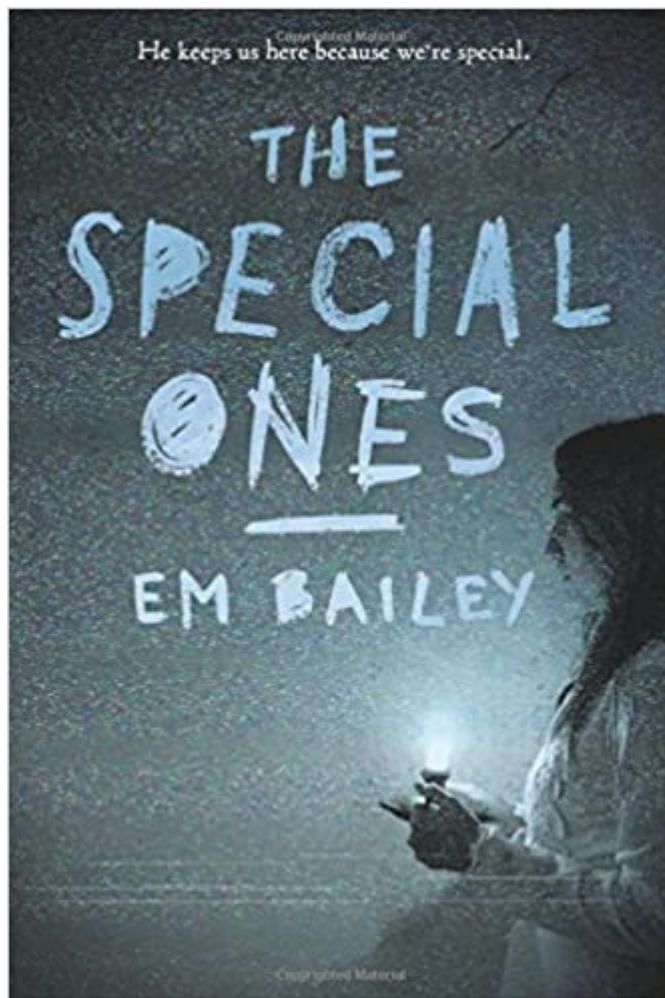


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# The Special Ones



## Synopsis

Esther is one of the Special Ones: four young spiritual guides who live in a remote farmhouse under the protection of a mysterious cult leader. He watches them around the clock, ready to punish them if they forget who they are—and all the while, broadcasting their lives to eager followers on the outside. Esther knows that if she stops being Special, he will renew her. Nobody knows what happens to the Special Ones who are taken away from the farm for renewal, but Esther fears the worst. Like an actor caught up in an endless play, she must keep up the performance if she wants to survive long enough to escape.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"This modern-day psychological thriller is as gripping and intense as Gillian Flynn's *Gone Girl* or Paula Hawkins's *The Girl on the Train*. . . . Complex characters and well-written dialogue will keep readers turning pages until the breathtaking conclusion. A must-have for YA collections, especially where thrillers are popular." —SLJ . . . "Riveting from the very first chapter, Esther's story is unpredictable and chilling, her narration viscerally revealing the quiet terrors of captivity and brainwashing. The Special Ones don't really have any special wisdom, but the characters—even him—are unforgettable. A complex, enthralling page-turner." —Kirkus, starred review . . . "taut prose, a slick story line, and more than a few startling twists will leave readers mesmerized . . . Striking, subversive, and loaded with as much heart-pounding horror as heart." —Booklist, starred review "Bailey's (Shift, rev. 5/12) latest psychological thriller features an

impressively eerie tone, goosebumps-inducing atmosphere, and genuine surprises." â "Horn Book  
". . . a deeply creepy and taut thriller . . ." â "Bulletin

Em Bailey is an Australian author of many books for children. Her first novel for young adults was *Shift*, a psychological thriller published internationally to much acclaim, which won the teens' choice Gold Inky Award and was selected as a Notable Book by the Children's Book Council of Australia. Em Bailey lives in Germany with her partner and daughter.

This book gets a 3-star rating as an average between the brilliant 5-star tense awesome well-written first half, and the clunky eye-rolling generic 2-star second half (two stars because I liked what the author was TRYING to do, even though she failed at doing it well for me). First half: a wonderful gradual creepy introduction into the life of the Special Ones. It was SO WELL DONE. I loved it. It supports and subverts every expectation you have while making the characters so human you can't help but worry about them. The second half: well, avoiding spoilers makes this tough, but... everything changes. The tone, the flow, the vibe, everything. I can't understand why the magic of the first part of the book couldn't continue into the second. To go from eager page-turning to frustrated eye-rolling in the span of a few pages is impressive, but not in the good way.

Well, this one was a very weird read. And by weird I mean that I absolutely loved the first half of this book and if it had continued that way, I would have rated it four or five stars. Unfortunately, the second half of this book was just not good at all that it soured the entire reading experience for me. The Good: Again, the first half of *The Special Ones* is brilliant. It's dark, creepy, engaging, and everything you want a YA mystery book to be. Esther, Harry, and Felicity were all so interesting and I was captivated by their lives in the farmhouse. I also loved how Lucille's presence seemed to throw a wrench into it all. The Bad: The second half of *The Special Ones* is terrible. It becomes generic, implausible, and basically the entire reason I hesitate to pick up YA mysteries. I didn't like having chapters narrated by the cult leader. I wouldn't have minded aftermath chapters, but the ones we got just weren't good. If it would have focused on Esther, maybe I would have enjoyed it more, but learning about Him or rather the botched story of Him we got, wasn't all that interesting. In the end, I don't think that I can recommend *The Special Ones*. The second half just ruined the entire book for me. If you do decide to pick it up and love the first half, be aware that there's an entire shift change in the second half that might ruin it for you.

This is such a creepily weird and interesting book. Now, I liked the first half much better than the second half, but even that half kept me reading. I needed to know what would happen and how it all would end. I may not have loved how it ended, but I was still pretty satisfied. As for that first half - wow! The book simply doesn't go where you would expect it to - at all. I really went into this thinking it was just another 'girl in a cult who discovers the outside world isn't what she expected book'. I won't give you spoilers. I'll just say it isn't that at all. Every time I \*knew\* what was going to happen, I was wrong. I'm very interested in seeing what the author is going to do next. This was a welcome surprise!

The Special Ones  
Em Bailey  
This is a very difficult book to review but I will give it a try. I do not want to give away too much and ruin the book for other readers. Esther and *Heavenly Creatures* are at the center of this terrifying tale. There are several secondary characters: Lucille, Felicity, Harry, Esther's mother and father and a few other minor characters. The secondary characters play a pivotal role in this tale. Esther, Harry, Lucille and Felicity live on the farm where they are protected by *Heavenly Creatures*. They are considered the Special Ones. The Special Ones are immortal through renewal. There are cameras throughout the farm and *Heavenly Creatures* watches them day and night. They have rigid rules to live by and a simple mistake can mean punishment or renewal. The Special Ones have a following. People contact them through a chat session and ask for advice. Each of the Special Ones are frightened and know they must play their role carefully. This is a psychological thriller; it reminds me of *Room*. The first half of this tale deals with life on the farm. It won't take long for the reader to discover the Special Ones are all abductees. They are forced to live on the farm and living the role they have been abducted to play. Their spirit and their mind is broken until they willingly or fearfully go along with the charade. *Heavenly Creatures* is the manipulator. The second half of this tale is very different. The writing in the first half is brilliant. The writing in the second half has a different quality. It is still good but I would almost swear that it was written by a different person. The hunt is on to find *Heavenly Creatures*. A secret concerning Esther is revealed. Esther is determined to find all the abductees but can she stay out of *His* clutches long enough to maintain her goal. The media plays a large part in the second part of this book, like vultures devouring road kill. This is a very dark book filled with violent scenes. The author successfully addresses several important topics such as how we treat teenage girls and how the media treats survivors. I think the media is what upset me the most, their treatment of the victim was unforgivable. Sometimes it seems that anything goes if it gets ratings. I do not think this book is appropriate for young adults under sixteen.

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