

Splendors and Glooms Study Guide

Splendors and Glooms by Laura Amy Schlitz

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Contents

Splendors and Glooms Study Guide.....	1
Contents.....	2
Plot Summary.....	3
Prologue, Fire: Chapters 1-6.....	5
Part 1, Fog: Chapters 7-17.....	8
Part 1, Fog: Chapters 18-28.....	12
Part 2, Ice: Chapters 29-38.....	16
Part 2, Ice: Chapters 39-46.....	19
Part 2, Ice: Chapters 47-51 and Epilogue.....	22
Characters.....	25
Symbols and Symbolism.....	29
Settings.....	31
Themes and Motifs.....	32
Styles.....	34
Quotes.....	36



Plot Summary

Splendors and Glooms is a novel by writer Laura Amy Schlitz. In this novel, puppeteer Gaspare Grisini makes his living putting on puppet shows all over Europe with the help of his two wards, Lizzie Rose and Parsefall. Cassandra, Grisini's former mentor, needs someone to steal away her source of magic before she dies a horrible death. For this reason, Grisini tells her about his wards and convinces her to use one of them to serve her purpose. Grisini hopes to use the child who steals the power to gain access to it himself. In the end, however, the children outsmart Grisini and Cassandra, as well as the source of power. *Splendors and Glooms* is a well-written novel of hope.

Clara is preparing to celebrate her twelfth birthday, but the day is overshadowed by the continuous mourning in her home five years after the deaths of her four siblings. One bright spot for Clara is that her father agreed to allow Grisini, a puppeteer, to perform at the party. Clara saw him once in the square and has been unable to forget his kind assistant, a girl a little older than Clara.

When the puppeteer arrives at the Wintermute home, he leaves his two wards, Lizzie Rose and Parsefall, to set up. Clara joins them and offers them the opportunity to share her tea. Lizzie Rose is polite and grateful, while Parsefall is indignant, bordering on rude. In fact, Parsefall cannot help himself and decides to steal a picture from the family.

During the puppet show, Clara shames her family by laughing at one of the performances, one of a dancing skeleton. This results in her being sent to bed early. Clara runs into Grisini on her way upstairs and he gives her an automaton watch for kindly helping him find the lost item.

A few days later, Lizzie Rose and Parsefall learn that Clara has gone missing. After the police visit, Lizzie Rose learns there have been two other incidents in which Grisini was accused of involvement with a missing child. For this reason, Lizzie Rose goes to the police with her information. When Grisini learns of this, he attacks Lizzie Rose, only to fall down the stairs while chasing her out of the room. Grisini disappears soon after, leaving Lizzie Rose and Parsefall to assume he is dead. It is shortly after this that they find a puppet that looks exactly like Clara among Grisini's belongings.

Unbeknownst to the children, Grisini has gone to the distant home of his former mentor, Cassandra. Cassandra is dying, and she believes that she will die a fiery death because of a cursed stone that is the source of her magical powers. For this reason, Cassandra has summoned Grisini to her in hopes that he might help her find a way to stop the stone from killing her. Grisini tells Cassandra the stone must be stolen by a child. Grisini suggests that Cassandra should write to his wards and have them come to her. He reasons that by their very nature the children will steal the stone.

Lizzie Rose convinces Parsefall they should travel to Cassandra's home after a run in with Clara's father leaves her convinced that the police will soon be looking for Parsefall because of the theft of the picture from the Wintermute home. When they arrive, Lizzie



Rose feels unwelcome by the servants even as Cassandra repeatedly promises the children that she plans to leave all her possessions and wealth to them. Parsefall, as well, feels uncomfortable, but not because of the servants or Cassandra. Parsefall has had a run in with Grisini who has instructed him to steal the stone. Parsefall is frightened for his life.

Parsefall tries to steal the stone, but Cassandra catches him and stops him. Later, Cassandra uses the stone to remind Parsefall of the horrible things Grisini has done to him in the past. This again makes Parsefall determined to steal the stone. However, Clara, trapped as a puppet, has fallen in love with Parsefall and she uses this passion to return to her human form and steal the stone instead. Clara runs the stone out to the frozen lake as Grisini pursues her and crushes it. Grisini falls through the ice, but Lizzie Rose and Parsefall save Clara.

As Cassandra lies dying in the aftermath of the stone's demise, she gives Lizzie Rose and Parsefall all she has promised. Clara's parents find her and agree to take custody of Lizzie Rose and Parsefall until they are old enough to claim their inheritance.



Prologue, Fire: Chapters 1-6

Summary

Prologue

Cassandra lies in bed alone in her home burning up with fever. Cassandra knows that the phoenix stone, her most precious belonging and the source of her magical powers, is the cause. Cassandra is frightened she will burn as other owners of the stone have done. In her fear, Cassandra thinks of the only person who seemed to understand the powers of the stone and wonders if she should have let him tell her how to prevent her inevitable fate. Instead, Cassandra attempts to destroy the stone by crushing it, but the stone protects itself by moving her aim at the final moment and smashing her hand instead.

Chapter 1

Clara wakes on her twelfth birthday excited for the day to come. Clara has convinced her father to allow a puppeteer to come perform at her party. Clara enjoyed the performance she saw weeks ago in the square and particularly remembers the young girl who helped the puppeteer by playing music for the show. When the maid comes to prepare Clara for the day, Clara convinces her to allow her to treat the young performers to join her for tea.

Chapter 2

Lizzie Rose is the orphaned daughter of theater actors. Lizzie Rose came to live with Grisini, the puppet master, a little over a year ago. Lizzie Rose joins Grisini and his apprentice, Parsefall, a young boy of about eleven whom Grisini took from the workhouse. Grisini is not a good provider, often forgetting to provide for the needs of his wards, leaving Lizzie Rose hungry as she helps deliver the puppet caravan to the Wintermute home for a birthday party performance.

Chapter 3

Parsefall is very impressed with the wealth and elegance of the Wintermute home. It is his habit to estimate the worth of items that he might steal and pawn. There are an abundance of things in the drawing room that Parsefall knows he could take. As he considers the lute, Clara Wintermute comes into the room and offers to share her tea with Parsefall and Lizzie Rose. Parsefall is not impressed by this kindness, but enjoys the unexpected banquet. As they talk with Clara, Parsefall and Lizzie Rose learn that all four of Clara's siblings died five years before of cholera, including her twin brother. Lizzie Rose expresses sympathy, but Parsefall has seen too much in his few years to care. Instead, he is fascinated by the idea of the death masks that decorate the drawing room. In the end, Parsefall steals a portrait taken of Clara's twin after his death.



Chapter 4

The puppet performance begins and Clara is delighted. Those around her seem less enthralled. Clara does not pay attention to her guests. Instead, she studies the show with enthusiasm. Each performance is exciting in its own right, but Clara finds the final performance particularly amusing. It is a dancing skeleton that falls into separate pieces but continues to dance. Clara cannot help herself and she begins to laugh out loud, causing her mother great pain as she not only humiliates her family with her laughter, but she laughs at a symbol of death. For this reason, Clara is sent to bed without dinner.

Chapter 5

As Clara makes her way to bed, she finds a watch on the staircase. Grisini comes into the hall and tells her he has been searching for his automaton watch. Clara gives it to him and he offers, as a reward, to allow her to keep it. Grisini then whispers something in Clara's ear that she does not hear nor understand.

Chapter 6

Dr. Wintermute is annoyed when the governess asks him to check on his daughter who has been unable to stop crying. Dr. Wintermute learns that his wife told Clara she will never be able to forgive her for laughing at the dancing skeleton. While Dr. Wintermute recognizes that his wife's words were unkind, he finds himself thinking of his deceased children and how much he wished that it had been Clara's twin who survived. Clara herself expresses this sentiment, causing Dr. Wintermute some shame.

Analysis

A multitude of characters are introduced in these early chapters of the novel. The first is Cassandra, a self-proclaimed witch who lies dying of some type of fever. Cassandra is convinced that a small stone she wears in a locket around her neck is responsible for her inevitable demise by fire and attempts to destroy it are thwarted, apparently by magic. The only connection the reader sees at this point between Cassandra and the other characters of the book is the fact that she once mentored Grisini, the puppet master. This early introduction leaves the reader certain, however, that Cassandra will play a major role in the unfolding of the plot of this novel.

Clara Wintermute is a little girl of twelve who, on her birthday, is looking forward to enjoying a puppet show. Clara shows her kind nature by desiring to share tea with the puppet master's wards even though this is not normally something someone of Clara's breeding would do. However, there is a darkness that has settled over Clara's family after the deaths of four of her siblings. Clara's mother continues to grieve for these lost children to such a degree that it overshadows the childhood of her one remaining child. For this reason, Clara is deeply unhappy and perhaps open to changing her circumstances.



Lizzie Rose is the orphaned child of theater actors. Lizzie Rose has the language skills of a more privileged life than the one she now leads. Like Clara, Lizzie Rose is naturally a kind person despite her circumstances. For this reason, Lizzie Rose has taken Parsefall, her fellow ward in Grisini's care, under her wing despite his tough exterior and desire to prove he does not need anyone. Parsefall is a young man who has seen more horror in his few years than most see in a lifetime. For this reason, he is determined to live by his own rules and survive any way he can.

Grisini is the puppet master. Grisini has taken in two young children, which seems like a kind thing to do, but he does not see to their needs as he should. Grisini comes off as selfish and desperate, like anyone else as poor as he in this time period. However, there is something odd about Grisini that was hinted at in the prologue when Cassandra thought of him as her only savior and later when he gives Clara his automaton watch. The reader is wary about Grisini, convinced there is more there than the author has thus far revealed.

Discussion Question 1

Who is Cassandra? Of what is she dying? Why does she blame her impending death on a stone? What kind of stone is it? Who does Cassandra think can help her prevent her impending death?

Discussion Question 2

Who is Clara? Why does the servant repeatedly remind Clara of everything she has and how she has little room to complain about her situation? What is her situation? Who are the Others?

Discussion Question 3

Who is Lizzie Rose? Why does she not seem to fit in in her circumstances? What is her relationship to Parsefall? How does Lizzie Rose feel about Parsefall?

Vocabulary

Handkerchief, suffered, interrupted, surge, punishing, examine, obediently, soothingly, heaved, rigid, misbehaved, summoned, hysterics, grateful, governess, cholera, striking, gracefully, locket, foreigner, terror.



Part 1, Fog: Chapters 7-17

Summary

Chapter 7

It is also Cassandra's birthday. As she lies in bed, worrying about her impending death, she sees the faces of three women in her mirror. Each of the women burns to death. One resembles Cassandra's childhood friend, Marguerite.

Chapter 8

Lizzie Rose and Parsefall are in their room at Mrs. Pinchbeck's boarding house when they hear a commotion downstairs. Parsefall tells Lizzie Rose the police are there. Parsefall is clearly upset although he has no reason to be. The police come into the room with Grisini and ask to question the children alone. The police then tell the children that Clara Wintermute has gone missing. When the children deny knowing where Clara might be, the police search the room.

Chapter 9

After the police leave, Lizzie Rose sends Parsefall to buy them some breakfast while she goes to console Mrs. Pinchbeck. Mrs. Pinchbeck tells Lizzie Rose that the police suspected Grisini once before when a child went missing. Mrs. Pinchbeck, however, sees this as a mistake because she does not believe Grisini could hurt a child.

Chapter 10

That night, Parsefall has a nightmare. When Lizzie Rose goes to console him, she finds a photograph from the Wintermute house in his blankets. They argue about the photograph, leading to Parsefall telling Lizzie Rose of another time when Grisini was blamed for the disappearance of a child. Lizzie Rose realizes this is a third incident, making her wonder if Grisini could be guilty of these crimes.

Chapter 11

A few nights later, Lizzie Rose finds the nice cop who came to her room and tells him about the other incidences involving Grisini and missing children.

Chapter 12

A little over a week after Clara's disappearance, Dr. Wintermute waits in his children's crypt, as told by the kidnapper, to deliver the ransom.

Chapter 13



Cassandra dreams again of burning to death. Out of fear, she summons Grisini because she believes he is the only one who can tell her how to rid herself of the curse of the phoenix stone.

Chapter 14

Grisini is out drinking, setting up an alibi before going to retrieve the ransom. Grisini has decided to take the money and move on, leaving his wards behind. However, he first has to escape the cop who has been following him. However, before the moment comes to go to the cemetery, Grisini hears Cassandra's voice summoning him and the overwhelming need to obey.

Chapter 15

Parsefall is rehearsing with one of the puppets when Grisini comes home. Grisini tells Lizzie Rose to walk the dog and distract the cop. Lizzie Rose tells him she cannot because the cop knows her. Grisini realizes that Lizzie Rose told the cop something about him and he attacks her, hitting her neck in an attempt to get her to tell him what she did. Parsefall kicks Grisini, breaking him free of Lizzie Rose so they both can flee the room. Lizzie Rose and Parsefall run to Mrs. Pinchbeck's rooms, but she does not answer. Grisini comes down the stairs after them. The stairs break and Grisini falls. Mrs. Pinchbeck finally opens her door. Mrs. Pinchbeck checks on Grisini and comes to the conclusion that he will need a doctor. Mrs. Pinchbeck locks the children in her rooms while she goes to get the doctor.

Chapter 16

The next morning, Lizzie Rose wakes in Mrs. Pinchbeck's bed. Lizzie Rose goes out into the hall to check on Grisini and finds him missing. Lizzie Rose assumes he is in the hospital. However, when Mrs. Pinchbeck finally wakes, she tells them that she never got to the doctor, but when she returned from the bar, Grisini was gone. Everyone assumes he wandered into the street in his delirium and will return. Until then, Mrs. Pinchbeck tells the children they can remain in her home as long as they help with the daily chores.

Chapter 17

A short time after Grisini's disappearance, Parsefall decides to take over the puppet show himself. However, one of the puppets has been damaged by Lizzie Rose's dog. Parsefall confronts Lizzie Rose only to discover that Lizzie Rose has no interest in the puppet show. They argue for a time about the work Lizzie Rose has been doing. Then Lizzie Rose goes in search of a new puppet for Parsefall to appease him. When she pulls a puppet from the wicker basket she is shocked to see that it looks exactly like Clara.



Analysis

Clara Wintermute is missing. The first place the police go looking for the child is Grisini since he gave a puppet show in her home the day before her disappearance. During this time period, it would not be unusual for someone as poor as Grisini to try to commit such a crime. However, Grisini allows the police to search his rooms and is confident they will not find anything. This suggests to the reader that Grisini is innocent. However, Grisini has a history of being around kids who disappear. For this reason, Lizzie Rose, who is kind and innocent, goes to the police with suspicions that he is involved in Clara's kidnapping, placing herself in danger when Grisini finds out.

The reader later finds out that Grisini did kidnap Clara and is asking a large ransom. However, the reader knows that Grisini is not holding Clara in his rooms, so it leaves the reader wondering where Clara is. When Grisini disappears, injured and likely going to his death, it seems that Clara's fate is a grim one. Without someone to care for her basic needs, the reader must worry that she will not survive for long if she is not found.

Grisini is called by Cassandra on the night he plans to pick up his ransom. This call is very powerful, causing Grisini to nearly abandon his attempts to pick up the money in order to answer it. This shows the reader how powerful Cassandra's phoenix stone is. This also suggests that Cassandra's fear of the stone is based in a real sense of the power the stone contains. Grisini might have the answer to help Cassandra, but with his criminal background and lack of concern for his own wards, as well as Clara Wintermute, it seems unlikely he would help Cassandra unless it would benefit him directly.

Discussion Question 1

What performance is Parsefall trying to learn with the puppets? Why does he want to learn this performance? How does he learn? What benefit might this have for him?

Discussion Question 2

Why does Lizzie Rose think that Grisini might be behind Clara's kidnapping? What does she do to try to help the police find Clara? How does this come back to hurt Lizzie Rose?

Discussion Question 3

Why does Cassandra want Grisini to come to her? How does she contact him? How does Grisini respond to this summons? What does this say about the relationship between Grisini and Cassandra?



Vocabulary

Complexion, jewel, beautifully, muslin, original, rummaging, handful, shillings, contradicted, sequined, accompanied, soothingly, float, rehearse, astonish, crimson, temper, different, scornfully, chambers, nuisance, contrived, perfecting, prone, interest, service, glistened.



Part 1, Fog: Chapters 18-28

Summary

Chapter 18

Parsefall and Lizzie Rose marvel over the puppet that looks like Clara. Lizzie Rose thinks it is just a coincidence, but Parsefall is convinced it is Clara.

Chapter 19

Grisini wakes at Strachan's Ghyll, Cassandra's home. He vaguely recalls taking the long train ride to arrive there. Cassandra sits beside him and insists on talking about the phoenix stone. Grisini eventually tells her that the stone must be stolen from her to protect Cassandra from the stone's power. However, it can only be stolen by a child. For this reason, Grisini tells Cassandra she should write to his wards and invite them to stay. Grisini insists they are little thieves and it would only take a matter of time for one of them to take the stone.

Chapter 20

Parsefall is stringing Clara when Lizzie Rose comes into the room. Lizzie Rose has been cleaning out Grisini's room. She shows Parsefall some things she has found, including several expensive pieces of jewelry. Lizzie Rose has already pawned a watch she found for a large sum of money. They discuss what to do with the money and Lizzie Rose reluctantly agrees that it would be alright for them to spend a little on themselves.

Chapter 21

Lizzie Rose and Parsefall have a large dinner and then go to The Egyptian Hall to see Royal Marionettes. Parsefall is so impressed with the show that he goes backstage to try to get a job. Parsefall is humiliated when they will not even consider his request seriously.

Chapter 22

Parsefall has trouble sleeping, so he sits and holds Clara. Parsefall imagines he can feel Clara's emotions and promises her he will finish stringing her the next day.

Chapter 23

A few days later, Parsefall takes Clara to the streets to do their performance. Clara loves it when Parsefall makes her dance because she can finally do something she had wanted to do as a human and thought she could not.

Chapter 24



While mending clothes for Mrs. Pinchbeck's stepson, Lizzie Rose finds a letter from Cassandra addressed to Grisini. Lizzie Rose reads the letter, surprised to find that Cassandra is offering to leave her wealth to Lizzie Rose and Parsefall. There is also money in the letter to pay for a train trip to Cassandra's home, Strachan's Ghyll.

Chapter 25

A few weeks later, Parsefall is making Clara dance again when Dr. Wintermute comes across them. Dr. Wintermute is understandably upset about seeing a puppet that looks so much like his daughter that he causes a scene. Parsefall manages to gather his things and runs, escaping Dr. Wintermute when there is a minor accident.

Chapter 26

Dr. Wintermute wanders through the streets lost in thought and finds himself outside Mrs. Pinchbeck's boarding house. Dr. Wintermute witnesses Mr. Pinchbeck forcing himself on Lizzie Rose and intervenes. Lizzie Rose then takes Dr. Wintermute up to her room to speak to him. Lizzie Rose assures Dr. Wintermute that she has no idea where Clara might be and he believes her, even feels some pity for her, until he sees the photograph Parsefall took from the Wintermute home. Dr. Wintermute accuses Lizzie Rose of being a thief and promises to go to the police.

Chapter 27

Lizzie Rose waits in the street for Parsefall to warn him not to go back to the boarding house. Lizzie Rose has devised a plan to get them out of town to avoid conflict with the police. While Parsefall waits, Lizzie Rose goes back to their room to get their few belongings, including Clara.

Chapter 28

Lizzie Rose buys first class tickets on the train for herself and Parsefall, causing some unhappiness among the other passengers. It is a long, uncomfortable ride. When they arrive at their destiny, they are worrying about how to find Strachan Ghyll when they are approached by a young man who claims to be Cassandra's employee. The man gives them a ride in a private coach.

Analysis

Parsefall and Lizzie Rose find a puppet among Grisini's things that looks identical to Clara Wintermute. Lizzie Rose thinks it is an eerie coincidence while Parsefall insists that the puppet is Clara. The reader learns the truth when the author allows Clara to have a voice. How Grisini turned Clara into a puppet is unknown, but it is clear that Grisini has had magic training and that he could have the power to do so. It also fits with the other missing children that Lizzie Rose has learned about. It seems that Clara's situation is not as bleak as the reader at first feared, but it is a difficult situation since



she cannot communicate and no one can turn her back into a human except for the missing Grisini.

Parsefall is a smart, streetwise kid who is used to having to care for himself. For this reason, when Grisini disappears, Parsefall has no trouble deciding that he should continue the puppet performances in Grisini's place in order to make a living for himself and Lizzie Rose. Lizzie Rose argues with Parsefall's logic, but he fights for what he believes is right, showing the reader that Parsefall is a strong, determined young man who will not let anything get in the way of what he believes is right.

Dr. Wintermute once seemed like an aloof father, a man who would have preferred to have a son to follow in his footsteps rather than the daughter he has been left with after a terrible tragedy took his other four children. However, now that Clara has gone missing, Dr. Wintermute has come to realize what a blessing having Clara was and he is determined to get her back to make up for the past five years. Unfortunately, Clara has disappeared without a trace and Dr. Wintermute has not the first clue where to find her. For this reason, he attacks Parsefall when he sees the puppet that resembles Clara and then goes to speak with Lizzie Rose. It is also because of this that Lizzie Rose is convinced Dr. Wintermute will send the police after Parsefall and she decides to leave town.

Lizzie Rose has found a letter from Cassandra that suggests she wants to give her wealth to Lizzie Rose and Parsefall. True to her nature, Lizzie Rose does not immediately seek out this fortune, but it does provide an escape when it seems that trouble is about to come for she and Parsefall. Unfortunately, they are walking into trouble because Grisini wants to use them for his own means.

Discussion Question 1

Where did Lizzie Rose find the puppet that looks like Clara? Why does the puppet look this way? How does Parsefall react to this puppet? For what reason?

Discussion Question 2

Where has Grisini gone? For what reason? What plan does he cook up for his wards?

Discussion Question 3

Who is Dr. Wintermute? Why does he go to speak to Lizzie Rose? What is Dr. Wintermute's first impression of Lizzie Rose? What does this suggest about Dr. Wintermute's overall character?



Vocabulary

Carriage, decipher, protest, emitted, footman, housekeeper, answered, narrowly, arrived, lavatories, swaddled, gristle, immediate, provide, promised, threatened, returned, irritating, onward, thundered, humiliation, gratitude, demanded, disemboweled, refused, clerical, admitted, argument, nursemaid, disgust.



Part 2, Ice: Chapters 29-38

Summary

Chapter 29

The coachman leaves Lizzie Rose and Parsefall a short distance from the main house at Strachan Ghyll, forcing them to walk to the front door. Lizzie Rose is impressed with the grandeur of the house, but intimidated as well. Cassandra watches their arrival from her bedroom window, wondering which will save her. Later, she falls asleep and has a dream about Clara that puzzles her.

Chapter 30

Lizzie Rose wakes the following morning and dresses in an ermine coat to take the dog for a walk. Before the servants know she is there, Lizzie Rose overhears them complain about having to serve two street children. As Lizzie Rose walks the dog to the lake, she is observed by Grisini who is now staying in the gatehouse.

Chapter 31

Clara wakes to the sound of someone calling her and is shocked to discover she is human again. Clara heeds the voice by going to the tower in the center of the house. There Clara discovers that she is not human again, but that she is under Cassandra's spell. Cassandra tells Clara that if she wants the phoenix stone badly enough, she will become human again in order to steal it. Clara, however, sees the truth about the phoenix stone in Cassandra's thoughts and refuses.

Chapter 32

Several days pass before Lizzie Rose and Parsefall meet Cassandra. When they are called to her room, Cassandra takes an instant liking to Lizzie Rose's dog. Cassandra tells the children that she has set out several items for them to choose from for Christmas gifts. Cassandra also tells the children to search the house and take whatever items they wish for themselves. Cassandra insists they can have anything in the house they want except for the stone around her neck.

Chapter 33

Clara knows that she must warn Parsefall and Lizzie Rose from taking the phoenix stone. Clara believes that she can create a spell like the one Cassandra made to make herself human again. For this reason, Clara begins picturing herself walking to Lizzie Rose's room and telling her of the danger. Then Clara imagines herself in Parsefall's dreams. This seems to work because she can see Parsefall as a child in the workhouse mourning his older sister. However, Clara is not confident that either Parsefall or Lizzie Rose got her message. Then Grisini comes in, wakes Parsefall, and tells him that he



will steal the phoenix stone and bring it to Grisini or Grisini will kill him and Lizzie Rose. Afterward, Parsefall looks for somewhere safe to sleep and Clara leads him to the tower.

Chapter 34

Lizzie Rose spends the next day searching the house for things she might like to keep. Lizzie Rose feels like this is a test, so she is careful about what she chooses. Lizzie Rose picks several books. As she looks the books over, Lizzie Rose finds a photograph of a young woman with a dog, something that intrigues her so she keeps it. At the same time, Parsefall sneaks into Cassandra's room to steal the stone, but she wakes before he can take it.

Chapter 35

Cassandra is shocked by her own fierce protection of the stone. To cover it, she speaks to Parsefall about what he might like to have as his gift. Parsefall shows her some of the things he has chosen. Cassandra then offers Parsefall another go at the objects she set out in her room for him. Parsefall chooses a gun which Cassandra shows him how to load. Parsefall also takes an emerald necklace to give to Lizzie Rose.

Chapter 36

Lizzie Rose is called to Cassandra's room to show her the chosen items. Lizzie Rose presents to Cassandra several books, a sea shell, and the photograph. Cassandra is angry when she sees the photograph, but quickly calms herself.

Chapter 37

Cassandra tells Lizzie Rose about Marguerite, a young girl she met when her father sent her away to an Italian boarding school. Marguerite was an American whose mother died in a house fire. The girls shared a birthday, so when it arrived, Marguerite wanted to share her party with Cassandra. Lizzie Rose interrupts Cassandra's narration to inform her that Clara shares that same birth date. This causes Cassandra to send Lizzie Rose away so she can think about what this might mean.

Chapter 38

Clara is in the tower room with Parsefall that night when Cassandra comes looking for her. Clara recognizes that Cassandra is weaker this time and she is able to resist her. Cassandra collapses in the hall outside the tower.

Analysis

Lizzie Rose and Parsefall arrive at Strachan Ghyll. It is a very impressive house, but the atmosphere is unhappy, a place of force servitude and illness. Lizzie Rose realizes immediately that the servants resent having to care for her and Parsefall, but there is



little she can do to change the situation. She and Parsefall cannot leave, but staying does not seem right either. To top it off, it is days before they meet their hostess, Cassandra. Lizzie Rose is put off by Cassandra immediately, but she recognizes that Cassandra is the only hope she and Parsefall have at this point because of her promise to leave them her money and possessions. Lizzie Rose does not want everything, she is more than willing to settle for just the gatehouse, but she knows that if she and Parsefall return to London they face a difficult future on their own. This is why they remain in a place where they are not wanted and are openly resented.

Cassandra is aware of Clara and her situation. Cassandra has the magic to change Clara back into a human, but she wants Clara to do it herself to show her passion for the phoenix stone. Clara can see inside Cassandra's thoughts, however, and she recognizes the danger of the stone. For this reason, Clara not only swears not to steal the stone, but she tries to convince both Lizzie Rose and Parsefall not to steal it either. It is a difficult situation for Clara because she is a puppet and cannot communicate. It also does not help that Grisini comes to Parsefall and threatens to kill him if he does not steal the stone and bring it to Grisini. It is a complicated situation that shows the connection between the three children as Clara fights to protect her new friends.

Discussion Question 1

Why does Cassandra allow the children to take anything they want from her home? What does this prove to the children? What is the real motive behind this action?

Discussion Question 2

Why does Cassandra want someone to steal the phoenix stone? Why does Cassandra fight when Parsefall tries to take the stone? What will happen to the person who steals the stone?

Discussion Question 3

What is the significance of the shared birthdate between Cassandra, Marguerite, and Clara? Why does Cassandra try to Clara to her when she learns of this? What is the result?

Vocabulary

Expression, frustration, resistance, dramatizing, imagining, congealed, cobalt, innumerable, ventilation, muttered, listened, twitched, casements, lackluster, treasures, portrait, interrupted, coverlet, admired, dreadful, nighttime, envied, accident, tragic, permission, forthright, convent, reflections, society, abandoned.



Part 2, Ice: Chapters 39-46

Summary

Chapter 39

Lizzie Rose wakes on Christmas morning and cannot find Parsefall. Lizzie Rose takes the dog down to the lake and recalls one of her favorite memories with her parents when they went ice skating together. For this reason, Lizzie Rose gets her mother's skates from her belongings and goes skating on the outer edge of the frozen lake.

Chapter 40

In London, Dr. Wintermute is passing a sad, quiet Christmas alone with his wife and the servants. They argue after Dr. Wintermute refuses to go to the cemetery with his wife and suggests that Clara might still be there had Mrs. Wintermute not forced her to grieve for so long. Mrs. Wintermute sees this as an accusation and argues with him.

Chapter 41

Parsefall gives Lizzie Rose the emerald necklace as a Christmas gift. Parsefall then suggests to Lizzie Rose that they return to London, but she is still afraid of the police. Instead, to appease Parsefall, Lizzie Rose agrees to rehearse the puppet show with him.

Chapter 42

A few days later, Lizzie Rose discovers that Grisini is on the property when she goes to check out the gatehouse and sees him sleeping inside. Parsefall admits that he already knew and finally tells her about Grisini's midnight visit to his room. Lizzie Rose decides they must run away that night, going north instead of back to London.

Chapter 43

Lizzie Rose and Parsefall leave the house late that night. However, Cassandra wakes and casts a spell on them so that they begin going around in circles. She cannot allow them to leave. Eventually, Lizzie Rose figures out what is happening and suggests they return to the house.

Chapter 44

The children confront Cassandra and she tries to explain that she cannot allow them to leave because she wants to leave her belongings to them. Cassandra then places Grisini under a spell and forces him to come to them, proving to the children that he cannot hurt them as long as he is under Cassandra's spell. Cassandra also destroys



Grisini's automaton watch, the source of his magic. Cassandra then casts a spell over Parsefall so that he will recall how cruel Grisini has been to him.

Chapter 45

Parsefall dreams of being a puppet. Grisini files off his pinkie to punish him for disobeying and threatening to do the other if he ever disobeys again. When Parsefall wakes from his dream, he swears to steal the phoenix stone so he can punish Grisini with it.

Chapter 46

Clara hears Parsefall's declaration and realizes the only way to save him is to steal the stone herself. For this reason, Clara draws on her passion and breaks the spell that has turned her into a puppet as Cassandra told her she could. Clara then takes the stone from Cassandra and encases it in snow from the window in hopes of counteracting its heat. Clara then rushes from the room, hoping that if she takes it to the frozen lake it will break it. However, Grisini is waiting for her on the stairs. Clara manages to get around him, but he follows her as she rushes out to the lake. The further out Clara goes, the thinner the ice. Soon the ice begins to crack and break around her. The stone, encased in ice, also breaks. Then Clara hears Lizzie Rose calling out to her, warning her to lay flat on the ice.

Analysis

The children try to leave Strachan Ghyll because of Grisini, but Cassandra casts a spell to keep them there. Cassandra then shows the children that she can control Grisini and he will never hurt them again. Parsefall is not convinced by this trick, so Cassandra releases a mental block in his mind that keeps him from remembering how cruel Grisini was to him. Not only does this help Parsefall remember how he lost his finger, but it inspires Clara to steal the stone.

Clara began this novel as a spoiled child who seemed ungrateful for all she had. However, as the reader learned more about Clara, it became clear that she was living in a dark, sad household that forced her to ignore her true nature in favor of living in constant grief for her four siblings. Clara is still something of a spoiled child, but it is clear that there is a good reason for her behavior. However, as a puppet, Clara has begun to show a side of her own self that even she did not seem to understand was there. Clara becomes a person who is willing to sacrifice herself for the benefit of another. Clara proves to be a good person.

Clara steals the phoenix stone even though she is aware of its curse. She encases it in ice and runs to the frozen lake in hopes that the freezing temperatures will destroy it. Clara gets her wish, but at the risk of her own life as the lake begins to break apart underneath. Lizzie rose and Parsefall come to her rescue, however, cementing the friendship that began between these three weeks ago at a birthday party.



Discussion Question 1

Why do Lizzie Rose and Parsefall decide to run away from Strachan Ghyll? What is their plan? How do they expect to make it away from Strachan Ghyll? Is this a good plan? What stops it?

Discussion Question 2

What is the significance of Grisini's automaton watch? Why does Cassandra destroy it? How does she destroy it?

Discussion Question 3

Why does Cassandra want Parsefall to remember how cruel Grisini was to him? What did Grisini do to Parsefall? How does Parsefall react to the memory of this cruelty? Is it the reaction Cassandra wanted?

Vocabulary

Tentatively, happiness, features, distorted, enchanted, punished, embarrassed, nightdress, frock, unfinished, magic, mournful, frostbite, rounded, earthquake, barrowed, gatehouse, interrupted, hesitated, declared, timber, plaster, rubble, adjoined, hollow, dreadfully, strained, rapidly, collapsed, resembled.



Part 2, Ice: Chapters 47-51 and Epilogue

Summary

Chapter 47

Parsefall walks carefully out onto the ice, gives Clara a rope, and gently pulls her to safety. The housekeeper and her son come out and take the children back inside. When they reach the house, the children are surprised to see that the tower has fallen. Parsefall tells the housekeeper that Grisini fell through the ice and drowned, so she sends her son to get the constable. The children then go up to see Cassandra who is deeply grieved by losing her stone. Lizzie Rose talks the children into caring for Cassandra despite her cruelty toward them in her grief.

Chapter 48

Dr. Wintermute is home reading when the butler tells him that Mrs. Pinchbeck has come to visit him. Dr. Wintermute is excited by this, hoping that Mrs. Pinchbeck might have some information for him. Mrs. Pinchbeck shows Dr. Wintermute the envelope from a letter she found, suggesting that perhaps the return address is where Lizzie Rose and Parsefall went when they left London. Dr. Wintermute decides to go to the address in hopes that someone there knows where Grisini is. Mrs. Wintermute insists on going with him.

Chapter 49

Cassandra is delirious most of the night. In the morning she is clear minded and agrees to finish telling Lizzie Rose the story she once began. Cassandra tells Lizzie Rose how Marguerite got a box of her mother's old jewelry for her birthday. Among them was a pendant, the phoenix stone. Cassandra thought it was a wishing stone and she wanted it for herself. One night Cassandra stole the stone and allowed Marguerite to believe it was one of her other friends who stole it.

Chapter 50

The children go downstairs for breakfast to discover that all the servants have abandoned the house. They are trying to figure out what to do when someone rings the front doorbell. Lizzie Rose opens the door and finds the Wintermutes there. Clara is happy to see her parents despite her reluctance to return home and almost immediately sees the change in her mother. Clara immediately asks her parents to take Lizzie Rose and Parsefall into their family.

Chapter 51

Cassandra lives a short time longer under the care of Dr. Wintermute. One day Parsefall puts on a puppet show for her. Cassandra encourages Clara to dance for her, which she



does after telling Cassandra of her guilt in relation to the death of her twin. Cassandra dies a short time later.

Epilogue

Parsefall is restless at Cassandra's funeral. It seems like a never ending ceremony. Parsefall looks forward to returning to London as a part of the Wintermute family, anxious to begin the process of becoming a member of the Royal Marionettes.

Analysis

Parsefall saves Clara in a parallel act to her decision to save him from the phoenix stone. Afterward, they discover that with the destruction of the stone so has Cassandra's magic disappeared. Cassandra is not happy about this, but the children rally around her determined to care for her in her final days because she is a, down deep, a good person. The servants have gone, suggesting that it was Cassandra's magic that kept them there rather than a desire to work for Cassandra. The children are once again abandoned, left to manage for themselves.

Dr. Wintermute has changed his tune in regards to the constant grief taking place in his household, as the reader noted on Christmas day. Therefore, when he gets information on where to find Lizzie Rose and Parsefall, he decides to go if only to make amends for the accusations he made against Lizzie Rose the last time he saw her. Fortunately, Dr. Wintermute finds his daughter, alive and well, creating a reunion that is much happier than the one Clara had expected. The Wintermutes agree to take in Lizzie Rose and Parsefall, an unusual act in the time period but one that will drastically change their futures.

Cassandra is dying. However, she passes on a few last pieces of advice to the children that helps them let go of the darkness of their past and look forward to a bright future. Lizzie Rose and Parsefall become her sole heirs, another change in fortunes that will completely alter their lives. Parsefall, however, only cares about the puppets and being allowed to play with his two favorite playmates, Lizzie Rose and Clara.

Discussion Question 1

What happened to Grisini? Why? Who grieves Grisini's passing? What does this say about Grisini's character?

Discussion Question 2

Why do Parsefall and Clara want to abandon Cassandra in her final days of life? Why does Lizzie Rose insist on staying with Cassandra and caring for her? What does this say about Cassandra? About Lizzie Rose?



Discussion Question 3

How do the Wintermutes find Clara, Lizzie Rose, and Parsefall? How do they respond to this reunion? How have things changed for the Wintermutes? Is this change for the better?

Vocabulary

Haste, engraved, tombstone, admiring, apprenticed, proscenium, receded, amuse, encountered, erect, vantage, insisted, endless, mentally, pewter, astonished, frantic, concentrated, arabesque, applauded, syllable, remembered, movement, compass, poison, beckoned, conscience, cashmere.



Characters

Lizzie Rose

Lizzie Rose is the daughter of theater actors. When Lizzie Rose's parents both died a year and a half ago, she found herself thrust into the care of a man she did not know. Lizzie Rose, who is well educated despite her place in society, makes the best of the situation. Lizzie Rose learns to care for herself and to care for Parsefall despite his gruff exterior that tries to keep her at arm's length.

Lizzie Rose works hard in this novel to care for Parsefall, especially after Grisini disappears, in an attempt to provide a roof over their heads. When Parsefall wants to begin running the puppet show himself, Lizzie Rose refuses in favor of continuing to appease their landlady with work in lieu of rent payments. Then when it looks like Dr. Wintermute is going to call the police on them, Lizzie Rose is the one who works out a plan to get herself and Parsefall out of town to protect Parsefall from the police.

Lizzie Rose is a kind, gentle girl who is clearly intelligent. Lizzie Rose could easily become a member of a higher level of society if she were given the right chance, but she refuses to leave Parsefall behind. If not for Lizzie Rose, Parsefall might have ended up on the street.

Parsefall

Parsefall is a tough young man who has grown up in poverty in Victorian England. Parsefall is extremely talented with his hands, able to both control a puppet with grace, but steal without the victim ever being aware of his touch. Parsefall works hard for Grisini, but he often has nightmares that stem to the missing pinkie on his hand.

Parsefall is often belligerent, especially toward Lizzie Rose, but this is just a mechanism to hide his fears and deep emotions. Parsefall comes to Lizzie Rose's rescue when it really matters. When Grisini threatens Lizzie Rose to force Parsefall to steal the phoenix stone, he protects her by not only refusing to tell her the truth, but by attempting to steal the stone even though he has a sense of its danger. In the end, it is because of Parsefall's kindness toward her that Clara steals the stone and destroys it.

Clara Wintermute

Clara Wintermute is the eldest child of Dr. and Mrs. Wintermute. Clara appears to be a spoiled child when she is first introduced in the novel, but the reader soon learns that Clara's four siblings died five years before, but her mother continues to grieve them as though they only died a month before. This has put a cloud over Clara's world that she cannot escape, governing everything from her behavior to how she celebrates her birthdays.



At her birthday party, Clara meets Lizzie Rose and Parsefall when they come with Grisini to put on a puppet show. Afterward, Grisini gives Clara his automaton watch that later is revealed to be the source of Grisini's magic. Clara disappears and for weeks no one knows where she is, but Grisini is the prime suspect. Eventually, Parsefall finds that Clara has been turned into a puppet and he uses her as his show stopper.

When the children travel to Strachan Ghyll, Clara quickly realizes that Cassandra has magic and that she can use it to break the spell making Clara a puppet. Unfortunately, Cassandra will only do this if Clara will steal the phoenix stone, an item that Clara knows will cause her to be as cursed as Cassandra. Clara not only refuses to do it, she tries to keep both Parsefall and Lizzie Rose from doing it as well. However, when Parsefall becomes determined to steal the stone and use it to exact revenge, Clara steals it instead. Clara manages to break the stone, not only freeing Cassandra from its curse, but freeing herself and any future victims.

Cassandra

Cassandra is an older woman who lives alone. Cassandra is dying of a heart disease, but she worries that she will die in a fire because of a stone she stole when she was a child that is cursed with incredible magic. Cassandra recalls when she caught her student, and friend, trying to steal the stone that he attempted to tell her how she could get out from under the curse, but she sent him away before she could hear the explanation. For this reason, Cassandra turns to this old student in the final days of her life for help. Unfortunately, he tries to take advantage of her by convincing her to use his own wards, children he knows he can control, to help her out of her problem.

As the novel begins, the reader gets the sense that Cassandra is a sad, unhappy woman who does not care about anything but herself. However, as the novel unfolds, the reader begins to see a side to Cassandra that is much kinder. Cassandra not only offers sound advice on life to Clara, Lizzie Rose, and Parsefall, but she leaves her wealth to Lizzie Rose and Parsefall without asking for anything in return.

Gaspare Grisini

Grisini is a puppet master who travels all over Europe to perform his shows. Grisini lives in London as the novel begins, but has also lived in Italy and elsewhere. Grisini is caretaker to Parsefall, his young apprentice, and Lizzie Rose, an orphan. Grisini is a selfish man, however, often forgetting to feed his young wards and to provide them basic clothing.

Grisini was once a magical apprentice to Cassandra. They had a falling out when Grisini tried to steal the phoenix stone from Cassandra, the source of her magical powers. For this reason, Cassandra is reluctant to ask Grisini for help when she realizes that the phoenix stone will be the source of her downfall. However, she eventually calls him to her because she thinks he is the only one who can tell her the truth about the stone and its curse. Grisini tells Cassandra the only way to break the power of the phoenix stone



over her is to have it stolen by a child. To this end, Grisini has Cassandra call his wards to her, convinced that no matter which steals it, he will be able to control the child and therefore the stone. In the end, however, Grisini is outsmarted by his own greed.

Mrs. Pinchbeck

Mrs. Pinchbeck is an alcoholic who owns a boardinghouse. The house is so run down that the stairs have a rope to hang on to rather than a banister. Lizzie Rose, Parsefall, and Grisini live in Mrs. Pinchbeck's home because Mrs. Pinchbeck and Grisini are friends from years back. When Grisini falls on the broken stairs and disappears, Mrs. Pinchbeck allows the children to stay on in the boardinghouse as long as Lizzie Rose helps with the housework. Mrs. Pinchbeck seems to have a kind heart, but she is lost in alcoholism and this causes her to do things she should not to get money for drink. In the end, however, she is the source of information that helps Dr. Wintermute find Clara.

Dr. Wintermute

Dr. Wintermute once had a son that he hoped would someday follow in his footsteps. When four of his children died, Dr. Wintermute buried himself in his work rather than face his own dark feelings regarding his situation. Dr. Wintermute loves his daughter, but has always wished that it was her twin, his son, who survived. However, when Clara disappears, Dr. Wintermute finally realizes how lucky he was to have a surviving child, how much he loves Clara, and how desperate he is to have her back. For this reason, Dr. Wintermute pursues every clue he can to find Clara, eventually finding her at Strachan Ghyll with Lizzie Rose and Parsefall.

Mrs. Ava Wintermute

Mrs. Wintermute is a sad woman who has lived the last five years of her life in constant mourning. Mrs. Wintermute lost four of her five children to cholera when they were all five and younger. Mrs. Wintermute is devastated by the loss of her children and does all she can to try to keep their memory alive, including surrounding herself with their death masks, painted portraits of what they might have looked like, and by giving gifts to her surviving daughter that are supposedly from her dead children. This creates a dark, depressing atmosphere for Clara to grow up in, turning her into a rebellious child.

Mrs. Fettle

Mrs. Fettle is Cassandra's housekeeper. Mrs. Fettle is a professional woman, but she does not try to hide her distaste in having to care for street children. The servants in Cassandra's household are being held there with Cassandra's magic, perhaps adding to their sense of discontent. When the phoenix stone is broken and the magic dissipates, all the servants disappear, including Mrs. Fettle.

Wintermute Children

Dr. and Mrs. Wintermute were once the proud parents of five children. However, when Clara was only five, her four siblings became sick with cholera and died. From that time on, Mrs. Wintermute has forced Clara to visit the cemetery on every holiday and often gives her gifts that are supposedly from her siblings. This constant state of mourning leaves Clara unable to do many things that children her age should do. She feels as though it is her fault that her brother is dead. Clara harbors a great deal of guilt for the death of her siblings, especially her twin, because the watercress that transmitted the fatal disease was something she not only refused to eat that fateful day, but she gave her own portion to her twin so she could have dessert.



Symbols and Symbolism

Phoenix Stone

The phoenix stone is a blood opal that was cursed by its first owner when she was burned for being a witch. Everyone who has owned the stone has been driven insane and suffered a death by fire. However, if the stone is stolen by a child, one with the same birthdate as the original owner, the curse is transferred to the child. It is for this reason Cassandra attempts to encourage either Lizzie Rose or Parsefall to steal the stone. Instead, it is Clara who takes the stone and destroys it.

Emerald Necklace

Parsefall gives Lizzie Rose an emerald necklace he stole from Cassandra's room as a Christmas present.

Sapphire Necklace

On her birthday, Clara receives a necklace with a sapphire in the center. The necklace is a locket that contains hair from her four deceased siblings, another reminder of the tragedy of her childhood.

Books

When Lizzie Rose is given the opportunity to take anything she wants from Strachan Ghyll, she picks several books including the works of Shakespeare and her father's favorite novel.

Ice Skates

Lizzie Rose has inherited a pair of ice skates from her mother. Lizzie Rose begins to skate almost daily on the frozen lake at Strachan Ghyll to fill her long, boring days.

Puppets

Grisini makes puppets to use in his fantoccini show. These puppets are often made out of cloth and stuffing. However, the puppet that resembles Clara is made out of a warm, pliable material that Lizzie Rose cannot identify.



Photograph

Parsefall steals a photograph of Clara's brother from the Wintermute home on the day of Clara's birthday party. When Dr. Wintermute sees this photograph in Lizzie Rose's possession, he jumps to conclusions and threatens to call the police. It is for this reason that Lizzie Rose and Parsefall go to Strachan Ghyll.

Muslin Bags

Grisini keeps the puppets in muslin bags when not in use to keep them clean.

Wicker Baskets

Grisini stores his puppets in wicker baskets. Lizzie Rose packs all of her and Parsefall's belongings in the largest of these baskets when they leave for Strachan Ghyll.

Pistol

When Cassandra offers Parsefall anything he wants from a table of items in her room, he chooses a pistol in the hopes that it will help him protect himself from Grisini.



Settings

London

The novel begins in London in the year 1860. Lizzie Rose and Parsefall live in poverty in an old boardinghouse. The owner of the boardinghouse, Mrs. Pinchbeck, is an alcoholic who does little to repair the home and employs a lazy housekeeper who also does little to improve the quality of the home. For this reason, and because Grisini disappears, Lizzie Rose finds herself taking on the responsibility of the cleanliness of the home. At the same time, Clara Wintermute lives in a luxurious home filled with wonderful treasures. However, the home is also littered with the reminders of her siblings' deaths, such as their death masks and pictures of them in their coffins.

Strachan Ghyll

Strachan Ghyll is Cassandra's home. Strachan Ghyll is a large estate outside of Windermere in northern England. The main house has been built around an ancient tower that Cassandra has kept standing for years with the magic from the phoenix stone. The house sits in front of a small lake. There is a gatehouse at the front of the property. Lizzie Rose, who is aware that Cassandra wants to leave the entire estate to she and Parsefall, simply dreams of living in the simple, smaller, gatehouse. When Clara breaks the phoenix stone the tower in the main house falls.

Strachan Ghyll Lake

There is a small lake behind the main house at Strachan Ghyll. This is where Lizzie Rose begins to skate on Christmas Day. It is also where Clara takes the phoenix stone in order to destroy it after stealing it from Cassandra. Grisini dies in the lake after he falls through the ice while chasing Clara.

Kensal Green

Kensal Green is the cemetery where the Wintermute children are inurned. Clara is forced to visit this cemetery on every special occasion, including her birthday.



Themes and Motifs

Poverty versus Wealth

One of the main themes of this novel centers around poverty versus wealth. As the novel begins, the reader is taken into the luxurious home of the Wintermutes, a doctor, his wife, and young daughter. The child appears to have everything she could ever hope to want. However, as the novel progresses, the reader begins to notice little things about Clara that do not ring true. Finally, it is revealed that Clara's four siblings died of cholera five years previously and the only reason she did not die as well is because she disobeyed instructions to eat her watercress.

The novel then focuses on Lizzie Rose and Parsefall. These two orphans have also suffered as Clara with the deaths of their parents. Parsefall has also lost a sister, though he refuses to talk about his past with anyone, even Lizzie Rose. These children live in poverty, reliant on a selfish, uncaring man who often forgets basic things like feeding the children. Lizzie Rose manages to save out money from the income of the puppet show to feed herself and Parsefall, but she struggles with the tight clothing she is forced to wear because Grisini has failed to notice she has outgrown the clothes she brought with her.

As the novel progresses, the differences between the children are both highlighted and muted. When the children arrive at Strachan Ghyll, Lizzie Rose suffers the humiliation of overhearing the servants complain about having to care for such children. However, Cassandra soon makes it clear that she plans to leave her wealth to the children, changing their circumstances overnight. Clara, too, changes their situation when she demands that her parents take them in.

In this novel, the differences between poverty and wealth are staggering in the beginning. The two wards of Grisini are clearly living a difficult life, struggling each day to meet their basic necessities while Clara is showered with gifts each day of her life. However, the gap between these two situations begins to close as the novel progresses, soon disappearing altogether at the end of the novel. It is this progression of characters, and their situations, that makes poverty versus wealth a theme of the novel.

Grief

As the novel begins, the reader is introduced to a spoiled rich girl who seems to have everything she could ever want. However, the reader soon begins to realize there is something wrong with Clara's home life. When Clara has tea with Lizzie Rose and Parsefall, the reader discovers that Clara had four siblings once but they all died of cholera. With this revelation, the reader begins to see that Clara is not so much spoiled as she is a normal child who resents having to live in the shadow of her mother's grief.



Clara's mother, Ava Wintermute, is a sad woman who cannot get pass the grief of losing so many of her children so close together. Mrs. Wintermute insists that her family visit the graves of the children on every special occasion, including Clara's birthday since she once shared it with her twin brother. Mrs. Wintermute also insists on giving Clara gifts she imagines the children would have given her, on decorating the house with the children's death masks and pictures of them in the their coffins, as well as with portraits that show what the artist imagines the children would look like as Clara ages.

Mrs. Wintermute is stuck in her grief, unable to let it go. This not only causes her to live her life in a cloud, but it also settles this cloud over Clara's childhood, making it impossible for her to act like a normal twelve year old. Clara is filled with guilt over the death of her twin and she struggles with her desire to be a normal child and her desire to make her parents happy. It is not until Clara disappears that Mrs. Wintermute begins to realize she must live in reality, that she must embrace life rather than keep vigil over death.

Dark Magic

Cassandra is a wealthy woman who had a sad childhood and lonely adulthood. Cassandra's mother abandoned the family when she was a child, causing her father to dump her in a boarding school and forget about her. This left Cassandra feeling unloved. Then one day Cassandra steals the phoenix stone from her only friend and begins to discover its amazing magic. In time Cassandra harnesses this power, using it to her benefit. Cassandra spends a lifetime enchanting men into loving her, forcing servants to remain at her side, and living the life she believes she deserves. However, in the end, Cassandra discovers that this great power has a curse that she is determined to avoid.

It never occurs to Cassandra in her youth that such power will have a cost. However, as Cassandra ages and comes close to death, she begins to realize that the stone is beginning to drive her crazy. Cassandra sees odd things, such as an image of three women burning to death in a mirror. Cassandra knows the stone is causing it, that it is the stone that is causing her to suffer constantly with fever. However, the stone has such a hold on her that she is unable to destroy it herself.

Once Grisini, when he was Cassandra's pupil and her potential lover, he tried to steal the stone. When Cassandra caught him he began to warn her of the curse of the stone. However, Cassandra cut him off before he could tell her how to stop it. For this reason, Cassandra calls Grisini to her to ask him how to rid herself of the stone. Grisini tells Cassandra it must be stolen by a child who will then take on the curse. Assuming that the children Grisini suggests for the job are criminals already, Cassandra does not worry about passing on the curse as long as she is free from it. However, as Cassandra gets to know the children, she finds herself using the dark magic to make them do things she knows is wrong. The magic has so altered Cassandra's thoughts and actions that she cannot help but do whatever it takes to rid herself of it.



Styles

Point of View

The novel is written in the third person point of view. The author uses multiple characters to tell her story, utilizing the omniscient aspect of this point of view. The narrators are mostly the main characters, Lizzie Rose, Parsefall, and Clara, but the author also shows certain scenes through the minds of Dr. Wintermute, Grisini, and Cassandra to show the reader things that the children could not possibly know but which are important to the developing plot of the novel.

The point of view of this novel works well with the plot because it tells a well-rounded story. The author makes it clear to the reader whose head she is in as each scene changes, often not changing narrators until she begins a new chapter. The use of multiple narrators allows the reader to see the story through many eyes, to know things that some of the main characters might know but which is important to the plot of the novel, and to develop an intimate relationship with each of the main characters as well as some of the minor ones.

Language and Meaning

The novel is written in simple English. The characters of this novel range from a highly intelligent doctor, an educated woman, to a street criminal and children. The author attempts to express the personalities of each of these characters, but does not fall into the trap of altering her grammar drastically to show the more guttural language of the poorer characters. One of the characters is a man from a foreign country so there is some use of foreign phrases, but the author is careful to keep these short and avoid situations where the reader cannot figure out the meaning, or sentiment, of the phrase through its use in the plot.

The language of this novel works with the plot because the author tries to remain authentic to her characters, but does not create a language that does not fit with the overall flow of the novel. The language has an old-fashion feel while it utilizes modern phrasing, a language that both compliment her characters as well as her clear affection for the English language. For this reason, the language of this novel is simple, but complex, sophisticated but happily casual.

Structure

The novel is divided into two parts, fifty-one chapters, a prologue, and an epilogue. The chapters are fairly short, with some consisting of only one or two pages. The story is told in a linear time line with occasional interjections of a flashback.

The novel is structured with one main plot and several subplots. The main plot follows Lizzie Rose, Clara, and Parsefall as they become embroiled in the conspiracy of their guardian to steal a very powerful, dark magic stone. One subplot follows the story of Clara Wintermute and her family's dark tragedy. Another subplot follows the story of Cassandra and her phoenix stone. All the plots come to a satisfactory conclusion at the end of the novel.



Quotes

The witch burned.

-- Cassandra (Prologue paragraph 1)

Importance: This is the first line of the novel, and it aptly expresses who Cassandra believes herself to be.

When the cholera struck, the children had been taken ill very suddenly. He remembered his wife's face as she wept over the bodies of the children he had been unable to save.

-- Dr. Wintermute (Chapter 6 paragraph 7)

Importance: This quote shows Dr. Wintermute's guilt in relation to the deaths of his children.

Only the night before, she had spoken of her fear of cold and darkness; now darkness and cold claimed her, and she was not afraid.

-- Clara (Chapter 9 paragraph 44)

Importance: This quote shows Clara's state of mind a short time after she disappears from her home, suggesting she is not in distress or being hurt.

Dr. Wintermute thought of how Clara had dreaded visiting this place, and he set his jaw. If Clara came back to him alive, he would see to it that she was never forced to come here again.

-- Dr. Wintermute (Chapter 12 paragraph 2)

Importance: This quote shows Dr. Wintermute's changing frame of mind after Clara's absence.

He had chosen his victim well. Dr. Wintermute could be relied upon to pay Clara's ransom; a man who had lost four children would stop at nothing to rescue the fifth. Not until the following morning would the doctor understand that his daughter was never coming home.

-- Grisini (Chapter 14 paragraph 5)

Importance: This quote shows Grisini's ruthlessness in choosing to kidnap Clara as well as confirming his guilt in the crime.

He's going to string me, thought Clara. She wanted to stretch her painted lips and shout for joy.

-- Clara (Chapter 20 paragraph 5)

Importance: This line not only illustrates Clara's situation as a puppet, but also shows her reliance on Parsefall and her desire to be able to move again.



No lady ever read a letter unless it was addressed to her.
-- Lizzie Rose (Chapter 24 paragraph 7)

Importance: The quote not only describes a behavioral aspect of the setting, but it also shows Lizzie Rose's understanding of right and wrong, something that might seem unusual in a person in her position. Lizzie Rose is a poor orphan, but she still thinks of herself as a lady and tries to behave as such.

The booking clerk looked startled. He knew his passengers at a glance, and it was clear to him that Lizzie Rose and Parsefall belonged in a third-class carriage.
-- Narrator (Chapter 28 paragraph 4)

Importance: This quote remarks on the setting of the novel, and it also begins to show the transition for Lizzie Rose and Parsefall from poor street children to children of means.

Lizzie Rose had made up her mind to behave like the youngest daughter in the fairy tales she loved. The youngest daughter always preferred the humblest gift: a rose instead of a diamond, a blessing instead of a fortune. Things always seemed to turn out well for her.
-- Lizzie Rose (Chapter 36 paragraph 1)

Importance: This quote shows Lizzie Rose's uncertainty around Cassandra because of Cassandra's demand that the children pick what they want from the house. It also shows that despite all she has seen and done, Lizzie Rose still has something of the whimsical in her.

I've even wondered if we mourned our dead children at the expense of the one who lived—
-- Dr. Wintermute (Chapter 40 paragraph 11)

Importance: This quote shows that Dr. Wintermute has begun to see what his wife's constant grieving has done to their one living child, offering hope that things might change should Clara ever return home.

He didn't bother much with girls-it was well known that they weren't as good as boys-but this was the prettiest girl he had ever seen.
-- Parsefall (Chapter 3 paragraph 10)

Importance: This quote gives details about Parsefall and shows the instant connection between Parsefall and Clara, a connection that will prove important later in the novel.

They were waiting, all three of them, for the moment when they could be alone again and free to laugh together.
-- Parsefall (Epilogue paragraph 21)

Importance: This quote is the final line of the book. It shows optimism for the future, a drastic change from Parsefall's previous refusal to look past the next meal.