Monument 14 by Emmy Laybourne

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Fourteen kids ranging from ages five to seventeen take on the task of surviving while locked inside a superstore. Outside, hailstones the size of basketballs, natural disasters, and a chemical spill from the local military defense department threaten, but inside the group must face the threat of their own shortcomings.

The premise of this book is alluring: a survival tale set in what might be the best circumstances one could hope for in an apocalypse. But unlike other survival stories like the apocalyptic Life as We Knew It or the classic wilderness-survival tale Hatchet, Emmy Laybourne’s novel focuses on the social and mental aspects of survival. Laybourne’s characters are memorable, and their experiences ring true for both the ages of the survivors and the potential responses to the circumstances they find themselves in. Laybourne heightens anticipation by creating tense situations while at the same time keeping her story almost entirely contained within the four walls of the superstore. This would be a good book for reluctant readers of either gender, or for lovers of the apocalyptic/survival genres.