

One (One Universe) Study Guide

One (One Universe) by LeighAnn Kopans

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Plot Summary

Merrin Grey learns that superpowers aren't the most important things in life in the novel *One* by LeighAnn Kopans. Merrin learns that trust and love can take her to heights that she'd never imagined as she and her friends try to save her boyfriend, Elias, from an evil superpower genius. The need to belong and the power of trust another are both themes in this teen romance novel with a twist.

Merrin Grey has never trusted anyone before she meets Elias VanDyne during her first day of classes at Norman High School. She failed out of Superior High School, the school for Supers, the year before and believes she is a failure because she is a One. She believes the only thing that will save her is a job at the illustrious Biotech Hub. The only problem is that the Hub does not employ Ones or Normals, only Supers.

Elias and Merrin realize that together they can combine their powers — levitation for Merrin and creating of vortex for Elias — and fly. Elias encourages Merrin not to tell anyone about their ability because he fears that the experimenters at the Hub will want to test them to determine how their abilities work together. Elias is already leery of the Hub because his sisters have become strange and distant since they began the Hub's program for gifted individuals.

As the novel climaxes, Merrin learns that although she thought she was participating in testing to get an internship at the Hub, she was actually being tricked into participating in more tests. She, Elias and their friends Leni and Daniel were all subjects in testing when they were young. Because Merrin's mother had begun floating in her sleep after Merrin was born and brought home from the hospital, it was believed Ones might be able to transfer their powers. During these tests, Leni lost her ability to be indestructible, but Merrin's mother gained this trait. Realizing that the powers at the Hub still believe that Ones are freaks who need to be tested and "fixed" Merrin rescues Elias from the Hub where he is being tested. In the process of the testing, Elias develops indestructibility while Merrin is able to fly on her own. Although they are now Supers, the two have to run from Superior, their hometown, to keep from being the subjects of more tests.

Chapters One and Two

Summary

Chapter One

Merrin Grey learns that superpowers aren't the most important things in life in the novel *One* by LeighAnn Kopans. Merrin learns that trust and love can take her to heights that she'd never imagined as she and her friends try to save her boyfriend, Elias, from an evil superpower genius. The need to belong and the power of trust another are both themes in this teen romance novel with a twist.

In Chapter One, Merrin Grey practices her one superpower. She is able to float. Merrin is considered a freak in the superpower world because she only has one power. Most supernaturals have two powers but Merrin has not yet developed her second power.

This year she is going to Nelson High school, the high school for normal students. She failed out of the school for those with superpowers the year before. She believes she sees a teacher that she recognizes but is not sure. In her first class, a holographic teacher tells the class about the way the supernaturals were created when they were affected by uranium contamination. The teacher indicates that supernaturals were given a specific place to live and treated well. Merrin was taught the history of the supernaturals in a different way. At Superior High she learned about the abuse, hunger and lack of medical treatment that were part of the government's attempt to overtake those who had super powers.

Merrin is hoping to get an internship with Hub Technology, a company run by Supers. She hopes she can survive life in the regular high school until that time. She chooses to eat her lunch in the bathroom on her first day.

Chapter Two

In Chapter Two, Merrin meets Elias in her art class. He is the same boy who helped her with her locker earlier in the day. She is shocked when he tells her that he also attended Superior High School for a short time. She wonders briefly if he also has super powers but decides he doesn't because his parents removed him from school so quickly. Even so, Merrin leaves the class with the excuse of having to go to the bathroom in order to escape the attraction that she feels for Elias.

Analysis

The world of Merrin Grey is much different from America today. The Uranium World Wars have resulted in a uranium contamination that has caused some people to have super powers. The true "Supers" have developed at least two superpowers. "Normals"

have no superpowers. “Ones” like Merrin have only one superpower. While Merrin can become weightless and float into the air, she is not able to move once she is in the air.

Because she has only one power, Merrin has been transferred out of the high school where most of the superpowered kids go to the high school where the Normals attend. During her first days of school, she meets a boy with whom she has a strange attraction. Elias tells her that he transferred from Superior after the first grade. Merrin decides that he is probably a Normal because he transferred out of Superior so quickly.

The world in which Merrin and Elias live and attend school is very high tech. They wear cuffs carrying a tablet containing all the information they need for school. The cuffs work as a cell phone with texting abilities, a GPS, and a universal ID. The students scan these cuffs to get into school and get their assignments. In this world, even teachers have been replaced with technology as a holographic image presents the history lesson.

There appears to be great friction between the Normals, Supers, and Ones. While she was taught at Superior High School about the way the Supers were treated right after the wars, the history class at Nelson High School glosses over the way that the Supers were put into camps where there wasn’t enough food and conditions were unsanitary. Now that period of time is over, the Supers seem to think that they are superior to Normals. Ones, however, are treated worse than even Normals. They are seen as freaks of the superpower world.

Discussion Question 1

What is a One? As a One, how is Merrin different from both Normals and Supers?

Discussion Question 2

Why is Merrin going to Nelson High School?

Discussion Question 3

What is different between the history lesson that Merrin hears at Nelson High School and the way the same time period was described at Superior?

Vocabulary

Hover, misfit, trudge, optimistic, translucent, disparity, teleporting, prelude, torturous, stilted, teems, placard, diabolical, mutated.

Chapters Three and Four

Summary

Chapter Three

In Chapter Three, Merrin remembers the way the Supers at her old high school would use their powers to take advantage of the girls. Because of an experience with an extremely strong boy at Superior, she no longer likes to look boys in the eye. At home, Merrin looks at the poster of a girl flying up to rescue a kitten. She believes her parents hung it thinking she would turn into that girl. Her mother asks if she wants to talk about her first day. Merrin doesn't. She thinks instead about how she has to get into an internship at Hub. All she has left to complete on her transcript is her parents' signatures and a recommendation from Mr. Hoffman.

Merrin catches her mother looking at her sadly. She realizes she has floated off her stool, a result of being a One. Her dad also asks about her first day. She talks about some minor things, also mentioning the boy in art class. She says she's planning to sit away from him in the next class. Her dad smiles knowingly and Merrin realizes she's been doodling E's on her tablet during the entire conversation. She mentions that she believes she saw Mr. Hoffman and her parents decisively tell her that she did not. Later that day, Merrin plays her drums as a form of emotional catharsis. When it begins to get dark outside, she knows it is time to go outside and practice.

Chapter Four

In Chapter Four, Merrin has found an inconspicuous corner of the library in which she can spend her lunch unnoticed. While studying Organic Chemistry one day, Merrin is surprised to see Mr. Hoffman. He tells her that he is working with her and others like her to help them get into positions at Hub Technologies. He warns her that the project must be kept under the radar so not even her parents can know what they are doing. Merrin agrees with his request and asks when they are going to start.

Analysis

In Chapter three, it is learned why Merrin is so disturbed by the boy who tries to make friends with her. At Superior, the boys were not below using their superpowers to force girls to be with them. One of the boys tried to do this to Merrin, hitting her hard enough to leave bruises when she tries to fight him off her. It is for this reason that Merrin is so afraid to be close to a boy.

One strange aspect of this section of the novel is Merrin's belief that she has seen Mr. Hoffman, a teacher who singled her out at Superior High School at Nelson High School. When Merrin tells her parents about this sighting, they seem determined that it was not Mr. Hoffman who she saw at the school. Merrin does not argue with her parents about



what she saw. At Superior High School, Mr. Hoffman tutored Merrin in Organic Chemistry, a subject in which she apparently had a special affinity. He seemed to think that he could get her into an intern program at the Biotech Hub even though Ones are generally not allowed to work there. Later, Mr. Hoffman meets up with Merrin in the library and suggests to her that they can continue studying Organic Chemistry during her lunch hours. He tells her again that he can get her into a Biotech program but that she must not tell her parents about what they are doing. This suggestion, combined with Merrin's parents' insistence that Mr. Hoffman will no longer be teaching her, leads to the assumption that Merrin's parents may want her to stay away from Mr. Hoffman for some specific reason.

Notice the parallel that the author draws between Merrin's desire to fly and the example of the baby birds. Although the baby bird fell out of the nest trying to fly, it survived the fall and even survived crossing the road. Merrin compares herself with the baby bird, but she indicates that she isn't sure if she is that determined to be able to fly. In connection with the example of the bird, Merrin indicates that her mother hovers over her like a baby bird. She has always been distant in her actions toward her daughter.

Discussion Question 1

What is your feeling about Mr. Hoffman's proposal to Merrin? Do you believe he is trying to take advantage of her in some way?

Discussion Question 2

What precautions does Merrin plan to take to keep Elias from sitting next to her in art again?

Discussion Question 3

Consider the example of the baby birds used in this section of the novel. How does it relate to Merrin's situation?

Vocabulary

Vintage, impeccable, prestigious, transcript, diatribe, turbines, genomes, notability.

Chapters Five and Six

Summary

Chapter Five

In Chapter Five, Elias admits to Merrin that he is a One also. His sisters are able to teleport. Merrin finds herself admitting to him that she is a One and her brothers are Supers. Almost against Merrin's will, Elias introduces her to some of his friends. They are planning on studying calculus later and want Merrin to join the group.

Chapter Six

In Chapter Six, at Elias' house, Merrin learns that his family is rich. The house is overseen by a robotic service and identification engineer named Rosie. Rosie is one of the things that Elias' mom is working on at the Hub. Inside Elias' bedroom, Merrin learns that all four of the students who have gathered are all Ones. They, like Merrin, are all seeking to try to develop their second gift to become true Supers. Merrin suddenly feels like part of a group.

After Leni and Daniel leave, Elias and Merrin eat pizza prepared by Rosie. Elias talks about his sisters. They are at college now. Elias says that he never hears anything from his sisters even though they were extremely close growing up. Before Merrin leaves, Elias offers to give her a tour of their home. When she is around Elias, Merrin keeps getting distracted by buzzing sensations that she both likes and feels uncomfortable.

Analysis

Elias continues to be friendly with Merrin though she is uncertain of his intentions. He invites her to study at his house, and she accepts. Once there, she learns that she has been accepted into a group of Ones. Like Merrin, the members of the group have never stopped trying to develop their second superpower. Leni can combust but isn't indestructible. She has a burn scar down her neck and arm. Daniel is indestructible.

After Leni and Daniel leave, Elias and Merrin eat pizza and talk. Both of them have twin siblings who are Supers. Elias' sisters are in college and he misses them because they were always close to one another. Now, he tells Merrin that he never from his sisters, not even texts. He worries that something is wrong with them.

Discussion Question 1

Why is it intriguing that Elias had not heard anything from his sisters who are at college? What might this mean?



Discussion Question 2

How is it significant to Merrin that she has suddenly been included in a group of Ones all struggling to become true Supers?

Discussion Question 3

Consider the love relationship that is budding between Elias and Merrin. In what ways might they be good for one another?

Vocabulary

Infuriating, clairvoyance, pristine, theoretically, remnant, wafting, prototype, combustibility.

Chapters Seven and Eight

Summary

Chapter Seven

In Chapter Seven, Elias gives Merrin a tour of his house which includes a movie theater, gym and music room. In the music room, Merrin is mesmerized by an untouched drum set. Elias hands her sticks and she plays. Just as she thinks Elias must be getting bored, she realizes he has joined her on an electric guitar. The two play together for a while, then Elias puts down the guitar and stands close to her. She allows him to pull her against him, something she's never done before. Before she leaves, Elias scans in Merrin's handprint, ordering Rosie to give her full access to the house. That night, Merrin has dreams that she is finally able to fly.

Chapter Eight

In Chapter Eight, Elias is not at school the following day. Merrin tries to escape from the cafeteria to eat her lunch but Leni encourages her to eat with her group. Merrin is grateful when another girls suggests Merrin has a crush on Elias but Leni draws the attention away from Merrin. After school is out, Merrin drives to Elias house. There is no one home. Even though she wants to go in and play the drum set, she can't make herself do it. While she is still at the house, Elias drives up. He tells her that he had to miss school for some doctors' appointments. When Merrin suggests that Leni and her friends are a pain, Elias tells her the girls don't matter. When Merrin pushes him to tell her what does matter, he says that there is someplace where he can be himself without worrying about being a One or being a member of the basketball team. Merrin suggests to him that even if he were to leave Superior, he would never be a true Normal because he can't get away from his One.

The two decide to go for a walk. Elias says he'll tell her his One if she'll tell him hers. She demonstrates her gift, floating up off the ground. He grabs her wrist, and suddenly, together, the two are able to fly. He says that he has the ability to push air, but has never flown before this day. Although she is overjoyed by the feeling of flying, Merrin is disturbed that it is only with Elias that she can fly. He kisses her and they begin to float again. Suddenly worried that she may become dependent on Elias, Merrin turns and runs.

Analysis

In this section of the novel, Merrin finally realizes her dream of flying. She is overjoyed, but disturbed that it is only with Elias that she is able to fly. She worries not only that she will have to depend upon Elias to fly, but also that she will begin to depend on him emotionally as well. This idea of emotional dependence seems to scare Merrin so badly that she runs away.



Elias and Merrin relate to one another on more than one level, however, as they also enjoy music. When Elias shows Merrin his family's music room she cannot turn away from the new drum set. She plays the drums, not even noticing when Elias joins him on an electric guitar. The two make music together.

Notice that Merrin is upset when Elias tells her that Nelson High School and the people there are not what matters. Elias tells Merrin he is looking for a place where he can be himself without having to worry about trying to develop his second superpower. He wants a place where he doesn't have to be stuck between the Normal and Super worlds. Merrin leans against him, wanting to cry because she knows that a place like that does not exist.

Merrin still wants to work at Biotech. In fact, she has been encouraged by a television news show indicating that Fisk, the president of Biotech is introducing a new program in which he wants to work with Ones. Her mother tells her not to read too much into the announcement, as she knows that it is just a marketing ploy.

Discussion Question 1

Why are Elias and Merrin able to fly when they are together? What does this symbolize about their gifts?

Discussion Question 2

Why is Merrin worried that she will become too dependent on Elias? Of what is she afraid?

Discussion Question 3

Why does Merrin want to cry when she learns that Elias want to go somewhere where he is not stuck between being a Normal and a Super?

Vocabulary

Riff, enticing, euphoric, deflected, mammatus, passivity, mortified.

Chapters Nine and Ten

Summary

Chapter Nine

In Chapter Nine, Merrin runs all the way back to her house. When she arrives there panting and gasping, her brothers are afraid a boy has done something to hurt her. They promise to “kick his ass” but Merrin tells them that she is all right. She slides into the house past her parents and gets in the shower. Afterward, her father calls up the stairs, concerned. Exhaustion finally hits Merrin and she sits on the stairs. Her father sounds almost hopeful when he asks if it is a boy who is causing her emotional distress. She says yes, then no, then cries. At this moment, Elias pulls up in the driveway, bringing Merrin’s car home. He is polite and respectful. Realizing Merrin has not been harmed, her father sends her to bed, telling her that she can talk to him if she wishes.

Chapter Ten

In Chapter Ten, when Merrin wakes in the morning, she is unable to move. She has a fever and her back hurts. Believing she is suffering with her monthly period, Merrin’s mother leaves her alone to sleep. She sleeps most of the day and is still tired the following day. When Merrin’s mother reminds her that her science class is meeting that night to watch the Northern Lights, she struggles to get ready to go because she knows that Elias will be there.

Merrin’s father drives her to Blakely Creek where the class is meeting. Elias meets her at the car and promises to drive her home. Elias tells her that he has felt sick with the same symptoms as Merrin since they went flying. While the others are watching the sky, Elias and Merrin slip away together.

Analysis

In Chapter Nine, Michael and Max show their concern for their sister when she runs up to the house from Elias’ home. Even though these boys are several years younger than Merrin and would probably be much smaller than any boy who might have hurt Merrin, they boldly promise to beat up the man who might have hurt her. Merrin convinces them that she is not hurt. In the house, her father shows the same concern. His fears are relieved when Elias comes to return Merrin’s car. Notice that even though Merrin’s mother is at home, she does not seem to show any interest in Merrin or any concern that she might have been hurt. The following day, however, when Merrin can barely move after the flying experience, her mother thinks that she may be suffering from an extremely tough monthly period. Merrin seems to find it both unusual and irritating that her mother is trying to bond with her over her monthly period.

Also interesting in this section of the novel is the horrible sickness that both Elias and Merrin suffer on the day after they fly. It takes them several days to recover from their flight. Even though Merrin wants to call Elias and talk to him about what has happened to them, she does not have his cell phone number. It is not until they see each other on a field trip that they realize they both had similar symptoms.

Discussion Question 1

Why do Elias and Merrin feel so badly after their first flight together?

Discussion Question 2

What do Merrin's dreams signify?

Discussion Question 3

Consider Merrin's concern about their daughter's sickness. Is this normal concern or do they think that something different is happening?

Vocabulary

Plummeting, verdict, obligatory.

Chapters Eleven and Twelve

Summary

Chapter Eleven

In Chapter Eleven, Elias and Merrin decide to fly again. They fly until they feel an aching pain and decide it's time to get down. Just after they land, Leni and Daniel come to check on them. Elias shows them what he and Merrin can do. Elias tells Leni and Daniel to hold hands. They admit they feel the same buzz that Elias and Merrin feel when they touch. Elias tells Leni to catch herself on fire, which she does. The two burn, but aren't hurt.

Elias tells them that he has a theory that Ones can complete each others' missing powers. Leni and Daniel laugh as they realize what they can do together. They catch themselves on fire again. They laugh as they burn even hotter than before. Merrin thinks to herself that she should take this information to the hub to see if they have ever considered the possibility of Ones combining.

Chapter Twelve

In Chapter Twelve, Elias and Merrin eventually become accustomed to the pain they feel after flying. Elias believes the pain may be caused by the stretching and growing caused by the combining of their powers. She and Elias continue to spend time together, kissing, talking, flying and growing closer.

Merrin continues to meet with Mr. Hoffman at school. She goes shopping with her mother and buys cute clothes. Her mother doesn't push to see if the new clothes have to do with Elias. Merrin also continues to practice floating. She notices that she has begun to drift while floating.

One night, Elias brings a backpack with them when they go flying. He takes her to the roof of a historic house and Merrin is afraid that he wants to take advantage of her. Elias notices her fear and she tells him about the boys at Superior. When she notices his angry glare and protective stance, she knows that she doesn't have anything to fear from him. They eat the picnic lunch that he brings as he tells her that soon he will be busy with basketball season.

Merrin continues to work with Mr. Hoffman thinking that one day she and Ethan will be the ones who get fixed because she will be the one to understand how the One plus One mystery works.



Analysis

In this section, Elias and Merrin share their special abilities with Leni and Daniel. Leni and Daniel discover that their powers work together, just as Elias and Merrin's do. Merrin believes that if she is able to find out how their powers work together, it will be her key to getting the respect of those who work at Biotech.

Also during this section, Elias tells Merrin that soon he will be getting ready for basketball season. It appears that he will be spending much time practicing, participating in weekend tournament and games, and even having private coaching. Merrin is curious about all the time he is dedicating to the sport but doesn't push too hard.

It is in this section that Merrin finally tells Elias why she has been so suspicious of him and even avoided him when they first met. When he first seems angry by the way the boy at Superior treated her, then puts his arm around her protectively, Merrin realizes that she has nothing to fear from Elias.

Discussion Question 1

Why is it significant that Merrin is now able to drift a little as she floats?

Discussion Question 2

What does it mean for the four teens that they can combine their powers?

Discussion Question 3

Why does Merrin believe that the Hub will want to learn about their abilities?

Vocabulary

Sibilant, ethereal, vortex, geomagnetic, epigenetics, meddling, trajectory, laborious.

Chapters Thirteen and Fourteen

Summary

Chapter Thirteen

In Chapter Thirteen, Merrin learns from Mrs. VanDyne that Elias' father is vice president of the Biotech Hub. He oversees experimental operations. Elias' mother hands him a letter from his twin sisters. Elias had cut Merrin off when his mother asked why Elias was so happy the night they'd gone to see the aurora together. When Merrin asks why he is strange and will tell her only that he wanted to keep their abilities to himself. When Merrin asks about the twins, Elias seems worried. He tells Merrin about the knock-knock jokes through which they'd communicated. The letter contains a joke that Elias doesn't understand.

Elias continues to seem distracted. Before Merrin leaves, she asks what is wrong. He tells her that the police had come to his house because he'd left his backpack on the roof of the historic house. Although the police had thought Elias had climbed up there, his dad thinks that he flew up there, that he has developed his second power. Although Merrin is excited about Elias' father finding out about what they can do, Elias refuses to let anyone know about her.

Chapter Fourteen

In Chapter Fourteen, Elias has told his father he climbed up to the roof of the house. His father gave him the choice of extra basketball practice or grounding. Elias chose extra practice. Meanwhile, Michael and Max, Merrin's brothers, have been spending a few afternoons a week at the Hub. Merrin worries because they come home exhausted.

One night as Merrin is hanging out with her twin brothers, Elias drops by the visit. He has gotten five tickets to the Biotech Symposium and plans to take them, along with Leni and Daniel. In her next session with Mr. Hoffman, Mr. Hoffman takes a blood sample from her. He also asks about Ethan. He questions why they spend so much time together and what they do when they are together. Merrin doesn't feel comfortable talking to Mr. Hoffman about their relationship. Before she leaves, Mr. Hoffman tells Merrin that he is glad that she's chosen to apply for the internship because she could help many people who are Ones, like he is. At this point, Mr. Hoffman has creeped Merrin out too badly to care that they have this in common.

Analysis

Questions begin to arise in these two sections of the novel as Elias gets an odd letter from his twin sisters and Merrin learns that Mr. Hoffman is a One like she is. First, Elias has voiced his concerns for his sisters during the first day that Merrin visited the VanDyne home. Now, he has gotten a letter from them with a strange note on the back.



He tells Merrin that the note follows the pattern of an inside running joke that he and his sisters shared, but can't tell for sure what message they are trying to send. Merrin can tell from Elias' expression and distanced look that he is very concerned about the girls.

Merrin, meanwhile, is disturbed when the man whom she thinks has been working with her to get her into the internship at Biotech informs her that he, also, is a One. Prior in the conversation, he'd been asking odd and nosy questions about Elias, the depth of their relationship and what they did together. Merrin is evasive in answering his questions.

It is interesting that Mr. Hoffman's line of questioning about Elias comes just after Elias' backpack is found on the roof of the home the two had visited during one of their dates. When Elias and Merrin left that night, they forgot to get the backpack; and, it was found by the police. Now, Elias' father thinks that Elias has developed his second superpower and has just not told anyone. Elias tells his dad that he climbed to the roof. Elias seems very suspicious of his parents and does not want to give them any idea of what he and Merrin can do when they are together. When Merrin is about to tell Mrs. VanDyne about their flying adventures, Elias stops her, telling her later that he wants to keep that ability to themselves for awhile.

The way in which they should handle their abilities is one aspect on which Merrin and Elias do not completely see eye to eye. Merrin believes that the Biotech Hub would be interested in learning about the way the two can combine their powers. Elias, however, does not seem as interested in sharing their abilities for the greater good. His actions indicate that he believes sharing their combined abilities might even be dangerous for one or both of them.

Discussion Question 1

Why is Merrin so disturbed to learn that Mr. Hoffman is a One?

Discussion Question 2

Why are both Merrin and Elias hesitant of telling others about their abilities?

Discussion Question 3

What message do you think the twins might have been trying to send Elias through their joke on the letter?

Vocabulary

Tact, levitating, teleport, manifest.

Chapters Fifteen and Sixteen

Summary

Chapter Fifteen

In Chapter Fifteen, Merrin's father and mother drives her and her brothers to the Biotech Hub for the Symposium. Because she left Mr. Hoffman so quickly during their last session and hasn't heard from him since, Merrin is afraid this may be the last time she may be allowed in the Hub. Elias meets up with Merrin. They walk down a hallway where a picture of Charlie Fisk, Julian's son, hangs. Elias tells Merrin that the boy died of cancer before his powers developed.

Elias takes the twins while Merrin visits all of the Biotech booths. She wonders briefly how he knows his way around the hub so well. When they meet back up, Merrin makes Elias go with her to a presentation about gene malleability. The film gives Merrin hope that one day she and other Ones will be more than just a One.

Chapter Sixteen

In Chapter Sixteen, Elias introduces Merrin to his father. Mr. VanDyne calls Julian Fisk to join them. Both Mr. VanDyne and Elias are shocked that Fisk knows Merrin by name. He comments on her work in school and Merrin is briefly paranoid. He tells her that she will be doing another round of testing with Mr. Hoffman. Merrin warns him that she is just a One, but he insists that there is a place for everybody. Before the conversation is finished, Fisk tells Mr. VanDyne to be sure that Merrin gets into the internship.

For the formal dinner, Merrin is borrowing a dress from Leni. The light blue dress that Leni never liked is perfect for Merrin. Later, during a dance, Elias tells Merrin that he was concerned by the way that Fisk was talking to Merrin. He tells Merrin he knows that working at Biotech is her dream, but that he's not sure if it is really what it seems. Elias seems angry, but then continues when Merrin pushes him. He tells her that Fisk's son had been a One. The boy had died because he was being treated in an effort to make him develop his second superpower. Elias explains to Merrin it had been believed the genes of Ones were trying to adapt. He tells Merrin he's learned this information from classified studies he's found lying around his house. When treatments were tried with Charlie, however, he began to develop tumors all over, killing him in a matter of weeks. Elias admits to Merrin that since his sisters are so highly powered and he was a One, the scientists at the Hub had been super interested in him. They'd spend time trying to determine why he never developed as a Super. He doesn't want the same sort of thing to happen to Merrin. Merrin suggests they tell the people at Biotech about what they can do together. Elias simply and firmly says no, which angers Merrin. Elias sees her eyes flash with anger and suggests they go for a walk.



Analysis

Secrets start to surface in this section of the novel as both Merrin and Elias learn about each other's connections with Biotech. One important thing to note is that Elias and Merrin have distinctly different views of the work being done at the Hub. While Merrin believes the Hub is the hope of her salvation, Elias does not believe that the Hub is everything that it is advertised to be.

Elias also tells Merrin about Julian Fisk's son. Notice that he tells two different stories. The first time he tells Merrin what is apparently the G-rated version of Charlie's death. He tells Merrin that Charlie died of cancer before his powers could develop. Later, when Elias realizes how enthralled Merrin is by the Hub, he tells her that Charlie had actually been the subject of some of his father's experiments. Charlie was a One, Elias tells her, and his father had caused the cancer when he tried to make the boy develop a second power.

A final interesting point in this section is Fisk's reaction to Merrin. He recognizes her immediately and is able to distinguish her by her individual talents. Merrin is surprised how well Fisk knows her activities and her aptitudes. Meanwhile, Mr. VanDyne and Elias are both surprised that Fisk knows Merrin at all. Mr. VanDyne again appears surprised when Fisk tells him to be sure that Merrin gets into the internship program.

Discussion Question 1

Why would Elias be hurt that Fisk recognizes Merrin so quickly?

Discussion Question 2

How is the true story about Charlie's death different from the one that Elias first tells Merrin?

Discussion Question 3

Knowing that Fisk was trying to change Charlie from a One into a Super, what does this signify about how Fisk really feels about Ones?

Vocabulary

Appeasing, dregs, geeky, subterranean, subtlety, intimidate, morbidly, conniving, malleability, rematerialize, paranoia, cleavage, luminous, intoxicating, inseparable, mesmerize, resignation, surreal, nonchalant.

Chapters Seventeen and Eighteen

Summary

Chapter Seventeen

In Chapter Seventeen, Elias tells Merrin to follow him down a hallway in a few minutes. When they meet up, he tells her that he has something he wants to show her. He takes her to a huge room with two running tracks, two swimming pools, simulation stations and a vaulted five-foot high ceiling. He explains it is the testing arena for the Supers. Merrin asks Elias how long he had been coming to the Hub and wonders why he never told her about his visits before now. She suddenly realizes that she has been keeping secrets from him as well.

Elias tells her that he's hoped to see his sisters and has also hoped to make his dad happy. He tries to explain that he'd been coming for testing for years in the hopes of finding ways to make Ones into Supers. He also says that so far, Merrin has been the only thing that has ever made him fly. When he tells Merrin that he needs her, she asks how he is okay with that sense of needing. Elias answers her question with a question asking if she is not okay needing him. He admits that he has never really dreamed of flying on his own, that was always his father's dream for him. Merrin kisses Elias, telling him that she loves him. Then, she asks him to show her everything about the arena.

The next day, Elias is himself again. Merrin is hoping to see her mother's presentation, but realizes that it is only for authorized people. She is angry and disappointed. Elias asks what her mom does and Merrin realizes that she really doesn't know. During lunch Merrin's mother walks into the room following her presentation. The crowd cheers for her. She acknowledges them and Merrin watches as her father comes to her mother's aid when he notices that she is being embarrassed by the attention. She realizes that she and Elias and just like her mother and father. Although she realizes that she loves Elias, she is surprised that he cannot see her affection in the way she looks at him.

Chapter Eighteen

In Chapter Eighteen, at the symposium, Merrin realizes that there is something terribly wrong with Elias' sisters even though she has never met them before. The girls look tired, sore and pale. Elias expects the twins to hug him and tease him for having a girlfriend, but they do neither. After this unusual reaction from the girls, Elias is more concerned than ever that something is badly wrong with his sisters. Merrin can tell he is angry and wants to leave the Hub. She wants him to talk and asks why they can fly so fast with as little power as he has. She, also, has been floating higher, not just with Elias but on her own as well. When Merrin admits that she is still practicing on her own, Elias asks what else she hasn't told him. She tells him about the graduate level classes she's been taking with Mr. Hoffman. He asks urgently if Hoffman took any of Merrin's blood.



When she finally answers, he pulls her out of the building. Once they are in the car, he asks her to run away from Superior with him.

When he stops the car in her driveway, Elias begins to cry. He tells Merrin that he needs her to trust him, like she trusted Hoffman. He wonders what Elias knows about Mr. Hoffman. He tells Merrin that he has to go back to the symposium for wrap up but they will have breakfast the following morning. He tells her that he is worried about her. Merrin promises that she will trust him and kisses him. She notices the kiss feels like a goodbye.

Analysis

Even with as much as Elias and Merrin have learned about each other and their individual associations with the Hub, there are still many unanswered questions about what is happening there. Elias is deeply upset after seeing what their time at the Hub has done to his sisters. Even though Merrin doesn't understand why he is as upset as he is, she notices that his kiss seems like a goodbye. The tone of the novel becomes desperate as the two part, even though Elias promises to meet her the following day so they can talk.

Notice in this section that Elias finally admits to Merrin that he is still in testing at the Hub. He will only tell Merrin that the experimenters at the Hub won't give up easily. It appears that Elias is truly okay with the way that he is. He is secure in being a One even though he has to depend on Merrin to be able to fly. Merrin, however, doesn't understand how Elias can accept that he may never be a Super. Although she loves the connection she has with Elias, she still wants to be able to fly on her own.

Merrin shows signs of maturing in the section. For years, she has had the one-sided goal of making herself a Super. She believes that the only way to prove her worth is to get a job at Biotech. As she talks with Elias about the possibility that they will always have to depend on each other to be "super," she reminds herself that life isn't all about flying, but instead about the people that she loves. Also, when Elias finally opens up to Merrin and tells her about his time at the Hub, she keeps herself from getting angry with him. She realizes that she should not say anything rash as she is keeping her own secrets from Elias. When she finally tells Elias about her time with Mr. Hoffman and that he took blood from her, Elias's concern seems to escalate. It is at this point that he suggests to Merrin that they run away from Superior together.

Discussion Question 1

Consider why Elias is so upset when he learns that Merrin has given blood to Mr. Hoffman. Do you think he knows something that Merrin doesn't?



Discussion Question 2

Describe how the twins appear during the Symposium presentation. How are they different from the sisters that Elias knew before?

Discussion Question 3

Why is it significant that Merrin doesn't know what her mother does at Biotech?

Vocabulary

Concentric, aerial, conclusive, grouse, quell, elation, inaugural, phenomenal, ovation, plaintively, urgency.

Chapters Nineteen and Twenty

Summary

Chapter Nineteen

In Chapter Nineteen, when Merrin gets home, the twins aren't there. Their room looks like it has been ransacked. Merrin's parents tell her that the boys have gone to testing at the Hub for about a week. They seem tired and worried. Merrin tries to make her parents see what the experiments at the Hub had done to the VanDyne twins. Merrin realizes why Elias is so upset.

The next morning, Merrin goes to Elias' house. She notices his mother has bags under her eyes. Elias is in the shower so Merrin goes to his room to wait for him but is distracted by a room she's never noticed before. The room is full of computers and books. One book "Genetic Adaptability in the 22nd Century" lies open on a desk. One chapter in the book "Malleability of the Gene Structure" is especially interesting. There are notes in the margins in Elias' handwriting. On the final page of the chapter, there is a list of names including hers, Leni's and Daniels. She wonders if Elias knew about her before the two ever met one another. She wonders if he actually sought her out.

Merrin goes to Elias' room. When he gets finished in the shower, she confronts him about the book. Elias admits that he hoped that they would be stars together and that he had been researching the way that Ones can use their powers in cooperation. Merrin is so angry that she leaves his room and walks to her car. Elias follows her. He asks if she remembers being at the Hub and being tested when she was young. Elias tells her that at first he had tried to locate her, but then he fell in love with her. Now, he tells her that he just wants to protect her. Merrin leaves, angry. It is not until she gets home that she realizes that Elias has told her that he loves her.

Chapter Twenty

In Chapter Twenty, Merrin bangs on her drums until she has worked out her anger. Leni comes and sits with Merrin as she begins to realize how hurtful she was to Elias. Leni tries to convince Merrin that her relationship with Elias isn't over. That night, Merrin's mother tells her that she will be going away for some intensive research for a few days. Merrin realizes how tired her mother looks and wonders what is going on. She senses that her parents are hiding something from her.

Merrin goes to her room and calls Elias. He tells her that his father has asked him again how the backpack got on top of the house. Elias has told him that he has finally been able to fly alone. Although Merrin suggests they tell him together, Elias tells her that he doesn't want to get her involved. He finally tells Merrin that he used to dream of flying. He realizes that he was dreaming of Merrin before he even knew her. Merrin hurts so badly that she cannot tell Elias how much she loves him. She also can't tell him about



her own brothers. She says goodbye and hangs up. After the call, Merrin goes to sleep and has dreams she is floating. She feels a pinch on her arm, then gets cold. She can't get warm, even under the covers. She wants Elias but somehow knows that she couldn't find him even if she looked.

Analysis

Things become more mysterious as Merrin arrives home after the symposium to find that her brothers are gone. Her parents tell her they've been taken to the Hub for some intensive testing. Merrin's parents, however, do not seem completely at ease with the arrangement but also don't seem to be telling Merrin the whole story. When Merrin goes to visit Elias she notices his usually perfectly groomed mother also looks tired and has circles under her eyes.

Very significant in this section is the research that Merrin finds in the library in Elias' house. She recognizes the notes in the margins as being in Elias' handwriting. This research material is significant because it makes Merrin wonder how long Elias has been researching the Ones work together. She also wonders if he has been searching for her to see if their powers will work together as he has thought they would.

Because she can only think that Elias is another person who has burned her trust, she confronts him with the research that she has found. While he admits to having worked on the project with the hopes that it would make his father proud of him, he tries to convince Merrin that he did not search her out. It is not until after Merrin has left Elias that she realizes that he had been trying to tell her that he loved her. She calls Elias and he tries once again to explain how much he loves her. His words make Merrin hurt so badly that she cannot tell him about her twin brothers' trip to the Hub. She also hangs up without telling him that she loves him.

Discussion Question 1

Why is it important to Merrin for Elias to love her personally, not for what she can help him do?

Discussion Question 2

In what ways are Merrin's parents acting strangely? Why do you think this is?

Discussion Question 3

Why do you think Merrin's brothers have been taken to the Hub? What do you think is happening there?

Vocabulary

Emits, marginalia, dubious, dissipated, perpetuate.

Chapters Twenty-one and Twenty-two

Summary

Chapter Twenty-one

In Chapter Twenty-one, Merrin wakes up with a start. She notices she has a message on her cuff. It is Elias. He says that he will not be around for awhile. Although it is only 4 a.m., she drives to Elias' house. He isn't there but has left a note for her to find. When she reads it, she knows that he has gone to the Hub. Merrin is angry because she knows that Elias has been taken to the Hub because he lied to protect her. Just as she is wondering who will disappear next, Merrin gets a call from Leni. Leni asks if everything is okay, saying that Daniel got a strange message from Elias. Merrin asks Leni and Daniel to meet her at her house. As she goes for some cash saved up from summer jobs, Merrin wonders how she will get into the Hub to get Elias, and her brothers, out. While getting her cash from her hiding spot in the family closet, Merrin knocks a box out of the closet, spilling its contents.

Chapter Twenty-two

In Chapter Twenty-two, as she gathers the stuff back into the box, she notices a picture of herself, a four-year-old, levitating an apple. She's never seen this picture before. She also notices that picture was submitted to the Hub. Merrin wonders why her mother would have submitted the photo but doesn't think about it too much as she puts the stuff back in the box. She suddenly realizes the box has a false bottom. Inside is a paper file. She suspects her mother made a copy of the file and smuggled it out. Merrin's name is listed with ten other test subjects. As she reads the file she learns that the experimenters wanted her to be able to levitate people as well as objects.

Leni's file indicates that she has the power of regeneration. Merrin thinks some sort of mistake must have been made as Leni is not indestructible. Then Merrin sees that it was her mother who was in charge of the experiments. Merrin suddenly realizes how rare it is for a Super to be combustible; in fact, her mother is the only other person whom she knows who has gift of combustibility. There is also a photo of Merrin's mother with Leni snuggled up beside her. Merrin briefly wonders what was done to Leni and to what extent her mother was involved. She wonders, in fact, if her mother could have somehow swapped powers with Leni. Angry for Leni, Merrin crams the papers back in the box and returns it to its shelf. She climbs into the car with Leni and Daniel outside and tells them they have to go to the Hub.

Analysis

Merrin's worry about Elias turns to fear as she realizes that he has been taken to the Hub. She is angry with herself because she knows that he is there because his father believes that he can fly and intends to force his son to do so. She also knows that Elias



would never have lied to his father about developing his second power if he had not been trying to protect her. Merrin rounds up her friends, Leni and Daniel, to help her rescue Elias from the Hub.

While she's looking for some cash that she's saved, Merrin unearths a paper file that contains information about some testing that she and her friends went through as small children. In this information it appears that at one time, Merrin could not only levitate herself, she could also levitate objects. It seems the Hub wanted to learn if it could transfer this power to other people.

What makes Merrin most upset is learning that her friend, Leni, was also involved in the experiments. A photo taken at that time shows a time elapsed photo of experimenters cutting Leni's arm, then recording the time it took to heal. Merrin knows that Leni is not indestructible. She's on antidepressants to keep from spontaneously burning herself because she is combustible but has no powers of regeneration. Considering that her mother is combustible, Merrin wonders briefly if the two might have somehow exchanged powers but she is more concerned with the idea that it was her mother who possibly caused Leni so much pain through the experiments. She knows that it was her mother who had Leni anesthetized and cut to see how long it would take her to heal. She also suspects that it was something her mother did that interfered with Leni's powers.

Notice also in the section the way in which Elias lets Merrin know that he has been taken to the Hub. Had anyone else found the note, they would have had no idea what it indicated. Because he has shared the inside joke that he and his sisters' shared with Merrin, she is able to quickly realize his whereabouts.

Discussion Question 1

How does Elias let Merrin know where he is?

Discussion Question 2

Why is it significant that Leni's powers seem to have changed after experimentation with Merrin's mother?

Discussion Question 3

Why is the picture of Merrin levitating the apple significant? Why have her parents never let her see it?

Vocabulary

Pungent, internment, indignant, submission, spontaneous, animate, coincidence.



Chapters Twenty-three and Twenty-four

Summary

Chapter Twenty-three

In Chapter Twenty-three, the gates of the Hub open automatically for Daniel's parents' car. Leni has Daniel hack information into Merrin's cuff so that she can get clearance through the Hub. When they come to a serum scanner, Merrin knows they can't get past that point. Leni convinces a skeptical Daniel that Elias would help them. Working together, Daniel and Leni burn out the insides of the scanner. This allows Merrin to pass and gives her time to make her way down the hallway. When the alarm system recognizes it has been compromised and guards begin to appear, Leni and Daniel duck into a closet while Merrin floats up to the ceiling. The ventilation system helps Merrin to drift toward the area where she believes Elias is.

Chapter Twenty-four

In Chapter Twenty-four, Merrin finds the lab of the Hub's medical wing. The walls of the lab are lined with refrigerated cabinets filled with vials of solution. She recognizes one of these solutions as a mutagen, capable of changing someone's DNA immediately. She wonders if the Hub has been experimenting with Ones to see if they were to take away their one power if they would be able to modify to adapt and perhaps even become better. As she continues to study the vials, she notices that each has a name on it. She finds vials with her name on them and slides them into a test tube rack. She grabs vials labeled Summers, Suresh and VanDyne as well. Merrin realizes that the vials she has taken have the power to make one a Super, or kill. Merrin leaves the lab through the only other door. She enters a testing area where Elias is lying on a hospital bed.

Analysis

Most significant in this section of the novel is Merrin's discovery of the individually concocted solutions which she believes has the power to turn each of the Ones into a Super. When she discovers these solutions, she realizes there was no truth to Fisk's claims that he was no longer interested in trying to find ways to make Ones become Supers. She takes these vials, choosing to try to give her friends the option of using or not using their solutions.

Also in this section notice how much trouble Leni has convincing Daniel to help them break into the Hub. Daniel is concerned that his parents will be mad at him. Leni uses their friendship with Elias against Daniel, telling him that Daniel would do the same thing for him. She also tells him that his parents would want him to help Elias. Notice also that both Daniel and Leni seem to doubt that anything being done at the Hub would hurt Elias. It is Leni who is more easily convinced than Daniel that Elias needs their help.



Discussion Question 1

Why is Daniel so apprehensive about helping Merrin break into the Hub?

Discussion Question 2

For what might the solution filled vials that Merrin finds in the Hub be used? Why does she take the vials with her and her friends' names on them?

Discussion Question 3

How do the three friends use their powers to outsmart the guards and security system at the Hub?

Vocabulary

Compromised, placards, deaminator.

Chapters Twenty-five and Twenty-six

Summary

Chapter Twenty-five

In Chapter Twenty-five, Merrin sees not only Elias in the room but also Max and Michael. The twins are being prepped for spinal taps. As Merrin steps closer to Elias, she is grabbed and pulled back into the lab. When she turns around, Merrin realizes that it is her father that has grabbed her. When she looks into his eyes, Merrin has a sudden memory of being in the lab before as a young child. At this time, she was given an injection her father promised would make her fly.

Back in reality, Merrin's dad tells her that when she was about five, her mother was given an enhancement injection that gave her the ability to fly. He tells her that her mother ability is amazing because she was not able to do that until they brought Merrin home from the hospital as a baby. That night, her mother had begun floating in her sleep. The experimenters came to the conclusion that Merrin had transferred her power to her mother. They had tried injections with Merrin, but she never developed a second and never transferred her powers again. Merrin wonders if her father ever considered that it was the tests that she was put through that kept her from displaying her powers. She finds it interesting that once she started practicing, she learned to float higher and higher. Merrin's father goes on to tell her that one of the children in the study even lost her One. Merrin knows now that Leni switched powers with her mother. He also tells Merrin that Elias transferred his powers to his sisters.

Merrin demands to know what is going on in the lab. Her father turns her toward the door where her mother is standing between Max and Michael. He tells her that her mother has arranged it so that instead of doing a spinal tap, she will sneak the twins out. Merrin does not believe him. She realizes that the twins have been taken so that genetic material can be pulled from them to determine what is wrong with her. Merrin tells her dad that she won't leave without Elias. Her dad tells her with all the injections they've given him, it is best to leave Elias there. He asks her to cooperate so that they can get her out without her being tested on as well. He goes out and checks Elias then tells Merrin's mother something. She looks in Merrin's direction then the two walk out of the lab together.

Merrin suddenly realizes that the people at the Hub are testing the siblings of the Ones in the original test to see what went wrong with the injections, why they didn't turn into Supers. She realizes that if she proves that she and the others can still transfer their powers, they will find what they are looking for without any more testing on the twins.

Chapter Twenty-six



In Chapter Twenty-six, the lab is empty and Merrin goes to Elias. She kisses him, hoping to get some response. Two nurses enter and go lightly up to the ceiling to keep out of sight. The nurses inject Elias but Merrin's mother keeps them away from the teens. Even though Merrin can't get her mind around what is going on, she believes that her parents do want to help Max and Michael. When the nurses leave, Merrin lands. Merrin tells her mother that she doesn't want to leave Elias. She explains to her mother that they have a special ability when they are together. Then, the door swings open, and Fisk walks in.

Analysis

Tension in the novel continues to rise as Merrin battles with her parents to make them realize how important Elias is to her. She is stuck between wanting to believe that her parents really do want the best for her, Max, and Michael and her parents' past track record of dishonesty. Even though she wants to believe that her parents finally want to help her, she knows that she cannot leave Elias. She is about to tell her mother about the special abilities that she and Elias have when they are together when Fisk walks into the room.

Discussion Question 1

What does Merrin's repressed memory about the Hub indicate?

Discussion Question 2

Do you think Merrin and her friends' abilities are based on genetics and injections or trust and freedom?

Discussion Question 3

Do you believe that Merrin's parents really plan to sneak Max and Michael out of the lab? Why or why not?

Vocabulary

Immobile, coherent, latent, excruciating, implement.

Chapters Twenty-seven and Twenty-eight

Summary

Chapter Twenty-seven

In Chapter Twenty-seven, Mr. Hoffman enters the lab with Fisk. Fisk asks Merrin what it is that she and Elias can do. Merrin refuses to answer so Fisk tells her that he believes the ability that her twin brothers have to walk across water twice as fast when they are together is because of a quality that they share with their mother, Merrin and Elias. When Fisk refers to Ones as genetic problems, Fisk tells her that Ones are a sign that something has gone wrong genetically. He says that something must be done to ensure that Ones don't continue to develop as they will weaken the Super race.

When Fisk talks about the abilities of the VanDyne twins, Merrin briefly thinks she sees Elias' breathing quicken. When Fisk refers to the sample of Merrin's blood that Mr. Hoffman collected, she is sure that her mother looks at her as if she has been betrayed. Fisk tells Merrin that since she has never admitted that she is able to do anything special, they have been forced to experiment on Max and Michael. Merrin screams at Fisk to keep his hands off her brothers and wants to claw his eyes out but her mother holds her back.

Merrin moves closer to Elias hoping that being close to him will calm her. Mr. Hoffman wonders out loud what would make Elias so important to Merrin that she would break into the Hub to make sure he was all right. Fisk threatens to harm Elias if she does not tell them what the two of them can do together. He tells Merrin that Elias' sisters are very useful and pushes a button to reveal them. Merrin's mother's jaw is clenched and a tear runs down her cheek. Merrin looks up to see the twins dressed in black swimsuits suspended in a tank of green goo with breathing tubes down their noses. Fisk says they are trying to use the twins' power to kick start Elias' second power but so far it hasn't worked. Fisk indicates they may try the experiment the other way around but that it will probably kill Elias. Fisk indicates that Merrin will tell what she and Elias can do, he can fix her so that she can fly on her own.

Merrin's mother pretends to hug Merrin, asking if she and Elias can really fly. When Merrin tells her they can, her mother pulls away telling Fisk she wants to get the experiment over and will put Elias under herself. Merrin cries and falls on Elias. As her mother pulls her up she tells her to take Elias and get out of there. Merrin has to use everything inside her mother to trust that she will make that possible. She suddenly realizes that if she and Elias leave the Hub, they will have to fly. When Fisk and his people see them fly, they'll have to keep flying to get away from the testing and experiments.



When Fisk again tells her that if she will prove that she and Elias can do something special, he'll stop the testing on her brothers, Merrin holds him at his word, telling him that if that is the truth, he will let her brothers go. She tells him that if he lets Michael and Max, as well as Nora and Lia, she and Elias will show them what they can do. As Merrin tries to negotiate, the door to the testing arena opens and guards come in with Leni and Daniel. Merrin is surprised that the two aren't freaking out but sees why when she notices their hands are bound together.

Chapter Twenty-eight

In Chapter Twenty-eight, Leni cries when she sees what is being done to Elias's sisters. When Merrin's mother comes back into the room she does cry as she recognizes her as the woman who said they were making her stronger. For a moment Merrin has a flash of hate for her mother as she realizes that it was because Leni loved her mother, trusted her mother, that she transferred her powers so easily. Merrin realizes she would have done the same thing if she'd ever really trusted her mother. Elias wakes. When he sees what has been happening to his sisters, Merrin sees rage in his eyes.

Knowing she needs to buy some time for Elias to get stronger, Merrin pulls a vial out of her bag, telling Fisk that she knows what he has been doing. Fisk goes to the vials telling them it has been his life work since Charlie died to make the Ones better. Merrin wants to think that he never intended to do the cruel things that he is doing to people, but seeing what he has done to those she loves, she can't bring herself to believe that.

When Fisk suggests that he can make Merrin more than a One if she will let him test the solution on her, she tells him honestly that she is happy being a One. Even though he tempts Merrin with the promise of making her fly on her own, she will not agree. Suddenly there is a ripping sound and Elias says, "they're back."

Analysis

Emotions come to a head as Merrin's mother and father realize that she'd sneaked into the Biotech lab to try to help Elias. Her father claims that Merrin's mother has a plan to sneak the boys out without actually performing spinal taps on them but Merrin doesn't trust what he is saying. When she is given the opportunity, she makes a deal with Fisk. She will show him what she and Elias can do if he promises to let her twin brothers and Elias' twin sisters go without more testing. Fisk agrees.

Merrin's plan is complicated when guards bring in Leni and Daniel. Now she has to find some way to get them, as well as everybody else, out of the lab safely. Merrin's parents have already removed one of the twins from the room and the tank that holds the VanDyne twins is being drained when Leni notices them. She is shocked by their appearance but Merrin tries to calm her by telling her that the two girls are being prepared to go home. Leni breaks down when she sees Merrin's mother. Even after all the years that have passed, Leni suddenly remembers what happened to her at the lab and that Merrin's mother was in charge of it all. Embarrassed and perhaps disgusted



with herself, Merrin's mother does not answer Leni when she demands to know why the older woman did what she did to Leni when Leni trusted her so completely.

Discussion Question 1

Discuss why Merrin's mother is never given a name.

Discussion Question 2

Do you think that Merrin should trust her parents? Do you believe they are really trying to help her get out of the Hub without being tested on?

Discussion Question 3

If you were in Merrin's situation, would you be swayed by the promise of being able to fly alone? Why or why not?

Vocabulary

Agility, deprivation, stasis, croons, futile, noxious, atrophied, contorting, roils, unadulterated, sanctioned, mediocre, retort.

Chapters Twenty-nine and Thirty

Summary

Chapter Twenty-nine

In Chapter Twenty-nine, Nora appears. She is handcuffed but pulls her cuffs apart, telling Fisk she believes she and her sister have gotten stronger the more they were tested. She picks Fisk up by the throat, his eyes bulging. Lia teleports in, takes guns from two of the guards and tosses one to her sister. Fisk duplicates himself into twenty clones, but Nora and Lia are able to tell the difference. They shoot down the fake Fisks. Meanwhile, some of the clones have tried to attack Leni and Daniel, but they have flamed up. Mr. Hoffman grabs for the vials held by the clones and is burned. Nora holds her gun to the head of the real Fisk telling her brother that they can take care of themselves as long as he takes care of the lab.

Nora makes Fisk give the vial he holds to Merrin, then orders him to call his security off the roof. Elias mouths to Merrin to get ready to use his new powers to move a medical grade oxygen tank into the lab. The tank cracks open, and Elias tells Leni to set it on fire. Lia and Nora teleport out when the guards try to grab them. Elias and Merrin fly out, taking Leni and Daniel with them. They see Merrin's parents preparing to load the boys into a car. Meanwhile, Fisk walks into the burning lab. Another oxygen tank rolls after him, exploding when it catches fire.

When they land, Elias pulls Merrin into a tight hug, thanking her for rescuing him. With Leni and Daniel, they run, trying to put a mile between them and the Hub. When they finally stop, Daniel asks Merrin if she got any of their serum out. Merrin hesitates for a moment before handing over the vials. She wonders if it is safe, but she knows that she should give her friends the chance to decide if they want to use it or not. Leni says that they will be going West to hide out. So they won't lose touch, Elias tells them to put a certain ad in the classified section of the newspaper in the town in which they settle. After Leni and Daniel have left, Elias stumbles and falls. When Merrin asks what is wrong, he indicates that he believes that his sisters have given him something. He slices his hand open, and it heals immediately. He tells Merrin he had suspected that was the case as his skin felt like a suit of pain.

Elias also tells Merrin that Fisk had figured out what they could do together. They'd brought in another kid that had Merrin's same power, but they couldn't fly. Merrin asks Elias how much he thinks his father knew about what was happening with Nora and Lia. Elias says he'll kill his father if it was more than nothing. They sit next to each other, drawing strength from one another. On the landscape, there is no sign of the drama that has just taken place at the Hub.

Chapter Thirty



In Chapter Thirty, Elias and Merrin realize that the only reason they are able to transfer their powers the way they do is because they are so close to one another. Merrin is finally able to tell Elias that she loves him. Merrin feels something warm, heavy and exhilarating enter her body. She realizes that she now has the ability to fly alone. Even so, she still prefers flying with Elias.

Analysis

It is in this section of the novel that Elias' sisters put on a bigger show than they did during the symposium. They display powers not only of being able to transport but also of having great strength as they break the titanium handcuffs they've been immobilized with and take on the host of guards to help save their brother. Their attitude toward Fisk is all that it takes to prove that Fisk has been treating the two of them in a terribly inhumane manner during their time at the Hub. They not only tell those gathered that Fisk is little more than just a One because his powers are so weak, he is also not the highly intelligent scientist everyone has believed that he is. During their time at the Hub, the twins have discovered their own special powers that have been brought about or strengthened by Fisk potions and serums while Fisk did not even think to test for these changes.

At the conclusion of the novel, everyone escapes from the Hub safely. Because they have displayed what they can do with their combined powers, Leni, Daniel, Elias and Merrin know that they'll have to stay on the run from Hub scientists. Merrin will have to trust that her parents will not return her brothers to the lab for more testing. Elias will have to trust that his parent will not command his sisters to return to the lab. They know they won't be able to see their families for a long time.

On a positive note, both Elias and Merrin have developed the special powers that they have wanted to make them true Supers. Elias can regenerate while Merrin can finally fly on her own. Although it is this power that she has wanted through the entire novel, she finally realizes that it is more important to be with Elias than to be able to fly.

Discussion Question 1

What causes Merrin to suddenly be able to fly on her own?

Discussion Question 2

Why do Merrin, Elias, Leni and Daniel have to go into hiding?

Discussion Question 3

In their confrontation with Fisk, what do the VanDyne twins reveal about their "training" with Fisk at the Hub?

Vocabulary

Emaciated, brandish, curtly, careening, ochre, inevitable, cadence, propels.

Characters

Merrin Grey

Merrin Grey is the main character of heroine of this novel. As a sophomore at Nelson High School, Merrin has never trusted anyone before she met Elias. She is a One, which she believes makes her a half-powered freak, neither Normal nor Super. She spends time practicing her one power, her ability to levitate, in the hopes that one day her second power will appear and she will be able to fly. As she meets and gets to know Elias, the two discover that by combining their powers, they can fly together. Merrin, who has always been stubbornly independent, still hopes to be able to develop her powers so that she can fly without the aid of Elias.

At school, Merrin is secretly studying with Mr. Hoffman, a man whom she believes is preparing her for an internship at the Biotech Hub. She believes that by working at the Hub, which hires only Supers, she will be able to prove her worth. It is during a trip to the Biotech symposium that Merrin learns that the Hub may not be all that she had dreamed it was. She learns from Elias that Julian Fisk, the president of the company, caused the death of his son, Charlie, by experimenting with solutions that were supposed to make the boy a Super. Instead they caused a fast growing form of cancer that killed the boy. Although Fisk advertises that he is trying to incorporate Ones into the Hub, Merrin learns that he is really still trying to figure out how to turn Ones into Supers.

When Elias is taken to the Hub for testing, Merrin realizes that she must save him. She puts her future as well as her relationship with her family on the line in order to stop the testing on her boyfriend. Although she is angry when she learns exactly what is happening at the Hub and what a large part of the experimentation she has been, Merrin is able to stay relatively cool under pressure and make a deal with Fisk to get both her twin brothers and Elias' sisters out of the Hub. She has to take a step of faith and believe that her parents will truly keep their word about not letting Max and Michael be tested any longer. Because she and Elias prove their powers by flying out of the testing arena, they must go into hiding to keep from being hunted down by Biotech scientists. At the end of the novel Merrin, who is finally able to fly on her own, takes off with Elias. She has finally realized, however, that love and trust is more important than any superpower.

Elias VanDyne

Elias VanDyne is the main male character of the novel. Although he could be considered the "hero" because he indirectly saves Merrin from the testing and experimentation that the people at the Hub might have in store for her, he is more dramatically saved by Merrin from the real horrors of the Hub. Although Elias has attended school in the district for "normal" kids since he was in elementary school, his father has not given up on the idea that his son might still develop a second



superpower. When Elias and Merrin leave a backpack on the roof of a home in their town, Elias' father assumes that his son has developed this second power and has been keeping it a secret. Elias lies to his father telling him that he climbed onto the roof because is afraid the scientists at the Hub will want to start testing Merrin if they learn what the teens can do together. Elias also lies to Merrin by not telling her that he is already being tested at the Hub because his father suspects he's lying about something. Elias instead tells Merrin he's going to special basketball practices.

In the end, Elias is taken back to the Hub for more tests. At this point, he has told Merrin the Hub scientists are interested in him because his sisters have superpowers and he does not. He has told Merrin that he feels he is treated as a freak that must be fixed by the people at the Hub. After Merrin sees the papers stored in her mother's closet, she finally realizes that Elias has been telling her the truth about the Hub all along. She stands up to Fisk, Mr. Hoffman, and her parents to get herself and Elias out of the Hub safely.

Katherine Grey

Katherine Grey is Merrin's mother. Her name is revealed only when Merrin reads it when she is looking at the case file that she finds in a box in the hall closet of her home. It was Merrin's mother who was in charge of testing several children who were Ones. Elias, Merrin, Leni, and Daniel were part of this test. During the testing Leni transferred her ability to regenerate to Katherine while she absorbed Katherine's ability to combust. Even though she was part of the same test group, Merrin never transferred any abilities to her mother. Merrin believes that she did not transfer her powers as her mother wanted her to because she knew even then that her mother was not trustworthy. Katherine has always been standoffish and distant from her daughter. It may be because she realizes what damage she could have done to her own child and that her own child did not trust her enough to do as she wanted.

Helen "Leni" Summers

Helen "Leni" Summers is a cheerleader at Norman High School. She is also a One. The most significant aspect of Leni's inclusion in the novel is that when she was a child, she transferred powers with Merrin's mother. During a series of experiments at the Hub, Leni lost her indestructibility by transferring that ability to Katherine and instead became combustible, an ability that she absorbed from Katherine. Merrin sees a picture of Leni and her mother together and notices how strongly Leni loved and trusted Katherine. Merrin is angry with her mother for deceiving the little girl's trust. When Leni sees Katherine at the Hub and remembers what happened to her, she is angry and hurt that she had been deceived in such a terrible way.



Dad

Merrin's father's role in the novel is a little uncertain. He seems to be the main parent on whom Merrin relies for advice and nurturing. At the same time, it is never really revealed how much about the testing of his children he really knew. It is known that he does work at the Hub, but that he works in a portion of the company that makes toothpaste. He doesn't seem to be interested in making any great discoveries or making his mark on the world. It appears, however, that his wife does tell him what is going on in her work and that he has some understanding of what she is doing. He claims that he is at the lab the night that Merrin breaks in to free Elias in order to help her mother get the twins out. Somehow, Merrin doesn't trust that her father is telling the whole truth.

Julian Fisk

Julian Fisk is the president of Biotech Hub. Merrin is led by Mr. Hoffman to believe that Fisk is interested in working with Ones at the Hub. After she gets to know him, however, Merrin realizes that Fisk is still working on failed research and experimentation from when he tried to make his son Charlie, who was a One, into a Super. The drugs and treatments given to Charlie with the intention of "fixing" him had instead caused cancer. Merrin feels that in some way Julian has continued with the research, to the extent of abusing his testing subjects, because he believes that if he can make Ones become Supers, Charlie's death will have some meaning.

Nora and Lia VanDyne

Nora and Lia VanDyne are fraternal twins who are Supers. They are able to teleport. At the time of the story, the girls are part of a gap year program. Elias is concerned about his sisters because he does not hear from them as often as he'd like. When he does hear from his sisters, he gets a handwritten letter with a strange code noted on the back. At a presentation the girls seem tired and empty eyed. Later when Merrin goes to rescue Elias from the Biotech lab, the girls are suspended in a sensory deprivation goop. Merrin insists that the twins be released from the Hub.

Mr. Stephen Hoffman

Mr. Stephen Hoffman is a worker from the Hub who poses as a chemistry tutor in order to try to glean information from Merrin about her abilities. Merrin doesn't give the man much information to go on, especially after Elias warns her not to tell anyone what the two of them can do together. Merrin does make a dangerous mistake when she allows Hoffman to take a vial of her blood for testing. During the scene in which Daniel and Leni flame up in order to protect themselves from Fisk's clones, Mr. Hoffman is burned when he tries to rescue a vial of serum from the flames.

Daniel Suresh

Daniel Suresh is a student at Norman High School. He, like Merrin, is also a One. Daniel is indestructible. When he and Leni work together, she transfers her combustibility powers to him while he shares his indestructibility powers with her. Daniel is one of the characters who helps Merrin rescue Elias from the Hub. Additionally, Merrin learns that Daniel was one of the children who was tested at the Hub at the same time that Leni lost her power of indestructibility.

Dierdre VanDyne

Dierdre VanDyne is Elias' mother and an engineer at the Hub. She is the creator of the Residential and Office Security and Identification Engineer (ROSIE). When Dierdre is also with Merrin briefly, she questions why Elias has been so happy recently. Merrin starts to tell her but is interrupted by Elias entering the room and finishing the thought with a different idea. Interestingly, Elias' mother pretends not to have been interested at all in what Merrin was about to say.

Andrew VanDyne

Andrew VanDyne is the father of Elias, Nora and Lia. He is the vice president of Biotech Hub and oversees experimentation. Mr. VanDyne gets excited when the police find Elias' backpack on the roof of a house, believing that his son has finally developed another superpower. When Elias lies and says he can fly, his father takes him to Biotech for testing.

Max and Michael Grey

Max and Michael Grey are Merrin's twin brothers. They are identical twins and are true Supers. The boys can both walk on water. Together, they can go twice as fast on the water, an ability that the scientists at the Biotech Hub want to dissect to see what causes the enhancement of the abilities when the twins are together.

Charlie Fisk

Charlie Fisk is Julian Fisk's son. Although it is said that the boy died of cancer, Elias tells Merrin that Charlie had been a One. An attempt was apparently made to replicate a gene in the boy that caused an explosion in mutated DNA. During the treatment, massive tumors had begun growing all over the boy's body. He was dead about six weeks later.

Symbols and Symbolism

A One

A One is a mutant who has developed one power, but never a second power, like other Supers. Ones are looked down upon by Supers because of their lack of power.

Smartcuff

A smartcuff is a flexible tablet that is worn as a universal ID, cell phone and GPS.

Vintage Public Super Service Poster

Merrin remembers her parents hanging up this poster showing a girl flying up to rescue a cat from a tree when she displayed her first power. Their dream of her being able to fly like the girl in the poster never developed.

Rosie

Rosie is an acronym for Residential and Office Service and Identification Engineer.

The Drum Set

It is a new drum set in the VanDyne music room that catches Merrin's attention. She gives in to her desire to play these drums even though it is the first time she has been so bold around Elias.

A Backpack

Elias and Merrin take this backpack with them one evening when they fly up to the roof of an historic home. The backpack is found on the roof of the house. To protect Merrin, Elias tells his parents that he has finally developed the power of flight.

A Letter from Elias' Sisters

When Elias gets this letter from his sisters, Merrin can tell he is concerned. Elias shows Merrin a handwritten note on the back of the letter that he doesn't understand, but is afraid that something is wrong.



Biotech Symposium

Because his father is vice president at the Hub, Elias is able to get extra tickets to the Biotech Symposium. He takes Merrin, Max, Michael, Leni, and Daniel with him.

Cancer

Cancer is the disease from which it is said that Charlie Fisk, the son of Julian Fisk, is said to have died.

Genetic Adaptability in the 22nd Century

Elia's notes in this book lead Merrin to believe that he has been courting her only in order to take advantage of her power. She believes that he knew from the time they met that they would be able to fly together.

A Box

When Merrin finds this box in the hall closet, she realizes that in the past, she, Elias, Leni and Daniel were part of an experiment in which their powers were manipulated. She also realizes that her mother was in charge of the experimentation.

The Buzz

The buzz is a term that Elias and Merrin use to describe the electrical connection that they feel around one another.

Vials

In the Biotech Hub's medical wing Merrin finds these vials with fluorescent colored liquids labeled with the names of Ones. Merrin is one of the Ones whose name is on some of these vials. She takes the vials in the case that what is inside can help her and her friends develop their second powers.

Settings

Nelson High School

Nelson High School is the high school that Merrin attends her sophomore year. It is the high school for so called Normal students.

Nelson High School Library

It is in the Nelson High School Library that Merrin has her secret meetings with Mr. Hoffman. In these meetings she believes that she is completing the application process for an internship at the Biotech Hub.

Biotech Hub

The Biotech Hub is the place where Supers work. It is Merrin's desire to work in this place because she would be the first One to do so.

Near Blakely Creek

It is near Blakely Creek that Merrin and Elias' class meets to watch the aurora. It is here that Elias and Merrin share with Leni and Daniel what they can do together.

VanDyne Concert Hall

Elias and Merrin spend much time together in the VanDyne concert hall playing music together when they are getting to know one another.

The Biotech Testing Arena

The night that Elias and Merrin visit the Hub for the Biotech Symposium, he shows her the testing arena.

Times Square

Times Square is the place to which Elias' sisters teleport during the Biotech Symposium.

Themes and Motifs

Discrimination

Discrimination is a theme in this novel as Merrin and the other Ones struggle to develop a second power and become true Supers. In Merrin's world, being a One is worse than being a Super or a Normal. The Supers, the ones who have two superpowers as a result of uranium contamination believe that they are superior to everyone else. These Supers even attend a special high school suited just for them. Normals have no super powers at all. They attend a "normal" high school. From Merrin's description of the school and grounds on her first day of classes, it appears that Superior High School was much better maintained and had better resources than Norman High School. Ones, like Merrin, feel out of place in both the worlds of the Supers and the Normals.

Notice also the difference in the way that the Supers were treated after the Uranium Wars is presented to the Normals and the way it is presented to the Supers. In the "normal" high school it is taught that the Supers were sent to special internment camps but that they were treated with the utmost care and respect while there. At the "super" high school the students are taught that the internment camps were more like prison camps with the people treated rudely, starved and not given proper shelter or medical attention.

Things Aren't as They Seem

One of the major themes in this novel is Merrin's realization that things are not always as they seem. She had placed her hope for her future in the Biotech Hub. She believes that if she is able to get a job at this place, she will in some way make up for being a One. Merrin's parents, who are Supers work at Biotech. Merrin isn't completely sure what her mother does, but her father works in a part of the Hub that creates toothpaste, Merrin wants more for her life. She has heard rumors circulating that the Hub is beginning a new program to work with Ones. Merrin has even had a teacher, Mr. Hoffman, who claims to be prepping her for one of these jobs.

When Merrin begins to get to know Elias, she learns that he has a different opinion of the Hub and the work that is being done there. He is suspicious of the intentions of the leaders at the Hub and refuses to tell even his parents what he and Merrin can do together. Elias soon tells Merrin that he has been, and still is undergoing testing at the Hub. Elias tries to tell Merrin that the Hub is not interested in incorporating Ones, only trying to find some way to make them develop a second power, Merrin does not understand until she sees firsthand what Elias parents allow to happen to him that she realizes how evil the Hub really is.

It is on this same night that Merrin saves Elias from the testing in the Hub that she realizes that her own parents also submitted her for testing at the Hub when she was



just a baby. Merrin was part of a study on Ones to see if they could transfer powers. The study had started because when Merrin was born, her mother had begun floating in her sleep. The tests were done to determine if other Ones could transfer powers as Merrin had. Some of the children in the study had become sickened by the treatments while one in particular, Leni, transferred her power of indestructibility to Merrin's mother, who was in charge of the testing. It was because Leni trusted Merrin's mother that Merrin's mother was able to take her powers.

Trust and Love

The ability to trust and love are important personality characteristics in this novel as it is only through by having these traits that Ones are able to transfer their powers. While Fisk buries himself in looking for some chemical formula that can explain to him how Leni transferred her powers to Mrs. Grey years before, Merrin knows almost immediately that trust and love is a big factor in the equation. She recognizes this when she sees the way that Leni loved and trusted her mother. Because of this love and trust, Leni unwittingly transferred her power regeneration to Merrin's mother. After her original transfer of her floating abilities to her mother the day she came home from the hospital as a newborn, Merrin never transferred her powers again until she met Elias. She believes this is because even though she didn't understand exactly why, she knew that her mother was not worthy of her trust.

The idea that Merrin's identical twin brothers can walk on water faster together than apart strengthens the notion that there must be trust and love for the transference to take place. For those who believe the powers are amplified when the boys are together because they have the same genetic makeup, consider that Elias' sisters are fraternal twins, meaning their genetic makeup is different, but they still have this same ability to transfer and enhance the other one's powers. Even though they are not related to one another, Elias and Merrin share this same ability to transfer powers. It is important to note that when experimenters at the lab found another One who could levitate and tried to put him and Elias together, the two could not replicate the same ability to fly as Merrin and Elias. The missing element in their relationship seems to be the trust and love that the others who are able to transfer powers have.

Styles

Point of View

The story is told from the first person point of view of Merrin, the heroine of the novel. Merrin's point of view is important, as it is she who is coming to the discovery that the Biotech Hub, at which she has always dreamed of working, is not what she had thought. Without having this firsthand view into the changes in Merrin's thoughts, emotions and opinions, the reader would not have a full appreciation of how much Merrin has changed.

The story is told through a combination of exposition and dialogue. The majority of the conversations take place between Merrin and Elias as they get to know one another and learn their individual experiences with being Ones. Merrin does not have much interaction with her father and even less with her mother. Because Merrin trusts people so little, the only way to truly tell her story is to tell it from her viewpoint. Although Elias could tell the story, he would not understand the full extent to which Merrin feels embarrassed because she is a One and her feeling that working at the Biotech Hub is her only plan of salvation.

Language and Meaning

The language of the novel is relatively easy to understand even though it does deal with some scientific principles. The writer refers to epigenetics, and adaptation of genes and DNA. Even if the reader doesn't have much background in these aspects of science and biology, they can still easily follow the novel as the topics are clearly illustrated by what happens to Merrin and Elias. The language used doesn't really help to differentiate between characters as they all use the same speaking style. The novel is also written in a relaxed style that moves along quickly, keeping the reader engrossed in the action.

Because the novel appears to deal with a time in the future, it could in some ways be considered a science fiction novel. The everyday conveniences, like the cuffs that work as cell phones, mini computers and identification, aren't like the ones that we have. Even though the setting is a more futuristic one, it isn't so technical that it seems unrealistic. Perhaps the most unrealistic aspect of the novel is the idea of a uranium war causing mutations in people.

Structure

The book has 30 chapters, each about 13 pages long. Each chapter is notated only with a chapter number. The chapters move fairly quickly, covering a time span of several months from the beginning of school until late fall or early winter.

There are many facets to the one main plot of the novel. In order for her to completely love Elias, Merrin must learn the truth about what happened to her and her friends as children. She must also learn the real purposes behind the experimentation going on at Biotech Hub, a place she'd always dreamed of being given the opportunity to work. She learns that instead of incorporating Ones, as the company's propaganda claims, workers at the Hub have continued trying to "fix" Ones, regardless of the inhumane steps they must take to do so.

Quotes

I'm a One — a half-superpowered freak.

-- Merrin (Chapter One paragraph 3)

Importance: As Merrin is practicing her power of floating, she thinks to herself how her one power makes her a freak in both the Normal and Super worlds.

But my body whispers to me. It tells me I can fly, if only I'm brave enough, strong enough, determined enough.

-- Merrin (Chapter One paragraph 15)

Importance: Even though Merrin has not yet developed her second superpower, she keeps thinking that if she practices enough and works herself hard enough, the power will eventually develop.

The lecture doesn't include video footage of the internment camps' shoddy housing or the mothers clutching their crying babies while they waited for the food trucks. It doesn't show the Supers waiting in long lines to see doctors they didn't trust or the makeshift schoolrooms full of dirty-looking kids in clothes that didn't fit quite right.

-- Narrator (Chapter One paragraph 72)

Importance: Merrin is surprised by the way the internment camps that the first Supers were taken to are described in her history lesson at Nelson High School. The history class at Superior taught the story a different way.

That makes it — the One — kind of unstable. It could manifest any time we're freaked out, scared or depressed. That was when I first figured out that having one power was way worse than having none at all.

-- Merrin (Chapter Three paragraph 37)

Importance: In this passage, Merrin describes why having only one power is actually worse than having none at all.

But Ones, and certainly not Normals, don't work at any of the Hubs — security and all.

-- Merrin (Chapter 3 paragraph 69)

Importance: Merrin describes why it will be so difficult for her to get a job at Biotech Hub. Normals and Ones never get job there, she says.

That's part of the reason I'm here. A school full of teachers is expensive, to be sure, but impressive students like you, Merrin... Well, you thrive on individual attention. So, my entire job now is to work with you.

-- Mr. Hoffman (Chapter Four paragraph 25)



Importance: Mr. Hoffman surprises Merrin with a visit in the library one day telling her that he has been specially assigned to work with her.

You should know that this is under the radar. If the board knew we were preparing Ones to work with us... Well, let's just say they'd never let us continue.

-- Mr. Hoffman (Chapter Four paragraph 40)

Importance: Mr. Hoffman warns Merrin that if anyone finds out that he is working with her to try to get her into the Biotech internship, an end would be put to their work. He tells her that she is not to tell her parents, friends, or anyone what they are doing.

Now Leni's mouth turns down even more. 'There are other Ones, but they won't admit it. We're the only Ones we know of around here who have kept trying.

-- Narrator (Chapter Six paragraph 61)

Importance: In her group with Elias, Merrin learns that she is not the only One who is still trying to develop her second power.

Elias is meeting me where I am. He's the only person who's ever been willing to do that — able to do that. Now that he has, I'm not so sure what to make of him anymore.

-- Merrin (Chapter Seven paragraph 43)

Importance: This quote is significant because it indicates the difference in the way that Elias treats Merrin and the way others have treated her in the past. Because he is the first person to do so, however, Merrin isn't sure how to respond to him.

There's something beyond Superior and the Hub, Merrin. Someplace where no one expects anything from me. From people like us. Somewhere I could be myself, without the One and without the stupid school and basketball team. Those are just things I'm using to get by.

-- Elias (Chapter Eight paragraph 102)

Importance: Elias tells Merrin that he believes there is something beyond the life that they have always known where they are not quite good enough because they have only one superpower. He tells her that he uses his participation basketball and school just as a way to get by until he can find this place where he can be himself.

It feels so incredible to fly, but it's not okay to need him to do it.

-- Merrin (Chapter 8 paragraph 54)

Importance: After Merrin realizes that she can fly with Elias' help, she is at first thrilled that she has finally been able to achieve flight, but also upset that she has to depend upon Elias for his help.

The genetic code. And the hole sends out signals to someone whose code is close to what is supposed to be filling it. Compatible Ones. Normal people — or normal Supers, I mean — would have both the powers needed.



-- Elias (Chapter Eleven paragraph 80)

Importance: Here Elias tries to explain to Daniel and Leni how he believes that some Ones are able to combine powers to create superpower.

Elias thinks that whatever makes the powers of Ones work together forces our bodies to grow and stretch — maybe even all the way down to the genes.

-- Merrin (Chapter Twelve paragraph 2)

Importance: Merrin accepts Elias' description of why they hurt so badly and feel as if they have hangovers after they fly.

Now, instead of just floating, I drift a little, so slightly that it might be the wind.

-- Merrin (Chapter Twelve paragraph 13)

Importance: Although she has learned that she and Elias can fly together, Merrin continues to practice her One. She believes her powers may be getting stronger as she feels herself beginning to drift just a little bit, when she floats.

I want to figure out what it is about Elias and me that makes us work together, makes us absorb each other's powers so seamlessly.

-- Merrin (Chapter Twelve paragraph 77)

Importance: Now, in addition to discovering why some people with mutated genes only develop one superpower, Merrin also wants to learn how some Ones, like she and Elias, are able to use their powers in harmony.

They're the ones who started the joke a few letters back, in little writing like this, on the flipside of the paper. Barely caught it the first time. And now... this answer... I don't know. Worries me. That's all.

-- Elias (Chapter Thirteen paragraph 48)

Importance: Elias tells Merrin about a special note he's gotten on a letter from his twin sisters. Though it is a secret code shared by the three of them, he isn't sure what to make of their last response.

Elias is worried about me being at the Hub, the one place I've always wanted to go, where Mr. Hoffman thinks I belong.

-- Merrin (Chapter Thirteen paragraph 76)

Importance: As Merrin listens to Elias talk about the Hub and his fear for his sisters, she realizes that he is also concerned about her own fascination with the Hub and what takes place there.

If Elias is a mystery, so am I. And the two of us together are freaking Grand Unification Theory.

-- Merrin (Chapter Sixteen paragraph 102)

Importance: When Elias tells Merrin about the tests performed on him at the Hub because his sisters were supers and he wasn't, Merrin rationalizes that she also is a mystery because she has a similar family story. Paired with one another, Merrin and Elias make an even more compelling mystery.

Most of life isn't flying, I remind myself. Most of life is about the people you love.
-- Merrin (Chapter Seventeen paragraph 55)

Importance: As Merrin begins to grow and mature, she realizes that as much as she had always held onto the dream of being able to fly, flying is not the most important thing in life. Since she has met Elias, she realizes that having someone to love is what matters most.

I know, even though I never met his sisters before this, that there's something wrong, something off with them. Something big.
-- Merrin (Chapter Eighteen paragraph 62)

Importance: After the presentation at Biotech, Merrin realizes by Elias' actions and demeanor that his twin sisters are not acting like themselves. This is significant because Elias has been concerned about what might be happening to them at the Hub.

Mom looks up at me watchfully. I never know whether she is suspicious or worried or disappointed. All I know is that the look is always there, and it's the reason we've never been close.
-- Merrin (Chapter Twenty paragraph 18)

Importance: It isn't until later this same night that Merrin learns why her mother has always been so hesitant and worried around her. She realizes that although she was too small to realize any different, Merrin already did not trust her mother's intentions as she had Merrin tested at the Hub.

Whatever he'd been letting them do to Elias there at the Hub, they think it's working. They took him because they think they've finally made him fly.
-- Merrin (Chapter Twenty-one paragraph 31)

Importance: As Merrin tries to find Elias on the night that she gets a strange message from him, she realizes that he has been taken to the Hub for testing because Elias' father believes that the treatments being given to Elias at the Hub are making him fly. Merrin knows, however, that Elias is lying about his ability to fly in order to protect her.

All I know is that, whatever they're doing to him, his body can't take it. They think we — Ones — can do stuff we can't.
-- Merrin (Chapter Twenty-three paragraph 25)

Importance: Merrin tries to explain to Leni and Daniel why they must break into the Biotech Hub and rescue Elias.

The amazing part about all this — about you and the reason you were involved in the experiment in the first place — is that she couldn't do that until you were born. The day we brought you home from the hospital, she started floating in her sleep.

-- Merrin's father (Chapter Twenty-five paragraph 40)

Importance: After Merrin's dad runs into her in the Biotech Hub, he finally tells Merrin that her mother had begun experimenting on Ones because she had developed a new superpower the night that the family brought Merrin home from the hospital.

So, transferring means we give our power away and absorb another at the same time?

-- Merrin (Chapter Twenty-five paragraph 53)

Importance: As Merrin tries to understand what experimenters learned from testing she and her friends, she asks her father this question. It appears, however, it is only she who gave a power away and absorbed another during the time of testing. The rest of the subjects had different results.

There are so few of us Supers, Merrin, and we're just starting to gain a stronghold in this society that thought it was necessary to put us in camps ninety years ago. We have to make you better, strengthen you. Or we all weaken.

-- Julian Fisk (Chapter Twenty-seven paragraph 15)

Importance: Fisk tries to convince Merrin to work for his cause as he tells her that unless the Ones are somehow forced to develop a second superpower, the entire race will eventually weaken and give in to the people who once put them in interment camps. It is a strategy to guilt Merrin into doing as he wants her to but Merrin is intelligent enough not to fall for his story.

Maybe help me figure out what the hell to do in a room with passive parents, an evil Super mastermind, and an unconscious boyfriend. And my poor baby brothers, who should never have had anything to do with this, prepped for spinal taps.

-- Merrin (Chapter Twenty-seven paragraph 27)

Importance: As Merrin faces confrontation from Fisk, Hoffman and her parents, she moves closer to Elias, hoping that just being next to him can help her figure out some way out of the situation in which she finds herself.

I should have trusted Mom. It should have worked for me, too. But my instincts have always been pretty damn good, apparently, because I've never really trusted anyone — never transferred a thing — until I met Elias.

-- Merrin (Chapter Twenty-eight paragraph 21)

Importance: It is when Merrin hears the pain in Leni's voice when she confronts Merrin's mother about her lost power that Merrin suddenly realizes that she had reason not to trust her mother.



I'd like to think he never meant to use weird green sensory deprivation goop or throat tubes or electric sensors or sedatives or spinal taps. I'd like to think he never meant to put pieces of the poor little transferring five-year-old Ones in vials and collect them, hoping that one day all the pieces together would add up to more than the loss of his son.

-- Merrin (Chapter Twenty-eight paragraph 52)

Importance: Although Merrin has considered the idea that Fisk is completely cruel and cold-hearted, she hopes that there was a time that his testing and experiments were a way to make up for the loss of his son. She wants to believe that he had never intended to take the testing as far as he has.

That's not why I love you, you know. I don't love you because you make me fly. You make me fly because I love you.

-- Merrin (Chapter Thirty paragraph 27)

Importance: Merrin's words to Elias confirming that she loves him are some of the hardest that she has ever had to say. She realizes that one of the reasons that their powers work together is because of the feelings that they share for one another.