finn win the prize for being able to identify people with their masks on?

Discussion Question 3

What does Finn notice about nature since Roza has returned?

Vocabulary

lurking, lair, bowlegs, brood, miraculously, despair, bore, resemblance, cluster, pomegranates, tattered, commune, gauzy



Characters

Finn O'Sullivan

Finn O'Sullivan is a beautiful teenage boy who lives in Bone Gap, Illinois, with his older brother, Sean. Finn has always been seen as an odd boy who is too dreamy and careless to be taken seriously. People in town call him names like "Moonface." Finn is a very sensitive boy who can hear cornstalks whispering and the crows talking to him. Finn is face blind which means that he can't discern facial features, he can only identify people by their mannerisms and body movements. This creates a huge problem when Roza is kidnapped and Finn is the only witness. He is unable to tell the authorities anything about the kidnapper other than the man moved like a cornstalk in the wind. Finn falls in love with a girl named Petey whom people in town think is ugly but he sees her as a whole person instead of just superficial looks. Finn also has a big heart and is capable of big love which leads him to go on a search for Roza after everyone else has given up. Finn is able to live in both the real world and the world of mysticism which makes him capable of understanding people in ways that other people can't and he is sensitive to people's moods and feelings.

Roza

Roza is a young Polish woman who comes to Chicago to further her college studies. She works for her botany professor who later tries to abduct her while giving her a ride home one day. She ends up in Sean and Finn's barn and they care for her and let her stay in the apartment on their property. Roza is a girl who loves to cook and bake and she makes gardens really come to life. She loves everything of nature and has simple needs. Roza is very beautiful and is approached by all types of men who don't really want her for herself but simply because she is beautiful. Roza is a mystery to Sean and Finn and she doesn't warm up to people easily, especially men, because they have often taken advantage of her. Roza eventually falls in love with Sean because he is kind to her and takes care of her. Roza is kidnapped and goes willingly with the kidnapper because he threatens to kill Sean and Finn.

Sean O'Sullivan

Sean is a young man who lives in Bone Gap, Illinois. He works as a paramedic but had had hopes of being a doctor until his mother left him and his younger brother, Finn. Sean gets a job to take care of Finn and silently resents the upheaval of his life plans. Sean is artistic and sketches people primarily. He and Finn's relationship takes an especially antagonistic turn after Roza is kidnapped and Finn is the only witness but he can't remember anything about the kidnapper's face. Sean has a reputation among the townspeople for being a truly good person and there is a lot of sympathy for him after Roza is gone because Sean doesn't deserve any more hurt in his life.



Miguel Corderos

Miguel is Finn's best friend. Miguel appreciates mysticism, too, and enjoys hearing Finn's stories about the corn whispering and the crows talking. Miguel lives in a big family which practices orienteering exercises to test their logic and rationale skills. Miguel is more visibly interested in girls than Finn is and is always aware of the girls around him. Finn can't really identify Miguel by his face but knows him by his long arms and muscular build.

Priscilla (Petey) Willis

Petey is a teenage girl who lives in Bone Gap, Illinois. Petey's formal name is Priscilla but she doesn't like it and demands to be called Petey. Petey is the daughter of a beekeeper, and she helps her mother with the bee business. Petey has an irascible temperament and the people in town think she is difficult. Petey is not a beautiful girl but Finn is attracted to her and falls in love with her. Petey discovers that Finn is face blind and can't really see people's faces so she thinks that he only cares for her because he can't see her ugly face.

Kidnapper

The kidnapper is an emotionally cold and chilling man who blackmails Roza into going with him by threatening to harm Sean and Finn if she doesn't. Finn describes him as a man who moves like a cornstalk in the wind. It turns out that the kidnapper is Roza's botany professor who takes her because she is beautiful. Symbolically, the man represents Hades, the ruler of the underworld in Greek mythology, which is borne out at the end of the story. The man attempts to give Roza everything she wants but he never asks her, treating her like a possession instead of a real person, just because he covets her beauty.

Mrs. O'Sullivan

Mrs. O'Sullivan is Sean and Finn's mother. Sean recalls her as being beautiful but she fades after their father dies. Eventually, Mrs. O'Sullivan finds a husband on the Internet and moves away to be with him, leaving Sean and Finn to fend for themselves. Being coveted as a woman was more important to her than staying and loving her own children.

Jonas Apple

Jonas Apple is the police chief in Bone Gap. He is frustrated with Finn when Finn can't identify Roza's kidnapper. Jonas is wounded emotionally because his wife left him and



took the dog with her. She just left him a brief message on a Post-It note and disappeared from his life.

Mel Willis

Mel Willis is Petey's mother. She is a beekeeper and seems to be a voice of reason in the story. She is in tune with nature and not as inclined to make rash decisions and jump to conclusions. Mel tries to raise her daughter to believe that she is a wonderful person in spite of what people in town think of her. Mel is a former hippie and is really laid back in her view of the world overall.

Charlie Valentine

Charlie Valentine lives across the street from Sean and Finn. He is an eccentric old man who lets his chickens live in his house. Charlie symbolizes love in the story, not so much for all the women he dates but for the fact that he loves people so much and it distresses him when he can't save them from harm. People think Charlie can't stand to have his great-grandchildren around because they are noisy when actually it is because he loves them so much he is afraid to get close to them for fear that harm will come to them and he will lose them.



Symbols and Symbolism

Night Mare

The black horse magically shows up in Finn's barn one night and he doesn't know where she came from. Finn takes Petey for rides on the mare at night and names her Night. Symbolically, the horse represents nightmares instead of dreams because she takes him on mystical trips to dark places that he could never imagine and would have never experienced without her.

Bees

Bees are associated with the feminine in life because of the roles of fertility, growth, and survival. The queen bee rules the colony of workers and she is responsible for taking care of the other bees and the hive overall just like the typical role associated with women. Bees all work together for the benefit of the hive just like people in a family do. Bees also produce honey which is associated with the sweetness, nourishment. Petey and her mother raise bees for their honey and they symbolize how women are both industrious and sweet, and how people view women in our culture.

Cornfields

Cornfields are important in the story, especially for Roza and Finn. In myth and legends, corn symbolizes protection and the divine and is one of the plants most valued by man. Roza finds sanctuary in the cornfields when she is trying to escape her kidnapper and Finn is able to discover the opening to the underworld by running through a cornfield whose stalks whisper to him.

Black SUV

The kidnapper's black SUV is dark and foreboding and it is the perfect vehicle for the man who symbolizes Hades, the king of the underworld. In most stories and fables, black represents death and harm and so it makes sense that the kidnapper has a big black vehicle to help him with his evil deeds.

Lambs

Roza loves to pet the lambs that the kidnapper brings to her. He learns how to tap into the things she likes in order to ingratiate himself with her. Lambs also symbolize peace and purity so he brings her a little lamb every day after she stabs him in an attempt to make peace with her and try to assuage her hatred for him.



The jeweled box

Finn gives Petey a jeweled box that had belonged to his mother when she gets angry at him. The box has no monetary value but it is one of the only things Finn has that belonged to his mother so it has emotional value. His giving it to Petey symbolizes the depth of his feelings for her in that he can give away something of his heart.

Honey

The honey from Mel and Petey's bees symbolizes sweetness. In spite of the danger they put themselves in to collect the honey, Mel Willis and Petey try to bring calm and understanding to the town especially in light of peoples' rude treatment of Petey.

Masks

At the end of the story, the town throws a masquerade party. The masks symbolize the masks that everyone wears every day in order to hide behind hurts and emotional wounds. Without the masks, people just see the superficial of each other and don't really get to understand the complete person.

Shard of mirror glass

Roza slashes her face with a shard of broken mirror glass in order to escape from the man who treasures her only for her beauty. Ironically, it is a piece of mirror, an item that is used to reflect beauty, that ultimately flaws Roza in the eyes of her kidnapper.

Pomegranate cookies

At the masquerade party, Roza gives pomegranate filled cookies to Sean and Finn. This is symbolic because in the Greek myth about Persephone being kidnapped and taken to the underworld, she is granted permission to leave only if she hasn't eaten anything yet. Unfortunately, Persephone had eaten a few pomegranate seeds and she is forced to remain. Roza, like Persephone, has tasted life in the underworld and she will never be the same.



Settings

Bone Gap, Illinois

The story takes place in a small midwestern town called Bone Gap. It is an unusual place because people have been known to just disappear, as if slipping through the gaps, never to be seen again.

Sean and Finn's house

Sean and Finn live in the country outside Bone Gap. They don't live on a farm but they have some outside buildings such as a barn and an apartment where Roza stays to recover from her escape from her professor.

Cornfields

Cornfields surround the town of Bone Gap and they are magical places. Roza finds sanctuary in them after escaping from her professor and Finn runs deep into them to find the entrance to the underworld.

Chat n Chew

The Chat n Chew is a diner in Bone Gap. It is really the only place for people to meet and have a meal. It is also the site of the masquerade party held after Roza's return.

Charlie Valentine's House

Charlie Valentine lives across the road from Sean and Finn. He has outbuildings and farm animals and even lets his chickens live in the house.

The Fields

The Fields are mystical places found in the underworld. In mythology, after a person died, he was sent to one of three fields depending on how he spent his life.

Poland

Poland is Roza's home country. She longs to return to see the rolling hills, farm animals and gardens.

Chicago

Chicago is a large city in Illinois and the site of the university where Roza attends to study botany. It is here that she works for her botany professor who attempts to abduct her.



Themes and Motifs

Understanding Who You Are and Where You Belong

The theme of Understanding Who You Are and Where You Belong is important in the story for several of the characters. Finn is a beautiful boy with a sensitive spirit who is ridiculed by the people in town because he is too dreamy and careless. Finn has mystical experiences that other people wouldn't understand so he keeps that part of himself quiet. Finn also has face blindness which means that he can't identify faces like other people can. Although this allows Finn to see the soul of people, he is ridiculed by others especially when he can't identify Roza's kidnapper. Petey also struggles to find out where she belongs. Because she is not a beautiful girl, the people in town make fun of her so she retaliates by being caustic. She knows who she is inside but people only view her superficial looks so she keeps her distance from them. Roza also tries to understand where she belongs in the world. She is very beautiful and is recognized for her beauty yet she knows that she is more than what she looks like. Roza is a sensitive, giving person yet most people don't get past her beauty and it is difficult for her to find where she fits in. Sean also struggles with his role in life. He had wanted to become a doctor but then his mother left and he had to give up his dreams in order to care for his younger brother. Now Sean works as a paramedic because it is medical related but it is not his full dream and he harbors resentment because his life and dreams have been stifled.

Beauty

Beauty is an important theme in the book, not only for those who have it but also for those who don't. Roza is very beautiful and is surrounded by men who want to possess her for her beauty, disregarding who she is as a full person. Roza begins to understand how shallow some of the men are who want her because she is beautiful but don't consider what she wants when she determines that she wants to continue her studies. Everywhere she goes, Roza encounters men who engage with her in the hopes that she will favor them but all she really wants is to be loved for who she is as a person. It is only when Roza meets Sean and Finn that she understands that men can care for you without wanting to use you or just see the surface of who you are. In Roza's case there are definitely dark sides to beauty in that her professor abducts her in order to possess her, having no regard to what Roza wants or needs. Conversely, Petey's story is based on the lack of beauty. Petey suffers the insults and taunts from the people in town because she is not attractive and this makes her feel ugly inside so she responds with caustic remarks. It is only when Finn tells her that she is beautiful that she understands that she can be seen for who she is on the inside, too. However, Petey is so conditioned to believe that she is ugly that she thinks that Finn loves her only because he is face blind and can't really see her. Finn denies this and they ultimately mend their relationship, Petey feeling beautiful because she is with someone who sees her for who she really is.



Seeing and Being Seen

The theme of Seeing and Being Seen is important in the story. People see each other all the time, but they never really see into the heart of people. This can come from peoples' unwillingness to let others see into them that deeply and from peoples' inability to see past the exterior of other people. It's all about perspective. Roza is beautiful yet none of the men she encounters bothers to really investigate and see who she really is. Eventually, when she meets Sean and Finn she knows that it is possible to be seen and valued for who you really are with no other expectations. Finn is the best example of someone who really sees because he can't really define faces; he sees people for who they are internally as well. He identifies people by their body shape and movements which most people consider insignificant when compared to the facial features. So in a way, Finn sees, but he doesn't, when it comes to faces, and he really sees when it comes to viewing a complete person. Petey is in the opposite position of Roza in that people see her and determine that she is ugly so they don't bother to learn anymore about her. If people knew the core of Petey's goodness, her physical unattractive would not matter and Finn is able to prove that true.

Myths and Magic

Myths and Magic are an important theme in the story. From the very beginning, we learn that Finn can hear the corn whisper to him and the crows talk to him. He has a heightened sense of awareness and can see and hear things that others can't. When the mare suddenly appears in his barn, Finn accepts it and takes nighttime rides to fantastical places yet he finds this perfectly normal. He also senses that Roza has disappeared in one of the gaps in the mystical town and he figures out how to find her. Most people wouldn't be able to comprehend the possibility for other realms, let alone determine how to find them. There are also undercurrents of Greek myths throughout the story. Roza's kidnapping is similar to the abduction of Persephone in Greek mythology. Persephone is taken by Hades, the kind of the underworld, because she is so beautiful and he wants to possess her. Her mother, Demeter, is able to negotiate with Hades for Persephone's return to earth for half of the year which Demeter marks as the spring and summer seasons. In the story, Roza is associated with nature and gardens which grow in the spring and summer. She is taken from her home by an evil man who wants to possess her for her beauty with no regard for what she wants or needs. Finn is then able to find Roza by entering the underworld by sailing on a fast-moving river which symbolizes the River Styx in mythology. Finn finds Roza in the underworld with the symbolic Hades, the kidnapper, and rescues her because she give up her beauty in order to leave.

Disappearances

Disappearances are an important theme in the story. It is said that people have been known to disappear through the gaps in Bone Gap, adding to the mystery and magic quality to the town. Roza is the main disappearance case in that she was abducted and



seemed to go willingly which no one can understand. Adding to the mystery is the fact that Finn can't identify the face of the kidnapper. But other people have disappeared as well. Sean and Finn's mother met a man on the Internet and moved to Oregon to marry him, leaving her sons to fend for themselves. It's not clear if something drove her from the town or if the draw from outside was greater, but she left and never returned. Jonas Apple's wife also disappeared. All that is known about her is that she left Jonas a message on a Post-It note and took off, taking the dog with her. Jonas is the town's police chief so it is ironic that he is the victim of such a situation in which he had no control or no recourse. Jonas is especially wounded because his wife took the dog which he sees as a huge personal insult.

Styles

Point of View

Like many novels, "Bone Gap" is written in the third person omniscient point of view. This means that the author writes the story using third person pronouns such as "she" and "he." The author also has insight into what the characters are thinking which makes it an omniscient view, as opposed to a limited view where only the activities of the characters are reported. For example, the author writes, "As for Finn, well, they thought he was a little weird, but that was okay with them. 'Yeah, that boy's nuttier than a honey cluster,' they might say. 'But he's a fine-looking nut. A sharp nut. Our nut.' Finn, they were sure, had his heart in the right place. Just the way they did." In addition the author tells the story from the different perspectives of Finn, Sean, Roza, Petey, and Charlie Valentine in alternating chapters. This moves the story along but provides more personal views of different characters and helps fill in details that the reader would not otherwise have had.

Language and Meaning

Because "Bone Gap" is set in modern day, the language is current for the times. The author uses 21st century terminology and euphemisms in narration and dialogue to show authenticity. The author uses things like current movies and pop culture icons so that the modern day audience can relate to them. It is also current in situations such as Mrs. O'Sullivan's meeting a man on the Internet and leaving home to move to Oregon to marry him. Online dating and chat rooms are relatively current and that helps set the story in this time and place. The author also uses language inherent for the characters. For example, Roza is Polish so she speaks in halting and broken English when she communicates. Finn is witty so the author gives him humor especially when he interacts with his friend, Miguel, with whom he likes to banter. The kidnapper uses few words but when he does he is demanding and controlling, trying to instill fear into Roza and anyone else he encounters. For the most part, the people of Bone Gap are simple people in a farming community and their language reflects their simple lifestyles and way of interacting with each other.

Structure

The structure of a novel usually takes one of 4 forms: character, milieu, event, or idea. And while a story can contain all four forms, one usually predominates. "Bone Gap" takes the structure of a character form. These types of novels tend to show a character's personal growth as the story extends. A character structure shows transformation as being important as opposed to an event story which is more concerned with what a character does. It is easy to identify a character structure novel because there comes a point in the story when the main character reaches a point of



frustration with life or a set of circumstances that are no longer acceptable for personal growth. The character then decides on changes, both small and dramatic, that will move the character's life in a different direction. The story concludes then when the character has resolved his or her issues and feels satisfied with the transformation or decides to stay in the current situation. In "Bone Gap," several of the characters undergo personal growth. Finn grows from being considered a dreamy boy to a young man who takes control of the situation regarding Roza's abduction and determines a way to find her. Petey grows in that she is able to understand that Finn loves her in spite of what other people think about her; she is not defined by outside influences, she is defined by herself. Roza grows because she learns that people can love her for who she is and not only because she is beautiful.



Quotes

Are you in love with me yet?
-- Kidnapper (Run paragraph 4)

Importance: The kidnapper asks Roza this same question every day and of course her answer is always no. He thinks Roza is the most beautiful girl he has ever seen and wants to marry her but she is rightly repulsed by him.

The man was tall. And he was so still. I've never seen anyone that still. But when he finally moved, he moved like a cornstalk twitching in the wind.
-- Finn (The Night Mare paragraph 9)

Importance: Finn's thoughts revert to Roza all the time and he thinks about the man who took her, noting how still he was. When the man did move it reminded Finn of how a cornstalk would move in the wind. Finn relates most things to elements of nature and even though Finn can't remember what the man's face looked like, he very distinctly recalls how the man moved.

That's not who I am.
-- Roza (Storming the Castle paragraph 3)

Importance: Roza asks her kidnapper why he wants her and he tells her that of all the beautiful women, she is the most beautiful. Roza is distressed because she is much more than her beauty but the man doesn't care about that.

How about finding yourself a smart boy? Or better yet, a kind boy, a boy who listens to what you have to say?
-- Babcia (Storming the Castle paragraph 8)

Importance: Roza seems satisfied with the local boys because they think she is beautiful and they covet that. Babcia wants Roza to find a boy who will love her for who she is as a complete person and not just for superficial reasons of her beauty.

It's nice you're helping the old ladies," said Bob. "They're not much good for anything."
-- Bob (Just Like the Rest of Us paragraph 1)

Importance: Bob is a sleazy guy who only wants women for sex and he is rude and obnoxious in his approach. When he learns that Roza is studying herbal remedies which may help menopausal women, he states that those old women aren't good for anything, meaning they are not useful to him as sex partners. Bob's attitude exemplifies that of a lot of men who view women as sex objects and not as whole, authentic, creative human beings.

He's so strange, that boy. Too strange. Maybe he had something to do with what happened to that other girl... you never know. Even your own brother believes this.



-- The kidnapper (Lost paragraph 11)

Importance: The kidnapper taunts Finn about Roza's disappearance. He seems to know what the people in town say about Finn's not being able to recognize the man's face and that Finn is weird anyway and perhaps had a part in Roza's kidnapping. The man knows that this will hurt Finn and he delights in tormenting him.

It's true. Face-blind people can sometimes recognize really unusual-looking people, and they're attracted to them." She pawed through the damn papers. "This article is about a teenage girl with prosopagnosia--that's the technical name for face blindness--who ran away with a middle-aged circus clown. But she was attracted to him because she could see him, recognize him in a crowd.

-- Petey (Blindside paragraph 7)

Importance: Petey has done some research on the Internet and realizes that Finn is face blind which means that he can't discern details of faces and recognizes people by shape and movements. Petey is upset because she thinks that is the only reason that Finn has been coming to see her. Petey knows that everyone thinks she is unattractive so the only boy who could be interested in her is the one who can't really see faces. Finn tells her that he sees her as a person but she doesn't believe him.

Remember these? Dolls eyes? If you eat them, they cause a heart attack. There are so many ways to die. A bit of bread lodged in the windpipe. A strike of lightning. A falling tree. A clean twist of the head. If you don't come with me, don't come quietly, those boys who took you in will die of heart attacks, or accidents, some ravenous parasite or flesh-wasting disease that causes the body to eat itself from within. I am creative when it comes to death. It is a science and an art. Do you believe me?

-- The kidnapper (The Dead paragraph 5)

Importance: Roza's kidnapper threatens to kill Sean and Finn if she doesn't come with him. He holds out a handful of baneberry which he had instructed her in class was poisonous so she knows he is serious. This is also important because it reveals why Roza went with the man without saying a word to Finn who wanted to know why she was leaving.

That's why I let her get in the car. Why I didn't try anything or do anything until it was too late. I mean, who would want to be with us? Mom didn't. She left you to take care of me. Poor, poor Sean, stuck with his weird brother, whole life ruined.

-- Finn (Punched paragraph 5)

Importance: Finn and Sean finally voice their anger over their situation. Finn covers all the important issues: Roza probably wanted to leave, their mother left, and Sean is left to take care of his weird brother who can't even identify the person who took Roza. This is a turning point in the story because Finn will no longer sit idly by while no one else takes action in finding Roza.



Because we don't have your typical gaps around here. Not gaps made of rocks or mountains. We have gaps in the world. In the space of things. So many places to lose yourself, if you believe that they're there. You can slip into the gap and never find your way out. Or maybe you don't want to find your way out.

-- Charlie Valentine (The Ballad of Charlie Valentine paragraph 11)

Importance: Charlie explains the mystical quality that attracted him to Bone Gap. There are places that people can hide or even disappear if they want to if they are so inclined. It helps to explain why things happen that can't be understood when there are no logical reasons for things.

She said, "Do you love me yet?" He recoiled from her, from the look of her. "You don't love me because you can't see me," she said. "Look! Look! I am beautiful now. I am beautiful.

-- Roza (Slaughter paragraph 6)

Importance: Roza slashes her face so that she won't be beautiful to the man and he will let her go. She knows that she is beautiful inside and out but the man was only interested in her physical beauty. She has a healthy sense of self awareness that can't be minimized by a flaw in her physical beauty.

About what I saw, about what happened to you," he said. "It's not just because I'm bad at faces. I didn't understand you went with that man to save me. That's what you did, right? Because that would mean you didn't want to leave us. That would mean you didn't want to leave Sean. And everyone leaves Sean. Do you understand?

-- Finn (Sunrise paragraph 3)

Importance: Finn clarifies with Roza why she left with the man that day. She left because the man threatened to kill Sean and Finn if she didn't go with him. Sean and Finn thought that Roza left because everybody leaves them and she probably wanted to go too. This changes how Sean and Finn will view their relationships, especially with women, as they go forward.