



2020

Charisma

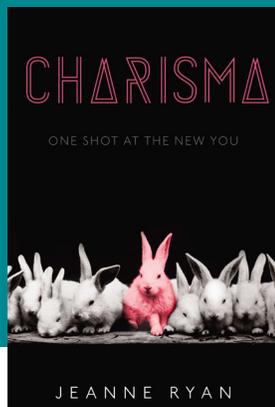
Katelyn Osborn

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Book Review

Charisma

Author

Jeanne Ryan

Reviewer

Katelyn Osborn

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Rating

Dependable

Level

Young Adult

.....

Pages

376

Year

2015

ISBN

9780803739666

Publisher

Dial Books

Aislyn is painfully shy – so shy she can't present her science fair project to the judges, enjoy parties, or talk to anyone besides her best friend Evie. Aislyn is trying her best to put herself out there, but after she completely fails her science fair presentation, has a panic attack at a party, and can't say more than a couple words to her crush, Jack, she's ready to try anything to get rid of this terrible shyness. When approached with a potential cure called CZ88 (Charisma), Aislyn says yes immediately. However, she's not the only person who accepts the Charisma, and soon Aislyn and other teens around her start to exhibit escalating symptoms that leave them in comas, or worse. She must find the cure fast, before Charisma kills any more people, or she succumbs to its effects.

Charisma is a cautionary thriller about the potential pros and cons of using gene therapy, and leaves readers racing through its pages to reach the conclusion. It is a heart-pounding look into a world very similar to ours – where gene therapy provides unlimited opportunities but can be easily misused. Anyone who's struggled with shyness will find a friend in Aislyn, as her painful symptoms clearly mirror their own. Jeanne Ryan has encapsulated the feeling of social anxiety very well, especially written in first person. It is fascinating to watch Aislyn's journey from shy to fully confident in a matter of hours, but once she has reached full confidence she starts to feel a little one-dimensional, as do many of the secondary characters. Ryan has chosen to emphasize the ethical quandaries of gene therapy instead of the science of gene therapy, which is the right choice for this genre, though it can lead to some plot questions among more scientifically-minded readers. In all, Charisma is a thriller to read, but not necessary for a book collection.

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