

# **Bumped Study Guide**

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# Plot Summary

The novel is set in the near future and a virus has made it unlikely that any woman over eighteen can conceive a child. Melody Mayflower and Harmony Smith are twins who were separated soon after birth. Both girls required medical attention after being born and both were addicted to whatever drugs that their mother was using prior to their birth. The organization overseeing their adoption felt there was a better chance to get the girls adopted if they were separated. Harmony is adopted into a strict religious community and raised there. Melody, meanwhile, is adopted by a well-educated couple who see teen surrogates as the way of the future.

In many ways, the girls' lives are a stark contrast but in some ways they are very similar. Though Harmony is raised in a religious atmosphere and is taught from childhood that her ultimate goal in life is to believe what she's told by the church elders and grow into the roles of wife and mother. Melody is taught to be everything wealthy parents could possibly want in a surrogate mother and taught she is to give birth, give up the child, and go on to college with the money she's paid. Melody's parents are so certain she's going to deliver multiple children and earn hundreds of thousands of dollars doing so that they borrow against her future pregnancies.

Meanwhile, the twins learn about each other. Melody has sold her uniqueness to the adoptive parents and knows Harmony will threaten that sale. Harmony is feeling an empty space in her life from the lack of demonstrative love among the people of her community. She continues to feel this even after being forced to marry a young man who is more interested in boys. She runs away and hopes that luring Melody back to Goodside will help assuage the loneliness.

Melody is under contract for a pregnancy but her conception is held up only by the adoptive parents' choice of a father for the child. In this futuristic world, there are young men who hire out to "bump" with these girls and the adoptive parents eventually settle on one of these - Jondoe - who is a celebrity in his own right. But it's Harmony who gets the message about the proposed "bump" and Harmony who meets and has sex with Jondoe. She believes Jondoe might like her for herself but overhears him telling someone he'd lied to Harmony in order to seal their deal. Harmony returns to her community, newly pregnant, with her husband and her pregnancy as apparent proof of their consummated relationship. Melody realizes she doesn't want to be a surrogate and decides to take control of her life, including her love for her best friend, Zen. And just at that moment, Jondoe shows up looking for Harmony. He and Melody set out to find her together.



# First, Chapters 1 through 5

## First, Chapters 1 through 5 Summary

As the story opens, identical twin sisters Harmony and Melody are at the Meadowlands Mallplex where Melody is trying on a "Fun Bump," a prosthetic belly meant to mimic pregnancy. She's listening to the advertisements indicating how wonderful it is to be a pregnant teenage girl when Harmony interrupts. Melody notes they began talking to each other only a few weeks ago and only met a few hours ago. The perspective changes to Harmony in the second chapter and she notes that she loves the mall. Harmony is from a religious community called Goodside and Melody lives in a secular community called Otherside, both in Pennsylvania. Harmony says the mall is everything Goodside isn't which makes it a prime location for her efforts to spread the word of God. Harmony indicates her first objective is to reach Melody but that there is an endless supply of people she might reach out to next.

Harmony has left Goodside before but only on missionary trips with her "prayerclique." Harmony admits to being nervous on her own and says she is especially so when Melody suggests they go to the Babiez R U store because she knows there will be open endorsements of premarital sex and other sin. She says, however, she is confident in her own faith and agrees to go. Harmony recounts the trip from Goodside and says the taxi ride was wonderful. At one point she leaned out the window and shouted for joy, losing her best veil in the process.

In the third chapter, Melody says she can't get a good look at Harmony's face because of her veil. Harmony asks to go to the mall to a store called Plain and Simple which specializes in "modest clothing" to purchase a new veil because she lost one on the trip. Melody says she'd agreed to take Harmony to the mall because she needed to get out of the house where the two girls were alone together. She detours into Babiez R U to "rehearse the enthusiasm" she hopes to convey during an upcoming election for a new president of the Pro/Am Pregg Alliance at school. Her competition is Ventura Vida who has designs on a presidential election in the future and sees her election to the Alliance as a step on that path.

Melody recounts the moment of Harmony's arrival. She says Harmony arrived on her doorstep uninvited and unannounced, and fears that Harmony will be competition for the contract Melody has signed to become a surrogate. She's reassured somewhat by Harmony's assurance that the Church has insisted she become a wife and mother, meaning she's off the surrogate market.

Melody knows she and Harmony were born premature to a mother addicted to drugs. The Good Shepherd Child Placement Services split the girls up, hoping it would be easier to have them adopted as single babies. Melody was adopted by Ash and Ty Mayflower while Harmony, the weaker and sicker of the two, was taken in by the Church. When Melody realizes the life Harmony has, she says she's grateful for the life



Ash and Ty provided her. Melody points out that more women into their twenties and thirties are able to give birth in Goodside than Otherside. She says Harmony explains it by saying God alone has the power to "open and close the womb." Melody says it's difficult to argue with the statistics.

In the fourth chapter, Harmony can't understand Melody's lack of curiosity about their biological parents. She says she learned their mother's identity was not known but that Melody had been adopted by the Mayflowers. Harmony says her adoptive mother points out this is an opportunity for Harmony to bring Melody to a Godly life. Harmony says she loves Melody without reservation but that she knows leading her to God will be difficult.

In the fifth chapter, Melody says that Harmony is happiest when she's talking about God. The saleswoman puts in an appearance, compliments Melody on her appearance with the Fun Bump, and asks Harmony if she'd like to try on something. Harmony declines. During the conversation, Harmony reveals that her "fiancé's name" is Ephraim but that he's called "Ram." The saleswoman comments on Harmony's engagement gown and asks why she isn't wearing a maternity gown by this time. Melody knows the woman is being rude and flashes angry though she can't really understand her need to stand up for Harmony. Harmony says she was originally engaged at thirteen. She doesn't explain what happened to that engagement but says God had "another plan for her."

## First, Chapters 1 through 5 Analysis

From the beginning, Melody seems uncommitted to the idea of becoming pregnant though she is already under contract as soon as a suitable male is found. Melody seems almost scornful of the overt advertising for sex and pregnancy. She tries on the Fun Bump, looks at herself in the mirror, and says that she's "fertiliocious," but seems to believe it sounds ridiculous.

Harmony is forthcoming from the second chapter about her reasons for being in Otherside. She says she is determined to bring Melody back to Goodside to a religious way of life, but it will much later be revealed that she has other motivations. It isn't clear whether Harmony doesn't fully realize her own mind or if she's trying to convince herself that her motivations are pure.

The Pro/Am PREGG Alliance is a group of girls who are working to unite the girls who are pregnant for profit - the professionals - with those who are amateurs and are pregnant without a contract ahead of time. Melody gives some basic information about the group, including that public schools have begun insisting that all pregnant girls "attend a special school where they're all brainwashed into keeping their deliveries." Melody seems opposed to the idea at this point but says that's not quite as bad as Harmony's situation, which is an insistence by the Church that she get married and having babies. An interesting note about the babies is that Melody and most of the other teenage mothers refer to the babies as objects. Shoko calls her unborn child "Burrito" but most are even less personal, such as "the delivery" or "the pregg." This is apparently



indicative of the trend for young girls to give up their babies rather than allowing an attachment.

The Human Progressive Sterility Virus or HPSV is not fully explained. The virus causes sterility in approximately seventy-five percent of the population. Melody says the Church elders in Goodside would be worried that she might corrupt the souls and minds of the people there but that they wouldn't be worried about the spread of the virus. Melody then says "the damage has already been done to my reproductive system and there's no chance of catching the Virus from me." It's clear that she can't be expected to conceive after she becomes an adult, indicating she must have the Virus. However, it's not made clear why she's not at risk to spread the Virus. There are other aspects of the book that are never fully explained, including that fertilizing eggs and growing babies artificially is not an option.

The "nature versus nurture theme is seen in the fourth chapter. Harmony explains her curiosity about their birth mother from an early age and her determination to find her once she was an adult. She asks Melody why she hasn't searched for their parents and Melody's response is that her biological mother gave her life but that Ash and Ty made her into the person she is. On the surface, it seems that Melody is content with her parents and not curious about her biological parents but it will later be revealed that Melody already know about Harmony. Lib, the man who has negotiated Melody's pregnancy contract, has already discovered Harmony's existence and has presented it to Melody as the one thing that would hurt her contract. The parents who have chosen Melody to carry their child have done so at least partly because of Melody's appearance. Harmony is Melody's exact double so the adoptive parents could just as easily choose her to carry their child.



# First, Chapters 6 through 10; Second, Chapters 1 and 2

## First, Chapters 6 through 10; Second, Chapters 1 and 2 Summary

In the sixth chapter, Harmony says they are joined outside the store by Melody's friend, Zen Chen-Chavez, who says he hacked through Melody's MiNet password to discover her current location. Harmony notes the two obviously have some connection. When Zen makes a reference to a party, Melody becomes strained but Zen doesn't seem to notice it. Zen makes note of how Harmony is dressed in a long gown, gloves, and a veil and asks if she's allowed to take off the veil. She says she is but doesn't want to. Zen responds that some people believe the higher pregnancy rates of women into their twenties and thirties in Goodside is because the veils and gloves provide protection from the Virus.

In the seventh chapter, Melody says that four years earlier, blood tests on the students at Princeton Day Academy Junior School where Melody was a student confirmed that three-quarters of the students had the Virus. Melody says she'd watched a video about the Human Progressive Sterility Virus that made it clear artificial insemination and growth of eggs is not an option for those with the virus, and that those with the virus would become infertile around the age eighteen though some might not reach that point until about twenty. Melody says soon after watching that video, she'd signed a contract with Zen stating that they agreed to "bump with each other" if neither had parented a child within a specific timeframe.

Melody reveals the details of her pregnancy contract with the Jaydens. They are paying her college tuition and buying her a car as well as paying for a "tummy trim" following the birth. They are also paying her a "six-figure signing bonus." Melody says her adoptive parents, Ash and Ty Mayflower, were professionals on Wall Street who became economics professors. They saw the emerging trend of young couples to pay for surrogates and groomed Melody for her ability for that role. Melody says she'd agreed with them because it seemed the right thing to do and that she'd been the first of her friends to sign a professional contract.

In the eighth chapter, Harmony watches as Melody and Zen argue about the piece of paper though she doesn't know what's on it. Harmony says she knows Zen could be a source of information about Melody but Melody says she's going home. Harmony decides to stay at the mall and Zen stays with her.

In the ninth chapter, Melody talks via the MiNet to her best friend, Shoko, who is due to deliver her second child soon. Shoko became pregnant the first time with her then-boyfriend, Raimundo, without a contract for the child. A couple adopted that baby and signed Shoko and Raimundo for a contract to carry a second and third child for them.



Shoko calls the baby she's carrying "Burrito" and says she can't wait until the birth is over. The conversation turns to Melody's lack of pregnancy and she says Mr. Rayden is searching for the perfect male to father the child. Melody then shuts down her MiNet for the night.

In the tenth chapter, Harmony and Zen are at the U.S. Buff-A where Zen asks Harmony why she isn't yet married. Harmony says she'd become engaged at thirteen and had questioned her housesisters about their thoughts on consummating the marriage. When they responded with scripture, she continues, asking if they haven't considered the pain of the sexual act itself. Harmony's attitude - that she was valued only for her ability to have children - was seen as a problem and the young man married one of Harmony's housesisters, Annie, who is now pregnant with her second child. Zen and Harmony talk about other things, including Melody, and Zen gives Harmony a "Lost-and-Found card" she can activate in an emergency to summon Zen.

The section titled "Second" begins with a quote by Melody's parents, who say teenage girls can't be forced to carry children but should be rewarded for making the choice to do so. In the first chapter of this section, Harmony wakes the next morning feeling guilty that she's not "where I'm supposed to be." She hears a voice and discovers it's Lib on the 2Vu. Lib is Melody's "Reproduction Representative" who negotiated her pregnancy contract. Harmony opens the connection before Melody wakes and Lib mistakes her for Melody. Lib reveals that Jondoe has agreed to father a child with Melody and that he'll be there later today.

In the second chapter, Melody notes there's something wrong with Harmony and thinks she's homesick. Melody asks if Zen did something inappropriate to upset Harmony but she assures Melody that's not the case. Harmony makes breakfast and the girls are in the kitchen when Ash and Ty call. They don't know Harmony is there but check in on Melody every morning. Melody tells Harmony to remain out of sight. Melody notes that Ash and Ty were college professors until she signed her contract at which time they began to travel. During the conversation that morning, Ash and Ty say they have met a couple who want a child and have a son Melody's age. They say they want Melody to carry that couple's child. Melody points out she has a contract but Ash and Ty say they have already spent the money and that they have also borrowed against Melody's future pregnancies. Melody says they'd had her "reproductive potential appraised" when she was eleven and took out a five-year loan against that potential. Melody says that, thanks to her parents, she is a strong young woman and that she will have to be in order to get out of the mess they've landed her in.

## **First, Chapters 6 through 10; Second, Chapters 1 and 2 Analysis**

Melody seems to like Zen as more than a friend but she has been careful not to allow him to become intimate with her in their years of friendship, despite the fact that most young people have done so. Though Zen is very smart and of an age to parent a child, he is not suitable to be represented for a professional contract because he is short.





Melody's parents are on a trip when Harmony arrives. They are actually selfish people who have exploited Melody in order to make a better life for themselves. They will soon reveal they have none of the money they were paid on Melody's contract and that they have even borrowed against future pregnancies. An interesting aspect of this is that Lib and the Mayflowers are worried that Harmony's presence might devalue Melody but the Mayflowers also believe that Melody's story of bonding with her long-lost twin might help her into a better college. This is just another example of their efforts to work the system and exploit every opportunity they can find.



# Second, Chapters 3 through 6

## Second, Chapters 3 through 6 Summary

In the third chapter of *Second*, Harmony is horrified and enticed by the provocative outfits Melody tries on as she's getting ready for school. After Melody leaves, Harmony tries on one of the outfits and is amazed by the lightweight material and that her reflection looks exactly like Melody. In the fourth chapter, Zen is waiting for Melody when she goes out to get her bike. Melody insists that Zen promise not to tell anyone about Harmony.

In the fourth chapter, Harmony remembers that Lib had asked that she remain home that day for the arrival of Jondoe, a teen boy who is highly prized as an impregnator. Harmony also remembers that she'd nodded without saying anything. Lib had also predicted the pregnancy would become "famous." Harmony had fallen to her knees as the conversation with Lib ended and she says she is "humbled by the task that God had put before me." Harmony realizes that Lib, who knows Melody well, couldn't tell the difference and she decides she will impersonate Melody during the meeting with Jondoe. She believes the situation has been created to give her the opportunity to also save Jondoe.

In the fifth chapter, Melody arrives at school just as the bus for the pregnant students arrives. Melody says there are tensions between the girls who are pregnant under contract and those who are pregnant without pre-pregnancy contracts - the amateurs. There are references to Tocin, a drug that makes a person more willing to connect with a partner in order to have sex without a relationship, and Anti-Tocin which is designed to keep a girl from bonding with her unborn child. There is tension between Melody and a girl named Ventura Vida who is pregnant. Ventura wants to be the next president of the Pro/Am Pegg Alliance, a club designed to smooth relations between the professional and amateurs. Melody also wants to be president. Shoko says she believes Ventura will win the contest, slated for that day. Melody is reminded several times that morning that she isn't yet pregnant. She points out she was the first of her group to sign a contract and that it's not her fault the Jaydens haven't yet chosen a male to father the baby.

In the sixth chapter, Harmony answers the door and finds Jondoe standing on the steps. She says he looks "just like the Jesus in my dreams." In the seventh chapter, Melody and Shoko talk briefly about a friend named Malia who is in lockdown at the Shields Center after having a nervous breakdown following the delivery of her child. It's eventually revealed that Malia had stopped taking her Tocin and insisted on keeping the baby. Shoko says she can't imagine someone stopping the Tocin on purpose. Melody says she owes Shoko a debt of gratitude for taking her as a "peer coach" despite the fact that she was Malia's coach as well.



## Second, Chapters 3 through 6 Analysis

A brief look at what Harmony's life is like is seen in the third chapter when Harmony is watching Melody get ready for school. Harmony notes that her housesisters, Laura, Katie, and Emily, are all younger than she and that they would all three have been up and busy for hours by this time. They would have done their farm chores, including gathering eggs and milking cows, but they would have also already gathered wood for the fire. This is indicative of a very primitive lifestyle that is borne out later by other thoughts and memories of Harmony. Harmony also reveals that there are fourteen housebrothers and sisters in her home.

Jondoe is a professional who is highly sought after for fathering children. The fact that these babies can't be impregnated or grown artificially means that Jondoe is required to have sex with all these girls. His name is apparently symbolic of his anonymity and he is treated with the same deference as a modern-day music star or actor. His role and his motivations become complicated and it seems that he may also be having doubts about his actions.

Melody describes the animosity between the girls who are pregnant professionally and those who are "amateurs." She says the amateurs have sex with boyfriends or other partners of their own choosing and are scornful of the fact the professionals don't get to select their partners. The professionals say the amateurs are jealous because they aren't good enough to command a contract. The professionals also tout the amateurs' inability to resist the opportunity for sex.



# Second, Chapters 7 through 15

## Second, Chapters 7 through 15 Summary

In the seventh chapter, Harmony allows Jondoe to come inside. He has read her file and knows all about her. He is very handsome and Harmony is tongue-tied, a fact that makes him laugh. In the eighth chapter, Melody says there is a blind on the MiNet at school and that if it hadn't been for that blind, her parents would have known the day had been a complete academic loss. She says a group of cheerleaders - genetically engineered to be similar in size and appearance - had participated in a group sex party the previous night, all hoping to be pregnant though only one returned a positive test during first period. Zen passes notes during some of her classes and says he believes Harmony's marriage is a mistake and that forcing her to marry is wrong. He indicates Melody should get Harmony to remain with her but Melody says that Harmony might not want to stay and that Melody might not want her to stay.

In the ninth chapter, Harmony and Jondoe go into Melody's bedroom. He asks her to play the guitar for him and Harmony, who also plays, agrees. She sings religious songs and says that as she does she comes to focus on a stirring of passion. In the tenth chapter, Shoko says she realizes Melody is probably upset because Malia has been sending her MiNet messages. Melody says Malia is trying to warn her against making the same mistake.

In the eleventh chapter, Jondoe gives Harmony a white test strip that she holds under her tongue. He reads the results and reveals that she's fertile now, meaning he can impregnate her. In the twelfth chapter, Ventura Vida is speaking during that afternoon's meeting of the Pro/Am Pegg Alliance. She has formal control of the floor and refuses to give it up to let someone else speak. She says only twenty-five percent of the school's population is pregnant and that they need to improve on that. She goes on to say the Alliance is a way of encouraging all girls to put aside their "petty" differences, adding that it's their duty to the local and global communities. Melody whispers to Shoko that they might next be considering mandatory inseminations, like those being done in China, but Shoko doesn't react. Ventura then says that several boys are in demand but that they shouldn't get the attention due the girls. She points out that the boys could not create life alone and Melody wants to point out that the girls can't either. Venture ends her speech by saying the girls have to be willing to have children if they are to help the United States remain the most powerful nation in the world.

In the thirteenth chapter, Jondoe has revealed that he'll impregnate Harmony - who he still believes is Melody - that night but that he's had a busy day and that he needs "downtime to reload." He suggests they spend the day together and Harmony agrees.

In the fourteenth chapter, Melody leaves school and purposely ignores the hundreds of messages on MiNet offering condolences for having lost the Alliance election. Zen suggests there is too much focus on what the older generation wants for the world and



that it's up to "thinking people" to come up with alternatives. In the fifteenth chapter, Melody and Jondoe are met with dozens of cameras as they leave the house.

## Second, Chapters 7 through 15 Analysis

The MiNet is apparently a super-charged, interactive Internet accessed on the go through the use of contacts and earbuds. There are zones in which the MiNet is blinded, including the school. This MiNet is used by almost everyone, allowing users to track each other, talk and video conference. It seems to have completely taken the place of telephones as a means of everyday communication. Melody reveals that being without the MiNet during school hours makes it seem more like 1836 than 2036.

There are repeated references to Malia though the situation happens before the opening of this book and the entire story is not yet revealed. Malia had become angry after giving birth because her baby was taken away to its adoptive parents. She has obviously bonded with the baby and some say it's the result of having seen the ultrasound images of the baby which prompted her to stop taking the Anti-Tocin. Regardless of the cause, Melody later thinks back on the time after the delivery. Malia had woken from sedation and accused Melody of allowing the adults to take the baby away. Malia refers to her baby as Angelina while the other girls refer to their in more generic terms, such as "Burrito." This is a clear indication of her bonding with the baby, a fact Shoko can't comprehend. This brings up a larger moral question relating to the future parenting of these young mothers. Will the young women who give birth as teens and give up their babies so willingly later be able to bond with their adoptive children? While the drug does play a role, there's no doubt a social trend toward ignoring the natural tendency to bond and the reader has to wonder if there will be long-term effects of that trend.

Zen presents the idea that the world is becoming over-populated with "the wrong kind of people." This is an aspect of the situation that is mentioned only in passing but it seems the world is in danger of creating groups of children who will all be related. There is also a trend toward choosing only boys who have specific traits as fathers. Melody notes that her height makes her more valuable and Zen's height is the main reason he can't pursue a career as a professional.



# Second, Chapters 16 through Third, Chapter 6

## Second, Chapters 16 through Third, Chapter 6 Summary

In the sixteenth chapter, Melody and Zen arrive at Melody's house to discover that Harmony is gone though her belongings - including her veil - are still in the guest room. Melody immediately fears that Harmony will be running around town, touting scripture. She knows people will believe she's Melody. Melody scans MiNet, looking for something that might lead her to Harmony's whereabouts, and sees what she believes to be spam from Jondoe. The messages from Jondoe indicate that he's taken with her and finds her "special and surprising." There is also several messages from Lib, all very cryptic, and Melody begins to be suspicious that something is happening.

Just then there's a knock at the door and Melody expects it to be Harmony. She's surprised to find Ram standing there instead. Ram reaches out to hug Melody, thinking she's Harmony. Melody confirms that she and Harmony are identical twins and Zen informs Ram that "your fiancé" isn't at the house. Ram then says that Harmony is actually his wife.

The Third section begins with a quote from the "Fox and Freedom Party," which is not mentioned again in an address called "Mission: Maternity." The quote indicates opposition to paying girls to have babies because reproduction is a patriotic duty. In the first chapter, Ram reveals that he'd tracked down the cab driver who took Harmony from Goodside and that Harmony had used her wedding ring as payment for the ride. Ram says he'd known Harmony would go to Melody because she had no other options. Melody wants to get Ram talking but Ram is reluctant. Zen gives Ram a "vitamin" which is actually a Tocin. Melody wonders why Zen has the drug and who he planned to use it with.

In the second chapter, Jondoe and Harmony arrive at the arcade and find dozens more cameras flashing. Harmony realizes her first impressions - that the lights were a sign of the Rapture - are incorrect. She's dazed as Jondoe urges her to pose for the cameras and smiles adoringly at him.

In the third chapter, Ram is obviously relaxed and begins talking. He says Harmony had believed she and Melody would meet, that Melody would immediately agree to move to Goodside, and that they would live together there. He also reveals that Harmony will be shunned upon her return to Goodside for having ventured out alone. He says the length of time for the shunning will depend on the Council and that he was shunned for three months once but won't tell them why he was punished. He then says he and Harmony have been married three days and Melody realizes Harmony ran away the day after the



wedding. Ram then says that he and Harmony might not be "really married in the eyes of God."

In the fourth chapter, Jondoe and Harmony leave the arcade without going in, moving on to a restaurant. Harmony realizes everyone is staring at them and that thousands of people are "watching live on the MiNet." Jondoe's security team keeps most away. Jondoe presents the idea that some girls refuse to become pregnant, always on the lookout for a better deal, and find themselves too old to conceive.

In the fifth chapter, Ram says he and Harmony didn't consummate their marriage. Melody thinks about her own attitude regarding the sexual act. She says she isn't repressed but that her parents have her scheduled for so many activities that she simply doesn't have time to think about it. The conversation is interrupted by her parents, screaming through the 2Vu.

In the sixth chapter, Harmony zones out and Jondoe believes she is on the MiNet. She tells him she isn't but he obviously is. He says most of his followers believe their pregnancy will be famous. He then says that Melody's poll numbers shot up in the Bible belt when she said "Oh my grace" to one of Jondoe's comments, but that her rating went down on each coast. He goes on to say younger girls like Harmony's hair in a braid as she's wearing it now and that he's watching live feed of the two of them at the restaurant. The crowd becomes more unruly and louder and the two decide to leave. There's a bit of a scuffle as they depart and Harmony becomes determined to reveal her identity.

## **Second, Chapters 16 through Third, Chapter 6 Analysis**

There's an interesting scene soon after Ram's arrival at Melody's house that is downplayed and the significance only later becomes apparent. Ram is obviously worried about Harmony and Zen tries to get Melody to hug him in order to comfort him. Melody doesn't understand Zen's signs and he finally tells her that Ram needs a hug. Ram declines, saying it isn't right because he's married. Melody obviously wouldn't have hugged him anyway and she tells Zen that he should hug Ram. Ram is "horrified" and Melody takes it as a sign that Ram is uncomfortable with male-to-male contact. When Zen slaps Ram on the back, Ram reacts to even that. The truth is that Ram is obviously homosexual and is repressing those feelings. Ram later says that he was once shunned for three months but doesn't say what he was punished for.

In the second chapter, Jondoe makes a reference to "charity work" in connection with Melody's name. He later reveals that he does one impregnation each year for charity and that the Jaydens could not have afforded him unless he'd agreed to do this for free.

Jondoe points out another aspect of the crisis that is only briefly mentioned - that of the desire for extending bloodlines. He says some parents of girls nearing the age of infertility who have not yet had babies are so anxious for their daughters to conceive

that they pay professionals to impregnate them. He doesn't say whether these parents are intent on raising the babies as part of their families or are just anxious for their bloodlines to continue.

Harmony's reaction when Jondoe calls her Melody as they are leaving the restaurant is one of conflict. She is obviously enamored of Jondoe who she says looks like the Jesus of her dreams. He is handsome and represents many of the things forbidden to her, which is at least part of the reason she's probably interested. Harmony's determination to reveal her identity seems to have little to do with doing the right thing and more to do with the fact that she wants him to like her as she likes him.





# Third, Chapter 7, through Rebirth, Chapter 6

## Third, Chapter 7, through Rebirth, Chapter 6 Summary

In the seventh chapter, Ty and Ash have seen footage of Melody with Jondoe and are congratulating Melody on her approval ratings. Zen has checked in by this time and realizes what's happening. He congratulates them on Melody's success and then turns off the MiNet and disconnects so they can't call back. When they are no longer able to see Melody's parents, he tells Melody to check in on the MiNet and she realizes that Harmony is pretending to be Melody.

In the eighth chapter, Jondoe says they have done all the promotional settings as expected and that the rest of the night is theirs alone. Jondoe reveals several things from Melody's file and Harmony realizes this is an opportunity to learn more about her twin. She asks Jondoe to tell her other things he's memorized from the file. He says that Melody's heroes are the team of scientists who discovered the cure for HIV and that she wants to become a scientist as well. Her goal is to find either a cure for the Virus or a way to artificially grow babies, though Jondoe says he doesn't fully understand the terminology and wonders if she realizes that would put people like Jondoe and Melody "out of business."

They arrive at a small motel called Inn in the Woods where there is no MiNet. Jondoe says the press won't be able to find them here. Harmony asks Jondoe why he is in this business and he seems surprised by the question. He says everyone assumes it's because he likes the sex. He says he can have sex whenever he wants and that he enjoys being paid so well, but that also isn't the motivating factor. He says he likes being famous but that the bigger concern is that he's "passionate about helping aspirational couples who want an upmarket pregg." He says he believes this is his purpose and that he should continue as long as he is able. Harmony says she feels the same but "about spreading the Word of God."

Harmony then says she isn't "the girl in the file" but Jondoe takes that to mean she's more complex than the words on the paper can make her seem. He says he is also not the person in his file and asks if she'd like to know who he really is. When Harmony says she does want to know, he says he wants to take her somewhere else.

Rebirth, the final section of the book, begins with the words from a song called "Bumpin.'" The lyrics are sexually suggestive. In the first chapter, Jondoe wakes Harmony upon their arrival at his parents' home. She learns that his name is Gabriel and his parents are ecstatic to see him. In the second chapter, Melody knows that except for Harmony's intervention, she might already have been impregnated by Jondoe. Zen points out that Jondoe has probably been messaging her during the time he's spent with Harmony thinking he was with Melody. Melody realizes all the messages



she'd believed to be spam were from Jondoe. Melody checks her latest messages and discovers that Jondoe is sending her Bible verses about procreation. Melody sends Jondoe a message, saying he's with her twin and identifying herself as the real Melody. He doesn't respond to her insistent messages.

In the third chapter, Harmony watches as Jondoe's parents hug him. She notes that her family would never participate in such an overt display of affection. Their home has a great pieces of religious décor, including Bible verses inscribed on the table. Harmony is relieved to know that his parents are religious. In the fourth chapter, Melody remembers the past two years of careful chastity in order to achieve this important impregnation. She says she's denied herself even the first kiss in order to ensure things didn't get out of hand and watched as others achieved their dreams. Melody contacts Lib and they figure out he'd talked to Harmony that morning, thinking she was Melody.

In the fifth chapter, Harmony tries to come to terms with the fact that Jondoe is involved in such a sin-filled life but his parents seem proud of him. In the sixth chapter, Melody reveals that she'd known about Harmony several years earlier because Lib had discovered that part of her file. Lib had eliminated the reference from Melody's file but couldn't access Harmony's to eliminate it there. She remembers being enthralled by the idea of a sister but Lib had reminded her this girl could deliver a child exactly like Harmony's, and that she might do so for free if she felt a religious calling toward that end. For the first time, Melody considers that Harmony might not have come to Otherside in order to convince Melody to return to Goodside, but that Harmony might actually have been trying to become more like Melody. By the end of the conversation, Melody knows Lib has given up on the idea of having Melody deliver a child for the Jaydens, and that he sees the potential for profit in the pregnancy bound to occur between Harmony and Jondoe. Just then Melody gets a message that Shoko's water has broken and she's headed to the hospital.

## **Third, Chapter 7, through Rebirth, Chapter 6 Analysis**

When Jondoe and Harmony are traveling from the inn to the home of his parents, Harmony falls asleep. When she wakes, Jondoe says she was talking in her sleep. She's concerned about what she might have said and thinks back on her dream, which offers some insight into her relationship with Ram. She says she knows Ram will never be able to perform as a husband and that she also knows the Council was aware of that fact about Ram. She says the Council chose to make her marry Ram because she is also an "unteachable spirit." Harmony says she hopes Ram doesn't come looking for her and that her decision to leave may help him accept his true nature. She says that if that can happen, she's done a good thing.

Harmony's lack of direction during the hours she's with Jondoe is evident in several of her thoughts and actions. She thinks about some brief moments of closeness with her mother and says she might someday have a daughter of her own. She says if she does, she might point out to her daughter that she was forced to marry a man even though she didn't love him. She indicates she won't make the same decision for her daughter

but then thinks that she might return to Goodside. It seems that a daughter born in Goodside will be forced to abide by the rules of the Council as Harmony is.



# Rebirth, Chapters 7 through 13

## Rebirth, Chapters 7 through 13 Summary

In the seventh chapter, Harmony is sharing a meal of macaroni and cheese with Jondoe and his parents. Jondoe's parents ask if Harmony has siblings. She says she does but isn't certain whether to count Ram as her housebrother now that he is her husband. She asks Jondoe if he has brothers or sisters and he says he has brother named Joshua who was "also my first client."

In the eighth chapter, Melody arrives at the birth center but notes that it's a difficult trip. She remembers Malia and her determination to keep her baby after giving birth. Malia's emotional outburst after the baby was taken away included a suicide attempt. In the ninth chapter, Harmony learns that Jondoe's older brother, Joshua, had married a girl named Hannah but they were too old to have children by the time they wed. Jondoe was fourteen and Hannah's sister, Diana, was sixteen. Jondoe's parents say they now have a grandchild with a second on the way. Melody finds she can't remain quiet and says that the sexual act outside wedlock is a sin. Jondoe's parents counter, saying "sex is Biblical" and that humans are told to procreate. Jondoe says that as humans, they have to find ways to use their "God-given urges" for God's glory, and that he sees this as no different than scientists creating life in a lab - a practice that was accepted prior to the Virus. He goes on to say the children now are created with a four-person union between the biological and adoptive parents. His father says Jondoe's work is a call for God's will. Harmony realizes Jondoe's parents know why she's there and that they are pleased.

In the tenth chapter, Melody notes the huge sign at the entrance of the Ivy Obstetrics and Birthing Center that indicates the babies are not kept at the center but are immediately removed after birth - the result of a trend to steal newborns. Melody gives her name at security and is immediately flooded with requests for her autograph. Madison Lutz-Lewis, manager of the center, greets Melody inside the center and urges her to consider giving birth to her own baby here. Melody insists on seeing Shoko but is told Shoko is in the operating room. Melody believes this is an indication Shoko is having a cesarean. She learns it's more serious than this but isn't given details. In the waiting room, she finds Destinee, Shoko's pregnancy broker. She says the baby is fine but that Shoko won't be able to have another child.

In the eleventh chapter, Harmony and Jondoe go to his bedroom, which he says is just as it was when he left home. She expects to be nervous but enjoys the intimacy. In the twelfth chapter, Melody notes that girls are told hemorrhaging is possible after childbirth but that they are really in no danger and shouldn't worry about it. She learns this happened to Shoko and that Shoko has had a hysterectomy. Melody settles in for the night on the couch in the waiting room, determined to be there when Shoko wakes. As Destinee leaves the room, she tells Melody she would have "sealed the deal with



Jondoe" much earlier. In the thirteenth chapter, Harmony wakes and notes that she is naked but not ashamed of it. She tells Jondoe she has a twin.

## Rebirth, Chapters 7 through 13 Analysis

Harmony reveals more about herself and her life during her meeting with Jondoe's parents. She notes that she has been taught to do what the Council says and that she's supposed to accept the Church's teachings without question. The problem is that Harmony is an intelligent girl and her natural tendency toward learning means she's anxious to read. Given little opportunity to read anything other than the Bible, Harmony is an avid student of God's word. When she dares question something, she's chastised. She's fully expected to believe whatever she's told without any conversation and this is apparently a problem for her.

Destinee appears only for the brief time that she and Melody are in the waiting room together. She has a distinct lack of concern for Shoko and points out repeatedly that the baby is fine before revealing Shoko's condition. An important issue facing the pregnancy brokers is seen in her statement as she's leaving the hospital. She has brokered a deal with the adoptive parents and Shoko for this child with an option on a third baby. Shoko's situation is different from Melody's in that she didn't have a contract with this couple prior to giving birth. The first baby was the result of a pregnancy between Shoko and her boyfriend and was essentially sold to the highest bidder. The adoptive parents wanted this child to have a biological sibling and contracted for a second baby with Shoko and her boyfriend, though they had broken up by that time. It's noted the second pregnancy was awkward but the two apparently had no problem creating a second baby. The broker has an option for a third pregnancy although Shoko is nearing eighteen and there's no guarantee that she could conceive again. As she's leaving, Destinee says she has to convince the adoptive parents that Shoko's emergency hysterectomy is not a breach of contract. This is just another example of the way the girls are treated as nothing more than brood mares without any value other than their ability to reproduce.



# Rebirth, Chapters 14 through 19

## Rebirth, Chapters 14 through 19 Summary

In the fourteenth chapter, Melody wakes in the waiting room by a girl named Freya. Melody notes the girl is very young believes she's wearing a Fun Bump but discovers the little girl is actually about to give birth. Melody learns that Shoko is now allowed visitors. In the fifteenth chapter, Jondoe says he understands that Harmony pretends to have a twin named Melody in order to endure the shame of what she's done. He says he does the same thing. Jondoe says he doesn't really know what to say because he has accepted Harmony's "Godfreaky" side and that she's now talking to him about being a twin. Harmony is concerned at his choice of words but then they have sex again.

In the sixteenth chapter, Shoko is sitting up and dismisses the fact that she almost died, demanding details about Jondoe. Melody explains that she has a twin and Shoko eventually accepts the explanation. As she is leaving, Melody realizes she's being carefully watched. She tells Mrs. Lutz-Lewis she won't be needing the services of the center because she isn't pregnant. She says she and Jondoe have had sex but only because they are in love, and that they used a condom. She says this will certainly bring Jondoe out of hiding.

In the seventeenth chapter, Harmony wakes again, this time alone in the bed and she hears Jondoe talking to Lib. Lib accuses Jondoe of becoming a "Godfreak" but Jondoe says he'd done what was needed in order to impregnate Harmony, having just learned from Lib that the twin he had sex with really isn't Melody. Jondoe assures Lib that Harmony is pregnant and that no harm has come of his pretending to be what she wanted from him. Harmony knows she is pregnant and realizes that Jondoe doesn't love her or God.

In the eighteenth chapter, Melody has warned Zen to get out of the house, knowing it will be overrun with press as soon as she makes the announcement that she and Jondoe are in love. They meet at the children's section of the library where real paper books are stored though no one uses them anymore. Zen reveals that he has a condom.

In the nineteenth chapter, Harmony hears a clip played by Lib in which Melody claims she and Jondoe are in love. Jondoe is furious, believing it will affect his fame. Lib says there are two options available at this point. The first is to tell the Jaydens the truth but assure them it doesn't matter because Harmony and Melody are identical and the second is to hide both girls away until the birth. Jondoe offers a third option - that he'll impregnate Melody and allow Harmony to go about her life. Lib says he doesn't believe Harmony will keep quiet because she has no incentive to do so. Harmony jumps from Jondoe's window and uses the Lost-and-Found card Zen had given her.



## Rebirth, Chapters 14 through 19 Analysis

In the fourteenth chapter, Melody is upset by the sight of Freya who Melody says is probably still in elementary school. Melody wonders why and how a girl so young has ended up pregnant and wonders if there will come a time when very young girls giving birth will be the norm. Melody recalls a time when it was unacceptable for girls to contract for their pregnancies but that Melody had blazed the way to overcome that social hurdle. She says Zen believes the Chinese are already using growth hormones to bring their children to maturity faster and fears that might also become the accepted norm. The idea of a young girl - age eleven or twelve - giving birth seems completely against the laws of nature to the modern reader but it should be noted this was accepted practice centuries ago. It should also be noted that Melody says girls like Freya will likely be expected to give birth every year until they are no longer able to reproduce. An interesting aspect of this is that girls like Melody and Shoko tout their contracts as a means to earn the money for college and to set themselves up for adulthood. Melody says it's not right for a girl to have to give birth every year of her teenage life in order to go to college.



# Rebirth, Chapters 20 through 28

## Rebirth, Chapters 20 through 28 Summary

In the twentieth chapter, Zen reveals that he has not been running around with cheerleaders as he's led Melody to believe. He says he has actually come to realize he can't stand being near her anymore without having her for his own. Melody wants to hear the rest of his confession but just then he's alerted to Harmony's use of the card and stays they have to go. In the twenty-first chapter, Zen and Melody find Harmony.

In the twenty-second chapter, Melody wishes they could communicate without talking but says that connection doesn't exist. They begin to talk about their feelings and Harmony admits that she'd originally thought she wanted to bring Harmony home with her, hoping that the two of them making a home together would fill a need for love Harmony has been missing. Melody confesses she doesn't want to have a baby and admits it's a relief to say so.

In the twenty-third chapter, Zen tells Harmony it's possible for her to remain in the secular community away from the Church without turning her back on God. She says she hates that the Church is constantly telling her what to believe and refusing to answer when she questions the commands. She thinks about her family and wonders if her mother would really miss her if she didn't return. She realizes Melody would never fit in at Goodside. Melody and Zen take Harmony to Melody's house. They tell her to talk to Ram and promise that Melody will return soon to help Harmony decide what to do next. Harmony says she wants a life that's different from the life she's had both for herself and for her baby.

In the twenty-fourth chapter, Zen points out that Harmony's pregnancy may mean that Melody don't have to fulfill her contract. Zen is working on a plan for "damage control" and says he'll perpetuate the rumor that Melody was spammed and never said she and Jondoe were in love. Melody asks Zen if he'd had the Tocin and the condom to convince Melody to have sex. Zen denies it, saying he'd planned to use the Tocin himself so that he could have sex with one of the cheer leaders. He says he'd finally accepted that Melody wasn't going to be his first sexual experience. In the twenty-fifth chapter, Harmony sees Ram and knows that he's the "only person in Goodside who is more lost than I am."

In the twenty-sixth chapter, Zen and Melody kiss and he says he loves her. In the twenty-eighth chapter, Harmony learns that Ram was at Melody's house when Melody discovers that Harmony had gone with Jondoe. She asks Ram what Melody's reaction was and he says Melody had said she wished Harmony had "never been born." Harmony says it's a relief to finally know for sure that she doesn't deserve Melody's forgiveness. She remembers the rumors about Ram, that he prefers the company of boys to that of girls and that he's soft. She also knows that having Ram for a husband and living her life at Goodside is the punishment she deserves. She tells Ram they are





expecting a baby. He starts to say they didn't consummate the marriage but she cuts him off. She notes that she can't possibly send him back to Goodside alone and that she can't expect to live with Ram in Otherside because there are too many temptations to be unfaithful. She notes that Ram needs her and that returning to Goodside with him is the only option. She says they have to go home together and he agrees.

In the final chapter, Melody arrives home to find Harmony and Ram have left. Jondoe arrives at the house wanting to know where Harmony has gone. He says Harmony must have heard his lies to Lib and that's why she ran away from his house. He says he felt "God laying a love for her in my heart," but that he couldn't reveal that to Lib. Jondoe reveals that Lib is working to sell the Jaydens on Harmony's baby instead and Melody says she doesn't care. Melody considers that Jondoe might be lying in order to gain access to Melody because of Lib's deal for Meldoy's baby. She also considers that perhaps Jondoe and Melody had something special and she suggests they might be able to "help each other." Jondoe hugs her in gratitude.

## **Rebirth, Chapters 20 through 28 Analysis**

There is a bit of a coming of age theme seen as Harmony comes to terms with her actions and her life though Harmony remains confused about exactly how to achieve her goals. Harmony has left Goodside before and has at least some knowledge of the life led by the people of Otherside. However, until getting to know Melody, she had never given any real thought to how those people actually live. On the way back to Melody's house after having sex with Jondoe, Harmony notes that she was naïve to think that Melody would give up her life in favor of the life at Goodside.

Both girls are products of their environments to some degree though both are also intelligent and able to think for themselves.

The twist of the plot comes when Harmony experiences the guilt of having betrayed Melody. Zen warns Melody that Harmony's church upbringing is ingrained and that she might do something selfless in her desire to do what's right. Zen expects that Harmony will offer to give up her baby to fulfill Melody's contract.



# Characters

## Melody Mayflower

This is the sixteen-year-old girl who has been raised with an eye toward making the perfect pregnancy for money. Her entire life has been mapped out for her and she has never been allowed much free time. She plays soccer, does well academically, plays guitar, and has been taught to be socially adept. Melody is marketed for her uniqueness but that's threatened by the fact that she has a twin sister. Melody is the first of her friends to act professionally with regards to pregnancy but she begins to have second thoughts about the choice. This wavering seems to be partly because she cares deeply for Zen. Melody seems scornful of the idea of church and religion when she first meets Harmony. She also clings desperately to her uniqueness until after she meets Harmony. Melody is, in many ways, a strong character though she has spent most of her life being manipulated by her parents. This willingness to be manipulated may seem a sign of weakness but it may also be a sign that she's thrown herself into realizing a dream she believes to be her own. Melody is a loyal friend, more so than many of her peers. When Shoko almost dies, Melody remains at the hospital overnight to be sure she'll be available if Shoko needs her. When Melody is able to see Shoko for the first time after the delivery, she can't let go of the fact that Shoko almost died during the birth.

## Harmony Smith

The sixteen-year-old twin sister of Melody, Harmony is the weaker of the twins at birth and is raised in a religious environment and taught that she has a single role in life - to become a wife and mother. Harmony is a strong character and questions both her role and the teachings of the church. She is also longing for a physical attachment with someone and is excited to learn that she has a twin because she believes a relationship with Melody will fill that gap in her life. Harmony's motivations seem unclear from the beginning and she is the more complex character. She initially seems to be leaving her family and marriage only temporarily in an effort to bring Melody to God. As she experiences life outside her community, she soon realizes she likes some aspects of the life. Harmony's reasons for stepping into Melody's role with Jondoe are also unclear from the beginning and it seems she's trying to save Melody from what she sees as a sin. It's later revealed that she might have been seeking to fulfill her own need for physical closeness by having sex with Jondoe but she may also have been trying to save Ram. Melody's decision to simply return to the church community with Ram seems to indicate the latter. Many of her motivations, as well as the fate of both girls, is left to the imagination of the reader.



## Zen Chen-Chavez

Harmony's best friend, Zen is too short to be sought to father babies for couples. Asked why he hasn't taken growth hormones, he cites the fact that it kills brain cells. Zen is in love with Melody and says that he always has been though he knows she refuses to have sex with him because of her contract.

## Ram

The young man who marries Harmony, he is from the church community but is apparently homosexual and unable to consummate their marriage. Ram hints at having done something that prompted shunning from the elders of the church but doesn't say what that was. Ram seems devastated by Harmony's decision to run away from him immediately after their marriage.

## Jondoe

Really named Gabriel, he is a seventeen-year-old who is considered one of the most desirable men on the planet for creating pregnancies. Jondoe is very famous and seems self-centered though he may have fallen for Harmony. The book ends before it's clear whether he was sincere about his feelings for Harmony or if it was another part of his act.

## Shoko Weiss

Melody's best friend, Shoko is expecting her second baby and has asked Melody to be her peer coach. Shoko is somewhat flighty but is totally dedicated to the idea of pregnancy for money. She's immature in many ways. When Melody points out several times that Shoko almost died during her second delivery, she doesn't want to talk about it.

## Ventura Vida

Another of the girls in the Pro/Am Pregg Alliance, Ventura is snotty and doesn't like Melody. Ventura is elected president after giving a rousing speech that has most members of the organization on their feet.

## Lib

The broker who has arranged the contract for Melody's child, he is anxious only to make money and cares nothing for the human side of his business. Lib is superficial and self-serving, attributes that are also seen in Shoko's broker.



## Ashley and Tyler Mayflower

Melody's parents, they have doctorate degrees and saw the commercialization of pregnancies as a trend long before it was legal or popular. They raise Melody from infancy with an eye toward a profitable pregnancy but then reveal that they'd borrowed money against her future pregnancies to the point that they are deeply in debt by the time Harmony shows up.

## Malia

Another of Melody's good friends, she stops taking the drug designed to prevent her bonding with the baby during pregnancy and loses control when she discovers the baby has been taken away. Malia tries to commit suicide.



## **Objects/Places**

### **Babiez R U**

This is the store in the mall where Melody and Harmony shop soon after Harmony arrives at Melody's house.

### **Goodside**

This is the religious community where Harmony lives.

### **Otherside**

This is the community where Melody lives.

### **Meadowlands Mallplex**

This is the name of the shopping center where Zen and Harmony first become acquainted.

### **Plain and Simple**

This is the name of the store that advertises modest clothing.

### **Good Shepherd Child Placement Services**

This is the organization that put the twins up for adoption after they were abandoned by their mother.

### **Pregg**

This is the term used to indicate either pregnancy or the unborn baby.

### **Princeton Day Academy**

This is the school where Melody and Zen attend.

## **Human Progressive Sterility Virus**

This is the disease that renders most adults incapable of reproduction.

## **Ivy Obstetrics and Birthing Center**

This is where both Malia and Shoko give birth.



# Themes

## Nature vs. Nurture

The fact that Melody and Harmony are twins separated at birth prompts the age old question of "Nature vs. Nurture." Melody is raised by parents who are focused entirely on providing the best of material possessions for themselves and Melody. They see Melody's ability to procreate as the surest way to earn huge amounts of money in order to ensure a comfortable lifestyle. Melody seldom has a moment that isn't taken up by tutoring or practicing of some skill her parents see as an opportunity to increase Melody's value as a surrogate. Harmony, on the other hand, has been raised by parents who focus entirely on the Godly way of life prescribed by the church. Harmony has been protected from worldly things in an effort to keep her attention squarely on her religious teachings. Despite the fact that the girls have been raised in vastly different environments, they each have the ability and desire to think for themselves and each rebels in her own way against the life others have set out for her. In Harmony's case, she steps out to find a way to fill the gap she feels is missing from her life. This gap is created by the lack of physical contact and the church's prohibition of shows of affection. Harmony craves that affection and believes having her sister live with her might fill that gap. In Melody's case, that rebellion takes the form of the decision to refuse to become a surrogate. The girls do seem content to remain or return to their former lifestyles though each seems intent on making changes to their lives in order to attain personal happiness.

## The quest for status

This is by far the most complicated theme of the story with many facets playing a role. Girls who offer themselves up as surrogates are doing so mainly to boost either their financial or social status, or sometimes both. The girls who manage to have several babies are revered and rewarded by parents anxious for those babies. Being pregnant is such a status symbol that a company has marketed "fun bumps" meant to simulate pregnancy. Melody's parents are among the first to fully grasp the idea that girls can be marketed as surrogates for huge financial gains. They raise Melody to be the epitome of a perfect surrogate and she is promised a "six-figure" payment upon delivery of a baby. Many of the young girls follow the Mayflowers' lead, signing on for huge payoffs that often include money, cars, and a tummy tuck at the end of the pregnancy. In this futuristic world, being pregnant is not only accepted, but desired. Some young men are sought after as biological fathers. One of these is Jondoe who is revered and followed like a modern-day music star or professional athlete. An interesting aspect of this theme is seen in Harmony. While she is obviously not seeking the same things as Melody or Melody's parents, Harmony is seeking a specific status among her church members. She becomes pregnant and returns home with her husband who is incapable of producing a child, willing to undergo the shunning that she knows will occur in her desire for the status as a mother and wife.



## The need for procreation

The human race is in danger in this futuristic setting. Roughly three-fourths of the population has a virus that eliminates their ability to procreate after reaching adulthood, somewhere around eighteen to twenty years of age. The obvious impact is a huge drop in births that literally puts the human race in danger of extinction. In an effort to deal with the problem, teenage girls are encouraged to have sex and put their babies on the market for sale though many babies are simply offered up for adoption. The medical profession has answered demands to solve many of the problems inherent with this new order, including a drug given during pregnancy that eliminates the natural bond formed between mother and child during pregnancy. An interesting aspect of the medical technology is that artificial pregnancies or test tube babies are not an option though the reasons are never fully explained. The desire of adults for a child is an important part of this theme. In Melody's case, the couple who have purchased her not-yet-conceived child have chosen her because she looks very much like the wife. Melody would have been impregnated at a much younger age except they are searching for a young man with a specific set of traits, including a resemblance to the husband. The book begins with a statement by the fictional United States President in which he states the United States can claim the coveted distinction of the highest number of teen pregnancies. It's noted that some countries are condoning pregnancies as soon as they are of an age to become pregnant. An important aspect of this is that teenage girls are taught about delivery of the baby with the assurance they are not in any danger. Melody sees that for the sham it is when Shoko almost dies after her second pregnancy.





# Style

## Point of View

The story is written from the alternating perspectives of Melody Mayflower and Harmony Smith, who are twins separated at birth. The story is presented in first person with a perspective limited to that of the twin who has the control in that chapter. This limitation is somewhat confusing in that the twins don't always reveal everything there is to know about themselves. This is especially true of Harmony who doesn't reveal early on that she has already married or her true motivations for leaving her home. For example, Harmony goes with Jondoe when he believes he is about to impregnate Melody. She seems to take this step in an effort to save Melody from becoming pregnant out of wedlock, an act she seems to believe would be a sin. Melody never fully outlines her motivations or thought process and it's left to the reader to determine why she actually does go away with Jondoe. Melody's thoughts are related more clearly. She begins to doubt the decision to serve as a surrogate and her doubts are revealed as they occur to her. Melody seems open and honest in her thoughts and actions while Harmony is the less reliable of the two narrators. The girls do not explain each moment from their own perspectives but often focus on different events. For example, Melody is asleep when Harmony takes the call from Lib. That call is presented from Harmony's perspective. Only much later does Melody reveal that she thought she heard Harmony talking to someone but that Harmony denied it.

## Setting

The story is set in Pennsylvania in the future. There are two main overall settings, the cities of Goodside and Otherside. The names of the cities themselves are symbolic. It's evident that the people of Goodside are church-going, God-fearing people who believe the actions of those in "Otherside" are against the laws of God. The two settings are not described to a great degree and the only actions that occur in Goodside are those of Harmony's thoughts and memories. From those, it appears that Goodside is somewhat primitive without conveniences typically available during this time period. Harmony says the teachings of her church is that conveniences allow for idle time and that idle time is not conducive to a Godly lifestyle. She mentions wood-burning stoves and other chores that indicate the community is probably very rural with a focus on agriculture. Otherside, by comparison, is very urban. There are many conveniences including the MiNet which is an Internet connection depending on earbuds and contacts as a means of total connection. Within the overall setting of Otherside are several specific settings. Melody's house, her school, the mall, the birthing center, and the home of Jondoe's parents are all settings for specific actions. The majority of these are described only to a very limited degree. The majority of the descriptions are presented only as ways to drive the action and further the story. For example, at the birthing center Melody notes the signs that state the babies are not on the premises and the two checkpoints she has to



pass through to gain entry. The home of Jondoe's parents is described because of the number of Christian references in the décor.

## Language and Meaning

The story is written with a great many words and phrases that have no real meaning in today's world. This language, designed specifically for this story, is sometimes confusing and seems to make the plot more convoluted than it has to be. It seems the author is seeking for a level of realism that might not exist without that language. For example, there are references to "the pregg," indicating the unborn child. There are references to "pregging," referring to the sexual act. There are overt references to sexual acts though some of these are hidden behind the language. One example is seen in the references to Zen as an "everything but." The reference clearly means that Zen is participating in all the sexual acts with the exception of the actual intercourse. The word "bump" also refers to the sexual act as well as the resulting pregnancy. There is a great deal of symbolism in the story. Jondoe is the "stage" name for the man who is hired to impregnate Melody but who impregnates Harmony by mistake. The name indicates he is a generic donor whose true identity is not known. The names of two of the main settings are also symbolic - Goodside and Otherside. The overall tone of the story is one of hope and the reader is led to expect that each of the characters will get what they want most in life.

## Structure

The story is divided into four sections titled First, Second, Third, and Rebirth. The first section has ten chapters, the second has eighteen, the third has eight, and the final section has twenty-eight. Chapters vary greatly in length. The first section covers the first meeting of Harmony and Melody, their impressions of each other, and introductions of several of the main characters and themes. The second covers the call from Lib in which he meets Harmony believing she's Melody, Harmony's meeting of Jondoe, and Melody's discovery that Harmony is already married. The third includes the date Harmony goes on with Jondoe and Melody's further questioning of Ram. The final chapter includes Harmony's impregnation, Shoko's delivery, Harmony's decision to return to the church community and Melody's decision not to become a paid surrogate. Each section begins with a quote by an imaginary person from the book. For example, the first section begins with a quote from the United States President in which it's noted the US once had more teen pregnancies than any other country and that could be the case again. Another begins with a quote by Melody's parents in which they say girls should never be forced to be surrogates but those who choose to become surrogates should be "richly rewarded." The sections are further divided into chapters. Each chapter is titled either Melody or Harmony depending on the twin who has the perspective in that chapter. The chapter titles are written in a dark color with the name of the other twin in a lighter color, upside down, and below the title. The use of only the girls' names repeating throughout the book is somewhat confusing. In this study guide,

each chapter is identified by the section in which it appears, the name of the twin whose perspective is seen and a number that is used only for the sake of clarity in this guide.



## Quotes

"I mean, how do you think you'd feel if you opened the door at seven o'clock in the morning to see your exact double standing on your front porch, dressed all in white, clutching a shiny Bible in one hand and a banged-up suitcase in the other? I'm lucky I didn't terminate right then and there" (Chapter 3).

"Four years ago today, mandatory blood tests confirmed that 75 percent of sixth through eighth graders at Princeton Day Academy Junior School had been infected with the Virus. Most parents hoped it was the unfunniest prank ever" (Chapter 7).

"The Church promises that there's no greater way for young women to please God than to take the sacraments. But the closer I got to my own marriage and maternity, the more I felt like I was only as praiseworthy as my healthy womb" (Chapter 10).

"They didn't ask a single question as to the impact such an astounding discovery would have on me emotionally, but immediately started debating the impact Harmony could have on me financially" (Chapter 2).

"And that's when they tell me that it's not about the money that they spent and don't have anymore, it's the money they spent that they never had. 'We borrowed against the equity on your Eggs' (Chapter 2).

"We can't all be like Zorah Harding, who, as we all know, is due to make her ninth and tenth deliveries any moment now!' The room breaks into applause for the most famously prolific eighteen-year-old in America" (Chapter 14).

"I'm trying my best to be patient, to remind myself that it isn't his fault he's one haybale short of whatever haybales are used for" (Chapter 3).

"There is no way his God-having parents would so happily welcome their son home if they had any idea he was getting rich from premarital sex and sin" (Chapter 5).

"There's no closer biological relationship between two people and I just knew that this sister would understand me the way no other person ever had" (Chapter 6).

"Half a class - fifteen minutes - devoted to 'Bad Things That Could Happen But Totally Won't So Don't Worry About It.' We're told that teenage girls just like us have been the most prolific breeders throughout human history and advances in modern medicine have eliminated nearly all the risks" (Chapter 12).

"I'm gasping for air, grasping the ugly truth. Jondoe doesn't love God. He doesn't love me" (Chapter 17).

"I don't want to be a Surrogette.' It's a relief to finally say this out loud for the first time" (Chapter 22).

"Did I really come here to bring Melody to Goodside? Or did I come here to bring out the Otherside in me" (Chapter 23).



## Topics for Discussion

Who are Melody and Harmony? How are they similar? How are they different? What does each want in life? Why are their dreams important? What are the girls' reactions to each other?

Why are Melody and Harmony raised separately? Compare the childhoods of the two. How are their lives different? How are they similar? How are their parents different? How are they similar?

Who is Zen? Ram? Jondoe? How are the three similar? How are they different? What are their roles in the lives of Melody and Harmony? What might their lives be like as adults?

Describe the crisis facing the human race during this futuristic setting. How does this crisis come about? What is the effect on teenagers? How does this change the lives of teens?

Describe three aspects of this futuristic world in which technology or the virus plays an important role. Include answers to these questions: How are the lives of people affected? Is it believable and is it possible? Is it a positive change?

Who are Melody's parents? Who are Harmony's parents? What are their motivations for how they treat their daughters? Which do you consider the better parents and why?

What is the role of people like Lib and Destinee in the story? Do you see this as a believable role in this futuristic setting? Why or why not?