

The Last Book in the Universe by Rodman Philbrick

Subjects: Epilepsy; Science fiction

Awards: Best Books for Young Adults, Notable Social Studies Trade Books for Young People

Book Lists: Gifted, Grade 6

Props: Chocolate Bar wrapper



They called me Little Face cause I never used to talk. I's too scared. I lived alone on the streets in the Urb, the city, in the latches where everyone and everything was broken, dirty, and tired. Where there were no laws, no police, no safety. The latch bosses, they're in charge of everyone and everything. If you break their rules, it's the wheel and you're as good as dead. It's been that way ever since the Big Shake which happened long before I's born.

Life's tough and I never really thought that things would get better. But then I met Spaz. That's not his real name. It's actually a kind of warning. People'd say, "Look out for the spaz boy, he might have a fit and bite you! He'll infect you!" I was afraid of him, at first, but then he gave me something I'd never seen or tasted before, a chox (chalk) bar. (*Bring out wrapper*) I liked it—a lot—and I wanted another one. So I helped him find Ryter. Ryter is this crazy gummy, you know, old man, no teeth. Anyway, he was always talking about the backtimes when they had stuff like electricity, plumbing, books. Nobody ever knew what he was talking about. Anyway, the latch bosses wanted Spaz to bust Ryter down, rip him off, take all his stuff. So that's what Spaz did.

After that, I thought I'd never see Spaz again, but then he got a message and everything changed. The message was from his little sister. She lived on the other side of the Urb. She was dying and wanted to see him one more time. Now, people don't travel from latch to latch, it's

suicide. Besides, Spaz had been thrown out and banned from her latch. Plus, the latch bosses will kill you if they catch you trying to leave their latch. And there are motorcycle gangs, dog packs, monkey boys, mindprobes, Takvees (Tactical Urban Vehicles) and . . . all kinds of . . . things. But, he didn't care. He knew it was crazy, but he had to see his sister. He loved her that much.

It was night when he began his journey and he hadn't gone far when I found him in the dark. I wanted another choc bar, so I grabbed his legs until he gave me one. (*Bring out wrapper*) Then he took my hand and led me towards the fires, towards the stack people, thinking that's where I belonged. But then a woman saw him and screeched, "Leave the boy alone!" Spaz told her to stand down, that he had brought me back and now he was gonna leave. But as he started to walk away, a voice from the dark yelled, "Who you gonna bust down this time? Another old gummy? You're not so tough in the dark alone, are you?" Then someone yelled, "Get him, cut his red!" And you know what that means. (*Slide finger across front of throat*) They shoved him down and surrounded him.

I ain't gonna say anymore, cause' it's Spaz's story and he tells it best. He wrote it down for you. You gotta read it, cause, it's (*Hold up book*) *The Last Book of the Universe* by Rodman Philbrick.