

The Stolen Child Summary

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Summary

Stanza 1 - The Magical Island of Sleuth Wood: In the first stanza, Yeats describes a beautiful, dreamlike place in Ireland—Sleuth Wood. There lies a leafy island, where the herons fly and awaken the sleepy water-rats floating on the lake. The fairies have hidden their faery vats there, filled with fruits, berries, and “reddest stolen cherries.” This scene paints a picture of a fairy-tale world—peaceful, mysterious, and full of joy. The fairies invite a human child to join them, saying, “Come away, O human child! / To the waters and the wild...” They call the child to leave behind the sorrowful human world and enter their magical realm, where there is no pain, only happiness and beauty.

Stanza 2 - The Dance of Fairies at Rosses: In the second stanza, the poet describes a moonlit night at a mysterious place called Rosses. When the moonlight shines over the gray sands, the fairies dance all night long, holding hands and locking eyes in delight. They perform “olden dances”, as if they are free from the limits of time. All around them are moonlight, waves, bubbles, and laughter — creating an enchanted musical world. But in contrast to this joy, the poet reminds us that the human world lies asleep, full of worries and troubles, because, as he writes, “The world is full of troubles and anxious in its sleep.” This stanza clearly shows the contrast between fantasy and reality—while the world of the fairies is dreamlike and free, the human world is filled with pain and restlessness.

Stanza 3 - The Streams and Whispers of Glen-Car: In the third stanza, Yeats describes the streams of Glen-Car and the natural beauty surrounding them. The fairies play in the flowing waters, whispering into the ears of small trout fish, giving them “unquiet dreams.” From the ferns, drops of water fall beside the stream, and the fairies speak softly, filling the entire sleepy landscape with life and magic. In this stanza, nature and imagination blend together—every element of nature seems alive and enchanted. Yet, the fairies once again call out to the child: “Come away, O human child! / For the world’s more full of weeping than you can understand.” This repeated invitation acts as a temptation of dreams, urging escape from the sorrow of the real world into the world of illusion.

Stanza 4 - The Child’s Departure and Lost Warmth of Reality: In the final stanza, the child is seen truly leaving with the fairies, as Yeats writes, “Away with us he’s going, the

solemn-eyed." He will no longer hear the lowing of the calves, the kettle singing softly on the hearth, or see the brown mice dancing around the oatmeal chest. These simple, domestic images symbolize the small joys and warmth of human life, which the child is now losing forever. The child departs "to the waters and the wild," entering the fairies' mystical world. But his journey is not one of joy—it is a sorrowful escape, where he trades love, home, and human warmth for beauty and illusion. The repeated closing line, "For the world's more full of weeping than you can understand," gives the poem a melancholic and philosophical ending. This suggests that even the most beautiful world cannot completely escape the sorrow that lies at the heart of existence.

LxNotes