***A Wizard of Earth Sea***

***Chapter 9***

***Summary:***

### Iffish

* Ged gets another boat, because apparently a boat made of scraps and magic isn't good enough for him.
* Since Ged fixes the old man's eyes in payment, the man asks Ged to name the boat Lookfar.
* This poor village reminds Ged of home, and he would stay, but Ged's got a quest. (This is the line we always use to get us out of uncomfortable discussions.)
* Ged sails to Vemish island, but the people there are afraid of him because their sorcerer says he's cursed and people on the island saw someone the other day who looked just like Ged.
* So Ged sails on to Iffish island, where everything is delightfully normal. Ged enjoys seeing children play and families do whatever families do. (Eat together?)
* But the innkeeper there subtly lets Ged know that they already have their own magician, so he should get a move on.
* Ged plans to, but then he runs into their magician – Vetch. After a little confusion – Vetch thought he saw Ged's ghost the other day – the old friends embrace each other and catch up at Vetch's home.
* Ged meets Vetch's younger siblings, his brother Murre and sister Yarrow. He also gets to see what a normal life is like, with a home and friends and all.

### But Vetch is willing to give up all of this (temporarily) in order to follow Ged on his quest. Ged at first refuses this offer, but we all know how this is going to end up: with the two of them in a boat.

* Vetch also tells Ged about Jasper, who never won his wizard's staff, which we suppose is just a fine way of tying up loose ends. Is there anyone else left from the first few chapters for us to hear about?
* While Vetch takes care of some pre-quest business, Ged gets to know Murre and Yarrow. Murre is Ged's age – nineteen – but they both envy each other's lives: to Ged, Murre's life seems peaceful; to Murre, Ged's life seems heroic. This is what passes for comedy in this otherwise pretty serious book.
* Ged tells Yarrow and Murre about how wizards have to keep the equilibrium and about how magic works. They talk about how you have to know the true name of things to work magic.
* They chat about magic and power for a while, and how we're all "syllables of the great word that is very slowly spoken by the shining of the stars" (9.77).
* These parts often get glossed over in movie versions, and it might sound boring and talky, but it's really kind of interesting to think about where power comes from and what people use it for.
* The next day, Ged and Vetch go off, while Yarrow waits for them on the dock. (So, yeah, Yarrow's here mostly just to cook and wait for the heroes. Le Guin writes more heroic women characters in other books in the series.)

***Brief Summary:***

Ged is in the village of West Hand preparing a boat. He buys the boat, named Lookfar, from an old man and for payment Ged heals the man’s eyes. Ged’s power began to come back to him the few days he was in the village and he did many other spells for the people there. Ged enjoys his time with the people in West Hand. When Ged leaves, he heads southward after the shadow because he knows that is where it has gone.

Ged’s first stop is in the port of Vemish. Here the local wizard tells Ged of a man, who somewhat resembles Ged, who had just passed through their village. The villagers feared this unknown man because he had not arrived on any boat and did not cast a shadow as he walked. With that, Ged leaves the island.

The next port Ged stops at is in the little village of Ismay on the island of Iffish. At a local inn, Ged is told the island shares a wizard from the school of Roke who has been given his staff from the Archmage himself, and so Ged is told he is not needed on that island. Ged does not think the East Reach is nearly as hospitable as he had come to expect according to his friend Vetch who was from Iffish in the East Reach. Ged thought the people seemed friendly enough but he also thought they must sense he was set apart from them, cut off. Ged knows he should not stay in Ismay but he is tired of travelling on the cold sea. So he tells himself he will stay just one night. The next morning Ged walks through the village watching the villagers and life that passed there as someone on the outside. His heart is heavy and he is sad. As he walks her hears a familiar voice—it is Vetch. He goes up to Vetch who throws up his own staff as though warding off a threat. Ged quietly tells Vetch it is himself.

When Vetch realizes it is Ged, he hugs his friend. Vetch tells Ged he saw him in Iffish three days before in the village of Quor. Ged tells his friend he could not have seen Ged three days ago because he arrived on Iffish just one day ago. Vetch tells Ged he called after the man that looked like Ged but the man did not answer and when Vetch followed him, he disappeared. Vetch says although Ged has come in darkness he is glad to see him and he invites Ged to come home with him and his sister. Vetch then introduced Ged to his sister Yarrow. Yarrow is about 14 years-old with dark eyes. She is slight and thin. On her arm sits a harrekki.

Ged learns Vetch is the wizard of the entire island of Iffish but he lives in the village of Ismay with his sister and youngest brother. His home is large and strong. Ged looks at Vetch’s home and life and feels that is how a man should live. Vetch asks Ged what his journey is and Ged tells him everything. When Ged is done talking Vetch tells him he will join the journey.

Ged tells Vetch he will not join him, the fight is not his. Vetch acknowledges the quest is indeed Ged’s but, he says, someone should be there in case Ged fails. Someone needs to be able to warn the Archipelago if Ged should lose to the shadow; and if Ged defeats it, then someone should be there to help spread the story of his victory. Ged gives into his friend’s request to join him.

Ged then asks about Jasper and learns he never earned his wizard’s staff but left the school to serve as the sorcerer on the Island of O. Ged tells Vetch he fears he has no strength to defeat the shadow but might be destined to chase it from land to land endlessly. Vetch tells Ged he believes fear is a lie. But Vetch does tell Ged it worries himthe shadow can walk around in a shape similar to Ged’s. They discuss why the shadow can take his form in the East Reach but not in the Archipelago? Why did it use Ged’s true name on Osskil but nowhere else? Ged tells Vetch he is bound to the evil thing. As long as he goes after the shadow it cannot possess him but he cannot catch it either. The only way he can destroy it is to discover its true name.

Ged stays with Yarrow and Vetch’s brother Murre as Vetch travels around the island tying up loose ends before they leave. At nineteen, Murre is the same age as Ged, but is very different. They watch each other with some envy. Yarrow becomes less shy around Ged and begins asking him many questions about sorcery and spell working, which he answers. Yarrow asks Ged if he will stay for a while in Ismay with them once he and Vetch return from their journey. Ged says he will if he can. Ged leaves and Murre tells Yarrow he is under a curse. Yarrow tells Murre she thinks Ged’s voyage will lead him to death but he still goes. When Vetch returns the two wizards set off in Lookfar as Yarrow watches from the dock.

***Brief Analysis:***

Ged is feeling hopeless as he continues to travel after the shadow. His travels lead him to Iffish, his friend Vetch’s home. Ged stays in the village of Ismay although he knows he shouldn’t. Watching the villagers, he feels sad that their lives are so different from his own. He feels cut off from other people. He runs into his friend Vetch and stays at his home where he meets Vetch’s sister Yarrow and brother Murre.

Ged envies Murre and his simple, privileged life. At the same time, Murre envies Ged because he is a wizard who has faced battles as a hero. Ged enjoys Yarrow’s company and it seems perhaps his feelings toward her could easily turn romantic if he had time to stay with her.

But Ged knows he must get back to his journey. Vetch will be joining him in his quest to defeat the shadow. Deep down Ged is sure in defeating the shadow he will lose his life.

***Critical Study:***

While recuperating in the village of West Hand, [Ged](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/A-Wizard-of-Earthsea/character-analysis/#Ged) helps the residents with his powers. When his boat is ready, he goes south, where he knows with certainty the shadow is. When he comes to the island of Vemish, the local sorcerer tells Ged that they saw a man with no shadow who looked like Ged. His next stop is an inn in Ismay, where he rests. The next day he runs into [Vetch](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/A-Wizard-of-Earthsea/character-analysis/#Vetch), who seems afraid of him. Vetch explains he was tricked by someone who looked like Ged three days before. Vetch introduces Ged to his siblings, Yarrow and Murre.

Ged tells Vetch of his troubles with the shadow, and Vetch offers to go with him. Ged does not want to put Vetch in danger but agrees. Ged talks to Yarrow and Murre in their kitchen. They realize Ged is under a curse, and although he fears he will die, he goes on his voyage anyway. Vetch informs the nobles of Ismay that he is going with Ged, and they leave at daybreak.

[Ged](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/A-Wizard-of-Earthsea/character-analysis/#Ged) is "sorely puzzled" by the Vemish sorcerer's declaration that the shadow looks like him. [Vetch](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/A-Wizard-of-Earthsea/character-analysis/#Vetch) also relays this same experience to Ged, describing the shadow to Ged as "a presentment of you, or an imitation of you." Ged confesses he does not believe he will defeat the shadow, but Vetch trusts Ged will "learn its nature, its being, what it is." Le [Guin](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/A-Wizard-of-Earthsea/author/) plants a big clue as to the shadow's true nature when Ged muses: "all my acts have their echo in it; it is my creature." Indeed, the shadow knows Ged's name because it is part of Ged and echoes his own name back to him.

Ged stops in Iffish, perhaps in the hopes that it will hospitable to him, since Vetch comes from there. He sees the Iffish have kind faces, but also that he is different from them because of his "evil destiny." Le Guin expertly shows in this scene how much Ged has developed personally in regard to community versus isolation. A younger Ged would not have minded being set apart, but this more mature Ged is "sick of the cold empty sea and the silence where no voice spoke to him." This Ged knows the value of community and suffers in isolation. Once he is reunited with Vetch, "their pleasure in being together overrode all." Ged has found true, steadfast community with Vetch and his family.

***Summary and Analysis Part by Part:***

***Summary Part 1:***

[Ged](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/a-wizard-of-earthsea/characters/ged-duny-sparrowhawk) spends three days in the village recovering and building a new boat that is not held together by spells but rather by sound materials. Ged obtains the boat from an old man, whose terrible cataracts he heals in exchange for the vessel. The old man thanks Ged for helping him once again to see all the light in the world. He suggests Ged name the boat Lookfar. Ged does many other good works for the villagers, healing the sick and tending to the flocks with enchantments. After several days, Ged heads southward—once again, he is in pursuit of [the shadow](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/a-wizard-of-earthsea/characters/the-shadow).

***Analysis Part 1:***

Even in the midst of a laborious, difficult, and intensely personal journey, Ged still makes time to help others and do the duties he knows he must as a mage. This shows how far Ged has come over the course of his journey: he no longer sees his path as a means to a glorious end, but rather he understands that his gifts as a wizard make him beholden to a larger duty to his fellow people.

***Summary Part 2:***

[Ged](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/a-wizard-of-earthsea/characters/ged-duny-sparrowhawk) soon arrives on a small island and docks at the port—yet as soon as he disembarks, the village sorcerer comes hurrying toward him and explains that while the villagers mean him no disrespect, they are wary of him. Just a day ago, the sorcerer says, a man who looks just like Ged—but who cast no shadow—was seen arriving on the island without a boat. Ged thanks the sorcerer, turns back to his boat, and sets sail once again, puzzled but still determined.

***Analysis Part 2:***

Ged believes that he has found shelter on a small island, but as soon as he arrives, he realizes that his shadow has beat him here. In assuming his shape—but remaining itself and distinctly other than human—the shadow is taunting Ged by souring his opportunities.

***Summary Part 3:***

[Ged](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/a-wizard-of-earthsea/characters/ged-duny-sparrowhawk) arrives at a larger island with a full port. He stays at an inn, where he eats and talks with some traders and townspeople. Recognizing Ged as a wizard, one man boasts that this village, Ismay, shares with other surrounding towns the services of a wizard trained at the School on Roke. Ged knows that he is not needed here. He declares his intent to stay only a night or two, feeling a cold dread wash over him as he realizes his destiny is to follow [the shadow](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/a-wizard-of-earthsea/characters/the-shadow) wherever it is bound. The next morning, Ged wakes to snowfall. He watches children play in the street and again grows forlorn over his lonely fate.

***Analysis Part 3:***

Ged feels that the experiences he should be having—serving as mage to an isle of people, enjoying a simple snowfall or a walk through the streets, and enjoying time with kind strangers—are off-limits to him given the heavy burden he carries in the form of the shadow. As long as the thing pursues him, Ged knows, he will never be free to live the life he wants.

***Summary Part 4:***

That night, reluctant to leave, [Ged](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/a-wizard-of-earthsea/characters/ged-duny-sparrowhawk) wanders the streets. He hears a man and a young woman talking as they pass him, and he is shocked when he recognizes the man’s voice. Ged follows the pair until the man turns around and holds his staff aloft in defense. Ged, taken aback and frightened, addresses the man, telling his old friend [Vetch](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/a-wizard-of-earthsea/characters/vetch-estarriol) that he’s hurt Vetch no longer recognizes him. Vetch, however, immediately drops his staff and cries out in joy. He embraces Ged and apologizes for startling at his presence. He says he has been waiting for Ged to come to the isle of Iffish for a long time. He tells Ged that several days ago, in a village in the hills, he saw an “imitation” of Ged—Vetch followed the “presentment,” calling Ged’s name, but got no answer.

***Analysis Part 4:***

As Ged reunites with Vetch, the meeting is full of happiness, joy, and a sense of destiny. Vetch’s report, however, about the strange imitation of Ged which has been spotted on the isle further disturbs Ged. Ged knows that no matter how much happiness he encounters, as long as the shadow lives, it will always threaten him. This sharpens his resolve and helps him to see that he truly needs to vanquish the shadow if he is ever to know unimpeded joy again.

***Summary Part 5:***

[Vetch](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/a-wizard-of-earthsea/characters/vetch-estarriol) introduces [Ged](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/a-wizard-of-earthsea/characters/ged-duny-sparrowhawk) to the young woman beside him: she is his sister, [Yarrow](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/a-wizard-of-earthsea/characters/yarrow), a girl of 14 who wears a miniature but live dragon as a bracelet. Together Vetch and Yarrow invite Ged to come to their home for some rest and nourishment. Ged admires Yarrow’s bravery in wearing a small dragon on her arm. Yarrow asks about Ged’s famous otak—but Ged replies the creature is no longer with him. At Vetch and Yarrow’s spacious home, Ged admires the prosperity his friend has earned.

***Analysis Part 5:***

When Vetch first left the School on Roke, there was a sense of melancholy within Ged as he watched his friend accept what he saw as a humble position. Now, however, Ged sees how greatly Vetch has been rewarded for his humility, his sense of duty, and the goodwill he’s earned with the people he serves.

***Summary Part 6:***

[Vetch](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/a-wizard-of-earthsea/characters/vetch-estarriol) asks what has brought [Ged](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/a-wizard-of-earthsea/characters/ged-duny-sparrowhawk) to Iffish, and Ged explains the entirety of his travels. Vetch says he wants to go with Ged to meet [the shadow](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/a-wizard-of-earthsea/characters/the-shadow), but Ged insists he must go alone. Vetch reprimands Ged for being prideful: someone must accompany him. If Ged fails, the citizens of the Archipelago must be warned of the shadow’s power; if Ged bests the shadow, someone must witness the event in order to sing the great songs of the encounter. Vetch insists that because he was with Ged at the beginning of his journey with the shadow, it is fitting he should be with him at its end.

***Analysis Part 6:***

Though Ged has grown a lot and excised much of his prideful nature, there is still a part of him that insists on going things alone and shouldering the brunt of every burden. Now, as Ged reunited with Vetch, he feels less alone for the first time in a long time. Vetch doesn’t want Ged to feel he has to make a great show of doing things all by himself—he can ask for help and still be strong.

***Summary Part 7:***

[Ged](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/a-wizard-of-earthsea/characters/ged-duny-sparrowhawk) admits that he is afraid to encounter [the shadow](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/a-wizard-of-earthsea/characters/the-shadow) again: the last time they met, Ged could not even seize it and realized he had no power over it. [Vetch](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/a-wizard-of-earthsea/characters/vetch-estarriol), however, optimistically insists that Ged will find a way to [name](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/a-wizard-of-earthsea/symbols/true-names) it and conquer it. Vetch asks what it could mean that the shadow has taken Ged’s shape in the Reach while it never did in the Archipelago. Ged and Vetch discuss the different enchantments that govern the different lands of Earthsea. The men continue discussing what could be calibrating the shadow’s form and what Ged’s delicate power balance against the shadow will mean for their future encounters. All Ged knows for sure is that he must learn the shadow’s name.

***Analysis Part 7:***

Ged knows exactly what it is he must do in order to best the shadow once and for all, but how he goes about doing it still remains a mystery. Luckily, he has the help of a true friend, Vetch, as he attempts to solve the mysteries not just of his own journey but of the larger world of which they’re a part. There is a lot of uncertainty surrounding the shadow, but Ged, strengthened by Vetch’s friendship and goodwill, feels strong enough to face whatever lies in store.

***Summary Part 8:***

The next day, [Vetch](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/a-wizard-of-earthsea/characters/vetch-estarriol) goes out to attend to some errands before he leaves with [Ged](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/a-wizard-of-earthsea/characters/ged-duny-sparrowhawk). Ged stays with [Yarrow](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/a-wizard-of-earthsea/characters/yarrow) and Vetch’s younger brother, [Murre](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/a-wizard-of-earthsea/characters), and delights in their company. Yarrow prepares food for Vetch and Ged’s journey, insisting they will need real food—not illusion—to keep them strong on their quest. Ged says he would not summon the illusion of food anyway, lest he disturb the equilibrium of the world. The two continue talking about the great powers of the world, and Ged declares that the greatest power is the power held in a thing’s [true name](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/a-wizard-of-earthsea/symbols/true-names). Ged enjoys talking with the sharp, smart Yarrow, and the two joke and tease each other as they banter.

***Analysis Part 8:***

As Ged and Yarrow talk, Ged finds himself bolstered by Yarrow’s lightheartedness. Even though they’re talking of serious matters and existential things, Ged never feels fear or uncertainty in the midst of their conversation. Ged is about to set off on a terrifying journey, but this conversation shows that he is better-equipped to face the shadow than he ever has been.

***Summary Part 9:***

The next day, [Vetch](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/a-wizard-of-earthsea/characters/vetch-estarriol) takes his leave of Ismay, informing the village elders that he is off to help an old friend on a quest. The elders berate Vetch for leaving them. Vetch declares that though he is, as a wizard, a servant, he is not their servant. Vetch, [Ged](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/a-wizard-of-earthsea/characters/ged-duny-sparrowhawk), and [Yarrow](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/a-wizard-of-earthsea/characters/yarrow) head down to the port. Yarrow stands watching from the docks as Ged and Vetch, in the Lookfar, set out to sea.

***Analysis Part 9:***

Vetch understands that as a wizard, his duty is not to any one person or place—his duty is to justice more largely. Vetch wants to support Ged on this important journey, so he makes clear to his neighbors that he is not abandoning them—he simply has duties to attend to elsewhere.

***Quotations:***

***Quotation 1:***

"My name, and yours, and the true name of the sun, or a spring of water, or an unborn child, all are syllables of the great word that is very slowly spoken by the shining of the stars. There is no other power. No other name." (9.77)

This gets a little philosophical for us, but Ged does raise an interesting idea here: what if we're all connected in one true name? And this raises another question: who's speaking this word/sentence? Is there any god(s) in Earthsea? Or are the most powerful creatures the wizards and the dragons that can use the Old Speech?

***Quotation 2:***

Ged watched him with wonder and some envy, and exactly so he watched Ged: to each it seemed very queer that the other, so different, yet was his own age, nineteen years. (9.55)

Here Ged and Murre, Vetch's brother, both think that the other has found the right way to live – Ged wants to live a normal life, while Murre wants to live a super exciting life. We might say that it's silly of them to envy the other since they each have their own particular worries within those lives. (Sure, Ged might think Murre's life is normal, but normal lives have troubles too.) But there's another reason why we're including this here: maybe there are different ways that people can come of age.

***Quotation 3:***

"All power is one in source and end, I think. Years and distances, stars and candles, water and wind and wizardry, the craft in a man's hand and the wisdom in a tree's root: they all arise together." (9.77)

Ged tries to explain magical power to Murre and Yarrow, Vetch's siblings. (Which raises a question: if they're so interested in magic, why doesn't their brother tell them? Oh well, at least this gives us an opportunity to see what Ged thinks.) Now, if you think about it, this is a radically different position than we had in one of the quotes above, where Ged hungered for magical power. At the end of the novel, Ged seems to think his own power has a particular place in the universe – that his power is part of the universe. In other words, he doesn't stand outside the world like a god, but takes part in it like a human being.

***Quotation 4:***

"Pride was ever your mind's master," his friend said smiling […] (9.34)

This is part of Vetch's argument for why he should go with Ged to face the shadow monster, and Vetch makes some good points here. It seems as if Ged, even when he's hunting the shadow and has been through a series of shocks, still is a little proud and self-centered. At least that's what Vetch thinks. Do you agree?

***Quotation 5:***

On the dock Yarrow stood and watched them go, as sailor's wives and sisters stand on all the shores of all Earthsea watching their men go out on the sea. (9.84)

We're mostly interested in what choices Ged makes (or what choices get made for him), but let's not forget that other people also experience these same choices. For instance, Ged wants to go shadow-hunting, so Vetch chooses to go shadow-hunting (or perhaps Vetch feels compelled to go shadow-hunting). As a result, Yarrow feels compelled (or perhaps chooses) to wait and watch for them.

***Quotation 6:***

"That is, I saw a presentment of you, or an imitation of you, or maybe simply a man who looks like you." (9.18)

We find this list from Vetch kind of hilarious since it moves from supernatural reasons to totally natural reasons. It's the kind of list you have to make when you have the supernatural in the world – that is, just because there are wizards and shadow monsters doesn't mean there aren't also non-supernatural reasons for a thing.

***Quotation 7:***

So he laid charms of heal and ward on children who were lame or sickly, and spells of increase on the villagers' scrawny flocks of goats and sheep… (9.3)

In his travels, Ged does some good work for people he meets, and that work involves a fair amount of magic. For instance, he heals one guy's eyes (9.2) before he goes on to charm his flocks and tools. Notice that this is also an intervention in the natural order, but it's one that Ged doesn't think twice about. Why is it OK to help these people and interfere with the natural world? Perhaps, in some ways, what makes this different is that he's doing it for other people, not for himself.

***Quotation 8:***

He had not yet let go of Ged's shoulder, and he said now, in the True Speech, "In trouble and from darkness you come, Ged, yet your coming is joy to me." (9.20)

Remember, humans can't lie in the True Speech, so when Vetch tells Ged that he's happy to see him, that's something we can take to the bank. Even though Ged's deep in trouble and Vetch knows about it, Vetch is happy to see him. Can two guys <em>be</em> more friendly?

***Quotation 9:***

"Little sister," Ged said, "it is I that have no skill explaining. If we had more time  –" (9.73)

Only some people can do magic, but everyone can understand magic since it's is part of the natural world. At least, that's the way it seems to us when Ged talks to Yarrow, Vetch's little sister. But there's another reason why we pulled this quote: Ged seems to have switched over from being a student to being a teacher.

***Quotation 10:***

Had Ged been free of what was laid on him he would gladly have stayed there a week or a month to sing them what he knew, that the great songs might be known on a new isle. But he was not free, and the next morning he set sail, going straight south over the wide seas of the Reach. (9.4)

This is certainly a radical contrast with Ged from the first chapter. If Ged in the first chapter wanted to do something, he did it, even if it meant getting beaten by his father. But by the end of the book, Ged can separate out his desires from his duties.

***Quotation 11:***

Growing weary of old men who nagged him, he said, "I am yours, by parentage and custom and by duty undertaken towards you. I am your wizard. But it is time you recalled that, though I am a servant, I am not your servant. When I am free to come back I will come back: till then farewell." (9.83)

Vetch has a job to do – he's the wizard for Iffish. But he's also a wizard for this friend, Ged, and for the world, and for the Balance itself. Duty isn't just about a job – it could be about responsibility towards the whole darn world.