

ForeWord Reviews

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JUVENILE FICTION

The Glass Table

Leigh K. Cunningham

Vivante Publishing

214 pages

Softcover \$8.99

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Four Stars (out of Five)

In a unique combination of fantasy and ecology, Leigh K. Cunningham's first children's novel, *The Glass Table*, chronicles the adventures of twelve children who are turned into spirits by an environmentally minded wicked witch. The story begins in the sleepy town of Rumpole during a sweltering summer. Cunningham writes, "It was the worst way possible to spend the school holidays: trapped indoors like caterpillars in a bug-catcher, with armpits flowing like waterfalls and hair damp and matted, hanging in dreads like worms."

Rumpole residents seeking escape from the heat pack up their families and travel to Lake Como to cool down in the frigid lake waters. The local witch is not at all happy with this onslaught of messy families, so she conjures a spell that transforms six of the children into river spirits and another six into wood spirits.

The children-turned-spirits discover a mystical glass table submerged beneath the surface of the River Kai. Here they learn the six rules that must be followed in order to avoid severe consequences. For example, rule number five states, "In the event that humans should cause further destruction to the woods, the lake, or the river Kai which flows from it, then all the spirits will die." This rule becomes important to the storyline when developers bring bulldozers to prepare the area for building. The spirits use all of their watery wiles to deter the builders, and the lake is saved, at least temporarily.

The spirits are permitted to visit their homes, and these episodes are both entertaining and poignant. Unable to be seen or heard, the children can only watch as their families struggle with grief and loss. Gradually, they begin to understand just how much they are truly loved. For young readers, this may be the story's most valuable lesson.

Readers will feel no sense of satisfaction at the end of the story, for the story doesn't end on the last page. Will the spirits discover a way to break the spell, or are they forever doomed to a life of eating raw fish and dodging giant carp? Perhaps these questions will be answered in the next installment of Cunningham's series.

For young readers who enjoy fantasy with a generous dose of humor, this story is a good choice.