

## BOOK CLUB DISCUSSION TOPICS

### CHAPTER 31 – CHAPTER 40

1.

Jay is injured while saving Trey's life, which results in Cato becoming the temporary leader. How does Cato feel about the newfound responsibility? How do his lab-siblings react? Does Cato seem to have the potential to be a strong leader? Was he really the best candidate, or should Jay have given the responsibility to someone else? If so, who would you suggest, and why?

2.

Cato is understandably bitter about Jay handing him the reins, only to take control back when Azar makes his appearance. Do you think Jay made the right decision stepping in during the crisis? How do you think events would have played out if he hadn't arrived? Should Jay or Cato have handled things differently than they did? Was there any other way to diffuse the situation?

3.

Azar seems to have Jay at his mercy, finally achieving his goal of capturing one of the Alpha ghosts. But at the last moment, Jay outwits him, and Azar has to face the knowledge that he was outsmarted by a teenager. How do you think this is going to impact Azar, who is used to always being in control and getting what he wants? Is he likely to change his strategy now?

4.

In Chapter 35, Cato admits to Vivian that they'd met before, although he doesn't correct her when she hypothesizes that he'd come to Phantom Heights through the Rip. Did Cato make a mistake by trusting Vivian with this information? Is she likely to keep the secret?

5.

Ero unearths information about Cato's past, including the cause of the accident that gave him his powers and how Cato managed to keep his identity a secret until he was discovered. Does Wes's version of events on Lastday match what Cato remembers? Were you surprised to learn who was responsible for the accident? Going back to Chapter 5 when Cato is studying the surface of the Dome, how does this new information change your perspective about his analysis?

6.

We see Madison once again struggle between her role as a mother and her duty as a ghost hunter: “In some ways, Madison felt she was a half-breed, too. Half-mother, half-ghost hunter. She’d never confronted kálos children before, so her ghost-hunting half had always been unrestricted, allowed to act independently and as ruthlessly as necessary. It was armor to protect the vulnerability of a mother inside. But these Alpha ghosts were different. Part of her acknowledged their deadly supernatural power, their ferocity, the danger they presented. Part of her wanted to cook them a hot meal and tell them they didn’t have to be afraid anymore. Kovak, he’d let her real son die, her own flesh and blood, and then he’d unknowingly given her seven children of kálos blood—enemy blood—to care for. She was so confused.”

How does this admission correlate to her actions when she was caring for Finn and Reese in Book 1? How do you think this will affect her relationship with the Alpha ghosts moving forward, now that she knows they’re kids?

Holly warns, “A snake will still grow up to be a snake, regardless of how you raise it. It’s best to crush the egg before the beast hatches and grows big enough to bite you and kill you.” How does Holly’s view of kálos children differ from Madison’s? How do you think Holly’s experience as a slave influenced this perspective?

7.

In Chapter 37, Wes tells Madison, “I can’t for the life of me figure out the connection between them. Project Alpha has me absolutely baffled. Eight test subjects, right? Their powers aren’t even remotely close. You’ve got low-level powers like Blinking and mind-reading, and then high-powered ones like telekinesis, and then there’s A6, whose power was supposedly off the charts. Passive, active, all over the spectrum. The only real connection between them is their youth. But why does Kovak need kids to build his weapon?”

Indeed, we’ve seen clear themes among the other AGC Projects that we know of. Theta conducts experiments on Avilésian animals. Zeta is focused on ectoplasm. Gamma breeds ghosts to study reproduction and gene manipulation. Delta, prior to being shut down, was centered around making super-soldier hybrids between kálos and nydæa. Omega dissects ghosts to study their biology.

Considering the vast differences in Divinities and power levels between the Alpha ghosts, do you have any theories as to what commonality between them might have made them prime candidates for Project Alpha? Why, if Agent Kovak hand-picked the test subjects, did he not induct any adults into the program? As Wes explained to Madison earlier, kálos powers grow and mature with age, so kids have comparably weaker powers than adults. Wouldn’t Agent Kovak have wanted more powerful test subjects to study as he constructs his ultimate weapon?

8.

After testing Shannon's DNA and confirming that she is, indeed, human, Madison tells her, "Crossing bloodlines between humans and ghosts is possible but extremely difficult. The DNA doesn't blend well, so the chances of you having mixed blood were astronomically slim." Given this information, in addition to Madison's offhand comment that "a lot of us have a diluted drop of Avilésian blood in us thanks to our ancestors interacting with creatures and spirits from the Ghost Realm," do you think there may be other half-breeds besides Cato and Axel? If so, what makes Cato and Axel so unique among other potential "mutts" with mixed blood?

Knowing that humans and kálos are (in most cases) physically compatible but that the pregnancy rate is practically nonexistent since crossing bloodlines is so difficult, how does this play a factor in the Avilésor slave trade? Reminder: Holly told Shannon back in Chapter 21 that "humans are nothing there, just things to be used—labor, sex, target practice, a punching bag—whatever the need may be."

9.

Axel proposes a rather dark theory to Cato, claiming it's possible that the Flash wasn't an accident at all. Although Cato initially denies the idea, he can't seem to stop thinking about it. Do you think Axel is completely off base, or is he onto something? Was Cato intentionally transformed into a hybrid? Or was he just in the wrong place at the wrong time?

10.

Vivian is hungry for answers, so much so that she's willing to steal the classified AGC test results from her mom to see what's inside before she returns it. And yet, she doesn't seem to find what she was looking for. Why do you think Agent Kovak censored so much of the file before sending it to Madison? What information are we privy to about Cato being admitted to Quarantine on Day 29 that Vivian doesn't know? What do you think she was looking for? What do you think Madison is looking for (and apparently unable to find as well)?