



RICK RIORDAN PRESENTS

# THE LAST FALLEN STAR

A GIFTED CLANS SERIES  
GRACI KIM

## THE LAST FALLEN MOON

Disney • HYPERION

EDUCATOR'S GUIDE

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# ABOUT THE BOOK

## *THE LAST FALLEN STAR*

**Riley Oh** can't wait to see her sister get initiated into the Gom clan, a powerful lineage of Korean healing witches their family has belonged to for generations. Her sister, Hattie, will earn her Gi bracelet and finally be able to cast spells without adult supervision. Although Riley is desperate to follow in her sister's footsteps when she herself turns thirteen, she's a saram—a person without magic. Riley was adopted, and despite having memorized every healing spell she's ever heard, she often feels like the odd one out in her family and the gifted community.

Then Hattie gets an idea: What if the two of them could cast a spell that would allow Riley to share Hattie's magic? Their sleuthing reveals a promising incantation in the family's old spellbook, and the sisters decide to perform it at Hattie's initiation ceremony. If it works, no one will ever treat Riley as an outsider again. It's a perfect plan!

Until it isn't. When the sisters attempt to violate the laws of the Godrealm, Hattie's life ends up hanging in the balance, and to save her, Riley has to fulfill an impossible task: find the last fallen star. But what even is the star, and how can she find it? As Riley embarks on her search, she finds herself meeting fantastic creatures and collaborating with her worst enemies. And when she uncovers secrets that challenge everything she has been taught to believe, Riley must decide what it means to be a witch, what it means to be family, and what it really means to belong.

## PRE-READING QUESTION

*Yet another day in the life of Riley Oh—the wannabe witch living in an exclusive gifted world. (p. 4)*

The story begins with an introduction to our heroine Riley Oh, an ordinary “saram” living among magical and glamorous beings. Although she has a loving and accepting family, Riley's sense of rejection and feeling of otherness has formed much of her identity and self-worth.

**How can these feelings influence one's direction and purpose in life? Riley imagines that magic will allow her to feel acceptance and self-worth. Will magic truly empower her, or does she need to discover her true self to feel complete?**



# DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. *I was adopted. And don't get me wrong. My parents try super hard to make me feel part of the gifted community, and I love them so much for it. But the truth is, the harder they try, the more I realize how much of an outsider I really am. I'm different.* (p. 1–2)

Riley Oh, the protagonist, feels so much like an outsider. She admits that it's not because her family makes her feel this way; they love her very much. Where do you think these feelings of being “other” and even “inferior” are coming from?

2. *People don't like what they can't understand. It scares them, and scared people do foolish things. I guess that makes sense.* (p. 3)

Do you think that Riley is speaking about herself? Is it possible that the other witches don't “understand” Rye because she is a saram? Or is she intimidated by the gifted community because she can't quite understand what it's like to have magical powers?

3. *I'm basically really talented at crying. . . . It's yet another piece of evidence that I'm not a true Oh. That I'm weak and don't belong.* (p. 6)

Throughout the book, Rye tries very hard to contain her emotions, to hold back tears and to not look “weak.” Do you think this is helpful or hurtful as she tries to process her feelings and various events in her life?

4. *I stick my hand in my pocket and squeeze my onyx stone to calm my nerves. It's shaped like a curved teardrop, and it's the only thing my biological parents left me.* (p. 7)

Rye likes to hold her onyx stone because it reminds her that she comes from somewhere. Without so much as a photograph of her biological parents, how difficult do you think it might be for Rye to imagine where she comes from and what her heritage might be?

5. *Could I actually become a healing witch—a real Gom? Could this be my chance to do my parents proud and prove to the gifted community that I belong?* (p. 11)

This gives us insight into how Rye feels she can “redeem” herself, but it also reveals that she doesn't think her parents are proud of her for who she is, or that she belongs to her community. Is it a good idea to try to “prove” ourselves to others? What pitfalls can we run into if we try to gain other people's approval?

6. *The ring used to be his mom's wedding band before it was refashioned for Emmett. He once told me, in a rare moment of candor, that the ring was special to him because it represented his parents' love—and their love created him.* (p. 79)

Emmett's willingness to lend Riley his mom's ring shows his deep feelings for his friend Rye. Why is this gesture even more symbolic, given Emmett's personality?

7. *“Sometimes putting a thing in plain sight is the best hiding place of all.”* (p. 81)

Noah says this of the Joseon Chalice, a six-hundred-year-old artifact that has been housed in his father’s Taegwondo dojang. How does this foreshadow the events to come?

8. *[S]ometimes the sky makes me feel a bit . . . well, sad. Like when you forget something you know was important, but no matter how hard you try, you can’t remember it.* (p. 88)

What was Rye looking at when she thought this and why is it significant?

9. *“We can solve this on our own. My parents have enough on their plates as it is. I got us into this mess, and I will get us out. I can do this. I will do this.”* (p. 99)

Why do you think Rye insists on saving Hattie on her own when she is clearly in over her head?

10. *“There is light within us all, as there is darkness within us all. These two absolutes make us whole. This is the way of the universe.”* (p. 108)

How has this proved to be true thus far in the story? Does this seem to be true for Rye as well?

11. *I feel a small flower of pride bloom in my chest as I show Emmett this part of my world. I want him to know how amazing it is, to understand why it’s so important for me to be accepted here.* (p. 115)

Emmett is on the journey with Rye to find the last fallen star and save Hattie’s life. He is part saram, just like Rye, but doesn’t belong to the same community. Why is it important for Emmett to see exactly why Rye wants to be accepted by the clans?

12. *I grew up thinking I didn’t have a drop of magic in my blood. Now I found out there’s a way I could control the thing I’ve always been ashamed of. No, not just control—master.* (p. 173)

Why does Rye find herself blown away by what the Horangi tell her? Why does this bring her so much hope?

13. *“The five sacred elements are all around us. The Earth was made by Mago Halmi herself, and we were all created in her image, which means we and the elements are all divine in our own right. We don’t need the Godrealm to access our gifts. Magic is inside each of us.”* (p. 173)

Is Rye inspired by what Taeyo tells her? Why does Rye have such a sudden and strong reaction?

14. *“You’re just as bad as them. Power-hungry and magic-obsessed, using your loved ones for your own gain.”* (p. 181)

Why do Emmett’s words cut through Rye’s heart?

15. Why does Rye believe that finding and destroying the last artifact is the perfect solution? (p. 183)



16. Taeyo lost his parents in the conflict, just like Rye and Emmett. How does he want their legacy to live on through him? (p. 191)

17. Why does Rye think that Taeyo is a healer in his own right? (p. 199)

18. *But, as I clutch Hattie's heart vial to my chest, I realize I've come a long way from being the frightened, hesitant girl I used to be. I may have made some foolish decisions, which got me into this mess, but I'm not going down without a fight.* (p. 219)

**How does this realization help Rye make a momentous decision? How has she come a long way from the beginning of this mission?**

19. *"When Sora first told me I had to initiate, I thought I'd have to betray the family that raised me. Be a traitor or something, you know?"* (p. 220)

**Rye shares with Emmett that it's not a betrayal to become a Horangi. Instead, it's something noble and worthy of being called a Gom. How is that echoed in the clan's motto?**

20. How did Rye learn again that the sun is mightier than the wind? (p. 236)

21. *"Don't let a curse define who you can and can't be. Only you have the power to decide that." . . . We're both trapped in a story someone else wrote about us. But we have the power to take the reins. If we want to.* (p. 236)

**Explain how these words are true for both the inmyeonjo and Riley.**

22. Why is it that Rye feels more Gom after she's initiated as a Horangi? (p. 238)

23. *Now I realize that tears are nothing to be ashamed of. I'd always considered them a flaw—something that made me weak. But now I see that they are a part of who I am—a part of who we all are. They come because we care. It's a way of saying I love you.* (p. 286)

**Describe the final moments between Emmett and his mother. What is the transformation that happens for both Mrs. Harrison and Emmett?**

24. *I've spent my whole life thinking of myself as an outsider. I always kept my head down because I was different and never fit in. But as I look around now, something stirs inside me.* (p. 296)

**How has Rye brought together the different clans? What feelings were stirring inside Rye?**

25. *And for the first time in my life, instead of being ashamed of my four inner fires, I embrace them. I let the embers drift down over me, become part of me. And as the licks of power engulf me, I allow myself to accept it, and accept myself.* (p. 300)

**How does this revelation help Rye prepare for the final showdown with the goddess?**

## POST-READING QUESTION

*I am the last divine star that fell from the Godrealm's sky. I am the one who was destined to stop the end of all days. I have lost, but I have gained. Because I am strong. And I am brave. My name is Riley Oh, and I was born to shine. (p. 302)*

Riley began her journey feeling incomplete and like an interloper even among her family and community. She wasn't sure where she came from and if she really belonged among the gifted. She longed to find acceptance from others, only to realize that she needed to accept herself first in order to find wholeness, purpose, and her own voice.

How was she able to find her true identity and strength after she experienced so much suffering and loss? Would she have been able to find out who she really was—her gifts and abilities—without these obstacles? What does this teach us about the attitude that we should have in confronting our fears and doubts about ourselves?

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# POST-READING ACTIVITIES

## CAST YOUR SPELL

**DIRECTIONS:** In chapter 9, Noah's chant opens a portal to the Santa Monica Pier for Rye and Hattie to step into. The spell is constructed as a quatrain, or a four-line poem with every line ending in the same rhyme. Write your own spell to teleport yourself to a desired destination. Construct it as a quatrain with rhyme or as free verse with no rhyme.

### NOAH'S PORTAL-OPENING SPELL

The thing that is in front of me

Inside the picture that I see

Use your eyes, look carefully,

A door opens momentarily

### YOUR TELEPORTING SPELL

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Riley's Los Angeles

## CHARACTER EXAMINATION

**DIRECTIONS:** Choose a character from the book and complete each section with as much detail as you can. One example has been done for you.

<b>Character's Name</b>	<b>What the Character Looks Like</b>
Hattie	Round, petite, no freckles, long hair, brown eyes.
<b>What the Character Says</b>	<b>How the Character Acts</b>
"As soon as I'm old enough I'm gonna run for Gorn elder. . . I'm going to shake up that place."	She is smart, brave, and outspoken; fiercely loyal to her sister, Rye.
<b>How the Character Thinks/Feels</b>	<b>How Others Feel or Act Toward the Character</b>
Believes that diversity is a strength and there should be inclusion for all.	Rye feels loved and supported by her, but also that she isn't as assertive or articulate. Noah is very fond of her.
<b>Animal/Symbol/Food that Represents the Character</b>	
Tigress/Flaming Hot Cheetos/Tteokbokki	
<b>Greatest Strength</b>	<b>Possible Weakness</b>
Bravery	Stubbornness
<b>Memorable Quote</b>	
"Sometimes you gotta burn your fingers to enjoy the s'more."	



## CHARACTER EXAMINATION

**DIRECTIONS:** Choose a character from the book and complete each section with as much detail as you can.

Character's Name

What the Character Looks Like

What the Character Says

How the Character Acts

How the Character Thinks/Feels

How Others Feel or Act Toward the Character

Animal/Symbol/Food that Represents the Character

Greatest Strength

Possible Weakness

Memorable Quote

## CLAN ANALYSIS CHART

**DIRECTIONS:** Fill in the columns; the first three columns have been completed for you. For the “Visual” column, you can choose or draw an image, make a collage, or create what inspires you based on the character.

Name	Clan	Clan Color	Magic Abilities	Greatest Strength	Possible Weakness	Visual
Riley	Gom/Horangi	Gold/Red				
Noah	Miru	Blue				
Hattie	Gom	Gold				
Taeyo	Horangi	Red				
Jennie	Samjogo	Purple				
David	Tokki	Green				
Cosette	Gumiho	Silver				



## THE FIVE ELEMENTS

In the gifted world, there are five sacred elements. If a witch can balance all five, they can access the power of their patron goddess and the magic of their clan. A Gi, which contains the element you lack, must be worn at all times.

**DIRECTONS:** Identify the four elements you believe you already possess (place a star next to them), and choose the fifth element you wish to develop (write inside the Gi charm). Or, if you're like Rye, choose more of one of the elements you have! After all, all of her elements were fire and that was her strength.



Finally, explain why you chose your Gi element.

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## YOU CHOOSE

*"It's all about choice. I don't have to feel conflicted between being Gom or Horangi, gifted or saram, adopted or born into a family. Because my choice isn't either-or. I can choose to be all of those things. It's my actions that define who I am, not who I was born to, or what blood flows through my veins, or even what magic I can wield. And the fact of the matter is that I chose all these people, and these people chose me" (p. 297).*

When Rye accepts herself for all that she is, she unlocks her true identity and claims her power as the last fallen star. Rye focuses on who she is and the brave and noble things she has done, rather than who she is not or what she lacks.

**DIRECTONS:** Write about a time when you cast aside doubts and criticisms—from yourself or others—and chose to do something new or challenging. How did it make you feel? What important lesson(s) did you learn? How were you able to help or encourage others in similar situations?

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## THE NEXT CHAPTER

At the end of the book, Riley has found her true identity, proudly accepted who she is, vanquished the evil Cave Bear Goddess, and saved her sister, Hattie, along with the rest of society. She and her newly formed group of friends establish their next quest, which is to restore the lost memories of her loved ones and possibly face the wrath of the other goddesses in the process. There is healing, hope, and optimism for everyone, especially Rye.

However, the next mission won't be so easy. Mago Halmi said, *"There is light within us all, as there is darkness within us all. These two absolutes make us whole. This is the way of the universe"* (p. 108). Rye is one half of the fallen star, and she is searching for the other half. If they are to balance each other like the eum and yang, there may be many more obstacles ahead before they can be united.

**DIRECTONS:** Using the quote below as a springboard, begin writing the next chapter in Riley's mission.

**"They are each a pair—a dark sun for a light sun, a dark moon for a light moon. They represent a balanced set of scales, like the eum and yang, built in perfect equilibrium, as you are"** (p. 108).

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# ABOUT THE BOOK

## *THE LAST FALLEN MOON*

For Riley Oh, life as the Godrealm's last fallen star is not all it's cracked up to be. Her new divine heritage doesn't even come with cool magical powers; half of her friends and family (including her parents) can't remember her; and to top it all off, the entire Gom clan is mad at her for killing the Cave Bear Goddess and stripping away their healing abilities. But when their anger boils over and a group of witches curse Riley's home, she knows it's up to her to restore magic back to her clan—even if it means sneaking into the Spiritrealm.

Luckily, Riley has some backup. Along with her sister, Hattie, Riley meets Dahl, a heaven-born boy with shockingly white hair and a fondness for toilets who might not be telling the whole truth about who he is. Together they'll fight vicious monsters, discover dark underwater worlds, and race to save the land of the dead from a fate that no one could have foreseen. And this time, Riley won't let anything get in her way. Because she can't shake the feeling that something terrible is coming their way—and the gifted community is going to need all the powers they can get.



## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Riley is enjoying the festivities until “that numbness returns, reminding me that I need to keep my doors firmly closed” (p. 12). Why is she shutting out other people and not allowing herself to feel any emotions?
2. *“I’m not a hero. I’m a stain on my family and my community, like these bloody marks on our house.”* (p. 18–19)  
What does Riley’s inner dialogue reveal about herself? Does anyone in her inner circle understand why she feels this way?
3. Emmett tells Riley, “You think it’s all about you. As if the whole world revolves around you or something” (p. 29) Do you think that this is true about Riley? Is she creating her own woes because she’s only looking inward? How could things change if she looked outward?
4. *“We all have someone who will accept our weird.”* (p. 35)  
Why does Riley say that this is important for friendships? Do you agree?

5. Describe how King Yeomra restructured the Spiritrealm. (p. 79)
6. Which question does Dahl almost fail to answer honestly during his interview? Why do you think Dahl tried to cover up the truth? (p. 105)
7. What is the legend of the imugi, and why was it significant that Riley says, “Imagine having such immense power at your fingertips and being unable to use it” (p. 114)?
8. *“You are worthy. You deserve to live another life. Sure, things weren’t perfect last time. But that’s what’s so great about reincarnation. You get another go. So, be bold. Take a chance. You’ve got this!”* (p. 136)  
Hattie is encouraging Cheol, but how does this apply to Riley?
9. Why are the nicknames “Dreamer Dahl” and “Realist Riley” so fitting? (p. 149)
10. How do Riley and Dahl differ in their attitudes toward their mission? Are they complementary or conflicting? (p. 162–163)
11. During Dah’s struggle with the mermaid, Riley notices something. What is it, and why is it significant? What does it allow Riley to do? (p. 171–172)
12. *“But something inside me shifts, like a puzzle piece that’s finally clicking into place after being lost behind the couch for months. I’ve always thought it was weird that looking up at the sky could make me feel sad. Perhaps it was because this entire time, I was missing my other piece.”* (p. 179)  
How do you think Dahl’s confession will impact Riley’s sense of identity and purpose in life?
13. *“You’re always trying to save me. I’m a problem you have to solve. Last time, you had Emmett. And now you have a twin brother to help you on your mission. And I’m just . . . I’m just deadweight.”* (p. 197)  
Explain why Hattie feels useless.
14. Why does Hattie ask if Riley is okay on page 233? Why does Riley look away from her sister? (p. 234)
15. Explain this quote: “When mortals ask for help, I don’t send them a miracle packaged nicely in a box and tied with a ribbon. Instead, I provide them an opportunity in which they can help themselves” (p. 259).
16. *“I’ve been so focused on putting everything back to how it used to be that I got stuck looking at everything from one point of view. But there’s a whole different perspective, if only I open myself up to it.”* (p. 261)  
What can Riley’s revelation teach us about changing perspectives?



17. *"I'm finally starting to see that my superpower—my divine gift—might just be my people."* (p. 261)  
How can Riley's friends and family be her superpower? How can this apply to us?
18. *"I might not be the same person that I used to be, but I can strive to do better next time around. In fact, if I can't return things to how they were before, maybe I can work toward creating an even better alternative."* (p. 261)  
Oftentimes, we might experience setbacks or failure during our first attempt. How do Riley's words encourage us to stay the course and look forward, not backward?
19. *"Just like the circle of life and reincarnation, forests go through seasons of death and revival. It's a virtuous cycle, because one can't exist without the other. . . . Otherwise, there'd be no growth, you see. It's essential."* (p. 270)  
What does the mayor mean by this quote? What can Riley learn about this?
20. *"[Mago Halmi's] belief is that I don't need any remarkable powers to be a good leader."* (p. 291)  
When the mayor confesses this, what does Riley realize? How is failure not always a bad thing?
21. Who are Daeyang and Bada? How do they treat the visitors? Why won't Daeyang hand the eum-and-yang stone over? (p. 303)
22. Describe the series of events that happens when Riley and Dahl take on Pash (p. 326–328).
23. How does the Haetae's prophecy come true? How do the twins work together?
24. *"And you know, if I've learned anything since we got here, if I've learned anything from you—it's that we shouldn't be scared of change. Sometimes, it's the only way to move forward. Like Dahl says—it can be an adventure, if we let it be one."* (p. 341)  
What is Hattie about to do that Riley disagrees with? Why is it significant that Hattie has learned this lesson from Riley? What does this moment signify for both sisters?
25. What is the mind-blowing ability of the key that Riley and Dahl accidentally discover on page 349?  
How can this aid them going forward?
26. *"Despite the road ahead, my heart has never felt so full. The guilt of the past few months is finally peeling off me like dead skin (like a snake?!) and I am finally realizing that change isn't always doom and gloom. Sometimes change can bring growth. And joy. And love."* (p. 363)  
Why does Riley feel renewed, and how will this allow her to prepare for the next journey, however dangerous it might be? Have you ever experienced change that brought growth, joy, or love?

# POST-READING ACTIVITIES

## CHARACTER COMPARISON

**DIRECTIONS:** Riley is the last fallen star, and Dahl is the last fallen moon. They are two parts of a whole and soul twins. However, their personalities make them polar opposites. Next to their names, list some of the traits that make them so different. Then think of a time when the two characters were at odds with each other. Write down their thoughts and feelings and how they took action. In that instance, how did they work together to become the eum and yang, or complementary opposites?

RILEY	DAHL
<hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/>
Thoughts/Feelings	Thoughts/Feelings
Actions	Actions
Colaboration/Unity	Colaboration/Unity

## A LETTER TO RILEY, A LETTER TO MYSELF

**Directions:** Riley represents all of us who have ever doubted ourselves or been our own worst critic. She is a hero to everyone except to herself. Sometimes, it really can be a struggle to see past our mistakes and flaws. However, Riley has the loving support of Hattie, Dahl, and countless others to help her understand that she is not the sum of her failures; rather, she is a mortal who needs to seize upon her strengths. The key to this was for Riley to take the spotlight off of herself and focus on how she could help others. Today you will write a letter to Riley, encouraging her at her lowest point to help her see that she can save the Spiritrealm with the help of her family and friends. The second letter will be to yourself. Turn off the “inner critic” and turn on the “inner fangirl/boy” as you write words of positive support for the person you were and are becoming. You can address a specific challenge you are/were in. There is a hero in all of us, including you!

Dear Riley,

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Dear \_\_\_\_\_.

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## SISTER VS. SOUL TWIN

**Directions:** Hattie is Riley's sister and best friend. Hattie is also the only one who has all of her memories of Riley intact. Dahl is Riley's soul twin and other half. He is her Spiritrealm guide and helper. Riley's relationship with Hattie deepens as her newfound relationship with Dahl builds. At times, though, Riley feels torn between her sister and twin. List how Hattie supports Riley and how Dahl helps Riley as well. Include evidence from the text. Is there a need to choose between Hattie and Dahl? How does Riley come to accept that she has gained more family?

### Hattie

- She is Riley's cheerleader, always encouraging her to be stronger.

### Dahl

- He is the creative thinker, able to help Riley think positively



MY SOUL ANIMAL IS . . .

**Directions:** When you pass through the Spiritrealm’s immigration checkpoint, you enter a scanner that reveals your soul animal—or true soul form. For Jennie’s halmeoni, it was a magpie. For Hattie, it was a lion. What do you believe your soul animal would be? Draw a picture or find an image to paste in the space below. Then, using three reasons, describe why you chose this animal as your true form.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue or grey ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are approximately 20 lines visible. The paper has a slight shadow on the right side, suggesting it's resting on a surface.

## STRENGTH AND WEAKNESS, CONFLICT AND RESOLUTION

**Directions:** Throughout the book, Riley struggles to find her strengths because she is fixated on her weaknesses. Her internal conflict mirrors the external conflicts that she and her loved ones endure. Think about Riley's journey toward self-acceptance, self-love, and empowerment. How do her weaknesses contribute to conflicts? How do her strengths lead to resolutions? Fill in each portion of the chart and feel free to add to the existing points. Each category can refer to internal or external. P.S. There is no wrong answer!

### Conflict

"I'm a complete failure" and "All I know is that I'm really good at making bad situations worse." (p. 6)

"I have no answers. I'm a fake. A pretenddivine." (p. 22)

"Nobody gets it. . . . Teamwork doesn't work when you're with me." (p. 44)

### Resolution

"Being with her makes me feel like we can achieve anything we put our minds to. And now I have a plan that will solve all our problems." (p. 132)

"I've always thought it was weird that looking up at the sky could make me feel sad. Perhaps it was because this entire time, I was missing my other piece." (p. 179)

"I'm finally starting to see that my superpower—my divine gift—might just be my people." (p. 261)

### Weakness

### Strength



## MY SUPERPOWER

**Directions:** Riley struggles with the fact that she has no actual divine powers because she feels unable to help her loved ones. Toward the end of the book, she says, “I’m finally starting to see that my superpower—my divine gift—might just be my people” (p. 261). In truth, Riley is surrounded by family and friends who have great powers, such as Hattie, Areum, Saint Heo Jun, and many more. Think about the people in your life who are your “superpower.” These people make you feel stronger, bolder, empowered, and uplifted. Their presence enables you to fulfill your potential and be the best version of YOU. Choose one or two people, and explain how they are your “superpower.” Also, include how you can be a “superpower” for them.

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# ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Graci Kim** is the national best-selling author of *The Last Fallen Star*, the first book in the Gifted Clans trilogy. A Korean-Kiwi diplomat turned author, Graci writes about the magic she wants to see in the world. In a previous life, she used to be a cooking show host, and she once ran a business that turned children's drawings into cuddly toys. When she's not lost in her imagination, you'll find Graci drinking flat whites, eating ramyeon, and most likely hugging a dog (or ideally, many). She lives in New Zealand with her husband and daughter. Find her at [www.gracikim.com](http://www.gracikim.com) and follow her on Twitter [@gracikim](https://twitter.com/gracikim) and Instagram [@gracikimwrites](https://www.instagram.com/gracikimwrites).



## Q & A WITH GRACI KIM ABOUT *THE LAST FALLEN STAR*

**Q:** Riley and her best friend Emmett have a common bond in that they lack magic and are “outsiders” living among the gifted community. In addition, they have suffered loss and share the desire to know their true heritage. Their sense of compassion and empathy toward each other is something to be admired. What message do you want to send to young readers who feel they are on the outside looking in?

**A:** No matter our background, our experiences, our age, or our heritage, we all yearn to belong. We all yearn to be accepted for who we are. And we all yearn to be loved. It's what it means to be human.

I think the flip side of that is that we all have times when we feel like the outsider. Like we don't belong, or that we aren't accepted. But just like Riley learns, I believe that true belonging needs to start within ourselves first. Because if we can't love ourselves, how can we expect anyone else to?

So my message to any readers who feel like they're on the outside looking in would be to be kind, first and foremost, to yourself. Treat yourself the way you'd want others to treat you. And set an example that you want others to follow. Accept yourself, love yourself, and others will too.

**Q:** Throughout the book, there is a tension between what Riley knows (the Gom clan and her family) and what she wants to discover (the Horangi clan and her heritage). She comes to accept that the past and present—and the duality in her identity—is her strength. Can you share your experience with biculturalism and how it has shaped your identity?

**A:** I am a Korean-Kiwi and I grew up in New Zealand. Growing up, there were times where I was bullied and teased for being different. Kids sometimes spat in my lunch, threw stones at me, pulled at the ends of their eyes, and told me to go back to my own country, even though this was my country. It made me think that being a Korean-Kiwi meant that I was stuck being neither Korean *nor* Kiwi. Like Riley, I believed myself to be flawed because of my differences.

But what I learned as I grew up, was that my duality didn't mean I had to choose between one or the other. Or that I was somehow less than a full version of either. In fact, I was both. Fully. It wasn't a maths equation where you have to split the whole into percentages or fractions. Because identities don't work like that. I now know that I can be 100 percent Korean and 100 percent Kiwi, just like Riley learns that she can be many things at the same time.

Watch Graci Kim answer these questions and more here: <https://youtu.be/rS99LyRnvjU>

About the guide writer: **Veronica Kim** was born in Seoul, Korea, and raised in NJ in a bilingual, bicultural home. She graduated from Johns Hopkins University, where she focused on East Asian Studies and Writing, and holds an MAT from Fairleigh Dickinson University. She was an ESL teacher for many years and enjoyed working with her young students and learning about their diverse backgrounds. She loves reading multicultural, inclusive work with her children and looks forward to seeing their generation find their authentic voice, just like Riley.

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