

Castle in the Air Study Guide

Castle in the Air by Diana Wynne Jones

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Plot Summary

"Castle in the Air" by Diana Wynne Jones is the tale of Abdullah, a carpet merchant, and his quest to fulfill his fate.

The story begins: "Far to the south in the land of Ingary, in the Sultanates of Rashpuht, a young carpet merchant called Abdullah lived in the city of Zanzib. As merchants go, he was not rich. His father had been disappointed in him, and when he died, he had only left Abdullah just enough money to buy and stock a modest booth in the northwest corner of the Bazaar" (Chapter 1, p. 1).

Abdullah is rather satisfied with his lot in life at this point. He is making enough money to live and runs a relatively successful business. However, as it happens in most fairy tales, Abdullah is not without his troubles.

Abdullah is constantly reminded by his deceased father's family that he is an embarrassment and a disappointment. They also treat him as an ignorant child and make monthly visits to the Bazaar to chastise Abdullah, criticize him, and give unwanted advice. Abdullah has no love for his father's family, mainly his father's first wife's sister, Fatima; his father's first wife's uncle's son, Assif; and his father's first wife's brother's son, Hakim. Among these people, Abdullah detests his cousin Assif the most.

Over the years it became clear that nothing Abdullah could do would be enough satisfy his father or the rest of the family. Abdullah began to wish that he belong to another family, one that appreciated him. To compensate for the family's cruelty, Abdullah created an elaborate fantasy. In the fantasy, Abdullah, who was the son of a powerful and mighty prince, was kidnapped by the infamous bandit Kabul Aqba. Abdullah managed to get away. A man found him in the desert and took him home. That man became his father. Lately, Abdullah also began to fantasize about the princess that he had been betrothed to at birth.

The daydream is magical because it is everything Abdullah wants - or thinks he wants - and proves to be something quite different when a djinn uses magic to make it come true.

Things begin to change drastically for Abdullah when he buys a magic carpet from a stranger at the Bazaar. Abdullah is steeped in custom but is not a fool. He is skeptical when the stranger attempts to sell him a magic carpet. Even after seeing it in operation, Abdullah wonders if it really is magic. Abdullah's magical journey truly begins at this point in the story. Not only is Abdullah transported through magic to meet Flower-in-the-Night, but he soon encounters a genie who is enchanted and is forced to grant wishes.

After Flower-in-the Night is abducted by a powerful djinn, Abdullah sets his heart on finding her. He uses the magic carpet to attempt to find his beloved only to encounter bandits. This is where Abdullah acquires a surly genie. The genie loves to wreak havoc and will do so at any opportunity. It is the genie that leads Abdullah to the Red Lion



where he meets a thief in the form of an old soldier. The pair travels together with very different purposes. Abdullah wants to find his princess and the old soldier wants to find his fortune.

The pair eventually ends up in the right place after suffering through a series of mishaps that usually involve powerful magic. Abdullah finds his princess and the old soldier, who is really a prince that has been enchanted, finds his rightful place. Along the way Abdullah has many profound moments that help him realize what is important and enables him to experience true happiness.



Chapters 1-4

Chapters 1-4 Summary

In Chapter 1, the reader is introduced to Abdullah, a young carpet seller in a Bazaar in Zanzib.

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Abdullah is constantly reminded by his deceased father's family that he is an embarrassment. They also treat him as an ignorant child and make monthly visits to the Bazaar to chastise Abdullah, criticize him, and give unwanted advice. Abdullah has no love for his father's family, mainly his father's first wife's sister, Fatima; his father's first wife's uncle's son, Assif; and his father's first wife's brother's son, Hakim. Of these Abdullah detests his cousin Assif the most.

Abdullah must constantly explain how the business operates. Instead of using profits for a dowry, he uses them to buy new inventory. This is unacceptable to the family.

Over the years it became clear that nothing Abdullah could do would be enough satisfy his father or the rest of the family. Abdullah created an elaborate fantasy to compensate for this horrible childhood. In the fantasy, Abdullah, who was the son of a powerful and mighty prince, was kidnapped by the infamous bandit Kabul Aqba. Abdullah managed to get away. A man found him in the desert and took him home. That man became his father. Lately, Abdullah also began to fantasize about the princess that he had been betrothed to at birth.

Abdullah is approached by a stranger. The stranger is abrupt and questions Abdullah about his wares. The man tells Abdullah that he has a magic carpet for sale. Abdullah is filled with disbelief but eventually becomes convinced and pays 210 gold pieces for the threadbare floor covering. Abdullah is so excited and yet suspicious of the new purchase that he does not even tell his friend Jamal, who operates an adjacent booth.

That night Abdullah is afraid that the enchanted carpet will return to its original owner so he tethers it securely to the booth and sleeps.

Chapter 2: In Which Abdullah Is Mistaken for a Young Lady

Abdullah wakes on a bank in a beautiful garden. He is unsure if he is in the midst of a dream. A beautiful girl approaches. Abdullah learns that her name is Flower-in-the-Night. Abdullah is immediately smitten with the girl. Flower-in-the-Night questions Abdullah and thinks that the carpet seller is another woman. Abdullah is stunned.



Flower-in-the-Night says that she has never seen another man other than her father. Flower-in-the-Night has been taught to believe that all men are bald and old. Abdullah takes off his nightcap and shows Flower-in-the-Night his full head of hair. Abdullah says he will bring pictures of all kinds of men to Flower-in-the-Night to prove that he is indeed male.

Abdullah learns that Flower-in-the-Night is betrothed to a prince of Ochinstan. Abdullah shares his fantasy story.

Abdullah wakes in the booth. Jamal speaks to Abdullah about the theft that occurred the previous day. Abdullah realizes that his nightcap is missing. Was the experience in the garden real?

Chapter 3: In Which Flower-in-the-Night Discovers Several Important Facts

Abdullah approaches an artist in the Bazaar and asks for drawings. Many people approach Abdullah with pictures. He buys 189 pictures to show Flower-in-the-Night.

Abdullah prepares for his journey to the garden to see Flower-in-the-Night. The carpet will not move. Abdullah thinks there must be a magic word but cannot determine what the word might be. Abdullah does not leave the booth that night.

The next day Jamal questions Abdullah about the pictures and asks if his friend is mad.

Abdullah, frustrated, goes to bed. He awakes in the garden. Flower-in-the-Night arrives. Abdullah shows her the pictures. Flower-in-the-Night agrees that men come in all shapes and sizes.

Flower-in-the-Night agrees to marry Abdullah. Abdullah objects, saying he is poor and her father would never permit it. They agree to elope. Abdullah and Flower-in-the-Night discuss the possible magic word for the carpet.

Abdullah returns to the booth and falls asleep. Hakim arrives and wakes Abdullah.

Chapter 4: Which Concerns Marriage and Prophecy

Hakim chastises Abdullah as usual. Hakim says that the prophecy concerning Abdullah's life has been found. Hakim insists that Abdullah come to the emporium to discuss the prophecy. Abdullah agrees to go to the emporium two hours before sunset. Hakim is not pleased but agrees.

Abdullah spends his entire day selling his inventory to raise enough money for a dowry for Flower-in-the-Night.

Abdullah goes to the emporium. The family questions him about the pictures and his new business. They ask if he has gone mad. The family mentions the prophecy.



Hakim gives Abdullah a piece of paper which he struggles to read in the dim light. It reads:

"These are the words of the wise fortuneteller: 'This son of yours will not follow you in your trade. Two years after your death, while he is still a very young man, he will be raised above all others in this land. As Fate decrees it, so I have spoken.'"

Abdullah's father added the following footnote: "My son's fortune is a great disappointment to me. Let Fate send me other sons to follow in my trade, or I have wasted forty gold pieces on this prophecy." Chap. 4, p. 64

The family of Abdullah's father's first wife has known about the prophecy for quite some time. They waited until Abdullah decided to start a new business to determine if the prophecy was true. The family has determined that it is time for Abdullah to marry. The family presents two fat, unattractive brides for Abdullah to marry. The magistrate is also present. Abdullah refuses to get married. When questioned by the family Abdullah says that he has already been betrothed. Abdullah is questioned and immediately makes up a story about being betrothed at birth to a princess. The family says they will research records to determine if the story is true. Abdullah manages to escape from the emporium without two new brides.

Chapters 1-4 Analysis

The character of Abdullah is a male version of Cinderella. He is treated poorly by his father's first wife's family. Instead of the wicked step-mother and step-sisters, Abdullah has a wicked stepmother and wicked male cousins. Abdullah seems to be relatively powerless over this group and must undergo constant scrutiny and harsh criticism. Much like Cinderella, nothing Abdullah could ever do in his lifetime would suffice to please the family of his father's first wife.

Some of the language in the story is somewhat difficult in that it is flowery and reminiscent of the Arabian Nights. Abdullah speaks in lyrical tones and uses the utmost politeness even when it is not warranted as this is the custom. An example: Abdullah meets an abrupt and rude stranger and still addresses him, saying, "It is possible that my low and squalid establishment might provide that which you seek, O pearl of wanderers" (Chap. 1, p. 6).

Likewise, Abdullah uses such language with his peers, such as the artist who eventually sells some pictures to Abdullah for Flower-in-the-Night's perusal. He says, "If some of these are kinds of men that you have never seen, I require you to invent them, O paragon of the paintbrush. And if your invention fails, which I hardly think is likely, O aristocrat of artists, then all you need to his turn your eyes outward, gaze, and copy!" (Chapter. 3, p. 35).

Abdullah is stunned when he awakes on the bank of a beautiful garden, and is sure it is a dream, as is the lovely presence of Flower-in-the Night. The girl does not meet Abdullah's vision of a dream girl but she is undoubtedly lovely. Flower-in-the Night's



unsure behavior intrigues Abdullah. Abdullah, used to the criticism of his father and family, does not feel that he is suitable to marry a princess. Flower-in-the-Night thinks otherwise.

The family shows the extent of its cruelty and selfishness when the step-mother and cousins present his father's prophecy. Once again the father states how disappointed he is in Abdullah but never gives an explanation for this except that it was divined by a fortuneteller. The family expects that their efforts will be highly praised by Abdullah and are surprised when he refuses. Abdullah wants nothing more than to escape. The family has no intention of letting go of any control they might have over Abdullah and furthermore clearly plans to take advantage of any new status Abdullah may manage to achieve.



Chapters 5-9

Chapters 5-9 Summary

Chapter 5 begins with Abdullah waking up on the bank and is happy to see Flower-in-the-Night. Abdullah had been worried that Flower-in-the-Night would spurn him after he did not appear in the garden as promised. Instead, the girl seemed to be doubly pleased. Flower-in-the-Night tells Abdullah that she had worried about him and his safety.

Abdullah beckons to Flower-in-the-Night to climb up onto the carpet and elope with him. Flower-in-the-Night begins to run across the lawn. Before anything can transpire, a large, hideous creature appears in the sky. Flower-in-the-Night screams when she sees the creature, saying, "She looked around and up. Whatever she saw made her scream, one single why old, frantic scream, which was cut off when one of the leathery arms change positioned to clap its huge talent hand over her face. Flower-in-the-Night beat at the arm with her fists, and kicked and struggled, but all quite uselessly" (Chapter 5, p. 75).

Abdullah is stunned and does not know what to do. He watches as Flower-in-the-Night is taken away by what is surely a djinn in disguise.

Soldiers begin to appear on the horizon. Abdullah knows that he will be blamed for Flower-in-the-Night's abduction and will most likely be imprisoned or killed. Abdullah manages to get away. Abdullah mourns the loss of his betrothed, saying, "So miserable was he that it never occurred to him that he might be in any danger himself" (Chap. 5, p. 78).

The next morning, soldiers from the Sultan's army storm the Bazaar looking for Abdullah. The soldiers arrest Abdullah and take him to the Sultan's palace. The Sultan is angry and demands to know where Abdullah has taken Flower-in-the-Night. Abdullah is confused about how the Sultan had found him. The Sultan shows Abdullah the lost nightcap. Abdullah explains what happened in the garden.

The Sultan will not be appeased. The Sultan says he will execute Abdullah so that Flower-in-the-Night may still marry the Prince of Ochinstan, as it is acceptable to be a widow and still marry a prince. Abdullah convinces the Sultan that while he had intended to marry Flower-in-the-Night, he had not done so. The Sultan says that Flower-in-the-Night's prophecy is to marry the first man she sees other than her father. That is why Flower-in-the-Night had been sequestered inside the palace walls.

The Sultan speaks of Flower-in-the-Night's marriage. Abdullah says that he does not believe that the Sultan is being fair to his daughter. The Sultan says that women do not matter. Abdullah disagrees. Abdullah is put into a dungeon and the search for Flower-in-the-Night begins.



Chapter 6: Which Shows How Abdullah Went from the Frying Pan In to the Fire

Abdullah is in the dungeon. He is severely depressed. If Abdullah is in the dungeon, how can he possibly find Flower-in-the-Night? Abdullah wonders if he will spend his life in prison. Abdullah thinks of a way that he can escape so that he may save his beloved Flower-in-the-Night.

In a moment of desperation, Abdullah calls for the carpet. The carpet arrives carrying Jamal's sleeping dog. Abdullah thinks that the dog must have been thinking about him in a dream. The dog wakes and is excited to see Abdullah. The dog immediately begins to investigate this new territory.

Abdullah hears footsteps. The soldiers are coming to the dungeon. Abdullah knows that if he leaves the dog behind that the soldiers will believe that Abdullah turned himself into a dog. The dog would certainly be killed. Abdullah asks the dog to lick his face. The dog obeys. Abdullah and the dog are whisked back to the Bazaar. Abdullah tells the carpet to hover by Jamal's booth. Abdullah quickly explains and gives Jamal enough money to leave Zanzib and to start his own restaurant. Jamal is stunned but flees. Soldiers are close on Abdullah's heels. Abdullah orders the carpet to go to the desert.

Along the way, Abdullah realizes that the nicer he is to the carpet, the better it performs. The carpet eventually lands in the desert. Abdullah tumbles onto the sand. He walks until he happens upon a group of bandits. The men are threatening. One of the men holds a blue bottle. The men demand an explanation from Abdullah.

Chapter 7: Which Introduces the genie

Abdullah recognizes the leader of the bandits to be Kabul Aqba, a well known cut-throat thief. Aqba questions Abdullah about his sudden appearance. Aqba is convinced that it must be magic. Abdullah goes along with it, hoping that his life will be spared. Aqba is suspicious since Abdullah still wears the chains from the Sultan's prison. Abdullah makes up a story saying that he was imprisoned by the Sultan because the Sultan feared Abdullah's powerful magic. Iron chains prevent even the best magicians from performing magic.

"Certainly," said Abdullah. "Such a mighty magician am I that the Sultan of Zanzib himself loaded me with chains for a very fear of what I could do. Only strike these chains apart and undo these handcuffs and you will see great things." Chap. 7, p. 110

Aqba decides that Abdullah's carpet must be magic and he commandeers the rug. Abdullah is angry. Aqba says that he is not interested in seeing Abdullah's magical skills, what he seeks is knowledge. If Abdullah can supply knowledge to Aqba then Aqba will ensure that Abdullah's leg shackles are removed.

One of the men holds a blue glass bottle. Aqba asks Abdullah what he thinks is contained in the bottle. Abdullah studies the bottle. The bottle is very old but the seal is new. Abdullah says he believes the bottle contains a genie and warns Aqba and his men not to open it. Two of the men opened the bottle. The genie escapes from the bottle and



says that he has vowed to cause harm to anyone that should open the bottle. Suddenly the two men are turned into toads. The genie claims that his new owner may ask for her one wish per day. The genie will be forced to grant that wish. Abdullah steps up to make a wish and is quickly pushed aside by Aqba. Aqba cannot decide what to choose as his first wish. Aqba and Abdullah discuss many options before Aqba decides on asking for a lavish feast. The genie grants the wish. There is a lavish feast set before Aqba and his men. The servants tell Abdullah that the feast had been intended for the Sultan. The Sultan is very angry that his food keeps disappearing along with his musicians and dancing girls. After the celebration everyone goes back to the palace. Aqba falls asleep on top of the carpet with the genie bottle beside him. The carpet listen to the air and the genie bottle falls to the ground. Abdullah takes the bottle.

Chapter 8: In Which Abdullah's Dreams Continue to Come True

Abdullah wakes and asks the genie to remove his chains. Abdullah leaves the camp armed with leftover wine and food. Abdullah cannot help but think how much this reality mirrors his lifelong daydream.

"It seems that fate has decreed that I live through my entire daydream in reality!" he croaked." Chap. 8, p. 124

The desert is blisteringly hot and Abdullah wishes he had chosen to bring water instead of wine. Abdullah thinks about Flower-in-the-Night in order to keep moving over the hot sand. Abdullah hears soldiers approaching from the rear.

Abdullah asks the genie for another wish. Abdullah wishes to go to Flower-in-the-Night. The genie says he cannot grant the wish because Flower-in-the-Night is nowhere on earth. Abdullah explains about the abduction by the djinn. The genie says that he may know some wizards that might be able to help Abdullah. Abdullah wishes to find the closest person that might help lead him to Flower-in-the-Night. Suddenly Abdullah is standing on a country road in front of a tavern named the Red Lion. On a bench out in front of the tavern is a man asleep on the wooden bench. Abdullah asks the genie why the sleeping man was chosen. The genie replies, "He appeals to me. He signs with dishonesty." Chap. 8, p. 135

Chapter 9: In Which Abdullah Encounters an Old Soldier

Abdullah surveys the sleeping man. Abdullah thinks the man looks like a ruffian and sees the dishonesty in his face. The man's clean-shaven face tells Abdullah that he is probably a soldier. While Abdullah stands surveying the man a woman comes to the door of the inn. She greets Abdullah. It is there for the woman Abdullah is a stranger because he treats her with great respect. Abdullah asks for sherbet or fruit juice. The woman says that she only has beer. The woman tries to explain beer to Abdullah. Abdullah finally agrees to drink the beer and also buys a pint for the wayward soldier.

The soldier asks Abdullah where he is from. The man tells Abdullah that he is also a stranger to Ingary.



"I'm from Strangia myself. Old soldier. Turned loose on the world with a bounty after Ingary beat us in the war. As you saw, there's still a lot of prejudice here in Ingary about this uniform of mine." Chap. 9, p. 141

The soldier begins to tell tales about the war including the fact that the army of Ingary used wizards in order to win the war. The old man is clearly bitter about having lost in such a way. The soldier says that after the war he decided that he would walk through Ingary to get a good look at the land and its people. Abdullah begins to grow weary of the man's stories and is grateful when the other customers arrive. It is not long before the old soldier holds court with many locals. He begins to diagram battles using various items on the table. When he runs out of items he uses gold pieces which Abdullah thinks is quite foolish considering that the man is a stranger in a strange land. Abdullah observes the activities while he eats his dinner.

Abdullah overhears for men talking about staging an ambush. Abdullah pays for his supper and quickly moves along.

Chapters 5-9 Analysis

Abdullah is not afraid to throw caution to the wind to pursue the woman of his dreams. After all, Abdullah's existence had not been very pleasant before he purchased the magic carpet. Leaving Zanzib to be with Flower-in-the-Night would be a dream come true. Additionally, Abdullah would be able to be rid of the family of his father's first wife forever, a fact that truly delights Abdullah. If Abdullah were to stay in Zanzib, it is clear that the family would continue to try to run - and ruin - Abdullah's life and business. In Abdullah's mind, there is nothing to lose.

Arriving to find Flower-in-the-Night waiting for him thrills Abdullah to no end. It is terrifying when the djinn swoops down and carries off Flower-in-the-Night. Abdullah does not know what to do. He does have the presence of mind to escape from the approaching soldiers, knowing he would be blamed for the princess' disappearance.

The Sultan is an angry man who would just as soon kill Abdullah as to listen to him. The man has no respect for women, not even his own precious daughter. Abdullah tries to defend women but to no avail. The Sultan is not appeased by anything that Abdullah has to say. Abdullah heeds the Sultan's threats to kill him and display his body on a forty foot stake. Abdullah wonders if this was what the fortune teller meant when she said that he would rise above all others.

Abdullah is still not certain how the flying carpet works. It seems to be linked to sleep, dreams or both as it is the dog that propels the carpet to Abdullah's prison cell. The whole culture is easily swayed by anything thought to be magical and Abdullah fears for the dog's life.

Abdullah has few people in his life that are kind to him. He and Jamal are good friends. Jamal is surprised once again by Abdullah's kindness and faith that he is a good enough cook to open a restaurant.



Abdullah finally begins to relax as he is flying over the desert. Surely, nothing can touch him as he glides through the sky. When Abdullah finally lands, he realizes that perhaps he is not in the clear after all. Abdullah had spent so much time on his elaborate daydream about his childhood that it is almost not a surprise to find Kabul Aqba in the desert. The reader can refer to Abdullah's daydream to understand the direction of upcoming events. Even Abdullah realizes that he is living his daydream. Suddenly, the minute details that made the daydream seem so real are far less pleasant when experienced in reality.

Aqba is surprised that Abdullah recognizes him. It feeds Aqba's already enormous ego. Although Aqba is known for being a vicious, cut-throat thief, the reader can easily gauge that Aqba only controls through brute strength as he cannot seem to make any kind of decision. Aqba, like many mercenaries, is most likely poorly educated and in that way Abdullah may be the man's superior even though Abdullah does not have much education either.

Naturally Aqba's men disregard Abdullah's pleas not to open the genie's bottle. Although Abdullah has no standing among this group of bandits, he is supposedly an intelligent, powerful magician.

The genie provides instant comic relief with his surly manner and bad attitude. It is clear that anyone that becomes involved with the genie will surely suffer in some way. Still, the thought of being granted one wish every day is too good to pass up.

Aqba's greed gets the better of him. Abdullah feels it is fair that he gets the genie since Aqba stole the carpet. Abdullah's first wish is to have the chains removed so he can escape. While it is a logical first choice, one would think that his second wish would be to have the magic carpet returned. Instead, Abdullah wishes to be taken to Flower-in-the-Night. The genie becomes impatient with Abdullah. One wonders if the genie is going to intentionally wreak havoc on Abdullah just because he can. After all, the genie did say that was his mission in life. If people refused to leave him alone, he was going to cause trouble.

Meeting up with the old soldier is strange to Abdullah. Abdullah cannot see how the old soldier can possibly know how to find Flower-in-the-Night. Abdullah sees the soldier as a foolish old man and is eager to be rid of him.



Chapters 10-13

Chapters 10-13 Summary

In Chapter 10, Abdullah realizes that he cannot walk very fast because he has stiffened up from sitting for so long. Abdullah comes upon the four men and realizes that the soldier is the target for the ambush. Abdullah knows he cannot stand by and let the four men rob the old soldier. On the other hand, Abdullah has never been in a fight in his life. A fight ensues and all four men are knocked out. While they are unconscious the old soldier robs them. Abdullah learns that the old soldier had not been foolish at the tavern by showing his gold but used the men's greed as a way to lure the thieves to attempt an ambush. The old soldier makes it a practice of robbing those who would try to rob him.

Abdullah travels with the old soldier. The old soldier notices that Abdullah's foot is hurting. Abdullah says he has walked far. He does not tell the old soldier that part of the pain is caused by a hidden compartment in his boot. The soldier takes a dressing out of a medical kit and puts it on Abdullah's foot. The dressing contains some kind of magic and Abdullah's foot is immediately healed. As the old soldier and Abdullah walk along, Abdullah thinks it is nice not to be followed. The men find a place to camp and the old soldier goes to check it out. The old soldier finds a wild animal in a cave and is attacked. The men continue on until they find a place suitable for camping. Once again the soldier talks about being turned out, broke. He feels it is his due to take back as much as he can from those who would attempt to steal from them.

The old soldier and Abdullah sit and talk as they watch the sunset. In the sky appears a large cloud. There is an illusion of a castle on top of the cloud. Abdullah and the soldier talk and watch as the castle disappears.

By Chapter 11, Abdullah tells his story. The soldier believes that Abdullah has lived an extraordinary life to this point. Abdullah does not share any of his daydreams and leaves out the part about finding the magic carpet and the genie. Abdullah does not trust the old soldier. The soldier feels sympathy toward Abdullah regarding Flower-in-the-Night. The soldier asks how he might be able to help. The soldier says that he happens to know wizards in Kingsbury and so they should head in that direction.

Abdullah wakes from a bad dream. A cat is sitting atop the genie bottle. The genie yells out that the cat is going to eat him. The cat leaps from the bottle and atop a cliff. The cat seems to be able to change size and shape at will, from a cat to a black panther and back again. The soldier shows Abdullah that he has found a kitten. The soldier says the kitten is a magical beast — he intends to keep it. The soldier carries the kitten under his hat.

The soldier guesses that there is a genie in the bottle. The old soldier insists that Abdullah use a wish to feed the animals.



Abdullah says that the old soldier cannot take a kitten on their travels. How can he continue to rob people if he has to take care of a kitten? The soldier says he no longer needs to rob people now that Abdullah has promised he can marry a princess.

"Abdullah knew he had lost this argument. He sourly tied to genie bottle to his belt and vowed never to promise the soldier anything else." Chap. 11, p. 180

Abdullah provides food for the animals.

Abdullah and the soldier prepare to leave. The panther lunges at Abdullah. When it lands, clinging to the embroidery of his jacket, the panther is the size of a cat. The cat's eyes clearly order Abdullah to carry her on their journey...or else.

In Chapter 12, Abdullah realizes that he does not dislike the cat as much that he thought he would. Midnight, the mother cat, is a clean beast devoted to her kitten, Whippersnapper. Abdullah's only complaint is that Midnight turns herself in to a panther whenever she becomes annoyed. Abdullah thinks Whippersnapper is charming. Although Abdullah likes the animals he becomes annoyed with how much the old soldier dotes on them. When they stop for the night the soldier requires the innkeepers to find just the right bedding for the animals.

The old soldier's requests become increasingly ridiculous. When the soldier asks to have a bath prepared the innkeepers gape. The soldier obviously thinks nothing of asking for a bath for a cat that has a flea. Abdullah is forced to negotiate. "O Prince and Princess of Publicans," he said, "bear with the eccentricity of my excellent friend. When he says a bath, he means, of course, the bath for himself and for me. We are both somewhat travel-stained and we welcome clean hot water - for which we will, of course, pay whatever extra is necessary" (Chapter 12, p. 184).

When the innkeepers leave, the old soldier balks at the thought of taking a bath. Abdullah insists, saying that he will part company with the soldier unless he bathes. Abdullah was accustomed to bathing every other day as it was common in Zanzib due to the heat. Even Jamal bathed once a week. It was not possible to tell how long it had been since the old soldier had bathed. Abdullah refuses to budge on the issue despite the soldier's claims that bathing makes one weak.

The soldier's condition did not seem to suffer from the bath. Midnight refused to bathe but Whippersnapper loved it.

During the next day's travel it begins to rain so heavily that even the genie complained. The group was forced to stop to seek shelter. Just as everyone was getting dried off, four constables approach the inn. The innkeepers point out the group's private lodgings. There is a mad dash to flee the inn. However, Whippersnapper decides to run and play while Midnight sits up high in a corner. The soldier manages to retrieve Whippersnapper. When the soldiers enter the room, Midnight turns into the largest incarnation of the panther to date. The men are terrified and scramble to flee before they are attacked by the massive beast.



Everyone but Midnight manages to escape the constables. The soldier refuses to leave without Midnight. Abdullah tries to explain that she had turned into a panther and assures the soldier that she will catch up to them. The soldier, still convinced that Midnight is a very valuable magical beast, refuses to go on.

The soldier and Abdullah argue about what to do next. Abdullah beseeches the genie to take them away. The genie grumbles that he just wants to be left alone. After a long discussion, it is decided that the genie will make the trio invisible until the constables go away and Midnight returns. The trick works and the constables eventually give up the chase.

In Chapter 13, Abdullah feels very strange and cannot figure out why his surroundings look so odd. He thinks about this while examining the thousands of little bluebells all around him. Suddenly, Abdullah flicks out his tongue and catches a fly. Abdullah realizes that the genie has turned the men into toads. The genie thinks this is quite funny as he did grant their wish not to be seen. Midnight approaches. The great cat becomes annoyed when Abdullah and the soldier return to human form. The soldier warns the genie that if he upsets Midnight again, he will break the genie's bottle. The genie says that the bottle is enchanted and therefore cannot be broken.

The soldier continues to demand that Abdullah find proper food for the cats. No matter how much Abdullah objects, he finds himself fetching food and milk every morning. On the third day, Abdullah discovers that he is feeling cranky and out of sorts. He thinks about what is bothering him. He says, "It was not just that he was stiff and tired and damp all the time. It was not just that he seemed to spend such a lot of time running errands for the soldier's cats, though that had something to do with it" (Chapter 13, p. 204).

Abdullah thinks about how he was grateful to Midnight for saving them from the constables. Yet, Abdullah and the cat were not friends. He says, "She rode his shoulder disdainfully every day and contrived to make it quite clear that as far as she was concerned, Abdullah was only a sort of horse. It was a bit hard to take from a mere animal" (Chapter 13, p. 204).

Abdullah continues to think about why he is so upset. He realizes that somewhere along the way he went from being at the top of the heap to the bottom. Everyone's wishes and demands came before his own. The soldier does not notice the change in Abdullah's behavior.

The soldier discusses with Abdullah the next wish. He says that they should wish for the return of the magic carpet. Abdullah says it would be wiser to wish for direct transport to Kingsbury. The soldier says that he understands the genie and that if there is a way to mess up a direct route to Kingsbury, the genie will manage it. Abdullah berates himself for not noticing this about the genie.

Abdullah summons the genie in an abrupt manner. Abdullah says that he is convinced that Fate is trying to intervene in preventing his reunion with Flower-in-the-Night so



Abdullah has decided that he will stop trying. That way, Fate will have to make the next move. The genie cannot decide if Abdullah is mad or brilliant. Regardless, Abdullah weighs various possibilities before deciding to transport Jamal and his dog into a life of ease and prosperity. Jamal is made the cook in a royal palace in the closest kingdom outside Zanzib.

The next day Abdullah decides to have the genie turn Aqba's soldiers from toads back into men. The genie hates Abdullah's new plan and does not keep silent about it. "O, very well then!" the genie said angrily. "You realize my revenge is in ruins, don't you? But what do you care? I'm just a daily wish in a bottle to you!" (Chapter 13, p. 213).

Chapters 10-13 Analysis

Abdullah's meeting with the soldier is not what it seems. The old man seems to be little more than a bum to Abdullah, who takes pride in his appearance and behavior. However, there is something appealing about the old man. Abdullah thinks the man is somewhat simple when he begins to flash gold coins at the tavern but it does not take long for Abdullah to realize that the old man is quite cunning and smarter than he had seemed upon their meeting. While the old soldier is helpful in some ways, it seems that his main purpose - and perhaps the genie's main purpose - is to delay Abdullah from reaching his goal by involving him in a series of mishaps and fool's errands. Abdullah is uncommonly gracious in the beginning but begins to resent the soldier's ways and demands. Abdullah realizes that he is allowing the soldier to treat him as he was treated by the family of his father's first wife. Abdullah becomes frustrated at himself as well and begins to take steps to reclaim his life. This is a big step for Abdullah as he continues to mature.

The genie continues to be comic relief. If there is anything the genie can mess up, he will. When the genie does not get his own way, he pouts like a petulant child.

The importance of Midnight and Whippersnapper are not yet clear. Midnight has definite human qualities while Whippersnapper acts much more like a child or a kitten than a fully realized human. Although the soldier thinks that the cats are mystical and therefore valuable, the author's penchant for twists and turns assures the reader that there is more to the story that remains to be seen.

Abdullah throws a wrench into the works when he decides to challenge Fate. No one thinks it is a good idea. However it turns out, Abdullah has done a good deed for his friend and has, at last, stood up for himself.



Chapters 14-18

Chapters 14-18 Summary

In Chapter 14, Abdullah is not in a good mood. The group travels upward and eventually sees a pimple of civilization on the horizon. The soldier tries to get Abdullah to cheer up by saying that while they have been delayed, certainly things will start to move faster now that Kingsbury is in sight. Nothing will appease Abdullah.

The soldier tries to empathize with Abdullah. He says he understands that Abdullah is tired, in love, impatient, and so forth. However, Abdullah must understand that Fate does not care what happens, nor does the genie. Abdullah asks him to explain.

"Because he hates everyone," said the soldier. "Maybe it's his nature - though I daresay being shut in the bottle doesn't help any. But don't forget that whatever his feelings, he's always got to grant you a wish. Why make it hard for yourself just to spite the genie? Why not make the most useful which you can, get what you want out of it, and put up with whatever he does to send it wrong?" (Chapter 14, p. 216).

Abdullah thinks about this logic. The soldier says the next best wish is to ask for the return of the magic carpet. Abdullah agrees but says he is sure that the bad will outweigh the good of the wish. The men make a bet of one gold piece.

Abdullah wishes for the carpet. The cats skitter when there is a whispering noise on the air. The carpet appears but it has a guest - Kabul Aqba. Abdullah, unfortunately, has won the bet.

Abdullah tries to decide how to get Aqba off the carpet. The carpet unceremoniously dumps Aqba to the ground. Aqba and the men struggle. Aqba has superhuman strength. Suddenly, he turns into a massive and hideous djinn. The battle rages on. Finally, Abdullah orders the djinn to stop struggling and explain why he has deceived him two - no, three - times. The djinn does as he is ordered because he has no choice. The djinn says he has foiled and deceived Abdullah so many times that he cannot count. Abdullah was never the djinn's main target but it seems that the others are much more determined and resourceful than Abdullah.

The djinn introduces himself as Hasruel. Abdullah has heard of the djinn who is supposedly as revered as angels, if not moreso. Hasruel explains that he only does "less than angelic" things because he is ordered to do so by his half-brother, Dalzel. Dalzel was born from the same angelic mother but by a different father, one who was evil. The child was born weak and sickly. Hasruel took the child to raise as his own. Hasruel explains that he gave away his biggest secret so that he must now do as Dalzel says or he will die.

Abdullah begins to understand. He surmises that Dalzel had ordered Hasruel to abduct Flower-in-the-Night for himself.



Hasrue! explains:

"Correction," said Hasrue!. "My brother and inherited a grandeur of mind from his mother, the Great Dazrah. He ordered me to steal every princess in the world. A moment's thought will show you the sense in this. My brother is of an age to marry, but he is of a birth so mixed that no female among djinns will countenance him. He is forced to resort to mortal women. But since he is a djinn, naturally only those females of the highest blood will serve." Chapter 14, page 226

Abdullah begins to understand. He asks why Dalzel must have all of the princesses. Hasrue! says it is simply because he can command it and Hasrue! must obey. However, Hasrue! developed a plan to get his life back. For every princess taken, there will be left behind a lover who will hopefully attempt to rescue the princesses. Thus far, no one but Abdullah has made any great effort to do so.

Hasrue! explains that he was the one to sell the magic carpet to Abdullah at the Bazaar. When Abdullah appeared in the desert, Hasrue! decided to have fun with him by appearing as Aqba and to force Abdullah to live out some of his daydreams. So far, it seems that Abdullah is the only one of those left behind that is making great efforts as most of the remainder - of which there are about thirty - have not done much if anything. Abdullah says that while he is of low birth, Hasrue! will have to be satisfied with him as Fate seems to want him to marry Flower-in-the-Night.

Abdullah asks why they keep seeing the castle in the air. Hasrue! explains that the ever changing castle is where the princesses are kept. Before Hasrue! can leave he informs Abdullah and the soldier that they will help him to kidnap Princess Valeria, daughter of the King of Ingary.

Chapter 15: In Which the Travelers Arrive at Kingsbury

Abdullah prepares to leave for Kingsbury. The genie objects to flying on the carpet since he already fell off of it once. The soldier questions Hasrue!'s integrity. Abdullah tries to explain that djinns do not lie and that he has seen Hasrue!'s name on the list of the Hosts of the Good. Of course, Dalzel could have forced Hasrue! to break his vows.

The soldier is not paying much attention as he is searching for Midnight. He is also feeling embarrassed for having imagined himself betrothed to a princess - one that turns out to be four years old.

The group boards the carpet and heads for Kingsbury, which takes most of the day since Abdullah had asked it to ensure that they remain out of sight. They land atop a carriage house and listen to servants talk as they change clothes and try to make themselves presentable. The soldier shaves off his beard and cuts his hair. Abdullah thinks that they will be able to fool people into thinking that they are farmers. While they listen they learn that the king has already been warned about the possible abduction. The soldier is disappointed as this means he will not receive a reward. Abdullah says there are others ways in which to make a fortune.



The group gets a room at the local inn. Abdullah weaves a story about giving the cats to a powerful witch. The innkeeper is receptive to all things magic. Abdullah improvises and says that he has a message for the Royal Wizard but understands that a tragedy befell the man. The woman says there are two Royal Wizards. She will direct them to the Royal Wizard Suliman.

The soldier tells Abdullah that he should leave the genie and the carpet in his care while he goes to visit Wizard Suliman. Abdullah is hesitant. After the soldier honors their bet, Abdullah feels safe in doing so and leaves the inn.

The way to the wizard's house is long, through back alleys and hidden courtyards. Along the way Abdullah notices that Midnight is with him. Abdullah arrives at the wizard's house only to be turned away by Manfred, his servant. Abdullah says he has spoken with Hasruel. Lettie, the wizard's wife allows Abdullah to speak. Just then Midnight jumps onto Abdullah's shoulder and then onto Lettie's very pregnant form. Lettie recognizes the cat and tells Manfred to fetch the wizard at once.

Chapter 16: In Which Strange Things Befall Midnight and Whippersnapper

Everything is thrown into chaos. Servants and apprentices are everywhere at once. Midnight, who is actually Lettie's sister Sophie, is taken into a room where she can be returned to her former self. The spell cast by Ben is strange and Abdullah cannot understand it. It is not long before Sophie is returned to human form. She explains that her husband turned her into a cat to save her from the djinn that stole the castle. Sophie also talks about Morgan, her newborn son, who was born as a kitten. Ben surmises that Morgan, formerly known as Whippersnapper, has probably been changed into human form as well.

The distraction of Abdullah's visit and Sophie's return causes enough commotion that the djinn is able to override Ben's spell. He captures Princess Valeria.

The group flees the house as Ben tries to make things right. The group flees to the inn. The soldier and the genie are gone.

Chapter 17: In Which Abdullah at Last Reaches the Castle in the Air

Abdullah is puzzled over the fact that the magic carpet remains. Lettie arrives last, having to bear the weight of her pregnancy. Abdullah starts to go downstairs to inquire about Morgan when he hears constables questioning the innkeeper. Abdullah returns to the room. It is decided that the magic carpet will take Abdullah and Sophie to find the soldier and Morgan while Lettie delays the soldiers.

The carpet takes off. While it is airborne, Abdullah tells Sophie the things she missed. She had been off in the bushes when Abdullah was speaking with Hasruel. Sophie implores Abdullah to keep talking because she is terrified of heights. Abdullah learns that Flower-in-the-Night could not have been betrothed to the Prince of Ochinstan because the prince is only a baby. The other prince, Prince Justin, was already



betrothed to Princess Beatrice of Strangia. Both wonder if Beatrice has also been abducted.

After a long while the pair spots the castle in the air. They are stopped by an angel in the form of a cloud. They explain that they have come in peace, to collect the baby Morgan and to give thanks. The angel lets them pass. The carpet glides into a courtyard and rests on the ground. Sophie surveys the land. A baby screams and Sophie and Abdullah run toward the sound.

Chapter 18: Which is Rather Full of Princesses

Sophie and Abdullah quickly discover that the screaming child is not Morgan but Valeria. The girl will not stop screaming. Even Hasrueel and Dalzel the most powerful djinns cannot make her stop. After a time the thirty princesses enter the room. Princess Beatrice chastises the djinns and takes control. She slaps Valeria who instantly stops crying. Valeria is in shock as no one has ever hit her before. Beatrice takes Valeria and hands her off to the others.

Flower-in-the-Night approaches the djinns. She says that the only way one can make a child stop screaming is to learn the source of the temper. After a while, Flower-in-the-Night determines that aside from wanting to go home, Valeria most likely wants to play with the cook's dog.

Flower-in-the-Night spots Abdullah and is filled with love and pride at the rescue. She acts strangely toward Sophie until Abdullah explains. Flower-in-the-Night introduces Abdullah and Sophie to many of the princesses. Beatrice points the way to baby Morgan. Abdullah spots the genie's bottle. The genie wants nothing more than to make Valeria stop screaming but all magic is powerless over the child. Abdullah wrestles the bottle away from a princess who turns out to be the soldier in disguise.

Chapters 14-18 Analysis

Things take a turn when Hasrueel appears and explains his plight. Abdullah had heard of Hasrueel and is surprised that the soldier has not. All children are taught about the Hosts of Good and the Hosts of Evil as schoolchildren. The soldier seems to have little interest in hearing about this information. When Hasrueel arrived, Midnight took off in fear.

Abdullah is glad to know that he has not suffered undue misfortune that he has been tampered with by Hasrueel. Still, Abdullah is not about to be discouraged. As the story goes on Abdullah matures rapidly and begins to stand up for himself. He is not too insulted when the djinn says he had not counted on Abdullah to rescue the princess as those of higher standing had lost interest and/or motivation. This may make Abdullah even more determined aside from the fact that at least in his mind he is betrothed to Flower-in-the-Night.

The soldier seems to be more helpful by the minute but still Abdullah is suspicious of him and rightly so. The man has proven that he is a thief and thus far has been very self



serving. In Abdullah's mind he has delayed the quest for the princess. Abdullah reaches a point where he decides that he will not be taken advantage of any more even though he is a nice guy and still does things for the soldier and for others even when they do not serve his purposes.

Abdullah is only slightly relieved to land in Kingsbury. Overhearing the servants is a great benefit as it gives Abdullah and the soldier valuable information. The soldier is still focused on making a fortune which concerns Abdullah.

The meeting with the wizard is a blur for Abdullah and he scarcely understands what is happening up to the point of the abduction of Princess Valeria.

Abdullah stated earlier that he believes women should be respected and revered. From this point forward the author makes it a point to show just how capable, strong and intelligent the women in the story are despite their age, shape or size. The women take over where the men have failed.



Chapters 19-21

Chapters 19-21 Summary

In Chapter 19, Sophie rages at the soldier. Abdullah had never heard such words come out of a lady's mouth. The soldier is terrified. When Morgan begins to cry Sophie finally calms down and tells the soldier to explain. The soldier says he had ordered the genie to take the baby to someone who could care for him and to take him to the Princess of Ingary so that he could claim a reward. Of course the genie twisted the wish.

The group finally settles down enough to begin to discuss a plan of escape. Beatrice begins to sing Flower-in-the-Night's praises.

"That girl Flower-in-the-Night is a real marvel,' Princess Beatrice remarked as she sat herself between Abdullah and the soldier. 'She came here knowing nothing unless she's read it out of a book. And she learns all the time. Took her two days to get the measure of Dalzel, wretched djinn's scared stiff of her now" (Chapter 19, p. 317).

As time went on Abdullah noticed that Flower-in-the-Night was cold toward him. They speak privately. The princess felt shunned because Abdullah had never kissed her. The misunderstanding is cleared up and all is well again. The plans resume.

In Chapter 20, the plan is to recapture Hasrue's life and return it to him. That way he would be free from Dalzel and would not be forced to do any more evil deeds. The plan is quite strange. The genie bargains with Flower-in-the-Night and tells the princess where Hasrue's life is hidden. The plan involves Abdullah being taken to the djinns and presented as an intruder. Flower-in-the-Night begs for the djinns to give him a chance. Abdullah says he was able to enter the castle by posing as Jamal's dog. There is a dogfight in which Hasrue's nose ring is ripped out and swallowed by Jamal's dog. Now Hasrue's life is in the dog's belly. Hasrue has been released from his brother's power.

In Chapter 21, Hasrue sends Dalzel off to an island in the company of the two fat, jilted brides. It is learned that there were many unknown enchantments. The genie was really the Wizard Howl, Sophie's husband. The carpet was an enchanted fire demon. The soldier was Prince Justin in disguise.

Hasrue decides that he must go away as the good djinns will not welcome him back after they learn that he has enjoyed his evil deeds.

Abdullah requests that the castle be returned to the ground, a wish Howl grants. Everyone returns to a normal life except for Abdullah and Flower-in-the-Night who are to marry and build a modest palace in a land granted to them by the King.



Chapters 19-21 Analysis

The arrival of Sophie and Abdullah at the castle causes a stir once the princesses realize they are there. Sophie is furious with the soldier and is stopped just before she tears him limb from limb. The princesses exert such power and force that the djinns are afraid of many of them, particularly Beatrice and Flower-in-the-Night. Once meek princesses have transformed into powerful women to be reckoned with. It is the women that make and execute the plans to save Hasruel and to find a way to escape from the evil djinn.

The author wraps up the story in a very traditional and rapid way. Nearly everything has been enchanted and many misunderstandings and mishaps have occurred along the way. The book ends on the note of "happily ever after."



Characters

Abdullah

Abdullah is the main character in *Castle in the Air* by Diana Wynne Jones. Abdullah is the son of Abdullah, carpet merchant that operates a modest booth in the Bazaar of Zanzib. Abdullah is young and somewhat inexperienced yet is making his way in the world despite being treated badly by the relations of his father's first wife. Abdullah is reminiscent of Cinderella and can never seem to do anything to please his family.

Abdullah must constantly explain how the business operates. Instead of using profits for a dowry, he uses them to buy new inventory. This is unacceptable to the family.

Over the years, it became clear that nothing Abdullah could do would be enough satisfy his father or the rest of the family. In place of a loving family, Abdullah creates an elaborate fantasy to compensate. In the fantasy, Abdullah, who was the son of a powerful and mighty prince, was kidnapped by the infamous bandit Kabul Aqba. Abdullah managed to get away. A man found him in the desert and took him home. That man became his father. Lately, Abdullah also began to fantasize about the princess that he had been betrothed to at birth.

Abdullah's entire life changes on the day he buys a magic carpet from a djinn disguised as a merchant. Abdullah also comes into possession of a genie in a bottle from his imagined father, Kabul Aqba, who is the same djinn in disguise. Abdullah meets and eventually must rescue his beloved princess so that they may live happily ever after.

Flower-in-the-Night

Flower-in-the-Night is the princess to whom Abdullah is betrothed. Abdullah meets the princess in a beautiful garden after being transported there in the night by the magic carpet. Abdullah believes that Flower-in-the-Night is his true love, the one that he had always dreamed about in his elaborate fantasy.

Flower-in-the-Night is the daughter of a Sultan. The girl has never been allowed to leave the area and had never seen a man other than her father. This leads to confusion as she assumes Abdullah must be a woman. Because of her isolation, Flower-in-the-Night is well-educated and clever. However, as Princess Beatrice points out, Flower-in-the-Night knew nothing about life until she reached the castle in the air.

Abdullah spends the majority of the book searching for Flower-in-the-Night who has been kidnapped by a djinn under the spell of his evil brother. When Abdullah finally finds Flower-in-the-Night, he sees that she has become a strong independent woman and for that he loves her even more.

Flower-in-the-Night and Abdullah eventually marry.



Jamal

Jamal is Abdullah's friend and the owner of the booth next to Abdullah's in the Zanzib Bazaar. Jamal is a smelly man with one eye. He cooks and sells squid. Jamal is known for his dog, who hates almost everyone equally.

Abdullah's Father's Relations

Abdullah's Father's relations include his vile first wife Fatima along with Abdullah's hateful cousins by marriage - Assif and Hakim. The family continually tries to run Abdullah's life.

The Old Soldier

The Old Soldier claims to have been unceremoniously tossed out of the Strangian army after they were defeated by the army of Ingary. The man proves to be unscrupulous and untrustworthy. It is learned that he is really Prince Justin who had been enchanted by the djinn Hasrueel.

The Genie

The Genie is discovered when Abdullah lands in the desert. Abdullah appropriates the genie from a group of bandits, namely Kabul Aqba. The genie's only goal in life is to wreak havoc even while he is granting wishes. It is later learned that the genie is really the Wizard Howl.

Hasrueel

Hasrueel is the djinn that wreaks most of the havoc in the story. It is learned that Hasrueel is really a good djinn that has been taken over by his evil brother, Dalzel.

Dalzel

Dalzel is Hasrueel's half- brother. When Dalzel grows up, he chooses evil over good. After capturing Hasrueel's life force, he becomes the mastermind behind the kidnapping of the princesses.

Sophie

Sophie or Midnight appears as a cat in the story. It is clear that Midnight is in some way enchanted as she is able to change from a cat into a panther. Midnight seems to have a



sense of entitlement about her which she exerts at will. It is learned that Midnight is really Sophie, the witch wife of the Wizard Howl.

Morgan

Morgan or Whippersnapper first appears in the story as an adorable kitten. In reality, he is the newborn son of Sophie and Howl.



Objects/Places

Magic

Magic is one of the main objects referenced in "Castle in the Air" by Diana Wynne Jones. Everything in the land of Zanzib seems to have some type of magical association, from the fortune teller's prophecy to the wares being sold by the merchants at the Zanzib Bazaar.

As is common for a child longing to escape, Abdullah fills his thoughts with a magical life from his royal birth to living happily ever after with his princess. The daydream is magical because it is everything Abdullah wants and proves to be something quite different when a djinn uses magic to make it come true.

Abdullah is steeped in custom but is not a fool. He is skeptical when the stranger attempts to sell him a magic carpet. Even after seeing it in operation, Abdullah wonders if it really is magic. Abdullah's magical journey truly begins at this point in the story. Not only is Abdullah transported through magic to meet Flower-in-the-Night but he soon encounters a genie who is enchanted and is forced to grant wishes.

Other examples of magic include the enchantment of people, turning them into animals or causing them to do things against their will; the existence of djinns and wizards; the existence of a castle that floats on air; and much more.

Fate

Fate is one of the main topics discussed in "Castle in the Air" by Diana Wynne Jones. The fortune teller predicts that Abdullah's fate is sealed from the moment of his birth.

"These are the words of the wise fortuneteller: 'This son of yours will not follow you in your trade. Two years after your death, while he is still a very young man, he will be raised above all others in this land. As Fate decrees it, so I have spoken.'"

Abdullah's father added the following footnote: "My son's fortune is a great disappointment to me. Let Fate send me other sons to follow in my trade, or I have wasted forty gold pieces on this prophecy" (Chapter 4, p. 64).

Abdullah is unaware of this fate until he is old enough to marry and is approached by his evil family members who want nothing but status and money from Abdullah.

In Abdullah's mind however, his fate lies elsewhere. Once Abdullah begins to realize his daydream, he is determined to be something more than one would ever expect of a lowly merchant. Abdullah goes as far as to challenge fate when things keep going wrong. Abdullah learns that these mishaps are not part of his fate, that they are put into place by Hasruel.



The fates of many of the characters seem to be predetermined. This is particularly true in regards to the princesses who are often betrothed at birth. In traditional stories the princesses simply go along. That is not the case in this story, however, as the princesses seem strong enough and determined enough to create their own futures and therefore, their own fates.

Zanzib

Zanzib is a land located in the desert. It is home to Abdullah, the carpet merchant. The people living there are either very rich or very poor and often unscrupulous, while also being excruciatingly polite.

Ingary

Ingary is a nearby kingdom. The princess of Ingary is one of the princesses kidnapped by Hasruel. Ingary is the country in which Zanzib is located.

Sultanates of Rashpuht

The Sultanates of Rashpuht are a group of kingdoms under rule by various Sultans. Among them are Zanzib, Ingary, and Kingsbury.

Desert

The majority of the story takes place in and around the desert of what can be assumed to be the Middle East. In Zanzib it is said that anyone that ventures into the desert must be mad but that is exactly what Abdullah does in search of his fate.

Kingsbury

Kingsbury is the final stop for the soldier and Abdullah before finding the castle in the air. It is home to The Royal Wizards Ben Suliman and Howl as well as Lettie and Sophie.

Djinns

The djinns are hideous, magical creatures. There are good djinns and evil djinns, known as Hosts of Good and Hosts of Evil. The two main djinns in the story are half-brothers Hasruel and Dalzel.



Castle in the Air

The Castle in the Air is an actual castle that was stolen from Howl and Sophie. The castle is enchanted and floats, in various forms, upon the clouds. It is where Hasruei and Dalzel keep the kidnapped princesses.

Genie

The genie is one of the great elements of any magical story of this nature. The genie is forced to grant wishes to the holder of the bottle. In this case, the genie is the Wizard Howl, who is being held prisoner by the djinns.



Themes

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Feminism

Feminism is one of the main themes in "Castle in the Air" by Diana Wynne Jones. In keeping with stories of this nature, women are often portrayed as pretty possessions without any rights. Abdullah has never believed this and is appalled when he hears others speak of women this way. This is especially true when Abdullah has an audience with the Sultan, who is also Flower-in-the-Night's father. The man has no respect for women, including his own precious daughter. Abdullah tries to defend women but to no avail.

Abdullah stated earlier that he believes women should be respected and revered. Things are markedly different in Kingsbury when it is clear that women have a great deal of power, particularly Lettie and Sophie, two very capable and strong witches. From this point forward the author makes it a point to show just how capable, strong and intelligent the women in the story are despite their age, shape, or size. When it comes to creating a plan to escape the castle in the air, the women take over where the men have failed.

The princesses exert such power and force that the djinns are afraid of many of them, particularly Beatrice and Flower-in-the-Night. Once meek princesses have transformed into powerful women to be reckoned with. It is the women that make and execute the plans to save Hasruel and to find a way to escape from the evil djinn.



Style

Point of View

The point of view used in "Castle in the Air" by Diana Wynne Jones is third-person and omniscient. This point of view works well in the story as there are several components and underlying factors that would not be revealed otherwise. The life in Zanzib is somewhat complex and a young character like Abdullah, who is unschooled in the ways of a royal court or magic, would not be able to adequately explain everything so that the readers would get the full picture.

The third-person point of view conveys the entire story and not just the subjective opinions of the characters. It also permits the reader to take part in the journey and development of each character in the story.

Setting

There are various settings used in Castle in the Air by Diana Wynne Jones. The entire story takes place in parts of the Sultanates of Rashpuht, a group of kingdoms ruled by rich and powerful kings or sultans.

The author refers to the main setting:

"Far to the south in the land of Ingary, in the Sultanates of Rashpuht, a young carpet merchant called Abdullah lived in the city of Zanzib. As merchants go, he was not rich. His father had been disappointed in him, and when he died, he had only left Abdullah just enough money to buy and stock a modest booth in the northwest corner of the Bazaar" (Chapter 1, p. 1).

Zanzib is a city located in the desert. The people in Zanzib are either very rich or very poor and often unscrupulous while being excruciatingly polite. The differences in cultures are very obvious once Abdullah begins to travel to different areas. For example, in the desert, there are no rules. Bandits tend to run in the desert and it is considered to be a dangerous land. In Ingary, which lies to the north, the people are much rougher and less than refined than they are in Zanzib. A good example of the differences can be seen in Abdullah's interaction with the innkeeper at the Red Lion. Likewise, there are differences in the very old city of Kingsbury which seems to be reminiscent of old Europe.

Lastly, there is the castle in the air. The castle was taken by Hasruel and Dalzel. It belonged to Howl and Sophie and was enchanted so it could float on a cloud. It also shifted constantly, changing positions of rooms.



Language and Meaning

The language and meaning used throughout "Castle in the Air" by Diana Wynne Jones reflects on the times in a number of ways. It is clear that the people in the stories live in the days of old, as they speak of particular events and fashions of the time as well as the traditions of the people and the culture as a whole. Jones does not use a great deal of slang or any language that would date the work in a negative way, rather it is a very classic and traditional use of the language that might be seen in Arabian Nights which is appropriate to the subject matter.

Jones is a master of language and is not afraid to exercise her vocabulary, often to comedic ends. There is a marked absence of sex, violence, and vulgarity throughout the story and it is rare to see any use of anything truly offensive. This may be due to the fact that many of this is a young adult book and the use of those items was not commonplace in the time.

The people outside Zanzib often question the way Abdullah speaks. At one point the genie becomes irritated with the polite way the carpet merchant speaks.

"'If there's one thing I hate,' interrupted the genie, bellying forth in a lavender cloud, 'more than this rain and being pestered for wishes in advance all the time, it's been coaxed for wishes and flowery language. If you want a wish, talk straight.'" Chapter 12, page 196

It is easy to see the progression of the work, both in structure and language. The language is more formal in the beginning of the collection and becomes looser toward the end.

Structure

"Castle in the Air" by Diana Wynne Jones is a work of fiction. It is comprised of 383 pages, broken into 21 chapters. The shortest chapter is 14 pages in length; longest chapter is 24 pages in length; the average number of pages per chapter is 18 pages.

The structure used throughout "Castle in the Air" is chronological in nature. It is structured to resemble such classic tales as Arabian Nights, with each chapter detailing what happens within. The chapters are as follows:

Chapter 1: In Which Abdullah Buys a Carpet

Chapter 2: In Which Abdullah Is Mistaken for a Young Lady

Chapter 3: In Which Flower-in-the-Night Discovers Several Important Facts

Chapter 4: Which Concerns Marriage and Prophecy



Chapter 5: Which Tells How Flower-in-the-Night's Father Wished to Raise Abdullah above All Others In the Land

Chapter 6: Which Shows How Abdullah Went from the Frying Pan In to the Fire

Chapter 7: Which Introduces the genie

Chapter 8: In Which Abdullah's Dreams Continue to Come True

Chapter 9: In Which Abdullah Encounters an Old Soldier

Chapter 10: Which Tells of Violence and Bloodshed

Chapter 11: In Which a Wild Animal Causes Abdullah to Waste a Wish

Chapter 12: In Which the Law Catches up with Abdullah and the Soldier

Chapter 13: In Which Abdullah Challenges Fate

Chapter 14: Which Tells How the Magic Carpet Reappeared

Chapter 15: In Which the Travelers Arrive at Kingsbury

Chapter 16: In Which Strange Things Befall Midnight and Whippersnapper

Chapter 17: In Which Abdullah at Last Reaches the Castle In the Air

Chapter 18: Which Is Rather Full of Princesses

Chapter 19: In Which a Soldier, a Cook, and the Carpet Seller All State Their Price

Chapter 20: In Which a Djinn's Life Is Found and Then Hidden

Chapter 21: In Which the Castle Comes down to Earth



Quotes

"Lately, however, the daydream had been concentrating on the princess to whom Abdullah had been betrothed at his birth" (Chapter 1, p. 6).

"He woke to find himself lying on a bank, with the carpet still underneath him, in a garden more beautiful than any he had imagined" (Chapter 2, p. 20).

"'It has to be a made-up word or a foreign one!' he cried out feverishly. It was that or believe that Flower-in-the-Night was only a dream after all" (Chapter 3, p. 40).

"The carpet whipped up in to the air and then away sideways with such speed and suddenness that Abdullah was first thrown over on his back, with all the breath knocked out of him, and then found himself hanging half over its frayed edge in what seemed a terrifying height in the air" (Chapter 3, p. 49).

"Abdullah ceased to blush. He saw he had been summoned here to be criticized" (Chapter 4, p. 61).

"So miserable was he that it never occurred to him that he might be in any danger himself" (Chapter 5, p. 78).

"Abdullah was touched at this proof of Jamal's friendship" (Chapter 6, p. 100).

"'It seems that fate has decreed that I live through my entire daydream in reality!' he croaked" (Chapter 8, p. 124).

"Abdullah knew he had lost this argument. He sourly tied to genie bottle to his belt and vowed never to promise the soldier anything else" (Chapter 11, p. 180).

"The carpet obeyed by sliding over the great walls like a snake. After that it kept to the roofs, following the shape of each roof the way of flounder follows the sea bottom" (Chapter 15, p. 237).

"He had gotten this far in his magnificent and generous speech when he realized it was all nonsense" (Chapter 20, p. 327).

"Dalzel glared down at Abdullah, and Abdullah hoped very much that Dalzel truly had almost no powers of his own" (Chapter 21, p. 339).

Topics for Discussion

Discuss Abdullah's prophecy. Do you think it is fair that Abdullah's father treated him poorly all his life because of the fortune teller's predictions? Do you think Abdullah's relatives acted the same way because Abdullah was considered to be a disappointment to the family?

Discuss the friendship between Abdullah and Jamal. What event occurs to escalate the friendship?

Fatima was the first wife of Abdullah's father. Therefore, the woman was no relation to Abdullah since he was the product of his father and his father's second wife. Why do Fatima and her family have such control over Abdullah?

Examine Abdullah's elaborate fantasy. Which parts of the fantasy do you think Abdullah might wish to change while he is experiencing it in reality? Why?

Discuss the relationship between Hasrueel and Dalzel. What causes Hasrueel to take on the responsibility of caring for Dalzel? How does Dalzel control Hasrueel?

Examine the concept of arranged marriages. Do you think they still exist? Give some examples of when an arranged marriage might be appropriate.

Give an overview of the story. Discuss at least three themes and why you feel they are important for Jones to explore with her readers.