



# The Careful Undressing of Love

*Corey Ann Haydu*

Download now

Read Online ➔

# The Careful Undressing of Love

*Corey Ann Haydu*

## **The Careful Undressing of Love** Corey Ann Haydu

Everyone who really knows Brooklyn knows Devonairre Street girls are different. They're the ones you shouldn't fall in love with. The ones with the curse. The ones who can get you killed.

Lorna Ryder is a Devonairre Street girl, and for years, paying lip service to the curse has been the small price of living in a neighborhood full of memories of her father, one of the thousands killed five years earlier in the 2001 Times Square Bombing. Then her best friend's boyfriend is killed, and suddenly a city paralyzed by dread of another terrorist attack is obsessed with Devonairre Street and the price of falling in love.

Set in an America where recent history has followed a different path.

## **The Careful Undressing of Love Details**

Date : Published January 31st 2017 by Dutton Books for Young Readers

ISBN : 9780399186738

Author : Corey Ann Haydu

Format : Hardcover 288 pages

Genre : Magical Realism, Young Adult, Contemporary, Romance, Fantasy

 [Download The Careful Undressing of Love ...pdf](#)

 [Read Online The Careful Undressing of Love ...pdf](#)

**Download and Read Free Online The Careful Undressing of Love Corey Ann Haydu**

---

# From Reader Review The Careful Undressing of Love for online ebook

alexis says

ARC Review Originally Posted on Lacy Literacy:

*"If you love someone and they vanish, you are left nodding like a zombie and throwing teacups at a wall. I never want to be a person who throws teacups at the wall"\**

My low rating of The Careful Undressing of Love isn't just because I did not like it. Mainly, it is because it left me feeling completely unsatisfied. Everything from the plot, the characters, the worldbuilding, and the resolution just left me feeling empty (and not in the good 'I'm so emotionally drained it was amazing' way). Waka Flocka really sums up how I felt about The Careful Undressing of Love:

Despite my low rating, there were a couple things that I liked about The Careful Undressing of Love. Typically, I'm in the anti-Purple Pose camp. I have given many low ratings to books that have it because most of the time, I can't stand it. What surprised me about The Careful Undressing of Love's Purple Prose was that it didn't annoy me. In fact, I liked it. There was also repetition of phrases like "like moons and tides". I actually like this type of thing, and enjoy it in other books like the ASOIAF series. I think it is a nice way of tying things together.

There were a lot of worldbuilding issues with The Careful Undressing of Love. I love urban myths and legends. Nearly all of my favorite books have them. Because the plot of The Careful Undressing of Love was based on a local curse, I thought I would really enjoy that aspect of the book, but that didn't happen. There is no background or origin story for the curse. All we get is some vague references as to how Angelika, the resident old lady who warns the kids about the curse, had fallen in love once. Don't get me wrong, I'm okay with the mysterious influencer/higher power, but it ended up feeling cheap. Also, the setting was poorly constructed. The Careful Undressing of Love is supposed to be an alternate history where there was a bombing of Time Square. It was never elaborated on, or truly explained, so it is hard to imagine the world the book takes place in.

The characters in The Careful Undressing of Love were cardboard. At the end of the book, they weren't even worthy of being called cardboard. Nothing about them felt natural. The actions that side characters made, especially Deliah, Isla, and Charlotte, were there solely to further the plot in the direction the author wanted. They truly were plot devices with no amount of uniqueness. The not-quite-a-villain Angelika was the most annoying of them all. Every time she appeared I wanted to throw the book. Because so much of her motivation relied on shaky world building, it was hard not to be enraged by her droning on about how the girls shouldn't fall in love.

The biggest problem I had with The Careful Undressing of Love was how pointless the whole book turned out to be. The ending was beyond disappointing. It was weak, and made me confused as to what the author was trying to prove. All that Purpley Prose about love and Lorna's quirky~ adventures like wedding crashing amounted to nothing. I'm fine with books having melancholy endings. In this case, it just ended up feeling

like one massive waste of time. Even if things ended "happy", I probably still wouldn't have been satisfied. The characters that the ending would be built on meant nothing.

I don't like having spoilers in my reviews, but I want to specifically address content from the ending so Spoiler Alert until the end of the review. (view spoiler)

✿ Huge thanks to Penguin Teen for providing me with an ARC✿

\*Quote taken from uncorrected proof & subject to change

---

may 🗡️ says

2.5 stars.

So. It's safe to say that I **remember pretty much nothing about this book**. I don't even remember what I didn't like about it?? I think my overall thoughts were that: The characters were annoying, the plot was annoying, the writing voice was weird, and the book was generally just... meh.

- **Lorna, the main character, is so annoying??** Her thoughts were irritating too, and she kind of had a really flat personality. Plus there were some \*things\* she did that were actually **WRONG** but she thought were justified just because another person was doing that \*thing\* too and ?? **WHAT**.

- The rest of the characters I don't really care about to actually try and remember them. :) (The whole book was kind of unremarkable to me, honestly.) I kinda hated Angelika because of how **CONTROLLING** of the girls' (and boy's) lives she was, but can you blame her??

-

- **The writing style, to me, was super weird.** Sometimes it was really pretty, other times it was all weird and chunky. It doesn't appeal to me and it was hard to read. Took me a long time to read a single page and I'm already a slow reader, so that sucks!!

- (view spoiler)

-

- But **something that I think that this book nailed really well was grief**. The grief that Lorna experiences from her father's death (not a spoiler, promise!) is so raw and realistic, and you can just *feel* that emotion too. There's also another character's grief and mourning, and what they do because of that is reasonable as well.

- Another thing I applaud this book for is for **the addressing of white privilege**. I don't have the exact quote, but I know that somewhere, Lorna (who is white) mentioned that people looked at her differently than the way they looked at Isla (who is not white). And like yes?? Thank you for mentioning this?? Because it is **SO** true, and it needs to stop.

- I think there was some other thing that was addressed nicely but I forgot it. :)

- **But one thing I DO remember is the ending and WHAT HAPPENED OH MY GOD I NEED TO KNOW???**

So yeah, I have many mixed feelings on this?? I honestly would not recommend it. But at least it has a pretty cover???

---

Aimee Meester says

[I'm so sick of this

---

## **Korrina (OwlCrate) says**

3.5 stars. The writing was good, and it kept my interest all the way through. But I felt the ending was a little weak and rushed, and made me wonder what the point of it all was.

---

## **Molly says**

*Huge thank you to Miss Print's ARC adoption for this review copy*

This book was fucking gorgeous. I fell in love with this book at first sight because the cover it just so stunning. I have bookstagrammed it a few times because it is just so beautiful. I actually probably wouldn't have asked for this book if not for the cover and the fact that it's magical realism. I wasn't a huge fan of this author's other books, but I wanted to give it a shot.

The writing in this book is fantastic. It sucks you in and even if the story is lacking (cuz it was in a few places) you just get so wrapped up in how lyrical the writing is that you can't not fall in love with it. I really enjoyed all of the characters and the mysterious New York City that they lived in, I loved the magical realism parts, and the way that love was used as a curse, a weapon, a sentence.

This is a story about four girls who grow up in the shadow of a curse. There's an old lady who lives on their street and she's akin with a cult leader. The girls living on this street have to follow certain rules and not fall in love or else the boy they love will die suddenly, before their time. As does with many superstitions, many of the traditions lose their meanings and the girls stop giving power to the curse. They buck tradition, they skimp on certain rituals, and they fall in love. Only when a boy they all care about dies do they fall back and take a hard look at the curse and the people they love.

In the background of this story of the girls there's also a tragedy that's similar to 9/11. Many of the girls' fathers died in what is called the Time's Square bombing. The story takes place seven years after the bombing and the girls are all part of the Affected. History has been re-written so rather than learning about the terrorists we instead learn about the people who died. The girls have to deal with two different stigmas, people's prejudices against them as cursed girls AND Affected, and they struggle with "tourism grief" and people coming around to see the "cursed girls".

There's a bit of mob mentality as the curse seems to take stronger hold and the women of the street, those who have lost someone, those who haven't yet, all come together and the ending of this book is heartbreaking and stunning.

I do wish that some of the things in the background of this story had been fleshed out more; I really would have liked to have had more about the bombing (but I guess not getting too much information was a reflection of the way that society had stopped caring about who did it and rather who was affected), and also I would have liked to have learned the fates of a few of the girls after the last chapter (there's an epilogue). Also there were times when I kept thinking "so the curse only works if one of the girls falls in love with a BOY?" and if you're worried about this, don't, because it does delve into how it works if one of the girls falls

in love with a girl as well.

---

### Kristina Horner says

This was a bizarre book. I really enjoyed it, especially the small hints we got about a somewhat dystopian version of future America, while that was merely an undercurrent of the book.

I love books that play with the space between fantasy and not.

Was the curse real? Was it not?

The only reason I docked the book a star was because I was hoping for a little bit more out of the ending, or possibly a different one entirely. But I think Lorna had to grapple with never having what she wanted, so leaving me as the reader feeling that way too was actually pretty effective.

I need a bit more time to ponder this one. But I will say I've never read a book quite like it.

---

### ALEXA says

Dreamy and eloquent, Corey Ann Haydu's latest novel is as gorgeously written as all her other work. Tackling themes of love and grief, of community and change, it was lovely and it was odd and it was all too compelling to stop turning pages once I had started. While I'm still not certain how I feel about the way it ends, I still very much think this is another book from Haydu that is worth the read (as all of her books are).

---

### Emily May says

*I thought living in a small space meant we shared everything. But so much can be hidden even in the most cramped apartment on one of the shortest streets in Brooklyn.  
Even love.*

This is why magical realism is one of my favourite genres. As with books like *The Strange and Beautiful Sorrows of Ava Lavender*, this too captures a unique modern-day fairy tale feeling, set in a recognizable Brooklyn neighbourhood, yet full of **magical mystery, curses, and whimsy**.

*The Careful Undressing of Love* paints a picture of a world that is almost - but not quite - our own. After a bombing in New York City claims the lives of the men of Devonairre Street, it is said that the Devonairre Street girls are cursed. They are encouraged to grow their hair, wear keys around their necks, and most importantly NEVER fall in love with a boy - because any boy they fall in love with will die, whether they love them back or not.

Haydu crafts a beautiful, tight-knit little world of hysteria, suspicion and grief. Lorna's coming-of-age and examination of love and relationships is, quite literally, a careful undressing of what love is and just exactly what it is worth. With **lush descriptions and painful honesty**, the author captures the intensity of first loves and the kind of friendship groups where it is impossible to separate one from the others. As Lorna explains,

she is not just Lorna, she's a part of LornaCruzCharlotteDelilahIsla.

Identity issues surface throughout the novel as Lorna tries to redefine herself beyond the limits and expectations that others have set for her. It's a strange book, that's for sure, but it is driven by a strong cast of characters and just the right hint of magic in the air.

As the story unfolds, Lorna is made to question herself and her feelings over and over. Her grief for her father is a constant undercurrent, as is the "Otherness" that surrounds the Devonairre Street girls. It's a gorgeous tale about youth, friendship and defining yourself, as well as a look at the ways we make symbols of others - as victims, as heroes, or martyrs - and our obsession with fate and destiny.

Despite the use of "boys" in the book's premise, *The Careful Undressing of Love* is not as heteronormative as it first appears. Its **diverse cast of characters** includes a lesbian romance, as well as African-American Delilah, and the Puerto Rican Cruz and Isla (Lorna and Charlotte seem to be white).

A truly beautiful book; both in its rich descriptions and in the subtle messages it imparts.

[Blog](#) | [Facebook](#) | [Twitter](#) | [Instagram](#) | [Youtube](#)

---

## **Emer says**

I'm done.

I'm just soooo done.

This book drove me insane AND NOT IN A GOOD WAY!!! I have never read a more frustrating storyline with characters that I wanted to smack as hard as I want to smack these characters. I don't know... Maybe it's because I'm too science / practically minded that I couldn't deal with the concept of this \*curse\*. I mean... Just no. No no, no no, no no NO!!! And I didn't like the handling of the aftermath of this bombing that occurred... This book was set in some sort of alternate timeline to our own and there had been a bombing, people died... But I've read other books recently dealing with the emotional aftermath of tragic events and they, in my opinion, have dealt with it sooo much better. This just annoyed me. Everything in this book annoyed me. Everything annoyed me so much that I just don't even feel like writing a ranty review. Like all the diversity in the world can't save this book I'm just pissed off.

## **one star**

I'm now questioning my perceived love for all things magical realism. First I don't like *Love in the Time of Cholera*, then I don't really enjoy *A Jigsaw of Fire and Stars* and now this.... I think I've got to rethink what genre is in fact my favourite.

---

## **Rachel Solomon says**

That was GORGEOUS.

---

### **Alison says**

I was lucky enough to read this book early, and it is spectacular. It's such a gorgeous, incisive look at how beautiful and terrifying and dangerous it is to love another person and the ways in which we contort ourselves to make sense of tragedy, both on a national and personal level. This book cut straight to the heart of a lot of questions I've been pondering about how to move forward in a world that seems completely random and cruel and refuses to play by the rules, no matter how hard you try to do the right thing. Plus, Corey's a phenomenal writer—there were so many times I had to stop and read a sentence again while seething with flat-out jealousy over how perfect it was. :)

I love all of Corey's books, so it's difficult to pick a favorite... but I think this might be her best one yet.

---

### **Stacee says**

I think 2 stars might be too many. I struggled with this book.

I fell in love with the cover and the sort of odd synopsis and I was certain it was going to be my sort of book.

Right off the bat, I was confused. It felt like I had been dropped in the middle of a story. I wasn't sure if it was supposed to be magical realism or a mild dystopia or just old world superstition. And I think that's what lost me...

I didn't really care for any of the characters, so I couldn't connect to them. I thought about DNFing, but then I would read a section of lovely prose and I would get hooked back in. Yet I'm not sure what I was waiting for.

Obviously by the high reviews, I'm in the minority. I can see how people will love it, but it wasn't for me.

**\*\*Huge thanks to Dutton Books and Edelweiss for providing the arc free of charge\*\***

---

### **Jamie (The Perpetual Page-Turner) says**

Oh my heart. I've just finished *The Careful Undressing of Love* and yet again I'm in awe of Corey and her beautiful writing. Wow! Delightfully strange & magical.

---

### **Nat says**

*“Love happens at night,” Angelika says, whispering like it’s a secret some of us might not know. “So we’ll take away the night.”*

This was such a quick read, almost impossible to put down. I wasn't sure at first if I would read this, but then without noticing I was twenty pages in and feeling invested, so then I had to keep going. And now here we



are.

**The Careful Undressing of Love** follows the Devonairre Street Girls and their eccentric little community in Brooklyn that has experienced an unusual number of tragedies, which everyone refers to as the Curse. And 75-year-old Angelika Koza is always there to remind them of it.

*“If a Devonairre Street Girl falls in love with any boy, whether or not he loves her back, the boy will die. Devonairre Street Girls must not fall in love. That is the responsibility, that is the Curse, that is what is true.”*

It kind of reminds me of Blue’s curse in *The Raven Boys*, where she has been told by her psychic family that she will kill her true love. But the Devonairre Street Girls don’t believe in their curse, or at least that’s what they tell themselves...

*“Fine. It’s strange that we wear the keys, that we grow our hair, that we drink the tea and eat the cake and switch the outside lights on when the sun goes down and armor ourselves in wool. But Santa Claus is strange, too. And lucky pennies. And horoscopes in newspapers. And unbreakable mirrors.”*

I loved the magical realism in here. Their curse also brought up in my mind the question of “is it better to have loved and lost or never loved at all?” I still don’t know what my answer is or will be.

Honestly, this book had me so enthralled that upon looking out of my window, I felt surprised that Angelika Koza wasn’t lurking and judging me from across the street. She knows something extra about the world. And I can still hear her voice shoving in *I’ll say it again if you weren’t listening*.

Also, to keep track of the characters, here’s a list of the their quirks that I initially loved:

- Delilah James with her made-up sayings. I’ll try to remember each and every one.
- Lorna Ryder with her ability to hear her mother’s heart. Oh, and who loves thinking only about herself...more on that later.
- Isla Rodriguez is an unstoppable force. She’s also the youngest of them all but growing up the fastest.
- Charlotte, who’s together with Cruz Rodriguez, doesn’t seem to have any kind of life in her until something happens that I’ll talk about later on.

Oh, and this book addresses white-privilege, which yes, please:

*“They’re always more concerned with Isla’s outfits than mine. The other night at Julia’s I was wearing less than Isla is now, but it didn’t incite the same kind of outrage when I walked down the street. I think Isla must notice it, too, the way her body is a particularly tense battleground compared to the rest of ours. I think of the way Ms. Abbound looked at Delilah, too. It’s uncomfortable to think of us as anything but a single organism, but of course it’s easier to be a white Devonairre Street Girl.”*

I kept thinking of this:

**\*From here on I want to discuss some **spoilers** stuff\***

The book also tackles Lorna’s grief after she lost her father in the Times Square Bombing almost seven years

ago. The portrayal of her grief felt so real and personal and specific, and I'm still reeling.

*"When Dad died, Mom said to be sure to let myself have good moments. Even when everything hurts, even when other cities are exploding and people we love are disappearing, there's still space for sweet things. I let our elbows' resting against each other feel good, while everything else feels bad."*

But then... then this book took a turn down the wrong lane for me. A truly wrong turn when Lorna decides to cheat multiple times on her boyfriend with Cruz, who's still with Charlotte. However, the book comes up with a convenient way for our hetero heroine to get rid of all her hetero guilt.

*"We've been together a long time," Nisha says.*

*Charlotte looks down, but she doesn't deny it.*

*"You can't be together," I say. "Charlotte and Cruz are together."*

*I look back and forth between the two of them, the golden couple of Devonairre Street, one of the main reasons I know the Curse isn't real, the people I've built a whole sense of the world on."*

I love how Lorna remembers this fact when it's convenient for her, because the minute her lips are on Cruz's she all, "Charlotte who?"

Also, I'm kind of livid at how this was all played out to make the heroine feel OK for cheating. I was so excited about the possibility of a f/f relationship featuring in here, but making it seem like plot-twist is just not how you do it. I had to take a breather after that to calm down over how angry I was.

There are so few f/f romances out there in YA books, and I was so, so excited when I heard it was going to play a part in here. But it didn't. It only appeared over 220 pages in (out of 288), and then it was only presented as a twist so that the main white, hetero character wouldn't feel guilty for kissing her friend's boyfriend. UGH. This is just such harmful representation when your whole novel is straight as fuck. Can't we have even one good thing this year???

After that I quickly came to realize just how self-centred Lorna acts all the damn time. She lives in this bubble of "I'm so special and everyone loves or wants to be me." And I'm like, "...people literally do not give two fucks about whether you speak or not." Similar to what Nisha said, *"But you Devonairre Street people—you're all in your own world, aren't you?"*

I just hate, hate, hate that Lorna was the center of this novel, when there were so many more deserving souls... like Delilah. **The Careful Undressing of Love** should have been told through Delilah's eyes, not Lorna's pretentious ones. Especially once you consider the fact that **Delilah lost Jack, whom she truly loved, and we barely get to see her after that.** We mainly see how Lorna is hurting, and I'm like.... okay....

This novel started out fantastic, but it petered out after Jack's sudden death. And after that straight nonsense, I was out. I can't even hide how disappointed I am. I was truly excited when I started and read the first 150 pages, but I can't get over how the whole aforementioned situation was played. You don't use f/f romances like that. You just don't.

*ARC kindly provided by the publisher in exchange for an honest review.*

**2/5 stars**

*\*Note: I'm an Amazon Affiliate. If you're interested in buying **The Careful Undressing of Love**, just click on the image below to go through my link. I'll make a small commission!\**

Support creators you love. Buy a Coffee for nat (bookspoils) with [Ko-fi.com/bookspoils](https://ko-fi.com/bookspoils)

---

## Megan • Reading Books Like a Boss (book blog) says

THE CAREFUL UNDRRESSING OF LOVE is a haunting, atmospheric, and romantic coming-of-age novel with an interesting twist. Haydu's writing is particularly noteworthy, along with the unique backstory and reimagined version of Brooklyn. If *Delirium*, *Station Eleven*, and *Practical Magic* had a book love child, The Careful Undressing of Love would be it.

I want to start off talking about the plot. I don't do this to spoil anything for you or bore you ad nauseum. I think it's important to what I say later on in the review. None of this is a spoiler, as there is so much more depth and exploration left in the novel when you read it.

The girls of Devonairre street have lived under the confines of a supposed Curse for more than 75 years. For the protection of others, the elders on the street have mandated traditions and rituals that residents must abide by, often leading to what others might consider strange behavior and appearance. (i.e. Wool protects your heart, lemons help with grief, honeycake and tea on birthdays, always wear a key around your neck, don't cut your hair, turn the lights on outside at night always, and never ever let Angelika find love on you.)

Lorna, Delilah, Cruz, Isla, and Charlotte think the Curse isn't real—something that's they always been told exists but couldn't possibly be true. Every boy a Devonairre street girl falls for will die. Their beliefs are tested when Delilah's boyfriend dies, who is also someone they all care about. His death rocks them to their core and forces each of them to reevaluate what they've always been told. Lorna's refusal to believe in the Curse doesn't change until she starts to fall in love for the first time. Is her own love a weapon and could this person die because of her?

The other interesting aspect of this book is the reimagined world Haydu has created. The novel is set in 2008, seven years after an event called the "Times Square Bombing". What happened and why isn't really explored—and isn't relevant—but the discussion of *the After* is what's at issue in this book. Usually amidst tragedy, we focus on who died, but here the nation places a lot of emphasis on *who's* left behind and who this tragedy affected. The family members of the victims are called *the Affected*, even going as far as teaching children the names of the Affected and their histories. There are thought-provoking questions posted on how we as a society handle grief and loss and also how we copy individually.

Like I mentioned earlier, Haydu's writing is hauntingly beautiful. There were several moments that I just had to pause and read passages again. Haydu effortlessly weaves relevant teen issues into this story was great.

What I really liked about this book—and what I hope teen readers will draw from this book—is the parallel this book draws to growing up. Our main characters have lived their whole life with this belief system imposed on them because of where they live and what they've been told. They haven't really questioned it

until now. We have all been there in some capacity. When you reach a certain age, you naturally come into yourself and your own identity by questioning the constructs around you and developing your own belief systems.

I wish we would have gotten a little more background on the Curse, aside from what was given, as well as a little more resolution on that end. Like the characters, the readers are given a lot of information and just asked to believe it and I found myself wanting to know more, just to have a little more foundation.

*\* I received an advance copy from the publisher in exchange for an honest review. Thanks to Dutton Books for Young Readers for this early copy.*

**[Read this Review](#) • [My Website](#) • [Facebook](#) • [Twitter](#) • [Pinterest](#) • [Instagram](#) • [Subscribe by Email](#)**

\*\*\*\*\*

**★★UPCOMING BOOK RELEASES★★**

\*\*\*\*\*

---