

Wildwood Dancing Study Guide

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Plot Summary

Jena is the second oldest daughter of a family of five. When Jena is only five years old, she is playing near her home with her cousins, Cezar and Costi. An old crone, who is later revealed as a witch, encounters them and offers to grant their wishes if they give her something they treasure. Jena trades her crown to become the Queen of the Fairies. Cost trades his family ring to become the Lord of the Water. Cezar's wish is to become the King of the Land and it's not immediately clear what he trades, but it's later revealed that he had been willing to trade the life of his older brother, Costi, for that title. As they continue their game, Costi apparently drowns and Cezar leads the impressionable Jena to that conclusion as they tell their parents what happened.

Jena discovers a magical frog soon after Costi's death and she names it Gogu. Gogu is able to communicate but only with Jena. They are inseparable for years until the day the witch turns the frog back to its original form - Costi. Jena is immediately skeptical that he is a good person, having seen a vision planted by a jealous young vampire in which Costi terrorizes her sisters.

Over the coming years, Jena and her sisters discover they have the ability to pass through a secret portal in their bedroom. Each full moon, they arrive at the land of the woodland creatures for a night of dancing with dwarfs, fairies, and other strange beings. Jena doesn't realize the portal is there because she has been granted her wish to be Queen of the Fairies until the witch reveals that detail.

Jena is very interested in her father's business and spends a great deal of time learning everything she can. When her father falls ill and leaves the castle for a better climate, Jena is left in charge of the family and business finances. Cezar can't stand for Jena to be in control of what he sees as a man's role and when his father dies, he becomes a bully, demanding to take over the accounts for Jena. Jena begins to worry that her father might die and reluctantly accepts the fact that she or one of her sisters will have to marry in order to have a male in their household to take control of their lives. They throw a party but Jena's older sister Tati is uninterested in any of the young men, having fallen in love with a being from the Wildwood. Jena dances with several young men but Gogu finds fault with each.

When Gogu is returned to his original form, he asks Cezar to put the past behind them and join forces as leaders of the village and owners of their family holdings. Cezar, eaten up with jealousy at his brother's return, refuses the offer of friendship and leaves. Costi returns Jena to her role as overseer of her family's holdings but refuses to accept her apology for having feared him immediately after his change from his frog form. When Jena realizes that she does love Costi, she goes to him and begs forgiveness. He accepts and they make plans to marry.



Chapters 1 and 2

Chapters 1 and 2 Summary

As the story opens, Jena says she and her sisters have kept a secret for many years. She says they know the way into the "Other Kingdom" where fairies and other mystical creatures live. Each full moon, the girls travel there by way of a secret portal they found when Jena was six and her sister Tati was seven. Other than Jena and her four sisters, only her pet frog Gogu knows this secret.

Jena and her family live at Piscul Dracului. The castle was built by an "eccentric nobleman" and Jena says she and her sisters could wander through the castle for years and still find nooks and crannies they hadn't known existed. Jena's father, Theodore, is a merchant who dreamed of owning the castle for many years before making that a reality. The result is that finances are a bit tight for the family now. Cezar's family home is Storm Heights, or Varful cu Negura.

Jena has imagined that she would learn the business and become something of a partner to her father, traveling with him in his work. She knows that most girls her age are marrying and her father's recent illness has made her think a great deal about the future of her family, which currently doesn't have a male heir.

On the night of the full moon, the girls stand at a specific point in the room and chant their names, at which time a portal opens that allows them passage into a world that doesn't exist for them at any other time. Over the years, the girls have come to realize they must be careful in the Other Kingdom. They never eat or drink and if Jena or Tati say it's time to go, they all agree without discussion. Jena says the rules are meant to keep the girls safe but that she's recently come to believe there might be something to fear.

On this particular night of their arrival in the Other Kingdom, Jena begins by dancing with a dwarf named Anatolie, who has provided her passage across the lake known as Deadwash. This is the same lake where Jena's cousin, Costi, apparently drowned when they were children. Jena learns from Anatolie that the Night People, a race of vampires, have joined the festivities on this night. Jena is immediately worried and cites the stories she's heard from their housekeeper, Florica, about the Night People's love of human blood. Each full moon, the creatures of the Other Kingdom dance and Jena and her sisters spend most of the night dancing and visiting the friends they've made there.

When the Night People arrive, Jena is worried but is assured Ileana will not allow anything to happen to the sisters. Jena knows, however, that Ileana is not as powerful as Draguta, the witch of the wood. Jena says everyone fears Draguta. During the night's dancing, Jena learns the Night People are "impressed" that the human girls visit the realm.



When the night ends, Jena and her sisters return home and Jena is pleased she's managed to keep them safe for yet another excursion. At home, Tati expresses her obvious interest in one of the Night People, a young man she later learns is named Sorrow.

In chapter two, Jena's father - Teodore - leaves their home bound for a better climate on the coast. The hope is that he'll spend the winter there and be able to return to the family home, Piscul Dracului, in the spring. Though Jena holds to this hope, she realizes her father is very sick. Cezar, who is Teodore's nephew, tells Teodore he'll oversee the family's business while Teodore is away. Jena interrupts, saying the accounts are all in order and that she is capable of overseeing everything. Cezar says it's "a lot of work for a girl," but Teodore interrupts him, asking to speak to each of the girls alone. He tells Jena that he is concerned about leaving her alone and reminds her there's enough money to cover household expenses until his return. He also asks that she listen to her Aunt Bogdana about matters "of propriety."

When Jena returns to the house, she is greeted by their housekeeper, Florica, who mothers the children but also respects their role as her employers. Jena is soon joined by the other girls and by Cezar and Uncle Nicolae. They serve coffee though the girls are all very sleepy from spending the night dancing in the forest. The visit is strained with Cezar saying he hates the forest because it's dangerous and Florica pointing out the creatures there might retaliate if the forest is destroyed. Cezar also says Teodore was wrong to allow Paula to be educated. Tati, who seldom speaks out, says she and Jena are in charge. Jena asks that he talk to Teodore about his objections.

As Cezar is leaving, he asks if Jena is angry. She says she isn't but that she does disagree with his ideas, especially with regard to destroying the forest. Cezar says he has to destroy it because of Costi's death.

After Cezar and Nicolae are gone, Jena takes Gogu into the forest for a picnic. She is near the spot where Costi drowned and remembers the day. She is younger than Costi and Cezar but on that day they ask her to go along as their princess. She has made a crown with the hope she might be allowed to play with them. They are playing near the lake when an old woman appears and tells each of the children they can trade something dear to them in return for a title. Costi trades his family ring for the title King of the Lake and Jena trades her crown for the title Queen of the Fairies. Cezar hesitates and looks at Costi but doesn't give the old woman anything. She nods anyway, says the deal is accepted, and grants him the title "King of the Land." The old woman then leaves and Jena plans to take the raft to the small island in the middle of the lake where she will "rule" as Queen of the Fairies. She loses her paddle and Costi swims out to her. She is terrified and is afraid to look as Costi pushes her toward shore. Later, Cezar says hands pulled Costi under and tells Jena that the witch, Draguta, drowned Costi. They return to the castle where Cezar tells his parents the news.



Chapters 1 and 2 Analysis

There is a great deal of introduction in this first chapter. Jena is the second-oldest of the family of five girls. Tati is a year old though Jena is the sister who tends to take responsibility for the family. Their mother died when their youngest sister, Stela, was born. Stela is now just five and the five girls have taken on the role of mother to their young sister. Lulia is thirteen. She is described as "curvaceous" and loves to dress up. Paula is younger than Lulia and is very smart. Their father pays a priest to give lessons to Paula and Jena though most people think it's an eccentric step and that education is wasted on the girls. Jena has learned a great deal about their father's business. He is a merchant and she is able to take on the role of caring for the finances for him whenever he is away. As the story opens, their father, Teodore, is very ill and is constantly coughing. The plan is for him to go to a place with a milder climate for the winter with the hope that he'll have a chance to recover from the illness. Though he has been away before, this is a longer period for the girls to be left alone. Jena is to care for the family's finances while their father is gone but her cousin and uncle are available to help.

Another set of introductions includes Jena's cousin, Cezar, and Cezar's parents. Jena's Uncle Nicolae is kind and friendly. Jena and the other girls like him. Cezar is a bully and is pushy. When Teodore is leaving the house, Cezar makes it clear he'll help with the business even though Jena resents it and Teodore doesn't instruct him to do so.

Gogu is a frog and it's evident from the beginning that there's something magical about him. At one point Jena asks him to tell her about his past but he refuses. When it's revealed that Gogu is actually Costi, he indicates that he hadn't been forbidden from talking about his past to Jena but felt it would be wrong to do so. He doesn't explain why but after it's revealed that Costi, Jena, and Cezar were each meant to learn a lesson, it seems that Costi began learning his much sooner than Jena.

Jena says she is careful to protect her sisters from the spell of the Wildwood dancing. She says they all look forward to the festivities and can hardly wait for the chance to go there each month. However, Jena also knows they don't belong there and she is careful to make sure she and her sisters are safe. One of the rules is that anyone who eats and drinks in the Other Kingdom can never return to the real world. With that in mind, Jena and her sisters never eat or drink while they are there. It's interesting that all the sisters seem to agree to the rules but Tati eventually breaks the rules and spends the rest of her life in the Other Kingdom.

The story of Costi's drowning is told from Jena's memory. There is an important clue there though Jena doesn't initially realize what really happened. The old crone who asks the children to "pay" for their titles is really the witch of the forest, Draguta. Costi hands over his ring without a second thought though it's an important piece of his family history. The reader will later learn that Draguta turns him into a frog to make him "King of the Lake" because of his willingness to give up something so important without even considering what it would mean to his family. The fact that Jena gives up her crown to become "Queen of the Fairies" is the reason she finds the door to the Other Kingdom.



Jena's gift seems a legitimate gift. Cezar's actions during this scene drive much of the story later. Cezar says he wants to be King of the Land but he doesn't seem to give Draguta anything. However, Cezar adores Costi and Draguta realizes that Costi is the dearest thing Cezar has. When Cezar stares at Costi, Draguta knows that Cezar is willing to trade his brother for this title. She asks if he's certain and he nods. It's not certain what would have happened to Costi if Cezar hadn't been willing to make this trade, but he fully believes he is the reason Costi drowns. Cezar is guilt-ridden for the rest of his life over this. Jena doesn't remember the events in this way because she is very young and as they are headed home, Cezar goes over the story with her, implanting another version of events in her memory.



Chapters 3 and 4

Chapters 3 and 4 Summary

In Chapter Three, Jena writes a letter to her father, trying to sound upbeat. A shipment of merchandise arrives and Jena successfully completes the transaction though the men try to get more money from her. Jena and her sisters spend the day getting the merchandise stored. Jena says unpacking the goods is a treasure hunt. Paula finds books that capture her attention and Tati finds some wonderful fabric. Jena says they can make Tati a new gown for the dance, which is the next night. Tati is excited and the rest of the girls agree to pitch in to help with the sewing. That evening, they tell Florica they'll spend the next day sewing but don't reveal they're making a new dress. Florica tells Jena they need to hire someone to help mend a particular section of fencing.

The following evening, they finish Tati's dress just in time for her to get ready to go. Each time, the girls arrive at the shore of the lake where several boats arrive to take them the rest of the way to the Other Kingdom. This time, the young man from the Night People, who Jena later learns is named Sorrow, arrives to pick up Tati. Later, Jena takes a break from the dancing to check on her sisters. Paula is with a group of very smart creatures who spend most of their time discussing academics. Stela is with small creatures, making daisy chains. Iulia is dancing. Jena can't find Tati but she eventually turns up and explains that she isn't dancing because Sorrow doesn't care to dance. Jena is worried that Tati seems so enthralled by Sorrow. Sorrow makes the return trip just before sunup with Tati and Jena tells herself they've all managed to make it safely home, but she feels something has changed and that they're no longer as safe as they once were.

In chapter four, Jena and Paula are visiting with Aunt Bogdana while Uncle Nicolae and Cezar hunt with several guests. The ladies often ride along with their husbands and Iulia is riding with the group. Aunt Bogdana says it's time for Jena and Tati to find suitable husbands, especially with their father's health so serious that he might not be able to return to handle the family's business. She says she might host an event to introduce the girls to some eligible young men of the region but Jena suggests they wait until the spring when their father returns. As the conversation continues, Iulia arrives and summons Jena to the door. She says someone accidentally shot Uncle Nicolae and that he's dead. Jena quickly summons Paula and they leave as Uncle Nicolae's body is brought into the house. They hear Aunt Bogdana's screams of grief as they leave the house.

More than two weeks later, Jena is writing a letter to her father when Cezar arrives. While he's there, Jena discovers that her sisters have apparently given away a great deal of money to the beggars who are constantly stopping by the castle. Jena is very upset when she makes the discovery but Cezar uses it as an opportunity to take over the family's finances. Jena keeps hoping that Tati will arrive and take her side against Cezar but she doesn't and Cezar takes the coffers with him when he leaves.



Chapters 3 and 4 Analysis

The girls' effort at unpacking the shipment in Chapter Three is an important look into the personalities of each and their dedication to the happiness of the others. Paula finds some books and is soon engrossed in one. Though the others are still busy at work, no one fusses at Paula for becoming sidetracked. As they are finishing up, Stela finds some interesting toys. Gogu is watching as she pushes the toys along the floor and he's a bit apprehensive. Stela tells him not to worry, that the toys aren't real. No one other than Jena can hear Gogu's thoughts and he speaks to her in that way. It would be easy for the sisters to refuse to believe that Gogu communicates with Jena or that he has the ability to reason things through, but they don't take that approach. Though they obviously believe in the magical creatures of the Other Kingdom, they also accept Gogu out of respect and love for Jena. Finally, the girls find the material that's so beautiful. The other girls might have asked for a new gown for themselves but they don't. Instead, they suggest Tati have a new gown. Tati, though she obviously wants the new gown very much, says the fabric is too beautiful and that they shouldn't use it. Jena wants a break from the routine and believes this project will provide that for all the sisters. It's obvious they all want to do this for Tati.

The conversation between Aunt Bogdana and Jena on the day of the hunt is a clear indication that Jena is considering that she might never marry. While Paula is very young, she is also intellectual and seems to be considering the same possibility. Both girls say there should be options available to them other than marriage, which shocks Aunt Bogdana. It's a clear indication of the expectations of the time period and the social dictates on the acceptable activities for women.

Cezar arrives at the house right after Iulia tells Jena about Uncle Nicolae's death. He says that he has to tell his mother the news but Jena urges that he change his shirt first, knowing that the shock will be greater if Cezar is covered in his father's blood when he delivers the news. The death of Uncle Nicolae is sad for Jena and her sisters but there's a great impact they don't realize until much later. Cezar, without his father to control him, becomes a bully toward Jena and her sisters, seeking to rule them completely. He also takes over the business affairs and controls the household money Jena has been responsible for.

While Cezar is visiting for the first time since his father's death, Jena learns there is a beggar at the door. Cezar asks what normally happens when these people arrive and Jena says they are given food and a little money. He warns that they not be "overgenerous." Jena is being careful but she doesn't realize that her sisters might take the situation into their own hands if she is not available. She has set a precedent for giving money and food to the beggars and she will later discover that her sisters have given away a great deal of money, dipping much too far into the household expenses.



Chapters 5 and 6

Chapters 5 and 6 Summary

In Chapter Five, Jena is very upset as the day goes on. Tati realizes it and asks about it. Jena lashes out at Tati, asking why she wasn't there when Cezar paid his visit. Tati says she wouldn't have been able to change Cezar's mind but reveals that she and Iulia had given money to beggars on separate occasions, and that they didn't count how much they gave away. While Jena and Tati are talking, Jena reminds Tati that she needs to remember their rules while visiting the Other Kingdom. Tati promises she hasn't forgotten but admits that she's very attracted to Sorrow. She says Sorrow has never had a friend and that he needs Tati. She also reveals that "something" is holding him in the land of the Night People but she doesn't know what that is.

The next time the Full Moon arrives, they arrive at the lake to discover it's frozen over. The creatures from the Other Kingdom arrive in sleds to transport them to the Dancing Glade. Tati is soon gone with Sorrow and Tadeusz, the leader of the Night People, asks Jena to dance. She reluctantly agrees and he points out his sister, Anastasia. Jena tells him she is afraid Tati has lost sight of what's possible and Tadeusz suggests Jena should do the same. He points out that she's attractive and says she should live her life and let others do the same. Jena has an audience with Ileana, the ruler of the creatures of the Other Kingdom, and her mate, Marin. Jena says she fears Cezar will destroy the Other Kingdom when he destroys the forest and Marin says they have faith that Jena will keep it safe. Ileana says they won't interfere though Jena argues that Cezar is a real threat to them. Tadeusz returns to Jena's side and offers to help her. He says he can solve Jena's problems but warns that it comes with a price. Jena refuses his help. He then says there's a way to enter the Other Kingdom at the Dark of the Moon and that she could look into the witch's mirror to see the truth if she returned at that time.

As the girls leave that night, Jena is unable to find Gogu. She cries but reluctantly leaves without him. Just as they reach the castle wall and are about to enter, Gogu catches up. As they reach home, Jena's mind is filled with what she might discover in the witch's mirror, including her own fate and news of her father.

In Chapter Six, Jena wakes the following morning with the realization that she owes her sisters an apology. She goes for a walk and when she returns, Cezar is there with his friends, Daniel and Razvan. Cezar has a letter for Jena but it is written by her father's secretary, Gabriel. The letter indicates Teodore is very ill and unable to write. Jena realizes she will probably never see her father again. She turns her attention to entertaining Cezar and his friends. They discover Cezar has brought some food, including cakes. Jena notes that it's a real treat for them because she has refused to ask for money to purchase anything frivolous.

Jena discovers Cezar has decided they don't need their hired hand, Dorian. She wants to ask him why, knowing there are things that need the attention of a man around the



estate, but she doesn't have an opportunity. Cezar then reveals that he's going to clear timber very soon and informs Jena it will bring her some much-needed cash. Jena says Cezar can't make that decision without Teodore's permission. Cezar says the action is retribution for Costi's death.

Cezar asks to look over the accounts and Jena reluctantly agrees. Cezar then says he'd noticed fencing has been repaired and asks Jena who she hired to do the work. Jena realizes it was the Night People but says she'd hired travelers who did the work in return for food. Jena recalls that Tadeusz had said all she had to do was wish for his assistance and she fears she might have done so. Cezar then reveals that he'd called for the removal of the priest in charge of Paula's education, saying it was "unconventional." They go over the accounts which are in perfect order. Cezar then points out there is trouble in the household. He notes that Tati has failed to show up when she's needed and that Paula is not at all afraid to voice her ideas and knowledge, though it's not socially acceptable for a girl to do so. He also points out that Iulia has been flirting with his friends. He tells Jena she needs help. She's furious and suggests that Cezar not pay a return visit soon.

As they enter the kitchen, Florica's husband, Petru, is there. He says a young girl has been murdered, her corpse drained of blood with puncture wounds on her neck.

Chapters 5 and 6 Analysis

The relationship between the Other Kingdom and the real world is not fully explained. To reach the Other Kingdom, Jena and her sisters travel through a secret passage that only appears each full moon. However, they cross the lake where Costi drowned and into the forest to reach the glade where they dance. Later, when Jena crosses over during the Dark of the Moon, she will return by walking across the field near the castle, arriving without going through the secret passage. With this information, Jena realizes there is a connection between the real world and the Other Kingdom. She fears that Cezar's destruction of the forest near the lake will result in the destruction of the Other Kingdom.

Jena's ride to the Dancing Glade in Chapter Five is Grigori who says "Good Evening" to Gogu. Jena thanks Grigori for his "good manners" and says Gogu would return the greeting if he were able to talk. Grigori says it doesn't matter that Gogu can't return the greeting and says he is able to recognize a friend, regardless of the form that friend takes. This is the first hint that the creatures of the Other Kingdom know Gogu for what he really is - Costi.

When Jena is with Tadeusz in the Dancing Glade, she completely loses track of time. He takes her some distance away from the others which is how she comes to lose contact with Gogu. When she realizes she's going to have to leave without him, she's furious with herself for allowing it to happen. She seems caught up in Tadeusz's spell while she's with him and admits over the coming days that she can feel him pulling at

her even when they are no longer dancing. Jena rightly fears that Sorrow is placing this kind of hold over Tati but will later learn that's not the case.

Cezar's action with regard to Father Sandu is an example of his general attitude that he can control anything and that his opinion is the only one that matters. Jena points out that Cezar has removed the priest, which hurts Paula, but adds that Father Sandu has spent years with the people of the parish and that his removal is a loss to the community. Cezar doesn't care. It's important that the reader consider the attitudes that make it "unconventional" for a girl to be educated during this time period.



Chapters 7 and 8

Chapters 7 and 8 Summary

In Chapter Seven, Cezar heads to the village with the intention of gathering a party to hunt down the killer but leaves Razvan to guard the girls. Razvan agrees but obviously wishes he could go with the hunters. After they are gone, Jena takes her sisters to their room where she confesses that she might have caused the death of the girl by wishing for help. The younger three girls are appalled that Jena listened to Tadeusz at all but Jena can't help considering what she might learn if she returns to the Other Kingdom on the Dark of the Moon. She admits she's "beguiled" by the memory of Tadeusz's voice but doesn't believe that's the only reason she wants to go. Later, Gogu urges that she dismiss the idea. Jena continues to think about Tati's attraction to Sorrow and decides she needs to introduce Tati to eligible young men in the real world. She decides to ask Aunt Bogdana about the possibility of hosting a small gathering for that purpose. Gogu asks if Jena would really marry a man she meets at this event and she says she will if it's what she must do.

Jena goes to visit Aunt Bogdana who says a party is an excellent idea. Jena reveals that Cezar has taken control of her household expenses and that she isn't certain he'll approve the cost of a party. Aunt Bogdana promises to take care of it, saying Nicolae would have been happy to host the event and that she can consider it a farewell gift from him. Jena tells her sisters the event will be on the Full Moon and that it makes sense for them to avoid the Dancing Glade until the danger of the vampires has passed. They aren't happy but agree to her plan. Tati objects most strongly, saying she and Sorrow will find a way to be together, even if she's forbidden the opportunity to return to the Other Kingdom.

In Chapter Eight, preparations for the party are underway. The guests are to arrive in the afternoon and will spend the night in order to avoid traveling at night with the danger of vampires so present. There are many who accept and Jena is surprised at the number of people chosen by Aunt Bogdana to attend. Cezar moves into Jena's home, saying it's easier for him to organize the hunting parties from her home than from his own. He, Razvan and Daniel seem to fill up the house and Jena complains that she has no opportunities for privacy.

Aunt Bogdana has arranged for a tailor to make dresses for the girls and it's obvious she wants Jena and Tati to outshine their sisters. None of the girls like the dresses chosen for them. Jena discovers that Cezar has ordered the removal of a huge shipment of merchandise in order to make room for the evening's entertainment. Jena is furious but unable to stop it. Jena and Cezar argue and the discussion turns to things other than the merchandise. Cezar accuses Jena of harboring anger because he sent the priest away and Jena says Cezar's hunting parties can only make the situation worse. Tati becomes indifferent and she seldom eats anything at all.



While they are trying on their new dresses, Cezar returns with news that the killer has been found and destroyed. They soon learn Cezar didn't find a vampire but only discovered a dwarf, whom he killed outright. Jena says the dwarf might not have been guilty but Cezar orders her from the room. Jena has to tell her sisters because Cezar's bragging is very loud. Aunt Bogdana is also upset by the news.

The following morning, every estate in the area discovers a dead animal. The exception is Piscul Dracului, Jena's home. There are immediate rumors of why and stories of secret doors in the castle. Cezar questions Florica and Petru, demanding each of them tell him of any secret passages. He then demands the opportunity to question each of the sisters individually but Jena refuses. It seems Cezar will hit her but Daniel steps in front of Jena and she sends the others to their room.

When Jena gets to her room, Tati is gone. It's the Dark of the Moon and she knows Tati has gone to the Other Kingdom in search of Sorrow. Jena says she wants to be sure Tati doesn't get in Cezar's way while he's so angry and that she's going to find Tati. She tells the others to go to sleep and leaves Gogu behind, fearing that something might happen to him while she's gone. Jena finds Tati on the parapet wall with Anastasia. Anastasia says she'll take them both to the Other Kingdom. Jena remembers Gogu pleading with her not to go and hesitates. Anastasia makes it clear she's leaving with Tati and Jena fears allowing Tati to go on her own. She joins them as a portal appears.

Chapters 7 and 8 Analysis

There is an interesting aspect of the traditional view of vampires in the method Cezar recommends to protect against additional killings. He says everyone should have garlic, amulets, and iron at hand to protect against the vampires. It's believed these things keep the vampires at bay though someone points out that the home of the victim had been protected with all those things. Jena recalls her conversation with Tadeusz who'd said the vampires aren't "fettered by puny charms," indicating the idea that garlic and the other items would ward off vampires is a myth.

There's another interesting scene in which the social dictates of the day are seen in Chapter Eight. Jena notes that none of them like the gowns being made for the party but they have bowed to Aunt Bogdana's wishes. Jena's gown and the one made for Tati are cut lower in the front and are obviously meant to outshine those of their sisters because they are supposed to be hoping to garner the interest of a suitor. However, Lulia's dissatisfaction shows through and she is obviously wishing her gown could be cut a little lower in the front. When Aunt Bogdana notes the action, she tells Lulia that she doesn't need to impress any of the men at this point, but that she must impress their mothers. This is evidence of the fact that parents during this time period play an important role in the lives of their children. While children may, to some degree, choose their own mates, those marriages generally have to be approved by their parents or they are simply not allowed.



There is no doubt Cezar is a bully but he also seems to want to protect Jena. It may be that he realizes how easily his wish to be the King of the Land had been granted and that he only later fully felt the cost - Costi's life for his wish. With that knowledge, Cezar may truly want to protect Jena from making a similar mistake. Cezar will later profess his love for Jena and it may be that he's honestly trying his best to look out for her. It seems more likely, however, that he wants to control everyone and everything around him, including Jena. Cezar does say repeatedly that he wants to avenge Costi's death but Jena realizes that anger is about to destroy Cezar. She tries to tell him but he can't see it.

Cezar makes an interesting observation after confronting Jena in the kitchen about the secret passages. Jena tells him that he's a community leader, just as his father was, and that people look up to him. Cezar objects, saying he is only a leader because of his role as master of his family estate. He says no one looks at him personally as a leader but he's all the community has to fill that role. He's right though he could have taken different attitudes and actions, earning the respect of the people rather than trying to bully everyone into doing what he wants.

Cezar tells Jena repeatedly that he's going to get revenge for Costi's death but he may actually be trying to assuage his own conscience. It seems obvious he knows that he traded Costi's life for the role as heir to his family estate and that he did so willingly. At one point he refers to the situation as an "evil joke," indicating he knows that Costi didn't accidentally drown. However, Cezar doesn't know that Costi has returned as a frog and that he's Jena's constant companion.



Chapters 9 and 10

Chapters 9 and 10 Summary

In Chapter Nine, they arrive at the Dancing Glade. The Night People are there and things are much different than when Jena and her sisters arrive on the Full Moon. The setting seems sinister and in the place of the cheerful lanterns that typically light the glade, the shapes of the lanterns are horrible, including a "worm infested apple." Jena sees humans among the creatures but they seem to be held there by some force. There is a young girl among the mix who is apparently being guarded. She also sees a girl who is being thrown into the air and later learns this is Sorrow's sister, and that both are being held against their will.

Tati demands to see Sorrow and she and Jena refuse to follow Anastasia unless they see Sorrow. Just then, Tadeusz arrives and points out they can't go home unless they're shown the way. Tadeusz takes Tati to see Sorrow and Anastasia takes Jena to the mirror that is reportedly the possession of the witch of the woods. In this mirror, Jena is supposed to see the truth of her situation. Though she pledges not to look, she can't help herself. She sees a young boy and a girl and later realizes this is Sorrow and his younger sister. They are taken captive and Sorrow is forced to do their bidding in order to keep his sister from being killed. The scene changes and Jena is dancing with a handsome young man with distinctive green eyes. He changes dramatically and chases Stela, Iulia, and Paula. Jena hears their screams and pleas. She then hears the message that trusting this man would mean an end to her. The vision disappears but Jena finds her crown. Anastasia tells her to throw it away but Jena refuses and Anastasia tries to grab it. Just then an owl appears and as it flies away, Jena follows, running from Anastasia. She encounters Tati and Sorrow. He urges the sisters to hurry home and takes them as far as the frozen lake.

The girls are bewildered but they believe they can simply walk home as they would any other time, and that there's no need for a magical passageway between their worlds. Jena feels on the verge of figuring out something important but can't quite put it together. She leaves her crown near the lake and they reach the castle safely but find the doors are locked. They know they are in danger of being discovered but, with no choice, knock on the door. Cezar comes from the barn and questions them. Jena and Tati insist they thought they'd heard a commotion in the yard and had come to investigate. Just then, Petru opens the door. Jena says she's sorry to have wakened Petru, and that the sound they'd heard was only Cezar returning. Petru follows along with their story, though he doesn't know why they are in the yard.

With just a week left before the party, which is being held on the Full Moon though it means the girls will miss the dancing this month, Jena tells Tati about her vision of Sorrow and his sister. Tati immediately wants to speak to Ileana in an effort to help Sorrow but Jena refuses, pointing out that Cezar is already suspicious about them.



On the night of the party, Iulia arrives in an altered dress with the neckline very low. Cezar catches up with her before Jena can intervene and demands she get a shawl. Jena later says he was too harsh with her though she agrees the dress was too daring. The young men who attend are all eligible but Jena finds fault with each. Jena then discovers that Sorrow is dancing with Tati. When Aunt Bogdana asks for his identity, Jena stalls but she catches up with Tati and demands Sorrow leave, pointing out that Cezar would kill him if he caught him.

In Chapter Ten, Cezar catches Jena alone and proposes to her. She refuses, saying they don't want the same things from life. Cezar gropes her and Jena slaps him, then walks away. Later, Jena tries to make Tati promise she won't go looking for Sorrow but she says she will only promise if Jena promises they'll go to the dance on the next Full Moon.

Jena finds time to be along with Gogu but she's interrupted by Paula who says Florica is upset. Jena arrives in the kitchen to discover Cezar has threatened to send Florica and Petru away unless they tell him everything they know about the Full Moon and the Other Kingdom. Florica admits that she'd told Cezar the girls always seem very tired the day after the Full Moon. Jena leaves the kitchen and finds Cezar, demanding that he take no action against the girls. Cezar then says he's certain there's a secret portal and that he plans to find it. He says people saw the strange man dancing with Tati and that there is fear Tati might be under the spell of the Night People. Cezar says he plans to hire a man to spend the night in the girls' bedroom on the Full Moon. This man will follow them if they go through a secret portal. Jena says she'll ask Aunt Bogdana to intervene but Cezar says she's gone away for awhile.

Chapters 9 and 10 Analysis

On the way to the mirror, Jena and Anastasia are alone. Anastasia begins to talk and Jena listens to her, though she should have known Anastasia would not be truthful. Anastasia says Tadeusz plans to let Sorrow see him with Tati in order to make Sorrow jealous and to humiliate both Tati and Sorrow. Anastasia also says that Tadeusz has manipulated Jena and that he has no interest in her. It's not until much later that Jena realizes she is an attractive young woman and that Tadeusz is attracted to her. Her lack of self-confidence on this point is interesting because Jena also comes to doubt her ability to care for her family and to take care of their interests.

Gogu's reaction on Jena's return to the castle after being gone on the Dark of the Moon is one of anger, but there are also some hints that something deeper is bothering him. He says he is upset that Jena left him behind but he also asks how he's supposed to watch out for her if she leaves him. Gogu is Costi, but he is in a frog form and Jena doesn't know he's Costi. She only sees him as a frog and she worries that he'll be trampled or otherwise killed. It's bound to hurt Costi that he can't actually take care of Jena as he would if he were in human form.



Jena manages to have an afternoon along with Gogu in an upper room. Jena tries to talk to him about his life prior to befriending her but he refuses to give any information. However, when they are talking about the best things in life, Gogu says that sleeping next to Jena, nestling in her hair, and being carried in her pocket are among his favorite things. He then says that true love is one of the best things there is. Jena says she doesn't believe she'll find true love and Gogu is obviously sad, moving off to be by himself after her comment. It's obvious to the reader who has by now figured out Gogu's true identity that Costi is in love with Jena, but the reader who doesn't have that knowledge at this point will not gain much from this scene.



Chapters 11 and 12

Chapters 11 and 12 Summary

In Chapter Eleven, Cezar searches the girls' room unexpectedly. They suffer through the humiliation of having him rummage through their things. That night, Jena tells Gogu they have to do something and he suggests they ask Draguta. It's obvious Gogu is petrified at the prospect but he insists he'll go with Jena. They leave early the next morning but Florica sees them. Jena says she has somewhere to go and asks that Florica not tell on her. The woman agrees after Jena promises she'll be safe.

Jena arrives at a place she believes Draguta might be and waits. When she arrives, Draguta is a small woman riding a fox. She tells Jena she will help with her problem if Jena gives up something she cherishes. Jena offers several material possessions but the witch says she wants Gogu. Jena refuses. The witch asks Jena what she wants and Jena spills the entire story, ending with the plea that she needs help for the coming Full Moon. The witch gives Jena a bottle of green liquid she says will put the man who's supposed to watch them to sleep.

Jena is frustrated as the witch leaves. Gogu, who is riding on Jena's shoulder, urges that she not be sad and Jena turns, kissing him on the nose. There's a flash of light and Jena flies through the air. When she recovers, she hears the witch's laughter and finds Gogu is gone. In his place is a handsome young man - the same man with green eyes Jena had seen in the vision in the mirror. She asks who he really is but he doesn't - or can't - answer. He can't seem to get up and she can't imagine going to Cezar for help, explaining the situation. She remembers the vision and eventually makes the decision to leave him though she is upset by it.

In Chapter Twelve, Jena tells her sisters what happened. Paula questions her vision but Jena doesn't. Tati suggests they use the potion to cross over on the Full Moon and says Jena can ask Ileana about the man Gogu has become while Tati can ask about Sorrow. Jena believes she can ask one of the creatures to take a letter to her father but Paula says going would mean opening the portal and that Cezar might then find it. They decide they'll go anyway though it might very well be the final time.

Over the coming days, Cezar has trouble finding someone who'll keep watch over the girls and follow them into the Other Kingdom. Iulia is upset when Razvan leaves and Jena, who hadn't even noticed Iulia likes Razvan, realizes she's been so wrapped up in her own concerns she's ignored her sisters. Jena writes a letter to her father, explaining the problems they're facing and asking for help. She addresses it to her father's secretary, Gabriel, with instructions to give it to Theodore only if he is well enough to take action. Otherwise, she asks Gabriel for help.

At bedtime, Jena and Tati prepare glasses of wine for themselves and offer a glass to the man hired to watch them and to the woman hired as a chaperone. They each accept



and are soon deeply sleeping. At the shore of the lake, they encounter Gogu and Jena refuses to let her sisters have anything to do with him. Jena discovers that Anatolie is the dwarf whom Cezar killed and that everyone knows Gogu is really a young man, though they are forbidden to tell and still won't reveal his true identity.

Chapters 11 and 12 Analysis

As the witch is about to leave after her conversation with Jena in Chapter Eleven, Jena asks if there's anything she can do about Sorrow, his sister, and his relationship with Tati. She says that Sorrow and Tati is an impossible match and the witch tells Jena she's going to have to let Tati live her own life. While the witch says Tati is a "grown woman," she is only seventeen which is a child by modern standards. It's important to realize the different expectations of that time.



Chapters 13 and 14

Chapters 13 and 14 Summary

In Chapter Thirteen, Jena tries to warn several people about the man Gogu has become but they all laugh away her concerns. Jena doesn't expect to have a good time, knowing this will likely be their last trip to the glade, but she allows herself to be led into the dancing. After awhile, she finds herself partnered with Gogu and she finds herself drawn to him. She wants to sit down with him and discover the truth, but he is soon gone from the circle of dancers. As Ileana arrives, Jena sees the witch who warns that some things are worth holding onto, and that she is about to lose something very dear to her. Tati rushes to Ileana, asking for Sorrow. She learns that Sorrow has gone on a complicated quest with the agreement he and his sister will be rescued from the Night People if he completes the quest. Ileana also says Sorrow will be given permission to keep Tati in the Other Kingdom if he completes the task and that the Night People will be banished.

As Ileana obviously becomes tired of the conversation with Tati and Jena, Gogu steps forward and motions to his throat. Ileana realizes he can't speak and she lifts the spell that has kept him mute. He thanks Ileana then introduces himself to Jena as Costi. Jena doesn't believe him. Just then, Tati faints. Jena realizes it's from being tired and having barely eaten in days. They decide it's time to go home and begin the journey. Paula reveals she's gathered some materials that might provide a clue about another way to enter the Other Kingdom. One of the creatures, Sten, says they can also cross over, but only if they are very careful, and promises they'll be checking in on the sisters. Another of the creatures, Grigori, says he believes Jena hasn't yet asked the witch the right questions.

They arrive at the opposite shore and Costi arrives behind them. He says again that he is Costi but Jena still doesn't believe. He accepts that, saying that if she can't trust him, there's nothing more to say, and that he's going home. He walks away but Stela says Jena should go after him. Jena finally does but he's disappeared. The witch appears and says Jena has been foolish. She asks Jena to remember the day of the wishes. Jena says she wished to be Queen of the Fairies and the witch says she couldn't grant that, but granted the portal which gave Jena a gift that was as close to that wish as possible. The witch says each of the five sisters got from the Other Kingdom what they needed most. The witch points out that changing Costi wasn't "merely mischief," but was necessary to teach him a lesson. She says he was willing to give up his family symbol without a second thought, and that she was teaching him important lessons because of his role in the caring for the forest. She then points out that Cezar had the opportunity to save Costi but that he'd been willing to trade his brother for the chance to rule his family estate. She says Cezar watched as Costi was taken under. Jena then asks why she was shown the vision of Costi in the mirror and the witch says Anastasia was jealous of Tadeusz's attraction to Jena. The witch then tells Jena it's up to her to figure out how to handle things from this point, and she leaves.



Jena and the others have to wake Tati to help open the portal. She wants to remain but they convince her to go. They return to their room to find the man and woman still sleeping soundly.

In Chapter Fourteen, Cezar demands to speak to the man sleeping in the girls' room and when Jena refuses to be ordered around, Cezar slaps her. He leaves the house and late that afternoon, Jena is outside when an old woman arrives in the yard just as Cezar arrives. Jena recognizes the witch as she'd appeared the day of Costi's apparent drowning. Cezar says they have nothing to give beggars but she says she has a present for him, and Costi walks into the yard. Cezar is upset but Costi says he wants to forgive everything and share the estate and the authority with Cezar. Cezar refuses, saying the estate is his alone. Costi says he's already spoken to the elders of the village and that his identity is established. Costi then says that if Cezar ever again strikes Jena, he'll be punished. Cezar says the witch didn't keep her promise, because being the King of the Land meant he would have the estate and Jena, but that it hadn't happened that way at all.

The witch leaves and Costi says Cezar is to stay away from Jena and her sisters. Just then one of the village elders arrives with Aunt Bogdana who immediately accepts that this young man is Costi. Cezar slips away, almost unnoticed. Jena returns to the house as Costi takes care of some changes Cezar had made and leaves for home with his mother.

Chapters 13 and 14 Analysis

Jena says granting Cezar's decision to give up his brother in return for a title was cruel. She imagines young Cezar, only eight years old, watching Costi being pulled under and knowing it had been his choice. The witch says Costi was still swimming but was caught in the current when Cezar had safely pulled Jena to the shore. According to the witch, Cezar could have saved Costi even then, but chose power over Costi's life. Even at eight, Cezar was hungry for the powerful position of leader in his family. Jena says it was cruel and that Cezar might have been a different person otherwise. This brings up the question of whether hatred is a natural part of Cezar's nature and whether he would simply have found other things to hate if this had never happened.



Chapters 15 and 16

Chapters 15 and 16 Summary

In Chapter Fifteen, Costi returns the coffers to Jena with enough money in the household expenses to cover their living for the months to come. One night Jena dreams about Tadeusz and his promise that he'd return if Jena merely wished for him. She fears she might have done so. Tati dreams that Sorrow is injured and she becomes weaker as the days pass. At one point, Florica checks Tati's neck, apparently searching for a vampire bite as an explanation for Tati's illness. Jena says she hadn't been able to bring herself to do that.

As Jena is watching Tati in bed following a visit from the doctor, Stela enters the room. Stela asks if Tati is going to die and Jena wants to reassure Stela but fears it might be a lie. She says she hopes Tati will recover but doesn't promise. Jena realizes she needs to make amends with Costi but can't figure out how to do it. The girls agree that Costi loves Jena but that her willingness to let him go will make it difficult for him to trust her again. Jena agrees she'll go to Costi the following day and begins planning how she might regain his love and trust. Jena prepares to leave but learns Costi is out of town. On the day she learns he has returned, she wavers, fearing that Tati might die while she's away. The others urge her to go anyway and she sets out. Florica has packed provisions for the walk and Jena stops near Costi's estate, making a fire and preparing a picnic as she often had with Gogu. She makes a pancake as she has often done for Gogu and sends it with a note to Costi by way of a servant. The servant returns after a while with word that Costi had eaten the entire pancake. Jena then sends in the empty shell of a beetle, referring to a time she'd snapped at Gogu for eating a beetle in front of her, an act she found disgusting. The servant returns with a note, asking if "good things come in threes." She sends a message back that he'll have to come find her.

He arrives a short time later and, though Jena had feared how they might break the ice, he asks her to listen to the music of the forest and they dance. Jena apologizes for letting Costi down and he apologizes for being so abrupt with her. They kiss though Costi initially fears he might turn back into a frog. That doesn't happen and it's obvious they are fully reunited. Costi asks her to marry him and she agrees.

Jena explains that Sorrow might return on this night, the Full Moon, and that she fears Tati might not live. Costi plans to walk Jena back to her own estate. As they near, they see Paula who announces that some of the men from the village have found Sorrow and are pursuing him.

In Chapter Sixteen, Paula says Sorrow has apparently completed his quest. They agree they'll help Sorrow though Jena knows Sorrow and Tati will leave this world forever. They help Sorrow find a safe place to wait. Costi and Jena rush to the house and get Tati. They give Stela only a moment to say good-bye and leave her behind. They also allow Florica and Petru to say good-bye, knowing the couple have already guessed



most of the details of their trips to the magical land. Iulia goes with them as they take Tati to meet Sorrow. The villagers who are seeking Sorrow are being led in circles by Draguta, giving them time to get Tati to Sorrow's hiding place. Sorrow asks Tati to go with him and she agrees. Jena says it's possible they may be reunited someday. Draguta appears and then leaves as the villagers arrive, searching for Sorrow.

Costi tells the villagers they saw a flash of something but that it had probably been a fox the villagers were actually pursuing. Costi applauds the efforts of the villagers to keep the region safe but says it's time to turn their attention to their farms and families. The family spreads the story over coming days that Tati has traveled to visit relatives because of her illness, and later that she's married there and settled in to raise a family. The distance prevents trips back to visit.

A few weeks after Tati leaves, Jena's father arrives. He's not completely well but has survived and takes over the running of the household and the business again. Jena and Costi make plans to marry but agree they no longer need to rush into it because of her father's return. Jena says she has no real hope of seeing Tati again but does believe there might come a time when her children are exploring their home and find a secret passage leading to the Dancing Glade, where they just might find themselves reunited with Tati's children.

Chapters 15 and 16 Analysis

Jena eventually becomes so worried about Tati that she calls for the doctor. The reader should remember the time period and what would have been acceptable medical practices during this era. Jena says the doctor "applies leeches," which seems to have been a typical treatment when the ailment is undiagnosed and above medical knowledge of the time. He then proposes "bleeding" Tati but Jena - realizing that Tati is already weak and that blood loss probably wouldn't be good for her - refuses. The situation is serious. Jena, who is only fifteen, is literally making life-or-death decisions for her older sister. She says that when her father told her to look after things in his absence she'd never expected to be watching Tati die.

Stela then asks if Tati has given up her belief in true love, obviously pointing out that she believes Tati is dying of a broken heart. Jena and the others begin to talk to Tati about true love, telling stories in which love prevails. They are trying to restore her belief but it seems this is what prompts Jena to realize she needs to solve her own relationship with Costi.



Characters

Jenica

Known to her family and friends as "Jena," she is the second-oldest daughter of the family. Jena says early in the book that she feels responsible for her sisters. As the story progresses, it becomes apparent that she is the more responsible of the sisters and that the others look to her to make decisions and solve problems. Jena accepts that role though she sometimes wishes she could simply have fun without worrying about others. Jenna has spent a great deal of her life learning the family business with the hope that she'll someday be able to play a role in the business. Jena believes she'll be the sister who remains at home with her father, caring for him without ever falling in love and having a family of her own. Despite her role as a leader in the family, Jena is compassionate and caring toward others. When she sees that Tati has fallen in love with one of the Night People, she is initially upset but eventually comes to support Tati's desire to follow her heart. When Iulia is chastised by Cezar for the cut of her dress, Jena is angry at Cezar, saying that Iulia should have been reprimanded privately so that her feelings wouldn't have been hurt so badly. Jena is a strong young woman and when Cezar strikes at her the first time, she is furious. When he later actually hits her, she doesn't bow to his wishes as he'd apparently believed. Instead, she demands he leave her alone. Cezar asks Jena to marry him and this might have been the easiest route for her but she refuses, citing the fact that she doesn't love him.

Costi

Cezar's older brother, he is handsome and an important part of the family until he drowns. It seems apparent that Cezar is jealous of Costi, even at this young age, and that Cezar trades Costi's life for his own title - ruler of the land. Near the end of the book, the reader learns that Costi didn't actually drown but was taken by the witch and turned into a frog. He spends years with Jena as her companion, Gogu. Once the reader knows that Gogu is Costi and that he loves Jena, some aspects of the story become humorous. When the girls throw a ball with the hope Jena and Tati will find suitable young men to marry, Gogu gives his opinion on several of the young men, saying they are not at all suitable for one reason or another. Costi's loving nature is evident in the fact that he tries to make amends with Cezar though it's mostly Cezar's fault that Costi remained trapped as a frog for so many years. Costi gives Cezar the option to accept his role as the younger brother but when Cezar refuses, Costi's natural ability to lead is evident in his demands on Cezar. Costi hasn't wasted his years as a frog and points out that he's learned all about the business while sitting on Jena's shoulder watching as she learned about the business. Costi's first actions as leader of the family are to take over control from Cezar, take control of the actions of the villagers including bringing an end to the efforts to kill off the woodland creatures, and to return Jena to her role as head of her own family. Costi's feelings are hurt when Jena initially doesn't trust him but his love for her results in his willingness to reconcile with her.



Cezar

Jena's cousin, Cezar is the younger brother of Costi and is responsible for Costi's apparent death in the lake. Cezar adores Costi when they are very young but is also jealous. That jealousy grows to hatred and when Cezar realizes he has the opportunity to trade his brother's life for power, he makes the deal. His guilt eats at him despite the fact that he refuses to accept Costi's forgiveness when Costi does return.

Tatiana

Jena's older sister, Tatiana, is very pretty. She is seventeen as the story opens and her aunt believes it's time for her to find a suitable husband. Tati falls in love with a man named Sorrow who is a member of the Night People though he apparently isn't a full-fledged vampire. Her heart breaks when she believes she is unable to be with Sorrow and she almost dies before his return.

Iulia

The third daughter of the family, Iulia is voluptuous and loves clothes and dressing up. She is thirteen as the story opens. She wants desperately to shine when the sisters throw a ball and alters her dress to show more cleavage than her aunt believes is appropriate.

Paula

The fourth daughter of the family, Paula, is very smart. Paula has a tutor each month, paid for by her father though most people believe the education is wasted on girls. When her father leaves for a better climate, Paula is heartbroken to learn that Cezar has cancelled her lessons.

Stela

The fifth and youngest daughter of the family, their mother died when Stela was born. Stela desires the attention of her older sisters and hates it when they are all too busy to spend time with her.

Aunt Bogdana

Jena's aunt who wants desperately to instruct the girls in the proper way to behave. She is very proper and believes the girls should be looking for suitable husbands. She approves of a ball for the girls to seek out suitable young men and chooses guests based on the hope that Tati and Jena will find someone they will agree to marry.



Sorrow

Sorrow is the young man who is obviously with the Night People the first time he is seen by Tati and Jena. Sorrow had apparently been captured by the leader of the Night People and forced to do as they command in order to protect his sister. When he has the opportunity to escape the Night People, save his sister, and be with Tati, he willingly goes on a dangerous quest.

Ileana

The queen of the fairy people, Ileana is the leader but is also blunt when she tells Jena she and her people are unwilling to interfere in events that are forthcoming, even when those events threaten the people of the Other Kingdom. She seems somewhat heartless at times and sends Sorrow on a dangerous quest before allowing him to come live with her people.

Tadeusz

The leader of the Night People, Tadeusz is the brother of Anastasia. He has an immediate power over Jena though she is also afraid of him. Tadeusz seems interested in Jena but Anastasia says he is actually just using her. It's eventually revealed that he probably had been attracted to Jena.

Uncle Nicolae

Costi's father, Uncle Nicolae is a kind man who is killed in a hunting accident. After his death, Cezar becomes even more of a bully and takes over the business and household accounting from Jena.

Teodore

Jena's father, Teodore, is in poor health as the story begins. He is absent for most of the story and it seems likely he will die while he's away. However, he does return and seems to be in much better health after spending a winter in a milder climate.

Anatolie

Anatolie is the dwarf who is killed by Cezar as the villagers try to find the person or creature responsible for the death of the girl in the village.

Florica

The housekeeper for Jena's family, Florica is older and tells Cezar the five sisters always seem exhausted the day after the full moon, planting the idea that the girls are traveling to the Other Kingdom. Florica fears that Cezar will send her away because she and her husband are old.



Objects/Places

Gogu

The magical frog who is Jena's best friend, Gogu is actually Costi though Jena doesn't know this for a long time and is not immediately willing to accept that it is Costi.

The Other Kingdom

The Other Kingdom is the magical land where Jena and her sisters go each full moon to dance.

Piscu Dracului

Piscu Dracului is the castle owned by Jena's family.

The Lake of the Nymphs

Jena's cousin, Costi, drowned in the Lake of the Nymphs when Jena was five.

The Full Moon

The Full Moon is the time of the month when the five sisters are able to pass through a magical portal in their bedroom to the Other Kingdom.

The Dark of the Moon

The Dark of the Moon is the time of the month Jena learns it is possible for the girls to travel again to the Other Kingdom. When she and Tati make this trip, they discover the Night People are in control and the setting and actions are sinister.

The Night People

The Night People are the dark race of people who are obviously vampires and who hold Sorrow and his sister in their power.

Queen of the Fairies

The title Jena chooses for herself and for which she trades her beautiful crown is Queen of the Fairies.



King of the Land

The title chosen by Cezar and for which he trades his brother's life is King of the Land.

King of the Lake

The title chosen by Costi and for which he trades his family ring is King of the Lake.

Storm Heights

Storm Heights is the name of Costi's family home.



Themes

Acceptance

Jena desperately wants to be accepted into her cousins' games and she prepares for that possibility by creating a crown. That crown is what she trades for her title, "Queen of the Fairies," and it's that trade - along with Costi's and Cezar's - that sets the events of the story in motion. Though Jena is afraid, she gamely follows the game and then accepts Cezar's version of events as fact, never questioning or revealing what really happened at the lake on the day Costi apparently drowned. Everyone has accepted Cezar's version of events and believes that Costi drowned.

When the girls discover the passageway into the Other Kingdom, they accept their right to be there though Jena remains wary and worries that something might happen to them while they are there. Another form of this theme is seen in the girls' acceptance of the creatures that populate the Other Kingdom and of these creatures' acceptance of Jena and her sisters. Each of the sisters is taken into a specific group. Paula spends time with the intellectuals who are very knowledgeable and meet her need to discuss academics. Stela is taken into a group of youngsters and small creatures. When the family has a dance in their own reality, Stela isn't accepted in the same way and she wishes for youngsters to play with.

Another interesting aspect of this theme is the willingness of the people of the village to accept that Costi spent almost a decade as a frog and that vampires were threatening them.

Love

This theme is epitomized by several characters in the book. In some cases, the love is devastating. For example, Tati falls deeply in love with Sorrow to the point that she is ready to die rather than live without him. Sorrow is so deeply in love with Tati that he goes on a dangerous quest, partly to save his sister but also for the opportunity to marry Tati. Costi and Jena are also examples of this theme. Jena doesn't understand that she is a beautiful, intelligent young woman who attracts the attention of the young men around her. She believes herself rather plain compared to Tati and can't see past that. However, Cezar and Tadeusz are very attracted to her and each tries to find a way to make Jena return that attraction. It's a statement to Jena's strength that she recognizes the draw she feels for Tadeusz as something magical and refuses to give in to it even though she doesn't believe he could actually be attracted to her. She refuses to have anything to do with Cezar and comes to dislike him because of his actions and attitudes. Costi loves Jena and she loves him in return, affection that grows while Costi is living as a frog. Other examples of this theme are less obvious. Theodore loved his wife and never remarries after her death. Jena's Aunt Bogdana loves her husband, Nicolae, and is initially devastated by his death.



The Desire for Control/Power

Cezar is the second son of the family and, as such, has much less power and control than Costi. He adores Costi - his older brother - but is willing to trade Costi's life for the power of being the oldest son. He does make that trade and is then unable to be an effective ruler because he desires complete control. Though Jena is fully capable of caring for the family business and household expenses during her father's absence, Cezar takes advantage of a mistake on her part as an excuse to take control. When Jena objects, he refuses to listen to her and demands that she answer to him in every aspect of her daily life. This effort to control Jena takes the form of physical violence and he hits her when she refuses to bend to his will. Cezar also hates the fact that Paula and Jena are being educated and has the town's religious official sent away in order to bring a halt to the lessons. Cezar also wants to control the town's people but he doesn't understand how to lead the people. Instead, he seeks to use his power to control them. Another example of this theme is seen in Jena's character. Though Jena isn't misusing her authority as Cezar is, she is determined to have control of the family's finances and business. It can be argued that she has the authority to have that control but when that authority is threatened, she fights desperately to keep the control.



Style

Point of View

The story is presented in first person from the limited perspective of Jena. The first-person presentation puts the reader in Jena's mind, meaning her thoughts, fears, and hopes are part of the story. When Jena is worried about her sisters, that fear is made clear to the reader. When Jena hopes Costi will forgive her, that hope is also made clear. The limited perspective is necessary for the twists that occur within the story. The fact that Gogu is a bewitched young man seems a possibility but Jena doesn't learn that until he is changed back. Jena's fear of Costi upon his return is prompted by the vision Anastasia showed her. Jena has no reason to mistrust the vision which means the reader is led to believe the vision is correct. The limited perspective also means the reader doesn't know the whole story about the encounter between Jena, Costi, Cezar, and the witch until Jena learns the truth. There's no doubt there's something important about that situation that Jena doesn't know. The reader may correctly guess that Cezar traded his brother for his role as "King of the Land," but it's not clear until Costi is returned to his human state that Costi didn't actually drown. The limited perspective was the only one available to the author to ensure the plot twists remained a surprise to the reader. The first person perspective is appropriate for the story and the audience.

Setting

The story is set in Transylvania during an unspecified time period. It seems evident the time setting is probably in the 1700s or earlier based on the lack of conveniences and the travel methods available. For example, there are no electric lights in the castle and Jena has to depend on a candle when she's finding her way around the castle during the night. The people travel by cart or horse, which indicates a time setting of more than a century ago. The physical settings are mythical though the overall setting of Transylvania is real. The author's note at the end of the story identifies Transylvania as the overall setting and indicates the reason for choosing that setting is the rich folklore of that country. There are several distinct settings within the country. The castle that belongs to Jena's family is where the majority of the action occurs. The castle is huge and Jena notes that there are so many nooks and crannies that she and her sisters will always have new places to explore in the castle. The lake where Costi apparently drowns is another important setting. It's a forbidden place with the children sneaking out to play there because it's forbidden. The Wildwood is another important setting though only on the full moon. There is a great deal of description given to the various settings, apparently in an effort to make them come alive in the minds of the reader.



Language and Meaning

The overall tone of the story is one of hope and happiness though there are overtones of dread and fear. The majority of readers will expect a happy outcome and this is the case, though there is sadness as Tati departs her home, probably for good with little chance of ever seeing her sisters again. The mystical aspects of the story mean there is little believable. The author creates this mystical atmosphere with vivid descriptions and many magical beings and settings. The Wildwood is an important part of creating that tone. The creatures there are mystical and strange, adding to the overall mystical atmosphere. The wildwood and the creatures are described in great detail. While some readers may be tempted to skim over the descriptions, they are a vital part of setting the tone of the story. The author seems to seek a sense of dread with regard to Jena's father. He leaves his home and family to live in a better climate because he is very sick. Cezar and Jena's Aunt Bogdana seem convinced that Jena's father won't return to the castle but will die while he's away. When Jena doesn't hear from him directly for an entire winter, she comes to fear the worst as well. The fact that Jena is about to marry Costi seems to support the idea that Jena's father won't be returning home. However, he does return as the story draws to a close. Tati's love for the young man who is apparently a vampire seems to be a doomed love affair and it seems Tati might die because she believes she won't be reunited with Sorrow. The fact that Tati leaves her family forever is sad but Jena has come to realize that Tati is either going to leave with Sorrow or she will die. This makes her departure a happier event and adds to the tone of overall hope.

Structure

The book is divided into sixteen chapters. Each chapter is titled by number only, meaning there is no clue as to the contents of that chapter. In Chapter One, Jena and her sisters are introduced along with their biggest secret - their monthly visits to the Wildwood. In Chapter Two, Jena's father leaves for a city with a better climate in order to avoid the harsh winter weather and Jena recalls the situation that led to the apparent drowning of her beloved cousin, Costi. In Chapter Three, the girls go for another visit to the Wildwood and Tati apparently begins to fall in love with Sorrow. In Chapter Four, Uncle Nicolae dies and Cezar takes over Jena's business and household money. In Chapter Five, Jena learns more about the Night People and the clash between Jena and Cezar continues in Chapter Six. In Chapter Seven, the girls plan a party with Jena coming to realize either she or Tati may have to marry to save the family from Cezar's rule. In Chapters Eight and Nine, the entanglement between the girls and the Night People intensifies as does Cezar's determination to destroy the woods. In Chapter Ten, Cezar asks Jena to marry him but she refuses. In Chapter Eleven, Jena's pet frog turns into a human but she doesn't realize it's really Costi. In Chapter Twelve, Jena and her sisters decide they will travel only once more to the Wildwood, leaving the door closed so that Cezar won't be able to find it. In Chapter Thirteen, Jena learns the truth about Costi and why he's been a frog for the past nine years. In Chapter Fourteen, Costi takes over the leadership of the family and Cezar leaves. In Chapters Fifteen and Sixteen, Tati

despairs of being able to live with Sorrow, whom she loves, and almost dies but when he returns to her, they leave together to live in the Wildwood. Jena and Costi reconcile and plan to be married as Jena's father returns home.



Quotes

"Generously built, with gray hair worn in a neat bun, our housekeeper treated us with a mixture of the respect due from a servant to young mistresses and the benign discipline of a mother cat bringing up a brood of unruly kittens." Chapter 2

"We're safe, I told myself as always. But it seemed to me that although we had crossed the margin to our own world and were on our way home once more, this was no longer true." Chapter 3

"It was interesting that our aunt never raised one obvious possibility: That one of us should wed Cezar. Not that any of us would want to." Chapter 4

"A friend is a friend, whatever form he may take." Chapter 5

"And I can't tell Father that Cezar's gradually easing himself into his place, that the valley is full of fear, that I no longer have control of his business interests, that that Tati's fallen in love with a ... whatever he is. I could hardly have done a worse job of looking after things." Chapter 8

"On some level, perhaps, our party had been a success, but the possibility of finding suitors we genuinely liked seemed farther away than ever. I remembered Tati saying once that the Other Kingdom might spoil us for life in our own world, because nothing could ever match up to it." Chapter 10

"It seemed that the prospect of a summer of riding in the company of an admiring young man was now more enticing to Iulia than the magic of Full Moon dancing. Was it possible to grow out of the Other Kingdom?" Chapter 12

"There was Draguta, in a long cloak of tattered green and a hat of leaves, under which her white hair shone like moonbeams." Chapter 13

"It was supposed to be mine, all of it, the estate and Jena too, that was what it meant, King of the Land, but it was a hollow promise. Even with you gone, I could never be more than second best." - Cezar to Costi, Chapter 14

"Draguta's plans were big ones; she had been shaping our lives since we were little children." Chapter 15

"So we called the out, the two of them with their seamed, strong faces and their work-worn hands. I told them, in as few words as I could, that Tati was going to the Other Kingdom, that she wanted this, and that it was the only thing that could save her life." Chapter 16



"Perhaps a pair of children would one day stumble upon a secret portal, and open it by accident to find a wondrous world of magic beyond. They might see the glowing lights and hear the beguiling music of Ileana's glade." Chapter 16



Topics for Discussion

Describe Jena. What kind of character is she? What do you like best about her? What do you like least? What are her strengths and weaknesses?

Describe Costi. What kind of character is he? What do you like best about him? What do you like least? What are his strengths and weaknesses?

Describe Jena's sisters. What are the strengths and weaknesses of each. Are they believable? Which do you like best? Why?

Describe the relationship between Jena, Costi, and Cezar? How is each of these characters connected? What does each want from the other? How does their relationship change over time?

Describe the Other Kingdom. How does Jena get there during the Full Moon? How does she get there during the Dark of the Moon? How is the Dancing Glade different during these two times? Would you want to go to either place? Why or why not?

Describe the situation in which Jena, Costi, and Cezar make wishes. What does each wish for and how is it granted? Who grants those wishes? What do Jena, Costi, and Cezar learn from having their wishes granted?

Describe the time and place where Jena lives. What are some of the problems people face as a whole? What are some of the things Jena and her sister are expected to do because they live in this time and place? What are some of the things Jena is responsible for? Would this be possible and acceptable in modern times?

Who is Florica? Petru? Bogdana? Nicholae? Teodore? Ileana? Draguta? How is each connected to Jena? What is the role of each in the story?