

# **The Darkest Minds Study Guide**

**The Darkest Minds by Alexandra Bracken**

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# Contents

<a href="#">The Darkest Minds Study Guide.....</a>	<a href="#">1</a>
<a href="#">Contents.....</a>	<a href="#">2</a>
<a href="#">Plot Summary.....</a>	<a href="#">3</a>
<a href="#">Prologue, Chapters 1 - 4.....</a>	<a href="#">5</a>
<a href="#">Chapters 5 - 7.....</a>	<a href="#">9</a>
<a href="#">Chapters 8 - 10.....</a>	<a href="#">13</a>
<a href="#">Chapters 11 - 12.....</a>	<a href="#">17</a>
<a href="#">Chapters 13 - 15.....</a>	<a href="#">20</a>
<a href="#">Chapters 16 - 19.....</a>	<a href="#">23</a>
<a href="#">Chapters 20 - 21.....</a>	<a href="#">27</a>
<a href="#">Chapters 22 - 23.....</a>	<a href="#">30</a>
<a href="#">Chapters 24 - 27.....</a>	<a href="#">33</a>
<a href="#">Chapters 28 - 31.....</a>	<a href="#">35</a>
<a href="#">Characters.....</a>	<a href="#">39</a>
<a href="#">Symbols and Symbolism.....</a>	<a href="#">42</a>
<a href="#">Settings.....</a>	<a href="#">44</a>
<a href="#">Themes and Motifs.....</a>	<a href="#">45</a>
<a href="#">Styles.....</a>	<a href="#">47</a>
<a href="#">Quotes.....</a>	<a href="#">49</a>



# Plot Summary

In *The Darkest Minds* by Alexandra Bracken, Ruby Daly is almost ten years old when children across the United States begin dying at an alarming rate. Many of those who don't die exhibit an array of strange symptoms. The government creates a police force to deal with them. The youngsters, known as the "Psi" children, soon become a group to be feared. Even parents are sometimes afraid and willingly turn those who appear to be affected over to the Psi soldiers.

Ruby watches as friends fall victim, but she doesn't show any signs of illness herself until the night before her tenth birthday. Her parents argue that night and Ruby rushes to her room, locking herself inside. Later, she slips downstairs to her parents' bedroom. She quietly looks at her mother and suddenly discovers she is able to see into her mother's mind. She doesn't understand what she's seeing or how it might affect her mother, but she's curious about it. She ends the contact rather abruptly and moves to her father's side of the bed, where she repeats the process. The following morning, Ruby is amazed that her mother isn't cooking the traditional birthday breakfast. When she asks why, her mother is obviously frightened and doesn't recognize Ruby. She takes Ruby to the garage and locks her inside. A short time later, Ruby's father arrives at the garage. He is a police officer and consoles her. However, he doesn't recognize her. It's not until later that Ruby realizes she erased her parents' memories, but only those memories related to Ruby.

Ruby's father plans to take Ruby to the police station in an effort to find her parents, still not realizing what's happened and unwilling to believe Ruby when she says she is their daughter. However, the Psi soldiers arrive first and take Ruby into custody along with other children. They are kept awake and treated roughly as a large group is bussed to a holding camp. By the time they arrive, children have been brutalized and terrified. Shortly after exiting the bus, one of the youngsters whispers in the ear of a guard who then shoots herself, acting upon the suggestion of the youngster.

Ruby quickly discovers that children are separated by their abilities. Children designated "blue" are able to manipulate things, remember complex pieces of information, break codes, and sometimes move items. Ruby is "orange." Along with those of similar skills, Ruby is able to plant ideas into the minds. She realizes that she doesn't want her captors to know this about her, and she suggests to him that she belongs with the blues. He makes that classification and she successfully hides the truth for six years.

During that time, most of the children with orange or red designations are killed or moved to more secure facilities. Ruby and one other remains in Thurmond until the League of Children – a radical political group – breaks them out. But Ruby knows they also don't have her best interests at heart and she runs away from them as well. She meets up with a trio – Suzume, Lee, and Chubs – and they are soon devoted to each other.



They eventually find themselves in camp of another orange, Clancy, who is the son of the United States President. But Clancy is like most oranges, selfish and willing to sacrifice anyone in pursuit of his own goals. Ruby, Chubs, and Lee manage to escape when the camp is overrun by Psi soldiers and they continue their travels, eventually finding the father of Jack, another of their friends who was killed during an escape attempt. Jack's father shoots Chubs, wounding him so seriously that Ruby is certain he will die. Faced with the likelihood that Psi soldiers will be taking them back into custody, Ruby calls on the League. They are rescued but now in the League's control with little chance of escaping.

Ruby makes a deal with the League to remain with them on the condition that Lee is released. Ruby and Lee are romantically involved by this point and Ruby knows that Lee won't leave without her. Armed with that knowledge, Ruby makes a decision and pulls all Lee's memories of their time together from his mind so that he's free to go on with his life.



# Prologue, Chapters 1 - 4

## Summary

### Prologue

The Darkest Minds by Alexandra Bracken opens with the Prologue in which Ruby Daly is pulling weeds alongside other children in the garden when the “White Noise went off.” Ruby says she always has a serious reaction to the White Noise, far worse than the other children. While the others are quickly recovering, Ruby remains nauseous and unsteady for hours. But this time, Ruby’s reaction is even more severe than usual. She doesn’t know what prompts the use of the White Noise but she tenses her body when she hears the blast of sound warning that it’s coming but there’s no way to fully prepare and this time she finds herself writhing on the ground in pain. She fills dirt fill her mouth and tastes blood as she grinds her face in the ground in agony. Then she passes out.

### Chapter 1

In Chapter 1, Ruby says Grace Somerfield is the first student in her fourth grade class to die, though thousands of others have died by this point. The disease is initially called Everhart’s Disease, named for the first youngster believed to have died of it, but is later named Idiopathic Adolescent Acute Neurodegeneration. It’s referred to as IANN. The teachers and staff at Ruby’s school are strictly forbidden to talk about it. Her family doesn’t have a television and the disease has become tragically widespread before Ruby is even fully aware of it. On September 15, Ruby goes to school as usual. At lunch time, Grace and Ruby are eating their meal with their classmates when Grace suddenly slumps over, dead immediately. The disease, IANN, spreads quickly and soon there are many dead children. Meanwhile, the government issues a list of “symptoms” and instructions for parents who are afraid of their children or who want to turn them over to the government.

### Chapter 2

In Chapter 2, it’s raining the day Ruby and a group of children arrive at the prison camp Thurmond. They are taken in by bus and Ruby says officials only later get the idea to black out the bus windows. The PSI Special Forces are in charge of the camp and the children are ordered to silence. Ruby is ten and the Psi soldiers frighten her but some of the older children are openly rebellious. As they are getting off the bus, one of the children whispers to a soldier. Without a word, the soldier shoots herself in the head, obviously acting on the child’s words. The other soldiers say the child is “an orange,” referring to the color coding used at Thurmond. Ruby quickly realizes the children are classified as green, blue, yellow, red, and orange. She also quickly realizes the soldiers fear the yellows, reds, and oranges, and that she’ll be safer if she’s blue or green.



Ruby is standing next to a girl named Samantha Dahl who urges Ruby to be brave. They are taken into rooms for evaluation and Ruby suddenly finds herself experiencing the memories of the man conducting the evaluation. She begins mentally suggesting to the man that she should be classified green and he does.

### Chapter 3

In Chapter 3, Samantha - known as Sam - is assigned to the same cabin as Ruby and the girls become close friends. Ruby says that her life at Thurmond is bearable as long as she has Sam to help her get through. For five years, the girls help each other survive. One day Sam stands up for Ruby though it means she's punished. When she returns to the cabin, she has obviously been through a terrible ordeal. Ruby tries to talk to her but Sam is angry, asking why Ruby never stands up for herself. Ruby touches Sam and in that contact, erases all Sam's memories pertaining to Ruby. A second later, Sam asks if Ruby is new to the camp, and asks for her name. Ruby whispers her name and is silent for months afterward.

### Chapter 4

In Chapter 4, Ruby wakes after having been brutalized by the White Noise of the prologue. She's in the infirmary and a doctor who calls herself Cate Begbie is caring for her. One of the first things Ruby notes about Cate is that she smells of rosemary. The doctor's name is really Cate Conner. Cate asks Ruby about her evaluation upon arrival at the camp. Ruby immediately senses Cate is "fishing" for information and becomes worried that Cate knows Ruby isn't really a green. Cate slips Ruby a note that says the new White Noise is being used to detect reds, yellows, and oranges. She says Ruby, obviously not a green, is in danger, and promises to help her escape from Thurmond. She's sent back to her cabin though she's obviously in pain from her injuries. Acting on Cate's note, Ruby swallows two pills that Cate says are part of the escape plan and waits to see what will happen.

## Analysis

There are no explanations given in the Prologue, but the reader learns that Ruby is being subjected to some type of serious torture. It is so severe this time that she passes out. The scene takes place at Thurmond, a prison camp where the Psi children - youngsters with supernatural abilities - are held. Ruby is describing what's called White Noise - or Calm Control. The sounds affect the Psi children dramatically, literally sending them into spasms of pain. The sound is blasted out over speakers to the entire camp, sometimes as punishment and sometimes as a means of controlling the children. Ruby notes that her reaction is always more serious than the other children who are able to shake off the pain and nausea after a few minutes. This time, her reaction is even more serious. It's later revealed that Ruby's reaction is because she has a different set of abilities. The reaction eventually puts Ruby in danger because she's singled out for having these different powers.



When Sam asks Ruby where her parents are, Ruby lies and says they are dead. She says the lie comes easier than the truth, which comes out several chapters later. Ruby has effectively erased herself from her parents' memories. Sam says she wishes her parents were dead because her parents chose to send her to Thurmond. The children who arrive at the prison camps are there for an array of symptoms and with an array of stories. Some are sent there by their parents when they scare their families. Some are sent there by their parents who seem to truly believe the stories of a rehabilitation program in place. Some are literally kidnapped from their schools or homes and are incarcerated against the wishes of their families.

The child who has the soldier kill herself seems, unfortunately, typical of the children classified orange. Most of them are self-centered and ruthless, willing to use their powers to get their way and uncaring when others are harmed in the process. Ruby is apparently the exception to this rule.

Ruby is fully aware that there aren't many with red, yellow, and orange abilities remaining. Though there are three thousand kids in Thurmond, Ruby doesn't believe there are any abilities there other than green and blue. However, when she's in the infirmary, she sees a boy who is also being treated by Cate and she wonders if Cate is making a deal to help that boy escape as well. She suddenly realizes she might not be the only orange left but she isn't particularly cheered by the thought. Ruby is torn on this point. It's natural for a person to want to be with others of like abilities but she's also seen what oranges can and will do, and she's bound to be a little hesitant at the thought of being around these ruthless people.

There are some terms used in the opening chapters that are quite common throughout the book. The children of Ruby's generation are referred to as Generation Freak, a reference to their supernatural abilities. The soldiers forbid "freak abilities," and Ruby says that's the first time she's heard that term used instead of the more "polite" term used by the adults in her previous circle of caregivers who called them "symptoms" of the IAAN disease. The children are also referred to as Psi children. Psi is a letter in the Greek alphabet and the letter is used as a symbol for the Psi Special Forces, a military group charged with keeping control of the children.

While it's easy to say the soldiers and the government are wrong to want to imprison these children, it's also important that the reader look at it from the perspective of the adults. Many of these children have supernatural abilities that can barely be curbed. The prime example is the child who suggests a soldier kill herself. The soldier does so without uttering a word. With the inability of the children, and their unwillingness, to behave in society, the reason for the prison camps becomes clearer.

## Discussion Question 1

How do children, including Ruby, come to be at Thurmond?



## Discussion Question 2

Describe Ruby's friendship with Sam and how it comes to an end.

## Discussion Question 3

What is the "White Noise" and why does a change severely affect Ruby?

## Vocabulary

Slithered, pathetic, hobbled, muster, incriminate, reek, brisk, lurched, oblivion, lethargic, deign, paranoid.





# Chapters 5 - 7

## Summary

### Chapter 5

In Chapter 5, Ruby wakes in the middle of the night, shaking with sickness. One of the girls hits the emergency button, summoning help. Ruby's first clue that Cate is near is the scent of rosemary. The situation is touchy, but they escape.

### Chapter 6

In Chapter 6, Ruby wakes to discover they've changed vehicles. The boy who'd been sick in the infirmary - who is later identified as Martin - is with them. Cate says they are in West Virginia and says Martin was smuggled out of Thurmond in a medical trunk. Then Cate tells Ruby they are members of the Children's League. Ruby is upset that Cate takes only her and Martin from the camp. She fears others in her cabin will be punished for her escape and says there are others more worthy of getting out of Thurmond. Cate counters by saying that Ruby is important to the League. Cate pledges to care for Ruby and apologizes, saying she can't imagine what Ruby's life was like at Thurmond. Cate then gives Ruby a necklace. She explains that it's a panic button and that Ruby can use it anytime she becomes separated from Cate or is in trouble.

Cate says thousands of children died from the IAAN. While the government says there are two hundred fifty thousand children under eighteen years of age, Cate says the Children's League believe there are closer to twenty-five thousand. Cate finds a news station on the radio, and Ruby listens to the report of forty-five women who were pregnant without registering their conditions. They are now being "detained." Their babies will be taken into custody at birth, "for the safety of their mothers and the state of Texas."

Martin wakes and Cate says they'll be meeting a friend who has clothing and identification papers for Ruby and Martin before going to the League's Southern headquarters. She says Ruby and Martin can then decide if they want to remain with the League. Ruby realizes Martin is trying to read her thoughts. Martin says he wants to be somewhere he can use his powers. Cate says she'd counted on that and asks Ruby if she also wants to "make a difference." Ruby realizes that refusing to participate in the League's plans, whatever they are, would not ensure that she would be allowed to leave. She also isn't certain what she does want to do. She only knows that she can't go home and says she'll go anywhere, as long as it isn't back to her parents.

### Chapter 7

In Chapter 7, Ruby learns that the American economy has tanked and that many towns are virtually abandoned. Martin continues to try to read her mind. The conversation turns to how Ruby and Martin were able to hide among the blues and greens for so



long. Ruby says she simply suggested to her evaluator that she should be green and he classified her as such. Martin says he changed places with another boy, making that boy truly believe he was Martin and convincing the guards as well. Ruby cringes, knowing that boy was probably killed because of Martin's actions. Martin says he controls the actions of others by convincing them they want a specific thing or want to behave in a specific way. Cate asks Ruby if her powers work the same and Ruby hesitates, realizing she doesn't want to share her powers with these people. Instead, she says she "just sees things." Martin taunts her, trying to make her show her powers. She controls herself instead.

They meet Cate's friend, Rob. Cate asks about Rob's assignment and he says he "couldn't get them out." Rob provides Ruby and Martin backpacks with clothes and other necessities, and invites them to go to the bathroom of a convenience store to wash up and change. Ruby stumbles on the way and Rob catches her. In their brief contact, Ruby sees Rob with the two children he was supposed to rescue from their camp. He makes both fall to their knees. Then, he shoots them. Ruby knows that if she opposes them, Rob won't hesitate to kill her as well. There is only one bathroom and Martin rushes to use it first. Ruby hesitates, wondering if she is justified in leaving Martin behind, and decides to run without him. Her resolve solidifies as she watches Rob hand Cate a gun, which Cate is obviously accustomed to. Just then Ruby hears another kid in the store.

## Analysis

There is no information about the pills Ruby takes that make her so ill. She is very sick for the first part of the journey. Dr. Rogers, the second doctor working with Cate, is left at Thurmond. Cate ties her up before leaving with Ruby, apparently to further the story that Ruby escaped. Her fate is not known and the Children's League members who talk about her seem only slightly concerned. It seems that they aren't worried that she'll be punished for her role in the escape.

Ruby says that she and others at Thurmond had heard whispers about the group known as the Children's League, and that she'd mostly assumed it was a fairy tale made up by someone who needed hope. Her first question to Cate when she learns the Children's League is responsible for breaking her out is why they took only her and Martin, leaving hundreds of others behind. Cate says the situation for Ruby and Martin was serious and explains that the White Noise has been altered to seek out children with red, orange, and yellow abilities hiding among the blues and greens. Cate says the other children will be rescued "when the time is right," but even from this point Ruby is skeptical of the motivations and actions of the League. She is upset even more when Cate says, "they'll live," referring to the children left behind. But even with that, Ruby wants to believe Cate and to believe in her.

Ruby sees memories of other people, often just by touching them. While she is riding with Cate, she sees that Cate was involved in a fire. The memory is vivid and it seems that it might be important later but it's never mentioned again.



Ruby recognizes Martin as another orange and knows there are few - if any - of them left. Thurmond children are strictly segregated by gender and Ruby has had no interaction with boys in years. She is tongue-tied but not just because she's near a boy of her own age. The children who are orange and red have traditionally been cruel and brutal in the use of their powers. One youngster had a guard kill herself upon his arrival at Thurmond. Others used their powers in an effort to escape from Thurmond over the years, and most were killed for their attempts. Ruby says they had all tried to escape while she had been content to hide among the greens. She isn't proud of herself now but she seems an oddity among the children of her powers. Even Martin has used his power to hurt others and shows signs of ruthless disregard for others. Ruby, in the car with him for the first hours of her journey, doesn't know what to say to Martin. She knows they may very well be the last of the orange children left alive but isn't happy to be with him despite that connection.

Ruby asks Cate if the adults believe the camps are "reforming" the children housed there. Cate says people seem to want to hold onto that thought because they can't otherwise cope with what's happening. The camps resemble the accounts of the Nazi prison camps where the camp inmates were used for experiments and treated cruelly. In many cases, the German people were oblivious to the happenings at those camps, or they ignored what they knew about the camps. Another similarity is seen when Ruby first arrives and one of the older children yells for them to run. Ruby can't imagine where she would go.

The public is told that the children in the camps are being "reformed." In truth, they are being treated with extreme cruelty. With this treatment, it seems likely that many of the children would develop a deep hatred for the guards and even for adults in general, and that they might use their powers against their oppressors.

## Discussion Question 1

How do Ruby and Martin hide among the greens and blues at Thurmond?

## Discussion Question 2

Explain how Ruby escapes from Thurmond.

## Discussion Question 3

What are the things that convince Ruby she wants to run away rather than joining Cate and the Children's League?

## Vocabulary

Crooned, recoiled, induce, trill, sanctions, huff, squash, barricaded, vigilante, chivalrous, lethargic.



# Chapters 8 - 10

## Summary

### Chapter 8

In Chapter 8, Ruby sees a small Asian girl wearing huge, yellow rubber gloves. The girl runs away with Ruby right behind her. They continue to run as Martin pursues her. Ruby sees the little girl, later identified as Suzume, rush toward a beat-up black van with the words, "Betty Jean Cleaning" on the side. Suzume jumps inside and slams the door. Ruby begs to be let in then realizes she's putting the little girl in danger and decides she needs to lead Rob and Martin as far away as she can. Before she can take off, Suzume pulls her inside the van and pushes her down, covering her with a paint-splattered sheet and motioning for her to be quiet. Just then, Ruby hears two male voices get in the van. They identify each other as Liam, known as Lee, as Chubs. Their conversation is interrupted by Cate yelling for Ruby. Then there's a gunshot and Lee takes off. Ruby realizes the three in the van are all children and that she's put them in danger. She decides to ask them to let her out, knowing they'll have a better chance of escaping Cate and Rob and hoping that she can escape as well.

She reveals her presence and Lee swerves in surprise. He recovers and there is an extended conversation about Ruby with Chubs saying they'd agreed to pick up "no more strays." The argument between Chubs and Lee continues with Suzume remaining completely calm and silent. At one point, Lee becomes indignant over Chubs' derogatory comment about the van, which they call "Black Betty." Ruby asks them to let her out and there ensues an argument about that as well. When Lee learns Ruby is running from the Children's League, he warns her that they aren't an "angel network" as some think. Lee refuses to let Ruby out, saying they'll at least take her to a bus station. They are still making introductions when a bullet shatters the back window of the van.

### Chapter 9

In Chapter 9, Ruby learns that skip chasers are chasing Lee and the others. Then Rob and Cate eliminate the trackers and Rob uses his power to stop Rob and Cate. Later, Ruby prepares to change out of the prison clothes and into the clothes from the backpack. Lee points out several small tracking devices hidden in the seams of the clothes and Lee destroys them.

Chubs insists that Ruby explain how she got out of Thurmond. She lies, telling them she is really good with patterns and codes, and that she'd escaped. At this point, they believe she has green abilities because she's wearing that code on her prison clothes. When they ask about Martin, she says she doesn't know anything about him. They don't initially believe her until she explains that there are three thousand kids at Thurmond. Lee says they were in Caledonia, Ohio, and they clearly pity Ruby's years at Thurmond. Ruby learns that Suzume has been in prison for about two and a half years, while Lee



and Chubs were in for less than two years each. Ruby is amazed at the relatively short incarceration times.

## Chapter 10

In Chapter 10, Ruby asks about their powers and learns that Lee and Chubs are blue while Suzume is yellow. Ruby is amazed that there were yellows at Caledonia while all the yellows in Thurmond had been removed and were presumed dead. Suzume interrupts the conversation, waving at Chubs and Ruby to join the search through an old RV park. The East River Camping Grounds is now abandoned and Ruby learns Lee had hoped it was the base camp for the “Slip Kid.” The Slip Kid’s identity is not revealed until later but Lee and the others believe he has the power to sometimes help kids return home. Ruby learns the Slip Kid is believed to be an orange. Ruby is amazed at the thought of another orange.

Ruby follows Suzume into one of the abandoned RV and they look around. Ruby notices a tiny red light on the windshield of the RV and realizes it’s a camera. She smashes the case but it’s obviously still working. When Suzume realizes the camera is there, she pulls off one of her gloves and touches the device, causing it to instantly melt. As Ruby and Suzume rush toward Black Betty, Ruby sees more cameras.

Ruby learns they are searching for the father of Jack, one of their cabin mates, to deliver Jack’s letter. Jack was killed during the escape from Caledonia. Ruby joins Lee in the front seats of the van when they encounter a Volkswagen and a pickup. Then White Noise assails them and all four children fall to their knees. They are in agony as Suzume and Ruby are pulled from the van. Ruby sees a flash and hears someone call out that he has a “positive ID on Liam Stewart.” Ruby can implant the idea into the man’s head that he would simply pick up his radio, cancel his request for backup, and walk away. She is amazed as he does just that. Then she rushes to the other side of the van and discovers Suzume has literally thrown the pickup and Volkswagen into a field. She sees a mangled body and is terrified until she finds Suzume. She manages to get Liam out of the driver’s seat, closes the doors of the vans, and begins to drive.

## Analysis

The early introduction of Lee, Suzume, and Chubs indicates the tight bond between the three. Apparently, Chubs was an overweight child when he arrived at the Psi camp. He says that Lee stuck him with that nickname early on and Lee jokes, saying that Psi camp is “better than fat camp.” When Ruby sees Chubs for the first time, he’s very slender. She notes that even his hands are skinny. Suzume is, at this point, just a very quiet little girl but Ruby soon learns that Suzume doesn’t speak at all and hasn’t for some time. It seems to be a self-induced silence and it seems that she might be able to speak if she wanted. There is a brief argument between Lee and Chubs about “strays” and the conversation turns quickly to a discussion about kittens. They had apparently found a box of kitten but Lee refused to take them along.



When Lee learns that the Children's League is chasing Ruby, he and Chubs are surprised. There's a brief discussion about the fact that there are skip tracers - which are bounty hunters for the Psi - and members of the PSF chasing them already. The boys know they don't need the Children's League after them as well. When Ruby wants out of the van, Lee asks if she's returning to the League. He says they aren't the "angel network" that most people believe them to be, and that she should beware of their agenda. He doesn't explain what that agenda is but does say they must have a plan to use Ruby. Ruby says she's already aware that she doesn't want to hook up with the League.

When Lee and Chubs learn Ruby is from Thurmond, they are obviously amazed. The first reaction is one of horror and it's obvious they've heard about the experimentation that's gone on there. Ruby again wonders why the adults of the world have let that situation occur, and why someone didn't save the children who were there against their wills. Ruby has to ask what year it is before she can confirm that she's sixteen years old and she's amazed that Lee and Chubs were well into their teens before being taken into custody.

Ruby is very worried that she might hurt someone with her abilities. In chapter ten, she has been asleep for a full day when Chubs wakes her. He touches her to get her up and she is furious with herself afterwards, realizing that she could have completely wiped his memory while he was merely trying to wake her. She doesn't reveal any of her powers to Lee, Chubs, or Suzume at this point, believing that they'll consider her a monster and will be afraid of her. At one point she decides she'll leave them, saying that she wants to be gone before they learn that "one of the real" monsters of the world is "sitting in their backseat." Ruby cannot imagine that they would still befriend her if she were to reveal the depth of her powers.

Chubs and Liam explain to Ruby that the reward for turning in a child with supernatural abilities is ten thousand dollars. With the downturn in the economy and so many people without jobs, there are many people willing to turn in a child to earn the reward. When the four stop at the East River Camping Ground and discover the cameras, they expect that bounty hunters, known as skip tracers, are using an array of means to search for kids with powers. There are many skip tracers, but Lee and Chubs are especially wary of a particular woman named Lady Jane. She has been chasing them for some time and is more determined than ever now that the price on Liam's capture has increased exponentially because of his role in the escape from Caledonia.

## Discussion Question 1

How does Ruby come to be in the company of Lee, Chubs, and Suzume? What are the reactions of each to her presence?

## Discussion Question 2

What happens when the children reach the East River Camp Ground?



## Discussion Question 3

Why does Liam believe Ruby has green abilities? Why does Ruby not reveal her true abilities when Chubs asks her?

## Vocabulary

Logistics, hoarse, exasperation, withering, mulling, pristine, conked, huffed, potential, skittish.





# Chapters 11 - 12

## Summary

In chapter eleven, Liam rouses and checks first to see that Chubs and Suzume are alright before asking Ruby what happened. She says Suzume crashed one of the cars into the other, knocking one of the men unconscious and sending the other one running away. Lee has never heard the White Noise before and Ruby explains that its purpose is to keep the children from using their powers. Adults cannot hear it. Liam wants to know why Ruby was less impacted and Ruby assumes it's because Liam and the other had not been subjected to it before while she had heard it often.

They find a rest area and pull over to regroup. Chubs tends to Ruby's scraped hands and knees. Ruby reveals that she'd seen a badge and a device that was used at Thurmond, meaning the men who attacked them were Psi military rather than skip tracers. Ruby doesn't understand why there would be such a concentrated effort to find them until Chubs says Lee was the "mastermind" behind the Caledonia escape. Ruby believes that might have been the only successful escape from a camp.

Lee calls for a vote on whether Ruby should remain with them. Chubs is the only one who doesn't vote "yes" and Ruby is concerned, saying she doesn't want to cause a problem for the three. Lee assures her that Chubs is only trying to protect himself from caring about someone else. Ruby suddenly realizes that she desperately wants to protect all three of them and that the three of them might actually need someone with her powers.

They find a Howard Johnson Express motel and Liam, carefully avoiding the office, finds a vacant room. Liam picks a lock and the others join him. Ruby discovers that Chubs, who has been hiding the book he carries, is reading "Watership Downs." She's amazed that he's reading the story of a bunch of rabbits and wonders if he knows how the story ends.

In chapter twelve, Ruby showers and comes across the panic button necklace given to her by Cate. She almost throws it away but thinks about it before taking that action. She believes it isn't a tracking device because the Children's League would surely have caught up to them by now if that was the case. She thinks through the possibilities of her future and realizes that the League might rescue her if the Psi soldiers were to catch up with her. Regardless of the League's agenda, she believes it will be better to join them than to return to Thurmond. She keeps the necklace.

Ruby shares the bed with Suzume and wakes, enmeshed in Suzume's dream. She sees the action from Suzume's perspective as the children rush chaotically from their beds toward a gate. There's snow on the ground and Suzume watches as dozens are shot so that they fall down into the snow. There is a booth beside the gate. Lee and Chubs are there, trying to cut the electricity to the gate. One boy darts past the older



children near the gate and when he touches it, he's electrocuted. Then Lee is picking her up and running, urging her to hold on tightly. Ruby wakes as Lee wakes Suzume. He tells her it's just a dream and reminds her they've only been out of the prison for two weeks. The next morning, Lee steals gas from another car in the motel lot and they resume their trip.

## Analysis

Chubs asks Ruby why she lied about Suzume's role in escaping the Psi soldiers. He realizes that the man Suzume hit with a truck was probably dead and Ruby confirms that suspicion. But, Ruby says that Suzume didn't mean to kill the man and that she'd seen no reason to put the image in Suzume's head. It's a statement of Ruby's character that she realizes Suzume would be devastated by that piece of information and chooses to keep it to herself. It's also a testament of Chubs' character that he knows the truth without Ruby spelling it out.

There's a conversation between Ruby and Chubs while Lee is choosing a motel room. Chubs tells Ruby that he knows she has not been honest with them and that she's bringing problems of her own into their group. He urges that she consider her situation and evaluate whether she's doing the group any good with her presence. He says that if she slips out in the middle of the night, he'll understand why. He's obviously very devoted to Lee and Suzume and is intent on protecting them from any potential danger. He doesn't yet know what Ruby's powers are and it seems he might be afraid of her, but that isn't it. He's actually worried that the Children's League might be the group to track them down because they are searching for Ruby. He doesn't yet know why the League wants Ruby, but knows that his friends will be caught up in that drama if they do catch up with Ruby. When Chubs learns what Ruby's powers actually are, he isn't at all afraid of her, and that surprises Ruby greatly.

The book, "Watership Down," is referred to several times in the story. Ruby first discovers that Chubs is reading it when they stop at the motel and she thinks it's no wonder he's been keeping the book hidden. She believes Lee might tease him about his choice of reading material. Ruby was taken into prison at age ten and the book was one of her favorites before then, meaning it is geared toward a younger audience. Ruby will quote from the book, saying that the main theme of the book is that "rabbits need dignity and, above all, the will to accept their fate." The rabbits in that story have stopped fighting against death, accepting that some of them are going to die.

The connection between Lee and Ruby begins the night they are in the motel room. Ruby is in the shower when it suddenly catches up to her that she's sixteen, without family or a place to call home, and will likely be chased for the rest of her life. She begins to cry in the shower and tries to keep it quiet so that the others can't hear her. Then Lee knocks on the door and asks if she's alright. She pulls herself together and answers, then gets dressed. When she emerges from the bathroom, Chubs tells Lee that it's obvious Ruby is alright and that he should have left her alone. Ruby doesn't say



anything but she knows that she wasn't okay and that Lee had somehow sensed that, coming to her rescue in the only way he knew how.

The morning after spending the night in the motel, Ruby is struck by a thought. She has spent the past six years being berated for any use of power, being threatened with severe punishment anytime someone showed signs they might use their power, and being taught that the powers are "unnatural." She suddenly wonders what would have happened if the children had been taught to use them wisely instead. Ruby doesn't know much about her powers because she hasn't been allowed to figure out what she can do. Because of her inability to control herself, she erased her memory from her best friend and her parents. Children all have different kinds and levels of powers so there's no way for the adults to give a single lesson on controlling powers, but it seems there could have been a way to incorporate most of these children into society rather than completely ostracizing them. Ruby has thought about the prison camps and the fact that people are allowing the camps to happen, but this is the first time it's occurred to her that learning to use her powers could be a positive thing.

## **Discussion Question 1**

What happens that causes Lee to call for a vote for those in favor of allowing Ruby to travel with them?

## **Discussion Question 2**

Why does Ruby decide to stay with Lee and the others? Why does she hesitate at all?

## **Discussion Question 3**

Describe the escape from Caledonia.

## **Vocabulary**

Martyred, superficial, feeble, thrumming, lulled, sheen, groused, gloating, adversity, deign, tentative, flabbergasted.



# Chapters 13 - 15

## Summary

### Chapter 13

In Chapter 13, Chubs isn't thrilled to find that Ruby didn't leave during the night but Ruby is unrepentant. Lee calls on Ruby to help navigate, saying Chubs has such poor vision that he can't help read road signs. Suzume goes to sleep and Lee explains that her parents sent her to the prison after she short-circuited her father's car. He says her parents were afraid of Suzume. However, Lee's parents and Chubs' parents had tried to keep the boys hidden, which is why they'd spend less time in prison. They stop at a restaurant and Lee goes inside for food. When he returns, he announces that Lady Jane is in another part of the parking lot and they quickly hide the van in a nearby alley.

While they sit, they go over what they know about the Slip Kid's camp. Their only clues are "EDO" and it's north of Raleigh. But, they all admit that even those pieces of information might be lies. Ruby believes the three letters are a code for a telephone area code. With that, they choose a destination and start their journey again. They are forced onto a side road where they see a college. Chubs is depressed, saying he would have been preparing for college if things were normal, but that colleges are closed now for lack of students. Those few who are not affected by IAAN are old enough to be drafted and no one has the money anyway. They also see a billboard with dozens of photos of children whose parents are searching for them.

### Chapter 14

In Chapter 14, they stop at a Walmart in Roanoke, Virginia. Ruby refuses to allow Lee to go inside alone but once in, she knows that it's not safe and wants to leave. They find what looks like a typical outdoor campsite and Lee reveals that he'd spent time here. Ruby sees the letter Psi painted on a wall and touches it to discover it's fresh paint. Just then, she and Lee are attacked by a group of boys. They run toward the front of the store where Suzume is touching a checkout lane. She has sent power surging through the store, causing lights and sounds to revive until lights begin exploding throughout the building. Chubs breaks her contact and the lights go off, leaving just the emergency lights in operation. Ruby gets her first look at the attackers and discovers it's a group of children.

### Chapter 15

In Chapter 15, the attack stops and there's an uneasy truce. The attackers explain that all social sites on the Internet have been shut down and email is strictly monitored, meaning it's nearly impossible for a kid to reach his parents. They say the Slip Kid is helping some reach their parents, sometimes through newspaper ads. The conversation takes a nasty turn in which one of the boys refers to Suzume as "a pet." Ruby takes



Suzume walking through the store to get her away from the conversation. They find new shoes for each of them and gather some clothing for all four. Then Ruby remembers seeing some pink rubber gloves and gets them for Suzume. Lee rejoins them and Suzume is so pleased with the pink gloves that she walks around, holding them out in front of her for everyone to see.

## Analysis

Ruby learns from Chubs and Lee that there are a number of factions warring against each other for control of the government among other things. The Federal Coalition is known as “West Coast” and is made up of former government officials. The United States is ruled by President Gray who promptly eliminated the two-term rule and has been in power for years. His son is Clancy Gray, whose photo Ruby saw everyday at Thurmond. Ruby asks if the Federal Coalition is against the prison camps and Chubs says no one is really focused on ending the torture of the Psi children or putting a stop to the prison camp program. Ruby asks who is on the side of the children and Liam says it’s only the children.

Lee has Suzume do school work each day. The work varies depending on the day and the time available to devote to it, and one day after Ruby joins them Suzume is doing multiplication. Chubs interrupts, saying it’s a waste of time and that she won’t ever need it. Lee disagrees, saying it will mean Suzume is ahead of other youngsters her age “by the time things go back to normal.” Ruby believes Chubs is right but it’s obvious that Lee wants to focus on the possibility that the world will eventually be normal again. Ruby remembers that her mother had once said education is a “privilege.” Ruby now disagrees and believes that all children are entitled to a normal life. Ruby tells Chubs that she hopes Lee is right because the alternative is that they all remain in hiding until an entire generation dies.

Lee asks the boys in Walmart what the Slip Kid’s ultimate agenda is. It’s obvious that he doesn’t entirely trust that there’s a kid out there who is willing and able to help others without some agenda of his own. This distrust is founded because most people in this time have agendas. They’ve seen this with the Children’s League, a group that some believe are just advocating for kids and helping them escape the prisons, but that are ultimately using kids’ powers to attack the government.

There is a brief conversation about “tribes” and it’s later revealed that some kids are banding together in groups, or tribes. This can’t be a good thing for the future of the United States and it seems the government would realize this, but it apparently hasn’t at this point.

Ruby and Suzume spend a little “girl time” together in Walmart. They find new sneakers for Suzume and boots for Ruby, and they find clothes for themselves and the boys. Suzume locates a pink outfit and she’s clearly enamored with it but she initially refuses to take it. Ruby realizes that Suzume doesn’t feel she deserves it because of what she can do with her powers. Ruby insists and they end up with Suzume dressed up and



braiding Ruby's hair. Another piece of this time is Ruby's decision to get the pink gloves for Suzume. It's a small gesture but Suzume loves the pink gloves. They are a symbol that she is a loved little girl rather than the monster she believes herself to be. It's a tiny piece of normalcy in an otherwise chaotic existence and Suzume is obviously pleased.

While Ruby and Suzume are "shopping" in the Walmart, Ruby removes Suzume's glove and holds the little girl's hand. Suzume tries to pull away but Ruby holds on. Suzume, who still hasn't spoken a word, drags Ruby to the appliances and short circuits a toaster to show Ruby again how her powers work. Ruby says she knows about Suzume's power but trusts the little girl not to hurt her. Ruby's intentions are good. She wants to help Suzume learn to control her powers. But Ruby herself is constantly struggling with her own powers. She fears touching Lee or Chubs for fear she'll erase the memories or do some other damage to them without meaning to. She wants to find the Slip Kid because she believes he is orange and will help her learn to control her powers. She doesn't really seem to think that Suzume, a yellow, needs someone who understands yellow powers to help her learn control as well.

## Discussion Question 1

Why does Lee have Suzume do school work each day and why does Chubs disagree with the practice?

## Discussion Question 2

Describe some of the changes that have occurred since Ruby went to prison.

## Discussion Question 3

Why does Ruby get the pink gloves for Suzume and why is Suzume so pleased with them?

## Vocabulary

Inherent, vocalize, insurrection, enormous, hoist, specifically, disdain.



# Chapters 16 - 19

## Summary

### Chapter 16

In Chapter 16, Ruby listens as Lee finally goes to sleep. Ruby wants to move closer but, as always, fears accidentally erasing herself from his memory. She hears the boys who attacked them talking and moves closer to hear better but finds Chubs already there. Chubs says that he believes the boys are going to try to steal Black Betty. Chubs and Ruby spend some time talking together after that and Chubs explains that he was hiding at a family-owned cabin when the Psi soldiers picked him up. Ruby later realizes that the EDO is a code for 540, an AM radio station. Ruby and Chubs realize the Psi children can hear certain frequencies that adults cannot hear, which makes the White Noise effective, and that the Slip Kid must be using that frequency on the radio. They tune in and hear a voice say anyone who can hear the broadcast should go to Lake Prince, Virginia.

### Chapter 17

In Chapter 17, Chubs talks about Jack Fields. He was with Chubs, Lee, and Suzume when they made their escape from Caledonia and was the first killed by the guards. The four get away from the Walmart and continue their journey, this time with a definite destination. As Ruby is about to put the map back in the glove compartment, she sees the letters written by Jack, Lee, and Chubs. Each was to be delivered to their parents if any one of them didn't survive to reunite with their families. Chubs and Lee have pledged to deliver Jack's. Ruby opens Jack's letter and Lee becomes furious, saying it's none of their business even though Ruby points out that it may contain information that will help them find Jack's father. She puts the letter back, unread.

Lee reveals that he'd been in the Children's League for a short time. His sister was killed though he doesn't reveal the details of her death. Lee's older brother joins the League voluntarily and keeps track of the number of people he kills as part of his missions for the League. That turns Lee off because he can't help but remember that the people being killed also have families. Ruby tells Lee that he is welcome to rant or scream or cry when he is with her, but urges him to stop running away from them whenever he is feeling vulnerable.

### Chapter 18

In Chapter 18, Ruby and Lee touch and she sees herself as he sees her. She realizes she is in his mind and slaps him to break the spell. She is furious with herself, fearing that she might have erased herself from his mind. Lee doesn't remember what happened between them and she covers it up, telling him she'd tripped and he tried to



keep her from falling. Ruby vows to avoid all contact with Lee until they reach the Slip Kid and she figures out how to control her powers.

They head back to the van and discover Lady Jane and another skip tracer are there, having already captured Chubs and Suzume. Ruby is hit with the butt of a rifle and Lee uses his power to throw the man against nearby picnic tables. Ruby quickly discovers that Lady Jane has gotten information already and knows that the Slip Kid's camp is at the East River. Ruby vows to stop this though she believes Lee, Chubs, and Suzume will no longer want her around. Ruby makes contact with Lady Jane, telling her to hand her gun to Lee, which she does. Ruby pulls memories of finding Black Betty in the rest area from Lady Jane's mind and instructs her to turn around, walk for an hour into a nearby forest, and then sit without moving. Ruby finishes her instructions, saying Lady Jane won't remember any of them or the confrontation in the rest area. Ruby nearly passes out and her last memory before falling is of riding along in Black Betty, before the others know anything about her power and while she still has a chance of belonging with them.

## Chapter 19

In Chapter 19, Ruby recalls the day before her tenth birthday. The IAAN disease has everyone on edge, including her parents. She finds a flyer hidden in the kitchen, listing symptoms of the disease and instructing parents who fear their children or who see the powers manifesting to call Psi officials. Ruby's parents argue that night and she goes to bed. Later, she rises and stands at her mother's bedside. She suddenly sees memories in her mother's mind and unravels all the memories of Ruby, though she doesn't realize exactly what she's done. Curious, she approaches her father and is amazed when she does the same to him. The next morning, her tenth birthday, she is surprised to smell breakfast cooking but it's not the tradition birthday-breakfast of pancakes. She goes downstairs her mother is obviously upset when she sees Ruby. She doesn't know her and asks how she got in the house. Ruby's father is a policeman and his reaction is the same. He is about to take her to the police station with him when the Psi soldiers show up and take Ruby into custody.

Ruby wakes in the van to discover she has stitches in her head. She hears Chubs and Lee talking about "dumping her." It takes time before she learns they are actually referring to Black Betty. Lee promises they aren't going to leave Ruby behind, whether she's seeking the Slip Kid in order to make contact with another orange or hoping for help finding her grandmother.

## Analysis

Ruby finds a page among Suzume's homework that appears to be an essay written by Chubs. He is immediately defensive about it and the first words he speaks are to insist that he isn't practicing for college. Education was obviously very important to Chubs before the Psi prison camps and he's very disappointed at his current situation. However, Ruby learns that this "essay" is really a coded message Chubs worked out





with his parents as a means of communication. He will later post it online in an effort to contact his family.

Lee is really struggling with his role in the escape from Caledonia. He is a natural born leader and the other children were more than willing to follow him when he created an escape plan. Dozens died before reaching freedom and Lee feels guilty for their deaths. Ruby, however, tells him that the children followed knowing the risks. They were eager to grab onto any hope at all for escaping the prison. When Lee says they would have been better off to remain safely in the prison, Ruby says the fact that the children had a choice is more important than the fact that some died.

Lee is angry when he hears a radio broadcast about a pair of Psi children who are picked up by police and returned to a camp. His frustration comes from having tried to create an escape plan only to have so many of the children killed and others picked up after they were away from the camp. He says that it seems the soldiers will “pick them off,” one by one, until all the children are in custody. Lee then reveals that he hopes the Slip Kid will be able to help find a way to free more children. Ruby feels selfish when she discovers this because she wants to find him in the hope that he’ll be able to help her learn to control her power.

Ruby can’t believe Lee and Chubs are willing to keep her near them after learning about her power. Lee points out that none of them are “normal” by the previous standards. Ruby says they don’t understand the depth of her powers or they’d be afraid but they don’t agree. This is part of Ruby’s ongoing struggle to deal with her powers and her role in the world. But Ruby is also filled with memories of others with orange powers. They were brutally cruel.

## Discussion Question 1

Why does Lee want to find the Slip Kid? How does that compare to Ruby's and Chubs' motivation for wanting to find him?

## Discussion Question 2

Why does Lee feel bad about his role in the Caledonia escape? What is Ruby’s answer to his feelings?

## Discussion Question 3

What might Chubs' life have been like if he wasn't born a member of Generation Freak? Support your answer.

## Vocabulary

Function, distraught, warren, legitimately, horrified, brutal, clench, tentative, drenched, babbling, valiantly, parroted.



# Chapters 20 - 21

## Summary

### Chapter 20

In Chapter 20, Ruby and Lee spend some time talking while Chubs and Suzume sleep. Ruby explains to Lee about her power and the fact that she's easier drawn into another person's mind if she's tired or inattentive. They nap as well and wake well after daylight. They wake the others and leave Black Betty behind, knowing the trackers are probably on the lookout for the van. They set out on foot, walking near a highway but just out of sight of the vehicles traveling along it. They hear a loud crash. Lee and Ruby go to investigate and see people dressed all in black rush to an overturned truck. One of them has a knife and the driver is on the ground. Ruby screams without realizing it and the people turn their guns on Lee and Ruby. They discover the people are Psi kids and a boy named Mike recognizes Lee. Lee asks Mike about the attack on the truck and Mike says it's a "supply hit." He then reveals that he is part of the group living with the Slip Kid.

### Chapter 21

In Chapter 21, Ruby and the others help carry the boxes of food to East River, which they learn is actually a former camping ground called Chesapeake Trails. Mike says the camp is safe because no one can attack the Slip Kid. He says even President Gray is afraid of him. When they enter the camp office, Ruby sees Clancy Gray working on a laptop. He looks up and says, "Ruby Elizabeth Daly." When Ruby is obviously shocked, he apologizes and says he's read files on her because there are "a lot of people" searching for her. He recites information about Ruby's childhood, including that her father, a police officer, had reported "an unknown child in the house." They say she was taken by the Psi officials. He also knows Lee and the entire conversation upsets Ruby, Lee, Chubs, and Suzume. Clancy says he's excited to meet another orange and apologizes. He instructs Mike to take them to a cabin and says they'll be safe at East River. As they are leaving, Ruby realizes Clancy is putting himself into her mind. He implants a vision of himself handing her a rose and asking for her forgiveness.

They are given a cabin to share but Ruby, needing some time alone, makes her way to the lake she'd glimpsed earlier. That night at dinner, everyone gathers around a campfire but Chubs leaves almost immediately. Suzume is playing with other youngsters and Ruby recognizes one of them from Suzume's nightmare at the hotel. The girl introduces herself as Hina and says she and Suzume are cousins. Ruby and Lee dance to one of the songs that plays and draw closer to each other. As they prepare to go to their cabin with Suzume, Ruby sees that Clancy is watching her intently.



## Analysis

Ruby and the others have built the East River up in their minds and they are expecting too much. They are disappointed from the beginning. It turns out that it's not the safe haven they'd expected because the kids are really just in hiding. Mike says the Slip Kid can help get messages to families but kids are asked to remain at the camp for awhile, helping with the work necessary to keep the camp going. Another thing that bothers Lee is the presence of the Psi symbol. The letter is used by the soldiers who stand guard over the prisons and Lee is upset when he sees that letter on the wall at the East River camp. Mike tries to justify the letter, saying they are the "Psi kids," and that the letter should be their symbol. He also notes that black is the color of choice because it symbolizes the absence of color. He's referring to the colors used to designate the Psi abilities and says that black signifies that the ability colors don't matter. Over the coming days, Ruby, Lee, and Chubs come to discover the camp is not where they want to be.

The first night Ruby's group is at East River, they gather with the others for dinner around a campfire but Chubs almost immediately excuses himself and heads back to their cabin. When he's asked why he isn't staying with the group, he says he's read the book, "Lord of the Flies." In that book, a group of young boys is stranded on an island and, left without grownup supervision, create a barbaric society with horrible results. Chubs recognizes the situation and believes that the children will naturally tend toward unacceptable behavior. He's not entirely wrong though there is not the mob mentality that's seen in "Lord of the Flies." While the children in that story were barbaric, the potential for an all-out war and cruelty is much greater at East River because the children there have powers that can literally be used to kill each other.

One of the positives of the camp is that the children use their powers to accomplish tasks and most are open about what they can do. For example, Ruby watches a young boy who is tasked with helping clear the dishes after their first dinner in the camp. He is using his power to move a large basin around the camp, allowing everyone to put their dirty dishes into the tub. Ruby is amazed to realize that they don't have to fear reprimand for using their powers.

Clancy was the first resident of Thurmond and he tells Ruby that she, of all people, should know that there is no rehabilitation program at Thurmond. It's still unclear whether the adults know the details about the camps and simply don't care or believe the government lie that the youngsters are being rehabilitated. It may be that the number of adults who fear the Psi children is greater than the number of adults who might want the program to come to an end.

## Discussion Question 1

How do Lee, Ruby, Chubs, and Suzume join the Slip Kid's camp?



## Discussion Question 2

What is the significance of the Psi children wearing black at the East River camp?

## Discussion Question 3

Why does Ruby expect Lee, Chubs, and Suzume to end their contact with her after discovering her powers? Why don't they?

## Vocabulary

Condensed, disorienting, banished, infinitely, qualms, punctuated, speculating, scrounge, predict, sordid, dubious.



# Chapters 22 - 23

## Summary

### Chapter 22

In Chapter 22, Ruby discovers that Clancy doesn't expect her to work around the camp like the others. While they are talking, he floods her mind with images of romantic settings in which Clancy and Ruby are close. He tells Ruby he can teach her to use her abilities, saving her from the trial-and-error method he'd been forced to use. Ruby leaves the camp for the lake and finds Chubs there. They have a good-natured argument about which of them found the spot first but Chubs can tell Ruby is worried. She explains her reluctance to trust Clancy with helping her learn to control her powers.

They begin to work at it and one of the first of Clancy's memories seen by Ruby is a letter with the White House emblem signed by President Gray and allowing experiments on his son, Clancy, as long as there are "no visible scars." She sees things from Clancy's perspective and feels him giving a speech about the success of the rehabilitation program. In another scene, Clancy uses his power to make his father sign a document. Then he's chased by Secret Service officials. He tells Ruby that he'd convinced his father that the program had worked but was eventually caught. When Clancy finishes telling her about the roles of the League and the President, Ruby knows she needs to learn to control her power and asks Clancy to help her.

### Chapter 23

In Chapter 23, Ruby watches Clancy as he rules the camp and realizes that everyone depends on him to make good decisions. The younger children attend classes and one day each week Clancy give a history lesson. Weeks pass. Most of the time Lee is away from the cabin, serving as security guard for the outer borders of the camp. Chubs is usually exhausted from his work in the garden and Suzume has honed her skills to the point that she stops wearing the gloves. Ruby spends her days with Clancy, trying to figure out how to keep him from invading her mind and learning other aspects of her power, though with very limited success.

One day Ruby discovers that Chubs hasn't been doing his work in the garden. The girl in charge threatens to tell Clancy. Ruby confronts Chubs and he says he hates the camp. He points out he's told what to do and when, just as he was in prison. He wants to leave. Ruby plans to talk to Clancy and steps out of their cabin and bumps into Lee. He puts his hand out and introduces himself.

## Analysis

Clancy tells Ruby that President Gray doesn't have the Psi military attack Clancy's camp because he doesn't want the publicity. Clancy says his father has spread the lie



that Clancy is studying abroad and that a raid on the camp would make it obvious that the prison camps aren't reforming children.

Clancy then shows Ruby a document that indicates it was the Children's League that planted the new frequency into the White Noise - or Calm Control - that had resulted in Ruby's traumatic reaction. Clancy says she wasn't in immediate danger but would eventually have been discovered. This is another sign that the Children's League is not entirely honest about their goals or their role in the current situation. Clancy then tells Ruby that his father is gathering an army, called Project Jamboree, and that he's using the children with red abilities for his own goals. It will later be revealed that Clancy has actually been behind the Project Jamboree. Through all these revelations, the reader never really knows who is acting in the best interests of the people and the children. It seems that everyone - including the League, the President, and Clancy - have personal agendas.

As Ruby spends more time with Clancy, she begins having romantic feelings for him. What she isn't considering is that Clancy doesn't have her best interests at heart and he is actually very skilled at planting impressions and ideas into the minds of others. Over the course of their time together, Clancy helps Ruby learn to hone her skills and it's those lessons that will eventually lead to an end to their relationship. An interesting aspect of this is seen in Ruby's desire for Clancy to simply teach her how to use her powers. She hasn't given a great deal of thought to the fact that no two children seem to have the exact same powers, regardless of their color. She knows that her powers aren't the same as Martin's, but seems to expect Clancy to know exactly what her powers are and how to control them. She's disappointed when she finds out that isn't the case.

Sometimes, children from Clancy's camp go "tribal." A group will set out on their own, creating a small social community that lives apart from the camp. Clancy has to approve these departures and it seems that most kids in the camp accept his word as law. However, it bothers Chubs that Clancy has so much power. He is furious that he's forced to work such long hours in the garden when Clancy does none of the work himself.

## Discussion Question 1

Why does Ruby have trouble deciding who to trust among the major players, including the Children's League, U.S. Government, and even Clancy Gray?

## Discussion Question 2

Why might some kids want to "go tribal?"



## Discussion Question 3

Describe the East River camp and Clancy's role in it.

## Vocabulary

Motivations, intimidated, balked, humorless, maiming, subtlety, murky, scenarios, emerged, relinquished, radiating.





# Chapters 24 - 27

## Summary

### Chapter 24

In Chapter 24, Ruby is horrified until Lee says he's looking for his friend Ruby, who he hasn't seen "in ages." Ruby begins to cry and it's tense until they make up. Hina arrives one day and says a group is leaving the camp. She and Suzume are going with the group. Hina says they are going to California where her family has a house. She says the West Coast government has pledged not to send the Psi children back to the prison camps. The three remaining are worried about Suzume and Chubs suggests they follow but Lee says they are safe and needed at the camp.

### Chapter 25

In Chapter 25, Chubs and Lee argue about whether they should remain at the camp after Suzume's departure and Ruby becomes unfocused to the point that Clancy snaps at her. He says he thought Suzume's departure would make Ruby more focused but it has had the opposite effect. Ruby suddenly realizes she doesn't need to be trapped with Clancy who obviously doesn't believe in her when she can be with Chubs and Lee, who do believe in her. Ruby is thinking more about Chubs' attitude toward the camp. She returns to Clancy's office and he apologizes. Ruby agrees to work with him some more and she finds herself in his arms. He is insisting that she wants this but she realizes the desire she feels is being planted by Clancy.

### Chapter 26

In Chapter 26, she wakes in Clancy's bed and he says she passed out. When Ruby says she wants to "find the others," Clancy grows angry, saying she only wants to find Lee. He tells her she is alone because she is an orange and always will be. He calls her stupid and says she's simply too immature to use her powers. She runs into Lee and they argue. When they touch, Lee picks up Ruby's memory of Clancy's assault on her. Realizing how afraid she'd been when he was forcing her to kiss him, Lee says they'll be leaving the camp immediately. They take a path Lee knows but encounter Clancy and others who typically work security.

### Chapter 27

In Chapter 27, Lee announces they are leaving but Clancy refuses to allow it. Clancy begins manipulating everyone involved, including Ruby. Only Chubs is immune and when he begins talking, he breaks the spell Clancy has. Clancy then has one of the boys beat up Lee. Ruby and Chubs return to the cabin and Lee is eventually brought there. Ruby sees that he's seriously injured.



## Analysis

Clancy's manipulative abilities are seen clearly in this section of the book. He grows angry when Ruby isn't able to concentrate after Suzume's departure. He says he sent Suzume away hoping that Ruby would be able to focus if Suzume weren't nearby to distract her. Ruby is hurt by his words and he realizes he shouldn't have said them to her. He tries to make up for it by saying that he'd really been jealous of Ruby's attention and that it was wrong of him to want her to be focused only on him. He then says he allowed Suzume to leave because he thought it would make Ruby happy. All pretenses are gone once he catches the three of them trying to leave the camp one night.

After Lee is beaten up trying to leave the camp, Mike and Chubs argue. Mike says that Lee was content with the situation until Chubs planted the idea that he shouldn't be happy there. Chubs countered, saying that Lee had put his very life on the line helping the children escape a prison camp in Caledonia and that there's no way he would seriously trade one prison camp for another if he were thinking straight.

When Lee and Ruby are together again in the cabin after the failed escape attempt, Ruby promises to talk to Clancy about allowing Lee and Chubs to leave. She has realized that Clancy wants her nearby and probably won't ever allow her to leave him, but she believes she can convince him to let Chubs and Lee go. Lee refuses, saying that nothing is worse than being apart from Ruby.

### Discussion Question 1

Why is Chubs so completely against remaining at the camp?

### Discussion Question 2

Why does Clancy say he allowed Suzume to leave the camp with her cousin? What do you believe was his true motivation?

### Discussion Question 3

Why does Ruby cry over the joke Lee makes when he pretends to introduce himself to her after not seeing her for several days?

## Vocabulary

Wretched, muster, implication, impeccable, crotchety, intricate, sheen, poised, revulsion.



# Chapters 28 - 31

## Summary

### Chapter 28

In Chapter 28, Ruby and Chubs are in the cabin with Lee, who is sleeping restlessly after having his wounds treated. Suddenly a girl named Lizzie rushes into the cabin with blood on her hands. She says Clancy is having a seizure of some sort and that she needs Ruby. Ruby hesitates but goes with Lizzie and finds that Clancy is not injured or ill. He has planted the image in Lizzie's brain and she fully believes it to be true. Clancy says he is keeping Ruby with him "for a little while." Ruby is gratified when she manages to break into Clancy's mind and force him to allow Lizzie to leave. But she can't hold the pose long and Clancy forces her back out. They are locked in their own battle when they hear the roar of helicopters and screams. The camp is being attacked. Two men enter the room and Clancy implants the image of an empty room. He's obviously expecting the attack and Ruby realizes the men aren't Psi forces.

Clancy refers to "my reds," making it obvious to Ruby that he is responsible for the army of children with red abilities. She realizes that no one is immune to Clancy's ability. Clancy says the flaw in his plan was that his father figured out Clancy was manipulating him. Clancy says he is justified because his father sent Clancy to Thurmond. Clancy attacks Ruby but Chubs arrives, using his powers to slam Clancy into the wall. Together, Ruby and Chubs run, making their way to the lake where they hide under the pier for hours until the attack is over.

### Chapter 29

In Chapter 29, they make their way back to the camp. They find that Clancy left his laptop behind though everything has been erased and only fifteen minutes worth of power remains. They plan how to use the limited time to find Jack's father and leave a message for Chubs' parents. Lee arrives and says he'd been running away with a group but returned in search of Chubs and Ruby.

### Chapter 30

In Chapter 30, they gather a few supplies and head away from the camp, finding a car nearby that has some gas in the tank. They soon see lots of cameras mounted on poles alongside the highway and consider taking less-traveled routes, but Chubs objects. He has a message from his parents instructing him to meet them at his aunt's restaurant. Lee suggests they drop Chubs off first but he insists on going with them to deliver Jack's letter to the address they'd found for Jack's father. They arrive at the housing complex - a former motel - and find the man who greatly resembles Jack. Chubs insists on making the delivery. Chubs knocks and the door opens, then slams shut before opening again.



to reveal Jack's father with a gun. He shoots Chubs at point blank range. When Ruby and Lee reach him, he's alive and they get him in the car.

The car breaks down and Ruby realizes that the situation is dire when Chubs passes out from blood loss. She finds the panic button and presses it. Cate appears quickly and they take Chubs in one vehicle, forcing Lee and Ruby into another.

## Chapter 31

In Chapter 31, Ruby wakes in a safe house near Maryland. Cate says Lee is nearby and that she hasn't heard from Chubs but believes he's being cared for. Cate tells Ruby that every agent in the house has a gadget to send out White Noise and that Lee will be killed if she doesn't cooperate. Martin is there and he is angry with Ruby, saying she should be grateful for the hours wasted in search of her. Ruby gets a memory from Martin of bombing a building. She knows she'll be doing this kind of thing as soon as she's involved with the Children's League. She reaches over and touches Martin's hand then asks his name. He's confused and she continues to question him, making it apparent that she's erased his memory. He panics and she suggests he leave the room, which he does.

Cate agrees to allow Lee to leave. Ruby knows that Lee is in danger as long as he remains with the League. She also knows that he won't leave as long as she's there. She is given some time with Lee. Lee says he'd made plans for all the things they were going to do together. They talk about how their lives would have been different if they'd lived normal lives but that they would have met anyway. They weave a fictitious story about that life, including Chubs and Suzume in it. Then, Ruby says she wants to finish the story and she carefully erases all Lee's memories of both Ruby and Chubs, knowing that's the only way he will voluntarily leave. When his memories have been erased, he's confused but Ruby tells him he was in a car accident, was picked up by the League, and that his brother provided money for a bus ticket. Lee initially refuses but when Ruby hands him the envelope, he accepts it and leaves the house. Ruby knows that her life will be torn now, that she'll be responsible for looking after Chubs, and that she will always long for what might have been.

## Analysis

Clancy lists Ruby's "faults" while they are in the storage room where Ruby thought Clancy was having a seizure. He says that she cares too much for others and won't use her power for fear that someone else will be hurt. This is seen throughout the story as the children with orange and red abilities tend to be willing to hurt others. Clancy has Lizzie frantic with the impressions he's feeding her. Ruby tells Clancy to stop "torturing" Lizzie and Clancy's answer is that he's just playing around. It seems likely that he doesn't see what he's doing to Lizzie as wrong. Ruby has dreaded this about herself but has failed all along to realize that she hates her power because it might hurt others while most kids with red or orange abilities don't care who they hurt.



When Chubs finishes using the computer, there are a couple of minutes left and Ruby uses an Internet site to phone her home. She gets an answering machine and a voice says she has “reached the home of Jacob, Susan, and Ruby Daly.” The reader’s first impression may be that Jacob and Susan haven’t changed their machine from the days of Ruby’s life with them or that they now remember Ruby, but that’s not the case. Ruby realizes that they have another daughter and have also named her Ruby. She is pleased that her parents have another child and that they’ve named her Ruby as well. She says that it’s vital for people to take care of each other. However, she takes a minute and allows herself to pretend that she is the Ruby who still lives with her parents on Millwood Drive.

Chubs reveals to Ruby that Jack wasn’t killed as a routine part of the escape from Caledonia. Instead, he’d been killed protecting Chubs during the escape. That’s the reason Chubs insists on going with Lee and Ruby to deliver Jack’s letter and the reason he asks to be the one to make the delivery.

The delivery of the letters has been the driving force behind much of the action in the story. Up to the moments after Chubs is shot, there is no indication what the letters say and Ruby’s efforts to read one of the letters had resulted in a heated fight with Lee. After Chubs is shot, Ruby sees Jack’s letter. It indicates that he’d believed his father loved him until his father called him “a monster and a freak.” The letter concludes with the words, “But you’re the one that raised me.” After reading it, Lee realizes that they should have read the letter ahead of time. If they had been armed with the knowledge that Jack’s father hated the Psi children, they would not have blindly sent Chubs to the door of the apartment, putting him in danger. At that point, Chubs tells Ruby that his letter was written for Lee. Ruby later shares that information with Lee and they discover that Chubs’ letter is nothing more than a blank piece of paper. Ruby knows that Chubs was indicating he trusted Lee to get him home alive so that he could deliver his letter himself.

## **Discussion Question 1**

Describe the letters of Jack and Chubs. What is the significance of each?

## **Discussion Question 2**

What is Ruby's reaction to the message on the answering machine at her home?

## **Discussion Question 3**

What are the common attributes of reds and oranges?

## Vocabulary

Thrumming, frayed, rankled, casually, empathetic, utmost, incomprehension, unadulterated, relenting, scurry.



# Characters

## Ruby Daly

Ruby is a member of a generation of children who possess an array of supernatural powers. In Ruby's case, she has the ability to tap into the memories of others and, as she hones her skill, to remove specific memories. The first three times Ruby uses this power, she does so on accident. She erases her mother's memories of Ruby and then her father's, and later erases the memories of her best friend, Sam. Her skills would have classified her as "orange" in the Psi system of evaluating the skills of the affected children, but Ruby plants the idea in the mind of her evaluator who decides Ruby is a "green." When most of the orange children are killed or moved to high-security prisons, Ruby is left at Thurmond for six years. Ruby is not ruthless and self-centered as is the case with most oranges. She is actually quite generous and kind unless someone wrongs her or her friends are endangered. This is first seen when Ruby is running from the Children's League and finds herself in the van with Lee, Chubs, and Suzume. She pleads with them to allow her to leave, saying she doesn't want to put them in any more danger. Another example of this characteristic is seen when Suzume kills a man who attacks the group. When Ruby relates the story of what happened, she makes it sound as if the man wasn't dead, knowing it would hurt Suzume to know she'd killed him. Ruby is romantically involved with Lee but when it's evident that Lee is in great danger from the Children's League, Ruby sacrifices their relationship in order to protect Lee. She erases all memories of herself and Chubs from Lee's mind, resolving that she will look out for Chubs and allowing Lee to safely leave the League in search of his family.

## Liam/Lee

Known to his friends as Lee, he is a "blue" who is completely devoted to his friends. He is romantically involved with Ruby and goes to great lengths to protect her when they are in danger. Lee is the leader of a group of children who plan an escape from Caledonia, the camp where they are being held prisoner. There are dozens of children as the escape plan is set in motion but only a few make it out. The rest are murdered by the Psi soldiers and Lee believes he is responsible for their deaths. He struggles with the guilt and the duty of being leader for the small group after the escape weighs heavily on him. He spends a great deal of time and energy trying to ensure that Suzume, Chubs, and Ruby are safe, even when he has little control over the situations they face and even when others have the ability to take over the leadership role. Lee's honesty goes so far that he refuses to read the letter entrusted to him by Jack, a friend who dies in the escape from Caledonia. When Ruby opens the letter to read it, Lee becomes very upset, saying the letter is intended for Jack's father and that no one else has the right to read it. As the story comes to a close, Ruby knows that Lee will never leave her behind and she removes his memories of their relationship so that he will be free to continue his search for his family. She also removes the memories of Chubs, knowing that Lee's devotion to Chubs is equally as strong.



## Charles Merriweather

Known as “Chubs,” he is very slender, making the nickname ironic. Chubs is Lee’s best friend. Though he is initially reluctant to allow Ruby to join them, he is fully devoted to her once he accepts her presence. Chubs is seriously injured as the story comes to a close.

## Suzume

As a little girl who is a yellow, Suzume is a loving child who greatly fears that she might hurt someone. She constantly wears gloves so that her touch won’t accidentally burn someone. She has the ability to overheat any electrical appliance. When the group is attacked, Suzume throws a car and kills a man.

## Clancy Gray

Clancy, the son of the President, is reportedly reformed. He is touted as proof that the program works, but he is actually heading up a camp for children who have escaped the prison camps. Clancy is self-centered and ruthless, willing to sacrifice anyone to get his way. He plans to use an army of children with red abilities, apparently to take control of the nation. He is known as the “slip kid.”

## Samantha Dahl

As a girl who has green abilities, she is imprisoned at Thurmond along with Ruby. Because their names are so nearly the same, they share a bunk and become close friends. One day Ruby invades Sam’s memories and accidentally removes all Sam’s memories of Ruby. Sam, not remembering any aspect of the relationship she’d developed with Ruby, is no longer Ruby’s friend at all, leaving Ruby completely bereft.

## Martin

Martin is another orange who is hiding at Thurmond. He is selfish and ruthless like most with the orange abilities. Whereas Ruby became classified a green by suggesting an evaluator make that designation, Martin trades places with another boy, sending the boy off to meet the fate of most oranges, which was probably death. Martin is taken from Thurmond by the Children’s League along with Ruby. His powers are not as strong as Ruby and as the story comes to a close, they have a battle of wits in which Ruby destroys some of his memories.





## **Cate Conner**

Cate is a member of the Children's League. She is posing as a doctor for the Thurmond camp when Ruby is taken to the infirmary. Cate is looking for children who are oranges living among the blues and greens of Thurmond. She smuggles Ruby from the prison camp and promises Ruby can choose whether to remain with the Children's League. However, it's evident that she's completely devoted to the League and that she'll do anything to further the group's cause.

## **Jack**

Jack is good friend of Lee and Chubs. He is among those who tries to escape from Caledonia. Jack leaves a letter with Lee and Chubs for his father. In the letter, he expresses his hatred for his dad for having turned him over to the Psi authorities.

## **Lady Jane**

Lady Jane is a tracker who chases Lee and Chubs after their escape, she is tenacious in her determination to capture them. She is from Britain and says she plans to use the bounty from her second capture of Lee to make her way back to her home country.



# Symbols and Symbolism

## Orange

Orange is the color that denotes children with powers similar to those of Ruby. These powers are generally more dangerous than some. Most who are classified as orange are killed or moved to high security camps.

## Blue

Blue is the color used to designate the children with less dangerous powers. Lee is a blue, and he has the ability to move things without touching them. Those with blue powers are typically allowed to move about the prison camp without shackles.

## Green

Green is the color used to designate children with enhanced mental capabilities. When Ruby is called on by Lee and Chubs to explain why she is classified green, she lies, saying she has the ability to break codes.

## Yellow

Suzume is a yellow, and this color denotes a set of fairly dangerous children. When Ruby, Suzume, Lee, and Chubs are being attacked, Suzume slings a couple of cars around and kills one of the men trying to take them in.

## Children's League

The Children's League is a group that is supposedly representing the rights of children. However, they are actually working toward their own goals and using children to obtain them. Members of the Children's League are responsible for getting Ruby out of Thurmond.

## The Panic Button

Given to Ruby by Cate of the Children's League, the panic button is a small medallion that Ruby almost throws away as soon as she escapes from Cate. She decides to hold onto it instead and keeps it as a backup plan. When Chubs is shot and it is evident that the group is going to be captured by Psi soldiers, Ruby pushes the button, summoning the Children's League to keep from going back to one of the camps.



## **White Noise**

Also known as Calm Control, this is a sound at a pitch that is excruciating to the Psi children. It's used by the guards at Thurmond to maintain control and to harass the children. A specific pitch is implanted into the White Noise that eventually identifies those with orange abilities.

## **Generation Freak**

Generation Freak is the nickname for Ruby's generation. It is referring to the fact that the majority of the children either die before they reach their teen years or exhibit an array of supernatural powers.

## **Prison Camps**

Psi children are held in prison camps. Some are taken there because their parents fear them, and some are literally kidnapped by Psi Special Forces soldiers. The children are brutalized and even killed at the camps.

## **Black Betty**

Black Betty is the black van driven by Lee when Ruby first joins him. The van is beat up, but the group forms an attachment to it. They are sad when they have to abandon it.



# Settings

## Thurmond

Thurmond is a camp where many of the Psi children are held. It's one of the largest and most foreboding of the camps. Thurmond is huge and houses hundreds of children. The camp becomes Ruby's home at age ten and she remains there until she's sixteen. The camp is fairly self-contained and includes a huge building referred to as "the factory," though Ruby says the building is actually one huge room with rows of tables where the children engage in a great deal of "busy work." There are also cabins where the children sleep. Boys and girls never interact, and they are not allowed to talk except for the moments before bedtime.

## East River

East River is a camp operated by Clancy. It's located at Lake Prince, and most youngsters believe it's a haven from the Psi soldiers, Children's League, and trackers. The camp is a series of cabins and Clancy lives in an upstairs room over one of the main buildings. The cabins look out over a central fire pit where the children gather some nights. They keep watch on the perimeter to ensure that no one makes it all the way to the cabins uninvited. There is also a garden to help grow some of the food the children need.

## West Virginia

West Virginia is where most of the story takes place. It's a real state in the United States. Some of the towns mentioned are also real. The author's goal in using a real state as the background setting is apparently to lend credibility to the overall story. The landscape is described only slightly, but those few details resemble what a traveler might see in West Virginia.

## Caledonia

Caledonia is a camp where Lee, Chubs, and Suzume are held along with other Psi children. While the camp is still a prison, the situation there doesn't seem to be nearly as brutal as the conditions at Thurmond.



# Themes and Motifs

## Self Sacrifice

Lee and Ruby are among the chief examples of this theme. Both are willing to do whatever it takes to protect the others. Ruby chases Suzume when she sees her for the first time, then realizes she should be leading Cate and Rob away from the little girl. When Lee and Chubs help her escape, she asks to be let out, saying she can't put them in even more danger. When the camp is overrun by PSF soldiers, Lee runs away with one group of children while Chubs and Ruby hide under a pier at the lake. All three return to the camp though they are all aware that PSF soldiers are likely to return in their search for survivors. All three were willing to face that possibility in an effort to find the others. Jack, a friend of Chubs and Lee, is killed trying to protect Chubs during their escape from Caledonia. Chubs says Jack had spent a great deal of time and energy teaching him to use his powers but when it came down to Chubs' life on the line, Jack was willing to sacrifice his life to protect Chubs. Perhaps the most dramatic and important aspect of this theme is seen as the story comes to a close. Ruby knows that Lee will never give up trying to rescue her and so she erases his memories of her. She has, by this time, developed a deep relationship with Lee and it hurts her to end that, but she is willing to sacrifice that in order to keep Lee safe. While she's dealing with Lee's memories, she removes his memories of Chubs as well and accepts that she will now have to be responsible for trying to rescue Chubs.

## Importance of Friendship

Ruby develops a friendship with Samantha soon after her arrival at Thurmond. Because their last names are very near the same, they are bunkmates and spend a great deal of time together. Ruby spends five years in Thurmond with Sam by her side and notes that it's bearable because Sam is there to help her get through it. The day that Ruby and Sam argue, Ruby inadvertently removes Sam's memories of their friendship. At that point, Ruby no longer has a best friend and without that bond, the time is more difficult. Ruby doesn't speak for the next year, obviously in mourning for her lost friendship. It's noteworthy that another girl immediately steps into Ruby's spot as Sam's best friend. Lee, Chubs, and Suzume have developed a close relationship. Because they have faced death together, their friendship is much deeper than might otherwise have developed. Their circle opens quickly to allow Ruby in and she is soon as devoted to them as they are to her. This is seen when Ruby and Suzume spend some time together at the Walmart. Ruby finds Suzume the pink gloves and helps her choose some new clothes, "girl time" the little girl desperately needs. Ruby also insists she and Suzume hold hands without the benefit of the gloves though Suzume is obviously afraid she might accidentally hurt Ruby. This need for friendship is also seen in the camp run by Clancy. The children tend to pair off in small groups and enjoy their time together. Suzume is obviously happy playing with several other children her age. Ironically, Ruby



hopes for friendship from Clancy. Even after Clancy brutally beats Lee, Ruby rushes to his side when she is told he's hurt.

## Self Acceptance

Ruby spends years hating her powers. This hatred begins from the moment she realizes she has erased her parents' memories of their only child. She is only ten and has no idea that she has the power, let alone how to control it. But the result is that she's removed from her home and sent to a prison camp where she spends the next six years. During her time there, Ruby accidentally erases her friendship with her best friend, Sam. She is lost without Sam's friendship and this gives her further proof that her powers are horrible. When Ruby comes to realize that the Slip Kid is probably orange, she hopes that he will be able to help her learn to control her power. Even with this hope, she doesn't want to learn to use them but only seeks to control them so that she can live her life without fear that she might accidentally use them. Ruby spends a great deal of time with Clancy before she begins to learn that control and even then she is unable to fully use her powers. When Ruby lands in the hands of the Children's League, she knows that her life has taken a dramatic change. It seems that once she realizes she will have little choice but to use her powers, she learns to control them as well. She uses them to erase Martin's memories and then to erase herself from Lee's memories so that he can escape the danger of the League.



# Styles

## Point of View

The story is written in first person from Ruby Daly's perspective. The limited point of view means the reader doesn't know what's going on in the minds of others until Ruby makes those discoveries for herself. The author uses this perspective as a means of enhancing suspense. An example of this is seen when Ruby is taken to the infirmary where she meets Cate, a member of the Children's League who helps Ruby escape from Thurmond. The Children's League is presented as a group that champions the rights of the children affected and the reader is allowed to believe this until Ruby realizes there is something wrong with the situation. Another example is seen when Ruby and the others find the camp of Clancy Grey. He is held in high esteem by many of the children and has become a legend on several levels. But when Ruby begins to feel uneasy about Clancy, the reader gets the first inkling that there's something wrong with that situation as well. It's not until Clancy reveals his plan to Ruby that the reader learns he has been manipulating the President of the United States and has a plan to use an army made up of the red children for his own purposes. The limited perspective also means the reader doesn't know the story of Lee and Chubs, and how they came to be traveling with Suzume. Those details are revealed to Ruby - and to the reader - through a series of conversations and revelations. An important aspect of Lee's background is the escape from prison. That story is revealed to Ruby through Suzume's dream. Ruby appears to be a reliable person for the perspective. The limited perspective is appropriate and acceptable for the story.

## Language and Meaning

The story is written in modern English with a straightforward style and action that flows quickly. The majority of the words used will be familiar to readers with average vocabularies. There are a few curse words used in dialogue and the author apparently uses these to seek a more realistic tone. There are a few words and terms that are created just for this story. For example, the children contract a disease known as Idiopathic Adolescent Acute Neurodegeneration, or IANN. The acronym is not used after the initial explanation. There are multiple references to the "Psi children." Psi is a letter of the Greek alphabet and the symbol for that letter is used on the cover of the book. The soldiers who work in the camps and who chase the children once they have escaped are called PSF, or Psi Special Forces. There is an entire department created to deal with the situation called the Department of Psi Youth. The children are grouped by abilities and become known by that color. Lee is a blue and Ruby masquerades as a green for several years though she is actually an orange. Many of the oranges and reds are terribly destructive and self-centered, and their powers are feared because of it. The words and phrases created for the story are not overwhelming and most readers will easily realize the meanings.



## Structure

The story is divided into thirty-one chapters of varying lengths. The book opens with a prologue in which Ruby describes what happens to the Psi children and her in particular when the “White Noise” is blasted over the speakers of the camp. At this point, the reader doesn’t know where Ruby is, only that she is in a garden and that there’s an electric fence very near. The story then drops back in chapter one to relate the events leading up to that specific blast of White Noise. That chapter opens dramatically with the description of the death of a girl in Ruby’s room, Grace Somerfield. The story then flows chronologically from Ruby’s perspective. For example, Lee and his friends escape their prison camp before Ruby is taken from Thurmond. But Ruby only learns about the escape in chapter twelve when she is caught up in Suzume’s dream about the escape from Caledonia and the resulting massacre. In chapter twenty, Lee and Ruby encounter some youngsters Lee knows and find their way to the camp of Clancy Grey. Over the next few chapters, Ruby works with Clancy in the hope she can learn to control her powers. In chapter twenty-six, Lee realizes that Clancy attacked Ruby and the three - Lee, Ruby, and Chubs - plan to leave the camp. In chapter twenty eight, the camp is overrun by Psi soldiers. Over the next two chapters, Lee, Ruby, and Chubs find Jack’s father and Chubs is shot. The final chapter wraps up the story with Ruby calling on the Children’s League in the hope they can save Chubs. She knows she has traded one prison for another and erases Lee’s memories in order to ensure he is set free. The story is divided into dialogue and narrative. Both are used to keep the story line moving and both seem appropriate to the subject and the intended audience.





## Quotes

Grace Somerfield was the first to die. The first in my fourth grade class, at least.  
-- Ruby (Chapter 1 paragraph 1)

**Importance:** The author has obviously crafted the first sentence of chapter one to capture the reader's attention, and it works well. The story goes on to give some details about the disease that's killing children, how Grace drops dead at school, and how Ruby and the others react to it.

The government was never scared of the kids who might die, or the empty spaces they would leave behind. They were afraid of us - the ones who lived.  
-- Ruby (Chapter 1 paragraph 35)

**Importance:** The disease, known as IAAN, kills many of the children who contract it. It also leaves children who survive with supernatural powers and the adults are afraid of them from the first.

When a PSF had escorted us to our new residence, it had been with several warnings: no talking after lights out, no leaving, no use of freak abilities - intentional or accidental. It was the first time I had ever heard of anyone refer to what we could do as 'freak abilities' instead of the polite alternative, 'symptoms.'  
-- Ruby (Chapter 3 paragraph 4)

**Importance:** This is soon after Ruby's arrival at Thurmond. She still isn't certain what's happening to her and is afraid. It's also soon after she becomes fully aware of the IAAN and how it affects children who contract it.

The government issued a notice that any parents who didn't feel safe or capable of taking care of their kiddos could send them to school on a specific morning, and the PSI Special Forces would be there to collect them for rehabilitation. Kept it all very hush-hush to avoid upsetting the children or inciting them to misbehave.  
-- Lee (Chapter 13 paragraph 28)

**Importance:** Lee is talking to Ruby, explaining how some of the children - including Suzume - were turned over to the PSI by their own parents. Lee says both he and Chubs were hidden away by their parents and were taken from their families by force, but Suzume was handed over.

But the distance between us was there for a reason. Imagining a future in which I didn't exist, in which I had unwittingly erased myself from his memories, kept my hands pinned under my legs and my mind, for once, in check.  
-- Ruby (Chapter 16 paragraph 3)

**Importance:** Ruby can't get past the fact that she erased her parents' memories of her



and did the same thing to Sam. The relationship between Lee and Ruby is evolving and she fears doing the same thing to him.

Everyone will know. And no one would be willing to have me after that.  
-- Ruby (Chapter 18 paragraph 68)

**Importance:** Ruby is just deciding that she will erase Lady Jane's memory of them. However, she knows that means Lee, Chubs, and Suzume will then know the full extent of her powers. She fully believes they will then be afraid of her and will break all contact.

But it still didn't make me feel any less ashamed of how relieved I felt to find it still there - to know that Cate, with all her promises to take care of things, was still out there, still only a touch away.  
-- Ruby (Chapter 20 paragraph 79)

**Importance:** Ruby thinks this after finding she still has the panic button provided by the Children's League. She is torn over keeping it and continues to think that it might be the thing that helps her escape if she's caught by the PSF.

I didn't even have a second to collect myself before the next three words passed his lips. There was no way I could have, because Clancy Gray looked straight at me and said the very last thing on earth I expected. Ruby Elizabeth Daly.  
-- Ruby (Chapter 21 paragraph 73)

**Importance:** Ruby has just discovered that the Slip Kid is Clancy and she's completely surprised that he knows her on sight.

But they all worked together and created a community where they were free from the English crown's rule and could practice their faith openly.  
-- Clancy (Chapter 23 paragraph 38)

**Importance:** Clancy is talking to the younger children about the Mayflower Compact and is obviously comparing the lives of the Pilgrims to the lives of the Psi children at East River. The Psi children are the Pilgrims, the United States Government is the English crown, and the East River is their new home.

Once Chubs had pointed out East River's similarities to camp life, I couldn't go back.  
-- Ruby (Chapter 25 paragraph 21)

**Importance:** Chubs is dissatisfied with their life at East River. He wants to leave but Lee is fully caught up in the lifestyle and activities. The difference is that Lee feels needed here and is working up to the idea that he might someday manage to free more kids from the prison camps. At this point, Ruby has caught Chubs' dissatisfaction and really wants to leave as well.

What the hell is the matter with you that you'd come back here knowing that there could still be PSFs?



-- Chubs (Chapter 29 paragraph 45)

**Importance:** Chubs is talking to Lee, fussing at him because Lee chose to return to the camp after the soldiers overran it. Lee's answer is that he would never just leave if there was a chance Chubs and Ruby were there. This conversation sets the stage for later in the story when Ruby knows she has to wipe Lee's memories if she wants to ensure he doesn't return to the Children's League in search of them.

I pulled myself from his mind, day by day, piece by piece, memory by memory, until there was nothing left of Ruby left to weigh him down or keep him bound to my side.

-- Ruby (Chapter 31 paragraph 110)

**Importance:** In this scene, Ruby is removing Lee's memories of her so that he will be free to leave the Children's League safe house. She knows that he would never willingly leave her behind and that this is the only way for him to have a chance of reaching his parents and safety.