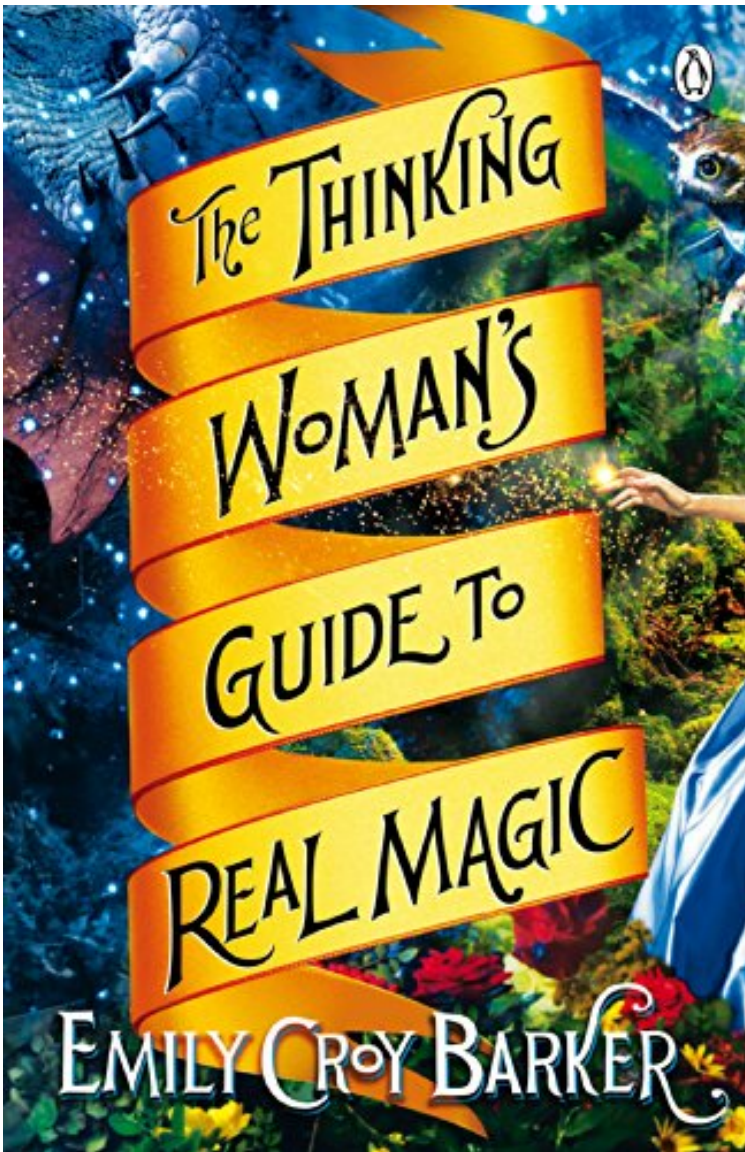


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The Thinking Woman's Guide to Real Magic



Par Emily Croy Barker
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(Get free) The Thinking Woman's Guide to Real Magic

Par Emily Croy Barker : The Thinking Woman's Guide to Real Magic before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Thinking Woman's Guide to Real Magic:

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Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurEmily Croy Barker's The Thinking Woman's Guide to Real Magic is full of romance, adventure and, of course, magic...'Fun, seductive, and utterly engrossing' Deborah Harkness, author of The Discovery of Witches'A wholly imaginative and witty debut novel that is unlike any I've read' Sara Gruen, author of Water for ElephantsNora's life is not quite going as planned. Her career has stalled; the man of her dreams is getting married, but not to her; and there's a mouse in her kitchen... Getting away for the weekend for a friend's wedding seems like perfect timing, especially when she stumbles across the unfeasibly glamorous Ilissa, who is determined to take Nora under her wing.Through Ilissa, Nora is introduced to a whole new world - a world of unbelievable decadence and riches where time is meaningless and everyone is

beautiful. And Nora herself feels different: more attractive; more talented; more popular... Yet something doesn't quite ring true: was she really talking to Oscar Wilde at Ilissa's party last night? Or transported from New York to Paris in the blink of an eye? It is only when Ilissa's son, Raclin, asks Nora to marry him that the truth about her new friends becomes apparent. By then, though, it's too late, and Nora realises she may never be able to return to the world, and the life, she knew before. If she is to escape Raclin and Ilissa's clutches, her only hope is the magician Aruendiel. A grim, reclusive figure with a biting tongue and a shrouded past, he might just teach her what she needs to survive and perhaps even make it home: the art of real magic. For fans of Deborah Harkness's All Souls Trilogy and Lev Grossman's Magicians series, The Thinking Woman's Guide to Real Magic by Emily Croy Barker is proof that magic not only exists but - like love - can sweep you off your feet when you least expect it... Emily Croy Barker lives in New Jersey. This is her first novel.

Chapter 1 Much later, Nora would learn magic for dissolving glue or killing vermin swiftly and painlessly or barring mice from the house altogether, but that morning the last normal morning, she later thought of it as she padded into the kitchen in search of coffee, she was horribly at a loss when she saw the small brown mouse wriggling on the glue trap in front of the sink. At the sight of Nora, the mouse froze for an instant, then tried to bolt, but only succeeded in gluing another paw to the sticky cardboard. Oh, crap, Nora said aloud. I can't deal with this. Not on top of everything else. She was angrier at her roommate Dane, than at the mouse. Almost certainly he was the one who had set the trap, and then hadn't had the decency to handle the result himself. Besides, the mouse problem was Dane's fault in the first place. If he had not let Astrophel out by accident, he claimed Astrophel would not have attempted to cross six lanes of traffic, and would still be alive and keeping the house mouse-free. The ashy remains of Nora's cat now resided in a small cardboard box on Nora's desk, and the mice had become a scrabbling, bold presence in the house. She thought about simply letting the trapped mouse remain there for Dane to clean up, but she would have to step over it to fill the coffee pot, and what if the mouse got loose while she was still in the kitchen? Before she could lose her nerve, Nora picked up the glue trap with her thumb and forefinger, and moved toward the garbage can. But the mouse was still alive. That was disturbing. After a second's thought, Nora took a bottle of olive oil from the cabinet. The good stuff, Tuscan gold, encased in a tall bottle with a sprig of rosemary suspended inside, and she was fairly sure it belonged to Dane. Outside, a block from her house, in a sliver of park, she carefully poured olive oil on the mouse and the glue board. The smell of the oil filled her nose; she was suddenly hungry. The mouse, its fur now sleek and dark with oil, rolled back and forth on the glue board. All at once it was loose. Nora jumped back, and the mouse scampered away, leaving shiny drops on the pine needles to mark its trail. She walked back to the house thinking automatically that she had a good story for Adam, and then remembering that she wouldn't be telling it to him. On her way to the English department, she kept an eye out for him anyway. He was still in town, probably, unless he'd gotten an earlier flight. She might bump into him on campus. It would be awkward. Then maybe not so awkward. And he would realize what a terrible mistake he had made. Instead, when someone spoke her name outside the department lounge, it was her adviser. Nora. I haven't seen you all week. Naomi smiled, showing an unnatural number of teeth. Nora braced herself, trying as always to find Naomi's presence empowering instead of terrifying. Naomi was carrying her eight-month-old son in a sling on her chest: Last fall, in a single semester, she had produced both the baby and a book on sexual ambiguity in Dickens. Following Naomi into the lounge, Nora wiggled her fingers at the baby, who gave her a somber gaze out of bottomless dark blue eyes. Where are the rest of the papers from your Gender and Genre section? Naomi demanded. I have only half of them. Nora unslung the backpack from her shoulder. Here they are, she said. I wish you'd finished them sooner. I want to look them over before I turn the grades in. I'm sorry. I had to grade the Modern Drama exams, too. It's been a busy week. Yes, it has. That's why I wanted to see those papers earlier. Naomi leafed through her mail, flicking most of it into the trash and then sliding a thin envelope with Italian stamps into the lustrous leather jaws of her slim briefcase. It was not the best time to bring up any kind of request, Nora saw, but she had no choice. Actually, I wanted to mention, she began, I decided to apply for that travel fellowship, the Blum-Forsythe grant? I was wondering if you could write a recommendation for me. I thought you weren't going to apply for that. Can't you ask Marlene to send out the recommendation that's on file? I realized there's some work I could do at Cambridge. The idea had come to Nora two nights before, as she lay awake at three a.m. The inspiration had less to do with John Donne, her thesis subject, than a sudden need to escape. The form asks some questions that aren't covered by the recommendation you wrote for me before. If you tweaked the old recommendation, it should be fine. It just has to be postmarked by Monday. Naomi pivoted, a wrinkle of annoyance visible between her strong brows. You know, I'm boarding a

plane Sunday to fly to London. I don't know if I'll have time. Oh, Nora said awkwardly. I didn't realize you were leaving so soon. Naomi sighed and ran a hand through her hair, which was growing long, Nora noticed.

Naomi usually had it cut on one of her frequent trips to Europe, one of the side benefits of having a boyfriend in London. Come into my office, Nora. I want a word with you. As Nora lowered herself onto the steel- and-leather chair in front of Naomi's desk, Naomi shut the office door. Nora's stomach tensed. I should tell you that if I do write you a new recommendation, Naomi said, I don't know that I'd have anything very positive to add. Nora blinked. Really? I haven't seen very much from you this year, just the one thesis chapter.

It was fine, but you finished it back in November, and here it is May. I wrote that Dickinson paper. *Wild Nights: The Erotics of Evasion*. One of the journals was interested, so I've been revising. It's a good paper, and I'm sure you could publish it. But you shouldn't be spending time trying to publish a paper so removed from your dissertation topic. I was hoping that I'd see at least one more chapter from you before the end of this school year. Well, I've been working hard. I'm just not making much progress. Nora paused, but Naomi said nothing, so she plunged on. I'm starting to think I'm just not sure I can say much that's new about gender politics in Donne. Nora, when you chose your topic, we discussed the pitfalls of writing about a canonical author like John Donne. It can be difficult to find unplowed ground. Hundreds of authors to write about, and yet it seemed that every single one had already been chewed over by packs of other hungry doctoral students. Even poets who had written only a handful of decent poems in their entire lives were the subject of lengthy, arcane, lovingly argued dissertations. And someone good, like Shakespeare or Brontë or Dickinson or Dickens or Donne? They were mobbed by grad students and professors alike, like pop stars surrounded by screaming groupies. Yes, I know, Nora said. So I'm wondering whether it might be fruitful to look at another writer, too. I have some ideas about Donne and Dickinson, their comparative poetics, that I'd like to outline for you. Naomi held up her hand. If you really want to write about Dickinson, the emphasis needs to be more American or early modern. Otherwise, you'll get killed on the job market. But I really am just Nora searched in vain for a way to describe the vast, barren desert of thesis research where she had been wandering without a compass. Just stuck. The baby had been fidgeting inside the sling, his starfish arms and legs waving in the air. Now he opened his mouth and began to wail. Nora suppressed an urge to do the same. I need to feed him,

Naomi said, unsnapping the pouch, and then I have a meeting with the dean, and then I'm going home to pack. So I'm sorry, I don't have time to finish this conversation. We'll talk after I get back in July. Nora nodded. Sure. If you want to e-mail me that Donne and Dickinson idea while I'm away, I'll take a look at it. She sounded less than enthusiastic about the prospect. Okay, I will. Thanks. Nora stood up, picking up her backpack. Enjoy London. Naomi looked up from behind her immaculate desktop. Nora, I agreed to be your adviser because you're very, very good in some areas. You're one of the best close readers of poetry I've ever worked with. You have a real knack for understanding the life of a poem. Fifty years ago, that would have gotten you a doctorate, a job, and tenure at any English department in the country. But today that's not enough. You have to be able to address a big question—something to do with aesthetics, or colonialism, or philosophy—what it is doesn't matter so much, but you need to play at that level. And that's where you're having problems. I know, I know. Big questions aren't my strong point. In fact, Nora had plenty of questions, just less and less assurance that she could ever formulate answers to them. She added, a little desperately: No ideas but in things. Well, that has to change, said Naomi, unbuttoning her linen blouse. Nora closed the office door, but not before getting a glimpse of the baby's mouth closing urgently on Naomi's brown nipple. Heading for the library, she checked her phone and found a message from her mother. Nora, I was hoping you might be able to drive up this weekend. We're going to the beach, and then to a fellowship dinner that you would really enjoy. She skipped to the next message, from her father's number in New Jersey. Nora's youngest sister's voice, high and cheerful: Hi, Nora, how are you? It's me. Teacher shirk day, I have to go with Mom to her work, boring boring. I looked for those books of yours you said were in the attic, but I couldn't find them. Do you know where else they might be? I need something to read. Bye. Ramona wasn't looking hard enough. Nora could picture the box, left of the attic stairs, near E.J.'s things. She was in the middle of leaving her own message when she walked smack into Farmer Dahmer, literally collided with him, right in front of the library. Farmer Dahmer as in Jeffrey wasn't his name, but almost everyone on campus, even the senior faculty, knew whom you were talking about if you mentioned Farmer Dahmer. He was a small man, around sixty, with a stiff, gray-brown beard like the wire pads used to scrub out sinks. He usually wore a faded plaid shirt, which Nora assumed was the origin of the agricultural portion of his nickname. Rumor had it that he was a superannuated grad student who had gone crazy after being unable to complete his thesis. Nora no longer found this story as amusing as she once had. He spent most of his days hanging around the library, where

she had often seen him bent over a sheaf of papers in a carrel, swaying back and forth, mumbling to himself. Farmer Dahmer looked even more stunned than Nora at their collision, and for a moment she was afraid that he would topple over. Im so sorry, she said, clutching his arm. Are you all right? I cant believe I didnt see you. Im really sorry. Oh, its you, he said to her, blinking his small eyes. Um, yes, Nora said uncertainly. Its me, all right. Are you okay? With a jerk of his arm, he shook himself free of Noras grasp. Oh, Im fine. Thanks to you. I very much appreciate it. Theres no need to be sarcastic. I really do apologize. No, I blame my own carelessness. You see, I was very hungry, and when I smelled the peanut butter, I simply forgot to be cautious. She nodded, unable to think of a proper response. Farmer Dahmers head swiveled from side to side, as though he were reading something in the figures of passing students or the grass and oak trees of the quad. Then he looked back at Nora. I suppose you want the usual reward. Is three enough for you? Oh, Im fine. Dont worry, she said, shaking her head vigorously so that there would be no mistake. Im just happy to know that youre okay. Oh, its no trouble at all, he said. Lets do the thing properly, shall we? He squared his shoulders and gave her a brisk nod, then turned and marched away, disappearing around the side of the student union. What a day, Nora thought, rubbing her head. She noticed for the first time the rich smell of olive oil mingled with rosemary hanging in the air. Hell, she must have spilled that stuff on her clothes this morning. She must reek. What had Naomi thought? She went into the library and spent a few hours finishing up the Blum- Forsythe application. In the air-conditioned quiet of the stacks on the twelfth floor, where she had her carrel, the scent of olive oil and rosemary faded, much to her relief. Heading home, she took the long way, past Adams favorite coffeehouse, the one where he used to hold his office hours when he was a teaching assistant because he couldnt smoke in his assigned cubbyhole in the English department. Of course he was not sitting there now. Why would he be? Not running into him was a clear sign from the heavens that whatever had existed between her and Adam was over, finished for good, the invisible karmic connection between them severed and tied off forever. She said aloud, but softly: I wish I could see him again, though. Maggie picked her up at four for the drive to the wedding in the mountains. That was a relief. Someone to tell about this nightmare of a week. Oh, youre kidding, Maggie said, when Nora had gotten only partway into her story, as they shot into the I-40 traffic. He flew all the way back here just to break up with you? And you really thought he was going to ask you to marry him. Thats so awful. He said he had something big to tell me, and he wanted to tell me in person. Well, thats big. And he is getting married. Just not to me, Nora clarified. And who is this woman? Another assistant professor there. An art historian. The French baroque. Oh, God. and they got to be friends, and it was all very casual, and then they went away for the weekend, an art exhibition in New York. You dont just go away for the weekend with a casual friend! I know, Nora said miserably. He told me all this right after I picked him up at the airport. He wouldnt shut up about her. As though I cared. And then he apologized and said hed been meaning to tell me, but he didnt want to do it over the phone. And he said he had other friends in town to see. So thats when I said, well, maybe you can stay with one of them. I havent seen him since. Maggie nodded her approval, but Nora grimaced. Well, I kept thinking Id see him and somehow wed work it out, but he hasnt called, nothing. Oh, and then just to top it off, she added, this morning my adviser gave me the something-has-to-change talk. One step away from the what-are-you-still-doing-here talk. My career and my love life, both going up in flames. Oh, honey. Maggie leaned over suddenly to give Nora a hug. The car veered toward the median for an instant, which made the gesture less reassuring than she intended. Well, fuck it. So what if grad school doesnt work out? There are plenty of other options. You should open your own restaurant and be a celebrity chef. I mean it. That toffee souffl you made, my God. Nora was silent, thinking again about her mornings conversation with Naomi. Unofficial probation, thats what she was on, even if Naomi hadnt used those words. All at once she missed Adam more than ever. He had brilliant political instincts; he knew exactly how to soothe and beguile the most implacable thesis adviser. Nora wasnt sure how shed get by without Adams coaching, not to mention his protective aura. Hed been such a star in the department that some of his prestige had invisibly accrued to her, too. She wondered suddenly how far news of their breakup had spread. Did Naomi know? Yes, Nora thought, or she would have asked me about him this morning. She always did before. You sure you want to go to this thing? Maggie was saying. Weddings are no fun when youre newly single, not by choicethats my experience. Nora shrugged. Its okay. How can I not go to Lucas wedding, anyway? Any chance that Adam will be there? No, hes flying back tonight. He wanted to spend the weekend with his fiance. Nora grimaced as she spoke the last word. Bastard. Well, maybe youll meet someone this weekend. And therell be lots to drink. Forget about Adam. Just what Im planning to do. Which made it all the more disconcerting, at the party following the rehearsal dinner, to turn and find Adam standing a few feet

away. He had a beer in his hand, and he was having a desultory conversation with a couple of law students, friends of Maggie's. He looked vaguely ill at ease even before he saw Nora. What are you doing here? he asked her. I was going to ask you the same thing, she said. I thought you were back in Chicago. He shook his head. Couldn't change my flight. I'm going back Sunday. So you decided to come to this thing after all. Well, yes. I was invited. Is that a problem? No, I'm just surprised to see you here. You shouldn't be. I've known Chris and Luca a long time. About time they got married. He took a swig of beer. Nora bit her lip. They started dating a month after we did. Really? I thought they'd been together longer. No, I remember. We saw them at that French movie, *Amlie*. God, that was a terrible movie. I liked it. Really? Nora knew the expression on his face well: Adam enjoying the sense of his own superior judgment. Other, more benighted people had always inspired that look never her. Then he seemed to recollect himself: Well, good for you. How are you doing? Very well, thank you. Good. For an instant, his eyes practically shone with sincerity. I'm glad. I was a little worried, you know, after the other night. Nora wanted to believe him. A man may smile and smile and be a villain. No, you weren't. You would have called me if you were. I did call you. Couple of times. She shook her head. I would have seen your number. They went around and around, until it emerged that Adam had dialed the wrong number, manually. He had a new phone, the kind that knew everything, but he had not bothered to enter her number. I see, Nora said grimly. Well, as you can tell, I'm just fine. Good. He started to turn away, then swung back. You know, I still care about you. She closed her eyes for a moment. I care about you, too. You may not want to hear this right now, but I mean it in the best possible way, believe me. When Celeste and I get married this fall, I hope you can be there. I mean it. October sixteenth. A few days ago, waiting for Adam in the airport, Nora had been thinking about wedding dates, wondering if October would be too soon. It wasn't as though she'd want a huge, elaborate wedding. Thank you, Adam, she said now, smiling, with as much dignity as she could muster. That's awfully she considered and rejected a number of words, settling for a relatively bland and obvious choice that she hoped would trouble Adam anyway stupid of you. She turned and plunged into the crowd. The party was a large, loose affair: It flowed through the house, which belonged to one of the brides relatives, and onto the rambling cedar decks wrapped around the outside. Plenty of room to retreat. Nora refilled her wineglass, then topped it up again and again. The alcohol began to make her feel blurry as she drifted from one group to the next, never quite finding her way into the conversation. But the recollection of her encounter with Adam remained razor-sharp. She kept looking for him to avoid him, she told herself. Once she looked up and saw him looking at her from across the deck. He turned away without acknowledging her. They flee from me that sometime did me seek, she told herself. Ducking away, she found herself in a room where a cluster of partygoers were watching an old episode of *The Avengers*. She plunked herself on a couch grateful for its solidity, although her surroundings continued to wobble slightly and watched John Steed and Emma Peel battle evil, he in a morning coat, she in a catsuit, exchanging arch *bons mots*. Why can't real love be debonair and fun? she wondered. After a while, she noticed that the man in the chair next to her was looking at her more than at the television. He addressed an occasional remark to her, and laughed when she did. When someone turned the lights up for a moment, she saw that his eyes were a bright green, like traffic lights. She took it as a good omen. They kept talking after someone turned the TV off. His name was Dave, he was in the history department, but he wanted to know about her life outside of grad school. She told him about being a cook after college. An organic caf with locally sourced, seasonal menus; Nora made it to sous-chef. It was fun for a while. But, God, so much work. I hear you, he said. I waited tables in college. Whenever I get fed up with sitting in a library, I make myself remember what it was like to be on my feet carrying trays until midnight. So you decided to do something more intellectually challenging, huh? For some reason I thought that would be grad school. He laughed at that, and they started kissing soon afterward. Dave's lips were softer than she liked, but that was okay. It was the first time she had kissed someone else besides Adam in almost four years. She hoped hazily that he would come into the room and see her with Dave. Doing just fine, thank you. Dave's phone rang. The ring tone was Rod Stewart: *Do Ya Think I'm Sexy?* Dave jolted away from Nora. Putting the phone to his ear, he turned, moving toward the door, but Nora still heard more of the conversation than she wanted to. Your girlfriend? she asked when he came back. He nodded, looking uncomfortable. Sorry, we just broke up. But she keeps calling me. Looking at him, Nora was fairly sure he wasn't telling the whole truth to someone Nora, his girlfriend, or himself. Well, fuck, she said, hitting the arm of the couch. Call her back. She wants to talk to you. He made a face. She's just emotional. Maybe she has a right to be. Don't be that way, Norma. It's not that big a deal. Nora, and yes, it is a big deal. She had to wait around for a while until she could get a ride back to the house where she and Maggie were staying. That meant having to avoid both Adam and Dave.

She skulked on the deck in the darkness with a Coke, pretending to look at the invisible view over the mountains. Back in her room, Nora undressed quickly. In the mirror, she saw her brown roots were showing. On some women that was sexy. Nora was not one of them. She tried not to imagine what Celeste looked like. October 16. How extraordinarily dense of Adam to invite her to the wedding. And Adam always so careful even calculating about everything he said. That was what really hurt. He wasn't even trying. He had written her off. She slid under the sheet. My life is a catastrophe, she thought, shutting her eyes. Lately, for reassurance, Nora had taken to reminding herself of John Donne's own checkered employment history: his unfinished legal training; the government job he was fired from; the long search for preferment before he finally found success and security in holy orders. But even at the beginning he had been writing those intricate, intimate poems of passion and thought. Nora was almost thirty, and what did she have to show for herself? Turning restlessly in bed, she thought: Naomi is right, I don't fit in, I'm all wrong for this. I can't do anything right. Well, maybe saving the life of that mouse today. And it's probably already back in my kitchen, eating my food. I wish my life were different. I don't care how. She woke early, her mouth dry from all the alcohol she'd drunk the night before. In the other bed, Maggie was still asleep. Nora pulled on a T-shirt and jeans and went quietly out of the room. The cabin that she and Maggie and four other wedding guests were renting for the weekend perched on the mountainside, at the end of a long gravel driveway lined with rhododendrons. She peered out of the living room window. It had rained during the night, but the sky was clear now. The wedding was not until five. People had talked about driving to Asheville for brunch. So far she was the only one up. Nora made herself some coffee and ate half a bagel, then stepped onto the deck outside. Chilly for May. She thought she might walk down to the road for some exercise, but then she noticed the trail leading up the mountain. She went back inside for a sweatshirt. Out of habit, she stopped by the bookshelf in the living room to see if there was a paperback that she could stuff into her pocket for emergencies you never knew when you might need a book to entertain and comfort and distract you in the days' empty places. There was not much to choose from. She passed on the Robert Ludlum and a couple of the Dune books in favor of a yellowed paperback edition of *Pride and Prejudice* that had originally cost fifty cents. Privately Nora agreed with Charlotte Brontë that Jane Austen's world was too manicured for sustained interest, but on the other hand you could always dip in and find something amusing on almost any page. Besides, she had to teach the novel in summer school next month. No reason to leave a note. She would be back in half an hour. Nora went outside and started up the path. At first it tunneled through more rhododendrons, but the forest brightened when she reached a stand of hardwoods, skinny gray poles, newly leafed out. There was almost no undergrowth at this time of year, only dead leaves covering the ground as far as she could see. After the novelty of walking somewhere that wasn't a street or a campus path had worn off, Nora began to find the upward-sloping, dun-colored landscape monotonous. She was wondering whether to head back when suddenly the path leveled off and she stepped out of the woods onto grass. A fragment of conversation from the party last night came back to her. So this was what Chriss' cousin meant by the Bald. The crown of the mountain was an immense green meadow. A few steps forward, and Nora had a 360-degree view of the undulating horizon, mountains rising in all directions. She walked across the meadow, feeling her heart lift in spite of herself. Ye visions of the hills, and souls of lonely places. Nora found herself smiling. She had the absurd thought she squelched it quickly that she could bring Adam up here to show him this place. Nora turned back when she reached the other side of the hilltop. It was going to rain again, she saw with regret; gray clouds were looming in the west. Otherwise, she would have been tempted to sit down and read for a while. She retraced her steps across the meadow. There was no sign of the trail where she thought it should be, but she reasoned that if she followed the edge of the woods, she was bound to come across the path, even if she had to circle the entire mountaintop. The first raindrops hit her face as she walked along. Still no path. She walked faster. After a few minutes, she saw a gap in the trees and what looked like the beginnings of a path. But was it the right one? There might be several paths. A disturbing thought crystallized: If she took the wrong trail down, she could wind up on the other side of the mountain, miles from where she wanted to be. Oh, well, she thought as the rain began to pelt down, I can go a little way and see whether it looks familiar. She started down the path. Had the trail been this slick, this steep before? Almost immediately she slipped and fell in a patch of cold mud. Her right ankle protested when she tried to get to her feet. Nora cursed herself. Accidents like this were precisely why she should have left a note at the cabin. Well, someone Maggie, perhaps would eventually notice if she didn't show up for brunch or the wedding or the reception. After a minute, Nora tried again to stand, and this time she was able to pull herself upright. So far so good. The ankle was sore, but it would take her weight. Well, she thought, I wasn't

planning to do much dancing tonight anyway. She found a stick to lean on, and began limping down the mountain. The forest here was full of spindly young trees like the ones that she had passed on the way up, but she couldn't tell whether they were the same trees. It was darker here than on the mountaintop, and the woods were full of soft pattering noises, rain smacking leaves. After ten minutes of slow progress, Nora had to admit that she still had no clue as to whether she was on the right path or not. She had just about decided to turn around and retreat when something ahead caught her eye. Instantly she knew that she had taken the wrong trail. I would have remembered that, she thought.

Revue de presse

Centered on more adult concerns than the Harry Potter books, Barkers debut is full of allusions to dark fairy tales and literary romances. If Hermione Granger had been an American who never received an invitation to Hogwarts, this might have been her story.

People Magazine

"A marvelous plot, clever dialogue, and complex characters distinguish The Thinking Woman's Guide to Real Magic. With the intimacy of a classic fairy-tale and the rollicking elements of modern epic fantasy, Emily Croy Barkers delightful debut will sweep readers into another world. Fun, seductive, and utterly engrossing, this wonderful tale of magic and adventure is a perfect escape from humdrum reality."

Deborah Harkness, author of the All Souls Trilogy

"To read The Thinking Woman's Guide to Real Magic is to enter a lush, fantastical dream filled with beauty and strangeness, love and cruelty, playfulness and gravitas. Emily Barker has crafted a wholly imaginative and witty debut novel that is unlike any I've read. Mind candy for those of us raised on Harry Potters!"

Sara Gruen, author of Water for Elephants

Think of this book as Hermione Granger: The Grad School Years. An entertaining tale capably told.

Kirkus

Barker weaves together classic fantasy and romantic elements (including shout-outs to Pride and Prejudice and hints of Wuthering Heights) to produce a well-rounded, smooth, and subtle tale.

Publishers Weekly

"Like in Harkness's work, as the novel closes, Barker leaves Nora poised on the brink of a decision that could lead to another adventure. This reviewer can't wait. . . . Readers who love magical fantasy adventures with strong female protagonists will enjoy Barkers novel. And fans of Lev Grossman's The Magicians may also want to try this.

Library Journal

"This dark fairy tale has plenty of curb appeal for a wide range of fantasy, time-travel, and alternate-reality fans."

Booklist

The Thinking Woman's Guide to Real Magic is a medieval fairy tale with a deliciously dark twist . . . a thoroughly enchanting read. . . . Barker has spun a clever, lush yarn that is uniquely its own.

BookPage

The Thinking Woman's Guide to Real Magic embraces many of the things that make portal stories so perennial, with just enough twists that it seems to be in conversation with some of its forebears . . . and . . . suggest[s] deeper issues of power and gender waiting to be explored.

NPR

"Emily Croy Barker has written a sophisticated fairy tale that has one foot through the looking glass and the other squarely planted in the real world. Both classic and wholly original, The Thinking Woman's Guide to Real Magic is an imaginative synthesis of the stories that delighted us as children and the novels that inspired us as adults."

Ivy Pochoda, author of Visitation Street

'I wish my life were different. I don't care how.' So begins perpetual grad student and recently jilted Nora Fischers grand adventure into a wonderfully imaginative world of illusion and real magic that reveals the importance of a curious and open mind, learning and love. Author Emily Croy Barker has great fun toying with our ever-shifting notions of work, beauty, belonging, and reality creating a delightful book for anyone longing to escape the everyday (and who isn't?!).

Karen Engelmann, author of The Stockholm Octavo

A clever and scrumptious debut fantasy, the kind you happily disappear into for days.

Kelly Link, author of Magic for Beginners