

Magic or Madness Study Guide

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Plot Summary

When Reason's mother Sarafina goes mad and tries to kill herself, Reason is sent to stay with her grandmother Esmeralda. Sarafina has told Reason stories about how Esmeralda thinks she is a witch and so carries out horrible rituals such as animal sacrifice. When Reason digs up Sarafina's dead cat in the cellar, she realizes this must be true. She runs away, but when she walks through the back door she is suddenly in New York. Reason now knows magic is real. A girl called Jay-Tee befriends her, but Reason's grandfather Jason Blake is trying to steal their magic. Reason and Jay-Tee run away, but they are soon found by Esmeralda, who saves them from Jason Blake. Jay-Tee and Reason decide to give Esmeralda a chance, and she begins to teach them about magic. Reason is still unsure who she can trust, however.

Reason and her mother Sarafina are constantly on the move in the Australian outback, running from Sarafina's mother Esmeralda, who has claimed custody of Reason. However, when Sarafina tries to kill herself she is sent to a special hospital in Sydney, and Reason is sent to live with Esmeralda.

Reason is afraid and suspicious of Esmeralda because Sarafina has told her that Esmeralda carries out horrible rituals such as animal sacrifice. Reason searches the house for signs of this, and finds dried flowers, a feather, a strange key, and human teeth in Esmeralda's room. She searches the cellar, but it is just a normal wine cellar.

Reason meets Tom, the boy who lives next door, who is friends with Esmeralda. He immediately warms to her, and she finds herself trusting him too. He offers to show her around the town, and takes her to the cemetery where her family's grave monument is. Reason is surprised to see that so many women in her family die very young. Tom knows this has something to do with magic, but he has promised Esmeralda not to tell Reason about it.

Reason goes to visit her mother in the hospital. Sarafina tells her to look in a certain place in the cellar. Reason does, and she finds Sarafina's old pet cat, dead with its throat slashed. She knows Sarafina must be telling the truth about Esmeralda, and immediately decides to run away. Before leaving, however, she tries the key in the mysteriously locked back door. It unlocks, and Reason steps through. She is in New York.

A girl called Jay-Tee has been watching out for Reason under the orders of a mysterious 'he.' Jay-Tee gives Reason a warm coat and boots, then takes her back to her apartment. She makes friends with Reason, gaining her trust so that she can hand her over to Jason Blake, the man who currently controls her. Blake takes them both out for dinner and tells Reason he will answer her questions in return for some of her magic. She agrees, but only allows him to drain her magic for about ten seconds before she stops him.



Jay-Tee takes Reason out dancing so that she can absorb the energy of the club and recharge her magic. At the club Jay-Tee's brother Danny comes up to Reason and asks her to tell Jay-Tee that it is safe for her to come home again. He knows she ran away because of their father. Reason likes Danny and thinks she can trust him, but Jay-Tee is freaked out by his presence and quickly leaves. They go out for breakfast, and Jay-Tee apologizes for having manipulated Reason. Reason forgives her and tells her that they have to get away from Jason. She persuades Jay-Tee to call Danny, who tells her that her father is dead. They arrange to meet Danny later in the day.

Unfortunately, Jason turns up unexpectedly. Reason tells him they want nothing more to do with him, but he will not let them leave. Reason gets angry and almost kills him with her magic, but Jay-Tee stops her in time. They run to the cafe where Danny is meeting them, and there Reason sees Tom, who has been helping Esmeralda to search for her. Esmeralda arrives and Jay-Tee and Reason run away again.

Jay-Tee heads for the door to Australia, but Jason is waiting for them. Esmeralda pulls up in a taxi and becomes locked into a staring match with Jason. Some kind of magical duel is taking place. Tom persuades Reason and Jay-Tee to at least give Esmeralda a chance. Reason and the others lend Esmeralda their magic, and she then easily defeats Jason. They all quickly walk through the door back into Sydney.

Esmeralda explains that magic is in all things, but is stronger in magic users like them. Magic is energy, so every time they create or use it they are shortening their lives. However, if they do not use it, they will go insane like Sarafina. This is the magic user's choice: magic or madness. Esmeralda promises to teach them, and to try not to steal their powers, but she cannot promise that she will not turn on them one day. Jay-Tee and Tom trust her for now, but Reason remains suspicious.



'Reason Cansino', 'With the Witch', 'In the Witch's House'

'Reason Cansino', 'With the Witch', 'In the Witch's House' Summary

Reason and her mother Sarafina have been living on the run in Australia, hiding from Reason's grandmother Esmeralda. Sarafina has told Reason that Esmeralda believes in magic and is very dangerous. When Sarafina goes mad and tries to kill herself, Reason is sent to live with Esmeralda. Reason is terrified and suspicious of her grandmother, and when she gets the opportunity to escape she takes it. She leaves by the back door, but finds herself in New York. Reason now knows that magic is real, but she still believes her grandmother is evil. Reason soon finds herself being manipulated by her grandfather Jason Blake, who wants to steal her magic. Reason befriends his other victim, a girl called Jay-Tee, and together they escape. They run, but they are found by Esmeralda, who promises to teach them magic without stealing any of theirs. At the end of the story Reason is still not sure who she can trust.

Reason and her mother Sarafina live in Australia, constantly moving through the outback and small towns in order to elude Reason's grandmother Esmeralda, who is searching for them. Esmeralda has a custody claim on Reason, from which Reason and Sarafina ran away. Reason loves their life on the move.

However, Sarafina's mental illness has been getting worse, until one day she tries to kill herself. She is taken to a hospital, where Esmeralda finds them. Sarafina is transferred to a special hospital in Sydney for the mentally ill, and now Reason is heading to Sydney on a plane to stay at Esmeralda's house.

Esmeralda meets Reason at the airport. She tries to be nice to her, but Reason will not speak to her grandmother. They take a taxi to Esmeralda's house, where Esmeralda shows Reason to her new room. Esmeralda leaves her alone, and Reason immediately checks for escape routes, then searches for any hidden ritual objects or herbs. She finds none, but shreds the lavender in the bathroom to be sure.

Sarafina has told Reason many stories about Esmeralda, claiming that Esmeralda believes in magic, sacrifices animals and eats babies bought from impoverished mothers. Sarafina has taught Reason that magic is not real, but that people who believe in it, like Esmeralda, are very dangerous. Reason believes all this, and so is afraid of her grandmother. She has brought her own snack food with her, since she thinks Esmeralda may drug her food.

Esmeralda goes out to the shops, and Reason decides to take this opportunity to explore the house in order to better plan her escape.



'Reason Cansino', 'With the Witch', 'In the Witch's House' Analysis

Reason's name is extremely significant, and will prove to be very ironic. Reason's mother loves math and numbers, lines and angles, and repetition. She finds comfort in anything that is rational and logical. She has told Reason that Esmeralda, Reason's grandmother, believes in magic. According to Sarafina, Esmeralda thinks she is a witch and is willing to do all kinds of horrible things to gain more power. Sarafina escaped this when she was younger, and is now protecting Reason from it. She teaches Reason that the world is rational and that there is no such thing as magic. Esmeralda is portrayed as irrational and crazy, and Sarafina as sensible and sane.

However, Sarafina is not as rational as she would like Reason to believe. Reason says that her mother has disturbed episodes, and Sarafina's insistence on a life of constantly moving, as well as her paranoia, is not the most rational environment. Sarafina's mental illness has clearly been getting worse, leading to her attempt to kill herself. Perhaps Sarafina can sense her own illness and hates it, and so gives her daughter the name 'Reason' in a desperate attempt to shield her from this. Perhaps with the name Reason she also hopes to ensure that her daughter will not suffer from the same delusions as Esmeralda. It would seem that madness runs in the family.

Esmeralda, however, does not come across as insane or disturbed. She seems like a very rational, sensible and caring woman. She seems genuinely concerned about her granddaughter, and she does not push Reason to talk to her, seeming to understand that Reason needs her space. Esmeralda's house is not what Reason imagined, or what Sarafina led her to believe that it would be like. It does not seem like the house of a person who believes they are a witch. It is possible that Esmeralda is pretending, hoping to lure Reason into a false sense of security before involving her in her 'magic rituals', but it is also possible that Sarafina has not been telling Reason the truth. Sarafina has had disturbed episodes and is now in a home for the mentally ill. She has been extremely paranoid throughout Reason's whole life, telling Reason crazy-sounding stories about Esmeralda. It is possible that these are exactly that, just stories, and that Esmeralda is a normal person after all.

Reason does not seem to want to believe this. She has been completely persuaded by her mother that Esmeralda is evil, and as a result of this she is frightened and suspicious. She knows that her mother is mad, but she refuses to believe that Sarafina is mad about this. Reason seems to be clinging to anything that will prove her mother right, and sane. If Esmeralda is evil, then Sarafina is not insane, and Reason can still be with her. Reason also has no reason to trust Esmeralda, whereas she has lived with, loved, and been protected by Sarafina all her life. It is no wonder that she is reluctant to consider that her mother may be wrong in this. To the reader, Reason may come across as a little naive and desperate, and brainwashed by her mother. At this point it may seem to the reader that Esmeralda is a perfectly normal woman and that Sarafina is the one who is messed up, trailing her daughter around Australia because of some

misguided paranoia about her own mother. Will Reason have to face up to the fact that her mother is insane, and that Esmeralda is not what she thinks?



'In the Witch's Bedroom', 'Into the Cellar', 'Through the Window'

'In the Witch's Bedroom', 'Into the Cellar', 'Through the Window' Summary

Reason explores Esmeralda's room. There are pictures all over the walls, two of a young Sarafina, with dried yellow flowers in the back of the frames. Reason crushes the flowers. The room is a mess but clean of dust and dirt. The wardrobe is full of black jackets, and Reason finds a black feather in the lining of one. She turns it upside down to freak out Esmeralda, as Sarafina taught her to do. She goes through Esmeralda's drawers and uses a bobby-pin to open the locked one. Inside is a key with a looped end in the shape of the infinity symbol. She takes it and re-locks the drawer. She then explores Esmeralda's bathroom and finds a hair-brush with a false back that is full of human teeth.

Reason thinks she is going to be sick so she runs to the balcony. Outside there is a fig tree growing close to the window, which she thinks she will be able to use to escape. However, she will need to wait for a better time, and she wants to speak to Sarafina first.

She then decides to explore the cellar, where Sarafina has told her that Esmeralda kills animals as part of her rituals. She cannot find the light so she enters the cellar in the dark. She sees shapes and imagines dead things, but then hears the front door upstairs and realizes that she left the cellar door open. She hides. The light comes on and Esmeralda looks in, but she does not see Reason. She leaves. Reason sees that the cellar is being used as a wine cellar and that there are no dead things in it, and no room at all for magic rituals to take place. Reason creeps back up to her room.

She is woken at 7am by the feeling of the house shaking. Esmeralda puts a letter under her door, then leaves. Reason hears the back door and goes to Esmeralda's balcony to look out at the back yard, but she does not see Esmeralda. She wonders if there are secret passages in the house. She decides to meditate using the ammonite stone that her mother gave her. When she does this she can sense the energy in other living things, which she calls entropy, and so is aware when others are around. She does this and can tell that the house is empty.

She goes to the kitchen, where there is a note from Esmeralda saying that she has gone to work. Reason tries the back door but it is locked. There is a wet fur coat hung up beside the door, which is strange because it is summer. The coat has US money in it. Reason thinks about trying the key in the back door, but the window is open so she climbs out into the back yard that way instead.



'In the Witch's Bedroom', 'Into the Cellar', 'Through the Window' Analysis

Whereas in the previous chapters the reader may have felt sure that Sarafina is mad, that Reason is deluding herself and that Esmeralda is a normal woman, now they cannot be so sure. Reason searches Esmeralda's room and finds various things that are suspicious. The author introduces these by presenting the least threatening first, and then heightening the weirdness with each one, as if challenging the reader and Reason to come up with rational explanations. First, Reason discovers dried yellow flowers in the frames of the photographs. This in itself is not damning, because many people will dry flowers in order to preserve them. Flowers might be associated with certain feelings and memories, so it does not seem strange that Esmeralda might put them in the frames of old photographs. However, Reason is alert for everything that might suggest witchcraft, and so she immediately jumps to bad conclusions.

Things get a little more suspicious when Reason finds a strange infinity shaped key in a locked drawer, and a feather in the lining of one of Esmeralda's suits, which are all black. It is possible that a woman might only own black suits, and it is possible that she would put dried flowers in her pictures, and the key may have a perfectly innocent explanation. However, all of these together, especially with the feather, do begin to suggest something stranger. When Reason discovers the human teeth in the hairbrush, things begin to get quite sinister. Why would Esmeralda have so many human teeth? Parents sometimes collect their children's milk teeth, but these seem to be adult teeth and it is unlikely that they have all come from Sarafina. Things are starting to look damning after all; perhaps Sarafina and Reason are correct, and Esmeralda really does practice dark rituals in the belief that she is a witch.

Just as the reader is starting to believe Sarafina's stories about Esmeralda, more evidence is given that Sarafina is mistaken. Reason explores the cellar, which is the place where Esmeralda supposedly carries out her horrible rituals. Reason expects to find ritual objects and perhaps dead bodies, but what she actually finds is a perfectly ordinary and well-stocked wine cellar. There is not even room in here for sacrifices or rituals to take place. This reminds the reader that sensible explanations can exist, even when evidence suggests something more sinister. Reason is also forced to admit that Esmeralda's house is nothing like how Sarafina described it. The house has electricity and modern comforts, and Reason has not found any real evidence of Esmeralda's evil behavior. This leaves the reader confused; is Sarafina telling the truth, or is she simply insane? Is Esmeralda more sinister than she appears?

Reason is still determined to believe that Esmeralda is evil, but it is clear that she is also beginning to doubt herself. She wonders why the house is not as Sarafina described it, and considers whether Esmeralda may simply use the word magic to explain things she does not understand. Reason is surprised by the innocent appearance of the cellar, and begins to wonder if her mother has been telling her the truth after all. She pushes down these thoughts as soon as they come. She is not yet ready to consider the possibility that her mother is insane in this too, and that this house will have to be her new home.



She needs to believe that Esmeralda is disturbed and cruel, and that Sarafina is telling the truth, since this is the only hope she has of ever being with her mother again.

When Reason is not sure if the house is empty, she finds out by meditating with her ammonite stone. She believes that this is science, that it is rational and explainable, because Sarafina has explained to her that it is about sensing the entropy in living things. Reason considers how magical it may seem, but she does not doubt what her mother has told her. To the reader, however, this sounds suspiciously like magic and ritual. Reason is somehow sensing whether people are present by simply meditating with a rock. On top of this, Reason feels the house shake twice, and watches Esmeralda leave by the back door but not pass through the back yard. Reason wonders if there are secret passages in the house. This, however, would not explain the mysterious presence of a wet fur coat by the back door, when it is summer in Australia, and the US money in the pockets of the coat. There are enough strange things in the house, combined with Reason's seemingly impossible talent, to suggest that magic might be real after all. If this is the case, perhaps Sarafina is wrong, but not in the way Reason might expect. Perhaps Esmeralda is not deluding herself that magic is real; perhaps Esmeralda really is a witch. If this is the case, then Reason could be in even bigger danger than she realizes.



'Treetop', 'In the Witch's Kitchen', 'Cemetery'

'Treetop', 'In the Witch's Kitchen', 'Cemetery' Summary

Esmeralda's neighbor, a boy about Reason's age called Tom, is climbing the fig tree in Esmeralda's back yard. He sees Reason climb out the window into the tree, and then climb up the tree with her eyes closed. He thinks she must have magic, like him. He says hello and introduces himself as the neighbor. He is surprised that she is Esmeralda's granddaughter, since Esmeralda has been a good friend to him but has never mentioned children or grandchildren. He also thinks Esmeralda is too young to have a grandchild. Reason tells him that Esmeralda is forty-two. She tells him about herself, and he says that his mother is insane too, and living at the same special hospital. He does not seem at all surprised by the coincidence.

They go to Tom's house and eat lunch, then he shows her the dress he is making for a school friend called Jessica. Jessica comes round for a fitting, and Reason leaves via the balcony. She steps over onto her own balcony and into her room. She thinks she can trust Tom, despite him being friends with Esmeralda.

Reason takes a nap, and wakes up two hours later to find Tom tapping at her window. She lets him in. He offers to show her around the town and she agrees. However, just then Esmeralda knocks at the door and Tom lets her in. Esmeralda tells them there is tea and cakes downstairs. They go to the kitchen, where Tom helps himself to food, but Reason pretends that she is not hungry. Reason tries to open the back door but it is locked. Esmeralda says the door is stuck and that she always leaves by the front door. Reason heard her leave by the back door earlier and so knows that she is lying.

Esmeralda goes back to work, and Tom and Reason head out to explore the town. Tom claims that they can get to the cemetery, where there is something he wants to show her, via rooftops and fences without Reason's feet ever having to touch the ground. Crossing the road proves impossible, however, so in order to keep his promise about her feet not touching the ground, Tom carries Reason across. At the cemetery they look at the gravestones and Tom shows Reason her family's grave monument. On it are a lot of women, all with the same name, most of whom died very young. Reason wonders why, and Tom wishes he could tell her that it has to do with magic. However, Esmeralda asked him not to mention magic to Reason.

'Treetop', 'In the Witch's Kitchen', 'Cemetery' Analysis

There is a point of view shift in these chapters, allowing the reader to see events from Tom's eyes instead of Reason's. This will be repeated at various points in the book, with chapters from Tom and Jay-Tee's points of view. Whenever this happens the



perspective shifts to third person, with Reason's point-of-view chapters always remaining in first person. This creates a strong contrast between Reason and the other characters. It makes it clear that it is her story that is being told. It also reminds the reader that events told from Reason's first person perspective may be biased or clouded by her own opinions and perceptions. She may misunderstand things or get things wrong. By shifting the point of view to Tom and Jay-Tee now and again, the author can show the reader that there are different ways of interpreting events. With Tom's chapter here, the author shows that Reason may be mistaken about magic. It adds new layers to the mystery by showing that Tom is convinced magic is real. The reader now has to question whether Tom is correct and Sarafina has been lying to Reason, or whether Tom has been drawn into believing Esmeralda's lies.

By showing things from Tom's point of view, the reader can also see that Tom is a nice person who has no intentions of hurting Reason. He seems like someone who could be a good friend to her. He is also very good friends with Esmeralda, which may suggest that Esmeralda can be trusted after all. Conversely, it may suggest that Esmeralda is as manipulative as Sarafina claims, and that Tom is in great danger.

Tom is obviously desperate for a companion who can understand him, and straight away he admires Reason for her independent attitude, climbing skills, friendliness and looks. More than anything he seems to be intrigued by her magic abilities, which he believes she possesses. He sees her ability to sense living things, and her strong sense of spacial awareness, as a kind of magical ability. This suggests that he possesses similar skills. Tom wants to tell Reason the truth about everything he knows, especially about magic, but Esmeralda stops him and makes him promise to keep it a secret. Tom does so, but he is not happy about it, and he attempts to give Reason clues by taking her to her family's grave monument. He tries everything he can to help Reason, and he comes across as a kind, honest and loyal boy.

At the grave monument Reason is surprised to see that none of the women in her family live for very long. Tom's thoughts at this point suggest that magic and early death are linked, just as magic and madness may be linked. It would seem that whether magic is real or not, it is extremely dangerous to those who try to use it, or who think they can use it. Tom mentions that his own mother is mad, and is even being held in the same hospital as Sarafina, but he does not appear to think this coincidence is anything special. He seems to think that magic and madness go hand in hand. Is Tom mad, like Sarafina and Esmeralda? Will Reason go mad too? Or is madness connected to magic, perhaps as a consequence of using or not using it? If so, what does magic have to do with early death, and how are all these things linked? These chapters drop in a few more clues about magic, adding to the mystery and showing that the situation is lot more complicated than Sarafina had led Reason to believe.



'In the Asylum', 'Going Underground', 'Through the Witch's Door'

'In the Asylum', 'Going Underground', 'Through the Witch's Door' Summary

The next day, Reason visits the asylum to see her mother. She is too early for visiting hours, but the receptionist tells her to wait and she will see what she can do. As Reason sits in the waiting room she remembers her mother being brought to the hospital. Sarafina had had to have her stomach pumped and her wrists bandaged. The police and social workers talked to Reason. She then went back to Sarafina's room to see her mother, but Sarafina had screamed at Reason to get out. Reason had never seen her rave this badly before, and had never experienced her turn on her own daughter either. This was the last she saw of her before going to Esmeralda's house.

Now a nurse takes Reason to see her mother. Sarafina is slow from the drugs they have given her, her voice flat and without emotion. She asks Reason if she is working for Sarafina now, which Reason denies. Sarafina tells Reason not to let anyone else 'steal it' but not to use 'it' herself either. She tells Reason to dig something up in the corner of the cellar. She then tells Reason that it is not so bad being insane, before a nurse helps her back to her room. Reason is shocked and upset by this meeting. She resolves to help her mother escape from the asylum so that she can get Sarafina off the drugs they are giving her, and help her to be herself again.

Reason returns to Esmeralda's house. She follows Sarafina's instructions and looks in the corner of the cellar where there is a loose stone. She heaves out a heavy box from behind it. Inside is her mother's old cat Le Roi, with its neck slashed. Reason realizes that Sarafina told her the truth; Esmeralda really did sacrifice her own daughter's pet. For a moment Reason thinks that the cat turned its head to meow at her, but she blinks and the cat is lying in the box, dead.

Reason is so upset by this discovery that she decides to run away tonight. She knows she will not be able to save her mother on such short notice, but she resolves to come back for her later. She searches the house for money, then remembers the infinity key and decides to try it in the back door. The key opens it and Reason steps through.

Reason finds herself in a strange city with tall buildings and snow everywhere. Reason has never seen snow before this. She is amazed and delighted. She twirls in circles and then walks down the street. She then realizes that she does not know which house she came out of. They all look the same to her. She is only wearing a tee-shirt and shorts, with no shoes, and she is extremely cold. The snow starts falling even harder.



'In the Asylum', 'Going Underground', 'Through the Witch's Door' Analysis

Reason visits her mother in the asylum and is forced to see how sick Sarafina really is. She remembers Sarafina trying to kill herself, how she raved more than usual in the hospital and even turned on her own daughter. Reason was shocked by this, but she is even more shocked by the slow, drugged Sarafina in the asylum. Sarafina seems distant and vague; she is nothing like the mother Reason loves and longs to be with again. This is very painful for Reason, who longs to help her mother escape and then get her back to the way she used to be. Sarafina is not making much sense when Reason speaks to her in the asylum, and Reason is beginning to wonder if Sarafina has been crazy all along. Perhaps Esmeralda is not what Sarafina says she is. Whether Sarafina is telling the truth or simply deluded, however, Reason will not give up on her and is determined to live with her mother again.

Even though Reason is beginning to doubt her mother a little, she loyally follows her instructions when she gets back to Esmeralda's house. She explores the cellar, finding a hidden box behind a loose stone as Sarafina said there would be. Reason opens the box and finds Sarafina's old pet cat inside, dead with a slashed neck. Reason suddenly knows that Sarafina has been telling the truth all along. The dead cat seems like pretty damning proof that Esmeralda is disturbed and evil. Esmeralda believes that she is a witch, and so carries out these appalling acts, even traumatizing and endangering her own daughter. Now Reason is in her house and is in very great danger. Reason has had her original belief confirmed; her mother might be mentally ill, but it is Esmeralda who is really the crazy one. Reason resolves to get out of the house and away from her as soon as she possibly can.

However, just as it seems clear that Sarafina has been telling the truth all along, and that Esmeralda is the crazy one, irrefutable evidence is presented that magic is actually real. Reason uses the infinity key on the back door and steps through into an entirely new city. It is winter here; there is snow everywhere, tall buildings with fire-escapes outside, and it is night time. It is obvious from the time and weather difference that Reason is now on the other side of the world from Australia, in a completely different time zone. The tall buildings and fire escapes make it seem likely that this is an East Coast American city like New York. Clearly it is impossible for Reason to step through a door in Sydney, Australia, and emerge in New York. Magic must be real after all.

This means two things. Sarafina has been lying to Reason, or she at least has been mistaken about Esmeralda's magic, thinking it a delusion rather than something real. Secondly, it means that Esmeralda does carry out strange rituals, such as killing the cat and placing feathers and herbs around the house, but that these really do have a magical effect. Esmeralda does not just think she is a witch; she actually is a witch. She is a lot more dangerous than even Reason had realized. However, there is one more possibility. Perhaps Reason herself is mad, and is only imagining that she stepped through a door into New York. This ties in with the title of the book: magic or madness.

The reader, and Reason herself, still cannot be sure what is magic and what is madness, who is really crazy, and who can be trusted.



'Rescue', 'In Bazarroland', 'Top of the World'

'Rescue', 'In Bazarroland', 'Top of the World' Summary

A girl called Jay-Tee has been waiting for Reason each night. She has been told by a man she refers to only as 'he' that Reason will come through the door into New York one night, and he has instructed Jay-Tee to wait for Reason and to befriend her. He has also warned Jay-Tee not to tell Reason anything about magic, and to avoid being seen by the witch Esmeralda, who might capture her and sacrifice her in a magical ritual.

Jay-Tee sees Reason wandering down the street and goes up to her. She gives Reason a coat and boots, takes her back to her apartment, and gives her pajamas and a bed for the night. She avoids giving Reason any straight answers to her questions, telling her that they are in the East Village and not mentioning that this is part of New York. Jay-Tee knows that Reason is from Australia, but pretends to not know about this or about the magical door.

Reason wakes up the next morning and Jay-Tee gives her warm clothes. They go to a cafe to eat breakfast. Jay-Tee asks if Reason has run away from home. Reason is not sure what happened, but she does want to stay away from Esmeralda, so she nods. Jay-Tee says that she is a runaway too.

After breakfast Jay-Tee seems to make money appear as if from nowhere. She pays the bill. Reason is about to ask what happened, but Jay-Tee cuts her off. She tells Reason that she wants to take her to the top of the world. She pulls her out of the cafe.

Jay-Tee takes Reason to a building, where they go up in an old dilapidated lift. At the top of the building they walk out onto the roof. Reason stares out across a huge, crowded city, full of tall buildings and very little greenery. This is what Reason had imagined a city would look like. It is certainly not Sydney.

Jay-Tee throws a snowball at Reason. They have a snowball fight, then go back down in the lift. Reason sees a notice on the side of the lift that says 'New York City' and she realizes where she must be. She finally admits to herself that magic is real.

'Rescue', 'In Bazarroland', 'Top of the World' Analysis

At first Reason attempts to deny that magic is real. Despite the evidence in front of her, she wonders if she may have been drugged and kidnapped, or sent here by Esmeralda. When this seems unlikely she wonders if she might just be mad like her mother. She thinks that if this is the case, then madness is actually making her happy. Finally, she is forced to admit that magic is actually real. She is definitely in New York, and there is no way she could have gotten here so quickly, even if drugged and sent here somehow,



and what would be the reason for that anyway? She knows that she stepped through a door in Sydney and came out in New York, and she realizes that there is really only one explanation for this. Magic is real. Now she has to face up to the possibility that Sarafina lied to her. Perhaps Sarafina was simply mistaken, or perhaps she desperately wanted magic to not be real. Perhaps she has been trying to protect Reason from it.

Despite the things Sarafina has said, she has actually taught Reason some magic, such as how to meditate with her ammonite stone. Why would Sarafina do this? Could this be Sarafina's attempt to teach Reason to protect herself, while keeping the truth of magic from her in order to protect her further? Reason does not think about what Sarafina told her in the asylum, but the reader might remember her words. Sarafina warned her not to let anyone steal 'it' or to use 'it' herself. Now that we know magic is real, it seems likely that Sarafina was talking about magic here. This suggests that magic may be dangerous to use. The grave monument, with its list of women who died young, also seems to back up this possibility. If so, Reason is in very great danger. She is alone in New York, and Sarafina's warning suggests that others will try to steal her magic from her. It seems that Jay-Tee and her mysterious 'he' have some kind of sinister intent towards Reason. On top of this, Reason does not know how to control her own magic, which is likely to be very dangerous if not used properly.

Jay-Tee comes across as friendly, especially to a shocked and frightened Reason who desperately needs a friend, but the reader knows otherwise. The author once again breaks away from Reason's first person point of view to give us a chapter from Jay-Tee's perspective. Jay-Tee is only pretending to be Reason's friend; she secretly has some kind of agenda behind helping her. This has to do with the mysterious 'he' whom Jay-Tee seems to be afraid of. Jay-Tee is working for this man, and she has been instructed to manipulate Reason so that they can use her. Are they trying to steal her power like Sarafina warned against, or are they hoping to use Reason in a magical ritual or sacrifice, as Esmeralda seems to have done with others? Either way, the reader knows that Jay-Tee is hiding things and lying to Reason, and that Reason is too naive to see this. This increases the suspense, as the reader can see the danger when Reason cannot.



'Feathers', 'Searching', 'Nightmare'

'Feathers', 'Searching', 'Nightmare' Summary

Jay-Tee takes a very sleepy Reason home and helps her into bed. Reason asks her age, and Jay-Tee lies that she is eighteen, not wanting Reason to know that she is also only fifteen like her. Reason lies down in bed, complains that everything seems fuzzy, then lifts the pillow and blows away the pile of feathers underneath it. She then goes to sleep. Jay-Tee is amused, and thinks that 'he' is not going to like that.

Meanwhile, Tom has come to New York to help Esmeralda look for Reason. He seems to have the power to sense her. Esmeralda told him all about her problems with her daughter. Sarafina ran away at age twelve when she freaked out about magic. She refused to believe that it is real, and brought Reason up to believe that there is no such thing. She also taught Reason that Esmeralda is evil, which is why Reason has now run away. Esmeralda and Tom found Reason's packed backpack in the house and so they know she had been planning to leave. They also found the infinity key in the back door and so they know that Reason is trapped in New York with no way back.

Tom stays with his sister, Cath, who is at college in New York. She does not know about magic, so Tom pretends he flew to New York on a plane with Esmeralda. He does not want to tell her about Reason, so he pretends that he has come to visit and to see the fashion.

Tom goes to a nearby cafe, where he senses that Reason has been. He is anxious about her and determined to find her.

Reason has a nightmare, screams, and tells Jay-Tee that the key is with a dead boy. She then wakes up. Jay-Tee tries to get more information out of her, since she wants to know where the key is and thinks that Reason has hidden it. Reason cannot remember her dream or what she said, however. They go out for pizza together. Jay-Tee tells her that her apartment is actually owned by a guy who lets her stay there, and who has agreed to let Reason stay too. Jay-Tee explains that in return she does tasks for him, but she does not want to tell Reason exactly what this means. She says that Reason will meet him soon and that she should be nice to him. Reason accepts this without suspicion and Jay-Tee feels guilty, wishing Reason were less naive.

Jay-Tee and Reason go home, where the man is waiting for them. He introduces himself as Jason Blake and says that he is pleased to meet Reason. He wants to take them for a fancy meal the next night. He asks Reason to do him a favor, but she will not say yes until she knows what it is. He appears to think better of it and says he will ask another time. He leaves.



'Feathers', 'Searching', 'Nightmare' Analysis

In these chapters the reader finally gets to see this mysterious 'he' that Jay-Tee has been thinking about. He introduces himself as Jason Blake, though Jay-Tee is not sure what his real name is. This implies that he lies a lot, and that he has led on or manipulated others before Reason. He is very smooth and charming with Reason, but straight away he asks her for a favor, and he seems displeased when she does not say yes. He obviously wants something from her. Jay-Tee's thoughts reveal that she is afraid of him, and that she hates to be around him. Clearly he has been using Jay-Tee and he intends to do the same to Reason. Jay-Tee tells Reason that she does tasks for him, like shopping, in return for staying at his apartment, but it is clear that the truth is more sinister. Jay-Tee refers to him as being like a wolf and a snake, two very disturbing images. She even imagines that he has torn people apart before. Clearly he has very little care for others. When Reason goes to sleep there are feathers under her pillow, suggesting that Jason is trying to work some kind of magic on her. This all suggests that Jason is extremely bad news.

Jay-Tee is beginning to feel more and more guilty about what she is doing to Reason. She is manipulating her on Jason's orders, but it seems that she is also hoping that Reason will replace her. She is not just hurting Reason for the sake of it; she is trying to stop Jason from hurting her by giving him Reason instead. Jay-Tee is looking out for herself, but as she gets to know Reason better she begins to see that this is unfair. Reason is naive and helpless in the city. She has always lived on the move in the Australian outback, with her mother to protect her and to teach her about the things that are relevant to them. She has not had an ordinary upbringing, has not been to regular school like other teenagers, and has never lived in a city before. She is much more trusting than Jay-Tee, and so she has been easy to manipulate. Jay-Tee notices this, thinking that Reason seems very young for her age. Jay-Tee is angry with her because she lets herself be used and lied to so easily, but her anger is really masking her own guilt and her feelings of self-hatred. For now, however, she is still too afraid of Jason Blake to go against him.



'into Magic', 'with Bubbles', 'Knowledge'

'into Magic', 'with Bubbles', 'Knowledge' Summary

Reason wakes up and thinks about magic being real. She is not sure who she can trust now. She feels sure that both Esmeralda and Jason Blake are evil, but she also wants to find out more about herself and her own magic. She wants to talk to Sarafina about it, so she asks Jay-Tee to take her to the street where she found her in the hopes that she will remember the door and be able to get back through. However, Jay-Tee secretly takes her to the wrong street, and Reason does not recognize any of the doors.

That evening Jason Blake takes them out to dinner in a limousine. They go to a fancy restaurant where Reason tries gourmet food and champagne for the first time. She does not like Jason and she suspects that he is trying to get something from her. She is careful not to answer any of his questions with a 'yes', even when he simply asks her if she likes the food.

Jason tells Reason that he knows who she is because he is her grandfather. He tells her that he will answer her questions about herself and about magic, but she must let him take some of her magical power in return. He looks at Jay-Tee, expecting her to encourage Reason to do so, but Jay-Tee feels guilty and goes to the bathroom instead. Reason follows her.

Reason asks Jay-Tee what it is like to have power taken by Jason. Jay-Tee says that Jason has done it to her, and that it does not hurt. She says that Reason can stop the power transference at any point simply by telling Jason to stop. Jay-Tee deliberately does not tell Reason the whole truth, not letting on how draining and horrible it is to have her power taken. She is still too afraid of Jason to be able to help Reason.

They go back to the table, where Reason says yes and puts her hand out. Jason drains some of her magic, but after ten seconds Reason tells him to stop. He says he will answer some of her questions, but not many, since she did not give him much magic. He tells her that magic is genetic, stronger in women, and that in her family it is connected to skill with math and numbers. He tells her that magic is very rare, and is easier to locate in cities. This is why Sarafina always avoided cities when running from Esmeralda. Jason also tells Reason that Esmeralda is in New York looking for her, and that it is his magic that is currently keeping Reason hidden.

'into Magic', 'with Bubbles', 'Knowledge' Analysis

Jay-Tee had thought Reason too naive to tell when people are trying to manipulate her or are lying to her, but she has underestimated Reason. Reason is fully aware that Jason is a bad man, and she is capable of seeing when she is in danger. As soon as she meets Jason she knows that he is trying to get something from her. When he asks for a favor, she insists on knowing what the favor is before saying yes. This makes him



back off for a little while. At dinner she remembers this and makes sure she never answers his questions with a 'yes', even seemingly innocent ones. She seems to sense that saying yes would give him power over her. This turns out to be correct. She also knows that Jay-Tee has been hiding things from her, but she is not aware of the extent of her lies. Reason is not as gullible as Jay-Tee thought, but she is still very innocent and vulnerable, and she still does not know quite how much trouble she is in. She thinks she can control the situation and gain answers in exchange for power, but she still does not know what the consequences of this might be. She tells Jason to stop taking power after only ten seconds, determined to hold on to the upper hand in the exchange, and disturbed by how wrong it feels. She seems to have already shown more sense in this than Jay-Tee, but she is still in a very dangerous position.

In these chapters Reason and the reader find out more about magic. Jason Blake confirms a lot of what the reader may have already guessed. Magic is real, and is passed down genetically. It is possible for it to suddenly appear even though neither parents have it, but it is more likely to occur in families. It is stronger in women, as seen on the Cansino family grave monument which lists far more women than men. Magic can be tracked, and this is easier to do in cities, which means that Reason is in danger of being found by Esmeralda here. It is Jason's power that is currently hiding her. Jason also reveals that he is Reason's grandfather. He might be lying, but Reason thinks that he is probably telling the truth, because he seems similar to her grandmother. She thinks that they are both dangerous, and that both only want to use her. She even thinks they smell the same, believing that she is sensing a similar evil magic on both of them. Jason seems just as cruel and just as determined to trap Reason, so it makes sense that he would be her grandfather, and that Esmeralda would once date this kind of man. It also makes Jason seem a lot more dangerous. Can Reason really trust him? She is in a very vulnerable position. She has seen evidence that Esmeralda performs cruel rituals, but Jason appears to be just as bad. However, Jason is at least offering her something in return for her power. Would Esmeralda just steal it from her? Jay-Tee has appeared to be her friend but has lied to her and used her. Can Reason trust anyone except herself?



'Maelstrom', 'Closer', 'At Inferno'

'Maelstrom', 'Closer', 'At Inferno' Summary

Jason Blake takes Reason and Jay-Tee back to the apartment, then leaves. Reason is overwhelmed and quiet. Jay-Tee decides to take her out dancing. They go to a club called Inferno where the bouncer, a friend of Jay-Tee's, lets them in. They dance, and as they do they draw energy from the people around them, re-charging their magic. This helps Reason to feel better after Jason drained her power. Reason mentions the possibility of running away, perhaps going to Australia and hiding from Esmeralda in the Bush. Jay-Tee is not sure about this. They dance again.

As Jay-Tee dances and Reason rests, a boy comes up to Reason. He says that he is Jay-Tee's brother, Danny, and that he has been looking for his sister since she ran away. He knows that she left because of their father, but he says that the situation is different now and that it is safe for Jay-Tee to come home. He wants to talk to Jay-Tee. He gives Reason his phone number, which she memorizes, just in case Jay-Tee runs again when he approaches her. Reason gives him her ammonite stone, knowing that she can always sense where it is. This way, if he kidnaps Jay-Tee, she will be able to follow them. She tells Danny that the stone is to give him good luck. He obviously thinks this is a bit odd, but he takes the stone and puts it in his pocket.

Jay-Tee heads for the bathrooms and Danny follows. Jay-Tee uses her magic to slip through the crowds back to the entrance of the club, then beckons to Reason. Danny is still waiting outside the bathrooms. Jay-Tee and Reason grab their coats and leave. Jay-Tee hails a taxi so they can go get breakfast.

Tom is still looking for Reason. He senses that she has been in the cafe, and he calls Esmeralda who comes straight over. She asks if she can share magic with Tom. He agrees. He experiences the same burning sensation and sense of wrongness that Reason did with Jason Blake, but in this case it appears to be just as bad for Esmeralda. Esmeralda uses their combined magic to try to sense Reason. She says that it helped, that Reason is definitely still in the East Village, and that they will find her.

'Maelstrom', 'Closer', 'At Inferno' Analysis

Esmeralda asks Tom to share his magic with her in these chapters. Tom is surprised, but he trusts Esmeralda and so is happy to agree. He feels the same burning sensation and sense of wrongness that Reason describes, but he does not pull away or ask Esmeralda to stop. He thinks that Esmeralda is using the power to locate Reason, and so his power is being used for a good reason rather than just being stolen. Esmeralda does not lie to Tom, but she also does not tell him the whole truth, that sharing magic in this way will feel so unpleasant and make him so tired. Esmeralda seems to be sharing power rather than simply taking, using both their magic to fuel the spell. Afterwards she



looks just as exhausted as Tom, and he assumes that the whole experience was even more unpleasant for her. It would seem that although she has done the same procedure as Jason Blake, she has at least been more caring and honest about it.

However, since the chapter is told from Tom's point of view, the reader cannot know the truth behind Esmeralda's motivations. It is possible that Tom is simply being manipulated. Esmeralda could be using Reason's disappearance as an excuse to steal Tom's power. She could be using the power to locate Reason, as she says, but using Tom's magic instead of her own in order to preserve her own power, lying to Tom that both their magic is necessary. Tom has never done this before, so he may not be able to tell whether power is being shared or merely taken. Furthermore, Esmeralda's kindness to Tom may have been planned manipulation, gaining his trust in order to get him to agree to this ritual. Jay-Tee did something similar with Reason, and Jason Blake is trying to gain their power through expensive dinners and an apartment to live in. Jason is trying to make them rely on him so that they cannot refuse their power even if they wanted to. Esmeralda could be taking an even more subtle road, convincing Tom to trust her so that he does not even question her request. Either way, it would seem that power needs to be given willingly, making it hard to trust anything that Esmeralda or Jason Blake say.

Jay-Tee tells Reason a little more about magic in these chapters. She explains that magic is generated by people and flows from them as a kind of energy. This is why there is a lot of power to be gained at the dance club, where people are packed close together and moving energetically. When magic is drained, on the other hand, a person becomes extremely lethargic and sleepy. This suggests that magic is energy, and that magic and life-force are linked. Jay-Tee confirms this, telling Reason that magic is dangerous to use and can knock years off the magic-user's life. This is not the case when a magically-charged object is used as a power source instead, like Esmeralda's back door and Reason's ammonite. This explains why so many Cansino women die young, and why Sarafina gave Reason the ammonite. It also explains why people like Jason Blake and Esmeralda might want to steal Jay-Tee and Reason's magic. If magic is a form of energy, then stealing another's means that they can use magic without being drained. If using magic somehow shortens their life, then stealing magic will help them to live longer. Knowing this, Jason Blake's actions seem even more sinister. He literally wants to suck the life out of the girls.



'Friends', 'Snot', 'Out the Door', 'Eau de Reason'

'Friends', 'Snot', 'Out the Door', 'Eau de Reason' Summary

Reason and Jay-Tee go out for food. Reason tells Jay-Tee that her brother Danny spoke to her and that he claims it is safe for her to go home. Jay-Tee is not sure what to do, but Reason encourages her to call Danny. Reason believes that they can get away from Jason Blake, and that Danny seemed like a good guy. She thinks Jay-Tee should at least find out what he has to say. Jay-Tee realizes that Reason has become a good friend, and she apologizes for manipulating her and lying to her.

They take a cab to a payphone far away from the East Village. Jay-Tee calls the number and Danny answers. He tells Jay-Tee that their father is dead. She hangs up the phone in shock and they go back to the apartment. Jay-Tee rings Danny again and arranges to meet him in a cafe nearby at 1 pm. They decide to have a nap until then.

Meanwhile, Tom has slept for twenty-six hours to recover from Esmeralda using some of his magic. His sister Cath is concerned. She can tell that Esmeralda, her father, and Tom are all lying to her, and she tells Tom to try to persuade their father or Esmeralda to tell her the truth. They watch a movie together and Tom wishes that he could just tell his sister everything.

Reason wakes up to find Jason Blake in her room, watching her. He wants the girls to go to lunch with him. Reason tells him that they do not want to go with him, and that they will no longer be needing his apartment either. She tries to leave with Jay-Tee but he will not let them. Reason tries to push past. He grabs her and squeezes her neck. Jay-Tee runs at him but he knocks her down. Reason gets extremely angry and feels her magic bubbling up inside her. She thinks about stopping Jason's heart, then remembers a boy who tried to hurt her a long time ago. She had felt the same anger and bubbling sensation back then, and the boy had died. Now she knows that she was responsible for his death, and that she is killing Jason Blake too.

Jay-Tee slaps Reason across the face to make her stop, then drags her out of the apartment. She explains to Reason that she cannot get angry and use magic like that, because it could kill her. They head to the cafe to meet Danny, hoping he will have somewhere they can hide.

Meanwhile, Tom has gone to the same cafe. He sees Danny in the corner and senses Reason on him. He knows Danny must have had contact with Reason, so he calls Esmeralda. Tom orders food, then hears a voice say his name. He looks up. It is Reason.



'Friends', 'Snot', 'Out the Door', 'Eau de Reason' Analysis

Reason is getting more confident and determined as she spends more time in New York. She is also very compassionate and a good friend. She handles the situation with Jason Blake calmly, and though she is upset, she does not blame it on Jay-Tee. She recognizes that Jay-Tee is also a victim, that she is terrified of Jason Blake, and that she did not want to betray Reason. Reason realizes that she has been naive and is now determined to remain in control. She has run away before and she can do it again; she refuses to let Jason have a hold over them simply because of the apartment. When Jay-Tee is not sure what to do about her brother, Reason takes charge, persuading Jay-Tee that she should at least call Danny. She reassures Jay-Tee that they will get away, taking a determined attitude rather than Jay-Tee's negative one. Jay-Tee sees the sense in what Reason is saying, so she agrees and rings Danny. They set up a meeting.

This plan is almost ruined when Jason Blake shows up unexpectedly to take the girls out for lunch. Jay-Tee is scared and resigned, as if she has already given up. Reason decides that they need to at least try to fight back. She calmly and confidently tells Jason that they will not go to lunch with him and that they do not want to live at the apartment any longer. Jason is shocked, but he will not let them go. By confronting him like this, Reason has forced him to show his true colors. He is not doing this for their own good, and it is not mutually beneficial. Jason only cares about what he gains from it and he will not let them go, resorting to kidnap to get what he wants. This proves that he is just as bad as Esmeralda. When Jason pushes Jay-Tee to the floor, Reason gets angry and almost uses her powers to kill him. Jay-Tee stops her in time and they manage to get away. Reason has now managed to break up the difficult situation they were in. Now they are simply running away again, something that they are both very good at. Working together, perhaps they can get away from Jason Blake after all.

Jay-Tee now feels extremely guilty for ever having used Reason as she did. Before, she had felt bad for preying on Reason's weaknesses, but now she actually sees Reason as a friend and she realizes that she likes her. She feels terrible that she could have treated this girl so badly and gotten her into so much trouble. She now trusts Reason completely and is happy to take her advice. She realizes that some of her early assessments of Reason were wrong. Reason can be strong and brave, despite her innocence, and Jay-Tee should not have underestimated her so much. Jay-Tee is now determined to help her friend as well as herself. If they escape Jason Blake, they will do so as a team. Jay-Tee's fake friendship has blossomed into a real one.

Meanwhile, Tom is feeling incredibly isolated. Jay-Tee and Reason have each other and are now working together, but Tom has nobody to turn to. He cannot tell his sister the truth about magic because Esmeralda and his father have told him not to. He trusts Esmeralda and likes her, but she is not a friend his own age. He is desperate to find Reason because he needs a friend to whom he can tell the truth, and who can understand him completely. He can never share everything with his sister, but Reason would be able to sympathize and share things with him. He is determined to find her.



'Away from the Witch', 'Worse Things', 'In the Air', 'Back Home'

'Away from the Witch', 'Worse Things', 'In the Air', 'Back Home' Summary

Reason is surprised and pleased to see Tom. Jay-Tee sees Danny and waves. Then Esmeralda walks in. Jay-Tee and Reason run out of the cafe. Jay-Tee runs too fast and Reason cannot catch up over the slippery, icy pavement. Danny catches up to her, asks what's going on, and Reason explains that they are running from Esmeralda. Danny picks Reason up, slings her over his shoulder, and runs after Jay-Tee, who is heading for the door to Australia.

Tom sees Danny grab Reason and carry her off, and assumes Danny is kidnapping her. He and Esmeralda run after them.

Jay-Tee arrives at the door, but Jason Blake is waiting there. Jay-Tee is not sure what to do, but then Esmeralda arrives in a taxi. She and Jason Blake stare each other down, and appear to be locked in some kind of battle of wills.

Danny runs up and puts Reason down. As Jay-Tee hugs Danny and tries to explain what is happening, Tom arrives. Reason introduces him to Jay-Tee and Danny. She recognizes the door, but explains to Jay-Tee that she does not have the key, so they cannot get through. Tom attempts to persuade them that Esmeralda is not evil and that she has never hurt him. Jay-Tee says that they need someone to teach them to use magic safely, and that Esmeralda may be a good choice, since Tom trusts her. If Esmeralda turns out to be bad, they can always run away again.

Reason agrees. She takes the ammonite back from Danny and uses it to send some of her magic, along with some of Jay-Tee's and Tom's, to help give Esmeralda more power. Blake cries out in pain and the staring match is broken. Esmeralda thanks them and then steps through the door. The others follow. Unfortunately, because Danny is not magical, he is left behind. Jay-Tee asks if he will be okay, and Esmeralda assures her that Jason is not in any condition to hurt anyone.

They sit at the kitchen table in the house in Sydney. Reason asks Esmeralda if she can teach them without demanding some of their own magic in return. Esmeralda cannot promise this, but she does promise to try. She explains that magic is in everything, but is usually very low level. Certain objects, like the ammonite and the door, can become imbued with magic. Magic is finite and so it can be used up. It also drains a person's life as they use it. The more magic a person makes and uses, the shorter their life will be. Reason looks so tired and ill right now because she almost killed Jason, and so she used up a lot of magic. She could have been killed.



If a person has magic and does not use it, however, they will go insane. This is what happened to Sarafina and to Tom's mother. A magic user can drain magic from another, using a little of their magic to do so which prevents them from going insane, and in the process they gain back more than they lost, so that they will live longer. This is what Jason Blake was doing to Jay-Tee and wanted to do to Reason. Esmeralda cannot promise that she will not one day turn on them in the same way, since it will be a choice between madness and death otherwise. She promises to try not to, however, and to teach them how to defend themselves in case she does.

Reason goes to bed and sleeps for two whole days. When she wakes up, Jay-Tee and Tom are in her room. They have become good friends. They trust Esmeralda so far, and Jay-Tee says that she is much better than Jason Blake. Jay-Tee asks for Danny's number so that she can call him and explain everything. She says that Esmeralda has forbidden use of the door for now, until things are safer.

Jay-Tee and Tom go downstairs and Reason gets dressed, thinking about whether she can really trust Esmeralda. She is determined to find a way to do magic without dying young, so that she can help herself, her friends, and Sarafina.

Reason looks in her backpack. The letters Esmeralda wrote are gone. Reason wonders what Esmeralda said then that she does not want Reason to read now. She then looks under her pillow, where black and purple feathers have been placed.

'Away from the Witch', 'Worse Things', 'In the Air', 'Back Home' Analysis

Now Esmeralda has fully explained what magic is and what it means for magic-users. Magic-users must choose between magic and madness, which links to the title of the book and the theme of madness running through it. At first the title seems to reflect the uncertainty over whether magic is real or the people who believe in it are mad. Sarafina has taught Reason that magic is not real, but she is mentally ill and went insane. Reason believes Esmeralda to be crazy until she finds out that magic is real after all, at which point she wonders if she might be crazy too. In the first half of the book the reader can never be sure what is real and who is mad. The title 'magic or madness' reflects this uncertainty, seeming to say that Reason will have to decide whether she believes magic is real, or whether she believes they are all crazy. Now the title has taken on a double meaning, since it also reflects the terrible choice that every witch has to make. Do they choose to use their magic, and so shorten their lives considerably, or do they choose not to use their magic, in which case they will live longer but go insane? Magic equals death, but no magic equals madness. The title therefore also reflects the literal choice between magic or madness.

Now Reason understands exactly what happened to Sarafina. Sarafina had refused to accept this knowledge about magic. She did not want to die early, but what really disturbed her was the idea that her own mother might turn on her, and that she would one day turn on her own daughter. Instead, she ran away. She taught Reason that



magic is not real so that she will not be tempted to use it and so die early, but also taught her enough secret magic, calling it science and math, to ensure that Reason does not go insane. Sarafina has been protecting Reason from this choice between magic and madness, and from the dangers that being a magic-user can bring. In the end, Sarafina preferred to believe her own deception, that magic is not real, and to stop using magic altogether so as never to be a threat to Reason. She could not stand the thought of turning on her own daughter, so she chose insanity instead. This explains Sarafina's comment in the asylum, that insanity is not so bad after all. Sarafina is happy with her choice, because it will help to keep Reason safe. She has accepted it as the lesser of two evils. Now that Reason has realized this, and truly understands her mother's sacrifice, she is determined to save her. Reason is determined that magic or madness will not be her only choice, that she can find a way to use magic without dying young, and so bring her mother back from insanity.

The name Reason is extremely ironic, and now seems almost like a mockery. There is no reason to this horrible choice between magic and madness. There is no reason to magic. Reason has found out that she lives in an irrational world in which magic exists and anything can happen. She can step through a door in Australia and come out in America. She can kill with her thoughts. However, at the same time, there is some reason to magic. So much of magic, particularly that held by the Cansino family, seems to be strongly linked to math and logic. If math is magic, then math cannot be rational either. Even Fibonacci's, the math problem that Reason loves so much, are a part of magic. She refers to them as Fibs, which is another word for lies, and so is clever wordplay from the author that suggests that everything Reason has known and loved is all lies. Fibs are lies because math cannot explain everything in the world, because magic exists and so not all things are logical and rational. Reason has been using Fibonacci's to help her concentrate and calm her down when she is upset, but now she finds out that this is just a fib, a lie, and that she has actually been working a kind of low level magic. Reason's world now feels completely crazy and devoid of the reason she once saw in it. Sarafina named her daughter Reason in an attempt to present the world to her without magic, and to deny that part of herself. Now Reason is determined to find reason in the madness. She is determined to find a way to use magic without dying young, and to live without giving in to madness. Perhaps Reason can stand for reason after all.

At the end of the story Reason and Jay-Tee decide to stay with Esmeralda so that she can teach them how to use their magic better and more safely. Although Jay-Tee seems to be relaxing and warming quickly to life in Sydney, Reason is less sure. She still does not know whether she can trust Esmeralda, and the reader is not sure either. Esmeralda seems to have been honest with them, and she saved them from Jason Blake. She has promised to at least try not to take their power from them. However, the letters Esmeralda initially wrote to Reason have disappeared, and Reason wonders what they might have said that Esmeralda does not want her to read now. Did they contain lies, or is Esmeralda lying now? There are also other clues to Esmeralda's sinister nature to be considered. Reason has not forgotten her mother's dead cat, Le Roi, buried in the cellar with its neck slashed. She has not forgotten the human teeth and other ritual objects she found. Both Sarafina and Jason Blake have accused Esmeralda of terrible behavior



such as killing people and eating babies. While this may have been propaganda to turn Reason against Esmeralda, it might also be the truth. Reason cannot know for sure, and the ritual objects suggest that Esmeralda is willing to do grisly things in pursuit of power. At the end of the book, Reason looks under her pillow and sees black and purple feathers there. Jason Blake placed feathers under her pillow, and he turned out to be evil. Could these feathers be here for Reason's protection, or is Esmeralda trying to control her in some way? Their presence is suspicious, reminding Reason that she must always stay on her guard.



Characters

Reason Cansino

Reason is the main character of the book. The story is told mainly in first person from her point of view, but it does switch occasionally to either Tom or Jay-Tee's perspective. Reason is a fifteen year old girl who has been brought up by her mother, Sarafina, on the move in the outback in Australia. Reason's mother is a white woman from a rich family, and her father was an aborigine whom she has never met. Reason and Sarafina have spent their life hiding and running from Esmeralda, Sarafina's mother, who is trying to claim custody of Reason. Reason enjoys her wandering life with her mother, and she loves Sarafina dearly. She wants to stay with Sarafina and resents Esmeralda for getting in the way of this. However, when Sarafina goes crazy and tries to kill herself, Reason is sent by social workers to live with Esmeralda. Sarafina is sent to a special hospital for the mentally ill.

Reason has always been told by Sarafina that Esmeralda is disturbed and evil. Sarafina claims that Esmeralda believes she is a witch and so carries out horrible rituals in the name of magic. Sarafina says that Esmeralda sacrificed her pet cat, Le Roi, and even killed orphan children. Sarafina's stories have frightened Reason, who now distrusts Esmeralda and is anxious to get away from her. When Reason gets to Esmeralda's house, however, it is not like her mother described. Esmeralda seems kind and normal, and her house seems perfectly normal too. Reason is unwilling to consider the possibility that her grandmother might be normal after all, since this would mean that Sarafina truly is insane and that Reason can never get her life with her mother back again. Reason explores the house and finds various things that could be used as ritual objects. Later, she follows Sarafina's instructions and finds the dead cat in the cellar. Reason is cautious around Esmeralda, having picked up a lot from Sarafina's paranoia. She does her best not to let Esmeralda get a hold over her, and even refuses to eat Esmeralda's food. When she has the opportunity, she escapes. Despite her fear of Esmeralda, she is brave and practical, and she manages to keep calm in the face of some very strange and frightening things.

When Reason walks out of the back door into New York, however, she seems much less cautious and suspicious. She is actually a very innocent and naive girl, and as Jay-Tee notes, she seems much younger than her actual age. This is because she has been brought up by her mother, wandering the outback without a normal kind of childhood, not attending regular school, and never living in a city. She does not have much experience of other people or of the modern world. She has rarely even watched TV. She is completely clueless in the big city, and so is far too trusting of people who seem kind and friendly. This allows her to be manipulated quite easily by Jay-Tee, causing Jay-Tee to feel very guilty for taking advantage of her vulnerability.

Despite Reason's naivety, she is not a foolish or unobservant girl. She can tell straight away that Jason Blake is bad news and that she should not agree to do anything for him



without knowing all the details first. When she does agree to give him some of her magic, she makes it clear that it is in return for answering her questions, and she does not give him much. When she realizes that it hurts and feels wrong, she stops immediately. She is determined not to get herself into the same desperate situation as Jay-Tee. At the end of the story, she is still not willing to entirely trust Esmeralda, showing that she can remain sensible and cynical even when Esmeralda is charming everyone else. Reason is also a very strong, independent and confident girl. She has never relied on anyone but Sarafina, and in their life together they have looked after themselves, staying away from police and doctors. Reason therefore never questions whether she can look after herself in the city, and it does not occur to her to go to the authorities. When she realizes what a bad situation they are in with Jason Blake, she immediately tries to persuade Jay-Tee that they should leave. Jay-Tee realizes that Reason is stronger than she gave her credit for.

Reason is a very kind and compassionate girl, and though she is never quite sure who she can trust, this does not stop her from making friends. She forgives Jay-Tee straight away for using her, because she can see that Jay-Tee is frightened of Jason Blake and that she did not want to hurt Reason. Reason understands that Jay-Tee is in a very bad situation and she is determined to help her as well as herself. Jay-Tee is amazed when she sees that Reason has become a real friend, and she feels very guilty for treating her badly. Reason accepts her apology and does not allow Jay-Tee to feel badly about it for long, instead focusing on the practical issues of their problem. Reason is also very friendly to Tom and is willing to trust him even though he is Esmeralda's friend. Reason seems to have the ability to sense when a person is good and worth her trust, and when a person is evil. She does not give up on Jay-Tee or Tom, even though both are trying to deliver her into the hands of a powerful magic-user who may have sinister intentions towards her. She knows not to give Jason Blake the same consideration, however. Reason seems to be good at reading people's hearts, which makes her distrust of Esmeralda even more significant.

Reason discovers that she can work magic. At first she is reluctant to believe this, since her mother has always taught her that the world is rational and that magic does not exist. Reason wonders if she is going mad like her mother did. Eventually, however, she is forced to accept that magic is real and that she can use it. For her, magic is tied to math and numbers, meaning that she finds power in logic problems and numbers. This is shocking for Reason, who has been brought up to value reason and logic. Now she finds that even math and logic are not rational, since they are actually a form of magic. Reason's life, even her name, feel like a mockery now. As she sees more of magic, she is not so threatened by it, but she still resents the situation that it has put her in. When she finds out that she must choose between magic (and early death) and madness, she is horrified. She is determined to find another way. Reason refuses to believe that there is no reason to the world or to her life; she will find a way to restore it.



Jay-Tee

Jay-Tee is the nickname of Julieta, a Hispanic girl living in New York. She has run away from her father and is now living on her own in an apartment owned by Jason Blake. In return for living there, she gives Jason some of her magic. She resents this, but she feels as though she is now stuck in this situation, and she is too frightened of Jason Blake to try to leave or to disobey him. Like Reason, she is a magic-user. She has the ability to conjure up money from nowhere, among other powers.

Jay-Tee has been told by Jason Blake to watch out for Reason, who he knows will come through Esmeralda's door one night. He wants Jay-Tee to help her and then befriend her, because he wants to use Reason in the same way he uses Jay-Tee, to take her magic. He wants Jay-Tee to gain Reason's trust and to then persuade her to trust him. Jay-Tee hates Jason and is reluctant to do this, but she does not dare disobey him. She is also hopeful that if she gives Jason Reason, then maybe he will let her go. By trapping Reason, she is saving herself.

Jay-Tee is all alone in the big city, having run away from an uncaring and abusive father. She has nobody to protect her or help her, and no-one to talk to. She has no friends, and so when she fakes friendship with Reason she quickly comes to like having someone to talk to and confide in. She begins to feel guilty about using Reason, and about manipulating her weaknesses. Later, she realizes that Reason has actually become a real friend. Jay-Tee appreciates her kindness and her support. She now feels terrible for what she has done, and is determined to work with Reason in future, rather than lie to her or mislead her.

Jay-Tee has a much pricklier and more outgoing personality than Reason. At first she comes across as more capable and astute than Reason, too, but this is partly because she has underestimated Reason's own strength. Jay-Tee has built up a lot of internal defenses against other people, since she has always been hurt or used in the past, but when the reader sees the real Jay-Tee they begin to see her vulnerability. She is only a fifteen year old girl like Reason, and though she tries to appear tough and confident, she is actually terribly unsure and frightened. When she sees her brother she is too scared to face him, and it is Reason who persuades her to make the call. When Reason learns the truth about Jason Blake's intentions, it is she who has to persuade Jay-Tee that they can run away. Jay-Tee has almost given up, but with Reason's help she begins to see hope and to fight for her freedom again.

Jay-Tee loves to dance, and particularly loves night clubs. This is because she likes the feeling of being around a lot of people who are all caught up in something energetic. These people give off energy that makes Jay-Tee feel better and stronger. It helps to replenish her magic, as she explains to Reason when she takes her to Inferno. Jay-Tee has given a lot of her magic to Jason Blake, and so may have shortened her life considerably by now. Dancing is her only way to feel free and alive again.

By the end of the story Jay-Tee has opened up a lot. She has accepted Reason as a friend, and is even beginning to make friends with Tom. She likes the house in Sydney,



and she is willing to trust Esmeralda. After a hard life so far, she now appreciates all the luxury she can get. She seems like a much happier and less jaded person.

Sarafina Cansino

Sarafina is Reason's mother and Esmeralda's daughter. She has looked after Reason since she was born, moving constantly around the outback with her in order to evade Esmeralda, who is searching for them. Esmeralda has claimed custody of Reason, thinking Sarafina unfit to look after her. Reason learns later that this is because Sarafina has stopped doing magic and so is going insane. Esmeralda knows that Sarafina will get worse until she is unable to be a good mother. Despite Sarafina's disturbed episodes, Reason has loved living with her and traveling with her. Sarafina has taught her everything she knows, including the math and logic problems that she loves so much. Reason cannot stand the idea of being without Sarafina, which makes it even harder for her to accept that Sarafina is mad.

Sarafina teaches Reason that the world is rational and that magic does not exist. She tells Reason that Esmeralda believes she is a witch and so carries out horrible rituals. She warns Reason that Esmeralda is very dangerous because of this. Reason believes her, which makes her very suspicious of Esmeralda. In reality, though, Esmeralda does not just believe she is a witch; she actually is a witch. When Reason finds this out she thinks that Sarafina lied to her, and she is hurt. However, it is not clear how much Sarafina even knows the truth herself anymore. She has spent years convincing both Reason and herself that magic is not real and that it is Esmeralda who is crazy. Perhaps she finally came to believe her own stories.

Sarafina has kept magic a secret from Reason in order to protect her. Sarafina ran away from Esmeralda when she learned that Esmeralda might one day try to steal her magic. She could not stand this thought, and so was determined to protect her own daughter from it. She knows that magic leads to early death, but that not using it leads to insanity. She teaches Reason just enough small bits of magic to keep her from going insane, but she pretends that this is actually science or math, so that Reason will not know magic exists and be tempted to use it. This is Sarafina's best way of protecting Reason. She also chooses not to use magic anymore. She is afraid that she will be tempted, like others, to take her own daughter's powers to save her life. She chooses insanity instead, which she sees as the lesser of the two evils, because at least she will not hurt Reason this way. This explains why, when Reason visits her in the asylum, she tells Reason that insanity is not so bad. When her actions are understood in this way, Sarafina comes across as a very caring, self-sacrificing and noble mother. Reason is determined to find a way to help her.

Esmeralda Cansino

Esmeralda, nicknamed 'Mere' by Tom, is Sarafina's mother and Reason's grandmother. Sarafina has told Reason that Esmeralda is crazy and dangerous because she believes



she can do magic. In reality, Esmeralda actually can do magic, but this does not mean that she is any less dangerous. Sarafina ran away from her when she was twelve. Esmeralda claims that this is because Sarafina could not cope with the knowledge that her own mother might turn on her and want to take her magic. She also hated the horrible choice she would have to make between magic (and dying early) and madness. Sarafina claims that she ran away because Esmeralda was carrying out horrible rituals, such as killing her pet cat Le Roi. It is clear that neither of them is telling the whole truth. Sarafina did not tell Reason about magic being real, but Esmeralda seems to be hiding her more sinister behavior too. Reason found the dead cat, Le Roi, in the cellar, with its neck slashed. Reason therefore knows that Sarafina has been telling some truths as well as the lies, and that Esmeralda has been telling some lies as well as the truths. Esmeralda is clearly very powerful, and could potentially be dangerous. Reason is cautious around her.

Esmeralda acts friendly towards Reason when she first arrives, trying to give her space to come to terms with her situation. When Reason disappears in New York, Esmeralda comes looking for her and saves her from Jason Blake. Tom trusts Esmeralda completely, and she has been very kind to his family. She says that she regrets driving her daughter away and wishes that she could do things differently. She seems sincere when she tells Reason and the others that she does not want to steal their powers, but she is honest enough to admit that in the future she might choose to do so rather than die. She says that she will teach them to defend themselves in case that day comes. She appears to really care about Reason and Tom, and to take her duty as their carer and teacher very seriously. Even Jay-Tee seems to be won by Esmeralda's kindness at the end.

However, Reason is still not sure whether to trust Esmeralda or not. She found human teeth in her room and a feather in the lining of her suit, as well as the dead cat in the cellar. Clearly Esmeralda has been practicing magical rituals like Sarafina said. Sarafina also told her, backed up by Jason Blake, that Esmeralda kills people and eats babies. This sounds very extreme, and could just have been made up to cause Reason to hate Esmeralda, but it could also be true. Clearly Sarafina was correct about the cat, so why not about this too? It is also obvious that Esmeralda is hiding things from Reason. She has taken the letters she wrote when Reason first came to stay, which makes Reason think that there is something in them that Esmeralda now does not want her to know. Esmeralda has also placed black and purple feathers under Reason's pillow, something that Jason Blake did. Although Esmeralda claimed to be sharing power rather than stealing it, she has performed the same magic-taking ritual that Jason used on Reason. She has therefore shown herself willing to take the power of a younger and more vulnerable magic-user. Esmeralda is still a mystery by the end of the story. The reader still does not know if she is good or evil, and Reason is right to keep her guard up.

Tom

Tom is Esmeralda's neighbor. He is a teenage boy about Reason's age, with very pale skin and light blond hair. He loves clothes and has aspirations to be a fashion designer.



He is also a magic user like Reason and Jay-Tee. He uses some of his magic when he makes clothes, giving them an extra special air and making them fit perfectly. This allows him to use a tiny amount of magic regularly so that he does not go insane like his mother, but it is not enough to drain him and shorten his life too much. He has been learning magic from Esmeralda, who has taught him about the choice between magic and madness.

Tom trusts Esmeralda completely because she has been a mother figure to him after his own mother was taken to the asylum. She has helped him to learn about his magic and control it better, and she has also helped his father cope with having a magical wife and son. She has been very kind to them, and Tom is grateful. He sees Esmeralda as a friend and admires her deeply, but she is not anywhere near his age and he longs for a friend with whom he can be himself. He cannot tell any of the people at his school, or even his own sister, the truth about his magic. As a result he feels isolated and lonely. This is why he reacts so happily when he meets Reason. He sees that Reason has magic and he hopes that she will become a confidante and friend.

Tom warms to Reason straight away and quickly comes to admire her as much as he does Esmeralda. He thinks she is beautiful, strong, confident and fun. He can see a lot of Esmeralda in her, which to Tom is a good thing. He does not understand why Reason seems so wary of Esmeralda, or why Reason does not seem to know anything about her own magic. Esmeralda asks him to keep magic a secret, which disappoints Tom. He does not like having to keep things from Reason, so he takes her to her family's grave monument to try to give her clues. When Reason disappears in New York Tom comes to help find her. He is willing to share magic with Esmeralda to help locate Reason, even though he knows this will shorten his life. Reason has become very important to him. She is not only a friend; he appears to have also developed a crush on her.

When they are reunited, Tom is able to persuade Jay-Tee and Reason to give Esmeralda a chance. They still do not trust her completely, which makes Tom uncomfortable, but they do trust Tom. Reason has never even doubted her feeling that Tom is a good guy, since his kindness and friendship are so genuine. Tom has no trouble quickly making friends with Jay-Tee, too.

Jason Blake

Jason Blake is the man who has been letting Jay-Tee stay in his flat in return for giving him some of her magic. Jay-Tee does not know his real name and refers to him only as 'he.' When he introduces himself to Reason, he calls himself Jason Blake, which may or may not be his real name. He tells Reason that he is her grandfather, which is later confirmed by Esmeralda. Like Esmeralda he is a magic-user and is potentially very dangerous to Reason and Jay-Tee. He is rich, confident and self-assured, and he proves that he is even willing to use physical violence against the girls if they disobey him.



Jason Blake pretends to care about Reason and Jay-Tee, hoping to lure them into trusting him before trapping them in a situation they cannot get out of. When Reason tells him that she and Jay-Tee are going to leave, he forbids it and physically blocks their way. He does not care about them at all, only about himself and his own magic. By taking theirs, he hopes to preserve his and so lengthen his life. He is cruel, selfish and manipulative. Reason can tell that he is bad news as soon as she meets him, but she cannot do much about it once he has her trapped. When he will not let them leave, Reason grows angry and almost kills him with her magic. He recovers and tries to stop them from leaving through Esmeralda's door, but this time Esmeralda battles him with her magic. Reason and the others lend some of their power to her, and they defeat him a second time. Esmeralda claims that he will not be in a position to hurt anyone for a while, but she still forbids any use of the door, just in case.

Jason Blake is a more obvious villain than Esmeralda, yet Reason chooses him over Esmeralda at first. This is because he is more up front with her about what he wants and what he can give in return. Reason's view of Esmeralda has been tainted by Sarafina and now by Jason Blake, who both convince her that Esmeralda is completely evil. In the end, however, Reason and Jay-Tee decide to give Esmeralda a chance. They find that she is actually better than Jason Blake, since she is not trying to steal their powers. She is also honest with them about the possibility of her turning on them one day, and for now she still seems to think this is a bad thing. However, she obviously once cared for Jason, and, like him, she does not want to die. There is a strong possibility that she will become like him one day, or that she already has and is simply manipulating them all in a much more subtle way.

Danny

Danny is Jay-Tee's older brother. He left to go to boarding school when Jay-Tee found out about her magic, so he was not around when Jay-Tee's father turned on her. He seems to know that this is what made her run away, however, and he puts no blame on her for it. He misses her and just wants to have his sister back. He tells her that it is safe to come home now because their father is dead. Jay-Tee is shocked. She arranges to meet him, but they are interrupted by the arrival of Esmeralda and they have to run. Danny does not know what they are running from or what is going on, because he knows nothing about magic. Jay-Tee tries hastily to explain, but poor Danny is still extremely confused at the end of the book.

When Danny sees Jay-Tee in the night club, he approaches Reason first. He tells her about himself and that he just wants to help. He jokes with her and even flirts a little, and Reason finds him very charming and handsome. She begins to develop a bit of a crush on him. She gives him the ammonite stone, partly so that she can find Jay-Tee again if he kidnaps her, but also partly so that she can find Danny again if she wants to. She trusts him straight away, sensing that he is a good, kind person.



Cath

Cath is Tom's older sister. She is currently living and studying in New York. She shares a flat with other students, who are less than thrilled when Tom comes to stay with them. Cath is dating a boy called Dillon of whom Tom disapproves. Tom used to be able to talk to his sister about anything, and considered her a good friend, but since he learned about his magic they have not been able to be as close. Tom would desperately like to confide in her and talk to her about everything, but both his father and Esmeralda have told him not to. Cath is therefore completely ignorant about magic and about why her own mother is now insane. She is not unobservant, however. She can tell that Tom is hiding something from her, and that Esmeralda and her father are lying to her. This hurts her feelings, but she does not blame it on Tom. She knows that he is just following the adults' instructions.

Dillon

Dillon is Cath's boyfriend in New York. Tom does not approve of him, and he does not seem to like Tom much either.

Le Roi

Le Roi was Sarafina's pet cat when she was a young girl living with Esmeralda. Sarafina claims that Esmeralda killed Le Roi as part of a magic ritual, and that the cat is buried in the cellar. Reason digs out the box and opens it, and sure enough, she finds a dead cat inside. For a moment she thinks that Le Roi turns to look at her, but the next second he is lying still and dead again. Reason sees the body of Le Roi, with his neck slashed, as proof that Sarafina has been telling the truth and that Esmeralda is evil.



Objects/Places

Magic

Magic is a kind of energy, a force that is inside everything and everyone. Usually it is only found in small bits, but magic users can create and use it for more powerful things. Objects can also become imbued with magic and so be used as a focus of power, like the ammonite stone or the door from Sydney to New York. Magic tends to be passed down genetically through families, and it is stronger in women.

Those who use magic drain their energy or life force as they do so. The more magic a person makes and uses, and the stronger it is, the shorter their life will be. If a magic user does not use their magic, however, they will go insane. Every magic user must then make this choice between magic (and early death) or madness. For cruel magic users who are unwilling to make this difficult choice, there is another option. They can take the magic from others, boosting their own magic at the expense of the person they are draining, and so add years to their life. This is what Jason Blake wanted to do to Reason, and what he has been doing to Jay-Tee.

Sydney

Sydney is a city on the south-east coast of Australia. It is a particularly beautiful city, full of parkland and bays and beaches. This is where Esmeralda lives, and where Kalder Park, the mental hospital where Sarafina is sent, is located. Reason has never lived in a city before, so when she comes to Sydney it is a bit of a shock. The size amazes her, but she is also pleasantly surprised by the greenery; she had expected cities to be all grey concrete and tall buildings.

Kalder Park

Kalder Park is the special hospital in Sydney for the mentally impaired, where Sarafina, as well as Tom's mother, is being kept. Reason visits her mother here before discovering the door to New York. It is a nice place housed in beautiful grounds. The staff appear to be kind, and the nurses seem caring, but Reason is shocked at how different and slow her mother seems because of the drugs they are giving her. She resolves to save her mother from this place.

Esmeralda's House

Esmeralda's house is a large townhouse in a rich area of Sydney. It has two floors, balconies over the street and the back yard, and a large wine cellar. The house is nothing like Reason thought it would be, because it seems far too elegant and ordinary



to be a witch's house. There is nothing scary in it, and it has functioning heating, electricity and other modern conveniences that Sarafina had told her it did not have.

Reason's Room

Reason's room in Esmeralda's house is beautiful, elegantly decorated, and very large. There is an en-suite bathroom bigger than any bathroom Reason has ever been in before. Although Reason wants to hate her grandmother, and is desperate to leave so that she can be with her mother again, she cannot help liking her room. She has never stayed anywhere this grand before, and she has never been allowed to read books about magic or fantasy, with which the bookshelf here is stacked.

Esmeralda's Room

Esmeralda's room is a mess, which seems incongruous in her large house, but it is not dirty or dusty at all. There are many photos on the wall, including some of a very young Sarafina. Reason finds dried flowers inserted into the frames. She also finds a feather in the lining of one of Esmeralda's suits, which are all black, a strange key in a locked drawer, and human teeth in the back of a brush in the bathroom. These things are enough to convince Reason that Esmeralda is doing something sinister, just like Sarafina told her. Esmeralda's room has a balcony over the back yard where Reason climbs into a fig tree and over to Tom's house.

The Cellar

The cellar in Esmeralda's house is a place that Reason dreads because her mother has told her such horrible stories about it. According to Sarafina, this is where magic rituals take place, where Esmeralda kills animals and sometimes even people. Reason ventures down there to see if this is true, expecting to see horrible ritual objects and dead bodies. However, it turns out to be a perfectly normal wine cellar, and there does not seem to be enough room for performing strange rituals. Reason is confused by this, wondering if Sarafina has been lying or mistaken all along. Later, however, she finds Sarafina's dead cat, Le Roi, buried in the exact place Sarafina told her to look. The cat's throat has been slashed. Reason takes this as proof that Esmeralda really is disturbed, since she sacrificed her own daughter's cat.

The Ammonite

An ammonite stone is actually a fossil, the shell of an extinct group of marine creatures. It curls around in a ridged spiral that looks a bit like a ram's horn. Sarafina gave Reason one of these to help her with the concept of Fibonacci numbers. Reason has treasured it ever since, and she likes to hold it when she is feeling nervous or needs to concentrate. She also uses it to meditate with, and when she does so she can sense when other people are around. Later, Reason realizes that the ammonite is actually a



magic-imbued object, and that when she meditates with it she is actually performing magic.

Reason can always sense where the ammonite stone is. She gives it to Danny in the night club when he goes to talk to Jay-Tee, knowing that if Danny kidnaps Jay-Tee she will be able to follow the feel of the ammonite and find them. Later she takes it back from him and uses it to help boost their magic so that Esmeralda can defeat Jason Blake in their battle of wills.

Fibonacci

Fibonacci are a sequence of numbers in which each number is the sum of the previous two. Reason's ammonite spiral helps her to visualize Fibonacci numbers because the spiral gets wider in a ratio equal to the Fibonacci sequence (called the golden spiral). Reason likes to recite Fibonacci numbers when she is scared or trying to concentrate. She later learns that there is a kind of magic in this, as her own magic is so closely linked to math. Reason calls Fibonacci 'Fibs' for short, which is also another word for 'lies.' This is significant, since Reason will learn that even math is not the rational thing she thought it was, because it is actually connected to magic. Her mother had taught her that there is no such thing as magic and that only reason and logic are true. Now Reason discovers that this is a lie, and that magic is very real after all.

The Back Door

The back door in Esmeralda's house is locked. Reason is curious about it and asks Esmeralda, but Esmeralda says that it is stuck and that she always uses the front door. Reason knows this is a lie because she heard Esmeralda leave via the back door the other day. When Reason makes the decision to run away, she decides to try the infinity key in the back door first. It opens it and she steps through. She finds herself in New York, and the door closes behind her with the key on the other side. Later, Reason learns that the door is an object imbued with magic, like her ammonite.

New York

New York is a city on the east coast of the United States of America. It is a very large city full of tall grey buildings and little parkland, and so is exactly what Reason had expected a city to be like. Reason finds herself here when she steps through Esmeralda's back door. New York is confusing for her in many ways, but it is also exciting and incredible. At first Reason is pleased to be here, but she quickly wishes she could return to Australia to talk to her mother about magic and what it means. Unfortunately, all the buildings look the same to Reason, so she does not realize that Jay-Tee has taken her to the wrong street to search for the door.



The Infinity Key

The infinity key is a key that Reason finds in one of Esmeralda's locked drawers. It has a swirly end in the shape of the symbol for infinity. It opens the magical back door in Esmeralda's house.

Filomena

Filomena is the name that Tom and Esmeralda have given to the fig tree that grows in Esmeralda's back yard. Tom likes to climb this tree, and it is here that he first meets Reason, who is also climbing it.

The Cansino Grave Monument

The Cansino Grave Monument is the grave monument of Reason's family. Tom takes her to see it in the hopes that it will give her clues about her magic. Reason is surprised to see that women are more important than men in her family. This is because magic is passed down more commonly to women. She also notes that most of her family has died very young; women living into their thirties are incredibly rare. This is because magic is dangerous; using it drains a person's life force and shortens their life.

Inferno

Inferno is a night club in New York where Jay-Tee likes to go dance. She knows the bouncer there, and so she can always get in. She takes Reason here after Jason Blake drains some of her magic. The presence of so many people and so much energy helps to replenish magic and makes the girls feel alive again. It is at Inferno that Danny approaches Reason and tells her that it is safe for Jay-Tee to come home.



Themes

Magic, Madness, and Reason

The title of the book is Magic or Madness. At first, this seems to refer to the fact that Sarafina is mad and that Esmeralda believes she is a witch. Reason is taken away from her mother's care when Sarafina attempts to kill herself, and she is sent to live with her grandmother Esmeralda instead. Sarafina has told Reason stories about Esmeralda and how she believes in magic. According to Sarafina, Esmeralda performs all kinds of horrible rituals, killing animals and even people, believing that it helps with her magic. Reason is stuck between two difficult situations. Her mother is mad and is being held in an asylum, but her grandmother is practicing sinister magical rituals. Reason can either live with madness or with 'magic'. She chooses madness, intending to run away with Sarafina again and get their old life back. She can cope with her mother's disturbed episodes, but she cannot cope with Esmeralda's cruelty. Besides, if Esmeralda believes that magic is real and is performing these rituals, then isn't she the crazy one? Sarafina seems saner in comparison.

When Reason explores Esmeralda's house, she gets mixed messages. There is electricity and heating, and there are modern conveniences, which Sarafina had claimed there were not, and the house itself is not at all sinister or 'witchy.' Esmeralda seems completely normal and is even being very kind to Reason. When Reason explores the cellar, she finds none of the ritual objects or dead bodies that Sarafina had led her to expect she would find there. It is only a perfectly normal wine cellar. Reason begins to doubt Sarafina a bit, for the first time wondering if Sarafina might be crazy in this too, and so only imagining her mother's evil rituals. The reader is also doubtful of Sarafina's stories about Esmeralda at this point.

When Reason explores the house she finds a feather in the lining of Esmeralda's suit, a strange key in a locked door, dried flowers in the back of picture frames, and human teeth hidden in the back of a brush. She is not sure if this is evidence of Esmeralda's 'witchcraft' but it certainly seems sinister to her. At this point, it is hard to tell who is really mad; Esmeralda, Sarafina, or both. Later, Reason looks in the cellar where Sarafina tells her to look, and she finds Sarafina's old pet cat buried in a box with its throat slashed. Reason realizes that Sarafina must have been telling the truth about it. Esmeralda really did sacrifice her own daughter's pet. This convinces Reason that Esmeralda is the mad one. Reason is now determined to escape.

However, while Reason is looking for money for her escape, she decides to try the strange key in the back door. She steps through and finds herself in New York. She now realizes that magic is real after all. Esmeralda really is a witch. Esmeralda is not crazy, because magic is real, though she is potentially even more dangerous now. Sarafina has been telling the truth about Esmeralda, but she has lied about magic. Alternatively, Reason herself is going mad and is imagining all the magic she experiences. Reason finds it hard to accept that magic is real because her mother has always been so



scathing of it, teaching Reason to rely on math, science, logic, and a rational world instead. Reason is also scared to admit that magic is real since it will mean that her grandmother is even more dangerous, that she is in more trouble than she thought. It will mean that she once killed a boy by wishing him dead, and that Sarafina's madness is more complicated than it seemed. Eventually, however, Reason is forced to accept the evidence that magic is real, and she has to face everything that this implies.

This revelation turns Reason's world upside down. She has always believed that the world is rational, as Sarafina taught her, that there is no such thing as magic and that everything can be explained in terms of math and science. Even her name is Reason, chosen by Sarafina to distance her from magic as much as possible. Reason's life and understanding of the world has always been about logic and reason, but now she finds that there is little reason to anything. Magic exists, and so the world is not rational. Even math is a form of magic, meaning that reason itself is no longer reasonable. The Fibonacci numbers that she likes to recite in her head to calm her down turn out to be a kind of spell, just as meditating on the ammonite is not science but magic. Even the name Fib, which is what she calls the Fibonacci numbers, is a word that suggests lies. Everything Reason has known feels like a lie. Her name now seems extremely ironic.

When Reason decides to give Esmeralda a chance, Esmeralda tells her everything about magic. She explains that magic is in everything and everyone in small bits, but that some people can use and create magic. This is a very rare skill that tends to be passed down genetically. It is more common in women. She also explains that magic is very draining for a person. It literally sucks away their life. The more magic a person uses and creates, the sooner they will die. If a magic user does not use their magic, however, they will go insane. Now the title of the book takes on another meaning. A magic user's choice is between magic (and early death) or madness. Sarafina chose madness rather than risk turning on her own daughter. Esmeralda and Jason Blake chose magic. Both Esmeralda and Jason Blake try to do as little magic as possible, just enough to keep themselves sane, but not enough to cut their life down considerably. Jason had been trying to steal Jay-Tee and Reason's power in order to lengthen his own life at the expense of theirs. Esmeralda cannot promise that she will not turn on them in a similar way in the future, since the choice between death and madness is a very difficult one.

Reason realizes that Sarafina has been trying to protect her from this choice all her life, teaching her just enough magic to keep her sane, but telling her that it is science and that magic does not exist so that she will not be tempted to use her powers and cut her life short. Now that Reason knows this, she is determined to find another way. She refuses to let this be her only choice. Perhaps Reason can reclaim the meaning of her name and restore reason to the madness of the choice with which she has been presented.



Friendship and Trust

Reason has grown up with her mother, constantly moving around the outback, and from small town to small town. She has never lived in a big city, and has not attended school regularly like other children. Because of this, she has never really had friends her own age. When Sarafina goes crazy and tries to kill herself, Reason is forced to live with Esmeralda, her grandmother. She feels very isolated and alone, since she is used to having Sarafina to rely upon. Now she has to look after herself. Her life with Sarafina has helped to make her capable and independent, but she is still very naive and innocent at times. She does not know what it is like to have friends, and so she has never missed them.

When she meets Tom, however, she begins to see how nice it would be to have someone in whom to confide. She opens up to Tom straight away and trusts him completely. Tom likes Reason too, and he admires her deeply. He begins to develop a crush on her. He shows her around the town and takes her to her family's grave monument in the cemetery, hoping it will give her clues about who she is and that she has magic. Tom is desperate to have someone his own age in whom he can confide about magic. He has Esmeralda, but she is much older than him and has taken on the role of mother and tutor for him. He used to tell his sister everything, but now he cannot tell her the most important things about his life because his father and Esmeralda have urged him not to speak about magic with her. He has school friends, but they cannot understand this part of him. He feels just as isolated and alone as Reason does. This is why the two of them make such an instant connection and become friends so quickly. This is why Tom goes to New York and is willing to give up some of his magic in order to find Reason when she goes missing. He cannot stand the thought of her being hurt or lost, and he wants his friend back.

Reason decides to run away from Esmeralda. She feels guilty about Tom, but she still thinks that she does not need friends. When she unexpectedly steps out into New York, however, she is extremely grateful for all Jay-Tee's help. Jay-Tee treats her kindly and pretends to be her friend, and Reason reacts with the same instant warmth and friendship that she does with Tom. She is in an even stranger situation than before, completely isolated in a strange city, and so she appreciates all Jay-Tee's help and support. Unfortunately, Jay-Tee has been lying to Reason. She is only pretending to be her friend so that she can gain her trust and then deliver her into the hands of Jason Blake, who wants to steal her magic. Jay-Tee is being selfish and only thinking of her own safety. When Reason sees how much Jay-Tee has lied to her and led her on, she realizes how trusting and innocent she has been. She may have been suspicious at all times with Esmeralda, but it has not occurred to her that Jay-Tee could also betray her. She has focused all her fear and negativity on Esmeralda and has forgotten that the world is full of bad people who want something from her.

When Jay-Tee realizes that Reason has become a true friend, and that she actually really likes her, she feels terribly guilty for using her and leading her into danger. She apologizes to Reason, who shows great forgiveness and compassion towards her. She



does not blame Jay-Tee, because she understands that Jay-Tee is terrified of Jason Blake and so naturally does everything he says. She can also see that Jay-Tee, like herself, has not had much reason to trust others, and that unlike Reason this has made her cynical and suspicious with everyone. Reason forgives her, and then takes control of the situation to help them both. Jay-Tee is determined to work with her rather than against her from now on. When they are on the same side and being honest with each other, they manage to get away from Jason Blake, proving that friendship and partnership can be more effective than working alone. Through their friendship, Jay-Tee has learned to open up and to be more trusting, and Reason has learned to be a little less naive.

Jay-Tee is surprised by her new friendship, since she has been living on her own, looking after herself, for so long. She finds that it is nice to be able to place trust in others and to share things. Now that she is more open to the idea of friendship, she quickly makes friends with Tom, too. At the end of the story they have all formed a strong friendship and have agreed to support and protect one another. Together, they are stronger than they are alone, which will help them if Esmeralda ever does turn on them. However, by having friends Reason has also made herself more vulnerable. She cannot run away so easily again, because she will need to take them with her if she does. She will also now worry about their safety as well as her own. Friendship can sometimes be a burden, as well as something comforting and pleasant, but Reason has learned that friendship is something she needs.

Growing Up

Reason has had a strange upbringing, traveling constantly, not attending regular school, living only with her mother, not watching TV and not doing the things that normal teenagers do, and so she comes across as quite naive and young for her age. She is very innocent, and despite her suspicion of Esmeralda, she is far too trusting of everyone else. She does not know much about the world, or about how people behave in cities. This gets her into trouble throughout the book.

At first, Reason shows her naivety in her interaction with Tom. She is not used to boys and relationships, and so it does not seem to even occur to her that Tom finds her attractive or is flirting with her. She naturally holds his hand without giving it a second thought, which for Tom is a more intimate gesture. Later, Reason's reaction to Jay-Tee's brother Danny shows a similar innocence. She thinks he is handsome and is attracted to him, but this is quite a new experience for her and she is not sure what to do or say. He manages to make her blush easily, despite the fact that she says she never blushes.

Reason's innocence gets her into trouble in New York when she is too trusting of Jay-Tee. Jay-Tee is clearly holding things back and manipulating Reason for some reason, but Reason never seems to notice this or think that it is a big deal. She does not question why Reason was out on the street with spare boots and coat, which suggests that she was waiting specifically for Reason. When Jay-Tee seems so happy for Reason to stay in her apartment, Reason does not question how Jay-Tee has this apartment



when she clearly has no job, or why she would be so nice to a complete stranger. Reason also surprisingly lacks curiosity and is unconcerned when Jay-Tee mentions that the apartment is actually owned by a man who lets her stay there in return for errands, and that this man wants to meet Reason. This should ring alarm bells for Reason, since, even if Jason Blake is not magical, he could have very sinister intentions.

When Reason meets Jason Blake she immediately feels that he is a bad man who cannot be trusted, yet she stays at the flat and lets herself be taken to dinner by him. She must know by now that Jay-Tee is using her and that Jason wants something from her, but she is driven by her curiosity and seems to think that she is more in control than she really is. When Jason has taken some of her power, and when it is clear that he will never willingly let the girls go, Reason realizes how naive and stupid she has been. She is annoyed with herself more than with Jay-Tee, who she forgives instantly because she knows how afraid Jay-Tee is of Jason.

From this point on, Reason is determined not to be naive and helpless. She is actually a very strong, confident girl, and Jay-Tee has underestimated her a lot. Reason is naive and innocent, but she had known straight away that Jason is a bad man, and she knows that they have to get away from him now. She persuades Jay-Tee to call her brother, and she assures Jay-Tee that they will get away from Jason. Later, when Jason shows up unexpectedly, Reason tells him that they no longer want anything to do with him. When Jay-Tee has given up, Reason fights back. Reason is now the stronger one of the pair. Together, they manage to get away from Jason. When they are faced with the choice of whether to trust Esmeralda or not, Jay-Tee looks to Reason for the final decision. Reason seems to have become the unspoken leader of their group.

At the end of the story Reason has grown up and changed a great deal. She has become a lot less naive about the world, and she is more capable of taking care of herself and others. She is more determined than ever to face problems rather than just accept them or give up. She feels the same way about the choice between magic or madness, determined to find another way. She has seen what her mother has given up for her, and now she is determined to be the strong one. She will save her mother, not the other way round this time. She has also learned not to be so trusting and to always remember what others might want from her. Unlike Jay-Tee and Tom, she is not so quick to conclude that Esmeralda is on their side. She will remain cautious.



Style

Point of View

Magic or Madness is told mainly in first person from Reason's point of view. Reason is the main character of the story, so it is important for the reader to follow what she is doing and thinking. She has had a strange upbringing and so is not like normal teenagers. Telling her parts of the story in first person therefore helps the reader to better understand her and her motivations. Reason's point of view is biased because she has been told stories by her mother and has picked up her mother's paranoia concerning Esmeralda. Reason does not want to see that perhaps her mother is mistaken or crazy, because she is desperate to live with her again. Reason will therefore interpret situations a little differently from how the reader might. Reason is also often a little naive and too trusting, so the reader can see that she is getting herself into trouble even when she cannot. This increases tension and suspense.

Reason does not know about magic before she gets to New York, and even then she is pretty clueless as to what is going on. Because of this, the author tells certain chapters from other characters' points of view. Both Tom and Jay-Tee get chapters from their points of view, which helps to shed light on Reason's situation. In this way, the reader has access to information that Reason does not have, meaning that the reader sometimes sees danger or opportunity coming that Reason does not. Again, this increases the dramatic tension of the story.

Tom's and Jay-Tee's chapters also provide a different perspective on events, since they have very different personalities and opinions from Reason. Tom trusts Esmeralda and thinks she is a good person, so his chapters allow the readers to see what Reason cannot. Jay-Tee is more cynical and has more experience of the world than Reason, so her chapters help to show what the reality of their situation is. These chapters also help the reader to get to know Tom and Jay-Tee better, making them more likeable and sympathetic characters. Without seeing Jay-Tee's fear of Jason Blake and her desperation to get out of a bad situation, followed by her guilt about using Reason to do so, the reader might not be able to forgive her actions.

Tom and Jay-Tee's chapters are told in third person rather than first person like Reason's chapters. This reminds the reader that it is Reason who is the main character of the story.

Setting

The first half of the story is set in Australia and the second half in New York. Reason has always lived with her mother Sarafina, constantly moving through the Australian outback. This is because they are hiding from Esmeralda, who has claimed custody of Reason. When Sarafina tries to kill herself she is moved to a special hospital in Sydney



for the mentally ill. Reason is sent to live with Esmeralda in Sydney. Reason has never lived in a city before, and Sydney is not quite what she expected. She thought cities would be all grey concrete and tall buildings, but Sydney is beautiful and open, with a lot of parkland. However, the noise and crowds, and the variety of different things found there, is exciting but overwhelming for her. She does not mind the city, but she wishes she could experience it with her mother, and she would happily run away again to be with her.

Esmeralda's house is not what Reason expected either. It is a large, expensive townhouse with two stories, balconies, and a large wine cellar. It has electricity, heating and other modern conveniences that Sarafina had told Reason it does not have. She is surprised, because the house does not look or feel like a witch's house. Like Esmeralda herself, it seems perfectly normal. Reason even finds it comfortable and pleasant, particularly her large room with its en-suite bathroom and bookshelves full of books that she has always wanted to read. Part of her wants to stay, but she also feels very guilty for liking it. She wishes she could live here with her mother, but since it is Esmeralda's house she knows she has to leave.

The house does contain some secrets, however. As Reason explores she finds dried flowers in photo frames, a feather in the lining of one of Esmeralda's many black suits, human teeth, and Sarafina's dead cat, with its neck clearly slashed. Reason concludes that Esmeralda is crazy and practicing dark rituals after all, but that she is just very good at hiding it and making her house seem normal. Reason is determined to run away. She decides to try the key she has found in the back door before she goes, however, and steps through into another city. Esmeralda's back door is a kind of magical portal to New York.

New York is completely different from Sydney, and Reason feels very lost and confused here. New York, with its tall buildings and overcrowded feel, is more like what Reason expected to find in a big city. At first she is excited and thrilled to be here, and enjoys experiencing new things like snow. As she comes to terms with the fact that magic is real, however, she wishes she could return to her mother. Reason likes some things about New York, but she is not fond of the extreme cold or the slippery, icy paths. She finds a lot of things about the city unfamiliar and she is a little homesick for Australia, though she does not miss Esmeralda or her house at all. New York is shown as being a less friendly place than Sydney, exciting but also dangerous, where people are always ready to use Reason and she must be on her guard. At the end of the book everyone returns to Sydney, where they can feel safe and create a proper home for themselves.

Language and Meaning

The language in the book is fairly simple, reflecting the way real teenagers talk. Reason's speech and narration is full of Australian slang, colloquialisms and abbreviations. Chapters from Reason's and Tom's points of view also use Australian spelling and vocabulary, such as 'jumper', meaning 'sweater', and 'mum' instead of 'mom.'



Jay-Tee is from New York, so her speech uses American vocabulary, spelling and colloquialisms instead. Jay-Tee gets quite frustrated with Reason's way of speaking at points. Reason is more accepting. Though she is sometimes confused by the words Jay-Tee uses, she can usually understand what she means from the context of the sentence, and she does not seem to mind learning new ways of saying things. Jay-Tee has left home at an early age and has never had to interact with many different kinds of people, and so she finds it hard to be tolerant. Reason's mother has presumably taught her to respect all different kinds of people, since she has had a life wandering through different places and seeing different ways of life. When Jay-Tee comes to Sydney, the tables are turned and it is Tom who gets to tease her about the strange words she says.

By showing the different idiosyncrasies of two countries that actually speak the same language, the author shows how unique different people can be. This champions those differences, showing that it is silly to consider one way to be the 'right' way, and that differences are actually interesting and beautiful. Reason herself is half white, half black (Aborigine), Tom is white, and Jay-Tee is Hispanic, yet they all get along very well together. By showing this, and by emphasizing the differences in speech and spelling, the author illustrates how differences should not be a barrier to friendship and understanding.

Structure

The book is told in chronological order with no flashbacks except for the occasional memory from Reason. This keeps the structure very simple and easy to follow. Most of the chapters are from Reason's point of view, with occasional chapters from Tom and Jay-Tee. The chapters from Tom and Jay-Tee's points of view are told in third person rather than first person, so these can never be mixed up with Reason's perspective.

The first half of the book deals with Reason's life in Sydney as she struggles to understand what is the reality of her situation and who is crazy. She sees some odd things that she finds hard to explain, and she finds evidence that Esmeralda really does commit horrible acts as part of magic rituals. She also meets Tom and makes friends with him. She then decides to try the back door and steps into New York.

The second half of the book is set in New York as Reason tries to find a place for herself and get some answers. Whereas the first half of the book is spent trying to outwit Esmeralda, the second is spent trying to avoid the twin dangers of Esmeralda and Jason Blake. Reason makes friends with Jay-Tee, who then comes clean about her lies and manipulation. They decide to face their troubles together. They run away from Jason, and Reason finds herself once again in the clutches of Esmeralda. Tom convinces them to trust Esmeralda, and they all return to Sydney.

Most of the book is spent in discovery, and in some form of running away from problems, which is Reason's go-to response to trouble. By the end of the book she has discovered what magic is and who she is, and the truth behind Sarafina's madness. The next book will deal with her beginning to learn more about how to use and control her



magic. She has a stable and safe (for now) home, and friends to support her. She still thinks about running away, but she realizes that this can no longer be the answer to her problems.



Quotes

"Esmeralda has many ways, Sarafina had said, of convincing you that magic is real. You have to remember that it's just tricks. Mirrors and light. Nothing supernatural." Through the Window. P34

"I wondered, as I had many times before, if it was possible that Esmeralda simply used the word magic for all those things that science hadn't yet explained." Through the Window. P34

"Lots of things my mother'd taught me didn't entirely make sense. She explained them in terms of patterns and numbers, but I could imagine someone with less knowledge of mathematics would think them magical." Through the Window. P34

"Sarafina was very determined that my head be full of facts. Information. Reason." In the Witch's Kitchen. P54

"My life before could have been a dream. Or I could be in the dream right now." In the Asylum. P82

"I was in New York City. Magic was real." Top of the World. P134

"I let all the anxious and confused thoughts float away. If this was madness, it was still better than where I'd been before." Top of the World. P134

"I am in New York City and it is Wednesday when it should be Thursday, morning when it should be night, freezing when it should be boiling, and magic is real." Into Magic. P162

"Or had Sarafina's lies been to protect me from myself? Because if magic was real, then I was a murderer. I had wished that boy dead and less than a second later he had died. I had done it. Part of me had always known that too." Into Magic. P164

"Being too scared to think (magic is real) had made me hope I was crazy, had stopped me from facing what was plain as the no-longer-white snow out the window. Magical is real. Magic has always been real." Into Magic. P164

"Now he seemed just like Esmeralda: softness and smiles on the outside, sharp shiny teeth on the inside." - describing Jason Blake. With Bubbles. P175

"He was a wolf and we were his food; that's what I saw in his eyes, that's why he wasn't going to let us go." - referring to Jason Blake. Out the Door. P238

"Magic is in everyone. When someone hears a phone ring and knows who it is before they've answered, that's a kind of magic." - Esmeralda. Back Home. P263



"There are no coincidences,' continued Esmeralda, 'only a great deal of magic.'" Back Home. P263

"Magic sucks you dry. The more you make and the stronger it is, the shorter your life.'" - Esmeralda. Back Home. P263

"I was afraid. Like Esmeralda, like Jason Blake, I didn't want to die. Would I end up taking magic from someone else so that I could live longer?" Back Home. P270

"What a ridiculous choice: magic and early death or madness." Back Home. P271



Topics for Discussion

Discuss the different meanings behind the title, *Magic or Madness*, and how this relates to the plot and themes of the story.

Discuss the theme of friendship and trust in the story. Who trusts or mistrusts others and why? Is anyone too trusting, or is anyone too paranoid? How is friendship represented, and does it help any of the characters in the story?

How does Reason change and grow up through the course of the story? What things does she learn, and does she change her attitude or opinions about anything? Do you think she changes for the better?

Discuss the character of Jay-Tee. Do you think she is a sympathetic character? Why or why not? Do you like her? Do you think she proves herself a good friend to Reason in the end?

How does the author portray the idea that differences can be positive and that these should not be a barrier to friendship? In your answer you should consider how the author has included both Australian and American vocabulary and spelling, as well as the different races and cultural backgrounds of the characters.

Discuss the use of math in the novel. Why does Reason like numbers so much, and why has Sarafina insisted on teaching her about them? What does Reason's ammonite have to do with math, and what is the significance of the Fibonacci numbers? How does all this relate to magic?

Why is Reason's name significant? How does it relate to the plot and the themes of the book?

Do you think Esmeralda can be trusted? In your answer you should consider all the evidence that she is evil or manipulative, as well as the evidence that she is honest and has their best interests at heart. Is Reason right to distrust her?