

# **The Bar Code Tattoo Study Guide**

**The Bar Code Tattoo by Suzanne Weyn**

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# Plot Summary

As the story opens, Kayla is in a meeting with her guidance counselor who has just informed her that she will not be receiving a scholarship to an art school as she'd hoped. Kayla is upset with the news but the disappointment is overshadowed by the fact that her family situation has become unstable ever since her parents accepted the bar code tattoos. Kayla encounters a group of students who are discussing their resistance to the bar code and becomes interested in their ideas. Over the coming weeks, she spends more time with the students and comes to have an active part in their group. The group makes plans to meet in the Adirondack Mountains if they are forced to leave their homes.

Kayla arrives home one afternoon to find an ambulance at her house. Her father has committed suicide and Kayla thinks back to the depression that has been evident in him since soon after he got the tattoo. Kayla's mother, Ashley, begins falling apart as well.

Ashley is a nurse and stops going to the hospital for awhile. When she returns to work, she is obviously depressed and is soon stealing medication from the hospital. She hints at the fact that the tattoo is evil and urges Kayla to never give in to having it. They discover the bar code also includes genetic information and is being used to make all sorts of important decisions. Those with genetic tendencies toward diseases simply won't be hired to work anywhere. One night Kayla arrives home to find Ashley frantic. Ashley reveals that babies born to parents with undesirable gene sets are quietly being killed while babies born with desirable gene sets are being experimented on to enhance specific abilities. She sets fire to herself and the house, trying to burn the tattoo off her wrist.

Kayla wakes in a hospital and learns she is about to be tattooed. She manages to escape and encounters a trucker who gives her good advice. She later encounters an elderly couple who reveal that people older than eighty are also being terminated in hospitals to avoid the cost of nursing homes. Kayla makes her way to the mountains where she meets up with Mfumbe Taylor, a student from her school, who has run away to avoid the tattoo. They head to the Adirondacks and hide out there with a group of resisters who have connected with Kayla using an emerging psychic ability. Kayla and Mfumbe live together and eventually begin communicating through those abilities. They learn there is an active resistance forming and Mfumbe believes they have a duty to join. Kayla has seen visions of their participation but fears what will happen if they join but agrees they have little choice.



# Chapters 1 - 4

## Summary

As the story opens, Kayla Reed is at school with her guidance counselor. She has just learned she isn't likely to qualify for a scholarship to an art school because her computer grades are too low. Kayla is only half listening but gets the full impact of the information. She slips into a vision in which she's with a crowd of people headed for a large city. Kayla's concern over the scholarship is overridden - to some degree - by the fact that her family life has deteriorated since her parents accepted the bar code tattoo. Kayla asks the counselor if he's felt concern over the tattoo she sees on his wrist and he seems perplexed, saying it's a matter of convenience. Every student is supposed to get the tattoo on their seventeenth birthday.

Kayla attends Winfrey High School. When she leaves the counselor's office she sits down in the stairwell and cries. She's there when Mfumbe Taylor drops a book that almost hits her. He sees she's been crying and asks if she's alright. She assures him she is and has an almost-overwhelming desire to confide in him but doesn't feel she knows him well enough. Kayla decides she's going to skip the rest of the day and go home but she encounters her best friend, Amber Thorn, before she can get away.

In chapter two, Kayla tells Amber the news about the scholarship. Amber already has the bar code tattoo. Kayla says she's not sure it's a good idea but Amber argues in favor of it. Amber already has one and says it's a matter of convenience. She says the tattoo didn't hurt but that her finger was pricked for a blood sample at the same time as the tattoo.

Kayla cuts class for the rest of the day and goes first to the mall to buy a music chip for Amber's birthday gift. Kayla then becomes very edgy and rushes home. There is a crowd of people around her house and she pushes her way through. She's almost to the front door when Gene Drake, a next-door-neighbor, stops her. He says he'd heard Kayla's mother screaming and believes there's something wrong with her father. Another neighbor, Mrs. Fern, calls out to Kayla's mom, Ashley. Kayla rushes to her father's side. He's alive but barely and the paramedics pick up the stretcher and put him in the ambulance. Ashley tells Kayla that the "bar code did this," but doesn't elaborate. There is a story in the Tribune E-Journal dated March 18, 2025, about the death of Kayla's father, Joseph Reed. The article indicates Mr. Reed had died of self-inflicted wounds and that he'd been depressed since being passed over for a promotion at work.

In chapter three, Kayla is trying to remove the blood stains from the bathtub. While she's in the bathroom, she slips into another vision. This time, she and others are moving toward a city. Kayla's mother is struggling and indicates there is something evil associated with the tattoo but won't tell Kayla what it is. Kayla goes outside where she encounters Gene. They talk for a few minutes and Gene says he's being trained to administer the tattoos. Gene says he'd been a regular tattoo artist years earlier and that



he'd seen many people who had the tattoos seeking to have them removed. Gene says the tattoo is evil and that he plans to break into a secure network to find out why. Kayla pleads with him to share the information with her.

At school Amber presents Kayla with her application for the tattoo. Kayla refuses, saying she isn't going to get one. They see Mfumbe and a group of his friends. Amber says the group is opposed to the tattoo. The group includes August Sanchez, Allyson Minor, Nedra Harris, and a very handsome boy named Zekeal.

In chapter four, Mfumbe asks Kayla and Amber to sign their petition in support of a measure by Senator David Young to put restrictions on what information can be attached to the bar codes. The movement is called DeCode and the group of students has an e-zine called "KnotU2." They argue that the bar code is infringing on the right to privacy and other civil liberties. At lunch time, Mfumbe and the others are handing out flyers when a group of football players begin harassing them. The football players indicate the dissension is unpatriotic and a fight breaks out. Mfumbe, Zekeal, and Kayla are sent to the principal's office and told to stop distributing the flyers because it's interrupting the flow of student traffic.

One of the articles in the first e-zine Kayla reads indicates that the United States President is Loudon Waters. He is a billionaire who owns a company called Global-1. The article was written by Allyson and indicates that Global-1 has effectively gained control of the entire world's food population by creating super strains of seeds that will not reproduce. That means farmers who wanted to grow these crops were dependent on Global-1 for seeds and Global-1 can now choose to sell - or withhold - seeds, making the entire world dependent on them for food. The e-zine also includes a cartoon by Mfumbe in which children are on a grocery store conveyer belt and aliens are scanning their bar codes. One of the aliens says it's "much easier to take over a planet when the groceries are already bar coded." Another article points out the possibility that the bar code is the mark of the beast as predicted in the Bible. The three control points are all sixes which is part of the Biblical prophecy. An article by Zekeal Young urges support for Senator David Young's efforts to ensure there's always an option to get the code or not. While these are merely the opinions of these students, it seems they are relating ideas and opinions being voiced by others.

## Analysis

The introduction of the bar code is sinister from the beginning. Kayla's unease about the tattoo is related to the reader which lends a level of suspense that is necessary for the full impact of the story. The idea of the bar code seems a matter of convenience. Personal information is related to the bar code in a computer database. Amber argues for the bar code, saying if she were to be pulled over she could simply present her wrist to the officer and who would have immediate access to her license. Amber's argument is purely convenience. She points out that she doesn't have to worry about losing her license and that she doesn't care who knows where she is because she has nothing to



hide. If this were the way the bar code is to be used, it could be argued that Amber is correct to accept.

It will later be revealed that the computerized information associated with the bar code includes genetic coding. This means a person's entire medical history - including dispositions toward disease - is immediately accessed by anyone with the authority to read the code. Kayla's paternal grandmother died in a mental institution where she was hospitalized because of schizophrenia. Joseph Reed's bar code included that information, meaning he and his children could have inherited the tendency for that illness. Joseph was passed over for a promotion because his employer didn't want to risk having to provide insurance coverage for an employee with that potential for illness. The far-reaching effects of this information will be revealed over the course of the story.

## Vocabulary

sympathy, manufactured, genuine, compelled, smithereens, mesmerizing, astronomical, circuitry, premonitions, hideous, disheveled, dermatologists, formidable, incredulously, paranoid, clique, dismissively, obscene, domination, tyranny



# Chapters 5 - 9

## Summary

In chapter five, Kayla wakes on the morning of her seventeenth birthday, a Saturday, to the news that Amber has filled out the application for Kayla's bar code tattoo to be administered that day. Kayla wavers but finally goes to meet Amber at the Global-1 offices, otherwise known as the post office. That particular post office is where Gene works as one of those who administer the tattoos.

When Kayla arrives at Amber's house, she hears Amber's parents fighting. Amber says that there is a problem with her father's bar code and they've suddenly been rejected for the loan to purchase the house they were about to buy. They've already sold their house and her parents are stressed over where they'll live. Kayla and Amber arrive at the post office to find out there are only a few people in line in front of them. Kayla suddenly has a vision similar to those she's had recently. In this one, a plane flies overhead and bombs fall. Kayla takes it as a premonition of danger and decides it's related to the tattoo. She tells that Amber she won't submit to the tattoo after all and demands they leave. Kayla rushes away and Amber hurries after her. They are in the street when they hear gunshots from inside the post office.

An article appears in the afternoon edition of the newspaper describing the incident. The article indicates that Gene Drake was shot and killed by security guards after he'd created a scene, told people they'd be better off dead than to have the tattoo, and reached into his pocket, an action the security guards took as a threat and as provocation to shoot.

In chapter six, Kayla is at home that evening watching the police cars next door as police search Gene's house and arrest his roommates. A week later, Kayla is visiting Amber at the Route Nine Motor Inn where she and her parents are now living. It's a dump but the best the family can afford after both Amber's parents lost their jobs. Kayla's mother has also lost her job and Kayla eventually finds a job at an art supply shop - the only place that will hire her without the tattoo.

In chapter seven, Kayla rushes back to the motel at Amber's call to discover the family is packing up to leave the city. They are going to Nevada where Amber has a cousin who is a religious fanatic. Kayla suggests she and Amber could find a place together but Amber says her parents have poured everything they have into Amber's account and her bar code is the only way to pay for gas and other supplies. The girls hug and the Thorns pull away.

Kayla begins to walk and finds herself in a warehouse district. She has heard about a club that allows young people in without a bar code but can't find it. She suddenly realizes she's being followed and begins to run. In chapter eight, Zekeal catches up with her and apologizes for scaring her. Kayla says she's looking for the Lobo2MeClub which



is pronounced the Lobotomy Club and Zekeal takes her there. In chapter nine, they dance and then go to the roof. Zekeal says he's sorry about Joseph's death. He reveals that his father has lost his job and his parents fights after that resulted in Zekeal moving out on his own. Zekeal says he believes there's something important about the code that they haven't yet been told. Kayla gets the idea that he's spent a lot of time thinking about it.

Zekeal says he has somewhere else to be and invites Kayla along. Kayla accepts without asking where Zekeal is going. They arrive at a warehouse to find Mfumbe, Allyson, August, and Nedra. Nedra objects to Kayla's presence, saying the meeting is supposed to be secret, but gives in when Zekeal insists. They talk about an upcoming e-zine they're working on and one of the articles is going to be about a proposed requirement for people on welfare to be bar coded. They visit several websites dedicated to the resistance.

## Analysis

Kayla wavers a great deal while trying to decide whether she should give in to Amber's demands that she get a tattoo or follow her instincts and refuse. This is an example of one of the important themes of the book - the importance of individuality. Kayla wants to refuse but she is also tired of fighting and believes it might be easier to give in and simply join the expectations to have the tattoo.

The "postal service" has gone bankrupt and is no longer a viable organization in this time setting. Global-1 has taken over all the post office buildings. Kayla and Amber talk about going to the "post office" where the tattoo will be administered but it's actually Global-1 in control.

The role of Global-1 in the book is that the company has become a huge conglomerate with a great deal of power. The fact that the company's owner is also president of the United States is an indication that the company is even more powerful. Global-1 is involved in an array of endeavors including cloning. The cloning of humans will be completely legal by the end of the book but cloned children will face discrimination.

Zekeal is involved with Nedra and Kayla knows this from the first time they meet. However, Kayla is very attracted to Zekeal and knows she wouldn't refuse his attention. Nedra is obviously hostile toward Kayla because she seems to sense competition. This triangle creates problems for the three. Eventually Zekeal tells Kayla he wants to be with her but he pleads for time to break up with Nedra. He points out that it's only a few months until school will be out for the summer and Nedra will be leaving town with her family as she always does. He says it will be easier if he continues to see her until then. Kayla isn't happy with that but agrees. The situation is impossible and is an example of the fact that Zekeal may be somewhat confused about his role and his feelings. Zekeal is, in fact, a member of Tattoo Gen but Kayla doesn't figure it out for some time. When she does discover the truth, she learns that he had recruited Nedra to become a member of Tattoo Gen as well and is currently working to recruit Kayla. Zekeal doesn't





seem to be completely dedicated to Tattoo Gen. For example, he helps Kayla hack into a database that reveals information about her father's bar code. This could be part of his plan to gain Kayla's trust but it also seems that he may be confused and wavering in his role as a recruiter and spy.

## Vocabulary

sinister, obnoxious, quavering, deemed, scornful, enthused, scruffy, gnawing, vibrated, lobotomy, terrifying, reproachfully, clones, assistance, malcontent, portrait, reality, massive, violation, liberties, unconstitutional



# Chapters 10 - 15

## Summary

In chapter eleven, Kayla arrives late at the meeting. She says she doesn't want to explain to the others that she'd been trying to get her "drunken mother" settled in. Allyson suggests that genetic coding, if it is made readily available to insurance companies, could save "millions" by simply refusing to insure those most likely to get catastrophic illnesses. There is an article about a proposal that would require anyone seeking public assistance to have a bar code. Senator David Young is speaking out against the proposal but his opponents say the movement against the bar codes are simply a lot of youngsters seeking to rebel.

In chapter twelve, Kayla finds her mother at the computer. There is a document open and Kayla realizes she's looking at the database file on her father. There is the basic information at the top of the file and, buried beneath another file, a series of codes Kayla recognizes from science as a gene code. The code is broken down into three sections - the advantageous aspects of his gene code, the questionable aspects, and the negatives. Among the negatives are predisposition toward mental illness and alcoholism. Kayla says she doesn't understand because her father didn't drink. Ashley tells Kayla she should not get the tattoo, regardless of the circumstances. Ashley leaves the house and Kayla sees the computer screen has gone blank with "access denied" in place of the document. Zekeal arrives and Kayla points out the computer screen. Zekeal hacks his way back into the system and they have time to look at the file once more before they are booted out.

Kayla goes to work but finds the store closed and her boss and his family gone from their apartment. Kayla instead goes to Zekeal's apartment and she finds him reading a manual for Tattoo Gen. He says a friend gave it to him so he could better understand what they're up against. The manual indicates the members should never insist someone change their opinion but should befriend them in an effort to gain their trust in order to convince them. Kayla has another vision. This time she uses her mind to urge the pilot of the plane to leave the area. The plane leaves and Kayla and the rest of the group continue toward the city. Kayla and Zekeal arrive at the meeting. Nedra isn't there but comes in later. She is wearing a skirt and is covered in tattoos, including the bar code. She tells Zekeal he should come with her and they leave the warehouse together.

In chapter thirteen, the rest of the group is shocked at Nedra's action and aren't sure whether Zekeal will return. August points out that he's circled Lake Placid on a map as a suggestion for where they might meet up if they have to leave their homes. Kayla reveals what she'd found out about her father's file. Allyson says there is no more government regulations related to cloning and believes the two - cloning and the genetic coding in the bar codes - are connected. When Kayla meets up with Zekeal outside the warehouse, he says he and Nedra have broken up.



Senator David Young resigns from his political position after the government makes it a law that everyone has to be bar coded. Zekeal and Kayla return to his apartment and lie on his couch together. Kayla falls asleep. When she wakes, Zekeal is in the shower. She notes an open email account and the Tattoo Gen manual beside the computer. Curious, she clicks on the final email in the list and discovers it's from Tattoo Gen congratulating Zekeal on his recent good work recruiting Nedra. They say the new recruit he's working on shows promise and Kayla realizes they're referring to her. Zekeal steps out of the shower and Kayla confronts him. They argue and Zekeal doesn't deny his involvement but says he'd planned to tell Kayla later. Kayla rushes home and finds her front door open.

In chapter fourteen, Kayla enters the house and points out to her mom that the floor is wet because it's raining and the door was left open. Ashley is obviously drunk but she staggers only slightly as she comes downstairs. Ashley says she'd gone to the hospital earlier that day and that she discovered that identification chips are being inserted into the foot of each newborn baby there. She says the chip contains the child's entire genetic code. Then she reveals what has her so upset. She says each child who has a genetic code that indicates the child is likely to have health problems is being left to die. She says some are given something in their bottles while others are left in cold rooms or given lethal injections. Kayla is incredulous and says she doesn't believe it but she actually doesn't want to believe it. Ashley says the healthy babies are being "genetically enhanced." They are being administered genes from a cat to make their eyesight better, genes from a dog to make them hear and smell better. Ashley says most of the parents don't know about the manipulation going on. Ashley then reveals that she'd told Joseph all this the night before he'd killed himself.

Kayla suddenly realizes part of her mother's recent struggles had been because she knew what Kayla's own future would hold. Joseph's mother - Kayla's grandmother - had been schizophrenic, meaning Kayla had inherited the gene that could cause that disease. Ashley says having the gene doesn't mean Kayla will begin hearing or seeing things that aren't there, a statement that prompts Kayla to remember the visions she's recently had. She is suddenly sick and rushes toward the bathroom but throws up in the hall. She's in the bathroom when she smells something horrible and rushes back downstairs. Her mother has her arm in the flames of the stove and her sleeve is on fire. Kayla begins filling a pot with water to douse the flames but the water is flowing too slowly and the flames are gaining momentum. Soon the kitchen is burning and Kayla grabs the living room drapes, throwing them over her mother in an attempt to smother the flames.

In chapter fifteen, Kayla wakes in the hospital with a pounding head. She hears the hospital staff talking and the doctor says he's going to give Kayla a tattoo. The nurse asks if that's the best thing and the doctor says Kayla, already older than seventeen, has to be tattooed or turned over to Globalofficers. He then says she doesn't have a parent to insist she be tattooed, an indication to Kayla that her mother is dead. Kayla can't believe it and asks the doctor about her mother. When they confirm that Ashley is dead, Kayla begins to cry and the doctor orders her sedated.



When Kayla wakes next, she's completely relaxed. She says every muscle in her body is relaxed and she has to struggle to remember anything that happened. Then Kayla hears a noise and turns toward it. She sees a woman in the hospital bed next to hers and remembers that she's in the hospital, that her own mother is dead, and that she's about to be tattooed. Kayla knows the tattoo will mean she'll never get a decent job and that her future is finished. She also feels the effects of her losses and is tired of fighting. Those thoughts, coupled with the drugs, make her decide to stop fighting against the tattoo. She admits that it feels better to simply accept what she has to do. Just then, there's a crash in the room and a nurse cries out.

## Analysis

There's an interesting scene in which Nedra rails against the system but turns around and defends the idea of a bar code. When Allyson asks why Nedra doesn't just give in and get the tattoo, she says she isn't sure. She says she thinks the situation is hopeless and there's no way a resistance will win but she's mad about it and hates to give in. Her words strike Kayla who thinks for a moment that Nedra might be entirely right. This dread and sense of hopelessness is an important aspect of the story. The government is making it difficult for anyone to conduct business on a daily basis unless they give in to the bar code system. The hope seems to be that people will simply give in rather than fight the system.

There are a number of interesting social dilemmas in the story that mimic modern-day issues. For example, it's noted that the postal service collapsed for lack of business, which is a true-to-life modern-day situation facing the American people. The possibility that a company is seeking to create seeds that won't reproduce in order to control the world's food supply is an idea that has been touted by conspiracy theorists for the past several years. In the book, the government is seeking to require anyone who receives public assistance to have the bar code as a condition of approval. In the modern-day political scene, there have been conversations about mandatory drug testing for those seeking public assistance. These parallels are vague enough to seem possible which lends credence to the story.

## Vocabulary

scrutiny, beckoned, earthly, ethereal, exasperated, bizarre, manifested, ballistic, nurture, debate, conformity, mandatory, fiscal, musculature, longevity, acuity, futility, exemplar, ostracism, conversely, discernible



# Chapters 16 - 18

## Summary

Chapter sixteen is the first chapter of part two. In chapter sixteen, the woman in Kayla's hospital room begins having convulsions and she crashes to the floor. The staff's attention is focused fully on the woman and they put her onto a gurney and take her out of the room. Kayla takes advantage of the situation and forces herself to stand up. She leaves the room, planning only to get out of the hospital. Kayla admits that running might be futile but says she is only focused on getting as much distance as possible between her and the doctor who is about to administer the tattoo. She is noticed by a man in the hallway and realizes she has to be calm in order to attract as little attention as possible. She sees some clothing in a room and steps inside. She gets out of her hospital gown and into the clothing - a suit that's too large but will serve as a disguise. She wants to lie down on the bed but knows she'll immediately be asleep because she's still fighting the effects of the drugs.

Kayla makes it out of the hospital and into a nearby stand of trees. Once under cover of the woods, she lies down and is immediately asleep. She begins to dream about an event when she was eight years old. Kayla and Ashley are sitting together in Kayla's dream and Kayla is drawing. Kayla says she wants to be an artist when she grows up and Ashley promises Kayla can be anything she wants. When Kayla wakes, she's cold but warmed by the memory of her mother's voice saying "I love you."

Kayla finds an e-card in the pocket of the suit she stole from the hospital. Though she feels guilty about it, she plans to use the card to buy herself something to eat. She stops at a diner and orders a burger, fries and soda, and she thinks the food tastes wonderful. Katie tells the cashier she hasn't yet turned seventeen as a way to explain why she has an e-card instead of the tattoo and her explanation is accepted. Kayla encounters a female truck driver named Katie. Katie says cancer runs in her family and she'd figured out medical histories became part of the bar code information. She'd opted not to have the tattoo because she knew it would close doors for her. Katie says she knows Kayla is over seventeen and she gives Kayla a temporary tattoo that will appear to the casual observer to be a bar code tattoo. Kayla asks how Katie had been so certain of her age and Katie reveals a newspaper story.

The newspaper article indicates Kayla is being sought in connection with her mother's death. The police quoted in the article said Kayla is not being charged with a crime but is wanted for questioning.

In chapter seventeen, Kayla and Katie have parted ways and Kayla is again on her own. Kayla finds a diner and goes inside to eat. She looks around the diner and notices an older couple eating at a booth. A television is on and she watches news broadcasts. She sees President Loudon Waters announcing that restrictions against human cloning have been lifted and that the move was "long overdue." Kayla loses interest in the news



and begins thinking. She knows she has little chance of actually escaping and considers it might be time to just turn herself in.

Just then the television catches her attention again and Kayla realizes there's a story about her airing. Nedra is on the screen, saying Kayla had threatened to burn down her house and kill her mother. Nedra says she hadn't taken Kayla's threats seriously but now wishes she'd told someone. Kayla's school picture flashes onto the screen. Kayla hurriedly gets up to leave and bumps into a waitress, spilling coffee on her arm and making the ink from the fake tattoo run. She covers it quickly and rushes to the robotic cashier to pay out. Kayla hurries to a car in the parking lot and, seeing a police car entering the lot, climbs in and covers herself with a blanket in the backseat. Just as the car starts up, Kayla hears the shriek of a police car. In chapter eighteen, Kayla discovers the elderly man from the diner is driving the car. His wife discovers Kayla and guesses the police were trying to find her. The man is Tova Alan and his wife's name is Mava. They are in their early eighties and their daughter is a doctor. They used acid to remove their tattoos. Mava reveals that their daughter warned them that elderly people who need medical attention are often killed because it would be very expensive to nurse them through serious illnesses. Mava broke her hip and her daughter set it to keep Mava from going into the hospital. Mava says their daughter is now in Canada and she and Tova plan to pick up some of her things and meet her there.

Kayla has another vision while she rests in the back seat of the Alan's car. She is inside a large city and a young man asks if she's afraid, only the communication is through telepathy rather than spoken words. Kayla wakes as Tova crashes through a toll gate and manages to outrun police by hiding his car in a copse of trees. They then make their way to the apartment that belongs to the Alans' daughter. Kayla is allowed to shower and Mava gives her a haircut which serves to eliminate all the singed hair from the fire but also makes Kayla look completely different. Kayla uses the Alans' daughter's computer to send a message to the cyber café where Amber had been when the girls last communicated. She tells Amber she's fine, that the stories are false, and not to worry. She then sends an email to Mfumbe with basically the same information. There's an immediate reply in which Mfumbe's parents say they are glad Mfumbe isn't in as much trouble as Kayla but that he has disappeared. They urge Kayla to tell them if she knows where he is.

## Analysis

There is not a great deal of information provided about Kayla's parents but they seem to be incredibly weak characters. Both have proof of the situation they're facing, including that Kayla will be facing a horrible future. However, her parents each withdraw from the situation rather than trying to fight the system or at least find a safe place for Kayla.

Kayla's visions are a foreshadowing of the action in an upcoming book. In these visions, Kayla and a group of people are walking toward a large, walled city. There are several things going on. In one of the visions, a plane is bombing the group walking toward the city. In another, Kayla is urged to convince the pilot to go away and she uses her



telepathic powers to do so. The city is apparently Washington, D.C. An article is presented earlier in the book in which it's proposed the city should be walled to provide a greater level of protection for its inhabitants.

The role of cloning in the story is an interesting undertone that is never fully explained. The details include the president lifting all restrictions against cloning which is a great source of controversy in the modern-day world. In another section of the book, a member of Mfumbe's group talks about another facet of the issue - that cloned children are not being allowed bar codes. There's no explanation given as to why the clones are not allowed the codes or why that might be happening but it seems likely that the clones have been genetically engineered to be free of the risk factors for the major diseases.

Zekeal is an ideal candidate for the Tattoo Gen group. He's charismatic and believable, which are important traits if he's trying to recruit young girls to the group. The problem is that he's immature and not very clever at keeping the truth a secret. The other problem is that Kayla is smart and quickly figures out that everything Zekeal says is a lie. Many young girls who are attracted to Zekeal could be swayed by his pleas and there's little doubt Tattoo Gen is depending on that.

## Vocabulary

intimidating, swarm, hybrid, holographic, seduction, remnant, humanly, contorted, convulse, fatigue, chanted, spearheaded, criminal, offense





# Chapters 19 - 21

## Summary

In chapter nineteen, Kayla suddenly realizes that using the computer could have been a bad idea because it could lead the police to her current location. They spend several days at the apartment and Kayla is relieved to see the story about her move from front page to a paragraph on page twelve. Mava then says she and Tova are planning to go on to Canada and she invites Kayla to join them. Kayla is relieved to have the invitation and accepts. They head out and Tova is planning to crash through another toll gate when the car suddenly veers out of control and crashes into a barrier. Kayla rouses herself to realize that Mava is alive but badly injured and Tova is dead. Mava tells Kayla to run but Kayla hesitates, saying she can't leave them. Mava says Kayla can't do anything for them and again urges her to go. Kayla pulls herself out of the car as police are approaching and begins to run. There are gunshots and she's injured but continues to flee.

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In chapter twenty, Kayla manages to find water and begins to follow the stream though she really has no idea why. She eventually finds her way to a cabin in the woods that is obviously some sort of local gathering place. She's drawn by the smell of food but when she sees a photo of herself flash onto the television along with a story of how she'd caused the crash that killed Tova Alan, she hurriedly leaves. Kayla hides until after dark and returns, hoping to find some food, perhaps even from a dumpster behind the building. The back door of the building is open and she sees a large piece of chicken on a table inside. She decides to risk trying to get it and slips into the building.

In chapter twenty-one, a hatch in the floor opens and Kayla grabs a knife only to be confronted by Mfumbe. Mfumbe details the situation that led to his decision to run away from home and he gives Kayla food and a soda. Mfumbe has a cabin of his own and he and Kayla go there. Mfumbe works at the local gathering place and earns enough for food. The first morning when Mfumbe has cooked breakfast for them, he and Kayla have a long discussion about the effects of cloning and genetic coding on evolution.





Another morning, Kayla wakes early and has a vision of Eutonah. Eutonah is beckoning Kayla and when Kayla goes toward her, she suddenly realizes that the woods are filled with Global officers.

## Analysis

Mfumbe's situation with regard to the bar code is different from those of Kayla and Amber in a dramatic way. Mfumbe's family is apparently African American. Mfumbe says his father has pointed out that the family is healthy and strong, meaning there will be nothing negative in their genetic codes. Mfumbe's father says this is an opportunity to take advantage of their heritage and this idea seems important to him based on the idea that his ancestors were treated poorly. Mfumbe is obviously intelligent and has been accepted to Yale on a full scholarship, but he won't be able to attend if he doesn't accept the bar code. In Mfumbe's case, accepting the bar code will produce nothing but positive change in the immediate future. In Kayla's case, the bar code will ensure she's unemployable and is never given an opportunity for education. It's easy to see why Kayla would be adamantly opposed to the bar code. In Mfumbe's case, the refusal is based entirely on principle and says a great deal about his character.

## Vocabulary

mandate, millennium, predicament, mesmerized, cavern, ravenously, gin, identifier, allegiance



# Chapters 22 - 28

## Summary

In chapter twenty-two, Kayla rushes to find Mfumbe who is washing clothing at the creek. He takes her to the opening of an old mine shaft. They follow it for a long distance and emerge into the woods in a different place with no signs of officers. They find a truck and hide inside it. It's carrying chips and sodas and they eat and drink while they ride. The truck is going north and they are relieved it will take some of the walking off their trip. They finally have to get out because the number of boxes is running low and they know they soon won't be able to hide when the driver stops for deliveries.

Mfumbe has a GPS and they check their location, choose a direction they believe will take them to the Adirondacks, and begin walking. They stop to sleep for the night and Kayla wakes to a vision of Eutonah summoning her and promising to lead her the right way. It takes three weeks for Kayla and Mfumbe to arrive in Keene Valley, New York. Kayla has a vision in which Mfumbe tells her he loves her and another in which she sees Zekeal.

In chapter twenty-three, Kayla becomes ill. She develops a fever and has to force herself to keep moving. They have begun stealing what they need to survive though both are bothered by the thefts. Mfumbe decides he'll steal some cold medicine and is caught in a convenience store. He's arrested but helps Kayla get away. There follows "a letter to the editor from Nedra Harris, national spokesperson for Tattoo Generation." Nedra writes that Mfumbe has fallen from the status of a promising student with a scholarship to Yale and is now a petty thief in jail. She says DeCode is to blame for Mfumbe's fall. She goes on to talk about Kayla, saying Kayla had somehow caused the crash that killed the Alans and is "a fugitive."

In chapter twenty-four, Kayla continues to walk though she's desperately ill. She finds a small lean-to and spends several days there. When she wakes, she eats some berries and finds water. Then she encounters an old woman who first checks Kayla's wrist. Finding no tattoo, she tells Kayla she's come to the right place to find healing. The woman takes Kayla to a group of people and Kayla finds August. August says he'd been forced to take a job after school because both his parents lost their jobs. He was working in a biotech plant and apparently saw something he shouldn't have, though he doesn't know what that was. He was told to quit school and live at the facility or his bar code would be altered so he'd never work again. August says he used acid to remove the code and went to Lake Placid, hoping to find some others from their group. August reveals that Eutonah is a Whiteface Mountain, about a day's walk away, and promises to send Kayla in the right direction.

In chapter twenty-five, Kayla begins her journey and is wondering about Mfumbe when she sees someone on the trail ahead of her. She realizes it's Zekeal and that he's not a vision as she'd seen earlier. She doesn't try to run away. She asks why he hadn't been



honest with her when they'd met at the school and he says he'd realized she was adamantly opposed to the bar code. He says he'd been afraid she wouldn't like him if he had another opinion. Kayla isn't swayed and says she believes he'd only been trying to make a name for himself with Tattoo Gen.

Zekeal argues with Kayla. He asks why she wants to live in the mountains and she says she'll be free. He says she should accept the bar code and sell her art. Just then Nedra arrives and Zekeal whispers to Kayla that he loves only her. Kayla wonders if the two of them have been promised some sort of reward for bringing her back. Kayla manages to get away from Zekeal and Nedra and she hides in a narrow cave. She eventually falls asleep but is roughly wakened when someone grabs her ankle and pulls her out of the cave. She tries to resist. In chapter twenty-six, Kayla discovers it's Eutonah and a huge man who is with her.

The group is living in an abandoned ski resort. One day Kayla finds a computer and sends an email to Amber. Kayla explains that she's working with Eutonah's group to enhance psychic abilities and that Eutonah believes these abilities are being learned quickly because people are being deprived of their normal evolutionary patterns. Kayla reveals to Eutonah that she's had visions of a group of people going toward a large walled city and Eutonah assures Kayla the visions are real and that Kayla is able to see the future. Kayla is relieved to know she isn't showing signs of schizophrenia as she'd come to fear. Eutonah realizes Kayla has used the computer and says they'll have to leave the resort because the "location has been compromised."

In chapter twenty-seven, Kayla is riddled with guilt over her action but there's nothing that can be done about it. The group becomes very diligent in watching for anyone approaching but nothing happens for days and they gradually relax. One day Kayla sees a group and is almost immediately shot in the shoulder. Suddenly Mfumbe is there and picks Kayla up to run and hide. Zekeal shows up and he and Mfumbe are soon embroiled in a fight. Zekeal is on top of Mfumbe and is obviously winning the battle. Kayla is unable to get up to help but she uses her power to make a dead tree limb fall, striking Zekeal.

In chapter twenty-eight, it's the following fall and Kayla and Mfumbe are still living together in the Adirondacks. On a particular day, Kayla goes to meet the postman. Mail is used almost exclusively for communication because email can be tracked. For the most part, Mfumbe and Kayla communicate telepathically. One day Kayla has a vision in which Eutonah, who has been imprisoned, tells her it's time to "stop hiding" and join an active resistance in Washington, D.C. August comes to visit and the conversation turns to the resistance. Mfumbe says they have been hiding in the mountains but August insists they've been working to become a strong force, capable of forcing change. One day Kayla's cat brings a small bird that has been badly mangled. Kayla holds the tiny creature in her hand and heals it. She and Mfumbe watch as it flies away. Kayla says she believes it's worth the risk for them to join the resistance and that she believes they can succeed.



## Analysis

Mfumbe tells Kayla that he loves her and has for a long time though he hadn't said so because she seemed to like Zekeal. Kayla turns to talk to Mfumbe after he says these words only to discover he's leaning against a rock and is asleep. While the details are presented, it seems likely that Kayla is hearing what Mfumbe is thinking. Kayla has ESP but hasn't yet come to realize the extent of her powers. It will take some additional time before she figures it all out with Eutonah's help.

The idea that a person uses only a small part of their brain is not a new one, nor is the idea that people naturally evolve and change with changing conditions and needs. The author uses the two ideas as a means to explain how and why Kayla and others have developed the power to communicate through telepathy, to heal and to telekinetically manipulate things. The idea is that people are being cloned and genes are being scientifically altered to allow only the "best" of humanity to survive. The result, in this story, is that people are evolving in different ways.

When Kayla first encounters August and the group he's joined, she asks if they are trying to contact aliens. August says they are actually trying to contact anyone or anything that's "good" and that can help them. He says he's open to whatever or whoever that may be, including aliens. There will later be a disagreement between August and Mfumbe. August has found the mountains to be a safe haven while Mfumbe has come to see them as a place to hide. August also points out that they haven't been wasting their time in the mountains but have been learning to be stronger and more united.

Zekeal's fate is not revealed in the story. The final word on the subject is that Kayla hears a "sickening" crunch of bones as the limb falls and strikes him. It's left to the reader to decide what happened to Zekeal.

## Vocabulary

foliage, fugitive, sweeping, delirious, octagonal, cosmos, continuum, swamis, shamans, replenished, majestically, diminish



# Characters

## Kayla Reed

She is sixteen as the story opens and has just learned that she's going to be denied a scholarship to an art school she'd hoped to attend. When Kayla turns seventeen, the age everyone is to submit to a bar code tattoo that will provide extensive identification, she dreads giving in to the tattoo even before her birthday. Kayla has seen others experience difficulty after having the tattoo and comes to realize there's something ominous about the tattoo and the information it contains. Kayla is intrigued when she discovers a group of students objecting to the tattoos and finds herself caught up in the fears permeating this group. Kayla's mother soon reveals that babies born to parents with undesirable traits or having unstable medical histories are quietly killed in the hospital where she works. Babies that are chosen to survive are given drugs to enhance their vision and speed. Kayla soon finds herself on the run from police who say Kayla is responsible for her mother's death. In truth, both Kayla's parents killed themselves, cementing Kayla's determination not to be tattooed. Kayla is soon on the run from police and looking for other dissenters who might help her. She has visions of a future in which she's using enhanced metaphysical powers but doesn't understand the significance. It's these powers that help her arrive safely at a haven for dissenters.

## Mfumbe Taylor

A brilliant young man, he is a student at the high school Kayla attends. Mfumbe has been offered a scholarship to Yale but the scholarship and college attendance depend on his getting the tattoo - a move he opposes. When Mfumbe's father insists Mfumbe get the tattoo, Mfumbe runs away from home. Mfumbe's father argues that African Americans were once uneducated slaves. Under the new system, Mfumbe's family is healthy so will be treated well with lots of benefits. Mfumbe would benefit greatly from having the tattoo which is an important indication of his strength of character. Despite the benefits, he won't give in to have the tattoo because he believes it is a violation of a person's civil rights. Mfumbe is caught shoplifting and made to return home but returns to the mountains and to Kayla through their telepathic connection. Mfumbe is with Kayla when she's shot and takes care of her in the months after. When Kayla and Mfumbe learn that the leader of a dissenting group is calling for change, Mfumbe believes they have a responsibility to return and lend their help. Mfumbe believes the dissenters in the mountains have been hiding and believes this to be the wrong course of action. He obviously feels the need for active dissent and pledges that his love for Kayla will ensure they stay together no matter what happens.



## **Zekeal**

A boy who is a member of the Tattoo Gen, he pretends to be a member of the resistance in order to gain the trust of students including Kayla. Kayla likes Zekeal until she discovers his deception. Zekeal is with the group that shoots Kayla. It's not clear what his fate is but it seems possible he might have died or been at least seriously injured when he tries to capture Mfumbe and Kayla.

## **August**

A boy who is a member of the small group of resisters who meets in an old warehouse, August is already in the mountains when Kayla arrives there. While Mfumbe argues that the dissenters in the mountain are doing nothing more than hiding out, August believes the time has been well-spent because they have grown stronger.

## **Nedra Harris**

A girl who is friends with several people who are resisting the bar code movement, she arrives at a meeting of that group one day with the tattoo. Kayla learns Nedra has actually been recruited by Tattoo Gen and sees Nedra on television, advocating the tattoos and telling lies about Kayla to encourage people to turn Kayla in.

## **Eutonah**

A spiritual woman Kayla sees in several visions and who uses this connection to guide Kayla to the mountains where she'll be safe from police. Eutonah leads the group with their efforts to enhance their individual powers.

## **Ashley Reed**

Kayla's mother, she is a nurse and has been bar coded before the book opens. Ashley becomes increasingly depressed and eventually reveals to Kayla that the bar code contains genetic information used to determine which people should live and which should be killed. Ashley says babies in the hospital where she works are checked for genetic information and those babies with the probability for health issues are killed in one of several ways. Other babies are being enhanced so they will have been vision and speed. Ashley kills herself trying to burn the tattoo off her wrist.

## **Amber Thorn**

Kayla's best friend, Amber turns seventeen a few months before Kayla and has the tattoo as soon as she's old enough. Amber believes allowing the government to track her is not an infringement of her rights as long as she hasn't done anything wrong but



her family is thrown into poverty when her parents both lose their jobs. Amber is forced to move to Nevada to live with a relative.

## **Tova Alan**

An old man who Kayla meets when she stows away in his car at a diner. He is driving his hybrid car and is about to crash through a toll gate when he has a heart attack and dies. Kayla is later blamed for his death.

## **Mava Alan**

The eighty-one-year-old wife of Tova. She knows that doctors are killing old people who wind up in the hospital because the cost of nursing care has become expensive. Mava has suffered a broken hip but did not go to the hospital because she knew this practice. When Tova wrecks their car, she tells Kayla she won't possibly survive once she's in custody and urges Kayla to run away.



## Objects/Places

### Bar Code Tattoo

This is presented to the people as a means of connecting a person to personal information such as banking information. It turns out that bar codes also include genetics information that is literally used to decide if a person lives, is allowed to work, or is killed.

### DeCode

This is an effort led by a senator as a means of bringing about the end of the bar code.

### Lake Placid

This is where Kayla, Mfumbe, and the others originally plan to meet if they are forced to leave their homes.

### Whiteface Mountains

This is the place in the Adirondaks where Eutonah is when she's calling to Kayla.

### Tattoo Gen

This is a group of young people who are militant in their support of the bar code tattoo. Zekeal is a member and he recruits Nedra.

### Winfrey High School

This is where Kayla, Amber, and Mfumbe attend school.

### Route Nine Motor Inn

This is the dumpy motel where Amber and her family stay until they leave for Nevada.

### KnotU2

This is the name of the e-zine created by Mfumbe and the others who are encouraging rebellion against the bar code.



## **Lobo2MeClub**

This is the club where Kayla and Zekeal go before Zekeal takes Kayla to the first meeting at the warehouse. Zekeal pronounces it "lobotomy."

## **Canada**

This is where the Alans are headed when Tova has a heart attack.



# Themes

## Government Control

The government seems very much like the rulers of a communist country in their efforts to control the people, the creation of the young militant group, and the use of propaganda to support their efforts. The government is telling people all the positive aspects of the bar code tattoo. Amber relates some of those to Kayla in an effort to encourage Kayla to get her tattoo. Amber points out that her personal information will always be available and she won't be required to keep up with an identification card or other documents. Amber's words are likely arguments she's heard presented by some form of the government in support of the program. The creation of Tattoo Generation is another effort at government control. This is also typical of communist rulers and governments seeking to gain full control of their people. The group is militant in nature meaning it depends on aggressive loyalty that keeps the interest of the young members. The organization also depends on young people as recruiters and rewards those with membership. The bond among members of these groups tends to be strong so the members feel the need to support each other, regardless of their personal doubts or questions. Zekeal is a prime example of typical membership. He was probably recruited because of his charisma and good looks which he was taught to use to recruit new members. Finally, the government is requiring compliance from its people by rewarding those chosen for reward and denying basic necessities to everyone else. This system ensures that people are afraid to speak out so the government retains completely control.

## The Rights of an Individual

The idea of individuality is an important theme in the book and Kayla mentions very early in the story that the bar code makes people seem like nothing more than "a box of cereal." Mfumbe compares the use of the bar code to the branding system used by the Nazis in the German concentration camps. The fact that a person will be judged on his or her genetic code is a form of imprisonment. When Zekeal confronts Kayla in the mountains and asks what she plans to do with her life, she says she will live as a free person. Early in the story some students are talking to Amber and Kayla about the reason the bar code isn't right. One of them points out that the bar code will be used as a person's pass through toll gates, meaning their movements can be tracked. Amber argues that she's done nothing wrong and has nothing to hide, therefore doesn't care if everyone knows what she's doing. However, the counter to Amber's statement is that she, as an American, should have the right to privacy. Senator David Young is seeking to curtail the bar code's potential power by ensuring people have the option to have the tattoo or not. The right to choose how they'll pay for items is one of the basic rights that is lost once the tattoo is law. The final curtailing of rights is seen when the government passes a law requiring that everyone have the tattoo.



## Coming of Age

Kayla matures a great deal over the course of the story and learns that she has a new role in this new world order. Kayla is sixteen as the story opens and a year passes over the course of the story. As the story opens, Kayla is opposed to the bar code tattoo but isn't entirely sure why. She ultimately trusts her instincts though she wavers, especially on her seventeenth birthday when she almost gives in to Amber's insistence to get the tattoo. Kayla begins an arduous and dangerous trek to find peace within herself and to decide what it is she's supposed to do. She does this without parental guidance, both her parents having died over the course of the story. As Kayla is beginning this journey, she is having visions. She knows that her grandmother was schizophrenic and learns her father's gene sequence shows the potential for the disease as well. Kayla comes to believe she's suffering the early stages of schizophrenia until she meets the Indian woman, Eutonah. Under Eutonah's tutelage, Kayla learns she is actually seeing the future - one of several powers she and some others are developing. Kayla and Mfumbe find a peaceful life in the Adirondack Mountains and might have lived there for the rest of their lives if not for the words of Eutonah and their friend August. Both urge the joining of a resistance movement marching on Washington, D.C. Kayla has already seen visions of the movement and is willing to give up her peaceful existence to join the effort even though she knows that it's dangerous.

# Style

## Point of View

The story is written in the third person from the limited point of view of Kayla Reed. This limitation of perspective is used largely to ensure suspense throughout the story. For example, Kayla has a series of visions and these are presented as she sees them. Because Kayla doesn't understand what she's seeing, the reader doesn't fully understand the visions. There are other instances in which the limited perspective creates suspense. When Kayla begins to learn the basis of others' objections to the bar code, she comes to believe there is some important piece of information being included in the bar code. Kayla's belief on this front translates to suspense and the reader doesn't learn the truth until Kayla figures it out. The fact that Kayla doesn't know what's happening in the lives of other characters also lends to the suspense. She is attracted to Zekeal and the reader has no reason to suspect there's something wrong with that until Kayla discovers Zekeal is actually a spy for a group supporting the tattoos. Another specific use of the limited perspective is seen with Kayla's interaction with her mother, Ashley. Ashley works at a hospital and knows details about the bar code. Though Ashley hints at the wickedness of the bar code, she doesn't reveal her knowledge to Kayla for a long time. When she finally does tell her about babies being killed, she says she'd been trying to protect Kayla by not telling her. The limited perspective is often presented in first person but this story is presented in third person. Most readers will tend to identify with Kayla despite the third-person perspective. The limited third-person perspective is acceptable and appropriate to the story.

## Setting

The story is set in the year 2025 in the United States. The physical setting is less important than the time setting and details about the society as a whole. There are many references to historical trends dating back to the 1990s. For example, at one point Kayla hears someone suggest the use of bar codes came about because people had been learning to accept similar coding since the 1990s. There are also references to the early 2000s. The book was copyrighted in 2004 and the references to dates seem a deliberate effort on the part of the writer to encourage readers to think about the current times. The story is set in the North and North Eastern United States. There are some characters who consider crossing the Canadian border because the laws there are not on the plane with those being enacted in the United States. There is not a great deal of description about any specific setting and those details that are given occur through the telling of the story. For example, Kayla is in the warehouse district of town when she encounters Zekeal and becomes part of the group of students intent on resisting the bar codes. The district is described only in terms of shadows and lights from a nearby nuclear power plant. There are a few details provided about the club Kayla and Zekeal go to first and the warehouse where the group meets. One detail about the warehouse



is that the door still opens with a key, a fact meant to indicate how old the building is and how seldom it's now used.

## Language and Meaning

The story is presented as a series of scenes with action that moves fairly quickly. With only a few exceptions, the author does not bog down in detail. The majority of the writing is very straight-forward though there are some passages that may not initially make sense to the reader. For example, Kayla is listening to her high school counselor when she zones out for a moment and has a vision. She doesn't realize what has happened and, because of the limited perspective, the reader won't have the details about what happened until much later in the book. This shouldn't be a problem for the reader and these visions, along with several other literary tools, are used to build suspense and to provide clues to the eventual outcome of the story. The overall tone is meant to be one of hope in the face of an apparently hopeless situation. The author seems to accomplish this though some readers may find themselves commiserating with the characters who believe the situation is hopeless. There are several deaths in the books and the graphic nature of one of those - Kayla's mother setting herself on fire - may be disturbing to some readers. The writing is divided into narrative and dialogue and both are acceptable and reasonable for the story. The dialogue includes terms meant to represent slang common to the teens who are the main characters of this story. For example, "astral" is used several times and apparently means something is exceptionally good.

## Structure

The story is divided into two parts and twenty-eight chapters. As the story opens, Kayla has just learned she will not receive a scholarship to an art school as she'd hoped. The story flows from there in chronological order with historical information presented in several ways. For example, very early in the story Kayla is thinking about the changes that have happened in her life, including the change she sees in her father since he accepted the bar code tattoo. These changes, which are vital to building the suspense about the tattoo, are presented as Kayla's memories. In other scenes, there are conversations about historical trends. For example, Kayla and other students discuss the fact that people have accepted computerization of records, the use of social security number, and the fact they can be tracked through credit cards as precursors to the bar code. Kayla's visions are presented in a bold font that sets them off from the rest of the book. They are actually visions of future events but are presented in the order they are revealed to Kayla. There is one graphic in the book - a cartoon that was supposedly drawn by Mfumbe Taylor for the magazine produced by a group of students. This is in the form of a political cartoon and aims to point out the negative side of the tattoo. Chapters are titled by number only. There is a great deal of foreshadowing at the end of chapters that lend to the suspense.

## Quotes

Even though she saw the tattoos everywhere, they continued to fascinate her. How bizarre to be branded like a box of cereal" (Chapter 1, p. 14).

All Senator Young is saying is that there should always be an alternative to the bar code. That way you're free to get the stupid tattoo or not get it, Zekeal told her." Chapter 4, p. 38).

And it's humiliating to be branded like that. It makes me think of the German concentration camps" (Chapter 9, p. 85).

By pointing this out, you plant the seeds of productive thought among those resistant to the tattoo. Also, point out that going against the wishes of the United States Senate is unpatriotic" (Chapter 12, p. 122).

His genetic code is in his file. Why do you think it's there?" (Chapter 10, p. 131).

We look forward to meeting the next candidate that you spoke about at our last session. We are confident that Ms. Reed will also be an asset to our group" (Chapter 13, p. 135).

Global officers are seeking 17-year-old Kyala Marie Reed for questioning in the death of her mother, 43-year-old Ashley Reed, a Yorktown resident" (Chapter 16, p. 161).

Thank God our son isn't with you. At least he's not in as much trouble as that" (Chapter 18, p. 179).

You can't help us. As soon as they take us to the hospital, we're dead" (Chapter 19, p. 184).

Our family is apparently pretty healthy. He says that since our genes have kept us down for so many centuries, now our genes are going to advance us and we have to be ready to take advantage of this unexpected turn of events" (Chapter 21, p. 193).

Parents, you are the guardians of your children. Safeguard their futures. Insist that they are tattooed on their 17th birthdays" (Chapter 23, p. 213).

Parents, you are the guardians of your children. Safeguard their futures. Insist that they are tattooed on their 17th birthdays" (Chapter 23, p. 213).



## Topics for Discussion

### Topic for Discussion 608713

Describe Kayla. Who are her parents? Who are her friends? What kind of person is she? What are her strengths and weaknesses? What is the dream she has for her future and how is it crushed?

### Topic for Discussion 608714

What is the bar code tattoo? How does the government support the idea of getting the tattoo? What is the law that's enacted to force the issue? What information do the people believe is in the tattoo? What does Kayla learn is actually included in that information? How does she figure this out?

### Topic for Discussion 608715

Who is Ashley Reed? Who is Joseph Reed? Who is Gene Drake? Who is Amber Thorn? Who are Mava and Tova Alan? How is each of these characters impacted by the information in their tattoos? What happens to them when they learn what's included in the tattoo information?

### Topic for Discussion 608716

Who is Mfumbe? Who is Zekeal? How are the two characters similar? How are they different? How is Kayla connected to each? Which character is more likeable? Why?

### Topic for Discussion 608717

What is the gift Kayla has from early in the book that is manifested fully once she reaches the mountains? What does Kayla believe is actually happening to her? How does Eutonah explain what's happening to Kayla with regard to this gift?

### Topic for Discussion 608718

What is the most important theme of the story? Why do you consider this important? Give at least two examples of this theme.



## Topic for Discussion 608719

Mfumbe's family is impacted by the bar code tattoo differently than the families of Kayla and Amber. Describe what affect the bar code tattoo has on the Taylors, Reeds, and Thorns. What does Mfumbe give up by not accepting the tattoo? Why does Amber believe accepting the tattoo is a positive move? Why does Kayla resist?