

# **Savvy Study Guide**

**Savvy by Ingrid Law**

(c)2015 BookRags, Inc. All rights reserved.



# Contents

[Savvy Study Guide..... 1](#)

[Contents..... 2](#)

[Plot Summary..... 3](#)

[Chapter One through Chapter Three..... 4](#)

[Chapter Four through Chapter Seven..... 7](#)

[Chapter Eight through Chapter Ten..... 10](#)

[Chapter Eleven through Chapter Thirteen..... 12](#)

[Chapter Fourteen through Chapter Seventeen..... 15](#)

[Chapter Eighteen through Chapter Twenty..... 18](#)

[Chapter Twenty One through Chapter Twenty Four..... 20](#)

[Chapter Twenty Five through Chapter Twenty Seven..... 23](#)

[Chapter Twenty Eight through Chapter Thirty One..... 26](#)

[Chapter Thirty Two through Chapter Thirty Four..... 29](#)

[Chapter Thirty Five through Chapter Thirty Seven..... 31](#)

[Characters..... 33](#)

[Objects/Places..... 38](#)

[Themes..... 40](#)

[Style..... 42](#)

[Quotes..... 44](#)

[Topics for Discussion..... 46](#)



# Plot Summary

Savvy by Ingrid Law is a touching tale of a young woman's journey to find her place in the world, along with the help of a band of misfits she never thought would stand by her side. It is a story of hope, courage, growing up, and of learning to understand that not everything, or everyone, is as they first appear.

Mississippi "Mibs" Beaumont is nearing her thirteenth birthday, and is looking forward to it. However, in the Beaumont family, the thirteenth birthday means more than just turning into a teenager, in that the Beaumont's gain their "savvy," or special power. With a mother who is perfect, a seventeen year old brother, Rocket, who controls electricity, a fourteen year old brother, Fish, who controls water, and a grandfather who can move earth, Mibs and her special family are anxious to see what her power could be. When her father falls into a coma after a horrible accident, however, the family is separated as Momma and Rocket head to Kansas to the hospital, and Mibs fears her birthday is ruined.

The local pastor's wife, Miss Rosemary Meeks, takes it upon herself to enlist the help of her fourteen year old son Will and sixteen year old daughter Bobbi to throw Mibs a birthday party. On the day of her birthday, however, Mibs believes she recognizes her savvy as the ability to awaken animals, and suddenly believes she has the power to wake her father. Once at the party, she sneaks out and onto a bus driven by Lester Swan, who she believes is heading to Kansas. Joined by Will, Fish, Bobbi, and Samson, Mibs soon realizes she has gotten the group into serious trouble. As she hears a tattoo on Bobbi, and another on Lester, begin to speak and watches them move, Mibs soon learns her savvy is really being able to make ink-based marks on skin speak. As Lester picks up Lill Kiteley, a kind woman whose car has broken down, Mibs also begins to realize their trip is becoming more and more delayed. Through their journey, however, the band of misfits slowly warm to one another, and begin to care for one another. Mibs learns that Will is really the son of his eldest brother, that Bobbi is just a tough acting girl with a big heart, and that she and Will are more than just friends. Their journey ends when the police catch up to the group, believing the children to be kidnapped. After an explanation, Lester and Lill, now a couple, are allowed to go free, and the children are finally taken to the hospital, where Mibs and the others find Poppa still in a coma. Mibs, however, on remembering Poppa's mermaid tattoo, reminds him through her that his talent, although not a full blown savvy, is to never give up. Over time, Poppa does regain consciousness, although he still has some lingering affects. Mibs learns that everyone, even "normal" people, have talents and that nothing in the world can be taken at face value. Savvy is a charming book about the power of faith, and the beauty of the human spirit. It is also the story of growing up, and of learning that everyone is special, in their own way.



# Chapter One through Chapter Three

## Chapter One through Chapter Three Summary

Savvy is the story of young Mibs Beaumont, a thirteen year old living in Kansas whose birthday brings with it a host of tragedies and celebrations that help to guide young Mibs into young adulthood. Her journey brings together a group of misfits who learn that they can depend on one another, and that everything is not always as it first appears.

In Chapter One, Mississippi "Mibs" Beaumont is waiting for her thirteenth birthday, which is due in just a few days. She and her family are given special powers at age thirteen and she is sure hers will be something outstanding. Her brother, Fish, had turned thirteen the previous year and had received the savvy of being able to control weather. His first episode had unleashed a hurricane, so the family had moved to the middle of the United States, between Nebraska and Kansas. Her grandfather, Grandpa Bomba, has the power to move and create land, and often claims to have created Idaho. Her mother's savvy is perfection, in that everything she touches is perfect. Her seventeen year old brother, Rocket, claims girls never get earth shattering savvies like his, which is the power of electricity. Her seven year old brother Samson and three year old sister Gypsy are too young to have powers. One evening at dinner, two days before Mibs' birthday, the family receives a phone call informing them that Poppa, their father, has been in a horrible car accident and is in a coma. Mibs finds herself momentarily hating her father, knowing her birthday is ruined, but she soon realizes her selfishness. Due to the stress, Fish begins a raging thunderstorm while Rocket causes all light bulbs in the house to explode.

Chapter Two finds Mibs awake at night, thinking of her mother and Rocket's upcoming trip to Salina to be with Poppa. The following morning, she helps Samson get up and get ready for school. On the bus, local girls make fun of Mibs, as they always do, and Mibs laments at how hard it is for the Beaumont's to make friends. Unable to invite anyone over because of the danger of uncontrolled savvies, the family keeps mostly to themselves. Once their savvies arrive, the Beaumont children are home schooled to avoid issues and today is the last day of Mibs' formal education. After returning home, happy to be away from the teasing girls, she finds Fish angrily washing the van of the local preacher's wife, Miss Rosemary. She has come to the Beaumont household to care for the children while their Momma is away. Samson and Mibs quietly sneak in the house hoping to avoid Rosemary, but she is in the kitchen cleaning jars no one outside the family should handle. She admonishes the children to be quiet and notes that they need a mother present.

In Chapter Three, Miss Rosemary mentions she has brought her children with her to keep Mibs and the others company. When Samson and Mibs locate the two, Bobbi, sixteen, is lamenting at how boring the house is while Will, fourteen, is reminding her to be quiet since the family has been through a tragedy. Mibs notes that Will has always been nice to the Beaumont's although everyone else seems to avoid them. Fish doesn't



like Will believing him to be "a holier than thou preacher boy", but Mibs thinks him to be kind. He claims to want to be like his father, but Mibs points out he is nothing like the Pastor. Samson quietly collects the seemingly dead turtle with which Will is toying and retreats without a word upstairs, while Will kindly lets Mibs know they are praying for her father. As he touches her shoulder gently, he lets her know Miss Rosemary has made meat loaf, and Mibs thinks to herself that meat loaf will likely not change anything.

## Chapter One through Chapter Three Analysis

In Chapter One, several of the key characters are introduced as are a few of the themes used in the novel. Mibs Beaumont and her family are clearly special as their unique powers tend to show. Fish, Rocket, and Grandpa Bomba all have their own powers that are extremely strong, which suggests Mibs' own savvy will be powerful as well. On the other hand, her mother's quiet perfection indicates Mibs may have a much tamer savvy. Regardless, her birthday is introduced as a powerful time in her life. The news that her father has been in a horrible accident suggests an even rougher birthday for poor Mibs because it is clear she now has even more with which to deal. As was suggested by the memory of her brother's own birthday, the thirteenth birthday is a frightening prospect and the knowledge that Mibs has to deal with her tragedy as well foreshadows trouble. This is compounded by Rocket's accidental power surges and Fish's rainstorms. This first chapter also helps introduce Mibs' character as she is in the beginning of the novel. Still a young girl at heart, Mibs finds herself angry at her father for spoiling her birthday. Although these feelings are quickly subdued, they show Mibs is still a young girl whose concerns are centered around herself.

Chapter Two introduces another character important in the novel, that of Samson. It is clear from this chapter that Samson is a quiet, shy, reserved individual who avoids most contact with others. Mibs, too, is quiet and reserved with others, in part because of their family secret. Although others make fun of her, she remains quiet and does not return their vicious behavior showing she is above such actions. Her thoughts, however, do show that the girls' words hurt her. The knowledge that Momma and Rocket will be away from Mibs' birthday foreshadows not only the coming of Miss Rosemary, but also the problems in upcoming chapters as Mibs struggles to control her savvy in front of others. Miss Rosemary's cleaning of the jars in the kitchen foreshadows more information about those in later chapters.

In Chapter Three, two more characters vital to the storyline are introduced, those of Will and Bobbi Meeks. It is clear from the beginning that Bobbi is a typical teenager who is bored with the world and bored in the company of those younger than she. Will, on the other hand, is highly caring and appears to genuinely feel for the Beaumonts. This, combined with Mibs feelings and comments about Will as well as his touching of her, foreshadows the knowledge that he has romantic feelings for Mibs. Additionally, Mibs' comments about Will wanting to be like his father and her feelings that he has a long way to go foreshadow the fact that Pastor Meeks is not Will's real father. The brief mention of Will's older brother and the idea that no one talks about him suggest a family

secret, revealed later. Finally, Sampson's disappearance sets the stage for his behaviors throughout the novel.



# Chapter Four through Chapter Seven

## Chapter Four through Chapter Seven Summary

In Chapter Four, Rosemary notes that she is planning a party for Mibs' birthday. Mibs and her family know this is a bad idea, but say little. Bobbi is chastised for making fun of her mother as she is told she too will attend. When Mibs tries to dissuade Rosemary by noting she has no friends, Will reminds her he is her friend, and Rosemary points out she has contacts. Mibs recalls Rocket's thirteenth birthday. He and the other children had been helping Grandma Dollop bottle sound waves, since Grandma could pull sound waves out of the air that she enjoyed, such as her favorite songs, and could put them into jars. When one wanted to listen to a song then, they simply cracked the lid. That day, Rocket was carrying jars and felt ill. Soon after, his savvy came on, which caused a blackout for several miles. Mibs just hopes no one attends her party.

Chapter Five finds Mibs waking without a noticeable savvy. As she rises, normally sound-asleep Gypsy wakes suddenly, and Mibs puts her back to bed. In the living room, Mibs is disturbed by the sound of Samson's hibernating turtle coming out of his shell, finally waking. She wonders about the significance of both events occurring on her savvy birthday. Later, as the group travels to the church for Mibs' birthday party, Mibs thinks of her father. She is wearing a yellow dress he specifically chose for her that has a large purple flower pinned to the shoulder. She thinks of how wonderful he is, even without a savvy, and how happy he had been to see her pleasure in the dress. She notes he has a tattoo of a mermaid from his navy days. At the church, Mibs is surprised at the number of people arriving for the party. Fish grabs her before she can go in and reminds her of the danger. Mibs begins to explain that she thinks her savvy is waking people up and says that she can help Poppa, but Will arrives to escort her inside. Fish's concern causes his savvy to begin small winds in the area.

In Chapter Six, Mibs and Will immediately run into girls from school who make fun of Mibs. Mibs is surprised to find that she doesn't like the way the girls ogle at Will. A sudden burst of wind causes the girls to move away and causes Fish to sneak away, afraid of losing his tentative control over his savvy. Will leads Mibs past the Pastor's office, where Pastor Meeks is arguing with someone, and then to the party room where he gives her a pen set. He then leads her to the kitchen where Bobbi and other girls are making punch. Bobbi manages a sarcastic "happy birthday," and Mibs suddenly feels very young in her dress when a sound distracts her. She seems to hear a singsong voice and cannot locate it, but when it appears in her head, it throws off her balance. She trips into Will, who upsets a tray of sandwiches. When Bobbi leans over to pick them up, Mibs notices a tattoo on her back that begins to move and speak, as it tells her Bobbi is really very lonely. Mibs faints.

Chapter Seven finds Mibs waking on a couch in Pastor Meeks' office to an argument between the Pastor and a bible delivery driver. On the other side of the room, Fish is arguing with Rosemary that Mibs doesn't need to see a doctor as winds whip through



the office. Mibs hears another argument between a Rhonda and a Carlene, but cannot seem to find the bodies to match the voices in her head. She wonders what is happening and as she tries to wake her sleeping grandfather to help Fish with his argument, she wonders why her savvy to wake people isn't working. Will peeks in the room, and Mibs chooses that moment to escape. Will touches her shoulder as he hands her the pen set she lost, and Mibs asks Will to help her.

## Chapter Four through Chapter Seven Analysis

Chapter Four introduces the idea of a birthday party for Mibs, which readers already know is a horrible idea due to her savvy arriving. However, it is clear Rosemary will not take no for an answer and is even planning to invite people Mibs would not normally encounter. Bobbi's reaction to the party serves two purposes. First, again Bobbi is shown as a snotty sixteen year old with little respect for others. Additionally, her ability to mimic her mother's voice, a talent used later in the novel, is introduced. Will's reaction to Mibs in this chapter again shows his care for her, since he claims to be her friend. Mibs does not know how to respond to Will's kindness but she does know she thinks of him fondly, introducing the idea that Mibs may have feelings for Will as well.

The story of Rocket's birthday party serves several purposes in this chapter. First, the story introduces another member of the Beaumont clan, that of Grandma Dollop. Her jars of radio waves were originally introduced as forbidden to anyone in the family in a previous chapter and are used later in the novel to play Poppa his favorite song. Additionally, the story serves to show the power that can happen on a thirteenth birthday in the Beaumont family. Readers understand how large of an experience the savvy birthday can be and how disastrous the birthday party might be. This notion is furthered by Mibs' own wish that no one attends her party.

Chapter Five introduces several of the themes used in the novel. First, it becomes clear that Mibs is beginning to place significance on coincidences occurring around her, foreshadowing her misread of her savvy later in the chapter. Secondly, Mibs' discussion of her "special occasion" dress shows she is originally very proud of the dress and very happy with it, particularly because her father purchased it. In this dialog, Mibs is clearly a pleased little girl who loves her pretty dress. This serves to counter Mibs' feelings in the next chapter as she is in contact with older, more mature girls. The brief mention of Poppa's tattoo seems trivial but is vital to the story later in the novel. When Mibs reveals what she thinks her savvy is, hope is given that Mibs can wake her father because she believes she has awakened other creatures, but one wonders whether Mibs is jumping to conclusions. Finally, Fish's continued winds show he is not scumbling his savvy well, and foreshadow his inability to do so throughout the novel.

Chapter Six further discusses some of the themes used throughout the novel. Mibs is surprised at her anger toward the girls who make fun of her, not only because of their words, but because they stare at Will. From this, one can gather that Mibs is feeling jealousy, a feeling previously unknown to her. It is clear she does not know what to make of these feelings, showing that Mibs is still a young woman whose maturity is





changing all the time. Neither a little girl or a woman, Mibs is forced to realize she is entering an age where many things will change. This concept is furthered as she loses esteem for her dress in the company of the older girls. Just a chapter ago, Mibs was so proud of her beautiful dress, but her self esteem allows this pride to crumble with the whispers of the older girls. Again, Fish's inability to scumble his savvy foreshadows a loss of control later in the novel, just as Will's gift to Mibs again shows his feelings for her. Finally, the sight of the moving tattoo confirms Mibs' savvy, although she does not yet realize the significance.

In Chapter Seven, Mibs' savvy is further displayed as she witnesses the two unknown women arguing. It is clear Fish understands that something to do with Mibs' savvy has occurred and he is trying to get her out of the situation. The scene between the Pastor and the delivery introduces Lester Swan, although his name is not yet known. However, it is clear the delivery man is meek, and non combative. The combination of this individual and the Bible Supply bus outside suggest a later link between this character and the story line. Finally, Mibs' acceptance of Will's touches and her request for him to help her escape show Mibs is beginning to be comfortable with Will, and also foreshadow the development of their relationship.



# Chapter Eight through Chapter Ten

## Chapter Eight through Chapter Ten Summary

In Chapter Eight, Mibs explains to Will that she has to get to Salina. As she leaves the church and passes the Heartland bus again, she notices an address on the side and realizes the company is located in Salina. Thinking she is in luck, she climbs aboard only to be followed by Bobbi. Her tattoo reveals she is wondering if Mibs is all right, but Bobbi herself simply asks what Mibs is up to. Will climbs aboard threatening to tell his parents about Bobbi's grades as he announces he is going with Mibs. As Bobbi declares he can't go without her, Fish also arrives and climbs aboard. As they all argue, they see Rosemary come out of the church along with the bus driver and they hide. As Mibs presses to the floor at the back of the bus, she is surprised to find Samson curled up looking at her. But as the bus pulls out onto the highway, she and the others are even more surprised as it turns the wrong direction headed away from Salina.

In Chapter Nine, Mibs ponders over Bobbi, wondering if she is really as tough as she seems since her angel tattoo speaks of her fear. Mibs worries that she is losing her mind and that the voices are symptoms of a mental disease. However, as she struggles to push the voice to the back of her head, as she does with real voices of the bullies at her school, she realizes the women from the Pastor's office are back in her head as well. Carlene and Rhonda, the voices, appear to be arguing about the deliveryman. Bobbi, bored, kicks Fish and he lets loose his savvy in response. As the winds hurl through the bus, Mibs tries to calm him, but it is Samson who, with a single touch, allows Fish to reign in his savvy. Mibs realizes the bus has stopped, and the children look up to find the deliveryman angrily staring at them from the aisle.

In Chapter Ten, as the deliveryman crosses his arms, Mibs finally sees the two tattoos she has been hearing in her head. Carlene is on the right arm and appears to be his ex-wife, while Rhonda, his mother, is on his left. The two again begin to bicker about how stupid the delivery man is. Mibs feels weak kneed, but with a touch from Samson she is able to shut out the voices. As the man demands to know why the children are on the bus, the tattoos note that he is a softy and that the kids will have him driving them anywhere. Mibs, encouraged, explains to him that they simply need a ride to Salina and that her father is there, hospitalized. Lester Swan, as the tattoos call him, gives in and sits down asking where the kids are from.

## Chapter Eight through Chapter Ten Analysis

Chapter Eight helps to develop Bobbi's character, as well as helps move the action from the church to the bus. Again, the angel tattoo on Bobbi claims Bobbi is concerned about Mibs, and that, at the end of the chapter, she is frightened. The tattoo is able to give Mibs insight into Bobbi that would otherwise be unavailable, and helps readers to see that Bobbi is really a caring, concerned sixteen year old who is simply rough on the



outside. Without this deeper knowledge, Bobbi would just seem rude. Further, this chapter shows that Will is stronger than he first appears, as he stands up to his sister. Again, the mention of the older brother appears to anger Will, foreshadowing information later in the novel that he is Will's real father. Finally, the fact that Samson is already on the bus shows again Samson's odd ability to always seem to be present wherever he is needed.

In Chapter Nine, it becomes obvious that Mibs is in denial about her true savvy. She wants so badly for her power to be helpful to her father that she ignores the clear truth that her savvy is not waking things, but is instead being able to access one's inner thoughts through any body art. Mibs' point about pushing away the voices in her head introduces another theme used through the book. Mibs has, for many years, pushed the negative words of her cruel classmates to the back of her mind. While she is now faced with even more negative voices, she still tries to push them away, showing that Mibs does not want such negativity in her life. The voices of Carlene and Rhonda are cruel in their evaluations of the delivery driver and their banter suggests the women are somehow related to him. Additionally, this chapter again shows the duality of Bobbi's personality. Her tattoo shows her to be afraid, but Mibs notes her outer toughness and her actions in kicking Fish again show her rudeness. Fish's response, a flurry of storming, again shows the power of his savvy, but also serves to introduce the knowledge that the Meeks know something is special about the Beaumonts, because they begin to realize they are responsible for strange events occurring. Samson's touch again shows him to be powerful already, in that he can help to give others strength.

Chapter Ten introduces the delivery driver, Lester Swan, in his true character. At first appearing rather threatening, it is clear from the tattoos that Lester is really a kind soul who is easily persuaded. With this knowledge, Mibs is able to talk Lester into allowing them to stay and to hitch a ride. Readers can begin to see the valuable tool of Mibs' savvy, but can also see the down side, as the two women tattoos talk mercilessly about Lester. The identity of the women is finally revealed and one can understand why their words are so harsh. Finally, this chapter again shows Samson's power as it is his touch that helps Mibs find her inner strength.



# Chapter Eleven through Chapter Thirteen

## Chapter Eleven through Chapter Thirteen Summary

In Chapter Eleven, Lester seems to enjoy having someone to talk to on his bus. Mibs and the others are surprised, however, to hear that Lester has several stops throughout Nebraska to make before he heads back to Salina. He doesn't plan to return to Salina until the following day, and the group suddenly realizes how much trouble they are really in. In Bee, Mibs wanders away from the group to escape Lester's tattoos and thinks of her own mother as she was explaining her savvy. She let Mibs know that she was not perfect, but that she simply had a knack for getting things right. She also pointed out that being perfect often meant being lonely, since no one wanted to befriend someone who had no flaws. As she walks to an abandoned house, she thinks of her father and his desire to build them all a porch swing. He takes them often to a park where the World's Largest Porch swing resides. Will arrives and asks her to explain about the storm squall on the bus. Mibs ducks the question as Will reminds her that he likes that she is different and asks why he is named Will Junior. Smiling, Will notes that perhaps the Beaumont's are not the only family with secrets. He presents Mibs again with his pen set gift, and she laments that she doesn't have paper to try it out on. When Will presents his hand to draw on, however, Mibs is shocked to find the sun she draws beginning to move and speak.

Chapter Twelve finds Mibs running back to the bus, trying to escape the words of the sun on Will's hand. She hides under the cot at the back of the bus, but as Lester, Bobbi, and Will all board the bus, she is inundated with voices. She yells over the din in her head for Will to wash his hand, as it tries to tell her that Will has a secret. As Mibs yells for Will to stay away, Fish misinterprets her fear and hits Will, believing he has hurt her in some way. Bobbi leaps at Fish scratching him as the windows on the bus blow out in a fierce wind. Rain begins to pelt the ground as Lester drags the boys off the bus. Fish, finally hearing Mibs, spits on Will's hand and wipes away the ink as the storm subsides. Mibs is grateful for her brother as she sinks to the floor of the bus already feeling tired of being a teenager.

As Lester escorts the others back onto the bus in Chapter Thirteen, Mibs finds herself sobbing, unable to stop as her grief for her father and her situation roll over her. Samson comes to her and touches her lightly on the arm. Mibs notes again that she immediately feels better and she wonders if Samson's power is an early form of his savvy or just a natural human gift. She listens to Rhonda and Carlene as they discuss Lester, and Carlene admits she threw his dog to the side of the road when it ate her shoes. Lester attempts to have Bobbi bandage the boys, but she dramatically declines, and Mibs is left to help them. Mibs admits the situation is her fault and realizes that the outcomes of choices are like savvys in that they cannot be predicted. As she goes through a first aid kit, she hears Bobbi's angel questioning if Mibs is likable or just a



freak, and Mibs finds herself responding out loud, that she isn't a freak, surprising Bobbi. As she hands a cold pack to Will and apologizes, he holds her hand noting that he isn't angry. He then says that he knows Fish is making the storms, and he suspects Mibs can read minds. He asks Mibs what it is that allows them these talents.

## Chapter Eleven through Chapter Thirteen Analysis

Chapter Eleven helps to expand the characters of Mibs' mother as well as her father. It is clear Mibs and her mother have a close relationship and that Mibs looks up to her mother. It is also apparent that her mother strives to make sure Mibs understands that no one, even her, is perfect. This theme stretches throughout the novel as Mibs' mother points out that even she can make mistakes. She also points out that having a knack for everything makes for a lonely life showing again that having a savvy can be both a blessing and a curse. Mibs' reflections on her father show him to be a caring and kind man as well. It is clear he wants what is best for his family as shown earlier in his dedication to providing a living for his family and in providing a dress for Mibs. His unfulfilled plan to build a porch swing also shows his desire to care for his family. This foreshadows his reaching this goal at the end of the novel.

This chapter also helps to develop Mibs and Will's relationship. It is now very clear that Will has strong feelings for Mibs and it is becoming clear that Mibs also has feelings for Will, although she may not fully understand them yet. Her reaction to holding his hand is innocent and sweet and it lends to the atmosphere of first loves already blossoming in the book. Will's comments about his own secrets again foreshadow knowledge about Will's family and the hint about Will's name suggests there is something not true about Pastor Meeks being his father. At the end of the chapter, Mibs' savvy is revealed in full as readers realize any ink on skin can produce a voice.

Chapter Twelve furthers several themes used in the novel. First, Fish's reaction to Mibs' fear shows his care and concern for her as her older brother. While he does not understand the situation, he immediately leaps to save her, again showing how close the Beaumont family is. Later, when he realizes her dismay is not at Will but at his hand, Fish immediately takes care of the situation. This same level of familial concern is shared by Bobbi, who leaps to her brother's defense when Fish attacks. Additionally, Fish's strong reaction again produces his savvy; only this time, it is obvious to anyone watching that the Beaumont's are responsible. This foreshadows the Meeks' realization about the powers of the Beaumont's and foreshadows conflicts about these powers. Finally, Mibs' realization that her teenage years are not off to a good start mimics the feelings of most ordinary teenage girls and strengthens the idea that Mibs really isn't all that different from anyone else.

In Chapter Thirteen, Mibs finally grieves for her father and allows herself to cry. This shows her emotional vulnerability and points her out to be the scared young woman she is. It is again Samson who provides strength and this leads Mibs to surmise that his savvy is early. However, her point that Samson may just possess the natural human power of care shows again that all people have a talent of a sort and that even "normal"



people can achieve greatness. This chapter also helps further the personalities of Rhonda and Carlene, as they are again heard bad mouthing Lester, and helps show Will again as a caring individual. He is able to forgive Mibs immediately, but only seeks the truth about her situation. When Mibs unwittingly reveals she can hear Bobbi's thoughts, Will takes note as does Bobbi. At this point, there can be no question that the Meeks understand there is something different about the Beaumonts. This, combined with Will's clear care for Mibs, foreshadows their acceptance of the Beaumont's powers over the course of the book.



# Chapter Fourteen through Chapter Seventeen

## Chapter Fourteen through Chapter Seventeen Summary

Mibs asks herself in Chapter Fourteen what makes the Beaumont's special. She remembers her grandfather explaining that their talents were genetically inherited, like having brown eyes or long toes. She also recalls her mother noting that even normal people had hidden talent, but few recognized it. She begins to explain this to Will, but Fish interrupts, because they are never supposed to tell anyone of their talents except family and those who will become family. Mibs recalls the story of her parents' meeting at a carnival and how her father immediately took a liking to Momma. When they were to be married, Poppa learned about savvies, as Grandpa made them six acres of land on which to live. Lost in memory, Mibs is nearly thrown from her feet as the bus comes to a quick stop and Lester walks off the bus.

In Chapter Fifteen, the kids look out to find Lester helping a tall, larger woman with her stalled vehicle. The two board the bus and the woman is introduced as Lill Kiteley, whom Lester has agreed to drive to her job in Emerald. When asked, Mibs quickly notes that Lester is not their father, but simply a family friend who is driving them to Salina to see their ill father. It is clear, after some faulty introductions by Lester, that Lill is unconvinced of the story. She notices the bruises and the scratches on Will, as well as the broken windows, and asks if this is a bus for bad kids. When Bobbi claims it is the bus for misfits, Lill says she will fit right in.

In Chapter Sixteen, Mibs notes that everyone immediately likes Lill, seeing her as a mother figure. She finds herself confiding in Lill about her father and recalling specific memories that are humorous or that show his care for her. When she notes that she needs to go wake him up, she can tell that Lill is worried about her having her hopes too high. When Lill compliments the dress, Mibs is self-conscious recalling how the girls at the church laughed and she feels she is letting her father down. Lill, however, tells Mibs that even she is intimidated by girls like Bobbi, but she also notes that sixteen is a rough age. Lill also comments that Will is quite the catch, and when Mibs stammeringly protests that they are not together, Lill points out that Will is sweet on her, but also reminds her that she has plenty of time for boys and to take things slowly.

In Chapter Seventeen, Samson appears, surprising Lill. He notes to his sister and brother that he is hungry, and Lill is shocked to learn the kids have not eaten. She points out it is long past dinner time. She has a talent, she says, for being late, but she also promises to help the kids with supper when they reach the diner. Samson comes out of his shell to ask if she has banana cream pie surprising the group. They arrive at the diner and walk through a dirty alley to reach the establishment. Mibs is startled by a hand sticking out from under a pile of old clothing next to a dumpster and she and Will





lag behind the group to check on the homeless man. As Will tries to pull her away, noticing the man has passed out, Mibs can think only of her father and pulls from Will's grasp. Mibs, still believing her savvy is to wake things up, tries desperately to wake the man up but fails. However, the man's tattoo does begin to speak, sorrowful and full of pain and suffering. The voice in Mibs' head asks to be left alone, and the eagle tattoo beats its wings furiously as if trying to escape. Mibs now realizes her savvy is not to wake things up but to hear inner secrets as told by the ink on a person, and she knows there is nothing she can do to help her father.

## Chapter Fourteen through Chapter Seventeen Analysis

Chapter Fourteen reiterates one of the problems with having a savvy, that of the inability to get close to others. It is clear Mibs wants to tell Will and that she has feelings for him that drive her desire to be honest. On the other hand, Mibs also knows that the family requires her to be quiet for their own safety. This inability to tell others results in a lack of ability to have close friends as Fish already knows. Her memories of her grandfather's words show that a savvy is just a special kind of inheritance, while her mother's comments remind that all people have hidden talent, but most refuse to recognize it. This theme runs throughout the novel as several "normal" characters such as Lill, Lester, and Poppa all show that their own talents are just as, if not more, useful than many savvies. The memories of Poppa tie into this theme as do the final chapters, as Mibs notes Poppa's savvy to never give up, foreshadowing his fight for consciousness later in the novel.

Chapter Fifteen is short, but introduces the character of Lill Kiteley. Lill is a larger woman, with a kind outlook and a loving nature. Lill quickly becomes a mother figure to those on the bus, but her initial mistrust of the kids and their wild story foreshadows her finding out about their ruse later in the novel. From the beginning, it is apparent that Lester has a liking for Lill, foreshadowing their eventual romantic involvement. At the end of the chapter, Bobbi's comment that the bus is for misfits and Lill's response that she fits in suggests a strengthening of the bond that is beginning to form between this unlikely group of characters.

In Chapter Sixteen, the theme of Mibs' position between girlhood and womanhood is again discussed. Mibs finds in Lill a woman to whom she can talk about her feelings, and Lill is a wonderful listener. Her reactions to Mibs' story show she is a caring, kind woman, but they also show she is highly concerned about Mibs' hopes. This dialog also shows that Mibs is still in denial about her real savvy, foreshadowing the realization of her error in the next chapter. Additionally, the dialog with Lill about Mibs' dress shows again that Mibs is caught between feeling like a little girl and feeling like a young woman. She is intimidated by girls like Bobbi, but Lill's comments about her own insecurities around Bobbi show that Mibs' feelings are not restricted to being a little girl. Her insecurities are okay, Lill reminds her, but she also helps boost Mibs' esteem by pointing out Will's obvious attraction to her. She is able to help Mibs see that her position in between girlhood and womanhood is normal and that her feelings are





normal, as well. She allows Mibs to relax and gives her the permission she feels she needs to take things a little slower.

In Chapter Seventeen, Samson's reaction to Lill shows several things. First, it is clear that Samson, who trusts no one, is comfortable with Lill, which adds to the idea that Lill is a good person. Secondly, his reaction shows that, despite his appearance and actions, Samson is still a small boy who needs the feeling of protection and security from parent-like adults. It is a reminder to the reader that as adult as these children seem, they really are still children. This is shown again in the fact that they have not yet eaten and have no real way to obtain food. Lill's commitment to helping them find a meal foreshadows the events in the upcoming chapters.

Mibs' experience with the homeless man is heart-wrenching for several reasons. First, Mibs' desperate attempts to wake the man, as a result of her father's own coma, show she is determined to be able to help her father when the time comes. When it doesn't work, however, and Mibs is left to realize she has led the group thus far on a wrong assumption, the reader can feel Mibs' deep disappointment. In addition, the ability for Mibs to hear the thoughts of the homeless man, as well as the frantic attempts by the eagle tattoo to escape, show his own deep level of despair and anguish, which is something no one can fix. Mibs is left with a hollow feeling, as is the reader. This scene does forecast Mibs' ability to use these secrets to help others as is seen in upcoming chapters.



# Chapter Eighteen through Chapter Twenty

## Chapter Eighteen through Chapter Twenty Summary

In Chapter Eighteen, Will manages to pull Mibs away from the homeless man, and the group enters the diner that is full of truckers and bikers, many of whom have tattoos. Mibs is immediately overwhelmed and becomes dizzy, as both Fish and Will try to hold her steady. Lill takes Mibs and Fish to a back room to lie down while she goes to work. The rest remain in the diner to eat. Lill notes that Ozzie, the manager, doesn't appear to be in as Mibs notices a report on a small TV in the back room about power outages in Salina. As Fish grills Mibs about her savvy, she continues to stare at the TV noticing a phone number flashing on the screen and interviews with people who, through the bad reception, look a little like the Pastor and his wife. Mibs explains to Fish about the ink and shows him by drawing on his hand as he thinks of a number. She recites it back and suddenly hears a voice in her head asking if she can read minds. She looks up to see Bobbi in the doorway.

Chapter Nineteen finds Bobbi rushing off to tell Will the truth about the Beaumonts, just as Fish and Mibs notice the television again as it flashes their pictures across the screen with a missing children report. As Fish goes to turn off the TV, Ozzie storms in the back room pushing the kids out as he enters the diner. He begins to yell at Lill, telling her she is fired as Bobbi whispers to Will in the corner, obviously telling him the truth about Mibs. Ozzie throws money from the register at Lill claiming that should cover her final check. Lill, with no other choice, begins shamefully picking it up off the floor. Lester yells at Ozzie to show more respect as he begins helping Lill, while Samson, hiding under the counter, leans in and bites Ozzie. Pulling out a knife, Ozzie threatens Samson, but Bobbi and Will rush at him as Fish and Mibs do the same. With the addition of a wind from Fish, Ozzie falls. The group escape out the storeroom, where they grab the remaining hamburger and fry baskets. Lill apologizes about the banana cream pie, but Lester immediately stops, turns around, and goes back into the diner returning triumphantly with the pie for Samson.

In Chapter Twenty, Mibs is happy at the lack of voices outside, but as she walks past the homeless man, she can still hear his despondent cries and anguish. Realizing she has to do something, she leaves her basket of food and the purple silk flower from her dress knowing her father would understand. As the group heads towards the bus, Bobbi's tattoo begins asking repeatedly in Mibs' head if she knows what Bobbi is thinking. Mibs tries to cover up the noise in her head by humming, but when Fish finds out why, he blows winds toward Bobbi and Will. His storm increases as Bobbi becomes more defiant and pushes her back into Will. They both now know for sure that the Beaumont family is different.



## Chapter Eighteen through Chapter Twenty Analysis

Chapter Eighteen serves to foreshadow several upcoming events in the novel. As Mibs is overwhelmed by the voices in her head and the group is led to the store room, the information flashing across the little television and the similarities between the characters and people Mibs knows foreshadow the knowledge in the next chapter that the kids are now wanted by police and believed to be missing. Further, the power outages in Salina show that Rocket's savvy is still out of control, suggesting that Poppa is still gravely ill. Finally, at the end of the chapter, the knowledge that Bobbi knows of Mibs' savvy foreshadows the revelation to Will about the Beaumont family secret.

In Chapter Nineteen, several of the characters behave in a way that, when first introduced, would have been out of character. This suggests that the characters are changing as a result of their journey with one another. Lester's defense of Lill shows not only his feelings for her, but also the beginnings of a backbone. Further, his resolve at the end of the chapter to retrieve Samson's pie shows his love for the kids as well as his strong belief in right and wrong. It is clear Lester cares deeply for Lill at this point and also that he is a good person. Additionally, Bobbi and Will's protection of Samson against Ozzie shows their increasing care for their new friends, even after they are aware of their uniqueness. In addition, this chapter reveals that both Bobbi and Will now know that the Beaumonts are special.

Chapter Twenty serves two primary purposes. First, in this chapter Mibs uses her savvy to help people, although she doesn't yet realize it. Mibs knows she cannot just ignore the voice of the homeless man. She sacrifices her own food and her beloved silk flower to let the man know, when he wakes, that someone had been listening. This small gesture shows that Mibs' savvy, while not earth shattering, can be used to help others, which foreshadows the use of her savvy later in the novel to help her father. Additionally, the fact that she gives away the flower of her "special occasion" dress symbolizes her transition from girlhood to womanhood. She gives away a special piece of herself to a man she doesn't know, showing an increase in her empathy and compassion. This is a drastic change from the little girl who selfishly was angry with her father at the beginning of the novel for ruining her birthday. Again, this small gesture shows that Mibs is changing and growing. Additionally, this chapter serves to introduce the final confrontation between the Meeks and the Beaumonts. These two families are beginning to develop a friendship, but the Beaumont's previous secret has stood in the way, as has Bobbi's consistent attitude. At the end of this chapter, Bobbi's torment of Mibs through her mind forces Fish to produce his savvy as protection against his sister. Allowing the secret to be let out foreshadows the Meeks' acceptance of the Beaumont's powers in later chapters.



# Chapter Twenty One through Chapter Twenty Four

## Chapter Twenty One through Chapter Twenty Four Summary

In Chapter Twenty-One, Mibs recalls her mother explaining that to scumble a savvy, one had to be able to soften it without covering it up. As Fish's storm blows stronger in the alley, Mibs realizes what her mother was talking about. A sign comes loose in Fish's wind and flies toward Will and Bobbi. At the last second, Fish is able to control his wind, and sends the sign harmlessly to the side. Fish is now able to control his savvy. The four climb aboard the bus, friends once again. As they are back on the road, Lester laments that he must make his delivery in the morning. The kids protest, but when Lill asks if there aren't people waiting for the children, their silence suggests something is amiss. Lill demands an explanation.

Mibs explains the truth to Lill in Chapter Twenty Two, and Lill again takes control of the situation. She reports that they will find a motel, and the kids will call their parents. Then, in the morning, Lester will make his delivery and then drive them all to Salina. Mibs knows she is responsible for the situation they are in and vows to protect the adults. Mibs also notes the way Lill looks at Lester fondly and notes that you can never tell who is a hero deep inside until you get to know them. Lester finds a motel, and the kids and Lill go up to two rooms while Lester chooses to sleep on the bus. As the group passes the pool, Mibs looks to Fish, since he would normally have been nervous around so much water, but he looks calm. Lill notices the way they look at the pool, but marches them ahead. Mibs pulls the others back a bit, and explains that she has a plan to avoid having to call home.

In Chapter Twenty Three, Mibs knows her plan relies on timing. The boys are assigned to one room and the girls to the other. When Bobbi is told to call home, she slowly looks to Mibs as she dials the boys' room. Bobbi pretends to talk to her mother as Lill listens from the bathroom. She convincingly rolls her eyes as she hands Mibs the phone, noting that Miss Rosemary wants to talk to her next. She claims to be going over to see the boys as Mibs begins talking, and she notes that Rosemary wants to speak with Lill next. As Mibs acts like she is talking, she hears Bobbi pick up the phone in the boys' room. She hands the phone to Lill as Bobbi on the other end mimics her mother's voice as she has done so many times. When the call is finished, Lill remarks how strong a woman Miss Rosemary is and how grateful she is the call went so well. Although Mibs feels badly, she believes she has done the right thing.

In Chapter Twenty Four, Lill leaves to get supplies, while the kids stay in the room. Fish and Mibs show Will and Bobbi the emergency news coverage about their disappearance, and Will notes how deeply they are all in trouble. Bobbi notes that it is best they didn't call home, or Miss Rosemary would have big brother Bill and the other



state patrol coming to pick them up, and Will appears particularly concerned about his brother's response. The television report also notes that the father of some of the children is still in a coma at Salina hospital. Mibs, upset, puts her hands over her face, but hears Bobbi's voice in her head saying that it will be okay. She looks up and sees Bobbi looking at her, nodding and smiling kindly. She unplugs the television reminding everyone that it should remain off. Lill returns with an armful of supplies including snacks, tshirts, toys, games, nail polish and lip gloss, combs, underwear, toothbrushes, and other goodies, along with a new tie for Lester. She has also purchased swimming suits and encourages the kids to go swimming while she tends to Lester. Mibs thinks to herself that Lill and Lester's relationship may be one good thing that results from the mess she has gotten them into.

## Chapter Twenty One through Chapter Twenty Four Analysis

Chapter Twenty One again shows that the journey is helping the group to strengthen as characters, as Fish learns to scumble his savvy. Forced to control it or have it hurt Will and Bobbi, Fish finds he is able to reign in his power and, once he can, the ability seems permanent. Fish realizes he is now able to control his abilities using them for a purpose instead of at random. Fish's action also helps Will and Bobbi understand his power and helps them to accept the Beaumonts as they are, even with their savvy. This chapter serves to show that true friends are accepting, no matter what the situation. The end of this chapter, however, foreshadows the children's demise as they are forced to tell Lill the truth.

Chapter Twenty Two develops Lill's character further. Lill takes charge of the situation, and explains to everyone what they will do. Lester is happy to have someone else controlling the situation, and Mibs notes that while Lester's previous loves, including his mother and ex wife, seem to be controlling, Lill's method is far different. Lill is not cruel or mean or demanding, but instead simply makes decisions when others fail to do so. In turn, Mibs also notices that Lill seems to like Lester, seeing in him a hero of sorts. Mibs' point that one cannot see the talents of others from the outside goes along with the theme of hidden talents in the novel. Additionally in this chapter are more signs that the characters are growing up. Mibs takes responsibility for the adults by coming up with a plan to fool Lill. She knows the adults will pay for her bad decisions and she wants to protect them. Fish's response to the pool also shows him to be growing up, as his new found ability to scumble his savvy makes him more confident about his abilities. Finally, mention of Lill's observation that the children respond to the pool foreshadows her purchase of swimming suits in the following chapters.

Chapter Twenty Three again shows that even normal people have talents. Mibs' entire plan to fool Lill into thinking the children call home relies on Bobbi's previously mentioned abilities to mimic her mother. Her acting ability as well as her natural ability to mimic her mother fool Lill into thinking the children have called home and that Miss Rosemary is aware of the situation. Mibs' guilt at having to fool Lill shows both her feelings toward the woman as well as her own conscience. While the other children are



proud of themselves for pulling off the deed, Mibs knows she has done something to betray the trust of a woman for whom she now cares deeply.

In Chapter Twenty Four, the news broadcast serves a few purposes. First, Will and Bobbi now understand Fish and Mibs' concerns about being seen by anyone outside their group. Secondly, the mention of Poppa still being in a coma shows his condition has not improved. Third, the broadcast serves as a launching point to show Bobbi's character in a slightly new light. Until now, Bobbi has primarily been a brooding, angry sixteen year old who seems to care little for others, although her tattoo tells Mibs otherwise. In this chapter, however, readers see that Bobbi can be caring, as she attempts to soothe Mibs by consoling her telepathically. It is brief, but it does show that Bobbi cares for others. Finally, the broadcast leads to the mention of Bill, the Meeks' brother, and how worried he will be about his siblings. Will's reaction to this suggests again that there is something secretive about his and Bill's relationship.

Lill's large purchase from Mega-Mart shows her to be a proud person. Lill doesn't want to hang onto the money she was "given" by Ozzie, and instead chooses to spend all of it on things for her new companions. Lill does this, she points out, because the money was "too greasy." Lill is a proud woman and to hang onto the money was to hang on to the shame that went with it. The purchase of swimsuits shows that Lill pays attention to others, since she noticed the children staring at the pool, although she misinterpreted the reason behind their stares. Finally, Lill's purchase of the tie for Lester, along with her notes about what Lester needs, show again that Lill is romantically interested in Lester, and that in him, she sees a man who has potential for greatness.



# Chapter Twenty Five through Chapter Twenty Seven

## Chapter Twenty Five through Chapter Twenty Seven Summary

As Mibs changes into her swimming suit in Chapter Twenty-Five, she finds herself self-conscious, but Bobbi helps to fix her loose fitting suit. Mibs and Bobbi find Will and Fish already near the pool, and when Mibs asks if Will is getting in, Will calmly notes that things are good. Will grabs Mibs and pulls her into the water playfully and when she rises from under the water, Will kisses her quickly. Fish, noticing the kiss, sends a small swirl of water at Will, but Will playfully splashes a stream of water at Fish, dousing him. As the two boys begin a friendly water fight, Bobbi and Mibs retreat to the side of the pool. Bobbi explains that Will likes her, and Mibs thinks to herself that she isn't a little girl anymore. When asked, Mibs admits she might like Will in return. Bobbi, surprisingly, responds with a kind, sisterly smile, and tells Mibs to take things slowly. When Bobbi admits she wants to kiss Rocket, Mibs asks why she is in such a hurry. Pressed by Bobbi to read her mind, Mibs is forced to admit she can't, but does suggest that maybe being a pastor's daughter causes Bobbi to want to prove she isn't a goody two shoes all the time. When Mibs admits she can no longer hear Bobbi's tattoo, she is surprised to learn that the tattoo was a temporary one, but she is grateful that she can continue to learn about Bobbi through friendship instead of inner secrets.

In Chapter Twenty Six, Lill tells Mibs as she falls asleep that you can never tell when a bad situation is going to result in good things happening. She thinks of her grandmother's death, because this is the worst thing that had ever happened prior to her father's injury. At the funeral, savvies went wild in the grief of their owners, as lightening flashed, dragonflies and bumblebees swarmed, underground pipes burst, and other events started to erupt. As she lay in bed, she reminds herself that her running away was to save her father, but part of her doubts this. She thinks now maybe she was running away from her savvy, from being a teenager, from all the changes she knows are coming. The following morning, the boys retrieve breakfast from the breakfast bar. When Will lets out a belch, Mibs reminds him he said he wanted to be just like his father. Fish laughingly asks if Pastor Meeks can belch like that, and Will slyly notes he cannot. Lester arrives, wearing new clothing, and he and Lill beam at one another. Left to finally get ready, Mibs puts on lip gloss, but immediately takes it back off. As they walk, Mibs can again hear the voices of Carlene and Rhonda as they berate Lester. Mibs believes those voices are so ingrained in Lester that they are now the only voices he hears. She wonders if this is the way everyone thinks. She notices it is difficult even for her to hear her own voice among the many in her head and she finds that if she listens hard enough, Lester's voices fade whenever Lill smiles at him. Mibs looks out the window and thinks to herself that its time for Poppa to wake up.





In Chapter Twenty-Seven, Lester stops at his next delivery, given confidence by Lill. When Lester returns, beaming, he kisses Lill and announces he has sold his pink Bibles to the church as well as to the woman's group in town. Fish and Will help carry the Bibles into the church but when they return, Will announces that Lester has to make one more stop. After examining a picture of a heart on a magazine in the bus, Mibs turns to Will and explains that, while she likes him very much, she isn't quite ready for him to be kissing her. Will's face falls a bit and when he asks for his pen back, Mibs is crushed. She reaches into her pocket, near tears, and wordlessly hands him the pen feeling extremely young and hurt. Unable to look at Will, she stares out the window when she suddenly hears his voice in her head saying "I can wait" over and over. Looking at him, she sees Will has drawn a smiling sun on his hand. Out loud, he simply tells her not to worry.

## Chapter Twenty Five through Chapter Twenty Seven Analysis

Chapter Twenty Five again helps to show the development of Mibs' character as well as that of those around her. Mibs is not used to being conscious of her body, but with Will so near and with her new sense of maturity, Mibs finds herself shy. She is assisted again by Bobbi, which shows Bobbi is developing into a friend / sister of Mibs. These feelings of Mibs are further confused when she is kissed by Will and asked point blank if she has feelings for him. Mibs is beginning to see herself not as a little girl, but as a blossoming young woman. Bobbi, too, shows growth in this chapter as she not only acts as a friend to Mibs, but as she herself is able to admit that Mibs should take things more slowly than she does. Finally, Fish's new ability to scumble his savvy shows again his growth as a character, as does his ability to have a water fight with Will without anger. Fish is beginning to accept that Will is a friend and that he doesn't need to protect Mibs.

Chapter Twenty Six furthers these thoughts of Mibs as she herself begins to contemplate her running away. She is able to admit that she was afraid not only of her oncoming savvy, but of growing up. While she did initially run away to attend to her father, she now understands that she also ran away from her problems. The memories of her grandmother's funeral remind her that savvies are hard to control, particularly in grief. Further, Mibs shows she is beginning to understand the voices that are inside all of us as she questions why Lester allows his voices to be so cruel. She realizes that all people have a variety of voices in their heads, and that she herself hears normal voices in her own. She notices that Lester's voices seem to rule him, however, foreshadowing her resolve later in the novel never to let negative voices run her life. On the other hand, her application of lip gloss, and her immediate removal of it again show she teeters between womanhood and childhood. Finally, this chapter again hints at the connection between Will and his father, since his responses, when questioned, all suggest that Pastor Meeks is not Will's father.

In Chapter Twenty Seven, Mibs is able to admit to Will that she needs more time. Although she is frightened of his response, Mibs knows she is not ready to have a physical relationship with Will. She cares for him deeply, appreciates his friendship, and





knows she has feelings for him, but she also knows she simply isn't ready. Her courage to tell Will shows she is developing self worth and self esteem, and Will's acceptance of her decision as well as his own decision to wait show him to be a genuinely caring person. This chapter also advances the relationship between Lill and Lester as they kiss to celebrate Lester's Bible sale. Lester is gaining confidence as a result of Lill's belief in him, foreshadowing the emergence of Lester's own voice later in the novel.



# Chapter Twenty Eight through Chapter Thirty One

## Chapter Twenty Eight through Chapter Thirty One Summary

In Chapter Twenty Eight, the group continues to travel toward Lester's last destination. Fish rises when he smells a large body of water, but Mibs reminds him that he has his savvy scumbled. When Lester announces they are almost to Carlene's, Mibs is furious having had to listen to Carlene's voice belittle Lester the entire trip. She tells Lester that Carlene is cruel. The voices of Rhonda and Carlene become louder and more cruel until, finally, Mibs screams to stop. She frantically tells Lester to stop listening to Carlene, because she is the one who left his dog on the side of the road and she is a bad person. Lester sits quietly for a few moments. Mibs is crushed to hear the voices of the women in Lester's head get louder, since she had detected their quieting since Lill and Lester began their relationship. Finally Lester tells Lill that he only has to pay Carlene and then he is hers, if she will have him. When Lill responds that she will, Mibs is delighted to finally hear the voice of Lester as his thoughts indicate his happiness.

In Chapter Twenty Nine, the group arrives at Carlene's and find her to be a small, unattractive woman. When the bus arrives, Lester asks everyone to stay on bored, but Samson appears, having to go to the bathroom. Bobbi surprisingly offers to take him. After asking to use the bathroom and receiving a slight wave as Carlene berates Lester, Bobbi leads Samson into the trailer followed by the other children. After they use the facilities, Samson tries to hide under a table, but Mibs drags him out needing to be able to see him. Suddenly, Carlene barges into the trailer, arguing with Lester. Lester, for his part, is telling Carlene off. As Carlene begins throwing things at Lester and again berating him, Lester finally finds his voice and screams at her to shut up, that he has had it with her abuse. Suddenly, Carlene recognizes the kids as the ones on television and begins calling the police as the group runs to the bus to escape. As they drive along the highway, Mibs realizes Samson is not on the bus.

In Chapter Thirty, the group heads back to Carlene's, but Mibs can see storm clouds brewing and knows Fish is having trouble scumbling. Arriving at the trailer, Carlene notes that Samson is locked up and the police are on their way. Lester tries to demand Carlene free him, and even Lill begins to threaten, but it is Fish who eventually loses control. A wind shoves Carlene across the entryway freeing the path into the trailer. The group moves in, but cannot find Samson. Knowing they are almost out of time, Mibs realizes she just needs a pen as the first police car arrives.

In Chapter Thirty One, Mibs quickly deadbolts the door and runs to where Will is, because he still has the pen. While the other children hold Carlene to the floor of the bedroom as she violently kicks and screams, Mibs draws a happy face on the woman and immediately asks where her brother is. Mibs can hear Carlene's voice, whining that



he climbed in himself and that she just locked the panel. When Mibs asks questions about the panel, she realizes she can hear Samson in her head saying he is in the wall. Following the volume of his voice, Mibs tracks him down to a wall panel under the table. Unlocking the panel and pulling him free, Mibs sees he has doodled all over himself and realizes she can hear a melody of thoughts belonging to her brother. Just then, police kick down the door.

## Chapter Twenty Eight through Chapter Thirty One Analysis

In Chapter Twenty Eight, Mibs finally challenges the voices she hears inside Lester's head. She realizes that Lester has lived with those abusive voices his entire life and that he hears them now as his own voice. She also knows that, with the coming of Lill, those voices have become less strong, and Lester is nearly able to free himself from his derogatory thoughts. It is Mibs who tells Lester that Carlene should be given up and at first it seems Lester is unable to do so. However, with great courage, Lester looks to Lill and explains that he has to settle his debt. He takes a big leap in asking if Lill will have him and it is this leap that then allows his own voice to shine through when Lill agrees. Mibs' resolution never to let negative voices run her life is a good lesson for readers. The large body of water noted in this chapter also serves to foreshadow Fish's use of the water against Carlene and the police later in the novel.

Chapter Twenty Nine introduces the real Carlene, who is much like the voice heard throughout the book. She is ugly both inside and out and treats Lester horribly. Her temper is fierce and her inability to communicate without negativity shows her to be a weak woman. However, this chapter also shows Lester's new found strength. He is firm with Carlene and, although it is clear that he is afraid, he does finally tell her that he doesn't care about her thoughts and that he wants to move on. However, this move angers Carlene and her call to police foreshadows the groups' capture later in the novel. The scene inside the trailer, where Samson attempts to hide, foreshadows his disappearance at the end of the chapter and suggests his hiding place. The leaving of Samson is not a surprise, since throughout the novel Samson has been left alone, since he prefers to hide. However, the knowledge that police are coming, combined with the personality of Carlene, clearly push Fish to his limits as is shown by the coming storm. While Fish is able to maintain it, this foreshadows the violence of his savvy in the next few chapters.

Chapter Thirty again shows Carlene to be a cruel and mean person. It is clear she knows where Samson is and it is also clear she has locked him somewhere. Lester, now less meek, shows a lot of strength in this chapter as he attempts to force Carlene to tell him where Samson is, and Lill again shows her strength of character. However, it is only the force of Fish's savvy that allows them access into the trailer. After looking in all the possible hiding places, it becomes obvious that Carlene has locked him out of site. With the coming of police, Mibs realizes she too can use her savvy to find Samson, showing she is learning that her savvy can be a useful tool.



In Chapter Thirty-One, Mibs' savvy is shown to be particularly useful, although one could argue it has been of use throughout her journey. Mibs takes control of the situation, showing again her new found maturity, and is helped by all of her friends, showing again their connection to one another. Samson's quick thinking in doodling on himself provided Mibs with the information she needed to locate him. The police entering at the last minute foreshadows the group's apprehension, but the knowledge that Samson is safe is a relief to everyone.



# Chapter Thirty Two through Chapter Thirty Four

## Chapter Thirty Two through Chapter Thirty Four Summary

Chapter Thirty-Two finds chaos at the scene of the trailer. Police and social services arrive and the adults are taken outside. Mibs listens as Samson's thoughts, nonsensical, spill into her own head. Paramedics arrive and ask about the black eye and scratches, as all the children try to explain their stories repeatedly. Mibs knows the adults are in serious trouble and she feels responsible. Additionally, plans are being made for the Meeks' to come take the children back to their home, instead of to Salina. Depressed, Mibs suddenly notes a man who looks like Will approaching in a state police uniform. As he hugs Bobbi and then pulls Will to him, Mibs hears him whispering to Will, chastising him for trying to be like his dad. Mibs suddenly realizes Bill is not Will's brother, but his father. As Mibs tries to explain to him what has happened, she bursts into tears.

In Chapter Thirty Three, Mibs sobs and tries to answer Bill's questions. He listens as the children all explain their story and after talking outside with several officers and the hospital, Bill returns, noting that Poppa Beaumont is in grave condition and needs his family around him. He tells them no one is pressing charges against Lester or Lill. He notes that Lill and Lester will take them to Salina as he leads the way alone, since Will asks to ride with Mibs. Lill forgives the children for their lies, knowing their intentions were good. When Lester appears nervous that an armed guard is being sent with the children, Lill calms him by discussing the idea of him running his own business. As they drive to the hospital, Mibs realizes that in any situation, good and bad are mixed up together.

Chapter Thirty Four finds the children on the bus, thinking of their father. Mibs is relieved as Samson's ink is washed off, but heartbroken to be able to hear his thoughts are about being strong for their father. Mibs herself is frightened and as they near the hospital, it is clear Rocket is worried as well, since all the traffic lights are blown out. At the hospital, they are greeted by their families. The Meeks appear both angry and relieved, while the Beaumonts, including Grandpa and Gypsy, appear haggard. Rocket tries to convince them he wasn't worried but Mibs realizes now her brother's concern was not only for her father. Grandpa stands back, tears rolling down his face as he holds one of Grandma's jars close to him. When Samson asks about Poppa, Momma's smile falters as she notes it is good they are all there. Mibs notices Lill and Lester watching them happily from the bus and she hopes she will see them again one day. The group says their goodbyes, and the Beaumonts go in to find Poppa.



## Chapter Thirty Two through Chapter Thirty Four Analysis

In Chapter Thirty Two, the secret about Will is finally revealed as the man believed to be his brother turns out to be his father. As Mibs points out, it is easy to see why this relationship has been hidden, since Bill was likely very young when he fathered Will. Rosemary, being the woman she was, would never allow such a scandal, so she and the Pastor took over Will's upbringing. However, it is clear that Bill is the man Will seeks to take after and it is Bill who is the true father of Will. The arrival of Bill foreshadows his ability to handle the situation. Additionally, this chapter shows that Samson is a special person as can be seen by his thoughts that even Mibs cannot really read. Her sorrow at the end of the novel is to be expected as the last few days suddenly come crashing down around her. This again shows that Mibs teeters between adulthood and childhood.

Chapter Thirty Three serves to reveal that no charges are being pressed against Lill or Lester, and that the children are finally going to be able to see their father. However, this wonderful news is a mixed blessing in that this chapter also reveals that Poppa has not improved and he needs his family. This information seems to suggest that Poppa may not survive, and the words Fish speaks about being strong ring through the group. Will's decision to stay on the bus with his friends instead of riding with his father show his concern for Mibs and his words to her are a reminder that, as Mibs points out, there is good and bad in every situation. Mibs has learned that with every decision there are both good and bad consequences that arise. Even in the most dire situations, there is good that can come about, even if those consequences are unintentional.

In Chapter Thirty Four, Mibs is able to see some of those same unintended consequences. She witnesses first hand the damage caused by Rocket's concern, and when she is greeted by her family, she realizes that she is partly to blame for that concern. Also, Mibs realizes her mother and grandfather have been equally concerned and her guilt is almost too much to bare. She also can see the Meeks' concern and Rosemary's clear anger at the Beaumont family; again, she is forced to realize that her actions have caused a number of consequences. At the same time, as she sees Lill and Lester's happiness, she is reminded that, sometimes, those consequences can be good as well as bad. Finally, mother and Rocket's reactions when asked about Poppa show his condition is grave and again suggest that Poppa may not live.



# Chapter Thirty Five through Chapter Thirty Seven

## Chapter Thirty Five through Chapter Thirty Seven Summary

In Chapter Thirty Five, Rocket asks about Mibs' savvy, and she replies that she and the world will survive it. Momma points out that she wants to hear the whole story, but Samson asks to first see Poppa. Momma, in tears, agrees. Outside his hospital door, Momma tells the children that the doctors have said Poppa may not ever wake, but that they need to keep praying. Momma, worried about the savvies of her children, looks at each of them independently, but all assure her they will be fine.

In Chapter Thirty Six, Poppa is lying in bed in a coma with wires and tubes hung on and around him. Grandpa and Rocket open the lid to the jar he carries, and Momma and Poppa's love song drifts through the room. Mibs touches him and is reminded of the homeless man who also lay, sleeping, beyond the world. Fish asks Mibs about Miss Mermaid, the tattoo on Poppa's arm, and Mibs sadly reports that the mermaid is silent. Fish, knowing what that means, walks from the room. Momma follows, and Mibs leans in to Poppa, whispering to him that he needs to wake up. She tells him he does have a savvy which is the power to never give up. She reminds him he is special and that he too can overcome things. As Mibs closes her eyes, she hears a faint voice in her head echoing her words. She opens her eyes to see Sampson's hand on Poppa, tears flowing down his face. She hears the small voice again a little louder and watches as Miss Mermaid slowly and painfully comes to life. Mibs begins to encourage Poppa, since she knows now he can hear her. Rocket, Momma, and Grandpa all try to pull Mibs away, but she continues to yell encouragement as the voice gets louder. Rocket, upset, blows the electricity and Poppa's heart monitor suddenly flat lines. Nurses rush in but Mibs remains holding onto to Poppa tightly, screaming for him to wake up as she hears Miss Mermaid say her name. Poppa twitches and his eyes open.

Chapter Thirty Seven finds the family finally back at home, although far from back to normal. It is Mibs' fourteenth birthday, and she finally has the party she wanted. Father and she are sitting on their porch swing, built by the family under Poppa's direction. She notes that Poppa is not the same, in that he has trouble with memory and sometimes doesn't know who they are. Some days, he cannot speak. Other days, however, he is much like his old self. Rocket is preparing to move to a ranch in Wyoming in an effort to learn to scumble his savvy. Fish is able to scumble his enough to go back to school, leaving Mibs home alone in home school as she learns to better control her own savvy. Poppa often speaks to Mibs through Miss Mermaid and he asks if her boy is coming for the party, meaning Will. Poppa pretends not to like Bobbi and Will, but Mibs knows he likes that Rocket and the rest of the family have made friends who know their secret and still like them. Mibs also reveals that one day on the phone, Momma wrote a recipe on



the back of her hand, and Mibs could hear, through the words, that Momma believes she is pregnant. Mibs wishes, as she swings on the porch, that her savvy could work in reverse, so she could let the world know how happy she is. She thinks of the future and wonders what will happen in a few years when Samson receives his savvy.

## Chapter Thirty Five through Chapter Thirty Seven Analysis

In Chapter Thirty Five, it is clear that Momma and Rocket are highly worried about Poppa, as even Mibs' savvy becomes secondary. Momma worries about the savvies of her children, though, as she knows the type of dangers that grief can cause when it comes to uncontrolled savvy. The knowledge that Poppa may never wake combined with the previous knowledge throughout the book that Poppa is in bad shape suggest that Poppa may not make it. Mibs' realization that no savvy can help her father shows that even with powers, there are some circumstances that are beyond anyone's control.

Chapter Thirty Six, however, shows again that all actions have unintended consequences. At first, Mibs' reports of Miss Mermaid are frightening, because it is clear that Poppa is not even remotely conscious. His inner thoughts are completely quiet. Unlike the homeless man who was passed out but alive and thinking, Poppa is clearly not even alert unconsciously. Fish and Samson know what this means, as does Mibs, and the knowledge is enough to make Fish abandon the situation, and to make Samson cry. And yet Mibs, knowing the power of positive thinking by now, whispers to father, and it appears to be this that allows Poppa to at least marginally hear her. Combined with the power of Samson's touch, Poppa's inner strength begins to grow. Again, this shows the theme of personal talent, in that, as Mibs points out, Poppa's power is in his determination. While he does not have a savvy, he still has a talent, and it is this talent that allows him to overcome his plight. In the end, Mibs learns that she does have some power to help her father, but that the power she has is faith, both in him, and in herself.

In Chapter Thirty Seven, it is revealed that while Poppa is still alive, he is not perfect. While this ending is sad, it does lend to the idea that, as Will pointed out, things don't always turn out the way you hope. Poppa is alive and there are days where he is nearly normal, which is wonderful. His bad days are simply accepted as a price to pay for his good days. He and Mibs' relationship has deepened even further as a result of his use of Miss Mermaid to speak. By this chapter, it is clear Mibs has developed even further, since she and Will are now dating. Fish, able to control his savvy, is able to return to school, but Rocket fears his savvy. The knowledge that Momma is pregnant seems to please Mibs, but she does not allow the information gathered by her savvy to be passed to others, showing she is learning to respect that knowledge. In the end, it is clear that Mibs, along with the rest of her family, have grown as individuals and as a family, and that there is nothing but a bright future, filled with adventure, ahead of the family.





# Characters

## Mississippi (Mibs) Beaumont

Mississippi "Mibs" Beaumont is the main character in the story. As a special girl turning thirteen, Mibs has enough problems in life just being a teenage girl with a savvy, but with the added strain of her father's accident, Mibs has enough problems to make anyone depressed. Her savvy, the ability to hear tattoos speak about their owners and to speak the thoughts of the owners, seems minor, but causes her problems throughout the novel as she hears Lester berate himself, hears Bobbi's own fearful thoughts, and hears secrets she isn't supposed to know. Mibs, however, is a positive thinker and throughout the novel remains positive and bright, always searching for the good in a situation. She, like most thirteen year old girls, is plagued with occasional selfish thoughts, but these are quickly reigned in and replaced with thoughts and cares for others. When Mibs runs away from her own birthday party, she does not intend to cause problems, but instead is thinking only of saving her father. Her actions are not malicious, but are instead simply misguided as she allows her emotions to overcome her logic. It is clear Mibs cares deeply for her family, as is shown by her actions towards Fish and Samson throughout the novel, and also in her relations with her other family members. It is also clear Mibs is self conscious around other girls who may seem more "advanced" than she. Her reactions toward the teasing by classmates shows she is on the cusp of being a young woman and a girl. Her feelings towards Will strengthen this point, as she clearly likes him, but also knows she is not ready for a physical relationship as shown by her rejection of his kiss in the pool. Her concern for Lester, her care for Lill, and even her cautious care for Bobbi show that Mibs is a kind-hearted character with good intentions, and a caring heart.

## Fish Beaumont

Fish Beaumont is the fourteen year old brother of Mibs Beaumont. From the very beginning, it is clear that Fish takes on an "older brother" role in the case of his little sister. Fish, whose savvy involves controlling water, is still working on his power. Often, he is overcome with emotion and as a result, has a hard time learning to scumble, or control, his powers. As a result, throughout the novel, Fish finds himself struggling between controlling his savvy and lashing out at others for the sake of his beloved sister. His winds cause damage to churches, buses, and even endanger the lives of people he grows to care about. When a sign, blown by Fish's savvy, threatens to hurt Will and Bobbi, Fish finds he is able to control his powers for the first time. This ability soon enables him to tighten his control, and therefore allows him to better enjoy his powers without fear of unintended consequences.

While Fish also has a hard time letting Mibs learn on her own, he also is the first to try and help her solve her problems. Again, this inability to let Mibs make mistakes on her own is not presented as a control effort, but only as an overprotective brotherly trait. He



interferes when Will is clearly interested in Mibs and he stands up to Bobbi and others for Mibs, often at the expense of himself. It is only after Fish is able to see Mibs as a young woman instead of a child that he is able to let go.

## Will Meeks

Will Meeks is the fourteen year old "son" of Pastor Meeks and his wife, Rosemary. Will is a bright, caring, and confident young man who, from the beginning of the novel, treats Mibs in a way that hints at his romantic feelings for her. Will is nothing like his father and mother, and often Mibs questions his name, Will Junior, since the Pastor is not named William. While Will and Fish are the same age, they also seem to clash on many levels. It is Will who helps Mibs escape her birthday party and hide on the bus along with his sister, Bobbi. Will knows there is something unique and special about the Beaumonts, but even when Will discovers their secret powers, he does not judge them. He admits he has his own secrets, and late in the novel it is revealed that Will is really the son of the Pastor and Rosemary's oldest son, William. His relationship with his father is strong, and it helps to explain why he is so accepting of the secrets of the Beaumonts, as his own secrets are known by few. When Will kisses Mibs, she does not reject him, but does admit she isn't ready. His willingness to wait for her shows his kindness and also shows he genuinely cares for Mibs. By the end of the novel, he and Mibs are together.

## Bobbi Meeks

Bobbi Meeks is the sixteen year old daughter of Pastor Meeks and Rosemary. Bobbi is a confident, sassy, sarcastic, mouthy young woman who often comes off as abrasive and mean. When her temporary tattoo speak to Mibs, however, it reveals that inside, Bobbi is really a very lonely girl. Her thoughts are often caring and concerned, but she rarely exhibits such concern to the outside world. Although Bobbi seems pushy and angry, she clearly cares for her brother, and begins to care for her new friends. She helps Mibs with her bathing suit, and, as their adventure continues, she even confides in Mibs about Will's feelings for her as well as her own feelings for Rocket. Bobbi learns, through the novel, that she can count on her friends, and the others learn that Bobbi truly is a good person inside.

## Lill Kiteley

Lill Kiteley is a larger woman whom Lester and the kids pick up on the road, since her car has broken down. Lill is a waitress in a nearby town and she is trying desperately to get to work, so Lester offers to give her a ride. Lill is a smart woman, kind, with a natural motherly instinct. From the beginning it is clear Lill suspects something is awry with the situation on the bus, but after the children lie to her, she begins to accept their story that Lester is taking them to Salina with their parent's permission. She is kind to them, confiding in Mibs about Will's clear like for her and about Bobbi's sharp edged manner. Mibs begins to believe Lill is an angel, sent to look out for them. When Lill is fired from



her job, she decides to continue to accompany the gang. When it is revealed that the kids are on the run, Lill attempts to have them to call their parents, showing she is a good woman who believes in right and wrong. Lill provides them with clothing, food, and companionship when they desperately need a friend. In addition, Lill takes a strong liking to Lester and, by the end of the novel, she helps him to see that he is a worthy person whose past relationships have made him self-conscious and self-destructive in his thoughts.

## Lester Swan

Lester Swan is a Bible salesman who is the accidental driver of Mibs and her friends as they sneak onto his bus. Lester is a very kind-hearted man, but is also slightly slow in his thinking. While the children take advantage of this, they do not do so cruelly, but only with their own needs in mind. Lester appears happy to have their company and genuinely seems to care for the children throughout the novel. When Mibs begins hearing the tattoos on his arms speak, she realizes he is plagued by self doubt and self abuse as his tattoos, one of his mother and one of his ex-wife, constantly berate him. Mibs begins to understand that Lester's past relationships have led him to question his own worth and his own abilities. At one point, Mibs finally cannot stand it and yells to him to quit listening to the cruel voices of his past and realize they are just being hurtful. Between Mibs' comments and Lill's patient nurturing, Lester begins to see he is worth more than he believed.

## Samson Beaumont

Samson Beaumont is the seven year old brother of Mibs. Extremely quiet and soft spoken, Samson is too young to have a savvy and yet his appears to have come early. Samson is able to scumble his siblings' savvy just with a simple touch, which makes him useful to have on their journey. On the other hand, it is Samson's need for a restroom that eventually leads the group to their capture by police, but this too turns out to be a blessing since it is Will's father who comes to their rescue. Throughout the novel, Samson is found hiding under or in things, just on the edge of events, providing a constant, yet often invisible presence.

## Poppa Beaumont

Poppa Beaumont is a kind, loving father who is "normal" in comparison to his family. Poppa fell in love with his wife at a carnival and didn't know at the time she possessed a savvy. Through their marriage and the birth of his children, Poppa has had to learn to adapt to the savvies of his family members and has done so with love and genuine concern. As Mibs is turning thirteen, he himself purchases a beautiful new dress for her, knowing it was important to her. When Poppa is in an accident and ends up in a coma, the entire family is turned upside down. It is this event that prompts Mibs and her friends to hide on Lester's bus in the first place. It is Mibs who is able to speak to Poppa once



they reach the hospital, because she can communicate through the tattoo Poppa has on his arm. When Mibs convinces Poppa he does not give up and is able to convey the family's love for him, he awakens. Although he is not the same in that he has memory problems and speech problems, he is still alive and still able to enjoy his unique family. Poppa's character shows that even people without super powers do have tremendous strength, courage, and talent.

## **Momma Beaumont**

Momma Beaumont is the mother of the Beaumont clan. She herself has a savvy, that of being perfect. Her cakes, looks, cooking, knitting, and everything she does is perfect. Mibs is often in awe of her mother's talents, but her mother admits that this perfection is often more of a burden than a gift, because it makes her difficult for others to relate to. Momma is a kind and gentle mother, who helps her children learn to scumble their savvy through home schooling, knowing that the children could be dangerous in a school environment with unscumbled savvies. Her decision to only take Rocket to the hospital, she admits, was a mistake, since she understands by the end of the book that her children needed to be with the family, because their powers, particularly when concerned, are too strong to be left unattended. When Mibs points out that she is perfect, by nature, her mother argues that she can make perfect mistakes. Mibs finally understands that having a knack for perfection doesn't make everything perfect. It is also revealed at the end of the novel that Momma is pregnant again.

## **Rocket Beaumont**

Rocket Beaumont is the seventeen year old brother of Mibs. Rocket's savvy is controlling electricity, but he is having difficulty scumbling it, often with dire consequences. He often teases Mibs in the beginning of the book. However, when he goes with his mother to the hospital to see Poppa, his savvy goes berserk out of his concern for his father and for the children. He accidentally causes power surges that burst light bulbs and even knock out power for miles. By the end of the novel, Rocket realizes his own savvy is dangerous and he chooses to leave for a ranch in Wyoming, where he can use his savvy without harm. Rocket is a caring character and although he plays a minor role, his character serves to show that savvies can be extremely dangerous.

## **Miss Rosemary Meeks**

Miss Rosemary Meeks is the wife of Pastor Meeks and the grandmother of Will, although she plays the part of his mother. Rosemary is not a terrible person, as she often seems, but is instead simply an overly concerned and righteous woman who has very strict opinions about the way children should behave. Raising her son's offspring is difficult and having such a large family secret takes its toll on someone such as



Rosemary. It is clear she loves her children and cares about others, but she has a difficult time expressing those emotions.

## **Grandpa Bomba**

Grandpa Bomba is the father of Momma and the grandfather of Mibs. His savvy is the ability to move the earth and, several times in the novel, his concern for the children and for Poppa cause minor earthquakes. His talent has been useful, however, in that the family always has land to live on. Grandpa loves his family, as is shown through his tears when the children are returned as well as his reactions in the hospital. Although he plays a small role, Grandpa's character shows that family is important to the Beaumonts.

## **Bill Meeks**

Bill Meeks is a state police officer in Topeka Kansas and is the oldest son of Pastor Meeks and his wife. It is also revealed late in the novel that Bill is the father of Will. Having fathered Will at a very early age, the Pastor and his wife took over the raising of Will and kept the truth a secret to anyone outside of the family. Bill, however, clearly cares for his son as is shown when he arrives at the scene at Carlene's trailer where the children have been detained. Will takes charge of the situation, allowing Lester and Lill to go free and allowing the children to finally reach Salina. Bill's appearance in the novel shows Mibs that she is not the only person with secrets and shows that Will understands private matters more than she realized.



# Objects/Places

## Nebraska/Kansas

This area is where the Beaumonts move following Fish's first episode with his savvy, so that they can be away from water.

## Savvy

This is a unique ability the Beaumont family develops at the age of thirteen.

## Scumble

Scumbling is the ability to control a savvy. For example, Fish is able to control his storms by the end of the novel, which means he has learned to scumble his savvy.

## Salina Hope Hospital

Salina Hope Hospital is the hospital where Poppa Beaumont has been placed following the accident and is where Mibs and her friends are trying to go.

## Emerald Truck Stop Diner and Lounge

The Emerald Truck Stop Diner and Lounge is where Lill works and where the confrontation between the truck stop owner and Lill, Lester, Sampson, and the rest of the group occurs.

## Lincoln Sleepy 10

The Lincoln Sleepy 10 is the motel the group stays in on their way to see Poppa Beaumont. It is also here that the kids first learn they are wanted and where Will first kisses Mibs.

## Heartland Bible Supply Company Bus

The Heartland Bible Supply Company Bus is the bus owned by Lester that the children hide in in an effort to make it to Salina to see Poppa Beaumont.



## **Mega Mega Mart**

The Mega Mega Mart is the shopping center in which Lill shops in order to buy food, clothing, and other supplies the group needs while staying at the hotel.

## **Carlene's Trailer**

Carlene's Trailer is where Lester has to stop to pay Carlene and where the group is eventually caught, as Carlene locks Sampson up inside a secret hiding place in the wall and calls the police.

## **Uncle Autry's Ranch**

Uncle Autry's Ranch is where Rocket goes at the end of the novel to freely be able to learn to scumble his savvy.



# Themes

## Coming of Age / Emotional Growth

Coming of age is a theme used throughout the novel as the reader follows the growth of several of the characters in the novel, both in terms of their growth from children to young adults, but also their emotional growth. The primary character in the novel is Mibs Beaumont, who is turning thirteen. In the beginning of the book, Mibs is the typical twelve year old who dreams of her teenage years, but Mibs is also special in that she is to gain her special power, or savvy, on her birthday. When her father is severely injured in an accident, however, Mibs shows her age by being momentarily angry at her father. Although this is quickly overcome, it does show the natural emotional response of a child. Over the course of the novel, Mibs is forced to come to terms with her transition into young adulthood. She is faced with new, romantic feelings for her friend Will, with a sense of low self-confidence in her budding body, and even her beloved "special occasion" dress, picked out by her father, forces her to rethink her age and how she appears to others. Mibs develops, over the course of just a few days, a sense of empathy for those less fortunate than herself, as is shown when she stops to help a homeless person. She gains empathy too for Bobbi, whose own age issues keep her distanced from others. By the end of the novel, Mibs knows she is now a young woman and can admit she is changing.

Mibs is not the only character in the novel to undergo growth as a person. Fish, Mibs' older sibling, learns to control his own powers, and learns that even he cannot stop his sister from becoming her own person. In the beginning of the novel, Fish plays a protective brother role, but by the end of the novel, Fish is able to let Mibs become her own person, with her own sense of self. Bobbi, too, goes from a lonely teenage girl who pushes people away to being able to let at least some people into her life as friends. Lester Swan, originally beaten and bruised as a result of abusive past relationships, is able to put them aside and begin a new life with the positive and loving Lill, showing that even adults can experience emotional growth.

## Individual Talents

Another theme in the novel is that of the talents all people possess. Mibs and her family have unique talents that they gain on their thirteenth birthday. For some, like Mibs, these talents are quiet abilities that no one else can see. For others, like Rocket, these abilities are dangerously high profile and must be contained. In both cases, however, these talents are unique to those who have savvies. However, as Momma points out to Mibs, most regular people have their own special abilities that they often choose not to see. For example, in the case of Poppa in the story, he is a man who never gives up on his dreams. Lill has a natural caring ability with others that makes her instantly likable. In addition, she herself admits she has a knack for always being late. Bobbi, although rough around the edges, has a talent for imitating her mother's voice. It is Poppa's talent





in the end that allows him to come through his injury, as he struggles against the odds to wake from his coma. Mibs and the others in the Beaumont family have special talents, but much of the book revolves around the talents of other individuals who are equally blessed with abilities that, while not supernatural in nature, do help them achieve their goals and help others in their own lives. One of the primary points of the novel is to accept your talents and use them in a way that benefits you as well as those around you.

## Unintended Consequences

Another theme within the novel is the unintended consequences of the choices we make. Several times throughout the novel, characters make a decision about a situation, and there are unforeseen consequences of those decisions that are played out. Mibs notes that she learns, over the course of the novel, that good and bad are always tangled together and that the outcome of a choice is as hard to predict as a savvy. For example, her decision to run away from the church to find her father does lead to the meeting of Lill and Lester, who fall in love with one another. On the other hand, that same decision leads to profound worry for the Beaumonts and the Meeks. In a single decision, Mibs alters the lives of a host of individuals, completely unintentionally. This shows that all decisions should be carefully considered, not just from a personal perspective but from the perspective of others, as well.

Sometimes the consequences of decisions are completely invisible. Mibs' decision, for example, to leave her food and her flower near the homeless man in the alley by the diner may not have lasting consequences for her. However, the consequences for the homeless man may be profound. Mibs learns that these types of decisions are important, in that each move a person makes can have an effect on those around them, even if that effect cannot be seen.

# Style

## Point of View

The point of view in this novel is first person, from the viewpoint of Mibs, the main character. Since the story is about Mibs and her family and about Mibs' journey into being a teenager, this point of view is vital to the story. Without being able to know Mib's inner thoughts, the book would be unable to really show her struggle between being a child and being a young woman. Additionally, Mibs is able to report on how others feel as a result of her savvy, which makes it possible to hear and see the inner motives of other characters as well. The emotional growth of Mibs is a vital component to her development into young adulthood, and the first person view allows readers to see and be a part of this emotional development.

Mibs' character is an honest narrator, in that Mibs is shown to be a good person who cares deeply for others as her thoughts and actions display. For example, the scene with the homeless man would not have been as poignant without the reader being able to see and feel the pain Mibs experiences as a result of hearing the man's own pain. Through her savvy, Mibs is able to see and hear the pain of others, and through the first person narrative, Mibs is able to convey those feelings back to the reader. This unique ability allows the reader full access to the inner workings of all the characters in the novel.

## Setting

The novel is set in the Midwest of the United States, primarily on the border between Nebraska and Kansas. The Beaumonts live on a stretch of land that is between Nebraska and Kansas, which the family calls Nebransas or Kansaska, depending on the day. They moved to this stretch of land in the middle of nowhere in an effort to avoid problems with Fish's savvy. They originally lived on the coastline, but Fish's inability to control his water savvy left the family little choice than to move far away from large bodies of water. Now, the nearest town is just a blur in the distance, which gives the family more room to use, and hide, their savvies. Following Mibs' escape from her own birthday party, many of the events in the book take place on the road, as the gang rides with Lester Swan on his bus around parts of Kansas and Nebraska. The group travels through Bee, Emerald, Wymore, Lincoln, and Salina, all while riding on the bus owned by Lester. Their stop in Bee results in a large argument between Fish and Will, as a result of Mibs' wayward savvy. Their stop in Emerald allows Mibs to use her savvy to help a homeless man and allows the group to know for the first time they are wanted by police. In Lincoln, Mibs receives her first kiss in a hotel pool, and she and Bobbi become friends. In Wymore, Samson is lost, and the children are found by police. Throughout all of these places, however, the group remains a solid, cohesive group of friends who, at all times, care for one another and attempt to help one another.



## Language and Meaning

The language used in the novel is very easy to read, with few difficult words, since the book is written for a younger audience. The sentences are constructed very simply, without technical terms or difficult concepts. The writing flows well and uses a style one would expect listening to a group of young adults. This style adds a realistic feeling to the book, because more difficult wording would seem out of place when reading about a group of young adults. In addition, the first person view of the novel requires a younger voice, since the main character is only thirteen years of age. The language used is therefore that of a middle class, white family set in the middle of the United States. There is little slang and no hint of accents, further clarifying the setting used in the novel. There is little difference in the language used by Lester Swan, which helps to show his limited educational background. Pastor Meeks and his wife, however, have a more stiff way of speaking, which helps to show they are different than the Beaumonts, who are more down to earth.

In addition, the language of the novel relies on the emotions of Mibs, in that most of her descriptions involve how she or someone else feels. This is vital to the story, since the novel is a coming of age story, in part, because Mibs is turning thirteen. The young adults in the book are all at cross roads in their lives, and the emotional context of the novel helps to show the difficulties these individuals face. Further, the emotions of Momma, Rocket, the Meeks, and Lester and Lill are also important to the story, and the language of the text helps convey this well.

## Structure

The book is comprised of thirty seven chapters of varying lengths, although all are fairly short. Each chapter is named by number only, so no reference is given to events within the chapter. Very little time passes in the novel, so most chapters cover just a few moments or at most, hours, within a two day period. The plot of the novel is simple, and although there are certainly subplots within the novel, those are limited in scope. The novel is about a young woman named Mibs who turns thirteen and obtains her savvy, or her special power. But this happy event is blackened by an accident in which her father is severely injured. Left with her brothers Fish and Samson, and their friends Will and Bobbi, the group sets out to travel to Salina, so Mibs can help save her father. Along the way, however, Mibs realizes her fears are not just about her father, but about growing up and about becoming a young woman. She is faced with new feelings over Will, new fears about her position in the world, and new realizations about friendships, family, and life. As her journey continues, Mibs grows up tremendously over a short period and becomes a young woman. The novel's pace is quick with short chapters that often end in cliffhangers. There is little description and much dialog, so the story continues along at a pleasant pace. It is easy to read and entertaining throughout.



## Quotes

"Momma looked at Poppa's empty chair and waiting plate, then she turned to us, chin trembling, and told us about the accident on the highway. She told us how Poppa's car had gotten crunched up bad, like a pop can under a cowboy's boot, and how he'd gone and forgotten to get out before it happened, landing himself in a room and a bed at Salina Hope Hospital, where now he lay broken and asleep, not able to wake up." - Chapter 1, page 10.

"It was a good thing for Ashely and Emma that Momma kept us kids home once we had our savvy. By the end of the day, I was hoping that mine might give me the muscle to turn nasty girls into slimy green frogs or to glue their mouths shut tight with a nod of my head." - Chapter 2, pg 17.

"It was just that simple - my savvy was waking things up, just like Samson's turtle. I knew that a savvy wasn't something you could make happen for wanting, but I had proof that the means of waking up Poppa were there and wrapped up in me, ready to burst out like Rocket's sparks or Fish's wind and rain - if I could just find my way to Salina." - Chapter 5, pg 44.

"I'm not perfect Mibs. Nobody's perfect. I just have a knack for getting things right. Maybe that looks a lot like perfect sometimes. Besides...you'd be surprised at how many people dislike spending time with someone who constantly gets things right. It's not always an easy way to be." - Chapter 11, pg. 96.

"Nervously, I took his hand in mine. The blue ink flowed out smooth and easy against Will Junior's skin, and in a moment I'd drawn a smiling sun. The next moment, I jolted backward, tripping over a jutting porch plank and falling onto my tail end, as that smiling sun blinked its eyes and cleared its throat like it had just woken up." - Chapter 11, pg. 103.

"I'm not sure what it was about my shy and shadowy Samson, but his touch always made a person feel more braced up inside. It happened now and then, I knew, that some folks got their savvy early." - Chapter 13, pg. 112.

"If it hadn't been for my birthday, or the choices I made because of my birthday, things might've turned out different. I was discovering that sometimes the outcome of a choice was almost as hard to predict or to control as a new savvy." - Chapter 13, pg. 116.

"A savvy's not a sickness or a disease, Mibs," Grandpa told me. "It's not magic or sorcery either. Your savvy's in your blood. It's an inheritance, like your brown eyes or your grandma's long toes or her talent for dancing to polka music." - Chapter 14, pg. 121.

"But as I grew up, I began to understand that a savvy is just a know-how of a different sort. Some people get called whiz kid or prodigy because they can do puzzles or play



music better than anyone's supposed to, or they can recite the numbers of pi, 3.141592636...on and on for hours from memory without a hitch. There are those who can run fast and win medals, and others who can talk anyone into buying anything at all. Those things are all just a special kind of know-how." - Chapter 14, pg. 123.

"Then I removed the purple ribboned flower pinned to the shoulder of the special-occasion dress and set that down beside the burger, feeling sure that Poppa would understand. Aside from my silver pen, it was the only thing I had to give, the only way I had to show the man that I'd seen him. That I'd listened." - Chapter 20, pg. 178.

"Bobbi and Will no longer had any doubts whatsoever that the Beaumont kids were different. That the Beaumont kids were extraordinarily, freakishly not normal. But all told, when it came right down to it, Bobbi and Will realized that we were also pretty amazing." - Chapter 20, pg. 183.

"When I walked out of that church in Hebron, I was running toward Poppa, but maybe - maybe - I was running away from something else. Running away from my unexpected unwished for savvy. Running away from the fact that I was growing up and life was changing as quick and sure and electrifying and terrifying as Rocket's sparks or Fish's hurricane or even a very first kiss. These thoughts kept me wide awake late into the night." - Chapter 26, pg. 233.

"Lester let the bus idle at the side of the road for several minutes. I did everything I could to ignore Rhonda's and Carlene's raging abuse of Lester. I felt sick over his willingness to allow that kind of talk in his own head, and I vowed that I would never let Ashley Bing or Emma Flint or anybody else like them have that kind of power over me. I wouldn't let the voices of bullies or meanies or people who barely-hardly knew me work their way in to my brain and stick." - Chapter 28, pg. 256.



## Topics for Discussion

Mibs and the rest of her family are very special, in that they have unique powers that are rare, called savvys. Do you think a savvy would be a good thing to have or a bad thing? Why? What traits or abilities have you inherited from your own family? Do you consider these traits positive or negative?

Throughout the novel, Mibs mentions the voices she hears, both in her own head and in the heads of others, which she hears through their tattoos or markings on their bodies. Where do these inner voices come from? Why are they important? Are they necessarily good or bad? Why? What does Mibs mean when she says she will never let those inner voices have a power over her like Lester's has over him?

Mibs' mother notes that everyone has a talent, much like a savvy, but that most people don't see theirs. What are the talents of Lester, Lill, and Poppa? Why are these talents important? How do they help the other characters throughout the novel? What does this say about people's own abilities?

Mibs develops considerably through the story, as her two day adventure teaches her many lessons. Choose one lesson Mibs learn on her journey and explain it. What was the situation? How did Mibs learn the lesson? How does this help her to grow, as a person?

In the book, the character of Bobbi is difficult to understand, in that she is often mean and short with the group, but at other times appears less guarded and more able to have fun. Why do you think Bobbi behaves this way? What does her tattoo claim Bobbi feels inside? What does Lill tell Mibs Bobbi is struggling with? Do you agree? Why or why not? Why do you think Bobbi behaves the way she does?

When Will kisses Mibs in the pool at the hotel, it is clear she is uncomfortable, although interested. When Bobbi claims Will likes her, this becomes more apparent, as she notes that the knowledge makes her "feel too young and too old." What do you think Mibs means by this statement? How does her age cause her to feel both like a little girl and like a young woman? What happens by the end of the novel, in regard to this feeling?

Throughout the book, there are both positive and negative ramifications for the decisions people make. In some cases, those unintended consequences are good, as in the growing relationship between Lester and Lill. In other cases, those consequences are bad, such as with the worry and concern the children's disappearance causes. Mibs begins to understand this duality, as she states that good and bad are always tangled together. What do you think this concept means? How does this relate to our decision making? What should we consider when making any decision?