



2018

Charisma

Melissa Heaton

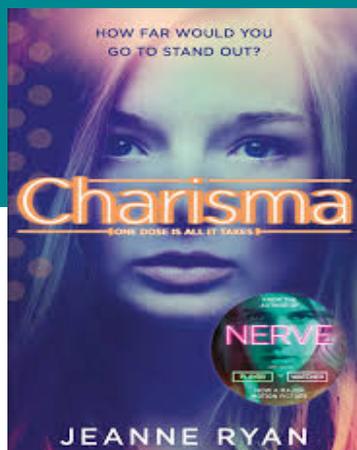
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Book Review

Charisma

Author

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Illustrator

Reviewer

Melissa Heaton

Rating

Dependable

Level

Young Adult

Pages

372

Year

2015

Publisher

Dial Books

ISBN

9780803739666

Aislyn's painfully shy tendencies seem to make everything worse in her complicated life. Aislyn's little brother suffers from Cystic Fibrosis, and her single mother works multiple jobs just to keep the family afloat. At a community event at Nova Genetics, Aislyn decides to be secretly injected with an experimental gene therapy drug called Charisma that changes her DNA to improve her weak personality. Almost suddenly, Aislyn's shyness disappears and she is charming. She is able to make friends easily and voice her opinions without cowering in a corner. Unfortunately, Aislyn and others start experiencing serious side effects. The drug backfires and becomes a deadly, contagious illness. Luckily for Aislyn, she is able to reverse the effects of the drug and survive.

Charisma focuses on the common insecurities of teenagers to belong and rise above perceived weaknesses. The saying "be careful what you wish for" is a strong theme in the novel as well as dealing with social anxiety and developing self acceptance. The plot is slow paced, at first, as the reader learns about Aislyn's crippling shyness. Wallowing in Aislyn's struggles helps the reader gain some empathy and understanding as to why she makes such a rational decision to undergo secret gene therapy. Eventually, the pace picks up once the treatment becomes deadly. The plot brings to light ethical dilemmas about controversial therapy and the associated risks. Although the novel lacks a fast paced, captivating plot, readers who like medical thrillers or science fiction will appreciate this novel.

*Contains moderate substance abuse, mild language, and mild sexual content.