

Something Strange and Deadly Study Guide

Something Strange and Deadly by Susan Dennard

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Plot Summary

When Susan Dennard's young adult novel "Something Strange and Deadly" begins, sixteen year-old Eleanor Fitt, the protagonist and narrator, is a very proper young woman. She is doing her best to fit into Philadelphia's society and to live up to the high expectations of her mother. However, she secretly dislikes doing so. Her family's fortune is in sharp decline years after the death of her father. Now, her brother Elijah has disappeared. At a party hosted by Mama Fitt, a dark spirit is conjured. The spirit and a cryptic note that her brother Elijah is being held hostage convince Eleanor to seek out the Spirit-Hunter trio, Joseph, Daniel, and Jie, who are protecting the International Centennial Exhibition from the walking Dead.

The Spirit-Hunters agree to take on Eleanor's case. At the same time, Eleanor is being encouraged to court Clarence Wilcox, Philadelphia's most eligible bachelor. Clarence begins to lose his old friends one by one as more and more of the Dead come to populate the nearby Laurel Hill Cemetery. Though Eleanor cares for Clarence, she begins to grow close to Spirit-Hunter Daniel. Ultimately, it turns out that the dead are being controlled by a necromancer, and the necromancer is Elijah. After being bullied in school by Clarence and his friends, Elijah is hunting them down one by one. Eleanor is horrified, especially when Elijah kills Clarence.

When Eleanor tries to stop Elijah from raising the body of their father from the dead, their father's body turns against Eleanor. Elijah sacrifices his life to save Eleanor. The dark spirit which was conjured previously then assumes control of Elijah's body and flees as Eleanor learns she has the power to control the dead as well. She uses her power to stop them. The Spirit-Hunters then leave and go after the necromancer. Eleanor decides to stay behind to take care of her mother.



Chapter 1 - 6

Summary

Chapter 1

Sixteen year-old Eleanor Fitt is in line at the telegraph office when she hears a woman scream that the Dead have descended on them. The Dead alarm, consisting of bells, rings out. In the week before, several bodies have escaped the grave in Laurel Hill Cemetery. Eleanor rushes to hide in the clerk's office. She had been waiting for her brother, Elijah, to come home from three years abroad on the New York train, though he has not shown up. When he missed the train the week before, he had telegraphed Eleanor; now, he has not, and she knows something is wrong. Suddenly, one of the walking Dead reaches through the window, though it does not attack Eleanor, and she wonders why. She then finds a letter, delivered by the corpse. She hears a loud crack, and the alarm bells die away. Eleanor then takes the letter from her brother home to read.

Elijah's message says trouble has followed him in New York, and he has to do something for someone before he can come home. He tells Eleanor not to tell their mother. Eleanor reflects on his brother's studies of ancient texts and theology, and his seeming desire to want to manipulate corpses. She knows she cannot tell their mother. In the newspaper, Eleanor reads how Frederick Weathers, son of City Councilman Thomas Weathers, disappears and then reappears as a walking corpse. The suspected murderer is also the suspected of raising the dead. Mama appears at the door, demanding to know where Elijah is, but Eleanor explains that one of the Dead came to the depot. Eleanor tells her mother that Elijah was not on the train, that he met some friends and would be staying in New York a little longer. Mama is incensed. She decides to carry on with a party planned for that evening, to impress the Wilcoxes.

Eleanor's father, who ranted and raved and seemed paranoid before he died, scared off many other families and friends. And with the declining fortunes of the Fitts, such a party cannot be canceled. Mama decides to focus the party around a séance, to make up for Elijah's not showing up. Eleanor is unhappy with séances, having already been in contact with the undead for one day. Eleanor begins to sweat, hot and nervous, and Mama has Mary, the servant, draw her a bath. Eleanor worries that Elijah might be a walking corpse.

Chapter 2

The guest arrive for the party while Jeremy, the elderly butler, and Mary, set up the séance room. Mr. and Mrs. Moore discuss church sermons with Eleanor, while Mr. and Mrs. Cook talk with Mrs. Wilcox and Eleanor's mother. Patience and Mercy Cook, whom Eleanor calls the Virtue Sisters. They are both very much interested in twenty year-old Clarence Wilcox, a handsome, eligible bachelor, who is standing with his sister, Allison.



Clarence, back in Philadelphia for two years, is a college graduate. Allison's beauty makes Eleanor feel ugly. Allison wonders why Elijah is not at the party. Meanwhile, Eleanor's eyes meet Clarence's eyes. Clarence has inherited the family fortune and business from his deceased father. Allison questions Eleanor on her unhappy mood, but ends up annoying Eleanor. Clarence then tells Allison to go and speak to their mother, which Allison does. Clarence and Eleanor get along well, and Clarence finds it funny that Eleanor had insulted Allison with a quote from Shakespeare a few days before. He then heads out through the parlor door as Allison returns to sit down.

Eleanor follows Clarence, where she finds him talking to someone about someone named Sure Hands, and someone in a photograph. They arrange a meeting the following night at the same time at Arch Street Theater. Clarence returns to the house to discover Eleanor, and asks how long she has been standing there. She tells him only a moment. He knows she is lying, and he asks her to keep their conversation to herself. The séance then begins. Abigail, Eleanor's mother, attempts to contact Henry, her deceased husband. Mama asks Eleanor to invite their father into their realm.

Chapter 3

The room is cold. Eleanor fears that the spirit responding to them is not her father. Eleanor refuses, but Mama proceeds anyways. Eleanor begs the other guests to stop her mother. Clarence tries to, but it is too late. An icy blast of air and the smell of grave dirt enter the room. A dark, horrible misshapen man appears in the room like a shadow. Suddenly, it is gone. Mama has fainted. Eleanor, Jeremy, and Mary assure everyone it is all theatrics, and everyone at the party slowly leaves.

Eleanor reads through the paper, about someone from the Spirit-Hunters named Joseph Boyer, who says the corpses are being controlled by a necromancer. The Spirit-Hunters are on hand to protect the thousands of visitors to the Centennial Exhibition. Joseph, the leader of the three-man team, has set up headquarters at the Machinery Hall at the Exhibition. Eleanor decides to go and see them the next day.

Chapter 4

Mary helps Eleanor dress. Allison pays an unexpected visit about the previous evening, and invites Eleanor to tea at the Continental Hotel. Allison's dress is beautiful and blue, and she wants to show it off. Eleanor agrees to go to tea. Allison asks how the séance theatrics were done, because the old séances in the past were never that exciting. Eleanor thinks this is strange, wondering how the Wilcoxes know, because they have only known the Fitts for a short while. Allison tells Eleanor that Clarence would like to go for a drive with her, and Eleanor accepts, half-excited, half-nervous. At the Continental, the ground floor is full of luxury shops, which Allison and Eleanor go into. At Charles Oakford & Sons, Allison suggests buying new hats for tea. Eleanor tells Allison that she isn't allowed to buy anything without her mother's permission. They then take the elevator to the second floor, the first time Eleanor has been on one. Allison orders tea, fruit, and pastries. Eleanor realizes she has less than a dollar on her, and as she is about to tell Allison this, Allison sees the Virtue Sisters in the company of two young



men, the McClure brothers. She is angry because they declined to join them for tea, saying they were too busy tending to their mother. The McClures offer to join Allison and Eleanor for tea, at their expense. Afterward, Eleanor then goes to the Centennial Exhibition.

Chapter 5

Eleanor goes to see the Spirit-Hunters. She meets a young man who is very unhappy at her interrupting an experiment with Laurel Hill grave dirt. She apologizes to the angry man, and asks to see Joseph Boyer. The man pushes her to wait outside, and introduces himself as Daniel Sheridan. Behind her emerges Joseph Boyer, who apologizes for Daniel, and introduces himself to Eleanor. Joseph then invites Eleanor back in. Joseph explains to Daniel he has just returned from a meeting with a Mr. Peger, and that it was decided no reinforcements are needed for the cemetery. Eleanor then explains to Joseph and Daniel about her brother, and the séance. Daniel says they have no time to handle cases because they are after a necromancer who had previously raised the dead in New York. They explain that the Dead will become more and more aggressive, and move beyond the Centennial Exhibition. Joseph is kind enough to at least ask to see Elijah's letter the following day –but then the Dead alarm goes off.

Chapter 6

Joseph and Daniel prepare some kind of wheel-like glass and metal machine, and they tell Eleanor to stay put. Behind her, however, the black being from the night before appears, and she rushes out into Machinery Hall where she finds innumerable Dead walking around, heading toward the Hydraulic Annex. A Chinese boy helps escort Eleanor to the Annex. The key to taking out the Dead is to take out their legs. The Chinese boy is Jie. He and Eleanor smash the kneecaps of the Dead while Daniel and Joseph prepare the machine that Joseph then sticks his hand into, causing a bright, blue light that explodes overhead, collapsing and killing the dead instantly. Daniel and Eleanor then help Joseph along, who is weak. Joseph tells Eleanor he felt the presence of the dark spirit, that there is energy in everything, a soul. Joseph, when he stands in water, can connect to the spiritual energy. Eleanor tells Joseph that the spirit he felt is the spirit her mother let out. Then, reporters descend on them, and Eleanor leaves.

Analysis

Susan Denard's novel "Something Strange and Deadly" begins explosively and mysteriously. Sixteen year-old Eleanor Fitt learns that her brother has disappeared, is being held captive against his will, and the city of Philadelphia comes under attack by the risen Dead. As if Eleanor's life was not complicated enough, she has to live with the high expectations of her mother, Abigail, who wishes Eleanor would fit well into the social strata of Philadelphia. The Fitt family fortune has been in rapid decline since the death of Henry, Eleanor's father and Abigail's husband. So Eleanor must deal with not only the living, but the dead as well -and the missing. The séance her mother throws that unleashes an evil, dark spirit, compels Eleanor to seek out Joseph, Daniel, and Jie,



the Spirit-Hunters, who handle all sorts of paranormal issues, including the walking Dead.

Eleanor's plethora of problems -some requiring contradictory behavior- only magnify when she falls in league with the Spirit-Hunters, for she is forced to come face-to-face with the walking Dead. Such public exposure endangers her reputation, which is the only thing the Fitt family has going for it. Eleanor's potential marriage to Clarence would solve many financial problems, though that marriage appears to be based solely on the good reputation that Eleanor has for herself. Eleanor, meanwhile, wonders about the reputation of the Spirit-Hunters, which seems to be one of conflict: they are approved of, but not trusted. Eleanor wonders if they are indeed capable of anything. When she sees them in action against the walking Dead, she is sold. There will be no turning back for her. She now stands between the conventional society of Philadelphia and the dark underworld which the Spirit-Hunters strive to keep out of civilization.

Discussion Question 1

Describe the Fitt family financial situation. What solution is there to this financial difficulty? Is this appropriate? Why or why not?

Discussion Question 2

Why does Eleanor seek out the Spirit-Hunters? Why would she press them with the case of her missing brother? Do you believe the Spirit-Hunters will take her case? Why or why not?

Discussion Question 3

Why do you believe the Spirit-Hunters have come to guard the Centennial Exhibition? What purpose could setting up headquarters at the Exhibition possibly have?

Vocabulary

Audible, treacherous, convulsive, theology, nary, guttersnipe, bodice, regal, undulated, deftly, elegant, etiquette, profusely, morbid, indignation.



Chapter 7-12

Summary

Chapter 7

Eleanor and Mary wash her dress, which smells of the dead. Mary is bribed into silence with a pair of gloves. Eleanor then goes on a ride with Clarence. He asks her for discretion about Friday night's meeting. Clarence explains that Frederick Weathers was his friend, and he had sent his footman to get a newspaper. Allison does not yet know, and Frederick's father has declined to run for council again, compromising Clarence's own campaign. Clarence also tells Eleanor to stay away from the Spirit-Hunters, that they are low-life, disreputable people. Eleanor doesn't agree. Eleanor convinces Clarence to go by Laurel Hill Cemetery. They look inside and see one of the undead. Eleanor wants to see where it is going by following it along the fence. Clarence protests. It turns out he was a year ahead of Elijah at Germantown Academy, a school where he had only been acquainted with Elijah. He apologizes for not letting Eleanor know he knew Elijah sooner. Suddenly, a corpse crashes against the fence, that of a long-dead Union soldier. As they leave, Clarence says he will tell someone about the soldier, but tells Eleanor to keep quiet, because he doesn't want their mothers to find out.

Chapter 8

Eleanor heads out early the next morning to give Elijah's letter to Joseph. But the Spirit-Hunters are not there. Eleanor meets a familiar-sounding man with a Cockney accent who says the Spirit-Hunters never help anyone, saying they are too busy or there is not enough money being offered. The man says the Spirit-Hunters have been around since May 25 to make the Dead problems, better, but the Dead problems have only gotten worse. The man is suspicious that the trouble in New York ended when they left, and the trouble in Philadelphia began when they arrived. The man says he is Nicholas Peger from the Philadelphia Bulletin. He is also a detective. He asks if there is anything Eleanor needs, and Eleanor declines. He tells her not to trust the Spirit-Hunters, and then says if she decides she needs his help, to find him at the Bulletin.

At home, Mama demands to know where Eleanor has been. Eleanor says she has been volunteering at the Women's Hall at the Exhibition, and Mama is aghast until Eleanor explains that Clarence approves of women who volunteer. Mama knows that a match with Clarence can save the family from destitution. Henry had been a railroad supplier, making his fortune from hard work. But an exploding dynamite shipment cost Henry the contract, and he died soon after. Eleanor then helps Mary with dinner. She recalls a vague memory of her father arguing with a dark-haired man named Clay, saying they will live like kings, and that Henry said that no good will come of it. Elijah had gone on to travel in 1873, and then had written from New York in 1875. She reads through all of his old letters, searching for clues, and making mental note of things mentioned like "Gas Ring". Eleanor goes to the calling card bowl, to find Elijah's first telegram the week



before, saying he had been delayed. It had been sent from Philadelphia the same day the Spirit-Hunters had arrived, on May 25.

Chapter 9

Eleanor goes to the Machinery Hall again to see if Joseph and the others have gone over Elijah's letter, but Joseph tells her to return in the evening, and he leaves. Daniel also leaves with a large bag, and Eleanor decides to follow him. She sees something poking through the sack—the tip of a boot. Outside, she hires a carriage to follow Daniel's. As they drive, Eleanor realizes they are headed toward Laurel Hill, and no one is permitted to go beyond East Fairmount Park. Eleanor pays the driver and then follows Daniel on foot into the woods, where he confronts her with a sickle.

Chapter 10

Daniel asks Eleanor if she has a death wish because she is visiting such a place. Daniel tells her to be quiet, because the Dead could hear them. He explains when the Dead are not under the control of a necromancer, they are desperately hungry. She also sees there is no body in the bag, just a boot used to sheath the sickle. Daniel is setting up a system to trigger an alarm by telegraph to allow the Spirit-Hunters to respond faster, for the previous evening, one of the Dead got out and killed a man and two horses before they could respond.

Daniel also knows that Eleanor is following him. He compares her to everyone else who wants their help, but doesn't trust them. Daniel is content to let the Dead have the city, but Joseph, who is just and moral, will not let that happen—and so neither will Daniel. Daniel explains that he has a lot of making up to do, and so he works for Joseph Boyer, for there is no man more noble. He says that Joseph knew the letter from Elijah was covered in spiritual energy, and was going to offer Eleanor some help, but she arrived at a bad time. A headless body has been found, identified by the family. Eleanor is worried that her brother may turn up dead, but she is determined to save him instead. As they talk, Eleanor sees interest in Daniel's eye, and wonders if he could be attracted to her. Daniel announces he is going to get more grave dirt, tells Eleanor she should help, but Eleanor declines, and leaves to head back to Machinery Hall.

There, she finds Joseph and Jie. Jie is actually a girl, and Joseph is on his way out to propose a pulse bomb to the Mayor. Jie explains she dresses like a girl because most Chinese girls aren't looked favorably upon in the United States. Jie is interested to learn that Elijah had been studying grimoires which are books of power. Grimoires can be very bad. Solomon and Honourous, books that Elijah had been studying, were books of black magic. Jie goes on to explain that Joseph had an old friend named Marcus, and they had studied with the Voodoo Queen of New Orleans., magic to ward of spirits. But Marcus wanted spells to heal illnesses and raise the dead. Marcus used grimoires to this end, was confronted by Joseph in the middle of a ritual, lost control of the Dead, who became Hungry, and then killed Marcus. Joseph blames himself for Marcus's death. Jie wonders if perhaps Elijah followed the necromancer, and then the Spirit-Hunters followed as well. Joseph returns, asking for a list of volunteer guards who will



be trained to combat the dead, and then says if Eleanor walks with him, he has some time to talk.

Joseph tells Eleanor he will help her find her brother. There has also been no sign of the wicked spirit conjured by Eleanor's mother since Saturday. Joseph can stop the spirit by using electricity to break apart the soul. And just because Elijah was studying grimoires, does not mean he was necessary studying evil. Joseph believes the necromancer may have kidnapped Elijah for his study of grimoires. As long as Elijah is valuable, he will stay alive. The necromancer, it is believed, is sacrificing people to make his powers stronger.

Chapter 11

On Wednesday, the Wilcoxes come to tea. While Mama and Mrs. Wilcox talk, Eleanor plays the piano and Allison babbles. Clarence sits on the sofa. He does not look well or healthy. Clarence asks Abigail to take Eleanor for a stroll in the gardens, and Abigail readily consents. Eleanor tells Clarence she is worried for his health, but he is gruff and comments about the color in her cheeks from being outside too much. Clarence explains he hasn't been sleeping, that another friend of his has passed away, from Germantown Academy, named James Sutton. Eleanor realizes that the necromancer is targeting Germantown Academy pupils. The thought makes Eleanor sick to her stomach, and Clarence offers to get Abigail. But Eleanor says she must go to the Exhibition. Clarence goes along, too. His footman, Willis, follows. Clarence explains the footman is there for personal reasons, and that he wants to see what mischief Eleanor is up to. She tells him she wanted to see the water exhibits, and agrees to meet him for an ice cream soda after using the necessary.

Meanwhile, she discovers Daniel hiding behind a steam engine. Daniel insists he isn't hiding, and asks if Clarence Wilcox knows where she is headed. She says he doesn't. Daniel tells Eleanor never to mention his name to Clarence, for safety reasons. He whispers this, causing Eleanor to punch his elbow and to call him a varmint. Daniel tells Eleanor to be afraid of Clarence, for he is afraid of Clarence as well.

Chapter 12

Eleanor explains the Germantown Academy connection to Joseph and Daniel –two boys from the same school Elijah attended, dead and decapitated. The city, further, has not been as helpful as it could be, because its politicians are self-serving and only self-interested. But all politicians are under scrutiny because of the Whiskey Ring, a group of Republicans using taxpayer money to their own advantage. Now, all politicians are using money to make things seem wonderful, like the Exhibition Hall, when only a short distance away, the poor live in Shantytown. They will not invest money in the Spirit-Hunter plan to invade the Cemetery with an army and defeat all of the Dead at once. They also need more information on electricity and mechanics, but the city will not allow them into the private library collections. Eleanor is thrilled, wanting to help, for her father had a lifetime subscription to such collections, as well as special privileges. They agree to meet the following morning so Eleanor can take Daniel to the library. As Eleanor goes



to rejoin Clarence, she sees him talking to Nicholas Peger. She can tell from their movements that they know each other well.

Analysis

Mama Abigail's plans for Eleanor are fully revealed. A sneaking suspicion before that a match with an eligible, wealthy bachelor could save the Fitt family is finally confirmed, and made an actual plan. While Eleanor isn't thrilled at the prospect of being married off, she is not unhappy with the idea that Clarence could be her husband. She has nothing against him, and holds no animosity towards him. He is polite, formal, and kind, and these are important qualities for a man to have. Perhaps most interesting to Eleanor -and perhaps most attractive to Eleanor about Clarence -is that she breaks rules of propriety with him again and again. Clarence does not condemn her for it. Instead, it seems to draw him closer to her, encouraging him to submit a request for a carriage drive with Eleanor, which Eleanor accepts.

Indeed, Clarence seems to be so attracted to -and trusting of- Eleanor, that he takes her into his confidence about the deaths of his best friends. This intimacy also allows Eleanor to grow closer to Clarence, who does not look well, and is in ill-health because he is not sleeping. It also allows Eleanor to realize that there is somehow a connection between the men who attended Germantown Academy as boys, and the targets of the necromancer. This makes Eleanor afraid that her brother's own tenure at Germantown has made him a target for the necromancer, as well as his experience with researching the Dead and grimoires. Joseph explains to Eleanor that she should not worry, because grimoires are not all evil, though many of them are.

The Spirit-Hunters, because of these facts, as well as because Elijah's note is covered with spiritual energy, compels them to take Eleanor's case on. Yet, despite this, Eleanor is also determined that she will be a part of things. Yet, no sooner does this occur, than Peger of the Philadelphia Bulletin materialize to tell her not to trust the Spirit-Hunters, further complicating an already complicated situation. Eleanor, though it is expected of her that she should be a functioning member of Philadelphia's reputable society,

Discussion Question 1

Why do the Spirit-Hunters agree to take on Eleanor's case? What do grimoires have to do with it?

Discussion Question 2

Why do you believe Daniel tells Eleanor to beware of Clarence Wilcox? Why does Daniel not want his name mentioned to Clarence?



Discussion Question 3

Explain the relationship between Eleanor and Clarence. Has it grown stronger, or more strained? Why? How does Eleanor factor into this?

Vocabulary

Discretion, rendezvous, exertion, evasive, logical, meticulous, belligerence, accusatory.



Chapter 13 - 18

Summary

Chapter 13

Eleanor returns to Clarence, and they return home. Early the next morning, Eleanor goes back to Joseph and the Spirit-Hunters. They all go to the library. Eleanor is impressed by Jie, who can go wherever she wants, do whatever she wants, and can fight. Jie explains she came to America to escape things like foot binding. By pretending to be a boy, Jie can be free forever. She explains she met Joseph and Daniel at a saloon playing cards, where she cheated Daniel. Jie goes on to say that Eleanor doesn't have to wear a bodice, that she has a choice. At the library, they search for a Germantown Academy yearbook, as well as for information on ghosts in Philadelphia. Eleanor, meanwhile, asks the librarian if she knows anything about the Gas Ring, but the librarian does not. Eleanor then sees Daniel emerge from the private collections wearing special goggles and carrying books on German engineering. He tells her to try on the goggles, which make things seem as if she is staring through muddy water. Daniel explains when spiritual energy is around, the lenses clear up. There is fluid with magnetic powder between the lenses that moves when spiritual energy is present. As Daniel speaks, Eleanor focuses on his mouth and wonders if he has ever kissed anyone.

Daniel explains that energy for spirits is different than energy for living people. In living people, energy is interwoven into the body; in spirits, it is not. The armchair in which Eleanor has been sitting –one she sat in with her brother years before –is covered up by the goggles, meaning the Dead have been there before. They ask the librarian about it, who recalls a filthy man sitting in the chair who wanted all the available information on the Exhibition. Eleanor believes it is the necromancer. Suddenly, the room goes cold and the goggles fog up, and Daniel tells Eleanor to run.

Chapter 14

Daniel shouts for people to flee. As Eleanor goes for the fire alarm, she sees the amorphous, black spirit her mother had released. The spirit attacks Eleanor and the others with books, splinters from shelves, and so on, and Joseph says he needs a source of electricity to handle the spirit, for it has grown much stronger. They decide to look for quartz, which can be a power source. Eleanor realizes her earrings are made of amethyst –the same as quartz. Joseph uses the quartz to cast out the spirit. Joseph realizes the spirit desires something deeply, but what it is, he cannot say. Eleanor faints as exhaustion from being electrocuted comes over her. She awakens in her bed, to her mother telling her she will not be volunteering anymore and fainting in the heat. It is a clever lie, Eleanor knows. Mama is further incensed that a dirty man has brought her home, and Eleanor believes it must have been Daniel. Eleanor is now forbidden from going to the Exhibition. Mama encourages Eleanor to focus on Clarence. They are



almost out of money, and Clarence will ensure they are not out living on the street. As Mam leaves, Eleanor notices she has a new, cheap parasol, having lost her old one. She smiles with the thought that Daniel has purchased a parasol for her.

Chapter 15

Eleanor is at the park with Clarence, Allison, the McClures, and the Virtue Sisters. Eleanor is not lost on the irony of her situation: her mother refuses to allow her to attend the Exhibition due to heat, but allows her to run around in layers of petticoats in the hot summer afternoon to play a sport. Clarence speaks to Eleanor alone. He looks even worse than before. Clarence is worried about her, and Eleanor is a little annoyed at having to deal with him, but she softens when she learns that yet another academy friend, Clinton Bradley, has died. Clarence makes Eleanor promise to write Elijah to make him stay in New York, that anyone from the academy is now in danger. Clarence says something is following him around and means to kill him, and he will do whatever it takes to keep his family safe. He clutches Eleanor's hands, and she tells him never to touch her again. He apologizes, and she tells him he needs more protection. She also wonders if the darkness in him has always been there, hiding beneath the surface.

On the way home, the Wilcox carriage detours to the Exhibition, for Clarence to run in to do some business. Allison reveals he is a Philadelphia Gas Works Trustee. Eleanor asks if it has ever been referred to as the Gas Ring, but Allison explains that her father rarely ever talked about it, and the same is now true of Clarence. She recalls her father saying that they live like kings, but that is all she should be worried about. Eleanor is shocked to learn that Allison's father's name was Clarence –Clay for short. Allison remembers some of the names of the Trustees –including Weathers, Sutton, Bradley, and others. Eleanor is stunned. More than Germantown Academy apparently connects the headless corpses. Eleanor dashes out to find a catalogue for the Exhibition upon learning there is a book exhibit as the rain comes down. As she finds one, Daniel finds her. He puts his brown coat over Eleanor and tells her that Clarence is looking for him. He tells her he will be laying low for a while. This hurts Eleanor, who does not want to go without seeing Daniel. She fills him in on the Gas Trustees, and he tells her to stay the hell away from the Gas Ring. Daniel then takes his coat and leaves as Clarence returns.

At home, Eleanor finds a grimy note from her brother, Elijah, which tells her to stop looking for him, and to stop seeing the Spirit-Hunters, because it hurts him, and puts her in danger. Eleanor is horrified that she has neglected Elijah by thinking about Daniel and Clarence. Eleanor thanks God that her brother is still alive, even though the necromancer controls him. Yet, she can also tell the necromancer is scared. She then goes through the exhibition catalogues, and finds the book index, seeking a grimoire, but finding none. She takes a break, and looks again, and finds a listing for the Grand Girmoire's companion book, *Le Dragon Noir*, supposedly written by King Solomon. Eleanor is elated.

Chapter 16



Eleanor sneaks off to the Exhibition the next morning. Jie is asleep on the floor, while Joseph is already awake. Daniel returns enraged, waking up Jie, saying the city will not trust them with dynamite. Eleanor tells them she knows what the Dead are after –Le Dragon Noire, the Black Dragon. Eleanor explains how she believes that perhaps Elijah went after it before the necromancer could get his hands on it. Joseph says he had spoken to the Exhibition Board when they had first arrived, but the Board said the volume was nothing important and was not on display, though it now clearly is. Joseph explains the Black Dragon contains spells for reanimating corpses with souls, which is what the black spirit was probably seeking at the library. Daniel explains he wants dynamite for the pulse bomb, a wave of electromagnetic energy that would destroy the Dead and other spirits. To create such a wave, an explosion must be had to propel it. Jie decides that if the city will not give them dynamite, she will steal it. Joseph asks Daniel if he remembers the layout of the factory, and Daniel, seemingly pained, says he does. He and Jie will go to the factory that night, while Joseph destroys the Grimoire. As Daniel leaves, Eleanor thanks him for the parasol.

As Eleanor leaves, Peger finds her, having come to learn who she is. Peger says that all of the dirt he has on her would be valuable to someone. Peger relents, saying that she shouldn't trust the Spirit-Hunters. He then asks about a young man named Daniel Sheridan, and he shows her a photo of Daniel when he was a child. He says Daniel is an escaped convict from Philadelphia's Eastern State Penitentiary, having been arrested for murder, and an explosion that caused Fitt Railway Supply serious trouble. It is the explosion that crippled the company and drove her father to her death. Daniel is also known as "Sure Hands Danny". The conversation startles Eleanor, and she wonders who she can trust. She then turns to thoughts of her brother.

Chapter 17

Eleanor is unhappy that her mother is forcing her to attend the opera alone, with Clarence. Mam explains how Mrs. Wilcox reveals that Clarence speaks highly of her, saying that she is different, and speaks of little else. Eleanor protests, saying she is only sixteen and does not know what she wants yet. Mama will hear none of it. Mama reminds Eleanor that when she is dead, Eleanor will be all alone. Only a husband and children and love will offer Eleanor happiness, says Mama. Mama explains that Henry and Clarence's father were once friends, but parted over a business difference, when Clarence Wilcox and others wanted to leave the railways behind. Henry Fitt had been offered a position in the new business, but he had declined it due to a suspicion of dirty politics. Eleanor then wonders why her mother wants her to spend time with the son of the man who ostracized her father, but Mama says the past is of no consequence. Most of their family money was thereafter wasted on a city council campaign, and their only hope of surviving is a good match to Clarence.

Clarence tells Eleanor she looks stunning. Taking his arm, Clarence escorts her to the carriage. Three Pinkerton Detectives are also there, having been hired by Clarence. Mrs. Wilcox and Allison will be going on a trip to the Wilcox family seaside cottage. Clarence falls asleep on the ride to the opera. Inside, the Virtue Sisters are not happy to see Eleanor on Clarence's arm. Outside in the street, Eleanor sees Jie, and it makes



her feel better. Clarence soon falls asleep during the first act. Eleanor excuses herself, saying she need to go to the necessary. Outside, she tells Willis she is going home due to a headache. Jie wants Eleanor's help because she is worried about Daniel, because the factory makes him skittish.

Chapter 18

Joseph does not want Eleanor getting involved in things. He further worries that Eleanor's position in society will be in danger as well, especially if things go wrong. As Eleanor goes to head home, she runs into Daniel. She confronts him about his past. He confirms he is a murderer, having killed someone six years before, but he denies ruining the company. Eleanor wonders if the murder was justified. Before Daniel can explain, an alarm goes off at the U.S. Government Building. Joseph explains he has hidden the grimoire. Joseph tells Daniel to go to the factory alone, while Jie rallies any guards she can. Joseph reluctantly tells Eleanor she must go to the factory. Daniel protests. .

0 Eleanor will keep watch. Jie gives her men's clothing, as well as a wrapping for her chest.

Daniel and Eleanor head along the Schuylkill River. He tells her she will definitely keep watch, and to run for help for Joseph if anything happens. Daniel explains he is from Chicago, where he picked locks, hence Sure Hands Danny. He was later taken on by Clay Wilcox to do a job. Daniel learns that the Gas Trustees are going to be rigging the upcoming city council election, and no one liked the Gas Ring's power. Daniel was supposed to rob the factory, but he was confronted by two guards, whom he fought with, knocking one to the ground so hard he hit his head on a rock and died. The other guard tells him the plan is now ruined, and Daniel says he realized he was supposed to be incinerated in the explosion to follow. The explosion meant that no one would hire Eleanor's father anymore, and his campaign as a Democrat for the city council was ruined by the Trustees, who were all Republicans. Eleanor is saddened, realizing her father was not paranoid, but truly did have enemies. And Henry was running against Clay for Council. It seems as if everything was planned by Clay to bring down Henry.

Daniel explains he escaped from Eastern, met Joseph, and then followed him around wherever he went. Eleanor reveals that Peger is being paid a lot of money by Clarence to find Daniel, that his existence is a threat to Clarence's chances for a city council seat. Eleanor also realizes that Clarence bullied Elijah in school. Eleanor then goes on to wonder why she and her mother had been sheltered from all these secrets. They arrive at the dynamite factory, Alfred Nobel & Company. As they sneak in, it becomes apparent the guards and the road agents out near the factory have a deal, and Daniel knows then that the factory is rotten to the core. But Daniel accidentally leaves his leather wallet behind, and Eleanor rushes after him.



Analysis

The further and more involved Eleanor becomes with the Spirit-Hunters, the more danger she comes into, culminating with her decision to be a lookout for a theft at the dynamite factory. This occurs after many facts come to light about Daniel's past, including that he once murdered a man and had been set up by the Gas Ring. From Daniel's evidence, it appears as if everything was indeed orchestrated by the Wilcox family to bring down her father. This only strengthens her resolve to stand by the Spirit Hunters. She even goes so far as to bail out on Clarence at the opera in order to go and do what she can to help the Spirit-Hunters in their quest to stop the evil spirit, destroy the necromancer, and bring down the Dead. The situation at the opera is symbolic. Eleanor is fully rejecting the current world of society and expectations in which she finds herself. She is not worrying about her reputation as she involves herself in the dark underworld of Philadelphia, in the company of the Spirit-Hunters.

At the same time, Eleanor is haunted by the words of Peger of the Philadelphia Bulletin, who warns her against trusting the Spirit-Hunters. Peger points out that the troubles with the Dead in New York ended when Joseph and the others departed. It seemed to flare up in Philadelphia with their arrival. Eleanor is not convinced. Yet, there is something about the timing that piques her curiosity and troubles her. It also troubles Eleanor that Clarence and Peger seem to know one another so well. But despite Daniel's own troubled past, Eleanor is no less committed to the cause of the Spirit-Hunters. If her ditching Clarence at the opera was a visible rejection of the class into which she was born, her agreement to participate in a theft of dynamite marks her departure from that class as well. There will be no going back for Eleanor.

Discussion Question 1

Why does Peger tell Eleanor she should not trust the Spirit-Hunters? Is there any truth or validity to his claim? Why or why not? Explain using evidence from the novel.

Discussion Question 2

Why does Eleanor seem so willing to trust Daniel, and to not hold his past against him? Would you react the same way? Why or why not?

Discussion Question 3

What clues does Eleanor obtain from Daniel's revelation about his past? How does she use these clues in the investigation of the entire situation?

Vocabulary

Companionable, dexterity, haphazardly, incessant, oblivious, gallivant, pallor, maelstrom, abominable, scalawag, ostracized, haggard, excruciatingly.



Chapter 19-25

Summary

Chapter 19

Eleanor rushes after Daniel to give him his wallet. He thanks her, but he tells her it was a stupid thing to do. By the light emitted from glowworms in a jar, Daniel picks the lock to the warehouse. They fill two sacks with twenty sticks of dynamite, each. But an alarm is raised outside. Daniel realizes Eleanor has left footprints behind. He instructs her to get back with at least one sack to Joseph. Daniel goes out to distract and fight the guards, but he is overcome. Eleanor then is almost captured by guards, but rushes off. She finds a vat with a water tap that says "Do Not Adjust", so she turns the water flow off to throw the guards into confusion. She accidentally breaks the knob as well. She then rushes back to untie Daniel and help him escape. They rush away, expecting an explosion, but it does not come. Daniel believes she must have turned the wrong knob. Daniel is enraged that Eleanor didn't leave when he told her to. As Daniel grabs Eleanor, to kiss her or to speak—she doesn't know—the factory explodes behind them. The explosion sends them sprinting back into Philadelphia.

Chapter 20

The Spirit-Hunter lab at the Exhibition Hall has been destroyed. Inventions have been crushed and Joseph's papers are shredded. Jie reveals the necromancer tricked them into going to the Government Building. Joseph is only semi-conscious, having killed over a hundred of the Dead. Daniel then tells Eleanor to go home, and she obeys. As she gets home, Clarence is waiting. One of the Pinkertons saw her leave with a Chinese boy. Eleanor explodes on Clarence with rage and hatred, confronting him with the past. Clarence admits that he and his friends bullied Elijah. Their fathers ordered the bullying. He says he is ashamed of his actions as a child, but he is prepared to offer Elijah a spot on the Gas Trustees when Elijah comes home. He regrets the bad blood between the families. But, he will follow his father's plans. He wants to marry Eleanor to help out with her family's financial situation as well. He says her mother spends too much, and Elijah should be at home instead of traveling around. Eleanor begins crying hysterically and blurts out that Elijah has been taken by the necromancer. She then rushes away from Clarence.

Clarence follows, demanding answers. He threatens to go to Abigail with the truth about everything if Eleanor doesn't give him answers. She tells him to wait until the morning. He takes her hand in his and brushes hair from her face, telling her she could be a fine lady if she wanted to. As he leaves, she sees a figure leave the shadows to follow Clarence, and realizes one of the Pinkertons now knows everything, too. Eleanor knows she will have to tell Clarence everything, and she knows she will need his help. But Clarence does not come the following day. Eleanor then decides to go and see



Clarence, but Allison meets her at the door instead. Clarence did not come home after the opera Saturday night, and the Dead have taken hostages at the Exhibition Hall.

Chapter 21

Philadelphia has been taken by panic. Eleanor goes to the Exhibition Hall. The necromancer is in control of the city. The police are held at bay by hostages. They are keeping the firemen away from a fire in the government buildings, and the Spirit-Hunters no longer have a lab. She rushes past the police and goes inside, where Daniel reveals there are two thousand hostages in the Agricultural Hall. They are being guarded by hundreds and hundreds of the Dead, against whom Joseph is trying to get through. The necromancer wants the Black Dragon book. Meanwhile, the hold the necromancer has on so many undead is coming undone. They will all turn Hungry if nothing is done, soon. Eleanor is given the task of taking the book to Joseph. She is given goggles by Daniel to get by. It is possible the evil spirit that has been after her may show up. She sees hundreds of the Dead simply standing in rows throughout the streets.

She rushes to the Government Building. There, all of the dead animals and fish on display have returned to life. She realizes the necromancer must be nearby. She goes to the historic part of the exhibition in the building, to George Washington's camp trunk, where the grimoire is hidden. She grabs it. She uses George Washington's sword for defense against a white polar bear, as well as other large animals. She stabs the polar bear's paw, but suddenly, everything stops moving. Then, the evil spirit appears, takes the sword, and raises it against Eleanor. A male voice then calls out "Siste!" The spirit drops the sword and disappears.

Chapter 22

It is Elijah who has saved Eleanor. They embrace. Eleanor notices he doesn't have glasses anymore. He says that he doesn't need them now and he will explain later. He tells her she has what he needs. Eleanor is confused, saying they can run away from the necromancer together. Elijah says he isn't the weak thing he used to be. As they head out, Elijah reveals that he himself is the necromancer. He goes on to say that he will be the most powerful person in the world, and he will bring back their father from the dead. Elijah has not just been killing the enemies of their father, but the enemies of his own from school. It was Elijah who followed Clarence from the garden. Clarence's body then emerges from the Dead, headless, carrying his own head. Eleanor is sick. She did care for Clarence, and Clarence wanted to make amends with him. Eleanor calls Elijah a monster. Elijah says that the bad people have gotten what they deserved. Eleanor tells Elijah she will surrender the grimoire if he and the Dead leave. He agrees, and then he laughs when he gets the grimoire, saying strategy was never Eleanor's strong point.

Suddenly, Daniel, Joseph, and Jie arrive. Daniel takes off after Elijah. Eleanor then pursues, wanting to find a way to save Elijah's soul. Daniel throws a pulse bomb after Elijah, but Eleanor tells him to run. She then grabs the bomb and tries to throw it into the trees, but it is too late. The bomb explodes, and Eleanor is knocked out.



Chapter 23

Eleanor regains consciousness long enough to see Daniel carrying her and crying. When she comes to again, the family doctor is hovering over her. He then gives her laudanum to ease her pain. When she wakes up again, her mother is crying, happy that she is alive. Eleanor is in a lot of pain. Mama demands to know about Daniel, for it was he who brought her home. Mama says Eleanor's reputation is at stake. If she can't find another person to marry, the family will be done. They can't even afford her medical bills. The only thing Eleanor has at this point is her reputation. She is horrified that all her mother can think about is money. She screams at her mother to get out, which she does.

When Mary comes in, Eleanor asks her about what has happened to the Dead and the Spirit-Hunters. Mary reveals that Mama knows Daniel is a Spirit-Hunter, and he has been accused of the murder of Clarence. The newspapers blame the entire affair on the Spirit-Hunters. Warrants have been issued for their arrest. The Wilcoxes have offered a huge reward for Daniel's capture. Three more people have died, and twelve more have been injured by the Dead. Eleanor offers Mary her amethyst earrings in exchange for male clothing. When Mary returns with male clothing, Eleanor offers her the earrings. Mary asks what she is planning, but Eleanor refuses to tell her. Mary threatens to rat her out, but Eleanor scolds her and tells her to get out. She tells Mary that if she rats, she will tell her mother that the earrings were stolen. Mary rushes from the room upset.

Chapter 24

At eleven that night, Eleanor dresses and sneaks out. As she heads down the street, she realizes that she is not alone. Daniel is also there. He says he has been waiting around for her, hoping to catch a glimpse of her. He blames himself for her injuries. They end up kissing –Eleanor's first kiss –and it is delightful to her. Daniel then pulls away with the ringing of church bells, telling her he has made a mistake. Eleanor becomes angry. She then decides to storm off, but Daniel tells her not to go after Elijah, that he is not her brother anymore, that he is a lunatic. Eleanor refuses to listen, but Daniel says if she is determined to stop Elijah herself, then it must be done as a team. The Spirit-Hunters have been hiding out near Laurel Hill. They are not powerful enough to stop Elijah, only to stop the Dead leaving the cemetery. Eleanor says she can get in to stop Elijah. First, the Dead army must be put down; then, Elijah must be killed. If he is killed first, the Dead continue on, unabated and uncontrolled. They have ten pulse bombs, but because Elijah keeps the Dead moving, ten aren't enough to get them all. Eleanor knows that the water of the nearby river will enhance Joseph's power, but the electric machine cannot go into the water. Eleanor announces they need a boat.

Chapter 25

The four head out in a stolen rowboat toward where the river touches the Cemetery's rocky shoreline. The electric machine will be in the boat, while the waters will magnify Joseph's powers. As they land on shore, the Dead emerge. Eleanor rushes to her father's grave, where she knows Elijah will be. But the Dead close in, tearing at Eleanor,



and bloodying her up. Elijah emerges, stopping the mayhem, and apologizing for it. Before her, Eleanor does not see a monster, but her long lost brother. Elijah is saddened because he has been unable to raise their father from the dead. He explains it is as if something in the spirit realm is blocking their father's spirit from joining them. He vows revenge, and then Eleanor knows he has gone insane. The real evil is not the Gas Ring, but Elijah. Elijah admits frustration with the dark spirit, which releases Dead from his control.

Suddenly, a pulse bomb goes off, and Elijah knows he has been betrayed. He then orders his army to the river. Elijah then tells Eleanor that she will help him raise their father, that she has the power to raise the Dead as well. It runs in families, in blood. Holding onto Eleanor, Elijah chants, and the skeleton of their father moves. But the skeleton moving no longer belongs to their father. It attacks Elijah, who calls on it to stop, but it does not. It attacks Eleanor, and Elijah tackles it to save her. Between Elijah and Eleanor, they manage to stop the skeleton, though the damage has been done. A gash has been torn in Elijah's throat. Eleanor is terrified as her brother begins to die. She does not want him to die. But suddenly, Elijah moves. The voice that then speaks is the same as her brother's, but the accent is totally different –similar to Joseph's. The evil spirit that has been released has now taken possession of Elijah's body. It demands to know where Joseph is. Eleanor realizes the spirit is Marcus. Marcus demands to know about the grimoire's whereabouts. When Eleanor says she doesn't know and spits in his face, Marcus throws her into her father's open grave.

Analysis

Despite Eleanor's rejection of Philadelphia's high society and her embracing of the darker underside of the city, Clarence is still enamored with her. Indeed, it is Eleanor's fiery independence that attracts Clarence. This makes the reader realize that, though the match with Eleanor may be one that is being arranged, there is genuine affection that Clarence has for Eleanor. It is also understood that Eleanor does indeed have some kind of feelings for Clarence -though her heart is now torn by Daniel as well. However, Eleanor is enraged with Clarence for his past, but immediately subdued by the knowledge that Clarence has spent so much time trying to make things right, going so far as to prepare a place for Elijah as a member of the Gas Trustees. What is telling about Clarence's honor here is clear, as well as tragically ironic: Eleanor does not need to marry him in order to save her family. Without her realizing it, the marriage to Clarence has become a voluntary choice -the first real, honest, and public choice that Eleanor has made. She also does not seem to take seriously -or see much of Clarence in herself -whose own past freedom has been virtually non-existent.

Nevertheless, Eleanor continues on, making the conscious decision to defy society to continue to help the Spirit-Hunters. She grows ever closer to Daniel, and ultimately decides that she will stand with the Spirit-Hunters to the bitter end, sneaking out on her own mother to do so. The horror in Eleanor's decision to stay on with the Spirit-Hunters through the hostage situation reveals the truth, that the necromancer is actually her own brother, Elijah. He is determined to exact revenge on his enemies, and on the enemies



of his father, and in so doing begins to murder them. The sons pay for the sins of the father, but the tragedy with Clarence is that Clarence was seeking redemption. But, when Eleanor's life is threatened, Elijah finds his redemption by giving his own life to save Eleanor's, though his body is then possessed by Marcus.

Discussion Question 1

What is the tragic irony, concerning Eleanor, of Clarence's attempts to redeem himself for his past, in part by giving Elijah a place in the Gas Trustees? Why do you believe Eleanor does not recognize this?

Discussion Question 2

Why does Eleanor fail to see that she and Clarence have much more in common than she previously figured? Does she view Clarence as a friend, an enemy, or a potential love? Why?

Discussion Question 3

What do you believe are Clarence's motives for seeking to redeem himself, and his family, for the things they have done in the past? Explain.

Vocabulary

Impetus, euphoric, enmity, aghast, impenetrable, putrid, decrepit, quavered, lolled, liling.



Chapter 26-27

Summary

Chapter 26

As Eleanor struggles to get up, Daniel jumps down on top of her, telling her to stay down. From above, the roar of dynamite can be heard. Joseph and Jie are fighting off the Hungry Dead, while Eleanor sees the grimoire lying half-buried in the dirt. Daniel pockets it. They then rush toward the river. There, Joseph is prepared. Eleanor tells him Marcus has returned in her brother's body. As Marcus confronts Joseph, the Dead go past them. Eleanor, Daniel, and Jie rush to the boat. As they paddle out, Eleanor realizes that she has the power, the gift, to affect the dead. She knows she can use the machine. Corpse by corpse, Eleanor sends them back to sleep. As she looks up into the spirit realm, going beyond her own body, she sees the spirits of her brother and her father. She also forces Marcus to vanish.

Chapter 27

Eleanor wakes up in Philadelphia's Pennsylvania Hospital. Her right hand is infected from a bite. Later, it is amputated. Mary reads Shakespeare to her. The family is going to sell possessions to cover its medical bills and stay in the house. Peger slams Eleanor in the press, publishing the news that she had been with Clarence the night of his death. The Wilcoxes denounce the Fitts and turn their hatred on them. She asks Mary to tell her mother to sell all of her things and to tell her mother that she loves her. Jie comes to visit, to tell Eleanor they are going after the necromancer, and to give Eleanor letters from her brother, which were placed in the pages of the grimoire. They will be headed to Chicago. Jie will write to Eleanor at every city they go to, so she can join them if needed. Eleanor is determined to stay in Philadelphia and take care of her mother. Daniel then sneaks in to see Eleanor. He apologizes for all the disagreements and for not being able to help her more. She asks him if he is in love with her, and he says it is not that simple. She says it is a yes or no question. He replies, "No," and he leaves. Eleanor sees Joseph standing in the street below. She then lies down, determined to begin a new life, to dream new dreams. She wants to see more of the world. She wants to take care of her mother. When she goes to sleep, she dreams of Elijah's smile.

Analysis

Susan Dennard's novel "Something Strange and Deadly" ends just as explosively as it begins. Eleanor comes to discover that she, too, has the powers of necromancy because it runs in families. She uses this power to do nothing but good at the end of the novel. She uses it to put down the hordes of the Dead, returning them to slumber. Unfortunately, she will lose her right hand in the final struggle. The loss of her hand can be viewed as symbolic. Her brother was her right hand as they endured their struggles



together. She lost him, too. She must now learn to get along without a hand, and she must learn to get along in the world without her brother. Unfortunately, Marcus escapes with Elijah's body, and the Spirit-Hunters will have to follow after him.

Interestingly enough, at the end of the novel, Eleanor decides not to leave Philadelphia with the Spirit-Hunters. She wants to stay home and take care of her mother, despite her family's now-ruined reputation. Now that she has nothing left to uphold in terms of class in Philadelphia, Eleanor wants to stay on. It appears as if a friendship with Mary, the maid, is on the horizon. At least, Eleanor can rest peacefully knowing she has done the right thing. However, the fights ahead will require as much courage as her struggles with the undead.

Discussion Question 1

What power does Eleanor come to realize she has? How does she use this power? What is the result? Do you think she will ever use her power again?

Discussion Question 2

Why did Elijah succumb to the power of dark magic? Do you believe his decisions are justified? Why or why not?

Discussion Question 3

Why does Eleanor decide to stay in Philadelphia? Is this a good decision? Why or why not? Would you have done the same thing? Why or why not?

Vocabulary

Pandemonium, dispersed, dwindled, opaque, speculation.



Characters

Eleanor Fitt

Eleanor Fitt is the main character, principal protagonist, and narrator of Susan Dennard's novel, "Something Strange and Deadly". Eleanor is a pretty, sixteen year-old girl who is a member of Philadelphia's upper class. She is the daughter of Henry and Abigail Fitt, though Henry is deceased. Eleanor is also the sister of a missing brother, Elijah Fitt, whom she seeks to find throughout the novel. Eleanor is fiery and independent, but she does her best to conform to her mother's expectations. Eleanor is being pushed toward marriage with Clarence Wilcox, who is very wealthy and the city's most eligible bachelor, because her family is in dire financial trouble. Eleanor and Clarence get along well enough, and the two begin to confide in one another. At the same time, Eleanor seeks out Joseph, Daniel, and Jie, the Spirit-Hunters, to help find her missing brother, whom she believes has been taken captive by the necromancer.

Eleanor later learns that Clarence's father, as well as others, ruined Eleanor's father to prevent him from running for city council. She also finds out that Clarence, under his father's demands, bullied Elijah at school. However, Clarence has come to regret everything, and he is seeking redemption, which Eleanor respects. Eleanor later discovers that Elijah is the necromancer, who is seeking revenge for his father and for his own tormented youth by killing his former classmates.

Eleanor, under threat of death from the Dead, is saved when Elijah sacrifices his own life to save her. Eleanor, who learns she has the same abilities as Elijah and Joseph, uses her power to put down the remaining Dead, though she ends up with a wound in her hand that leads to amputation. Rather than pursue Marcus, who has inhabited Elijah's dead body with the Spirit-Hunters, Eleanor stays behind to care for her mother.

Clarence Wilcox

Clarence Wilcox is a handsome twenty year-old man, who heads up the Wilcox family that consists of his sister Allison and his mother. His father has passed away. Clarence is enamored with Eleanor and does not oppose a marriage to her. Clarence has also spent much of the past few years seeking redemption for his family's past and for himself. He goes so far as to create a position for Elijah on the Gas Trustees so that the Fitt family's finances may once again be in order. Clarence is ultimately killed by a vengeful Elijah. Under his father's orders, Clarence had bullied Elijah in school as a child.

Elijah Fitt

Elijah Fitt is the older brother of Eleanor Fitt and the son of Henry and Abigail Fitt. Elijah had spent his childhood bullied and angered by the hatred and abuse rendered against



his father. When he is old enough, he heads out to travel the world to study grimoires and books of dark magic. He then grows powerful enough to raise the Dead and to exact revenge on his enemies, including Clarence. When Eleanor's life is threatened by his Dead army, Elijah gives up his own life to save her. His body is later possessed by the spirit of Marcus, the old adversary and former friend of Joseph.

Daniel Sheridan

Daniel Sheridan is a member of the Spirit-Hunters, specializing in mechanics and engineering. He is a native of Chicago, where he picked locks as a child and earned the sobriquet, Sure Hands Danny. Daniel is later used by Clay Wilcox to stage a dynamite robbery to ruin Henry Fitt. During the scuffle, he accidentally kills a guard, for which he goes to prison at Eastern. He escapes. He later meets Joseph and spends the next several years seeking to atone for his past. Though Daniel is gruff and cold, he grows close to Eleanor. However, a romance is not kindled between them following a kiss. At the end of the novel, Daniel leaves with Joseph and Jie to find the necromancer.

Joseph Boyer

Joseph Boyer, a native of New Orleans, is the leader of the Spirit-Hunters. He is utterly brilliant and unfailingly patient and kind. He has the powers of necromancy, which he uses for good by putting to rest spirits and the undead. He has taken both Daniel and Jie under his wing. With them, he works to do away with evil.

Jie

Jie, a Chinese girl a little older than Eleanor, came to America to escape barbaric practices such as foot binding, only to discover America has its own constraints. She then decided to live as a boy to get by better, which she does. Jie and Eleanor become fast friends, for Eleanor realizes she has a lot in common with Jie. Jie, a former railroad worker, is taken under Joseph's wing, and she becomes a Spirit-Hunter.

Allison Wilcox

Allison Wilcox is the devastatingly beautiful younger sister of Clarence Wilcox. She lives up to society's expectations in all ways. She is highly respected and desired. Allison becomes friends with Eleanor, but then later turns against Eleanor when it is discovered that Eleanor was with Clarence the night he died.

Henry Fitt

Henry Fitt is the deceased husband of Abigail and father of Eleanor and Elijah. Henry made a fortune for his family in railway supply, only to see his business sabotaged and

his city council campaign undermined by his former friends. He had refused to become involved in dirty politics.

Abigail Fitt

Abigail Fitt is the widow of Henry Fitt and the mother of Elijah and Eleanor. Though she deeply loves her daughter, she places emphasis on the financial survival of the family and on the future well-being of her daughter. She struggles with Eleanor to see that Eleanor's reputation is not tarnished. She is beside herself when Eleanor is nearly killed, but utterly relieved when she survives.

Clay Fitt

Clay Fitt is the deceased father of Clarence and Allison. Clay is a corrupt businessman who is involved in dirty politics. He oversees the demise of Henry Fitt's business and fortune, hiring Daniel to be the scapegoat. He later dies.



Symbols and Symbolism

Grimoire

Grimoires are books of magic that can be used for good or for evil. Elijah travels the world studying grimoires to use dark magic to increase his power and exact revenge on his enemies. Grimoires are also studied and used for good by Joseph Boyer, who puts down the Dead and evil spirits.

Goggles

Goggles are invented and used by Daniel and Eleanor to detect the presence of spirits, spiritual energy, and the dead. They are composed of a double layer of lenses, between which magnetic materials and grave dirt are deposited. The lenses respond to spiritual energy accordingly by clearing up, or dirtying further.

Parasol

A parasol, a small umbrella meant to shelter ladies from the sunlight, is carried and used as a weapon against the Dead by Eleanor. Daniel later buys a parasol as a gift for Eleanor. It is a replacement for her destroyed parasol.

Amethyst Earrings

Amethyst Earrings are a gift to Eleanor from Elijah, which Joseph uses to put down the evil spirit at the library. Eleanor later gives the earrings to Mary as a bribe for Mary's silence about her activities with the Spirit-Hunters.

Boat

A boat is stolen by Daniel and Jie to transport the electricity machine to the river beside Laurel Hill Cemetery.

Electricity Machine

An electricity machine is designed and invented by Daniel for use by Joseph, and later Eleanor, to magnify their powers to control electricity to put down the Dead. One of the machines is destroyed by the necromancer. The other one survives.

Pulse Bombs

Pulse bombs, composed mainly of sticks of dynamite, are used to destroy the dead. They send out electromagnetic pulses that return the Dead to the dead. They are invented and wielded by Daniel and Jie.



Settings

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, is located in the United States of America. Philadelphia, in the year 1876, is the setting for the novel "Something Strange and Deadly" by Susan Dennard. It is where Eleanor and her mother, as well as the Wilcoxes, live; and it is the city to which the Spirit-Hunters travel from New York to stop the necromancer. Philadelphia is also the location of Eastern State Penitentiary, Laurel Hill Cemetery, the Schuylkill River, and the International Centennial Exhibition.

Eastern State Penitentiary

Located in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, the Eastern State Penitentiary is a massive prison. It is where Daniel is briefly imprisoned before escaping.

Laurel Hill Cemetery

Laurel Hill Cemetery is the source of the walking Dead that plague the city of Philadelphia. It is where Elijah, as the necromancer, has set up his base of operations. It is also the scene of a final confrontation between the Spirit-Hunters and Elijah and a first confrontation between Joseph and the reincarnated Marcus.

Schuylkill River

The Schuylkill River passes through Philadelphia, runs beside the Alfred Nobel & Company factory, and cuts beside Laurel Hill Cemetery. By using the waters of the Schuylkill, Eleanor puts down the Dead.

International Centennial Exhibition

Philadelphia is the host of the 1876 World's Fair, then known as the International Centennial Exhibition. It is in Machinery Hall at the Exhibition that the Spirit-Hunters set up shop. Time and time again throughout the Exhibition the Spirit-Hunters put down the walking Dead. The Exhibition is also where Eleanor first goes to meet the Spirit-Hunters.



Themes and Motifs

Feminism and Freedom

The dual concept of feminism and freedom is a major theme found throughout Susan Dennard's novel, "Something Strange and Deadly." Feminism, which at its root level concerns female empowerment and decision-making, is seen as an ally to the clamor for greater female freedoms in the novel. Most notably, the combination of feminism and freedom affect Eleanor, Jie, and even to an unrecognized extent, Clarence.

When it comes to Eleanor, feminism and freedom run hand-in-hand. Eleanor does her best to conform to both her mother's and society's expectations. However, she is not comfortable with some of the decisions being placed upon her, such as her mother's desire for her to marry at the age of sixteen. Eleanor ultimately comes to reject this way of life, although she does not reject the idea of marrying Clarence at all. By falling in league with the Spirit-Hunters, Eleanor grows more assertive and makes many of her own decisions, such as tagging along with Daniel to the dynamite factory and skipping out of the opera early. Jie, too, has embraced feminine freedom by choosing to live life as a boy to enjoy greater freedoms.

Eleanor does not feel that she has enough freedom, believing that the opposite sex enjoys all the freedom they want. Yet, this is not the case, as even someone as wealthy, respected, and powerful as Clarence is bound to obligations. Having honored his father's wishes until his father's death, severely limited his choices, too. However, Eleanor does not truly accept that Clarence has had little choice in his life until that point in time when Clarence began a journey of redemption after his father died. Ironically, without Eleanor recognizing it, Clarence has given her the first real choice as a young woman. By securing Elijah a spot on the Gas Trustees, the Fitt family fortune will be restored, and marriage to Clarence is not necessary. He uses his freedom to give Eleanor hers.

Family

Family is a dominant theme in the novel "Something Strange and Deadly" by Susan Dennard. The idea of family, which includes love, affection, support, loyalty, protection, and compassion for individuals who may or may not be blood related, centers on the Fitt family in different ways.

Henry Fitt, the deceased patriarch of the Fitt family, has spent his life providing for his family by accruing a fortune in the railway supply business. He has a deep and abiding love and respect for his children, instilling in them a love of knowledge and of reading. When he struggles against his enemies and sabotage, Henry ultimately dies, and Elijah picks up the mantle. Seeking to avenge his father's death and restore honor to his family, Elijah turns to dark magic, becoming a necromancer who raises the Dead. Elijah



compromises his own honor and reputation in the process, but he redeems himself by giving his life for Eleanor.

Elijah also served as a shield for Eleanor against their mother's high expectations of her, and she, in turn, comforted him when he was bullied at school. When Elijah goes missing, Eleanor dedicates herself to finding him and bringing him safely home. While Eleanor and her mother disagree about how Eleanor should be living her life, they truly love each other. Eleanor's mother, Abigail, is concerned about her daughter's survival when she dies, though she does not have the best way of expressing it. Eleanor, in turn, rather than abandoning her mother following the death of Clarence and her involvement with the Spirit-Hunters, decides to stay in Philadelphia and take care of her mother, whose advice about time healing wounds becomes advice that Eleanor seeks to live by.

Revenge and Redemption

The combined themes of revenge and redemption drive the plot throughout Susan Dennard's novel, "Something Strange and Deadly". Revenge deals with retribution, deserved or undeserved, against those perceived to be guilty of some crime. Redemption has to do with atoning for one's past sins and wrongs, seeking to make things right in some way, shape, or form. It is around the characters of Daniel, Elijah, and Clarence that revenge and redemption are exhibited.

Revenge and redemption are most clearly on display with the character of Elijah. Seeking to avenge his family's misfortunes, including the business and political sabotage against his father, the downfall of his family's fortune, and his own tormented childhood, Elijah travels the world, studying dark magic and power. He uses his knowledge to increase his own power, hunting down and butchering his and his family's enemies like animals. Yet, when Eleanor herself becomes endangered by Elijah's excesses, Elijah redeems himself by giving his life to save Eleanor.

Redemption is most clearly visible with the character of Daniel. As a child, Daniel was a lock picker who was picked up for use by Clay Wilcox in Philadelphia. Accidentally killing a man, Daniel spends time in prison, escapes, and later devotes himself to the morally upright work of defeating evil with Joseph and Jie. Daniel is utterly devoted to his quest for redemption, which is ongoing as of the end of the novel.

Redemption is also on display with the character of Clarence, who does his best to hide his actions from Eleanor until it becomes necessary to demonstrate them. Forced into bullying Elijah as a child by his father, Clarence regrets it deeply, and regrets the actions his father took against Henry Fitt. Since the death of Clay, Clarence has been doing everything he can to set things right, even going so far as to secure a place for Elijah on the Gas Trustees to restore the Fitt family fortune. But Clarence's efforts at redemption are undone by Elijah, who murders him before Clarence can make things right.



Styles

Point of View

Susan Dennard tells her novel "Something Strange and Deadly" as the first-person limited-omniscient narrative, from the perspective of main character and principal protagonist, Eleanor Fitt. Since the novel primarily involves Eleanor's efforts to find her brother, to navigate the tricky waters of love, and to combat the walking Dead with the Spirit-Hunters, there is no one better to tell Eleanor's story than herself. This allows the reader to understand her thoughts and feelings firsthand, and gives them a point of reference to which they can relate against the historical setting of 1876 Philadelphia. The novel is told in the limited-omniscient perspective in order to give the plot added mystery, allowing the reader to learn only what Eleanor learns as she learns it, and in essence, becoming a partner in solving the mystery.

Language and Meaning

Susan Dennard tells her novel "Something Strange and Deadly" in language that is simple and poetic. This is done for at least two primary reasons. The first is that the novel is told by a sixteen year-old girl living in 1876 Philadelphia. The simple language reinforces the idea that education was not the goal of a woman, and this makes Eleanor's characterization much more believable. The soft, almost poetic portions of the novel, such as when Eleanor reflects on her brother, or her affections for Daniel, also give Eleanor's character an air of believability, both about her age and her emotional depth as a human being. She isn't just fiery and independent, but she is capable of strong emotions as well, and this makes her all the more relative to the reader. Despite the dark circumstances around her, the youthful Eleanor is a typical young idealist, whose hopes, dreams, and ideas of love outweigh the grave circumstances in which she finds herself.

Structure

Susan Dennard divides her novel "Something Strange and Deadly" into twenty-seven chronological chapters that span a period of about two weeks. This straightforward approach to the novel allows the reader to focus on the plot that includes unconventional and wide-ranging topics and ideas which run the gamut from mechanical engineering and electromagnetic pulses to feminism and redemption.



Quotes

A strange sense of unreality washed over me, and I eyed her with disbelief. No one had ever incited me for a drive before, so why the dickens would Clarence Wilcox want to?

-- Eleanor (Chapter 4 paragraph 41)

Importance: As the novel gets underway, events both normal and unnatural, begin to speed along. One such event is Clarence's apparent interest in Eleanor, who has never before been desired by a man in any way. The carriage ride she has pending with Clarence excites her, and makes her wonder about why Clarence would want to do something so public with her.

Even the greatest feats of man lose their luster when one's head is filled with storm clouds.

-- Eleanor (Chapter 5 paragraph 52)

Importance: As Eleanor heads through the Exhibition Hall at the Centennial, all of the amazing inventions and machines around her do not ensnare her imagination or capture her attention, for she is too worried about her brother. And beyond such thoughts, even the greatest inventions on display cannot stop the undead.

Everything that's alive has spiritual energy. You call it soul.

-- Joseph (Chapter 6 paragraph 73)

Importance: Here, Joseph explains to Eleanor how energy binds everything together. This spiritual energy that inhabits things that are alive is also called soul. This energy can be manipulated, grown, or put down. This will prove especially important as Eleanor learns about how the Spirit-Hunters do their work.

I am seeing monsters everywhere.

-- Eleanor (Chapter 7 paragraph 87)

Importance: As Eleanor discovers that everyone seems to have secrets, and not everyone is as they appear to be on the surface, she begins to become confused, and is hurt, especially by the seeming change in Clarence. She did not realize that Clarence had more to him than what appeared on the surface, and that the secrets he has makes him a monster in some way, the same as the real monsters -the walking Dead- that are terrorizing the city.

I use my abilities for good by helping those who need it, and so, yes, I will help you find your brother.

-- Joseph (Chapter 10 paragraph 133)

Importance: Joseph, having explained to Eleanor that the powers of necromancy can be used for good or evil, explains that he only uses his own powers for good. He



therefore decides to take on the case of Eleanor's missing brother, as it seems to coincide with that of the necromancer's desires.

The girl with the full hair is not as free as the girl with the bare head.
-- Jie (Chapter 13 paragraph 164)

Importance: Jie, who has escaped China and the horrifying practices forced on women, such as footbinding, comes to find that women in America are also under expectations, and so decides to live as a boy, dressing and acting as one, because males do enjoy more freedoms than women do.

I had been Elijah's outlet from his bullies, and he had been my escape from Mama's expectations.
-- Eleanor (Chapter 13 paragraph 166)

Importance: Eleanor explains to the reader just how close she and her brother were, how they took comfort in one another, and took care of one another. This underscores Eleanor's determination to find her brother, for without her brother, she feels as if she has no one else to turn to depend on.

I had chosen this path, and now all I could do was follow it.
-- Eleanor (Chapter 19 paragraph 263)

Importance: Though thought when Eleanor is returning Daniel's wallet to him at the dynamite factory break-in about the way she has decided to get to Daniel, the quote is utterly symbolic and representative of the larger changes Eleanor has made in her own life. The path she has chosen is dangerous in many ways, but it is still the path she has chosen, and she must now see things through.

Wounds will heal, grief will pass, but a reputation can never be recovered.
-- Mama Abigail (Chapter 24 paragraph 324)

Importance: Here, in the sole piece of worthy advice Abigail gives her daughter, the idea that a reputation matters interminably is presented. Heartbreak, physical injuries, and sadness can all be overcome, but a bad reputation will haunt a person to, and beyond the grave. It is a warning to Eleanor that she must not only do the right thing, but that she must be careful, and consider her reputation.

The fault is not in our stars," I whispered to the ceiling. "But in ourselves. This was my choice.
-- Eleanor/Shakespeare (Chapter 27 paragraph 388)

Importance: Here, Eleanor quotes Shakespeare, paraphrasing him slightly, as the novel ends. Things that happen are not always beyond one's control, but more often than not are directly influenced by human beings and their free will. Everything that has happened to Eleanor is not beyond her control, but has been her own doing. She knows she has made her choice, and she knows that if there is any fault with what has

happened, it is because of her. That concept -of responsibility- is profound freedom, which Eleanor finally realizes.