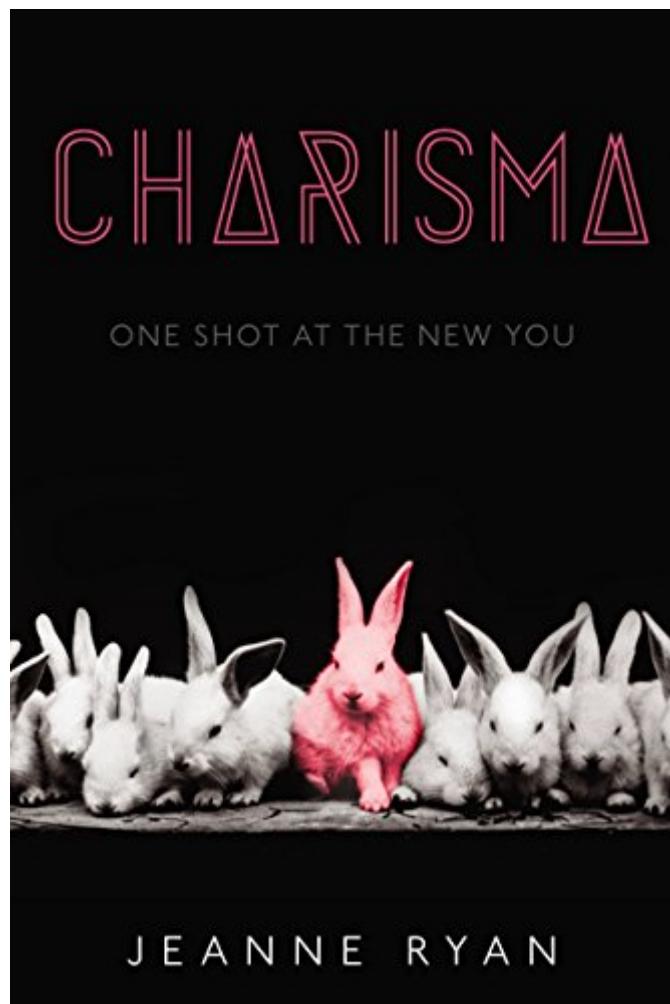


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Charisma



Synopsis

A heartwrenching thriller from the *New York Times* bestselling author of *NERVE*, the book that launched the major motion picture! Aislyn suffers from crippling shyness "that is, until she's offered a dose of Charisma, an underground gene therapy drug guaranteed to make her shine." The effects are instant. She's charming, vivacious, and popular. But strangely, so are some other kids she knows. The media goes into a frenzy when the disease turns contagious, and then deadly, and the doctor who gave it to them disappears. Aislyn must find a way to stop it, before it's too late. Part medical thriller, part social justice commentary, *Charisma* will have readers on the edge of their seats. From the Hardcover edition.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Meet Aislyn Hollings, a girl who gives the phrase "cripplingly shy" a whole new spin. She wants to speak up: at the school science fair to promote her excellent project, or at a party where a guy who's obviously into her is trying to start a conversation. But she can't--she'll have a panic attack.

Over and over, she watches her social hopes go down in flames of devastating embarrassment. Then she gets the chance of a lifetime--the opportunity to try a new, hush-hush gene therapy that will change her into the sparkling personality she's always wanted to be. Things are great at first, even when she finds out some other kids may have received the same therapy. And then some of them start to have unanticipated, and very bad, side effects. Is Aislyn next? More importantly, can she stop this before it's too late? Charisma is a thoughtful YA thriller from sophomore author Jeanne Ryan (author of *Nerve*). Most teens, and many adults, want to change something about the way they are. But now, when it seems those changes are possible, how many risks should we take, and what are good reasons for those risks? This book looks at those questions, as well as other teen themes like friendship, loyalty, and popularity. There's also some excellent handling of the fear-driven bigotry some people level at those who are sick, or just different. But just because this book has themes doesn't mean it's boring! I read *Charisma* in a couple of sittings--the plot took so many exciting turns, I couldn't wait to find out what would happen next. It's firmly in the PG category; I recommend it for any teenager curious about science and ethics, or about herself and her own personality. Five stars!

I promise no spoilers, but nevertheless must add that the novel, *Charisma*, concludes in a most satisfying manner, both from the standpoint of the story, which was compelling, as well as the science presented, which was accurate and 21st Century from page 1 to page 374 (including the Author's Note). Although the book was a "page turner," my schedule forced me to read it over a three-day span. Being written in the first person, it provided an almost chilling peek into the personality and neuroses of Aislyn the young protagonist who, to overcome her teenage anxiety, allows herself to be injected with a gene therapeutic drug that "works" essentially overnight. The state of mind (and more) into which Aislyn finds herself is both exhilarating and eye-opening (as in the "third eye" sense). Both the lead up to and aftermath of her one time dose of *Charisma* provided me with an in-depth view of a transformation that was, quite frankly, chilling. I felt Aislyn's anxieties prior to the transformation and her growing concerns after the transformation as she became increasingly concerned about some of the drug's apparent side effects. Many very real concerns about gene therapy were unveiled as well as some of its potential benefits. The writing was crisp and to the point. The story line was brisk and entertaining. No doubt, this novel will be made into a major motion picture, and I can only hope that the serious points highlighted will be dramatized without dulling the "thriller" aspect of this outstanding five star novel.

CHARISMA is a fascinating, chilling and immensely entertaining story that invites readers into a world where an untested gene therapy drug promises amazing results but unbeknownst to its recipients comes at a deadly price. It's a story that reveals a likely and not-so-far-off future where one's personality can be radically altered with a single injection. It's a thought-provoking and gripping and utterly compelling read that will have readers debating the pros and cons of the scientific advancement. When Aislyn Hollings is offered the opportunity to be a test subject for Charisma, a gene enhancement drug that is guaranteed to be life-changing, she is eager to accept. Her debilitating shyness has kept her from living the life she wants and she's desperate to be someone who is not afraid of everything and everyone all of the time. But when she starts to suspect that she's not the only one to have been given the dose, or even the first one, her enthusiasm begins to wane. That is, until she finds herself becoming more confident, taking more risks, being more social, feeling more normal. However, when some of the people she believes had their personalities altered by Charisma start getting sick and falling into comas, and the doctor who administered the dose stops responding to her texts and calls, Aislyn decides to break her silence, find out who else might be at risk, and begin a frantic search for a way to reverse the effects before the same thing that happened to them happens to her. Jeanne Ryan penned an absolutely thrilling and heartbreaking and riveting story with a heroine who is incredibly sympathetic and smart and "with the help of Charisma" determined. Her story offers food for thought about the merits of gene therapy, about the risks, about the potential for its use in non-essential treatments, about its potential for use in life-saving situations. And it does so in a way that is engaging and interesting and hugely exciting. CHARISMA is filled with twists and turns, frightening and tragic outcomes, captivating and likable characters, and appealing between-the-chapter tidbits. It is a suspenseful page-turner that combines science that is not entirely fictional, mystery and romance into a story that is positively enthralling. It is a provocative read that will prompt discussion and debate and will keep readers thinking about it long after the story's end.

I could not put CHARISMA down! I read this book in two sittings and was anticipating the end and making predictions throughout. I loved that I was wrong sometimes because of the unexpected turns the book took. Those unexpected twists made it even more enjoyable and challenged me to read carefully as the suspense built and my anticipation increased. I find gene therapy an interesting topic, especially all of the good that may come from it, but would not have time on my own to research it. Having that wrapped up in a fun novel with likable real characters made the book both a novel and a scientific journey. Thanks for another thought-provoking book, Jeanne Ryan!

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