

# Nightshade Study Guide

## Nightshade by Jack Butler

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# Plot Summary

Nightshade is a novel of teenage romance, rebellion, and dark fantasy by Andrea Cremer. Cal, a female Alpha Guardian, is able to take the form of a wolf to serve her masters, the Keepers, but her life is completely controlled by them and she grows to resent this fact. One night, as she and her beta, Bryn, are patrolling the mountain near a sacred site, Cal decides to save the life of a human boy by letting him drink her blood after he is attacked and almost killed by a Grizzly Bear.

The act could get her executed by the Keepers, but Cal does it because she feels that it is the right thing to do. The next day, the Keepers are waiting to speak with her about her intended union or marriage with the Bane alpha, another teenager of her same age by the name of Ren. They want to be sure that Cal is comfortable with the union and Cal doesn't know what to say because she has always been told that the union was simply the way that things would be. The next day at school, it turns out that Shay is a new student there, and she does not know how to keep what she has done a secret. He makes several attempts to approach her, but is constantly fended off by the other Guardians, particularly Ren, who talks to Cal about the union and invites her and her pack to a party so that they can make the transition go more easily. It turns out at the party that Shay is even more important than anyone had thought.

He is the nephew of Bosque, a powerful Keeper, and Cal and the rest of the Guardians are tasked with protecting him. Shay confronts Cal outside the party and invites her to coffee. She agrees, but they are attacked by two Searchers on their way there. Shay becomes very interested in the history of the Keepers and Guardians, and steals a book from his Uncle's private library in order for him and Cal to translate it. Cal finds herself more and more attracted to Shay, a fact that does not go unnoticed by Ren, who is increasingly jealous and protective of Cal. Cal does not take to Ren's new attitude well at all and begins to dread the union more and more, despite the fact that she knows Ren is not a bad person. The night of the union finally arrives, and Cal is horrified to discover that Shay is to be sacrificed during their union. Only concerned with Shay, she escapes with him and is nearly stopped in the Rowan Estate. However, she is captured and taken by the Searchers and completely uncertain of her fate by the end of the novel.



# chapters 1-3

## chapters 1-3 Summary

Nightshade is a novel of teenage romance, rebellion, and dark fantasy by Andrea Cremer. The characters struggle against an unfair set of rigid rules as they search for the truth about the ones who control them. In chapter one, Cal and Bryn, two Guardians, rescue a teenage boy from a Grizzly Bear while patrolling their mountain. The boy is badly wounded, and Cal, the alpha female, decides to use her blood to heal the boy, even though doing so is a strict violation of their rules. She tells him to drink it, and he is brought back from the brink of death immediately. She then tells him to run, but the boy is completely unafraid of her, and instead begins asking questions. Cal strikes him unconscious and carries him back to his Ford Ranger. Bryn catches up to her and asks her what she has done, but Cal swears her to secrecy, and cannot explain herself what she was thinking.

In Chapter two, Cal returns to her house and finds Lumine Nightshade, her Keeper, waiting for her with several wraiths. Cal is afraid that she's been caught already, but Lumine wants to talk to her about the coming union between Cal and Ren, the alpha male of the Bane pack. Cal is very frustrated that she has no choice in the matter, but she knows she can't do anything about it, so acts as though she approves of the union and looks forward to it. Lumine leaves, and Cal's father reminds her how important the union actually is. Her mother scolds her about her general messiness and her attitude, as well as the way that she dresses. Cal's younger brother, An, defends her briefly. He jokingly offers to run away with her if she does not want to marry Ren, but Cal insists that her current problem is with her mother, not with Ren.

In Chapter three, Cal comes down from her room the next morning, better dressed after her mother has scolded her. She drives herself and An to school. She meets with Bryn before first period and explains why she is dressed so differently. Ren approaches her and they speak in private. Ren asks her if she wants to make the Keepers ease up on them both, because they have visited him as well. He wants to try and get control of their pack away from the elders by spending time together. Cal thinks it's a good idea and agrees.

## chapters 1-3 Analysis

The characters are introduced and much of the storyline is established. Cal is clearly independent, somewhat rebellious, and upset over the way the adults in her life are attempting to control her. Luckily for Cal, many of her peers, including her brother An and the Bane alpha Ren, are in similar situations. It is clear that this will be part of the story as the novel unfolds, but Cal's violation of their rules in chapter one also seems as though it will play a significant role in the story, as her decision to save the boy's life doesn't arise from Cal's desire to control her own life. The characters are Guardians,

which are very similar to werewolves, but they have adopted many customs and practices of modern human life, apparently to blend in to their surroundings. They clearly have a large presence at the small private school they attend, but still must maintain the semblance of normality for obvious reasons.



# chapters 4-6

## chapters 4-6 Summary

In Chapter four, Mr. Graham, Cal and Bryn's first period teacher, introduce the teenager they encountered while on patrol. He is a new student at the school, and his name is Seamus Doran, though he goes by the nickname Shay. Shay recognizes Cal, who fakes cramps in order to get a hall pass from Mr. Graham. Bryn and Cal discuss what to do about the situation and decide it is best to pretend nothing ever happened. Cal sees Shay again in Organic Chemistry, during which Ren again asks her if she wants to hang out with him. He invites her to a VIP party being thrown on Friday night by Efron, his pack's Keeper, and he wants her to bring her entire pack. She agrees. Suddenly, Shay greets her from behind, and both Ren and Cal are surprised, because most humans do not approach them at all. He asks if he can talk to her but leaves because of the way that Ren is looking at him. During lunch, Cal tells her brother and the rest of the pack about Ren's offer. She also tells them that she doesn't want Ren to control their pack's merge, and that the party is on Ren's territory. After they are agreed, Cal shocks Ren and his group by asking to join their tables together. Sabine, a member of Ren's pack, is upset by the merge, but most of the others cope well with it. Shay spots them and begins walking towards the group, but Cal and Ren's friends scare him off.

In Chapter five, Shay also appears in Cal's last class, along with Sabine, Ren, and Dax, Ren's beta. Ren introduces himself to Shay, and he and Dax sit on either side of him. Class begins, and Shay mentions Thomas Hobbes, who was not in the readings. This earns a quick reprimand from Logan, Efron's son. Mr. Selby insists that they move on from the subject of Hobbes, but Shay is clearly upset that the philosopher has not been included in the coursework. Cal explains that Hobbes' outlook on life is considered to savage for discussion. Shay insists that they should at least discuss Hobbes' idea of "war of all against all," but Mr. Selby suddenly collapses from a seizure. The human children exit the room and the school nurse arrives. Logan takes Shay aside. Cal wonders what the Keepers would want with a human boy. Logan returns to the Guardians and explains that the phrase Shay kept repeating triggered of of the Keepers' spells.

In Chapter six, Bryn helps Cal decide what to wear for the party. Bryn asks if Shay has bothered Cal again. An comes in to ask when the others should pick them up. At the club where the party is being held, Ren waits for her at a table, and the two send their pack members away to speak briefly in private before a Bane elder comes to report that Efron is asking for all of them. Lumine Nightshade is also there, and they introduce Cal and Ren to Shay's uncle, and Shay is there with him. Afterwards, Cal and Ren return to the party with Bryn and An. Ren makes advances of Cal, but she resists.



## chapters 4-6 Analysis

These chapters reintroduce the hiker to Cal and the reader, and it turns out he is going to be a very important part of the story after all, but at the moment it isn't clear how, other than the fact that he knows that Cal is not totally human, and he is also related to a Keeper of clear significance. His uncle, Bosque, also seems as though he will be of importance later on, but there is no clear understanding of how he will fit into the rest of the story, other than the fact that he orders the other Keepers around. More information about the Guardians has also come forward. The Guardians group together in packs and follow their alpha. They are supposed to do so unquestioningly, and the alphas themselves are supposed to obey their Keeper. It is now known that Keepers have the ability to cast spells and use magic. The character Efron has been referenced many times, and has now been seen by Cal. Based on his nature and the way that he treats Sabine, he seems a likely candidate for becoming the villain of the novel. Ren, however, remains a difficult character to understand. His ideas and interactions with Cal appear friendly and supportive, but many of his mannerisms seem to suggest he is at least somewhat of a threat. The chapters have also shown that the Nightshade and Bane packs have bonded between themselves somewhat, as the novel began with the two groups apparently disliking each other somewhat.



## chapters 7-9

### chapters 7-9 Summary

In Chapter seven, Shay approaches Cal again, this time outside the party. To her shock, he invites her to coffee that night. She decides to go with him. They discuss literature briefly, but Shay quickly changes the subject to the Grizzly Bear attack, and the fact that he thinks she is a werewolf. She corrects him, and makes him a deal. Shay agrees to tell no one about what happened on the hill, and in exchange she will tell him about the Guardians. On their way to the coffee shop, Cal realizes they are being followed by two men discussing Shay. She tells Shay to return to the club and ask the bouncer for help, and agrees to meet him the next morning. The two men run to catch Shay, but she stops them, and realizes they are Searchers. She turns into wolf form and kills one of the men. Two Bane elders stop her from killing the second. They return to Efron, who inspects Cal's wound that she received during the fight. The wound was caused by magic, and Ren offers to heal her with his blood. They awaken the Searcher, who accuses them of taking a Sarah and Tristan, and also claims that one of them killed a person named Stuart. Lumine summons a wraith that attacks the Searcher. The Keepers send Cal and Ren back to the party. They find their packs, and Ren asks if Cal is okay. She responds coldly to him, and Ren asks her why she hates him.

In Chapter eight, Cal is so exhausted the next day that she doesn't get out of bed for a long time. Her father comes in, and they talk about what happened the night before. Cal gets ready to start her patrol, and An asks to come with her. She tells him that she is worried about Logan taking over the pack. Bryn arrives and Cal asks her if she would take the day off. An asks Bryn to help him with a poetry unit in class. Cal changes into a wolf and goes to Shay.

In Chapter nine, Shay and Cal talk briefly about what Guardians are, and what Keepers are. Shay tells her a little about himself. He asks about her blood, which she used to heal him. She also tells him that she and Ren must become married and form a new pack. He begs her not to marry Ren just because she's supposed to, but she gets very angry with him and shoves him to the ground.

### chapters 7-9 Analysis

The characters Cal and Shay have been pushed closer together by events, just as Cal is trying her hardest to stay away from the boy. There is a significant danger that what happened on the mountain will be revealed to the Keepers, especially since it is now known that Shay's uncle seems to be an important Keeper. The reader also learns important backstory about the relationship between the Keepers and Guardians, though it is clear that Efron abuses the relationship. Cal and Ren are experiencing difficulties in their relationship, and Ren is mistaking Cal's resistance of him as dislike, though

nothing could be further from the truth. Cal is instead torn between two strong sets of feelings.



## chapters 10-12

### chapters 10-12 Summary

In Chapter ten, Cal returns from patrol that night, and Bryn comes out of An's room with a guilty expression on her face. Cal goes into An's room where he admits that he and Bryn are seeing each other, and he wants to be with her after the union when the new pack forms. Cal thinks that Bryn isn't serious, but An insists she's just afraid of what Cal will do to her. Cal says that she'll pass the recommendation along to the Keepers, but it's more likely that they'll set Bryn up with Mason. An laughs because Mason is gay. He also says that Logan is gay, but that it's acceptable for Keepers, and not for Guardians, because Guardians are expected to breed for the Keepers.

In Chapter eleven, Bryn apologizes to Cal for the situation between her and An the next morning at school. Shay is in her literature class and does not take notice of her. In chemistry, Ren tells her that they are going to perform alchemical experiments to attempt to transform lead into gold. A human girl, Ashley, asks Ren to a dance, and when Ren tells her that he's going with Cal, Cal accidentally shatters a beaker in her hand. Shay approaches Ren and Cal, and asks to speak to Cal alone, but she sends him away for fear of upsetting Ren. The two alphas go to lunch together. Ren spots Bryn and An together. Logan approaches, and congratulates Neville on a song he's just done. He asks the Nightshades and Banes to meet him in the commons after school.

In Chapter twelve, Cal finds herself unable to focus in philosophy. Shay isn't there, and she's worried about what Logan wants to meet them for. When they do meet, Logan gives them plans for where they will live. He tells them that they are supposed to guard Haldis Cavern, and that they are supposed to protect Shay. He also tells them that he alone is responsible for selecting mates within the new pack. He also asks Mason to stay behind. Cal tries to stop Logan, but Ren insists that it isn't her problem any longer. Nevertheless, she stays behind to make sure Mason is ok. Mason leaves the commons and meets up with her again, letting her know that he's threatened to tell Efron that Logan is gay.

### chapters 10-12 Analysis

This section of the novel focuses on the relationships of the guardians and the impact that living in the packs and serving the Keepers will have on their lives. As Ren remarks, life as a Guardian, especially an Alpha, gets harder, not easier, as they are bound to obey their Keeper, who will become Logan once the new pack is formed. Cal doesn't seem like she will be able to handle it very well, as she is strong-willed and already resents the Keeper's control over their lives. It was made clear again that Shay is to be protected, but while he is considered important to the Keepers, none of the Guardians, nor Logan, have let it be known why that is the case. It is very possibly related to why the Guardians will be tasked with guarding Haldis Cavern.



## chapters 13-15

### chapters 13-15 Summary

Cal finds Shay near her locker. She is very upset from the encounter with Logan, and agrees to go on a walk with him. She asks him to kiss her, but he refuses at first. Finally, they do kiss, but Cal tells him that they can never do it again. Shay takes a book out of his backpack. Cal is terrified of the book because she is not allowed to read it, on pain of death. It has maps inside, one of which is of Haldis Cavern, and the book is titled "Bellum omnium contra omnes."

In chapter fourteen, Cal tells Shay that she is forbidden to read the book, or that she will be killed. She explains to him that Bosque is neither his real uncle nor actually a human being. The Keepers are at war with the Searchers. The Searchers are trying to take control of the sacred sites in order to take control of the world. Hobbes took his phrase from them and was offered to be made into a Keeper, but he was terrified of them and refused. After Cal explains all of this to Shay, he wants to read the book even more than he did before. She agrees to help him translate the book, even though she cannot read it herself.

In chapter fifteen, Cal comes home to find Ren waiting for her and her parents discussing a kill she and Ren must accomplish together. In her room, he asks if she is okay with everything that has happened, because he knows that it is difficult to be an Alpha. He tries to kiss her, but she can't get Shay out of her mind and she refuses him.

### chapters 13-15 Analysis

Cal has much stronger feelings for Shay at this point than she does for Ren, a fact which does not go unnoticed by Shay himself, and even Ren might suspect that something is wrong. She has continued to share knowledge with Shay that humans are not supposed to be in possession of, and is risking her safety even more by trying to help him translate the book he found. Her parent's mention of the "kill" that she must accomplish with Ren foreshadows a challenge she must undertake in the near future, but secrecy is keeping her from discovering what the "kill" actually is.



# chapters 16-18

## chapters 16-18 Summary

In Chapter sixteen, Shay has translated the titles of the three sections in the book. The third one gives him some trouble, and he shows Cal a picture at the end of the book. It is a picture of the cross on the back of Shay's neck, but Shay isn't even aware that he has a tattoo on the back of his neck. He can't even see it when he grabs a mirror, so Cal assumes that the Keepers have put a spell on him to prevent him from doing so. The book also contains several symbols that Cal recognizes from Alchemy, and the tattoo on the back of his neck suggests he is the Scion. Shay tries to escape, but Cal turns into a wolf and stops him. She changes back and he pulls her into a kiss. She pulls away from him and reminds him that she is going to be married on October 31st. She asks him if he remembers anything about his parents. He tells her their names, Tristan and Sarah, which she remembers from the night they were attacked outside the club. The searcher they took alive accused Efron and Bosque of taking Tristan and Sarah.

In Chapter seventeen, Shay is not in first period, but reappears in Organic Chemistry. Ren is angry at Cal both for the way she treated him the other night and for all of the time she's been spending with Shay, even though their Keepers told them to protect the boy because he was important. She apologizes as best as she can, but he is still cold to her. At lunch, their packs are waiting for them. Shay appears, and asks if he can join them. Cal is shocked, but Ren invites him to stay, and gives him Cal's chair, making Cal sit on his lap. Everyone at the table introduces themselves. Shay tells them that he lives in the Rowan Estate, which belongs to Bosque. Cal becomes very uncomfortable about the way Ren is treating her and the fact that Shay is in a large house all by himself, and she leaves. Ren follows her to the girl's bathroom. He asks what is worrying her, and she responds that wraiths are most likely inside of the Rowan Estate. He lifts her onto a sink and begins kissing her, but Nurse Flynn enters. Ren leaves quickly, and Flynn says she understands his behavior, but not Cal's. She tells Cal she will overlook the behavior this time.

In Chapter eighteen, Shay is upset with Cal one afternoon in the library for allowing herself to be treated poorly by Ren. She explains to him that her kind interact differently, and that he himself provoked Ren's behavior. If Shay continues to challenge Ren, he could kill him. This only makes Shay laugh, and Cal knocks him over in frustration. He asks if he can continue eating lunch with them, because he's starting to like the group and doesn't feel as though he fits in anywhere else. She tells him about wraiths, and that they might be in the Rowan Estate. She thinks she hears someone in the library, but they continue working. According to the book Shay is translating, the Witches War took place around 1400 A.D., which Cal says can't be right because the Keepers have told him that they had their power since ancient times. Suddenly, someone fires a crossbow bolt. It misses them, and Shay attacks the Searcher. A second one comes at Cal with blades, but the first insists to Shay that they are there to



help him, not to hurt him. They fight the Searchers off, who are named Ethan and Connor, and escape themselves as library staff comes to investigate the noises.

## chapters 16-18 Analysis

An important piece of information regarding the Keepers' true intentions has been revealed. They are, according to what Cal has heard, not the protective beings they claim to be. While Cal and Shay learn this, they must struggle against their mutual attraction for one another, though arguably Cal is trying much harder than Shay, as he has far less respect for the customs and practices of the Guardians than Cal. Ren is becoming dangerous in his jealousy and protectiveness over Cal, but he is still concerned for her welfare, even if his attraction to her is difficult to control. The suspicion that the Keepers are not what they claim to be is strengthened by Shay's discovery of the actual date of the Witch's War, and also by the fact that Ethan and Connor insist they are trying to help Shay, not harm him. This information is all highly suggestive that Cal and the Guardians are not helping the protectors of the earth, but instead may be protecting a force that promotes evil and destruction, and may mean Shay harm in the process.



# chapters 19-21

## chapters 19-21 Summary

In Chapter nineteen, Cal is back in chemistry class, and she asks Ren what he knows about Samhain, which is the night of the blood moon on October 31st, when both Cal and Ren were born, and the night their union is scheduled to take place. Ren says that he knows that the spirit world has more power that night, and that it is closer to the physical world, but he also reveals that his mother was killed by Searchers on that night in a legendary assault on a Guardian compound. Ren asks her on a date before their union, so that they can arrive at the ceremony together, and she agrees to it, thinking it is a good idea. After class, she meets back up with Shay, who recommends that they skip the library today, given the attack they experienced, and instead go to coffee, but Cal can't help him today, because she has to take care of something involving her union with Ren. Shay is disappointed, but Cal cannot miss her appointment.

In Chapter twenty, female Guardians, including Bryn, Sabine, Cal's mother Naomi, and Fey, have gathered at Cal's home to help prepare the dress she will wear during the union. Fey let's a stray comment about getting blood on the clothes slip, and when Cal asks Naomi, she admits that part of the ceremony involves making a kill with Ren to prove the solidarity of the pack. Naomi explains that it will most likely be a searcher that they have captured for just that occassion. As they prepare her wedding gown, accidentally, or in Sabine's case not so accidentally, sticking pins into Cal every now and then, Cal's phone rings, and she is surprised that it is Shay. To her mother's disapproval, she answer's the phone, and Shay tells her that he thinks something is inside Haldis Cavern that could provide answers for them, and he wants to investigate inside the cavern itself. Cal is completely forbidden to do so, but nevertheless agrees to enter Haldis Cavern with him next Sunday, during her patrol.

In Chapter twenty-one, An convinces Shay to join both packs at a club that night. Cal discourages Shay as much as she can, but he insists on going anyway. Later that night, she arrives at the Burnout, and finds everyone is already there, including Shay. Nev sings with Sabine up on the stage, and people beging to dance. To Cal's surprise, Shay asks Bryn to dance, and Ren asks Cosette. Mason being to dance with Cal, but Ren quickly takes her from him. He shows her a set of keys and explains that the Keepers have given him the keys to their new home, and that he wants her to come look at it with him later. He also asks her if the union is really what she wants, but she cannot answer, because she doesn't know anymore. The music stops suddenly, and Cal turns to see Dax fighting with Mason. Ren breaks up the fight and sends Dax outside. Shay dances with Cal once Ren steps outside to deal with Dax, but when the dance is over, she realizes that Ren is watching. Fed up with Ren's jealousy, she decides to leave and goes into the woods alone.



## chapters 19-21 Analysis

Cal is beginning to question everything about her life as uncertainties about the nature of the Keepers grow. But Cal is not alone in her uncertainty, even if she is no longer sure that she wants to be with Ren. Ren's mother was killed by Searchers, and he looks forward to the rest of his life hunting them down, but others, such as Sabine, Mason, and Neville, all face similar problems with the Keepers as Cal does, and even An is worried about what will happen if they do not allow him to be with Bryn. Shay continues to encourage Cal to break the rules of the Guardians and resist the union of herself and Ren, but his appearance at the club and challenge to Ren's authority by dancing with Cal has very likely put him in danger in the near future. Ren seems to have genuine feelings for Cal, and is far from secure about their union. It is also likely that the secrets of the kisses she and Shay have shared will get out soon too, as Shay continues to spend time with the Bane and Nightshade packs.



## chapters 22-24

### chapters 22-24 Summary

In Chapter twenty-two Shay and Cal meet at the bottom of the mountain. They enter Haldis Cavern, which is littered with animal bones. Suddenly, a spider the size of a horse drops down to them from the top of the tunnel. Cal attacks it, but gets bitten. Shay kills it with the ice axes that he brought along for the hike. Cal does not believe herself to be seriously hurt, but decides to check the wound because it is very likely that the Keepers enchanted it. She also knows that someone will come in to check on the spider very soon. She begins to feel sick, and realizes that the Brown Recluse has a poisonous bite. She says that there is nothing Shay can do for her, and tells him to leave. Shay begs her to turn him into a Guardian so that he can use his blood to heal her, and she finally does so. She is terrified of what she has done, but Shay's sense of humor calms her. They continue down the cavern until they find a floating woman, holding something that glows red. Shay goes to her, but Cal pulls him away in fear. He says that he heard her singing about the Scion, and also that she gave him a glowing red cylinder. Cal touches the cylinder, but it hurts her, and she takes that to mean that the Haldis, the name given to it by the woman, is meant for Shay alone. He doesn't know what it does, and they decide to flee the cavern together.

In Chapter twenty-three, Shay and Cal hunt deer together in wolf form on the mountain. They finish prowling, and turn back into human form to discuss the Haldis and what it could mean. He wants to go to the Rowan Estate to see if they can use its library and find out more about what it does. Cal is scared of the idea, but realizes it might be the best place to find information on the subject.

In Chapter twenty-four, Cal returns home the next day to find Efron waiting for her, with Logan, Lumine, and several wraiths. Ren and his father Emile arrive. The Keepers tell them that they think something has gone wrong at Haldis Cavern. They want the packs to see if their pet is still alive, and only Cal knows they are talking about the giant spider. She realizes that this means they don't know everything about what happened in the cavern yet. The Keepers leave, but Emile and Ren stay behind. Emile makes advances at Naomi, which infuriates Cal, and Ren insists that it's time for the two of them to go back home. Cal argues with her mother about allowing Emile to touch her after Ren and Emile leave, but Naomi grows angry with her daughter and strikes her across the face, warning to never challenge an Alpha male, regardless of the circumstances.

### chapters 22-24 Analysis

Cal and Shay's intrusion into the cave represents both a major breakthrough and a major complication for their cause. On the one hand, Shay is now in possession of the Haldis, which is clearly an artifact of great magic and significance, but their encounter with the giant spider left a great deal of evidence of Cal's betrayal of the Keepers. To



further complicate matters, Shay has now been transformed, and it is difficult to remain in complete human form when newly transformed individuals become agitated or upset, which happens to Shay almost every time he sees Ren. As a result, he is having great difficulty keeping his new nature unnoticed by the other Guardians. Their largest hope lies in uncovering how to use the Haldis, as it clearly contains powerful magics. Cal's encounter with the Keepers confirms that she is in danger, though she still might be able to protect herself from discovery. Emile is a stark contrast from Ren, which gives the reader hope that Ren may be of assistance in the near future.



## chapters 25-27

### chapters 25-27 Summary

In Chapter twenty-five, the Nightshade and Bane children meet in preparation for the search in Haldis Cavern and the surrounding area. Cal is stunned and disappointed when Ren insists on investigating the cavern personally, with Bryn and Ansel. The rest of the Guardians are told to investigate the surrounding area in order to see what they can find, and Cal is left in charge of the investigation outside the cavern, which is not what she had planned, and puts her in great danger of being discovered. Hours later, as her group finishes searching the area, they hear Ren's call and go to him. He tells them that the spider is dead, and that Logan and Efron are on their way. When the others leave, Ren asks her why she went into the cave. She lies to him by saying that she went in a while ago because she was curious and wanted to know what was inside, but she got scared when she saw the spider and fled. She says she has no idea who the other wolf was that everyone else smelled both in the cavern and on the mountainside.

In Chapter twenty-six, Cal enters Rowan Estate to help Shay with the translation of the book. He shows her his room, and when Shay smells an old blanket of his, he suddenly remembers his mother's face, though Cal has to explain what is happening to him, now that he is a Guardian. Shay takes Cal to the library where there is a picture of a man and woman that Shay now knows to be his parents, though he can't understand why their picture would be in here, as no other pictures of them were kept. Shay decides to pick the lock on a bookcase containing a lot of volumes, thinking that it will contain information on the Haldis, or the Harbinger or Scion, but instead it only contains histories of the Guardian packs, unions, and births.

In Chapter twenty-seven, Cal and Shay have found nothing of use in the library, so they decide to continue translating the book Shay found originally. During their work, Shay asks her about the Blood Moon, and she explains that there is a sort of festival related to it that many people in the area attend. Shay asks if she will go with him, but Cal refuses and doesn't want to say why. Finally, she admits that Samhain, or the Blood Moon, is the same night as her union to Ren. Shay is somewhat upset by this, but Cal explains the Blood Moon to Shay a little more, and he realizes that they should study the night more because the final section of the book seems to suggest that it is of great significance.

### chapters 25-27 Analysis

Ren's support and assistance to Cal suggests that she is right about their being more to him than just being an Alpha male Guardian. Like her, he is struggling deeply with the situation, and he also cares very deeply for Cal. This, in addition to the fact that he is not used to being challenged as leader of their group, is the primary cause of his jealousy over the amount of time Shay spends with Cal. He must suspect, on some

level, that Cal really is attracted to Shay. Shay's sudden remembrance of his mother allows him to come closer to the truth, but it's still unclear why an important Keeper like Bosque would have pictures of them in his library, especially if they were supposed to be Searchers, but it is very clear that Shay plays an important role in whatever ceremony or ritual the Keepers have planned for Ren and Cal on the night of the Blood Moon.



## chapters 28-30

### chapters 28-30 Summary

In Chapter twenty-eight, after first period the next day, Shay tells Cal that Ren's mother, Corinne, was executed, not killed by Searchers. Instead, she had planned a rebellion against the Keepers with several other Guardians, all of whom were destroyed as a consequence. The Harrowing, according to the information Shay has found, was actually a large revolt of Guardians against Keepers. She tries to deny it at first, but even as she does so, she knows that it's true. Nurse Flynn interrupts them and scolds Cal once again for her indiscretion, but leaves quickly. Cal asks Shay who the Searchers are, and he explains that he does not think they are the Guardian's enemies. She meets with Ren and asks if she can just meet him at the Blood Moon festival with the rest of the group instead of going on their planned date, because she has more to do with Shay. Ren becomes furious and attacks Shay in the middle of chemistry class. Shay defends himself as best he can, and Cal can see him shifting into wolf form, and hopes that Ren is too angry to notice what's happening. At lunch, both Ren and Shay are missing. Later, Cal tells the pack about what has happened. Shay and Logan appear, and Shay has taken the blame for the entire incident. Dax and Fey decide to find Ren, despite Cal's insistence that they leave him alone.

In Chapter twenty-nine, Cal is having a dream about being back in Shay's room, and this time she allows him to kiss her. Ren attacks them suddenly and kills Shay, and she awakens from the Nightmare. An comes into her room and admits to explaining what they are to Shay. He's also figured out that Shay is the other wolf that they smelled on the mountain and in the cave, but Cal denies it and insists that she doesn't know who the other wolf is, even though she feels terrible about lying to her younger brother about everything, she is also scared for his safety and doesn't want him or the rest of the pack to become involved.

In Chapter thirty, Cal thanks Shay for in first period for taking the blame over the fight. He hands her some rough translations from the book. Ren is missing from lunch once again. Later that night, at the Rowan Estate, Shay tells her that he will leave her alone from now on. They continue working on the book, and Cal believes that whatever is going to happen to Shay is not related to the union that night, despite the fact that much of Shay's research suggests otherwise.

### chapters 28-30 Analysis

Shay, having finally come to terms with what his feelings are doing to both the Nightshade and Bane packs, and Ren and Cal specifically, has decided to keep his feelings for her in check, just as Cal realizes that she actually might be in love with him, and that her life as an Alpha female might prevent her from ever being in love again. Her responsibilities as Alpha have, in a way, blinded her to even her brother's present

situation with Bryn, given the likelihood that the two will not be allowed to stay together. The fact that the Keepers could split them up clearly distresses him greatly, and since Neville and Mason's situation is very similar, it's clear that many in both of the packs will have similar problems with the way that the Keepers interfere with their lives.



## chapters 31-33

### chapters 31-33 Summary

In Chapter thirty-one, Bryn prepares Cal for the union ceremony. They go to Vail, Efron's resort, with An. She sees Ren again, who is doing a little better. He gives her a ring, and she begins to feel somewhat better about having to spend the rest of her life with him. She smells Shay as it begins, and finds him blindfolded. He tells her that he has been translating a word wrong in the book, and that he is a "sacrifice," rather than a "gift." It seems that Shay is supposed to be the kill for Ren and Cal.

In Chapter thirty-two, Flynn appears and tells them that she was responsible for bringing Shay to the ceremony. Cal refuses to hunt him. Flynn turns into a succubus and attacks them, but is unprepared for Shay when he turns into a wolf. She is killed as they make their sudden escape.

In Chapter thirty-three, Cal notices wraiths closing in on them, and as she escapes, she collides with Ren. Ren and Shay nearly fight, but Cal convinces Shay to keep running. She convinces Ren to help her by creating a distraction with the others, and tells him that the Keepers killed his mother. Ren asks her to come back to him when she is finished, but she refuses and she hears his mournful howl as she runs away.

### chapters 31-33 Analysis

Shay's appearance at the ceremony may have been sudden to Cal, but the careful reader would have expected this outcome and anticipated it, based on what is known about the Keepers and the comment that Cal's mother made about the ceremony several chapters ago. Ren's reaction is more surprising, as he doesn't tear into Shay instantly, but it confirms that he is indeed more than just an Alpha male, and that his feelings for Cal are genuine.



## chapters 34-35

### chapters 34-35 Summary

In Chapter thirty-four, Shay and Cal return to the Rowan Estate. Cal changes out of her gown and into clothes more suitable for being on the run. As they ready to leave, Cal realizes that an incubus statue has gone missing. They see the real incubus on the ceiling and it swoops down to attack them. A chimera joins in the fight, waiting for them at the top of the staircase. Bodies begin climbing out of paintings on either sides of the hallway and begin to chase them. They go to the library to find Bosque waiting for them. He tells them that the book they've translated is full of lies and that Shay was never truly in any danger, but that they wanted to test Ren and Cal's loyalty by pretending that he was the sacrifice. Suddenly, Searchers storm the library as Bosque summons wraiths. Cal is hit by a crossbow bolt. The Searchers take Cal and Shay and escape.

In Chapter thirty-five, Cal awakens as a prisoner of the Searchers. Shay is there, but they take him away. Cal is left alone, by herself, to wonder if she's done the right thing.

### chapters 34-35 Analysis

These chapters establish that the story is meant to continue in another book. The Rowan Estate was dangerous after all, even more than Cal could have imagined. The Searchers don't seem any better than Keepers at this point, but Cal can only wonder what will happen to her by the conclusion.



# Characters

## Cal/Calla

Cal is the Alpha female of the young Nightshade pack. She is arranged to be married to Ren on her eighteenth birthday and though she gets along with Ren well enough, she resents the way the adult Guardians and Keepers interfere in her life. She saves Shay's life, putting her own at great risk, and when he appears at her school the next day, at first she does whatever she can to keep him at a distance but despite her efforts, the two become very close and she develops strong feelings for him. She is An's older sister and Bryn's best friend, though the alpha does not share Bryn's taste for dressing up in the least. Though she is fiercely proud and protective of those she cares about, she is also very headstrong and at the beginning of the novel experiences a lot of difficulty accepting the amount of control others have over her life. Ren asks her many times if she is okay with their coming union, and she can't even respond to the question because she has always been told the union was the way it had to be. As a result, when she begins to have feelings for Shay, she alternately threatens the boy and encourages him to pursue her, going so far as to transform him into a Guardian so that he can use his blood to save her life. Throughout the novel, Cal is constantly torn between trying to protect and serve her pack, and trying to protect her own freedoms.

## Shay

Shay is seventeen, roughly the age of the other teenage guardians in the book. His parents both died when he was two, and he has been living with his uncle, Bosque, ever since. Unknown to Shay, Bosque is a very powerful Keeper. Shay is nearly killed on the mountainside but rescued by Cal, who uses her blood to help heal his wounds. After Cal does this, it turns out that Shay is a new student at her school, and he is very fascinated with both her and the group that she hangs out with. Over time, he develops strong feelings for Cal, and learns the nature of both the Guardians and the Keepers, but his curiosity leads him to begin translating a forbidden text with Cal's help, and he discovers too late that he is the Scion, and that the Keepers plan to sacrifice him at the Blood Moon festival where Ren and Cal will join together and take charge of their new pack. Shay is constantly questioning the ways of the Guardians, much to Cal's annoyance, and Ren distrusts him and is very jealous of him for the amount of time that he spends with Cal. Shay is also a very intelligent teenager, accustomed to first-rate educations, and he clearly comes from a very wealthy family, but tells Cal that his frequent moves make it very difficult for him to find friends, and as a result he has never felt as though he fits in anywhere.



## Ren

Ren is the Alpha male of the Bane pack. His marriage to Cal has been arranged since their birth, and he appears to look forward to the union, despite the fact that he has fostered something of a ladies' man's reputation at the school. He seems to have strong feelings for Cal, but his life as an Alpha Guardian has made him fairly aggressive in his romantic pursuit of her, and he is not used to being rejected. He is very jealous of Shay and the time that the two spend together, and it is very possible that he expects the two have kissed at some point in the novel. By the end, he decides to help Cal, although he is clearly heartbroken and saddened by her rejection of him.

## Bryn

Bryn is Cal's beta and best friend. The two patrol the mountainside together during the weekends, and she is there when Cal decides to use her blood to help Shay. She is completely loyal and trustworthy to Cal, but often knows things about the Nightshade pack that its members don't share with Cal because they don't want to burden her any further. She is attracted to An, and the two begin dating midway through the book, but this makes Cal nervous because none of the pack members are actually allowed to choose who their mates are.

## An

An is Cal's younger brother. He is supportive of her, and just as loyal and trustworthy as Cal. He is in love with Bryn, and worries that the two will not be able to be together when the Keepers begin choosing mates. He also becomes good friends with Shay.

## Lucas

Lucas is a Keeper, the age of the teenage Guardians. He is supposed to take control of the new pack when the union between Cal and Ren is complete. He is gay, and tries to make advances at Mason, but Mason manages to fend him off by threatening to tell Efron, his father and the Keeper of the Bane pack.

## Efron

Efron is a Keeper in charge of the Bane pack. He is unpleasant, and uses Sabine to satisfy his desires.

## Lumine

Lumine is the Keeper of the Nightshade pack.



## **Bosque**

Bosque is a powerful Keeper and claims to be Shay's uncle. He appears in the Rowan Estate when Shay and Cal plan their escape, but is fought off by Searchers.

## **Mason**

Mason is a member of Cal's pack. He is a talented singer, and is also gay, which earns the attention of Lucas.

## **Neville**

Neville is a member of Cal's pack. He is a talented poet, and does not get along with Dax.

## **Sabine**

Sabine is a member of Ren's pack. She does not like Cal, and has a reputation for being promiscuous.

## **Dax**

Dax is Ren's beta. He is very large and does not like Mason or Neville.

## **Nurse Flynn**

Nurse Flynn is a succubus, who constantly makes Cal and the others feel uneasy about themselves. She attacks Cal and Shay when they try to escape the ceremony, but does not know that Shay has been turned into a Guardian and is killed in the fight.



# Objects/Places

## The Mountain

The mountain houses the sacred site of Haldis Cavern, and both Nightshades and Banes are responsible for patrolling it.

## Haldis Cavern

Haldis Cavern is a sacred site guarded by a giant spider. It houses an artifact called the Haldis, which Shay takes from the cavern after the spider is killed.

## Wolves

Each of the Guardians is able to turn into a wolf.

## Deer

The Guardians love to hunt deer on the mountain.

## The Haldis

The Haldis is a magic cylinder that glows red. Shay takes it from the cavern, but has no idea what it does.

## Cross

A cross-shaped tattoo is on the back of Shay's neck, but he cannot see it.

## The Library

Shay and Cal decide that the library is the safest place to study the book that Shay found in his uncle's library, until they are attacked there by Searchers.

## Eden

Eden is the name of the club where the two packs get together for the first time.



## **The War of All Against All**

A phrase which, in latin, is written across the binding of the book Shay has taken from his uncle's library.

## **Wraiths**

Like Guardians, wraiths serve the Keepers, but they cannot be killed. They are flickering black shadows.

## **The School**

Both packs go to the same school. It is a private school, and the parents of many of their children are powerful individuals, even though the Keepers maintain absolute control of it.

## **The Cafeteria**

The Bane and Nightshade packs meet up at the Cafeteria and eat lunch together. Shay joins them after he works up the courage to ask.

## **Alchemical Symbols**

One of the things that makes the book Shay has so difficult to translate, is that it contains alchemical symbols that he is not familiar with.

## **Spells**

The Keepers all seem to be able to cast magic spells. It is unknown how powerful they are or precisely what sorts of spells that they can cast.

## Social Sensitivity

As much of the best "speculative fiction" has always done, *Nightshade* extrapolates from present trends and developments in society and projects these into the future, imagining what human beings and their institutions may become. Most of the novel's action takes place on Mars, which has been colonized and partially "terraformed," or made earthlike and habitable, around the turn of the twenty-second century. Naturally, much of the book's superficial interest derives from technological advances that have made space flight and human colonies on another planet possible, as well as a myriad of impressive gadgets. These are standard trappings of science fiction. But the author's real interest lies elsewhere, namely in the ways technological evolution has (in the imagined world of the novel) affected politics and government, education, communication, and mass entertainment, and in the ways these changes have affected human beings and their interactions with one another. One major advance the author imagines is a "cybernetic revolution" in the twenty-first century in which computers became able to interface with their programmers in human language. This development, Butler's character John Shade recalls, placed an unprecedented premium on eloquence and rhetoric, creating such a demand for good English teachers that they could command fabulous salaries.

Less fanciful are the novel's projections for mass communication and entertainment of the masses. Movies, or what they have evolved into, are made and broadcast within minutes of or even during the news events they reflect.

The effects are horrifying, but they are made to seem a natural and possibly inevitable outgrowth of trends in twentieth-century society. Beyond such disturbing visions, however, the reader is shown a much longer view of what humanity will become.

Other social concerns are reflected in the novel's description of the prejudice against the class of people called "j anglers" and in the exposition of the tenets and practices of the religion called Butlerianism (after the name of the "minor twentieth-century poet" who wrote the Preface to the sect's Works).

# Techniques

Any novel that attempts, as this one does, to envision and represent a complete, functioning society that is radically different from our own must necessarily be quite complex. If the scientific, technological, philosophical, linguistic, and social backgrounds of that society are projected a long distance into the future, that complexity is multiplied. Such is the task Butler set for himself in *Nightshade*. Remarkably, in what is ostensibly the voice of John Shade (who witnessed the evolution of this world for more than three centuries), through Shade's exposition as well as through dramatic exemplification in the speech and actions of characters, Butler portrays a world so coherent and real-seeming in all its aspects that his achievement must rank with the greatest efforts of speculative fiction.

Yet it is clear that Butler's chief interest as far as fictional technique is concerned lies in the area of narrative voice. A striking connection exists between this novel and its predecessor, *Jujitsu for Christ*, where Marcus Gandy, in one of his "authorial" intrusions says that he "always wanted to be ...

a science-fiction writer. I wanted to write about strange and wonderful alternate realities. . . . Got tricked into realism, but you can tell it ain't my home. I swear to god the next book I write will either be my own story, or it will be vampires on Mars." *Nightshade* is clearly the book Marcus threatens to write at the end of *Jujitsu for Christ*, but it is not clear that Marcus is the narrator of it. Complexity of narrative technique here goes far beyond the earlier novel, appearing to operate from at least two, and possibly three or four narrative perspectives. The first is that of Chapter 1, "What's Past," which recounts Shade's original human death and subsequent resurrection. Narration here is standard third-person, with no hint of personality other than the author's objective voice. Chapterswitches to first-person narration in the apparent voice of the protagonist, Shade, speaking in what for most of the novel seems to be "present time," that is, some three and a half centuries later than the events of chapter 1 — on Mars. Describing the "cybernetic revolution" that led to an unprecedented value's being placed on rhetoric and eloquence, Shade says that the "first true CEO of the U.S." had an L.I.D. and "had battled his way to the top . . . with the aid of Shakespeare and Yeats and Gandy." Marcus, it would seem, became quite an important writer. We later learn that Shade had known Marcus; they had studied creative writing together, presumably at the University of Arkansas. Shade recalls that "the Negro poet with the green eyes," who "had been raised by whites and then had tried to reclaim . . . his heritage," was later to "abandon his poetry for the crazed semiautobiographical fiction that finally made his reputation — *Jujitsu for Christ*, *My Own Story*, *I Was a White Nigger for the FBI*" — and remarks that what Marcus "said he really wanted to write was science fiction. He would have loved my story." Shade's list of Marcus's fiction includes the *Jujitsu for Christ* and Marcus's "own story" that he had mentioned as a future project at the end of the earlier novel; it does not include Marcus's science-fiction book about "vampires on Mars," but that is apparently this book.



A second, or possibly third narrative voice appears clearly as the first-person speaker in Chapter 7, "Intertemporal," to clarify differences between the Martian and Earth calendars: "I must, at this point, interrupt. I can no longer bear this confusion of times. . . . " The entire chapter, spoken by the same voice, is printed in italics, as are the later intrusions by this narrator, at least prior to the Epilogue. The speaker's references to "Shade's writing," as well as the "interruption" itself, suggest some sort of primary or overall narrator, or possibly some "editorial" persona as narrator. At this point it seems as if that entity could be the novelist Butler, or it could be his persona, Marcus Gandy. Approximately five more instances of this narrator's intrusion occur, all marked by italics, prior to the Epilogue, which drops the italics but still appears to be the same voice. A careful reading of these passages reveals clues that point indisputably toward Mandrake, the Artificial Intelligence, as the italic narrator, and perhaps more. The Epilogue is avowedly in Mandrake's voice: "I who tell it am Mandrake, the root of change. Poor forked thing buried in darkness. Homunculus who cannot rise from time and bloom with the spirits in Heaven."

Even the careful reader is left with some serious doubts about the identity of the narrator or narrators of this book. Butler himself has shed some light on the matter, in an unpublished letter in which he says he intended his "stacked narrators" or "kerneled narration" as "Shade inside the somewhat ghostly Mandrake inside the yet more evanescent Marcus inside the practically nonexistent Butler. A shade of a shade of a shade of a shade." Merits of the "shade" pun aside, it is interesting to note that the narrative voice in Butler's next novel will be even more "ghostly."



# Themes

## Rebellion

Specifically, the novel explores the teenage instinct to rebel against his or her parents and authority figures. However, the world of the Guardians is one of far more responsibility than the average teenager, and as a result, the consequences of defying the Keepers are far more severe. Cal is a rebel with a cause, because she truly believes that many of the rules the Keepers enforce are wrong. She fears for the future of her pack, primarily because she is unable to protect any of them from whatever the Keepers might wish of them. Shay is similarly rebellious, but his defiance of authority comes from curiosity instead of a desire to protect anyone, at least at first. As time goes on, and he learns more about the way that the Keepers control the Guardians, he insists that Cal do more to free herself from their control, equating her current situation and forced marriage to Ren with slavery. Cal rejects this idea at first, but as more information comes to light, she realizes that he is right. She finally decides to defy the Keepers when she learns that she is supposed to kill Shay during the union ceremony with Ren. Many of the other Guardians find their lives difficult. Ren dislikes being constantly watched over by the Keepers. An and Bryn are concerned that the Keepers will not allow them to stay together after the packs unite, and Mason and Neville are gay, which Cal is fairly certain the Keepers will not tolerate, because they need Guardians to breed more for future packs and future Keepers.

## Love/Romance

Love plays an important role in each of the major characters' lives, and the love triangle between Ren, Cal, and Shay, does much towards progressing the story as the characters struggle against one another. Shay grows to be completely in love with Cal, and constantly begs her not to go through with the union to Ren, even though Cal can only insist that she has no choice in the matter. Cal begins the novel with strong feelings for Ren, but gradually realizes that Shay makes her feel a way that she never knew she could feel before. She fights these feelings as best as she can for as long as she can, but the fact that she is supposed to protect Shay forces her to spend a great deal of time with him, and soon enough she realizes that she is more in love with him than with Shay. Ren appears to be totally in love with Cal, but even though he knows he is forbidden to touch her before the union, he is an Alpha male and is expected to hunt and make advances at girls. Cal dislikes his reputation for having a lot of experience with girls at the school, though she doesn't appear jealous of it in the sense that she resents Ren for it. Instead, she seems to wish that she'd been allowed to date boys. Ren is very jealous of Shay, not because he feels that he is supposed to possess Cal, but instead because some part of him senses that she greatly prefers Shay's company to his own. Other characters experience similar romantic problems. Sabine is bound to obey Efron whenever he calls on her. Mason and Neville are dating, but the odds that



they will be allowed to stay together after the union are almost zero. Bryn and An also begin dating, but Cal is afraid that the pair will split up.

## Studying

The Guardians all seem to complete their homework on time, and they also all seem to be very good students. It is not known if the Keepers expect this of them, or if they are merely of higher intelligence than normal humans. Shay is also very studious, and in fact disrupts philosophy class to complain that Thomas Hobbes is not included in any of the readings. Study is also very important to the progression of the novel. Without his knowledge, Shay would never have even been able to attempt the translation of the book he stole from his uncle's library. Through the course of the book, he and Cal spend a lot of time either at a library or at the Rowan Estate, making attempts to decipher the latin inside the book. They make several important discoveries from it, and in fact it leads them to investigate Haldis Cavern. Shay also decides to investigate the histories of the Keepers and the packs, and it is here that he discovers the stories that the Keepers have told the Guardians are a far cry from the actual truth. It is through studying the books in Bosque's library that Cal and Shay discover the Keepers are not a force for good at all, but instead have enslaved the Guardians for a purpose unknown. Their chemistry unit on Alchemical symbols also gives them some insight into what the contents of Haldis Cavern might be.

## Significant Topics

Paradoxically, almost, since *Nightshade* is a science-fiction novel set more than a century in the future on another planet, with a central character who is 350-year-old vampire born on Earth before the American Revolution, the book's major themes are quite traditional. They include love, loyalty, honor, the value of human communion, and the perseverance of the human spirit. Thematically, then, *Nightshade* operates in the mainstream of traditional modern fiction, although this fact may be obscured for less careful readers by the book's more obvious membership in the fictional genre (or subgenre) of science fiction.

Sometimes we say, when a sciencefiction novel turns out to possess conspicuous literary merit, that the book "transcends the genre," as if science fiction were some inferior ethnic variety of the species fiction that only rarely might be expected to rise above mediocrity. The truth is that there is but one genre, fiction, and that none of its varieties commonly excels. When a representative of one of those varieties does achieve excellence, it is always a cause for celebration, not for condescension.

Butler's *Nightshade* does in fact "transcend the genre," but the genre is fiction. The late John Gardner, in his treatise *On Moral Fiction* (1978), defined a "good book" as "one that, for its time, is wise, sane, and magical, one that clarifies life and tends to improve it." *Nightshade* meets and even exceeds those criteria, at the same time that it carries the more specific conventions of science fiction to as felicitous heights as they have



ever reached. This book ranks, in its societal dimensions, with Huxley's *Brave New World* (1932); in its scope, range, and the distance and perspective of its vision for humanity, with Arthur C. Clarke's *Childhood's End* (1953); and in the sophistication of its linguistic speculations, with Anthony Burgess's *A Clockwork Orange* (1962).

An important key to many otherwise puzzling aspects of this novel is to be found in the Epilogue, subtitled "Someone to Answer To." This epilogue, presented as a series of questions and answers clearly spoken (or rather, written) by Mandrake, the Artificial Intelligence who was protagonist John Shade's friend and companion, provides a fitting denouement as well as establishes the novel's ultimate narrative perspective. It is a long one indeed: thirty revolutions of the galaxy, which, if you do the arithmetic, turns out to be about 300,000 years.

Shade lived on with Mandrake for a mere 6,000 years, at which time there were no more human bodies left, hence no more vampires. Shade would not allow Mandrake to copy him and thereby relinquished his immortality. Humanity, Mandrake notes, in the course of those thirty revolutions "whirled up from the dust of the dust of one small star, seemed to become the ghost at the heart of things, disappeared." Mandrake, with infinite patience, awaits their return. He — or rather, she — perhaps redeems the time in which she (unlike her vanished human creators) is locked by endlessly editing and rewriting Shade's story and the story of their life together.



# Style

## Point of View

The novel is recounted in the first person. Cal is both the narrator and the main character. Much of what Cal believes to be true about the history of the Guardians and the Keepers is false, and as a result, the reader is somewhat misinformed about what the Keepers are actually doing to the world. Though she is fairly intelligent and capable, she tends to be distracted through much of the novel from the problems of the rest of her pack, and this puts her at odds with correctly assessing a number of situations, most notably the fact that Mason and Neville, two members of her pack, are gay. Despite these small shortcomings, she is a reliable narrator for the most part.

The story consists primarily of a solid blend of exposition, dialogue, and the internal thoughts of the narrator. This technique works well within the context of the novel, because Cal suffers from several problems that she finds difficult to express, but the relationship between her and her pack mates, along with the other Guardians, is also very important to the story. Cal is very seldom alone, and she is constantly weighing her needs and desires against the needs and desires of others, as well as trying to figure out a way to solve problems for which she does not have easy answers.

## Setting

Much of the story takes place inside a small private school, apparently set up specifically for the Guardians and Keepers to attend, though the children of powerful people also appear to be at the school. It is controlled almost exclusively by the Keepers, who are members of its board. Some of the staff serve the Keepers directly. The students themselves are divided into groups, though the humans don't know it. The Guardians keep mostly to themselves, as do the children of the Keepers. At the beginning of the book, the two packs, Bane and Nightshade, sit at separate tables, but later join them together to form one large group. The student body is very small, with only thirty or so seniors at the entire school.

The Guardians are tasked with guarding a mountain and keeping Haldis Cavern safe from intruders. The mountain is home to many wild animals, and the Guardians often hunt deer and rabbits on it. Even Grizzly Bears are present, and Shay is attacked by one in the first chapter. Haldis Cavern itself is narrow, damp, and guarded by a giant spider. At the end of it a floating woman holds the Haldis, which is later taken by Shay. Normal humans are not supposed to be on the mountain, and it is considered private property, presumably owned by the Keepers themselves.

The Guardians all live in large well-built homes, though Cal's room is constantly a mess. Shay lives in the Rowan Estate, a large old mansion filled with statues, paintings, and books belonging to his uncle Bosque.



## Language and Meaning

The language of the book is fairly straightforward and simple. The Guardians speak more or less in the same way normal teenagers would speak, though they make constant references to the fact that they are more than average humans. The Keepers use a somewhat more sophisticated manner of speech, but this does not interfere with understanding them. Instead, it sets them above the Guardians as their masters and represents the way that controllers would speak to their controlled. The manner of speaking is still contemporary and readily understood by any reader, and this serves the story well, considering it occurs during modern times.

The characters are distinguished in many ways by the words that they choose and the ways in which they express themselves. Ren is the only one to call Cal Lily, despite the fact that the nickname infuriates her. Shay tends to be very sarcastic and playful, especially with Cal, even when he appears to be threatened. Dax tends to be tight-lipped and gruff in his speech, as suits his personality. The particularities of each of the character's speech patterns gives them each a flavor and distinct personality, a fact which greatly adds to the enjoyment of the novel as a whole, as each of the teenage Guardians is brought to life through his or her words and phrases just as much as his or her actions.

## Structure

The book is divided into thirty-five chapters. Each chapter is anywhere from a few pages to over twenty, though longer chapters are rare. The story is told in roughly chronological order, and very little time passes between the chapters, for the most part. Chapters are commonly ended at night and begun the next day, which gives the novel a fast-paced feeling. Each of the chapters tends to be short and focused on the conflicts and desires of the characters in them as opposed to expositional passages.

The novel has one main plot with several subplots. The main plot follows Cal as she continually becomes less and less comfortable with her position as female Alpha. Her growing feelings for Shay push her away from not only Ren, but from the life that she was created for. An important subplot unfolds with her and Shay as they attempt to decipher the book and uncover the secrets of the Keepers, and this allows their feelings to grow for one another. The conflict between Ren and Cal is also important, because Cal doesn't have anything against Ren. In fact, she seems to care about him, but it is clear by the end of the story that he is not who she really wants to be with.



## Quotes

"He was a boy who looked about my age: seventeen, maybe eighteen. Brown hair with a slight shimmer of gold fell in a mess around his face. Sweat had caked strands of it to his forehead and cheeks" (Chapter 1, p. 8).

"The mound of t-shirts offered a convenient place to bury my head. I was tempted to shift into wolf form and rip the bed apart. But that would be me grounded for sure" (Chapter 2, p. 19).

"Ren shrugged. He gripped the sides of the table and bent forward, arching his back in a languid stretch. "If his name is on the list, he'll get in"" (Chapter 4, p. 31).

"I led the Nightshades up the steel staircase to the second level of the warehouse-like club. Eden throbbed with a mix of industrial beats and dark trance. Humans packed the main dance floor, pulsing and swaying with the heavy bass" (Chapter 6, p. 47).

"I could smell his fear but was intrigued by the other, more-alluring scents beneath it. Clover, rain, sun-warmed fields. I leaned toward him, taking in the shape of his lips, the light in his pale green eyes" (Chapter 7, p. 61).

"I ran up the eastern slope of the mountain. The frosted earth bit into my paws. I knew where I was headed and didn't pause until I arrived at my intended destination. When I reached the ridge, I dropped onto my haunches. He was there, quietly waiting for me, and I wasn't as surprised as I thought I would be" (Chapter 8, p. 76).

"As an alpha I could help my packmates get the things they wanted, but there wasn't anyone who could do the same for me" (Chapter 10, p. 93).

"Mason stood just behind me, his body locked in place. I looked at Logan; his eyes gleamed in the red haze of the setting sun that filled the room. Smoke spilled from his lips and the scent of cloves wafted around us" (Chapter 12, p. 106).

"He became very still and stared at the book, which sat in his lap. His fear and judgment pricked at me. I crossed my arms over my chest and continued to watch him, my mood darkening with each passing moment" (Chapter 14, p. 124).

"Shay's kiss deepened; his hand ran along my back, tracing the length of my braid, sliding beneath my skirt to stroke my skin" (Chapter 16, p. 138).

"I wasn't sure why my heart raced, nor why I felt so short of breath. All I knew was that I couldn't stand another moment balanced on the tightrope between Ren and Shay at that lunch table" (Chapter 17, p. 151).

"I kept a safe distance from the alpha for the remainder of the lab. He was in a dangerously playful mood, and my reactions to his attention were erratic enough that I



worried he'd startle me into spilling flammable liquid and igniting our entire station" (Chapter 18, p. 166).

"The music had stopped. The table where the young wolves had been sitting was turned on its side. Glasses lay broken on the floor; those that remained intact were rolling along the slanted hardwood floor into the far corner of the room. Dax held a fistful of Mason's shirt and stood snarling at him" (Chapter 21, p. 181).

"The brown wolf, whose thick fur glinted with golden streaks, pawed at the snow-covered ground, clearly irritated by my patronizing tone. Yeah, I know. I get the hamstring, you get the thought" (Chapter 23, p. 199).

"A rustling in the underbrush announced the Banes' arrival. Five wolves emerged; seeing that we were still in human form, they shifted one by one. Ren last" (Chapter 25, p. 211).

"Before Shay, I'd never laughed like this, so giddy and free, my body shaking with joy instead of anger" (Chapter 26, p. 225).

"I frowned at him for a moment but then looked at Dax. My mind was back in chem class, remembering the defeat in Ren's eyes before he left" (Chapter 28, p. 241).

"The three of us stood watching dancers twirl on the other side of French doors that separated the ballroom from the garden terrace. Blood Moon was hosted by Efron Bane and took place at one of his five-star hotels on the outskirts of Vail, a palatial Victorian resort that rested on the edge of a dense forest" (Chapter 31, p. 256).

"He caught me just as my muscles went limp and I collapsed. Images too hideous to face began to flash through my mind. My pack. My brother. Wraiths" (Chapter 33, p. 271).

"Brief flashes of light and sound occasionally pierced the veil that smothered my senses. I felt movement, but not any I made on my own. My limbs were numb" (Chapter 35, p. 285).

## Key Questions

Stimulating and interesting discussion of *Nightshade* may be conducted through several approaches. Most obviously, it may be viewed as a sciencefiction novel and compared with classic works of that genre, or it may be discussed in the larger context of Utopian fiction, as suggested above. One fruitful avenue would be to identify several common themes or conventions of science fiction and explore the ways Butler employs them, perhaps in comparison with other authors' uses of the same or similar conventions. Possibilities include space travel, colonization of other planets, social impact of accelerating technological change, the persistence (or decline) of traditional values in the imagined future, plausibility (or lack thereof) of the author's speculations, coherence and verisimilitude of the fictional world of the novel, and so on. Another approach, especially promising for this book, would involve a consideration of the author's projections about future dialects of English on Mars. It would be particularly interesting, and challenging as well, to select dialect passages and "translate" them into standard English.

In *Nightshade*, Butler has taken the traditional body of folklore, legend, superstition, and fictional representation about vampires and sought to impose a more or less rational explanation upon it, making it the basis for the central character's identity. The "classic" vampire lore, represented by Bram Stoker's novel *Dracula* (1897) and its innumerable progeny, as well as other fictional versions, such as those of Anne Rice in her recently popular "vampire" novels, may be compared and contrasted with Butler's. Still another approach might be to consider Butler's representations in his future world of such perennial human social problems as prejudice and bigotry (against the "jangers," for instance), or exploitation of certain elements of society (the "zoomers") by those in power. Finally, it might be productive to try to identify fictional situations and events either as having symbolic meaning or as paralleling real historical events, such as possible religious symbolism in Shade's (and other "vampires'") death and "resurrection," or parallels between Shade's "rebellion" on Mars and the American Revolution.

1. Explore possible significances of and relationships among the names of the book (a plant name), the protagonist (Shade), and Mandrake (another plant name).
2. Compare the vocabulary of "future words" and Butler's comment on them in the "Glossary" at the end of the book with those in Anthony Burgess's *A Clockwork Orange* (1962). Do the two seem equally probable or improbable?

Are they equally "sophisticated" as linguistic speculations?

3. Discuss the tenets of "Butlerianism" (the principal religion discussed in *Nightshade*) as a possible evolution of religious thought or theology in the future.
4. Compare the future disease "crash" and the social consequences for its victims with present-day AIDS and its victims.



5. What do you suppose Mandrake looks like? Several people, working independently, should draw pictures or sketches of Mandrake, based on descriptions in the novel.
6. Does Mandrake have gender? If so, what is it? Male? Female? Both? Neither?
7. In the chapter titled "Strange Feedback" Shade apparently makes love with someone. Is this experience real, or a dream? If real, who is the person?
8. Is the holographic mass communications medium called the "trivia" a logical extension of present-day trends in television programming?
9. Analyze the "intrusions" of the narrative voice whose words are printed in italics (especially in Chapters 7, 8, 14, and 24) for clues to the identity of this speaker. Who is it, and how do you know?
10. Based on Mandrake's statements in the Epilogue, what can you guess or speculate about the ultimate fate of humanity? What do you suppose happens to them? Where do they go, and how?



## Topics for Discussion

What about the Keepers is suggestive of their true nature and intentions? What about the Searchers? Is anything known about them? Do the Searchers appear to be evil at all?

Are there any similarities between Shay and Ren? Are the two characters completely opposite, or is there something that they have in common that attracts Cal to both of them? What about Shay makes him more attractive than Ren to her?

Nurse Flynn appears several times as a nuisance in the novel, and at last as a dangerous enemy. Is there any warning to the reader that she might be more than meets the eye? If so, what? What does Cal notice about her that implies Flynn is not entirely human?

The Guardians are bound together by very powerful family and pack ties. The Keepers tend to exploit this, but are they really in control of the Guardians? List at least five things that other Guardians besides Cal do or say that implies the Keepers' hold over the Guardians is far from absolute.

Do Cal and her mother, Naomi, get along? What about Cal upsets Naomi so much? What about Naomi frustrates Cal? What do we know about Cal's father, and could he be a bigger influence in her life than her mother?

Is Shay right to continually harass Cal about her feelings for him? She tells him to keep his distance several times, but either she doesn't get the message across or Shay gets the sense that she doesn't mean it? Why would this be the case?

Throughout the novel, the Guardians express terror over the wraiths that the Keepers can summon. Why are the Guardians afraid of the wraiths? What other creatures are known to serve the Keepers by the end of the novel?

Discuss the role of ordinary humans in the book. Where do they appear? How often do they become involved in the story?

## Literary Precedents

Nightshade fits comfortably into the modern tradition of science fiction, a type of literature Butler has read avidly since his childhood and which he cites as an important influence on his own writing. In this novel, Butler freely employs any number of the conventional devices, methods, situations, and techniques familiar to readers of science fiction for most of the twentieth century. As a science-fiction novel, Nightshade is virtually a tour de force in which the author breathes new life even into some rather stale conventions and imbues them with a degree of literary excellence they have rarely attained in the works of other writers.

A listing of modern predecessors in the genre would read like a who's who of science-fiction authors; it would include such names as H. G. Wells, Edgar Rice Burroughs, Robert A. Heinlein, Isaac Asimov, Arthur C. Clarke, Anthony Burgess, Ray Bradbury, A. E. Van Vogt, and a host of others.

A longer and broader tradition into which Nightshade fits with equal comfort is that reaching from Plato's Republic to Huxley's Brave New World (1932) and other twentieth-century representatives: that of utopian/dystopian fiction. Works in this tradition are usually, but not always, set in some imaginary future time when human society will have evolved into some more or less ideal state (utopian), or will have degenerated into some nightmarish horror (dystopian). Occasionally, as in Nightshade, elements of both the ideal and the nightmarish will be present. The tradition owes its name to Thomas More's sixteenth-century work Utopia (a word he made up out of Greek elements to mean "no place"; "dystopian" is a modern designation for those speculative works that envision a specifically "bad place"), a representation of what he apparently thought of as an ideal human society located on an uncharted island. In the next century, Francis Bacon contributed The New Atlantis, a vision of a society in which everyone happily practiced inductive reasoning and the scientific method, and a century later Jonathan Swift's entry, Gulliver's Travels (1726), made its appearance. Swift, like Butler, also played with narrative voice, representing his descriptions of "remote parts of the world" as having been composed by his fictitious traveler, Lemuel Gulliver. A nineteenth-century representative is the English novelist Samuel Butler's Erewhon (1872), whose title is an anagram of "nowhere." In this century, the tradition has flourished as never before, producing titles too numerous to catalogue here. Butler's Nightshade is worthy to stand with the best works in the tradition, from Plato to the present.

## Related Titles

All three of Butler's novels to date are related to one another. Please see separate analyses of *Jujitsu for Christ* (1986) and *Living in Little Rock with Miss Little Rock* (1993).



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