The protagonist of the book, thirteen-year-old Conor is very responsible for his age, due primarily to the fact that his mother was diagnosed with cancer a year before the start of the book.Conor is her primary caretaker because Conor's mother and father had gotten divorced five years before her diagnosis.Conor thus exhibits conflicting emotions: he wants the waiting regarding her illness to be over, but he is also desperate for her not to die.At the beginning of the story, Conor refuses to believe that his mother's health is deteriorating and tries to act as though everything is normal.Both try to convince Conor that his mother isn't getting any better, but he refuses to accept this.He also tries to push away the recurring nightmare that he keeps having, in which a creature tries to drag his mother over the edge of a cliff, and Conor is unable to hold onto her and save her.With the monster's help, Conor ultimately accepts the fact that in his nightmare, he could have held onto his mother longer but chose not to, because he just wants her pain--and his own pain--to finally end.By accepting these complicated feelings, and by ultimately telling his mother that he doesn't want her to go, he is finally able to feel like he might survive her death.Additionally, his father and grandmother visit, which also makes Conor's denial difficult.The monster tells Conor stories to try to help him acknowledge that life, and human emotions, are very .complicated

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