

The Introduction:

The Instructions

As construction of the city of Ember concludes, its chief "Builder" and his assistant discuss the future. They are unsure of what will follow but, without revealing why, determine that the city's inhabitants need to live there for at least 200 years. So that Ember's future citizens will know what to do at that time, the chief then reveals a grand plan: They will provide Ember with instructions, sealed inside a box with a timed lock set to open on its own at the right date. Sworn to secrecy, only the city's mayors, one after the next, will know about the box and its hiding place in Ember's Gathering Hall. None will know what is inside the box, only that the contents contain critical information for Ember's people.

All goes according to the Builders' plan until an immoral mayor, the city's seventh, takes possession of the box. Plagued with a coughing sickness, common in Ember at the time, he brings it home, hoping to find a cure that will save him. Although he fails to open the box, he damages it. After the corrupt mayor dies, the box ends up in a closet. The box remains there for generations, until finally clicking open at the programmed time.

Chapter 1: Assignment Day

It's year 241 and Ember is old, in disrepair, and dark. With no natural light, its only illumination comes from light bulbs and streetlamps. Electricity shuts off nightly, and power outages, which result in blackouts, are common during the day. Children attend school until they are twelve years old. On Assignment Day the children enter the adult workforce.

At Ember School, Mayor Cole arrives with a bag holding the fate of all twenty-four students in the graduating class: the job they will do for the next three years. Lizzie Bisco stands first and draws Clerk at the Supply Depot, whose underground storerooms contain all of the city's supplies. Lina Mayfleet disappointedly draws Pipeworks Laborer, which means she will repair pipes below the storerooms. Doon Harrow hopes for Electrician's Helper so he might fix Ember's electrical problems and save the city, but he draws the job of Messenger and throws his piece of paper in anger. Scolded by the mayor, Doon rants about the state of Ember with its blackouts and supply shortages. Later, in Harken Square, Doon and Lina trade jobs. As Messenger, Lina gets the job she had first wished for, and Doon feels happy because he will have access to Ember's generator, which creates electricity from an underground river.

Chapter 2: A Message to the Mayor

Lina runs home, happy about her job, but as she passes unlit streetlamps, feels dread while recalling a rumor about Ember's dwindling light bulb supply. Lina's

Granny and baby sister, Poppy, are her only family now that her parents have died from the coughing sickness ravaging Ember. Their cluttered apartment above Granny's yarn shop is decorated with Lina's drawings of a city filled with light, one born from her imagination despite teachings that beyond Ember, there's only darkness.

Later, Lina starts her job as Messenger, reporting to Captain Fleery and delivering messages for Ember's citizens. Near Garn Square, she passes a group of Believers singing hopeful songs. Later, she delivers a message from Looper Windly, a young man who walks with a lurch, to Mayor Cole in the Gathering Hall. Portraits of Ember's mayors, including its seventh—her great-great-grandfather, Podd Morethwart—line the walls. As Assistant Guard Barton Snode fetches the mayor, Lina wanders to the roof, hoping to see into the Unknown Regions, but glimpses only blackness while causing a commotion below. After Chief Guard Redge Stabmark catches Lina, the mayor scolds her for trespassing but, upon receiving her message, smiles strangely and decides not to punish her.

Chapter 3: Under Ember

Doon begins his new job at the Pipeworks. Donning an old slicker and boots, he descends a deep, damp stairway leading to the Main Tunnel. There, he encounters Ember's raging underground river for the first time and begins to mentally map the Pipeworks's vast, labyrinthine layout. At its west edge, he watches the river vanish into a dark opening in a wall. At its east edge, he sees the chasm from which the river surges into the Pipeworks, along with a locked room housing Ember's generator.

While patching pipes, Doon also realizes that Ember is in worse shape than he thought, so he determines to get into the locked room. When he does, though, he discovers that his understanding of how the generator works is as limited as that of his coworkers. Later, Doon's despondency turns to anger at home, but his father convinces him to stay vigilant at work and pay close attention to everything he sees. And because Doon is fascinated by bugs, his father, Loris, recommends he keep an eye out for interesting insects. But Doon regards this as silly. Doon hopes instead that his work in the Pipeworks will lead him to something that will help save the city.

Chapter 4: Something Lost, Nothing Found

Lina finds Granny tearing up their couch while looking for something she had heard that her grandfather, Ember's seventh mayor, lost long ago. Later, Lina's work takes her to the greenhouses, which stand near trash heaps at the city's southeast edge. Lina is delighted to deliver a message to its manager and her friend, Clary, but sad because the greenhouses remind her of her father, who worked there before he died.

Lina learns from Clary that a new disease has infected Ember's potatoes, one of the city's food staples. The two then hear loud sobs from Sadge Merrall, who is in great distress after attempting to venture into the Unknown Regions. While searching for something that might help the city, Sadge encounters only immense darkness that fills him with fear. Sadge tells Clary and Lina that the Unknown Regions will never be penetrated without a portable light source, something that doesn't exist in Ember. As Clary and Lina discuss mysteries about Ember's Builders, the Unknown Regions, and where they came from, Lina tells Clary about her imagined city of light. Lina stresses that the city feels real and that she believes there's a hidden doorway that leads out from Ember.

Chapters 5: On Night Street

Granny's aging mind grows more muddled, so Lina has Mrs. Murdo, their neighbor, keep her company. Lina visits a store on Night Street, run by Looper, that has colored pencils, a rare commodity in Ember. There, she buys two, one green and one blue, but loses Poppy. As Lina searches for Poppy in surrounding streets, a blackout, the longest in Ember's history, consumes the city. When the lights return, Lina finally finds Poppy and learns that Doon kept her safe in his father's shop during the blackout.

Chapters 6: The Box in the Closet

In response to the blackout, citizens attend a meeting in Harken Square. Mayor Cole attempts to calm the crowd, saying those in power are managing the problem. But the townspeople sense he is lying. They grow angry and yell and surge at him as he escapes into the Gathering Hall. After the meeting, Doon rails about the mayor's lies, but his father advises him to learn to master his anger. At home, Lina finds Granny ransacking a closet, from which she's unknowingly dislodged a beautiful but damaged box with a mechanized lock and opened lid. Nearby, Poppy chews and rips up a piece of paper lined with perfect printing.

Chapter 7: A Message Full of Holes

Lina studies the paper scraps and concludes the original note must have come from the Builders and the box must be the lost item Granny was seeking. Although Poppy destroyed much of the message, Lina's able to make out a seven-step list of instructions. Many of its words are now missing, but Lina regards the message as a mystery and determines to solve it, believing the message could help Ember.

At work, Lina invites Captain Fleery to her apartment, where Captain Fleery reviews the message, only to dismiss it as unimportant. Captain Fleery then reveals she is a Believer: someone who thinks the Builders will return to save the city. At the Supply Depot, Lizzie tells Lina about Ember's supply shortages and that only Mayor Cole and Farlo Batten, who is in charge of the storerooms, have access to reports on light bulb and vitamin supplies. After Lizzie shows no interest in the message from the box, Lina writes to the mayor, notifying him of her find, but she receives no reply. As

Lina studies the broken message more, slowly filling in words such as *river* and *door*, she realizes the message pertains to the Pipeworks and that kind, curious, observant Doon is the right person to help her fill in the blanks.