

# **A Tangle of Knots Study Guide**

**A Tangle of Knots by Lisa Graff**

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# Plot Summary

A Tangle of Knots by Lisa Graff, takes place in a fictionalized version of the world. Most of the population is born with something that's referred to as a Talent. A Talent is one particular skill that a person has which they are perfect at, even without any prior training. The story opens with a young man named Mason. Mason has just inherited a fortune from his mother. He has the inheritance in a rare suitcase, one of 36 that were made. He takes the train to New York, but the suitcase with the inheritance is stolen.

The story jumps ahead more than 50 years, introducing a slew of new characters. The first are Cady and Miss Mallory. Miss Mallory runs an orphanage, where Cady has been staying for the last few years. Miss Mallory has a Talent for helping people to find exactly what it is they're looking for. She uses her ability to pair children up with their perfect parents, but she hasn't been able to find anyone for Cady. Cady has the Talent to cook the perfect cake for anyone. She's been entering a local competition where she's been able to win against even professional cooks.

The next characters that are introduced are the Asher family. Marigold is a middle child who is struggling to find her Talent. Her younger brother, Will, has the Talent to disappear, while her older brother, Zane, has the Talent to perfectly aim his spit.

Marigold is upset because she can't find her Talent. Will is upset because he craves adventure. Zane is upset because he is having trouble at school. His principal called him worthless and wrote a letter to his parents suggesting that Zane be sent to a different school. The family is also taking care of someone named V, a woman who has had a stroke and is unable to speak. Before Zane's parents can read the letter from the school, there's an accident at the apartment, inadvertently caused by Zane.

The family ends up moving into an Emporium, run by a mysterious caretaker called, The Owner. The Owner is eventually revealed to be Mason from the beginning of the story. Mason has been stealing other people's Talents. He's also been collecting the rare suitcases, determined to find his inheritance, which is the recipe for the perfect peanut butter. His son, Toby, works for him. Toby is distraught because many years previously, he lost his wife and daughter in Africa.

Toby ends up running into Cady at the orphanage, and he feels a strong connection to her. Miss Mallory feels that connection as well, and Toby ends up adopting Cady and bringing her to the Emporium. Meanwhile, Mason has finally found the suitcase containing the recipe, but before he can use it Cady finds it. She makes the perfect peanut butter and gives it to Mason, who demands the recipe. She hands it over, but Mason discovers that the recipe isn't enough, he needs Cady's Talent for baking, the same one that his mother had.

While Mason is making the peanut butter, the Asher family is dealing with their own problems. Will accidentally gets sent to New Jersey. Marigold and her mother set out to track him down. They eventually get to a museum where Marigold discovers that her

mother used to be an archeologist, and she has the piece of a very rare fossil that has been missing for years.

While everything is happening, a mysterious merchant manipulates each one of the characters, arranging it so each one is led to the convention center where Cady's baking contest is taking place, and where Mason is trying to steal her power. The Asher family comes to her rescue and stops Mason from getting her gift. Afterwards, they discover that Toby was always Cady's father. Toby inherits the Emporium, and all of the characters decide to stay together.

# Prologue-Chapter 1

## Summary

### Prologue

The book opens with the recently turned 18-year-old Mason Burgess getting ready to leave Mississippi. His mother has just passed away, and he is traveling with her inheritance slip, intending to collect his money so he can start his life over. Mason speaks with an older, but charming salesman. They talk about their Talents, with the salesman revealing that he sells knots. Mason says he doesn't have any Talents. The salesman tells Mason to keep an eye on his suitcase before the salesman seemingly vanishes. Mason gets on the train to Philadelphia, but when he arrives; his suitcase is missing, along with the inheritance slip.

### Chapter 1

This chapter is set 53 years after the Prologue. This chapter opens with Cady, a young orphan, who resides in a New York orphanage. Cady is baking with the owner of the home, Miss Mallory. Cady has an incredible talent for baking. She has been able to compete in competitions with professional chefs, and win. Cady doesn't have the same luck when it comes to finding a family. She has been adopted several times before, but she was always returned to the orphanage. Today, she learns, new parents are coming to look at the children, and Cady is hopeful that she might be able to find her perfect parents.

## Analysis

### Prologue

The main purpose of the prologue is to introduce two of the characters, the mysterious merchant and Mason. Mason's identity is shrouded for most of the book, until it's revealed that he is in fact, The Owner. The merchant talks about how rare the suitcase is, which is what propels most of the plot forward. In the future, Mason is still trying to recover his lost suitcase, which contains the inheritance slip. The idea of Talents is brought up in the prologue, which is also a big part of the book. The idea is expanded upon in further detail over the next few chapters, which makes the reader look at this scene in a new light once the reader reads the official explanation about how Talents work in the world.

The author is making a very large statement early on by introducing the theme of Talent. Mason isn't careful with his Talent and before he knows it, he has no 'Talent'. He spends the rest of the novel looking for his lost Talent. The author seems to be suggesting that once a person uncovers what their Talent is in the world, they would do well to nurture and protect it.



Symbolically, the suitcase represents a person, in particular, Mason. It is very rare, and there are only a few like it around. That it contains something very special and meaningful also hints at Mason and what he might have been capable of had he not misplaced his Talent. His search for the suitcase throughout the novel, is a search, at its very essence, for himself and his true nature.

## Chapter 1

Cady isn't stated to have a Talent, but it's heavily implied that she does have one in this opening chapter. Again, this is foreshadowing since the reader isn't fully told about how Talents work in the world. The same can be said of Miss Mallory, who doesn't realize that she has the Talent for finding exactly what people need, which is how she's able to find the perfect parents for her orphans so quickly.

Cady's conflict is brought up in this chapter. Cady feels like she doesn't belong to anyone because all of the families she tried to live with haven't ended up accepting her. The bond between Cady and Miss Mallory is established very early on, and readers can see how much they care for one another. This sets up the future plotline of Miss Mallory being worried about and missing Cady after she's adopted by Toby.

## Discussion Question 1

What statement is the author making about 'Talent' when Mason's suitcase is stolen?

## Discussion Question 2

Discuss the relationship between Miss Mallory and Cady.

## Discussion Question 3

What is the symbolism of Mason's suitcase?

## Vocabulary

inheritance, begrudgingly, constituted, scrawl, guffaw, petite, scrumptious, waltzed, obscured

# Chapters 2-3

## Summary

### Chapter 2

This chapter opens with a new character, simply called, The Owner, putting up a sign in his lost luggage emporium, advertising that he has rooms for rent. The Owner is having money troubles, which is why he is resorting to renting out his space. The Owner possesses the unique ability to levitate. While dealing with a customer, he palms an object in his jacket that makes his hands icy cold. He shakes hands with the customer, who becomes sick. The chapter ends with the reveal that in a week all of his rooms are going to be filled, and all of the inhabitants are going to lose what they value the most.

### Chapter 3

This chapter introduces another character, the 10-year-old Marigold. Marigold has been spending all day trying to discover what her Talent is. She is a middle child, and middle children have a reputation for not developing Talents at all. Her younger brother, Will, encourages her. Will vanishes, which is his talent. Marigold tries to get her other brother, Zane, to help find Will, but Zane seems uninterested. Marigold jokingly tells him not to kill anyone while she's gone, and the chapter ends with an ominous warning that Marigold would later learn how accurate her joke had been.

## Analysis

### Chapter 2

The supernatural element of Talents is officially brought up for the first time with Mason, disguised as The Owner, who is able to levitate off the ground. Although it isn't explained until later on, Mason also has the ability to steal other people's Talents, which is what he's doing at the end of the chapter. This chapter also foreshadows the fact that soon the rest of the characters are going to be staying in the Emporium, which sets off the events for the majority of the book.

### Chapter 3

Marigold and the rest of the Asher family are introduced. The idea of Talents is explained fully in this chapter. Not only does it explain specifically what Talents are in the world, but it's established that not everyone has Talents. These people are called Fair. Marigold is afraid of being Fair, since it's more common in middle children. Marigold's fear of being Talentless is one of her main character traits. Will's ability is brought up, which is what sets up his future plotline. Zane's rebellious nature is brought up, and the reader is given the impression that he has a darker side to him by the ominous warning at the end of the chapter.





The theme of Talents is explored further in both chapters, but particularly in Chapter 3, indicating that to be Fair is something bad, an indication of inferiority. However, the author seems to be suggesting that there are no mediocre people in the world, only people who haven't yet discovered or decided to use their Talent. Thus, the message in this chapter is that one should try many different things because one never knows how one might discover one's Talent.

## **Discussion Question 1**

Discuss the theme of Talent in Chapter 3.

## **Discussion Question 2**

What are Talents and why are they important to this novel?

## **Discussion Question 3**

Discuss the character of Marigold.

## **Vocabulary**

murky, meaningless, portent, teetering, maneuver, pointless, flagrant

# Chapters 4-5

## Summary

### Chapter 4

This short chapter introduces another new character named, V. V is an older woman who recently suffered from a stroke. She passed out in the woods and was discovered by the police. Because of her stroke, V is unable to communicate. V reveals that she lost her daughter, Caroline, and she feels helpless without her daughter or the ability to communicate.

### Chapter 5

Zane is trying to read a book, but he finds his mind wandering. Zane had gotten in trouble earlier at school. The principal had called him worthless, and it was all that Zane could focus on. The chapter ends with Zane trying to think of a plan to intercept the letter that the principal has written, so his parents won't know that he has gotten in trouble.

## Analysis

### Chapter 4

Caroline is mentioned for the first time in this chapter, by V. Caroline is referenced several more times throughout the book. She's a key character in explaining why V acts the way that she does. The reader eventually learns that Caroline is also directly related to two other characters, Toby and Cady. Toby was previously married to Caroline, and they had a child together, Cady. The character of V also explores one of the themes, that not all communication is verbal. This theme is only briefly touched upon in this initial chapter, with V being identified nonverbally by the locket that she wears.

The locket represents V's connection to her daughter and to her family. As she can no longer speak, it has tremendous significance to her, and it aids the police, when they find her in the woods, in determining who she is. She, quite literally, wears her identity around her neck.

### Chapter 5

A major character arc for Zane revolves around the principal calling him worthless. In nearly every chapter that focuses on Zane, he's thinking about the letter, and what the principal said to him. Zane's entire motivation is wanting to prove that he isn't worthless. This drives him to start stealing because he's that desperate to support his family and gain their approval. Zane's character arc also touches on the theme of Labels and how



they can be dangerous. Often those who are labelled live up to those labels, even if at first they didn't deserve them.

## **Discussion Question 1**

Discuss Zane's character.

## **Discussion Question 2**

Discuss the symbolism of the locket.

## **Discussion Question 3**

Discuss the theme of Labels.

## **Vocabulary**

clamor, gibberish, mish mash, heist, delinquent, perturbed, calcify, eloquent

# Chapters 6-7

## Summary

### Chapter 6

Miss Mallory feels that Cady is going to find her parents soon. She has never been wrong about her feelings before. Part of her is happy, but she's also gotten close to Cady and will miss her. Miss Mallory gets the mail, which has the tickets for the Sunshine Bakers contest that Cady is entering. She's about to tell Cady that something has changed with the judges, but Cady runs off to get the cake out of the oven before she can finish her thought.

### Chapter 7

The chapter opens with Marigold's mother, Dolores Asher, treating V at the hospital. V is still unable to speak, and they know nothing about her. Mrs. Asher feels envious when she sees that V has no Talent listed, wondering if her life really became easier when she discovered her own Talent. Later, she receives a letter from her children's school, but she doesn't have time to open it as she wants to get home.

## Analysis

### Chapter 6

Miss Mallory tries to tell Cady that something is different with the judges in the Sunshine Bakers contest. She never gets the chance, and it isn't mentioned again until much later in the book when Cady actually arrives at the contest. The surprise is that instead of one judge, there's a panel of judges. Cady's talent is to cook the perfect cake for one person, so she's thrown off when she has to make a single cake for a panel of people. This chapter continues to set up the relationship between Cady and Miss Mallory. It shows that Miss Mallory has very bittersweet feelings about Cady being adopted. She wants Cady to have a good home and to be happy, but at the same time she doesn't want Cady to go because she's grown so attached to her.

### Chapter 7

This chapter is important because it introduces Mrs. Asher's unique view on Talents, as well as touches upon the theme of Talent. Everyone in the book has spoken about Talents being a good thing, especially the envious Marigold. Mrs. Asher is the first character to look upon Talents as being limiting and burdensome. Mrs. Asher is unsure if her Talent is a good thing, since it ultimately limited what she was able to do with her life. This also touches upon the theme of Following One's Dreams. This chapter also serves to introduce V into the main cast of characters.



## **Discussion Question 1**

Who is V?

## **Discussion Question 2**

What does Mrs. Asher think about Talents that is so different from others' views on it?

## **Discussion Question 3**

Discuss the theme of Following One's Dreams.

## **Vocabulary**

meticulously, expunged, melancholy, fretful, vengeful, wistful

# Chapters 8-9

## Summary

### Chapter 8

Will sneaks out of their apartment because he wants to go on an adventure. He explores around the apartment, but doesn't find anything exciting. He starts to return home when there is a crash. A hot air balloon has crashed onto the ground in front of the apartment, giving Will the adventure he has been looking for.

### Chapter 9

This chapter introduces Toby. Toby is a thief that stole some luggage to sell to The Owner. He has just discovered a rare suitcase, the same type that Mason has. Toby is excited to bring it to sell, but on the way back he nearly runs over Cady because of the foggy weather. He stops at the orphanage and finds himself inexplicably drawn to Cady. When Miss Mallory asks if he came for Cady, he finds himself saying yes, deciding that he wants to be a father again.

## Analysis

### Chapter 8

Will's need for adventure is brought up in this chapter. Will's entire plot arc revolves around him wanting to explore. The balloon crashing into the apartment helps to move the other plots forward, since it moves the Asher family into the same location as Cady and Toby, as well as Mason. Therefore, the symbolism of the balloon is that it is excitement, a new element of the unknown.

### Chapter 9

Throughout some of the other chapters the weather has been brought up. Cady was discovered on a foggy evening, and the air balloon crash was believed to be because of the bad weather. In this chapter, Toby meets Cady because of the foggy weather. The weather continues to be mentioned a few other times throughout the book, but each time it serves to guide characters together or set up another plot point.

Toby feels an instant connection to Cady. Their familial relationship is explored in more detail towards the end of the book. Nearly each section with Toby contains some bit of foreshadowing, and this chapter is no exception. He talks about how he was a father before, hinting that it didn't go well last time. He's determined not to repeat the same mistakes, but for the time being he doesn't elaborate on what those mistakes were.



## **Discussion Question 1**

Discuss what is known about the character of Toby.

## **Discussion Question 2**

Discuss the symbolism of the balloon.

## **Discussion Question 3**

Discuss the character of Will.

## **Vocabulary**

doily, premonition, deterrent, tines, admonished, predisposed, cacophonous

# Chapters 10-11

## Summary

### Chapter 10

This chapter starts a week later, with Cady having just finished her trial run with Toby. Cady is making a cake for Toby. She's worried that he might not be happy, even though the week has gone well. Cady runs into Mrs. Asher, who is moving in some of V's items. The Ashers have had to move into The Owner's emporium after the hot air balloon damaged their apartment. Cady and Toby live there as well. Mrs. Asher assures Cady that everything is fine with Toby and he seems happy. Cady runs into the merchant from the prologue, who talks about how mysterious fate can be. And then he vanishes.

### Chapter 11

V starts to settle into life in the emporium. She remembers what it was like when she was a child, when the building was a peanut butter factory. She keeps seeing someone that reminds her of her lost daughter. Cady's cooking invokes something in V, which makes her sad that she isn't able to engage Cady or Toby in conversation.

## Analysis

### Chapter 10

For the most part, this chapter just serves to set up everything that had happened in the last week. The biggest change is the fact that Toby and Cady are now living together. Cady thinks their relationship is okay, but she's still concerned that she isn't doing a good enough job. This is a major trait for Cady, as she's always seeking acceptance. The other big change is that the Ashers and V are now living in the same place as Cady, Toby, and Mason. The mysterious merchant also reappears for the first time in the story since the prologue. He frequently appears in later chapters, helping to move the plot forward and guiding the characters just at the right time.

### Chapter 11

V mentions that the emporium used to be a peanut butter factory. At first, this seems like a relatively minor throwaway line. This ends up actually being a major plot point later in the book, when Mason explains that his inheritance was the recipe for the famous peanut butter, which was a top selling item. V feels a connection to Cady that she can't explain, foreshadowing that there may be more of a relationship than either of them realize at the time. V's inability to speak makes her nonverbal communication quite vital. The theme of Nonverbal Communication is illustrated most through her character, but it should also be noted that Cady also engages in it, and seems, of all of them, able to best 'read' V and what she is wanting.





## **Discussion Question 1**

What are some of Cady's worries in both of these chapters?

## **Discussion Question 2**

Discuss V's character.

## **Discussion Question 3**

What is the purpose of the mysterious merchant?

## **Vocabulary**

luscious, rogue, phenomenon, elope, stodgy

# Chapters 12-13

## Summary

### Chapter 12

The mysterious merchant comes into the Emporium, bearing another rare suitcase, the last one that The Owner needs. The merchant reveals it was his air balloon that crashed last week. The Owner offers to buy the suitcase, taking every dollar he has out of the register to purchase it, which the merchant agrees to.

### Chapter 13

Marigold is still searching for her Talent. She runs into V and manages to communicate to her enough, showing her the oboe that she has been practicing. Marigold reads the letter that talks about Zane having trouble at school, which is making things tense in the family.

## Analysis

### Chapter 12

The mysterious merchant is once again moving the plot forward. The suitcase that he brings is the one that has the inheritance slip that Mason so desperately wants. He also reveals that he was the owner of the balloon that crashed into the Asher's apartment building, which is what made them have to move into the emporium. This is just another example of the merchant being around to set things into motion, acting as an agent of fate.

### Chapter 13

The theme of Nonverbal Communication is brought up once more through Marigold and V interacting. V uses the oboe as a way to communicate to the rest of the world, since she isn't able to physically speak. Zane's letter is brought up again, letting the reader know that it hasn't been addressed yet in the past week. Things are very tense between Zane and Marigold. The two continue to be at odds for the majority of the book, with Marigold not understanding why Zane is acting out.

## Discussion Question 1

Discuss nonverbal communication and how it is important to the novel.

## **Discussion Question 2**

What is the author's purpose in creating a character that cannot speak verbally?

## **Discussion Question 3**

How does the mysterious merchant act as an agent of change?

## **Vocabulary**

chivy, tenants, malnourished, deciphered, sinister, moody, sullen, morose

# Chapters 14-15

## Summary

### Chapter 14

Will is searching through the emporium, trying to find his lost ferret. Instead, he stumbles upon The Owner. Will is surprised to find that The Owner isn't floating.

### Chapter 15

The Owner is in his room, unaware that Will is watching him. He's pleased that he has finally found the last suitcase, after 53 years of searching. His room is filled with various jars. Whenever The Owner shakes hands with people, he steals their Talents and stores them in his room.

## Analysis

### Chapter 14

This very short chapter serves to set up Will's future adventure. Will is spying on Mason (The Owner). Attention is drawn to the fact that Mason isn't using his Talent to float. This suggests that Mason had just stolen a Talent, since that's the only other time he's stopped levitating.

### Chapter 15

Mason has recently deposited a Talent, confirming that in the previous chapter he had stopped levitating because he had just taken someone's gift. This serves to foreshadow his future conflict with Cady and Zane, when he tries to steal their powers. Mason confirms that he has finally found the suitcase. This also gives the reader more clues into who Mason actually is, since at this point he's still simply labeled as the mysterious owner and not going by his true name. It makes sense that he would be Mason, since that's the only other character that has shown any interest in the suitcases.

## Discussion Question 1

What device does the Author use to indicate that Mason has stolen a Talent?

## Discussion Question 2

Why would Will be the perfect spy?

## Discussion Question 3

Discuss the foreshadowing in Chapter 15.

## Vocabulary

condensed, opaque, brusque, incoherent, lackadaisical, malnourished, fledgling

# Chapters 16-17

## Summary

### Chapter 16

Will continues to watch The Owner, unaware that what he has in his room are stolen Talents. Will sees that The Owner does have Will's mother's missing hairpin. This angers Will, who leaps into the room and steals the hairpin away from The Owner.

### Chapter 17

Toby returns home to see Cady. He enjoys the cake that she has made. She starts asking him questions, and he reveals that he used to travel. He almost tells her about Africa, but stops. He reveals to the readers that he went to Africa to get married and celebrate the birth of his child, but he once again implies something bad had happened. He wants to leave the emporium, but Cady seems very happy there, which is reason enough for Toby to stay.

## Analysis

### Chapter 16

Will spots the missing hairpin, which causes him to leap into action. Will steals the hairpin, ultimately deciding that he needs to hide. This sets off the chain of events that lead to Will finally getting to go on his grand adventure.

### Chapter 17

Toby's mysterious nature is hinted at again. He reveals to Cady that he used to travel, and he reveals to the reader that one of the places he traveled was Africa, where something life changing happened to him and his family. This will be expanded a few more times in Toby's section before finally being explained. Toby makes it clear that he has a good relationship with Cady, despite the fears that Cady has had in her previous chapters.

The cake is symbolic in that it represents Cady's attempt to connect with Toby. She is also using her Talent to create a cake that she know he will like. However, when he loves the cake, he is, in essence, telling her that he loves her, too.

## Discussion Question 1

How does Will finally get what he's been longing for?



## Discussion Question 2

Discuss Toby's character.

## Discussion Question 3

Discuss the symbolism of the cake that Cady baked for Toby.

## Vocabulary

evaporated, taut, miraculous, innervated, reactionary, scintillating

# Chapters 18-19

## Summary

### Chapter 18

The Owner starts searching through the newest suitcase that he has acquired. He doesn't care about Will bursting in and stealing back the hairpin; he just wants to search the suitcase. Unfortunately, it doesn't have what he is looking for, which is the peanut butter recipe from his mother.

### Chapter 19

Cady sees The Owner throwing the suitcase down the stairs, angrily. She curiously goes to investigate and discovers the recipe that The Owner was looking for. Cady takes it and decides that she's going to use it for her upcoming baking contest.

## Analysis

### Chapter 18

Mason finally reveals that the inheritance slip he received from his mother wasn't just a check. It was the recipe for the famous peanut butter that V had mentioned earlier in the book. Mason fails to find the recipe hidden away in the suitcase, throwing it aside in his anger and setting it up so Cady can discover the recipe.

This also makes a pointed statement about Talent. One cannot force it, try to steal or mimic someone else's Talent. It must be genuine and original to the owner. Mason is angry and impatient and overlooks his mother's recipe. But, Cady, who is simply curious, and open to her own Talent, is able to find it and use it. This reiterates both the themes of Talent, and that of Following One's Own Dreams.

### Chapter 19

Cady finds the recipe that Mason was searching for. This is what puts her on Mason's radar. Mason tries to go after her when he discovers that she has the same Talent that his mother had, setting up the final conflict that takes place at the convention center during the contest.

## Discussion Question 1

Why was Mason not able to find his mother's recipe?



## **Discussion Question 2**

What is the Author saying about Talent in Chapter 18?

## **Discussion Question 3**

Discuss Mason's character.

## **Vocabulary**

facile, bombastic, hodge podge, whimsical, mesmerizing

# Chapters 20-21

## Summary

### Chapter 20

Zane is going through the emporium, trying to find objects worth stealing so he can sell them at a pawn shop. He thinks his parents lost the letter in the chaos of the balloon crash, since they haven't mentioned it to him. He's hopeful that if he can get enough money to help pay for the apartment repairs they won't ship him away to boarding school.

### Chapter 21

Will escapes from The Owner's room, holding onto the precious hairpin that he has recovered. He decides he needs to hide, and he picks one of the rare suitcases to hide in. While hiding, he eventually drifts off to sleep.

## Analysis

### Chapter 20

Zane believes that his parents haven't seen the letter from the principal. This ends up being false, as Marigold discovers later on when she brings up the letter to her mother. Zane is shown to still be negatively affected by the label that the principal gave him: worthless. This demonstrates the theme of Labels and how devastating they can be. Zane wants to prove that he isn't worthless by raising money to help his parents fix the apartment. He believes that if he does this, he won't be sent to a new school.

### Chapter 21

Will runs away from Mason, unaware that Mason has no interest in chasing after him. Will hides in one of the rare suitcases, setting up his plot of being sent to New Jersey to begin his adventure.

## Discussion Question 1

What is Zane's ethical dilemma?

## Discussion Question 2

Why does Will hide in a suitcase?

## Discussion Question 3

What does Zane assume about the letter from school?

## Vocabulary

maladjusted, secreted, ferreted, chastised, embarrassed, smitten

# Chapters 22-23

## Summary

### Chapter 22

Marigold is getting ready to send a care package to her father, who is working out of state to help get money to pay for apartment repairs. She discovers the suitcase filled with Zane's stolen goods. She's upset and plans to ship it off with the care package as evidence of what Zane is doing. When the postwoman arrives, she accidentally hands over a different suitcase, the one where Will is hiding. Marigold discovers her mistake when she spots one of Will's shoes in the spot the suitcase has just been.

### Chapter 23

Will wakes up and discovers that he's being thrown around in a suitcase. The suitcase eventually opens and spills him out, and Will is happy to find that he's finally on an adventure.

## Analysis

### Chapter 22

Marigold finds out that Zane has been stealing. This adds to the animosity between the two. Marigold is already angry with Zane because he has a Talent and she doesn't. Marigold intends to tell their father about it, but she ultimately ends up picking the wrong suitcase. This is what causes Will to be shipped off and go on his grand adventure. This string of events sets into motion the Asher family discovering the truth about the hairpin.

### Chapter 23

This short chapter just serves to establish where Will is brought to, as well as his general mindset about this new adventure. Will is excited; unaware how worried his family will be that he has gone missing.

## Discussion Question 1

How did Will end up going on his 'big' adventure?

## Discussion Question 2

Why doesn't Marigold like Zane?

## Discussion Question 3

Why is Mr. Asher working out of state?

## Vocabulary

burgeoning, frolic, blatant, snobbery, prudent

# Chapters 24-25

## Summary

### Chapter 24

Miss Mallory is still saddened by the loss of Cady, the last orphan who had been in the orphanage. She hears a sudden disturbance and goes to investigate, discovering Will and his suitcase.

### Chapter 25

Mrs. Asher and Marigold are driving through the city, trying to find any sign of Will. Marigold is upset at herself, both for accidentally mailing Will, as well as having no Talent. Mrs. Asher tries to assure her that being without a Talent isn't bad, and it took years for her own Talent to develop.

## Analysis

### Chapter 24

This chapter is the first time the reader gets to see the character of Miss Mallory after the adoption. Miss Mallory is still upset that Cady is gone from her life. Given how mysterious Toby has been throughout the book, it's unclear whether or not he's a trustworthy character. Readers could be given the impression that Miss Mallory is going to have to rescue Cady and the two will become a family. This ultimately ends up not being the case, but Miss Mallory is still involved in Cady's life by the end of the book.

### Chapter 25

The theme of Following One's Dreams is revisited in this chapter. Marigold feels bad because she doesn't have a Talent, but her mother points out that it isn't necessarily a bad thing. If Marigold was Talented, that Talent would take over her life. She wouldn't be able to explore different things and find what she enjoys. Mrs. Asher implies that she misses this freedom, and she expands upon it in her next set of chapters.

## Discussion Question 1

Discuss the theme of Following One's Dreams in this chapter.

## Discussion Question 2

Compare and contrast Mrs. Asher's feelings about Talent, and Marigold's.

## Discussion Question 3

Discuss the character of Miss Mallory.

## Vocabulary

hybrid, conundrum, florid, futile, petulant

# Chapters 26-27

## Summary

### Chapter 26

Zane is upset that Marigold ratted him out. However, he keeps searching for things to steal, going through Toby's room. He doesn't find anything, but the reader discovers that Toby has a picture of Mrs. Asher's hairpin framed in his room.

### Chapter 27

Cady makes a small cake to bring to The Owner. At first he dismisses her, but when he has the cake he can taste the familiar peanut butter. He demands to know where she got the recipe. Cady shows him the recipe that she found, making him ecstatic.

## Analysis

### Chapter 26

This chapter continues to show how tense things are between Zane and Marigold. The two eventually get into a fight when Marigold returns after failing to find Will. The other thing that this chapter does is establish how important the hairpin is. This is a plot point that continues to be explored while Marigold and Mrs. Asher are searching for Will.

### Chapter 27

This chapter is one of the most important in the books, since it sets up the main conflict between Cady and Mason. Mason needs the recipe that Cady has. He soon discovers that it isn't just the recipe he needs, but Cady's talent as well to make it work. Mason starts to pursue Cady, leading to the final conflict towards the end of the book.

## Discussion Question 1

What important conclusion does Mason come to when he tastes Cady's cake?

## Discussion Question 2

Why is Cady suddenly very important to Mason?

## Discussion Question 3

Why are Zane and Marigold upset with each other?



## Vocabulary

communicative, absentee, duly, morph, festivities, livid



# Chapters 28-29

## Summary

### Chapter 28

Will starts his adventure, but he's disappointed that he hasn't found anything exciting. He spots what he thinks is a giant, which turns out to be the mysterious merchant. The merchant offers to take Will into the city, promising him a grand adventure.

### Chapter 29

The Owner is still delighted to have found the recipe. He thinks to himself that he'll no longer be a disappointment in the eyes of his father.

## Analysis

### Chapter 28

The mysterious merchant shows up once again. He continues to act as a guide for the characters. He brings Will to the museum, which causes Marigold and Mrs. Asher to try and find him there. While they fail to find Will, they learn more about the hairpin.

### Chapter 29

This short chapter just serves to give more motivation to Mason. Part of why he wants to be so successful is because of the negative things that his father has said to him in the past. This brings up a parallel between Zane and Mason. Both of them are acting out because of the labels that were put on them by other people, again showing the theme of Labels. Unlike Zane, Mason doesn't have anyone in his life to tell him that he isn't worthless, which is why Mason keeps stealing while Zane eventually stops.

## Discussion Question 1

What is Mason's motivation for wanting to recreate the peanut butter recipe?

## Discussion Question 2

Discuss the theme of Labels.

## Discussion Question 3

Compare Zane to Mason.

## Vocabulary

scrawl, fortitude, thrall, antecedent, prim



# Chapters 30-31

## Summary

### Chapter 30

Zane continues to steal from the emporium. He sneaks into The Owner's room and feels compelled to start taking the seemingly empty jars, not knowing they actually contain other people's Talents.

### Chapter 31

In this short chapter, the mystery merchant brings Will to the Museum of Natural Sciences, promising him a grand adventure.

## Analysis

### Chapter 30

Zane steals the collection of Talents that Mason has kept for himself. This chapter foreshadows their eventual conflict later on, where Zane is able to use all of the Talents as a distraction to keep Mason away from him.

The theme of Labels is continued in this chapter as the reader sees Zane still very willing to steal in order to prove that he isn't deserving of the 'worthless' label that his principal has given him. Additionally, while Zane doesn't know that the jars contain stolen Talents, the author is making a point about taking someone's work and talent and claiming it as one's own.

### Chapter 31

The merchant continues to set up events in the story. By bringing Will into the Museum of Natural Sciences, he ensures that Marigold and Mrs. Asher make their way into the museum. While they're at the museum, they learn more about the hairpin, and also bring home the book V eventually uses to find out more about Caroline.

## Discussion Question 1

Why does Zane still continue stealing items from the emporium?

## Discussion Question 2

Discuss the theme of Labels.

## Discussion Question 3

How does the mysterious merchant intervene so that Will is eventually discovered by his mother and Marigold?

## Vocabulary

aloft, buoyant, deciduous, studiously, gnarled, flummoxed



# Chapters 32-33

## Summary

### Chapter 32

The Owner keeps trying to make the recipe, but each time the peanut butter comes out wrong. He becomes frustrated, realizing that his mother must have had a Talent to create the peanut butter originally.

### Chapter 33

Marigold and her mother continue to search for Will. A guard at the museum says he was there earlier, but doesn't know where he has gone to. They find the hairpin that he had been carrying. To their surprise, there's a banner advertising that the hairpiece has been missing for more than 50 years.

## Analysis

### Chapter 32

Throughout the book it had been hinted at that Cady likely possessed some type of Talent for cooking, since she has always able to make the perfect cake for someone. This chapter officially confirms that Cady is talented, just like Mason's mother used to be. Mason is determined to steal her gift, so he can finally make the perfect peanut butter.

### Chapter 33

The importance of the hairpin is brought up once again. Marigold and her mother discover that there's an exhibit dedicated to the hairpin. Readers now realize that the reason the mysterious merchant brought Will to the museum was so the rest of the Asher family would end up there and see the exhibit.

The hairpin represents something hidden and precious, though the family is not aware of that as of yet (nor is the reader). However, the significance of the hairpin has, at this point, been mentioned several times.

## Discussion Question 1

What does Mrs. Asher find out about her old hairpin?



## Discussion Question 2

What does Mason decide must be true about Cady?

## Discussion Question 3

Discuss the symbolism of the hairpin and what it might potentially mean after their discovery at the museum.

## Vocabulary

tentative, putrid, heir, stupendous, curator, annex

# Chapters 34-35

## Summary

### Chapter 34

The Owner demands to know where Cady is. Toby insists that he won't let The Owner take Cady's talent. He's again reminded of an event that happened in Africa. The Owner insists that they could be rich together, but Toby doesn't care and vows that he will protect Cady.

### Chapter 35

Marigold picks up a book that explains what the hairpin is. She discovers that it was actually a bone from a fossil, which supposedly belonged to the oldest and largest bird. Mrs. Asher had picked it up when she was still Talentless and had volunteered at an archeological dig in Africa. She was pregnant at the time and had to leave the dig early. She went for one last dig and took the bone as a souvenir. Marigold is upset because she sees this as stealing, just like Zane. She talks about the letter, and Mrs. Asher admits that she has read it, but she didn't know what to do yet about Zane.

## Analysis

### Chapter 34

Toby's mysterious past is brought up again. He doesn't want to fail Cady like he failed someone in the past. Ironically, the person that he failed in the past was also Cady. This shows that, despite keeping secrets, Toby is still a trustworthy character and he has Cady's best interests at heart. He refuses to give up on Cady, even when Mason tries to bribe him.

### Chapter 35

The importance of the hairpin is finally explained, letting the reader know why so many people seem to be interested in it. Mrs. Asher had no idea it was a valuable item. She tells Marigold the story about how she acquired it. This story sets up some of the other events in the story, since the reader later learns that it was Mrs. Asher who was given the baby Cady. The story also demonstrates the theme of Following One's Dreams, as well as the theme of Talents. Mrs. Asher was able to find the piece of the fossil all on her own, even though she wasn't Talented as an archaeologist. She was only there in the first place because she was Fair, and thus had the opportunity to do what she was interested in, instead of being forced into a profession just because that's what her Talent dictated.





## **Discussion Question 1**

How might having a defined Talent be limiting?

## **Discussion Question 2**

Discuss the theme of Following One's Dreams.

## **Discussion Question 3**

Discuss the new information about the hairpin and why it is so important to Mrs. Asher.

## **Vocabulary**

waif, delirious, anxiety, blasphemous, ridiculed, facsimile

# Chapters 36-37

## Summary

### Chapter 36

V sees Toby become excited when he spots Marigold's book from the museum. V identifies the hairpin that is on the cover. Toby starts to pack up a truck, intending to leave the emporium with Cady.

### Chapter 37

Cady and Toby are getting ready to leave when they hear a strange noise in the back, as though someone were getting in the truck. Toby doesn't seem concerned, assuming it is a small animal making noise.

## Analysis

### Chapter 36

Toby getting excited about the picture seems like a minor detail, since it isn't ever really brought up again. Readers later discover that Toby was interested in the picture because it contained pictures of his family. V is able to identify the hairpin on the cover, hinting at a connection between her and the Asher family, since the reader now knows that Mrs. Asher discovered the hairpin in Africa.

### Chapter 37

Toby and Cady are unaware that V has gotten into the truck with them, since she doesn't trust Toby and wants to make sure that Cady is kept safe. This comes up later when it explains how V was able to get to the convention center and come to Cady's defense when Mason attacks.

## Discussion Question 1

What are the possible connections between V, Mrs. Asher, Cady, and Toby?

## Discussion Question 2

What does it indicate about Toby that he is willing to take Cady away from the emporium?

## Discussion Question 3

Why does V stow away on the truck?

## Vocabulary

passive, retroactive, missive, aloft, cagey, dumbfounded



# Chapters 38-39

## Summary

### Chapter 38

The Owner is furious when he discovers that Cady and Toby have left. He is determined to get her Talent. He gets a call from Miss Mallory, asking if Cady and Toby have left for the convention center where the baking contest is taking place. Mason tells her that they have, and he, too, makes for the same convention center, intent on finding Cady.

### Chapter 39

Will continues his adventure, stumbling onto the train station. He sneaks on board, still excited to be going on an adventure, even though he is starting to feel like he is lost for the first time.

## Analysis

### Chapter 38

This chapter serves to set up how Mason is able to figure out where Toby and Cady are going. It also reintroduces the character of Miss Mallory, who has been absent for several chapters.

### Chapter 39

Will continues to follow his dreams, demonstrating the theme of Following One's Dreams. Of all of the characters, with the exception of Cady, he's one of the only characters that seems to enjoy the Talent that he has. He's starting to feel like he's become lost, though, and finally realizes how serious it is that he has left home. Up until now, he hasn't given it too much thought, and just assumed that he would eventually be able to get home.

## Discussion Question 1

Compare Will to his mother, Mrs. Asher as far as Talents and their appreciation of them.

## Discussion Question 2

Why is Toby taking Cady to the convention center?

## Discussion Question 3

Discuss the theme of Following One's Dreams.

## Vocabulary

imbecile, moronic, capsize, belligerent, condolence, fallacy, indifferent

# Chapters 40-41

## Summary

### Chapter 40

Cady and Toby arrive at the convention center. Cady is upset that Miss Mallory isn't there yet. She wants her to show up so she can declare the adoption with Toby official.

### Chapter 41

Marigold is outside, practicing a variety of different Talents. Zane shows up and she confronts him about the theft. She becomes upset when he insults her, and ends up pushing him into the road, right into oncoming traffic.

## Analysis

### Chapter 40

Cady once again expresses that her relationship with Toby is going well. She believes that Toby can finally be the father that she has been searching for. Cady is afraid because she's worried that Miss Mallory won't show up to make it official.

### Chapter 41

Marigold and Zane start to fight, causing the chapter to end on a cliffhanger, implying that Zane might have been killed. Zane ultimately survives the crash, running into the car being driven by Mason. This slows Mason down and keeps him from being able to reach Cady and steal her Talent. It also gives Marigold and Zane a reason to get to the convention center.

## Discussion Question 1

Why is Cady worried about Miss Mallory not making it to the convention center?

## Discussion Question 2

How does Cady feel about Toby?

## Discussion Question 3

Why do Marigold and Zane fight?

## Vocabulary

churned, gallant, hazardous, justified, nonchalant

# Chapters 42-43

## Summary

### Chapter 42

V isn't sure why she decided to sneak onto the truck. There was something about Toby she didn't trust. She thought about her daughter, Caroline, who was taken away from her by a deceptive man. She felt a similar connection to the picture that she took from Marigold's book.

### Chapter 43

Mrs. Asher is still driving, trying to find Will. Instead, she finds his ferret, Sally. Finding Sally gives Mrs. Asher an idea, and she speeds off.

## Analysis

### Chapter 42

In this chapter, the theme of Grief is demonstrated by V's memory of her daughter, Caroline. She has spent decades mourning the loss of her daughter, and she is determined that she is going to protect Cady, who reminds her of her daughter so much. The author has given the reader enough clues at this point that an assumption might be made about V's daughter and her relationship to Cady, as well as Caroline.

### Chapter 43

Mrs. Asher discovers Sally, who is also looking for Will. Thanks to Sally, Mrs. Asher is finally able to get a new clue for finding Will, which eventually leads her to the train station.

## Discussion Question 1

Discuss the theme of Grief as it applies to V.

## Discussion Question 2

What was V's motivation for stowing away in the back of the truck?

## Discussion Question 3

What role does Sally play in Chapter 43?



## Vocabulary

bestow, spied, courageously, doubted, predisposed, muffled

# Chapters 44-45

## Summary

### Chapter 44

Zane gets hit by a car, driven by The Owner. The Owner stops and screams at them. Zane's suitcases are tossed aside, releasing all of the stolen items he has taken. The Owner is furious and starts to blindly throw things, accidentally hitting Marigold. Zane becomes angry and lashes out at him, but The Owner acts first and uses his ability to steal Zane's Talent.

### Chapter 45

Cady searches through the crowd, trying to find some hint of Miss Mallory. One of the cooks asks her what she's going to make. Cady likes to see the judge first to feel what the right cake might be. She's surprised to learn that there are going to be five different judges this year, and she isn't sure what she is going to make.

## Analysis

### Chapter 44

Despite being mad at one another, Zane shows that he still cares a great deal about Marigold. When Mason (The Owner) accidentally hurts her, Zane summons up the strength to try and fight Mason, even though he has just been hit by a car. Mason is easily able to overpower the injured Zane, and the chapter ends on a cliffhanger.

### Chapter 45

Cady finally discovers that the judging is going to work differently this year. This is something that Miss Mallory originally tried to warn Cady about at the start of the book, but she never got the chance. This is a problem for Cady, since she's only ever cooked for one person before. She knows the perfect cake to make for individuals, but she doesn't know how to make something that is going to please everyone. On top of that, Cady is still nervous because she hasn't been able to find Miss Mallory so she can officially declare Toby her new father.

## Discussion Question 1

Why is Cady upset that Miss Mallory hasn't shown up?

## **Discussion Question 2**

What is going to make this years' baking contest more difficult for Cady?

## **Discussion Question 3**

What indicates that Zane still very much cares for his sister, Marigold?

## **Vocabulary**

ingenious, diligent, effervescent, knowledgeable

# Chapters 46-47

## Summary

### Chapter 46

Marigold attacks The Owner, interrupting him while he's trying to steal Zane's Talent. She ends up receiving Mason's Talent instead. Zane and Marigold want to go to the police, but they have no idea how to get there. A hot air balloon suddenly appears, piloted by the mysterious merchant, who offers them a ride.

### Chapter 47

Toby is nervously watching at the convention center. He keeps checking his watch, wanting the event to be over with. He keeps saying to himself that he doesn't want anyone figuring out the truth.

## Analysis

### Chapter 46

Marigold is finally able to get a Talent of her own by interrupting Mason when he was trying to take away Zane's. Marigold jumping to Zane's defense shows that she cares about her brother, just like Zane had shown when he had attacked Mason for hurting Marigold. The mysterious merchant shows up again, rescuing both Zane and Marigold. He ends up taking them to the convention center, once again arranging it so all of the characters are able to get together.

### Chapter 47

This short chapter once again brings up Toby's difficult past. This is one of the themes of the book: Grief. The author is suggesting that when people can't properly mourn, their grief can consume them. Toby has done a good job showing the theme. He's still affected by what happened to him in Africa, but he isn't letting that completely control his life. This is in direct comparison to V, who seems consumed by her lost daughter. Toby is at least trying to start a new family, and he wants to get away so he and Cady can begin a new life together, away from the dangerous Mason.

## Discussion Question 1

How has resolution come to Marigold from the beginning of the novel?



## Discussion Question 2

Discuss the theme of Grief as applied to both V and Toby.

## Discussion Question 3

What role does the mysterious merchant play in these chapters?

## Vocabulary

insufficient, lurid, normalcy, tepid, undulated, vied



# Chapters 48-49

## Summary

### Chapter 48

Marigold and Zane travel with the mysterious merchant. He speaks to Zane and asks why he was stealing items from the emporium. Zane explains what happened with the apartment. The merchant in kind tells Zane that he only crashed because Zane spit out the window and happened to hit him, causing that crash. He assures Zane that it was an accident, and that Zane shouldn't feel responsible. He also adds that Zane's principal was fired, and he believes Zane will have a good school year after the summer. Zane is surprised, but before he can ask about it, the merchant announces they have arrived at the convention center. He tells the children they might be needed below.

### Chapter 49

Miss Mallory is trying to get into the convention center, but she doesn't have her ticket. She feels a strange tug, and offers the chef a ceramic bird that she has found. The chef is touched, since the bird reminds her of one that her grandmother used to have. She lets Miss Mallory in. She feels that familiar tug when she sees Toby, and she knows that Cady is meant to be with him.

## Analysis

### Chapter 48

The mysterious merchant covers two different themes when he talks to Zane. The first one that he addresses is Labels and how devastating they can be. The merchant thinks it was unfair of the principal to call Zane worthless, and he assures Zane that the principal was wrong. He also touches on the theme of Grief. He lets Zane know that it's okay that he made mistakes with his life. The important thing is that Zane learns to move on from what he did.

The merchant continues to be an all knowing force in the world, since Zane has never told him about what happened at school. The merchant is also guiding the two characters so they can get to the convention center to help Cady fight off Mason, who wants to steal her powers.

### Chapter 49

The nature of Miss Mallory's talent is explored in a little more detail. Before, she thought her Talent was strictly to help orphans find the correct parents. It turns out that she has the ability to pair anyone with anything, which is how she was able to convince the chef

standing guard to let her in. This is mentioned again towards the end of the book, when Miss Mallory goes into business with Toby and Cady, using her Talent to pair the perfect items with their customers.

## **Discussion Question 1**

How is Zane's conflict resolved?

## **Discussion Question 2**

What does the reader learn about Miss Mallory's Talent?

## **Discussion Question 3**

Discuss the theme of Grief as it relates to Zane.

## **Vocabulary**

fortitude, ballistic, amid, allotment, stymied

# Chapters 50-51

## Summary

### Chapter 50

Mrs. Asher finally finds Will at the train station. Will explains that he was looking for his ferret, Sally. He says that Sally was too important for him to lose. Mrs. Asher softens and understands what Will means. She decides to take Will to the convention center so they can watch Cady's performance.

### Chapter 51

The Owner forces his way into the convention. The chef at the door tries to stop him, but he's able to push by her.

## Analysis

### Chapter 50

Will is finally reunited with his mother. At first she is upset, but she understands where he is coming from when he talks about just trying to find his ferret. She is likely thinking about her last night in Africa, where she wanted to find something that was important to her, and took the bone.

### Chapter 51

This very short chapter simply serves to show that Mason has arrived, and after his encounter with Marigold and Zane, he's lacking in patience and willing to be more forceful than usual.

## Discussion Question 1

Why had Will returned to the train station?

## Discussion Question 2

Why does Mrs. Asher refrain from being too upset with Will?

## Discussion Question 3

What does Mason's actions at the convention center suggest about what he's willing to do?



## Vocabulary

clarity, debris, fragile, heartfelt, opulent

# Chapters 52-53

## Summary

### Chapter 52

Marigold and Zane sneak into the convention center. Marigold spots The Owner trying to close in on Cady. Someone drops a book on Zane's foot. He's surprised to see that on the cover is V, now identified as Victoria Valence. V sees that Cady is in trouble and gets ready to pull the fire alarm.

### Chapter 53

V is getting ready to pull the alarm. She meant to do it because of Toby, but now she is doing it because of The Owner (Mason). She thinks about the photo she took, and realizes that it was truly Caroline in the picture.

## Analysis

### Chapter 52

V is finally identified as Victoria. Her book had been mentioned a few times in the story, most notably by Cady back in the beginning of the book when she was talking about other chefs. While this is going on, Mason is moving to attack Cady, but it's clear that V is trying to defend her.

### Chapter 53

The most important revaluation in this short chapter is that the person in the picture was V's lost daughter, Caroline. This is explored in a little more detail in Toby's chapter, when he figures out how they are all connected. This also helps to explain why V has been so distrustful of Toby, since he was the same person that ran off with her daughter years ago, though V doesn't realize it until the end of this chapter.

## Discussion Question 1

Who is V, really?

## Discussion Question 2

Why does V stand up for Cady at the convention center?

## Discussion Question 3

What is the significance of the book that was dropped on Zane's foot?

## Vocabulary

perturbed, isolated, muddied, qualification, dubious

# Chapters 54-55

## Summary

### Chapter 54

Cady is upset because she has made a horrible cake. She tries to make one that she would like, but she never baked for herself before. She's ready to give up, but she stumbles upon the picture that V has been carrying. She recognizes the young child in the picture, knowing that it was her as a baby. Before she has time to figure out what that means, she's attacked by The Owner.

### Chapter 55

Toby speaks with Miss Mallory. He tells her that he can't stand the thought of losing Cady. He thinks back to his time in Africa, revealing that after he lost his wife he gave his child away to Mrs. Asher, who took her to an orphanage. Little did he know, his daughter, Cora, grew up to be Cady. Miss Mallory assures him that he's the perfect fit for Cady. He sees The Owner attacking. He calls out for The Owner to stop, calling him, shockingly, 'father'.

## Analysis

### Chapter 54

Cady realizes that she's never been able to focus on herself. This is a big part of her character, since she's always been focused on pleasing others, never thinking about what she needs or wants. Cady stumbles onto the picture that V has been holding, realizing that she is the baby in the picture. This leads to her and Toby soon figuring out that they were always a family all along.

### Chapter 55

Everything about Toby's history is finally revealed. Toby's character once again brings up the theme of Grief. Toby made a mistake with his last family, but he's been working hard to make things work with his new family that he has with Cady. Of course, he now learns that Cady has always been his daughter. It's also explained that Mrs. Asher was the one who took young Cady to an orphanage, after being given her by Toby years ago in Africa.

## Discussion Question 1

Discuss the theme of Grief as it applies to Toby.



## **Discussion Question 2**

Why does finding V's picture of a baby change things for Cady?

## **Discussion Question 3**

How have Cady and Toby been a family all along?

## **Vocabulary**

fickle, aggressive, sullenly, vehement, terse



# Chapters 56-57

## Summary

### Chapter 56

The alarm is pulled, but Zane can see that The Owner is about to steal Cady's power. He tries to reach her, but he's still too far away. He pleads with Marigold, asking her to use her stolen Talent to stop The Owner.

### Chapter 57

Marigold uses her new Talent, 'spitting', to spit on The Owner's hand, which knocks a pebble free. The reader learns that he has been using it to steal Talents. The pebble begins to melt because of the sprinklers, shattering The Owner's dreams.

## Analysis

### Chapter 56

This chapter continues to set up the conflict between Mason and Cady. Zane knows that the fire alarm isn't going to be enough to stop Mason, so he pleads with Marigold to use the new Talent she acquired to stop him.

### Chapter 57

V and Marigold end up working together to stop Mason. Marigold stops him from stealing the power, knocking the item that he uses for the theft out of his hand. V pulls the alarm causing the water to destroy the item, completely stopping Mason from ever stealing someone else's Talent again. Cady is still stripped of her power, which is addressed in the epilogue.

## Discussion Question 1

What happens to Cady in these two chapters?

## Discussion Question 2

How does Marigold help save Cady?

## Discussion Question 3

What has the pebble allowed Mason to do throughout the novel?

## Vocabulary

bewildered, accosted, chided, bemused, allowable



# Chapters 58-59

## Summary

### Chapter 58

Toby rushes forward to help Cady. The water seems to be having an effect on him, washing away a disguise. Cady recognizes him as the man from V's photo, her father. He apologizes to her, but she insists that she isn't mad and she just wants to go home with him.

### Chapter 59

Will and Mrs. Asher finally arrive in the convention center, just as all the chaos is happening. One of the chefs offer Will a piece of cake, and Will accepts, declaring it the perfect ending to the adventure that he always wanted.

## Analysis

### Chapter 58

Toby confesses everything to Cady. He continues to show that he isn't going to let his grief consume him. After this chapter, Toby doesn't bother with a disguise, because he's finally comfortable with who he is, completely letting go of his past grief.

### Chapter 59

This chapter very briefly touches on Will's adventure and how he had been following his dreams. Will is one of the few characters to have been happy throughout the majority of the book, because he was able to do what he wanted.

## Discussion Question 1

How is Will's conflict resolved?

## Discussion Question 2

How is Cady's conflict resolved?

## Discussion Question 3

What is the significance of the water washing away Toby's disguise?



## Vocabulary

disguise, astonished, overwhelmed, guile, contrite

# Epilogue

## Summary

The Epilogue takes place a month after the last chapter. Back then, Cady had lost her Talent, but she still continues to bake. Toby has inherited the emporium and turned the business around. He is working with Miss Mallory, who uses her talent to match things to people, helping customers have the right experience. Cady is able to cook the famous peanut butter and they begin selling that. The Ashers decide to stay, along with V. Mrs. Asher publishes a paper about how she found the hairpin, which is actually a piece of the fossil. Mrs. Asher and Zane have a long talk and she now understands why Zane has been acting out. She tells him that he is not worthless and that they are proud of him.

## Analysis

Cady losing her Talents and still baking is an example of not needing a Talent in order to be successful. It also shows that she's following her dreams. Cady had never simply cooked because she was Talented, but because she was genuinely interested in it. She's doing what she wants and isn't hung up on the labels, like Talent or Fair.

All of the characters are reunited at the end of the book. Toby has released his grief, and now he has started a new family with Miss Mallory and Cady. The Ashers have gotten over their problems. Zane is going to be attending school, and has stopped stealing. He no longer feels worthless. Mrs. Asher is pursuing something that interests her by writing about her archaeological experience, even though that isn't her Talent. Marigold is happy as well, because she has a talent. Like her mother, she now has the opportunity to pursue what interests her. The theme of Communication is very briefly hinted at as well, with V still continuing to play the oboe as a way of expressing herself.

## Discussion Question 1

What is the Author's purpose in writing this story?

## Discussion Question 2

Discuss the theme of Following One's Own Dreams.

## Discussion Question 3

How has everyone's conflict been resolved by the end of the story?

## Vocabulary

gladsome, gorgeous, aligned, bravado, vowed, protective, overcome, paraded



# Characters

## Mason Burgess/The Owner

Mason is first introduced in the beginning of the book. He's just turned 18 and inherited a fortune from his mother, which is eventually revealed to be a peanut butter recipe. After his inheritance is stolen from him, Mason becomes a very bitter and angry man.

He doesn't care about the tenants living with him, only keeping them around because he needs their money. Mason shows little concern when the children are put in danger, and he's more than willing to steal their Talents if it means furthering his own goals.

Mason also displays little care for his own son, Toby, whom he barely even seems to acknowledge. Mason is also known as The Owner of the emporium.

## Cady

Cady is a young orphan with the incredible ability to bake the perfect cake for any person. This is later revealed to be a unique Talent that Cady has, since she's able to make Mason's mother's peanut butter.

Cady feels neglected because none of the potential families have ever wanted to take her in. She's very eager to please other people, and has a hard time thinking about what she actually wants. Cady is revealed at the end of the book to be the biological daughter of Toby. She is also very close to Miss Mallory, the director of the orphanage.

## Miss Mallory

Miss Mallory is the owner of the orphanage where Cady is staying. Miss Mallory has a very close bond to Cady because of the extended time that Cady has spent with her. Miss Mallory possesses the Talent to pair children up with the perfect parents.

This Talent is later revealed to apply to any type of pairing, not just orphans and parents. Miss Mallory spends most of the book looking out for Cady and trying to attend her baking competition. At the end of the book, Miss Mallory lives with Toby and Cady in the Emporium. The nature of her relationship is never fully explored, but it's hinted that she and Toby are in a relationship.

## Marigold Asher

Marigold is the middle child of the Asher family. She starts off very upset at the start of the book because she doesn't have a Talent. She's obsessed with finding out what her Talent is, constantly trying out a new set of skills every day.



Marigold has a very strong sense of morality. She pushes for her mother and for her older brother to do the right thing. She's very upset when she discovers that Zane has been stealing. During the book it's mentioned many times that Marigold and Cady are friends, although the two characters barely interact during the course of the story. Marigold eventually ends up inheriting Zane's Talent when she stops Mason from stealing it.

## **Will Asher**

Will is the youngest member of the Asher family. He has the Talent for disappearing. Will is still very much a child. He's very naïve about the world, and doesn't seem to understand the consequences of his actions. Will spends most of the book wanting to go on an adventure. When he gets separated from his family, he treats it like he's a knight going on a grand quest.

## **Zane Asher**

Zane is the oldest child in the Asher family. Zane has a very rebellious attitude. He's having trouble in school because he was caught skipping class, and his grades aren't great. The principal called him worthless and recommended that Zane switch schools.

This has a profound effect on Zane, who wants to prove to his parents that he isn't worthless. Zane starts to steal because he wants to raise money for them to pay for the damages to the apartment. Despite his loner nature, he's shown to be very protective of his family, leaping to Marigold's defense when Mason throws something at her.

## **Victoria Valence/ "v"**

V is an old lady that has suffered from a stroke, making it so she's unable to communicate. She's found in the woods during the early parts of the book. She's taken in by the Asher family. V's deceased daughter, Caroline, was married to Toby.

V eventually discovers at the end of the book that Cady is her granddaughter, which explains why she felt so protective of her during the story. In her youth, V was a famous chef, and many characters are shown to be reading her book during the story. This is how Zane is eventually able to identify her.

## **Mrs. Asher**

Mrs. Asher is the mother to Marigold, Zane, and Will. Like Marigold, Mrs. Asher didn't have a talent as a child. It wasn't until she turned 27 when she finally got a Talent. Mrs. Asher has mixed feelings about having a Talent. She enjoyed the freedom that came with being Fair, since it meant that she got to experiment and try out a number of different jobs.

It's revealed during the story that Mrs. Asher used to be an archeologist. She found a small piece of a fossil, which she used as a hairpin. The scientific community has been searching for that fossil for years, as Mrs. Asher eventually discovers when she's looking for Will.

## **Toby**

Toby is the son of Mason, although that isn't revealed until the end of the book. Toby was previously married to Caroline. The two of them had a child together, but when Caroline passed away, Toby gave up the child because he was afraid that he couldn't care for her. Toby always felt guilty about abandoning his child, which is why he decided to adopt Cady. Because of his guilt, Toby wears a disguise. Once he comes clean to Cady, he gets rid of the disguise.

## **Mysterious Merchant**

The Mysterious Merchant is a character that frequently appears in the story and helps to move the plot forward. He never introduces himself by name, simply saying that he sells odds and ends, most notably knots. The merchant is very knowledgeable about everything that's going on in the books. He knows who all of the characters are, and where those characters need to go. He shows up to act as a guide, namely in getting all of the characters to the convention center to help Cady.

# **Symbols and Symbolism**

## **Expensive Suitcase**

Mason starts off the book carrying a rare and expensive powder blue suitcase, which has the inheritance slip from his mother. When he loses the suitcase he becomes desperate and spends the rest of his life searching for it. To him, the suitcase represents his hope for the future.

## **Inheritance slip/Peanut Butter**

Besides the wealth, one of the reasons that Mason wants to get the slip back is because his father always thought of him as a failure. Mason believes that if he can get the slip and make the famous peanut butter, he'll be able to show his father that he was wrong about him.

## **"Talented" and "Fair"**

When someone is Talented, it means they have an ability they are born with that they are naturally perfect with. People who are Fair don't have any sort of Talent. Being Talented essentially determines what someone does with their life. Marigold frets that she doesn't have a talent, but her mother doesn't think it's that bad. She remembers when she was Fair and all the different things she was able to do. To her, being Fair represented freedom, since she was able to choose what she wanted to do with her life, and wasn't just born into something.

## **Foggy Weather**

Whenever something major is about to happen in the book, it's preceded by foggy weather. The day of Cady's adoption, the weather is foggy, just like the night when Cady was found in the first place. When the mysterious merchant crashes into the apartment building, the weather was foggy. When Will is going on his adventure, the weather is foggy, just like during the baking contest. The fog is symbolic of big changes for the characters.

## **Red Bracelet**

Marigold wears a red bracelet during the book. The bracelet is supposedly meant to bring out people's Talents. This shows Marigold's desire to find out what her Talent is so she can feel like she fits in with the world.



## **V's locket**

V's locket used to contain a picture of her daughter, Caroline. V still carries the locket around, even though the picture has been gone for years. To her, it's the last connection she has to her daughter.

## **Hairpin/Fossil piece**

Mrs. Asher originally took the fossil piece because it was her last day as an archeologist. She wanted something to remember the experience by, so she took the fossil and used it as a hairpin. She held onto it because it reminded her of a time when she was Fair, and all of the things she got to experience because her fate wasn't determined by her Talent.

## **Cady's Cakes**

Whenever Cady makes a cake, she's always making it for someone else. She wants to make them the perfect cake because she wants to be accepted. She always hopes that if she can make people happy, they'll let her into their lives.

## **Principal's Letter**

The letter from the principal was written after Zane got from trouble. It recommends that he goes to a different school next year. Zane constantly thinks about the letter, remembering how the principal said that he was worthless. To Zane, the letter is a constant reminder of all the times that he screwed up.

## **Oboe**

When V is first introduced to Marigold, she's trying to play the oboe to see if that's her Talent. It isn't, but she offers it to V, who cannot speak. V takes to the oboe because to her it is a way for her to communicate to the world, even though she isn't capable of speaking because of her stroke.

## **Magic Pebble**

Though the reader isn't told how Mason obtained the pebble, it is mentioned that this pebble is what allows him to steal and store other people's Talents.



# Settings

## Mississippi Train Station

The prologue chapter takes place in a Mississippi train station. Mason had just gotten the inheritance slip and is going to New York to start his life over. While he's at the station, his luggage is lost, which contained the all-important inheritance slip.

## Home for Lost Girls

The Home for Lost Girls is run by Miss Mallory. This is where Cady lives in the beginning of the book, before she's taken in by Toby. It is located in Poughkeepsie, New York.

## New York Apartment

The Asher's live in a simple apartment building at the start of the book. After the apartment is damaged in an accident, they're forced to move into the Emporium.

## The Emporium of Lost Luggage

The Emporium is owned by Mason, and later by Toby. The majority of the main characters end up spending their time living in the Emporium. The Emporium is where Mason discovers that Cady has the recipe that he was searching for.

## Convention Center

The Convention Center is where the baking contest takes place. It's also where Mason tries to confront Cady and steal her Talent so he can make the perfect peanut butter.

## Museum

The mystery merchant brings Will to the museum when he's on his adventure. Marigold and her mother try to find him there, but it was too late. What they do discover is a display showing Mrs. Asher's hairpin, which is the missing piece of a fossil.

# Themes and Motifs

## You Don't Need Talents to be Special

This theme is prominently shown through the Asher family. At the very start of the book, Marigold is stressed because she doesn't have a Talent. She's afraid that she isn't special because she wasn't born with a natural gift, while both of her brothers displayed their Talent at a young age. Marigold spends most of the book trying to learn what her Talent is, each day trying dozens of different activities. She practices on her oboe not because she likes it, but because she hopes it might end up leading to her Talent.

Marigold's mother assures Marigold that she doesn't need a Talent to be appreciated. Marigold's mother didn't get her Talent until she was almost 30. She looks back on those times fondly, because she enjoyed the freedom that came with not having a Talent. Even though she lacked any Talent in archeology, she was the one that discovered the final piece of the lost bird fossil.

Cady shows this theme at the end of the book as well. During the early parts of the book, Cady is shown to be a good cook because of her Talent. She's able to replicate the peanut butter recipe when Mason failed. Cady loses her talent when Mason attacks. Despite that, she's still an excellent cook at the end of the book, and she can still make the rare peanut butter.

## Non-verbal Communication

This theme is first brought up through the character of V. From the moment that she is discovered, V is unable to communicate. She suffered from a stroke previously in her life, and as a result she isn't able to speak. When Mrs. Asher brings V home, Marigold still finds a way to communicate with her. She can see that V is frustrated with her situation, so she offers V the oboe that she was practicing on. V is able to play the instrument, and continues to play it throughout the book. For her, this is a way to communicate with the rest of the world.

The theme is shown once again through Cady's character. Unlike V, Cady is capable of speaking. Cady very rarely says what's on her mind. She's terrified that she isn't a good child, and that's why none of the families ever want to adopt her. Cady is always on her best behavior, using these nonverbal cues to show her potential families how hard she is working to try and please them, and that she can be a good daughter. She also uses her cakes as a way to express these feelings. She always makes the perfect cake for whoever she's cooking for, which is her way of asking them for approval, and always a way of showing that she cares about people.

Zane is another character that communicates nonverbally. Zane wants to tell his family that he's sorry for the way that he acted, as well as proving that he isn't worthless. He doesn't ever try to talk to anyone about it, but instead he lets his actions speak for him.



He tries to make money for his family, hoping that his gift will say what his words can't. Despite being verbally rude to Marigold, he shows how much she means to him when he leaps to her defense against Mason, even after just being hit by a car.

## Following One's Dreams

This theme is initially shown through the character of Will. At the start of the story, Will is craving an adventure. Will's family is very protective of him because of his Talent, being able to disappear. They try to keep Will in sight at all times because they are afraid of losing him. Will feels sheltered, so when he gets the chance for an adventure he immediately leaps at it. If Will was given more freedom and opportunities to explore he might not have been so reckless when he ended up in New Jersey.

The theme is demonstrated with the Asher family as well. Mrs. Asher reveals her past to Marigold, how she used to be able to pursue a number of different studies before she found her Talent. She enjoyed the freedom that she has, and says multiple times that it isn't necessarily a bad thing to be Talented. Now that she is Talented, Mrs. Asher feels like she can never pursue those old interests of her. Meanwhile, Marigold has so many opportunities to do what she wants.

The theme is demonstrated in a different way with Cady. Mrs. Asher feels like it's hard to follow your dreams with a Talent, but Cady shows that it's possible. Cady has a talent for baking, but that isn't the reason that she cooks. Cady cooks because it is something that she's genuinely passionate about. When Cady loses her talent, she continues to cook because it's what she wants to do. This is important since it shows readers that not everyone feels restricted by their talents like Mrs. Asher does.

## Grief

This theme is first demonstrated with the character of V. During the book, V is one of the characters that receives very little attention. Most of the V sections focus on how she's dealing with the loss of her daughter, Caroline. V is entirely motivated by Caroline. Whenever she acts, she does it because the people around her remind her of Caroline. By the end of the book, V has learned to move on from her grief and become part of a new family.

Toby undergoes a similar journey. Like V, Toby spends most of the book mourning the loss of Caroline. When he lost her, he was unable to focus on having a family, so he had to give up his daughter. Toby regrets what happened, and seems to be burdened by his past actions. Toby takes it one step further and uses a disguise, as if he was too ashamed to ever show his true face. By the end of the book, Toby has been accepted by Cady, and just like V he was able to start a new family.

The theme is shown through Zane's character arc as well. Zane feels bad because of what the principle said. Zane believes that he is worthless because of what he did in the past. He lets his grief drive him to desperation, and he starts to steal in the hopes of



getting money to essentially buy his parents affection. Zane gets the chance to speak to the mysterious merchant, who tells him that Zane has to accept that accidents happen, and it isn't worth it to focus on them. He tells Zane that he believes he'll have a better time at school next year, as long as he doesn't give up now.

## Labels

The first time that this theme is demonstrated is with Marigold. Marigold is struggling to feel accepted because she doesn't have a Talent. Marigold is obsessed with the idea of finding a Talent. She spends all day practicing a variety of different skills, but she never does anything that she is interested in. Marigold doesn't want to be labeled as Fair, even though her mother insists that it isn't a bad thing. She actually enjoyed being Fair because she got to do what she wanted, but Marigold is hung up on the labels. Naturally, being Talented sounds more appealing than simply being Fair.

The theme is more explicitly demonstrated with the character of Zane. Throughout the story, Zane is constantly unable to focus because he keeps hearing the principle's voice, calling him worthless. Zane is practically driven mad by this label. He starts to steal and try to find ways to help his money, just because he's so desperate to prove that he's not worthless. Things are made worse when his sister starts to speak negatively of him, calling him a thief.

The theme is shown through Mrs. Asher as well, in a similar way to Marigold. Marigold's character shows how the label Fair is dangerous, but Mrs. Asher shows how the label of Talent is dangerous as well. It's a more positive title, but it still is restrictive. Mrs. Asher feels like she's trapped by her Talent. She felt like she was no longer allowed to pursue her old interests because she had developed a Talent.

Many characters have been shown to have their life dictated by their Talent. Sometimes it works out, like in the case of Miss Mallory and Cady. With both of these characters, though, it was shown that they were pursuing their Talents because they were actually interested in them, which is how they discovered they were Talents in the first place. This relates back to the theme of characters needing to be allowed to follow their dreams, and not just having their fates decided by whatever label they get because of their Talent.

## Talent

Throughout the novel the idea of 'talent' or a special ability is the common thread, or motif, that binds the characters and the plotline together. For Marigold, it is the fact that she doesn't believe she has a 'Talent', when in fact, she does.

For Mason, the commentary that is made about his talent is that he wasted it, misused it, didn't develop, trust, or cherish it as he should have...and as a result, lost it. This loss of his talent led him to become angry, bitter, and sinister.

Talent, as a real entity in this novel, is held up for investigation by the reader. The author challenges the reader to determine what constitutes a 'talent' and how one should use one's special ability or talent in the world. Quite clearly one could choose to use their gift to do good in the world, like Miss Mallory and Cady. While others, like Mason, use their abilities for personal gain and to inflict pain on others.

In the end, the author shows that when one does not share their talent with the world, it is not only wasted, it is useless to the owner. This is indicated in the scene toward the end of the novel, when Mason finds the suitcase and the recipe, only to find out that he no longer can enjoy, understand, or appreciate it.

# Styles

## Point of View

A Tangle of Knots is told from a 3rd person omniscient perspective. Each one of the chapters follows a different character, with no two chapters focusing on the same individual character. The narrator frequently speaks to the reader, foreshadowing specific events that are going to happen in the book. The chapters will frequently focus on a character that was mentioned in a previous chapter, letting the reader see how the previous scene effected that particular character. This commonly happens with Zane and Marigold, or Marigold and Mrs. Asher.

## Language and Meaning

For the most part, the book is written in a very easy to read fashion, reflecting that it is aimed for a very young audience. There are a few unique terms specific to the book. The first is Talent. Talents are mentioned as early as the prologue, but they aren't explained for a few chapters. Talents are abilities that certain people possess, where they are perfectly skilled at something, even without any prior training. Some of these can even be supernatural abilities, such as Mason's ability to levitate.

## Structure

Many of the chapters are only a few paragraphs in length. The short scenes make it possible for the reader to jump between characters and see how each character is reacting to a situation. The book relies heavily on foreshadowing. Because of the short nature, it's easy for readers to remember the details from the earlier chapters, so they get to see how the plot was being laid out, and they can look at scenes in a different light. This frequently happens with characters like Toby and V. Very often much of the chapter is taken up with a recipe from Cady.

## Quotes

He tapped his foot on the ground, breathing in the last few moments before he claimed his inheritance. His Fate. As soon as he climbed aboard that bus, the young man would be on his way.”

-- Mason (Prologue paragraph 3)

**Importance:** This passage sets up Mason’s main motivation, and it tells the reader how important the inheritance is to him.

Mason checked everywhere. He searched the other passengers as they trotted off with their own suitcases. He crawled inside the baggage compartment to check for hidden nooks and corners. He even threatened the driver. But it was no use. The suitcase, and the one slim, irreplaceable slip of paper inside it, was gone.”

-- Mason (Prologue paragraph 47)

**Importance:** Mason losing his inheritance explains how he takes on The Owner persona in the following 53 years, and why he went after Cady.

“The Owner didn’t know it then, but in just one short week, all eight rooms would be filled. Some would be occupied by people with great Talents, others would not. One would house a thief, a person in possession of an object worth millions of dollars. Several would be inhabited by liars. But every last person would have something in common. In just one short week, every last one of them would have lost the thing they treasured most in the world.”

-- Narrator (chapter 2 paragraph 24)

**Importance:** This passage foreshadows that soon, all of the main characters are going to be living with him, in the Emporium. It also describes several of the characters. The thief is Zane, the person with the valuable object is his mother.

No one in the Asher family could possibly understand what it was like to still be searching, to constantly worry that you might be Fair. After all, weren’t the majority of the people in the world without any Talent middle children, just like Marigold? Middlings, that’s what they called them.”

-- Marigold (chapter 3 paragraph 25)

**Importance:** This passage shows all of the pain that Marigold is going through by not having a Talent. It also helps to establish the setting, since this is one of the first times where Talents and Fair have been properly explained.

I’m going to look for Will,” Marigold said, shooting Zane a final glare as she left the room. “Try not to kill anyone, all right?” If only she had known what a wise warning that would turn out to be.”

-- Marigold (chapter 3 paragraph 27)

**Importance:** This shows the strained relationship between Zane and Marigold, but also how protective Marigold is of Will. The last line is also an example of how the book likes to foreshadow future events.

What was the point? First she'd lost Caroline and now, her words. And without those two most precious things, there really was no point to much of anything at all."

-- V (chapter 4 paragraph 11)

**Importance:** V's whole character arc revolves around not being able to speak, as well as dealing with the grief of her lost daughter.

And in that moment, Toby knew. He'd give anything to be a father again. "I'd love to adopt Cady," he said. And that—that—was not at all a lie."

-- Toby (chapter 9 paragraph 34)

**Importance:** Toby and Cady's relationship is explored throughout the rest of the book. This section also foreshadows Toby's mysterious past, which is explored more in each one of his chapters.

Marigold sighed. "I knew you wouldn't understand." She was back to fussing with that bracelet. "No one in this family understands anything about me."

-- Marigold (chapter 25 paragraph 7)

**Importance:** Marigold feels like she's an outsider because she doesn't have a Talent. She hates being Fair, especially since everyone else in her family has a unique Talent.

The Owner let out a chilling laugh. With icy fingers he plucked Toby's hand from his shirt. "You can't protect the girl from everything, Tobias." Every part of Toby's body burned now, from his heels to his hair. "No," he said, remembering that horrible day in Africa. You certainly couldn't protect anybody from all the terrors of the world. "But I can try."

-- Mason and Toby (chapter 34 paragraph 6)

**Importance:** Mason is open about his plans to take Cady, and he's also revealing more information about Toby's mysterious past.

Perhaps this chameleon was nothing like the one who had charmed her Caroline right out from underneath her. Perhaps Caroline hadn't needed much charming to begin with. But what if V could have stopped it all if she'd only said something? What if, by exposing this chameleon, V could stop a similar mother from experiencing a similar headache?"

-- V (chapter 42 paragraph 1)

**Importance:** This passage reveals a great deal of information about V, and it helps to explain why she is so distrustful of Toby. This is explored in more detail towards the end of the book, when V discovers the connection between her daughter and Toby.





V had been wrong before, thinking she saw Caroline in places she knew she wasn't. But the mother in that photograph—V would stake her life on it—was Caroline herself, clear as day."

-- V (chapter 53 paragraph 6)

**Importance:** It's finally explained why V was so protective of Cady, as well as why she was distrustful of Toby.

Toby knew what it was to lose a child. That terrible day in Africa, just one week after his wife had died, he hadn't known. He couldn't have known how it would be, the guilt and the worry that he would suffer every day to follow. So he'd made the decision that he'd come to regret for the rest of his life. At the time, it had seemed wise. After all, what had he understood then about fatherhood? Absolutely nothing. Better his precious baby Cora grow up with new parents who could give her everything she wanted than with a half-wit like him. That's what he'd thought at the time."

-- Toby (chapter 55 paragraph 4)

**Importance:** Toby's mysterious background is finally explained to the reader, and they can see what all of the foreshadowing in his previous chapters had been leading up to.